TOKEN
A Journal of
English Linguistics

Token: A Journal of English Linguistics

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Exploring social identities in public texts

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1. The concept of social identity

This special issue focuses on the public representations that people create for themselves or others create for them. However, rather than employing the notion of 'representation', we utilise a concept originating from social psychology, 'social identity', as something constructed by both *self-concept* and *membership* in a social group or groups. According to Tajfel, this means "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of the group membership" (1972: 292). In other words, it involves psychological belongingness, but also both how we act as individuals and as parts of a collective.

Tajfel – Turner's Social Identity Theory (SIT; 1979) is based on three separate mental processes[1]. The first one, social categorisation, involves the categorisation of objects in order to understand them and identify them. Similarly, we categorise people (including ourselves) in order to understand the social environment by using such (often) binary social categories as black/white, Christian/Muslim, and student/teacher. In the second process, social identification, we adopt the identity of the group we have categorised ourselves as belonging to. For example, if someone categorises themselves as a student, they will adopt the identity of a student and begin to act in the ways they believe students act. They will also conform to the norms of the group, which ties their self-esteem to group membership. The third process entails social comparison. After categorising ourselves as part of a group

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[1] The theory was later developed into Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) by Turner et al. (1987). Its main aim was to broaden social identity research from intergroup relations to group behaviour in general.

and identifying with that group, we tend to compare that group with other groups. In order for our self-esteem to be maintained, our group needs to compare favourably with other groups.

The actual content of group behaviour (what people actually think and do as members of a group) is shaped by more macro-level dimensions of social identity processes (Hogg 2005: 208-209). This also involves such processes as building and maintaining different kinds of stereotypes and beliefs. Tajfel (1982) sees stereotypes not only as descriptive but also as functional, in that when we hold a certain stereotype of a group, that stereotype serves to justify and legitimise our actions. In the social identity process we tend to exaggerate differences among groups as well as similarities within groups.

Therefore, it is not unusual for a group to define its identity by its common opposition to some enemy or 'out-group'. While this process can be very effective in strengthening in-group bonds, it does so by significantly intensifying intergroup conflicts. Intragroup consensus can be reached by conforming to group norms. This process is called 'referent informational influence', which occurs in three stages: self-categorisation (in which a person defines a social category or identity for him/herself), norm formation (in which a person creates or learns the stereotypical norms of the social category), and norm representation (in which a person assigns the norms to him/herself and starts behaving accordingly) (Hogg – Abrams 1988: 172). In other words, we are influenced by others to the extent that they are in a position to be knowledgeable about group beliefs, norms and values. That is particularly true of individuals who are most representative (prototypical) of the in-group. They guide and lead discussions about 'who we are' and hence 'what we should do'.

By way of demonstration, we can consider two groups, criminals and non-criminals, in order to exemplify intragroup consensus and intergroup conflict. The members of the non-criminal group, ordinarily a 'respectable' majority, cultivate intragroup consensus by maintaining societal norms as well as behavioural parameters. The members of the criminal group are those who do not observe those norms and parameters to the extent that they break established laws, after which they obtain out-group status. Such deviation results in intergroup conflict. This conflict between in-group and out-group members is intensified if the out-group minority is somehow recognised as a danger to the in-group majority. Criminal status acquires a negative connotation and non-criminal status a positive one.

In language use, social identity can be expressed in various ways. Linguistic studies on social identity have often focused on matters such as

ethnicity, speech accommodation, second-language acquisition, and gender and language[2]. The most typical way of manifesting social identities and intergroup relations is in the so-called in-group and out-group discourse. Often the majority culture comes to be seen, and talked about, as the norm, the 'us', and that of the minority group as the 'other'. Wodak (2008: 61), in her study of discursive exclusion and inclusion strategies, notes that the meaning of who 'we' are varies according to prevailing ideologies and power relations: sometimes 'we' means 'all of us reasonable people' and, at other times, clearly defined and restricted groups. The use of 'us' and 'them' characterises linguistic contexts such as "many debates in all European member states (such as polarized discussions on EU enlargement, gender mainstreaming, on definitions of citizenship, immigration and participation in decision-making, and many more)" (Wodak 2008: 75). Van Dijk (2009: 52) discusses this state of polarised public discourse in terms of "our own place". Such places are where we want to be autonomous socially, politically, and culturally: there we do not want interference from above, or from outside our own place, i.e. group, including invasion into our way of using language (i.e. our idiolect, which is often a sociolect).

As van Dijk (2009: 141) states, giving attributes to the self and others concerns interactional and societal contexts. This means that defining the self is not only governed by macro-level norms or shared knowledge, but is also produced in micro-level interactions and situations. According to Gumperz – Cook-Gumperz (1982: 3), different ideologies affect face-to-face interaction and discourse practices where "subconscious and automatic sociolinguistic processes of interpretation and inference" can lead to different outcomes. No interaction is thus value-free, but is always assessed according to someone's norms and values (as in the 'referent informational influence' mentioned above). As Ochs (1993: 289) understands it, social identity is usually something not explicitly encoded in language use, but rather a social meaning inferred in act and stance meanings. Social identities can be seen to evolve and vary in social interaction in response to the acts and stances of other interlocutors, but also according to the speaker's own attitude towards each interactional situation (Ochs 1993: 298).

Often the values and norms of a particular group are also manifested in the negative labelling of other groups or members of those groups. This means creating and maintaining negative impressions, which can be aided or achieved through the use of 'labels of primary potency' (Allport

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[2] For ethnicity and speech accommodation, see, among the earliest studies, Giles (1978 onwards); for language acquisition, Gardner (1979); and for gender, Hogg (1985).

1986)[3]. Consequently, certain characteristics, like male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, or normal weight/obese, carry more perceptual potency than others, and signal difference from what is considered mainstream (e.g. moral distinctiveness). In other words, we evaluate other individuals and groups by labelling them one way or the other.

Also in this special issue, social identity manifests itself, firstly, in actual labels and attributes, such as in personal pronouns and terms of reference. In addition, some studies here show a variety of other discursive ways in which interlocutors' social identities are encoded. The juxtaposition of different groups and their members can occur through acts of criticism and praise, or by variation in stance-taking, or otherwise. Another important contextual factor taken up by these studies concerns genre, which ranges from modern blog writing and advertising to historical literature and narratives, and proves to be one of the most powerful tools for creating and maintaining social identities.

2. The concept of public texts

The contributions in this issue share an interest in identities as interactively construed and performed in *public* texts[4] that offer specific background for an understanding of their manifestations. However, the concept of public texts that these contributions rely on has become increasingly elusive, especially in the digital era. In characterising the new media and the rise of computer-mediated communication (CMC), researchers have underlined the blurred distinction between newsmakers and consumers, as well as between what is considered public and what is considered private[5], between what is mass and what is interpersonal communication (Landert 2014a, Ratia – Palander-Collin – Taavitsainen 2017). The public vs. private dichotomy proved insufficient to capture the most recent modes of communication, but

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[3] Nevala (2016) has studied extreme negative labelling of criminals in historical newspapers in terms of 'fiend naming' (from Clark 1992). An opposing strategy of 'angel naming', i.e. sympathising labelling, is used of the crime victims, respectively.

[4] The notion of *text* is yet another challenge to communication theory and discourse analysis. We do not expand on this, as the papers in this collection do not focus on visual pragmatics or multimodality. We largely follow an understanding of *text* as a coherent specimen of written language that could also be publicised in electronic media.

[5] The private vs. public distinction as a social concept goes back to ancient Greece and to the opposition between the household and the polis (see Bailey 2002 for a historical overview; see also Del Lungo 2010 and Dossena 2010).

closer investigations have shown that editor vs. user-generated content may still be separated in many cases (Landert 2014a), so that the collaboratively produced matter is in fact a sum of multiple individual (though sometimes anonymous) and editorial contributions. Moreover, a juxtaposition of private and public in a historical perspective is relatively new. Besides, for historical texts and past communication frames it is essential to critically review its applicability and to develop, for individual periods or datasets, some historically relevant notions that correspond to the contemporary understandings of what constitutes the public dimensions of texts. The brief overview below illustrates the complexity of achieving this task for some historical writings.

Historically, as we have mentioned, regardless of period-specific interpretations, the private and public domains remained discrete only to some extent. It was not until the Late Modern period that something of an opposition seems to have emerged with the rise of the public sphere in major European countries (Habermas 1989 [1962]). As for communication, the growth of the public domain has frequently, though sometimes rather simplistically, been related to the major technological developments in text production and dissemination, such as the invention of print, and to the gradual rise in the accessibility of printed material throughout the sixteenth century[6]. Going back to the Early Modern period, the rise of printed press publications (the first English *coranto* dating to 1620) marks the beginnings of *public* discourse in the sense of mass rather than individual communication. However, it is important to bear in mind that informational texts, historically seminal to journalistic genres, such as diplomatic letters and newsletters (e.g. the *avvisi*[7], Infelise 2007; Brownlees 2011: 25-26) still circulated in handwritten form long after the invention of print. In London, for instance, newsletters that transmitted commercial, military and political intelligence were (mostly professionally) handwritten well into the seventeenth century. Chartier (2007: 60) mentions several profitable staples, i.e. kinds of scriptoria

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[6]   Similarly, groundbreaking events (e.g. related to postal services, such as the intro-duction of the Penny Post in 1840; the postcard revolution in the late nineteenth century; cf. Gillen – Hall 2010; the digital revolution of the late twentieth century) have also been viewed as turning points in the history of (public) communication and the involved modalities.

[7]   The *avvisi* originated in the late fifteenth century in connection with trade around the Mediterranean. Similar handwritten newsletters were common in the Netherlands (*gazettes*) and Germany (*Neue Zeitungen*; cf. Barbarics – Pieper 2007: 61). See also a comprehensive bibliography on changing news discourse at http://www.chinednews.com/.

with professional scribes catering for the needs of a narrow group of elitist subscribers. Thus, the circulations of public (printed and mass) and private (handwritten and elitist) informational texts ran parallel in the Early Modern period[8]. Frequently, such texts were not independent, but parasitic to other texts, usually diplomatic or commercial correspondence. Infelise, for instance, shows that fifteenth century *avvisi* were either attached as separate sheets to merchant letters as a "by-product of a normal correspondence carried on for other reasons" (Infelise 2007: 41), or drawn as extracts from these and distributed as anonymous newssheets. Thus, in earlier periods, some texts – which later modern times have taught us to view as well delimited, autonomous and widely accessible physical objects – had not had an independent existence, or had not necessarily functioned in the public domain.

A range of models have been proposed in communication studies and discourse analysis research to capture the blend of private and public in different texts and genres (e.g. Weintraub 1997). In historical pragmatics, for instance, Koch – Oesterreicher's (1985) conceptualisation has become a standard reference point for communicative parameters relevant to the classification of (historical) texts (in terms of the degree of orality vs. literacy, spoken vs. written, intimate vs. public, etc.). The model was initially designed to capture the multidimensionality of private vs. public and oral vs. written domains and their interfaces with the phonic and graphic codes. Thus, it assumes that the language of immediacy (spontaneous and informal, such as a conversation) and language of distance (planned and formal, such as a sermon) may be variously realised in the graphic and phonic medium and need not be viewed as bound to only one medium (Koch – Oesterreicher 1985: 21). For instance, dialogic passages in mediaeval and Early Modern textbooks written in the scholastic tradition may reflect the language of distance, while a partially scripted sermon during a contemporary Baptist Sunday service may come closer to the language of immediacy. Although the model does not account for the most recent interactive and increasingly sophisticated multimodality of electronic texts, it has been helpful in characterising the private to public cline in online letters to editor (Landert – Jucker 2011), while its extensions have been successfully applied to a number of empirical studies into CMC (Landert 2014a and b). In terms of the conceptualisations that it has offered to linguistics more generally, it has proven useful for capturing the direction of the stylistic trends observed

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[8] Cf. Daybell's discussion on the porous private vs. public, domestic vs. political divisions in Early Modern (female) correspondence (2006: 26-30).

throughout the twentieth century. Thus, increasing informalisation and colloquialisation (Leech et al. 2009; Mair 2006) have led to increasing linguistic immediacy of public discourse (Jucker – Landert 2015).

Models that conceptualise the public vs. private in communication have evolved overtime to meet the demands of the most recent developments in human communication. Table 1 presents an overview of such models in terms of specific parameters and features that belong to different discourse domains.

Table 1. Models and communicative parameters of the "private" vs. "public" cline

Model	Parameters	Parameters	Feature extremes
Koch – Oesterreicher (1985)	two	medium	phonic vs. graphic
		form	language of immediacy vs. language of distance
Weintraub (1997)	two	visibility	open vs. hidden, accessible vs. withdrawn
		collectivity	collective vs. individual
Landert – Jucker (2011)	three	context	not exclusive vs. exclusive to sender and addressee
		content	collectively-oriented vs. individually-oriented
		form	language of immediacy vs. language of distance
Landert (2014b)	four	context	as in Landert – Jucker (2011)
		content	as in Landert – Jucker (2011)
		form	as in Landert – Jucker (2011)
		setting	involving vs. not involving

Three of the four models take into account the context and form and view these separately (Koch – Oesterreicher's medium vs. form). Only Weintraub's parameters (visibility and collectivity) conflate the context and the subject matter. Landert's model employed to conceptualise the most recent phenomenon of personalisation observed in mass media is most sophisticated as it relies on four dimensions (2014b: 24-36 for details). In terms of dimensions, Landert proposes replacing the parameter of visibility and accessibility with the characterisation of the communicative setting as involving as opposed to non-involving. At the *involving* extreme a range of texts are placed which invite users to interact directly, among others, by

contributing their own content, while at the non-involving extreme users have no such opportunity. This approach is particularly useful for capturing the complexity of accessibility and collaboration in the production of CMC; however, the non-involving vs. involving dimension is not entirely determined by the medium. For instance, online news which contains witness statements lies toward the involved end of the continuum, while news accounts in the same medium that do not contain such material lie closer to the non-involved end (Landert 2014b: 30).

3. The studies in this issue

Several papers in this collection, especially the ones which utilise recent digital data, focus on the dimensions of visibility (or Landert's involving vs. non-involving setting), context and content that underpin the models outlined in Table 1.

Beginning from visibility and context, it is obvious that many forms of online communication (social media, blogs, comment sections in news sites, etc.) are open and accessible to the general public, rather than exclusive to the sender(s) and addressee(s). In terms of content, depending on the degree of user-input that a given online site allows, (i.e. its interactive quality), the overall substance of the online communication is a result of joint effort and it constitutes (at least on the surface) a collective assembly of content. All these features render CMC an ideal site for "empowerment" of marginalised communities and even political emancipation of non-dominant languages and their speakers (Deumert 2014). Social inequalities receive due attention and space in the domain characterised by high visibility and easy access. Hence, a greater opportunity arises for successful contestation and protest against these, their underlying causes, as well as for potential change. Identity construction practices are integrated in expressions of dissent and involve specific discursive mechanisms which invite close scrutiny.

Hanna Limatius investigates such practices in plus-size fashion blogs and views such blogs as sites for body positive empowerment. Group practices and norms observed in the 200 posts from 20 UK blogs offer a chance to deconstruct certain mechanisms of identity formation in this marginalised group of fashion-oriented plus-size women. First of all, a purely linguistic element related to the mechanisms of consciously propagated change is involved: plus-size fashion bloggers (and recipients) have clearly reclaimed the word *fat* and have as a result destigmatised its overwhelmingly negative

semantics. Secondly, the posts show that in-group membership expressed by a set of mutual values (e.g. "alternative" ideals of beauty, self-acceptance and affirmation) has been used to create and maintain such a new "empowered" plus-size identity. Moreover, the narrative sections of the posts indicate the importance of such passages (e.g. presenting identity construction as a journey, etc.) for the involved identification processes, as well as for the new positivity attached to the socially marginalised body features and images. Finally, in contrast, a new stigmatised identity against which plus-size positivity is set, and in relation to which it becomes a well-guided and guarded social ground, is the hesitant plus-size person who is willing to lose weight. Limatius combines aspects of text analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to comment on the recently growing wave of empowerment strategies to which the Internet and virtual communities have provided such a fruitful outlet.

Tony McEnery and Helen Baker too attempt a reanimation of historical voices of socially marginalised groups, looking into the vast range of texts published in Early Modern England, i.e. publically available in the period through the medium of print. This study focuses on the labels describing the poor in the seventeenth century, more specifically the deserving poor or the groups considered worthy of charity by contemporary society. A corpus-based exploration of EEBO focuses on a superficially neutral descriptor, *the poor*, and employs collocation analysis to explore (1) group delimitations involved in this category, (2) forms of poverty, (3) social attitudes elicited by the designation, and (4) the reaction that the call to support the poor was perpetuated by the state and raised to the status of a social obligation. The essay shows that *the poor* are defined mostly by family circumstances (e.g. by being orphans and widows) rather than in relation to a particular profession. Interestingly, the occupation of begging appears to define the group only in the first three decades of the seventeenth century, as the term *beggar* as a so-called terminating collocate decreases in frequency in the 1640s. Overall, the term has positive discourse prosody throughout the period and this positivity intensifies as the century progresses. The paper also shows that, in response to the needs of the deserving poor, *hospitals* and *charitable* activities were notions frequently used by Early Modern English society. These identification processes of the poor, as the authors maintain, originate in church discourse that ascribed the qualities of suffering saints to the group. In official relief mechanisms, however, the mediation in charity, i.e. the personae of *overseers* and *churchwardens* feature prominently. McEnery – Baker interpret this along the lines of the increasingly positive identification

of the poor: if charity is performed through mediating institutions, criticism of the distribution and consumption of resources is directed to the mediators, not to the beneficiaries. The identifications related to *the poor* change from negative connotations to overwhelmingly positive ones; this development reflects a direction of social change and a differentiation of responses to poverty, throughout the century. In the case of the poor in Early Modern England, the study suggests that the group has been in a sense externally and socially empowered throughout the seventeenth century.

In the eighteenth century another type of social inequality, that of genders, underlies the tensions around women's identities in the then public-thus-typically-male domain of literary achievement and print publication. Anni Sairio's paper discusses the socially construed deficiency of women in the world of contemporary literature. In particular, the analysis focuses on the ways in which reader perceptions are guided through the social values promoted in the genre of satire, which was meant to be instructional. In 1760 Elizabeth Montagu, the central figure of the Bluestocking circle, published her writings for the first time: three satirical conversations were printed anonymously, as part of a larger series, the *Dialogues of the Dead*, authored by John Lyttleton. The linguistic window on identity used by Sairio involves stance-taking and the frequencies of first- and second-person pronouns used by the individual characters in Montague's dialogues. However, the anonymity of the writer is the central recurring theme in the deconstruction of identity processes. Also the social meanings that these processes carry constitute another topic that reappears in the study. First and foremost, anonymous publication relieved the female author of gender-related risks in a male-dominated domain and was not uncommon at the time. Secondly, as Sairio notices, the gender-free stance enabled by anonymity reduced the amount of gender work (in analogy to facework) that would otherwise have been expected of a woman (as a writer). Thirdly, as in CMC today, concealing some aspects of identity worked as a protective mechanism through which sensitive and socially-stigmatised contents were expressed, but no responsibility rested on the undisclosed interactant. Finally, the prototypes and expectation defaults could have been skillfully manipulated by means of anonymity, or (semi)anonymity, as in the case of Elizabeth Montague. In a detailed analysis of the three dialogues, the paper shows that, unlike in most communicative settings, where values are promoted through group membership, critical judgment was the main vehicle employed to endorse virtue and learning, rationality, morality, self-discipline and self-improvement. Through her subversive dialogues that used gender-neutral disguise, Montague, a learned

woman known for great emphasis on self-presentation, expressed her own respectable, but deeply reflexive social identity.

Gender stereotypes also lurk in the background of the paper by Daniela Cesiri, which focuses on the social identity of (female) food bloggers by analysing the comment sections of 5 top UK cooking blogs, i.e. exemplifying an instructional genre. Framing her study in the Goffmanian concept of "communication as stage", the author focuses on bloggers' direct interactions with commentators. This allows her to place the bloggers on a continuum between the expert and the amateur (albeit experienced) food lover, as the idealised roles to which the creators of such sites relate. The concepts of "self-as-performer" and "self-as-character" are used to differentiate between the identification processes in which the bloggers engage. These concepts also help indicate the correspondence (or the lack of it) between the interactive "mask" and the image that individual blog writers perpetuate in other spheres of their lives. Following a set of criteria for "virtual communities" (Herring 2004), Cesiri shows that the site of interaction analysed is indeed one such community where the identities and roles of the interactants are juxtaposed with, and negotiated in relation to, a specific set of norms, usually originating in the blogger as a sort of a central norm-defining role model. In dealing with the comments from the followers, the strategies employed towards the management of criticism and praise offer some insights into the reciprocal position of the parties involved in communication. Whereas praise is tackled by bloggers individually, criticism tends to be resolved on a community basis, where the core character sometimes withdraws from interaction to give space to their followers. In this way support and defending statements are generated collectively, as are some recipe variants, amendments and extensions.

A similar mechanism of mutual responsibility and responsibility distribution within a specific (discourse) community guides the interaction in an entirely different communication setting described in the paper by Matylda Włodarczyk. The correspondence of the British Colonial Office in the early nineteenth century represents the exchanges of a very specific professional circle in the colonial administration of the Cape of Good Hope. The study focuses on issues regarding alignment with the institution and other parties, as well as on the ways in which multifaceted social/institutional identities are constructed in internal correspondence. A three-decade perspective, i.e. a comparison between a set of letters from 1796 and a set from 1827-30, captures the development of the institution, the growth of its networks and power grids, the changing guidelines and conventions of

communication, as well as the dynamics of the ways in which institutional authority is exercised. When constructing their identities, the participants foreground their institutional rights, obligations and relative positioning in the locally constructed grid of mutual relations. At the same time, some general factors, such as the values of genteel society, characteristic of Late Modern Britain, and the growing professionalisation of the civil service shape linguistic expression in the exchange. The analysis focuses on self- and addressee reference and the distributions of the relevant pronouns and nouns according to the direction of institutional distance crossing. Contrary to the predictions of social distance theory, where person deixis and self-presentation through first person pronouns are constrained in letters sent up the social (and family) hierarchies, the institutional inferiors in the Colonial Office do not avoid self-reference in the letters sent 'up' (its incidence is similar to the frequencies of 'I' in personal correspondence; cf. Palander-Collin 2009: 112). On the other hand, institutional superiors do not use more, but considerably fewer, self-referential pronouns in the letters sent 'down'. Consequently, Colonial Office correspondence emerges as a local domain characterised by unique patterns of self- and addressee reference, corroborating the precedence of institutional factors over other determinants of person reference, i.e. the domain where language and identity interface is most profound.

Minna Palander-Collin and Ina Liukkonen also focus on powerful institutions and their regulatory mechanisms that very closely guide identification processes for well-specified institutional roles, such as that of a defendant in a court of law. The data for the study are drawn from the Old Bailey corpus. In this database, the witness is the dominant speaker in quantitative terms, with the victims, defendants, lawyers and judges taking up much less space in the interaction. The authors of the paper focus on the positioning of one of the less prominent roles, the defendants against the court and the crime they have (allegedly) committed. This position is investigated via the mechanisms of stance-taking operationalised in two models that rely on evaluation, positioning and alignment, orientation, attitude, and generality respectively. The latter, i.e. the model of discourse stance, is investigated via keyword and cluster analysis. The analysis results in a stance cline ranging from guilty, to factual and ignorant, to not-guilty positions. Stance-taking, viewed as an identity construction process, emerges as a complex act which can be observed on several levels: starting with broader social and societal practices, and ending with specific contexts in place and time where defendant discourse and individual speech turns are seen to occur.

Finally, Isabel Ermida investigates conflictual stance-taking in comment sections of the British *Mail Online* newspaper website, another public site functioning as a forum for grievances. The paper scrutinizes the case of a young unemployed couple with six children asking Social Security for a four-bedroom flat. The participation setting is a complex one: the plurality of CMC results in the commentators venting their own frustrations over issues of unemployment, housing or parenting. As a result, the online conversation becomes a "multi-topic argument", where polarised social ideologies are voiced, sometimes in a violent and unrestricted manner such as hate speech. In the paper, three types of disagreement are analysed: backgrounded, hedged, and foregrounded disagreement are manifested through more or less explicit linguistic and discursive strategies. Ermida provides a comprehensive overview of linguistic forms through which disagreement is expressed while she matches the degree of disagreement with the conventional Brown – Levinson (1987) take on superstrategies of politeness. Moreover, the analysis is set against the discursive theory of (im)politeness in that it approaches relational work in the perspective of face management. The contribution also offers a useful overview of approaches to disagreement and conflict in the more general perspective of (public) discourse(s).

The papers in this collection are based on texts that belong to (public) discourses on account of their accessibility, high visibility as well as the communicative setting that occasions from the joint efforts of specific communities, or mutually interconnected groups. Through the public medium, regardless of time or space, many such groups have engaged in identity construction processes integrated in the expression of dissent against specific social ideologies or beliefs. Frequently, and typically in CMC, interaction reveals polarised social ideologies that willingly exploit convenient and consequence-free discussion sites (Ermida). Not only mainstream mind-sets and beliefs, but also marginalised identities have achieved a degree of empowerment through public discourse, either in a relatively short time span through group internal strategies (Limatius), or as part of a profound, general social transformation that had taken decades (McEnery – Baker). Some contributions have shown that the potential for such empowerment lies within identity construction strategies that seem universal, such as for instance, concealing aspects of identity or full anonymity, norm-setting stance or manipulating the prototypes and expectation defaults (Sairio and Cesiri). Some settings, like institutional ones, however, feature some less common, locally-bound identity strategies that involve responsibility sharing and hierarchical distribution of authority (Włodarczyk). In general, all identity construction occurs on multiple levels of human activity and

is manifest on different levels of language and discourse at the same time (Palander-Collin – Liukkonen). We hope that the evolving notion of social identities within the public sphere will continue to attract an increasing range of linguistic approaches in the future.

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"There really is nothing like pouring your heart out to a fellow fat chick": Constructing a body positive blogger identity in plus-size fashion blogs

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on practices of identity construction in plus-size fashion blogs. Specifically, I investigate the construction of a body positive blogger identity, and the ways in which this identity is reflected in the language use of a group of 20 UK-based plus-size fashion bloggers. The data for the study consists of a corpus of 200 blog posts (including reader comments). In a qualitative analysis, four categories of practices for identity construction are examined: 1) constructing identity through word choice, 2) constructing identity through group membership, 3) constructing identity through narratives, and 4) constructing an identity that is stigmatized within the group. The results of the study show that while adopting a body positive blogger identity can be empowering, it also contributes to the creation of in-group norms and restrictions.

Keywords: blogs, marginalization, norms, identity, fashion.

1. Introduction

In this article, I study the ways in which plus-size women use language to construct and negotiate identities in their fashion-focused blogs. My premise is that a lot of the identity work in plus-size fashion blogs revolves around the concept of *body positivity*: a movement of body acceptance that emphasizes inclusivity and challenges the idolization of thin, toned bodies in the mainstream media (Sastre 2014: 929-930).

In my analysis, I view identity as constructed and performed in interaction, as opposed to essential (Joseph 2009: 14). The focus of the study is on what I refer to as a *body positive blogger identity*. The idea of body positivity is closely related to the *fat acceptance* movement, which opposes sizeism, i.e. discrimination based on body size (Scaraboto – Fischer 2013: 1245), and promotes equal rights between fat people and those who are not considered fat[1]. Currently, both body positivity and the fat acceptance movement appear ubiquitous on the Internet, with an increasing number of activists and their followers forming online communities (Limatius 2016) and *safe spaces* (Sastre 2014: 929) via social media. According to Harjunen (2009: 56-57), fatness is "increasingly a site of identity politics work" and a lot of that work takes place on fat-acceptance-influenced blogs. Thus, blogs are in a key position in shaping the discourse on fatness (Harjunen 2009: 39).

Despite the growing online presence of the body positivity and fat acceptance movements, fat and/or plus-size people continue to face marginalization in their everyday lives. This marginalization is especially apparent in the field of fashion (e.g. Connell 2013; Downing Peters 2014), a fact that consistently shapes the discourse of plus-size fashion blogs, as well as the bloggers' identity construction. In fashion imagery, thin bodies are what is expected or considered normal, while fat bodies are unexpected, even deviant. Retailers also offer fewer clothing options in larger sizes, which results in plus-size women being left with "little sartorial agency" (Downing Peters 2014: 49), even though they are hardly a minority in modern Western societies. For example, a recent study (Christel – Dunn 2017: 134) suggests that the clothing size of the average American woman is "between a Misses size 16-18, and a Women's Plus size 20W, with greater distinctions among racial and ethnic groups".

Drawing on previous research on identity construction within online groups of marginalized people, as well as the theoretical frameworks of *social identity*, *narrative identity* and *categorical identity*, this article aims to answer the following questions:

1)   In what ways is a body positive blogger identity discursively and linguistically constructed in plus-size women's fashion blogs?
2)   How does this identity construction reflect in-group practices and norms?

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[1]   In the present study, the word "fat" is used as a neutral adjective with no intention of being offensive.

The qualitative analysis of blog texts and comments is structured around four themes: constructing identity through word choice, constructing identity through expressions of group membership, constructing identity through narratives, and constructing an identity that is stigmatized within the group.

Although plus-size fashion blogs have been studied from the perspective of identity before (e.g. Gurrieri – Cherrier 2013; Harju – Huovinen 2015), apart from discussing the bloggers reclaiming the word "fat", previous research has paid little attention to the role of language in practices of identity construction. Further explorations into this topic are required, as language can be an important factor in challenging what LeBesco (2001: 76) refers to as the "spoiled identity of fatness". The present article contributes to the growing amount of literature on plus-size women, fashion and identity by providing a language- and discourse-focused approach, as well as investigating the role of in-group norms in the identity construction that takes place within one specific online community of plus-size fashion bloggers.

2. Norms and identities in the online interaction of marginalized groups

In recent years, there have been several studies on practices of identity construction within online communities of marginalized people. The online interaction of people with eating disorders, for example, has been studied extensively. Stommel (2008), who studied a German discussion forum on eating disorders, discovered that the forum participants expressed various identities to construct group membership, including categorical identities (such as "anorectic") and situational identities (such as "new member"). Eating-disordered identities were also the focus of Palmgren's (2015) research on Swedish blogs written by girls with eating disorders. According to Palmgren (2015: 45), the bloggers used their blogs as platforms for performing an eating-disordered identity and established normative practices within the group, such as using special punctuation in words related to weight and eating as a way to prevent moderators from finding the blogs and deleting them (for example, writing the word "fat" as "f.a.t.") Comparable practices were also discovered in Yeshua-Katz' (2015: 1348-1351) study on the "Pro-Ana"[2] online community; to protect their group

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[2] According to Yeshua-Katz (2015: 1348), while the "Pro-Ana" movement is often defined as rejecting the idea of anorexia as an illness and instead treating it as a lifestyle choice, this definition is not unproblematic. See Yeshua-Katz (2015) for a more in-depth discussion.

from "wannarexics" (i.e. people who do not have an eating disorder, but want to access the information provided by the community to be able to lose weight quickly), the participants policed group identity through norms and boundary maintenance.

The online communities of LGBTQ+ groups have also been investigated from the perspective of identity. Marciano (2014: 824) studied the online interaction within the Israeli transgender community, illustrating three ways in which transgender users utilized cyberspace: as *preliminary*, *complementary* and/or *alternative* spheres. Using online environments as preliminary spheres allowed transgender users to experience certain aspects of their lives virtually before going through these experiences in the offline world, while using them as complementary spheres enabled them to complete their offline world with another social setting (in addition to school, work, etc.) (Marciano 2014: 830). Finally, online environments could also act as alternative spheres, which allowed for "parallel worlds" where users could adopt an identity that contributed to their well-being, but was perceived as impossible to perform in their offline lives. For example, some transgender women maintained an online relationship while hiding their biological sex, stating that this enabled them to identify as "real biological women" (Marciano 2014: 830). A similar way of using online spaces to express alternative identities took place in the Brooklyn drag community studied by Lingel – Golub (2015); instead of creating fan pages on Facebook, the artists created new, separate personal profiles for their stage personalities, stating that fan pages did not allow for enough interaction.

Based on the previous literature on identity construction within online communities of marginalized people, online spaces are often used as platforms for performing identities that are problematic or even impossible to express in offline settings. Being able to express such an identity in a safe environment can thus be an empowering experience. However, previous studies also show that in all online communities[3] – whether they consist of marginalized individuals or not – norms and restrictions exist to moderate who is accepted into the group and what kind of behavior is expected of them. These in-group norms also dictate what kind of identities are perceived as acceptable. Even within marginalized communities where the existence of the group is, to a certain extent, based on the idea of differing from the norm, a distinction is often made between what is considered normal *within the group* and what is not.

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[3]   For an in-depth discussion on online communities and the criteria for defining one, see Herring (2004).

In the identity construction that takes place in plus-size fashion blogs, both the empowering effects of online interaction, and the possibly restricting effects of in-group norms are present. The bloggers in my data referred to the blogosphere as a safe space where plus-size women can express their interest in fashion without being subjected to judgement or ridicule, but they also appeared conscious of the fact that as a part of an online community of plus-size fashion bloggers, specific ways of acting and communicating were expected of them by other community members, as well as – to an extent – community outsiders.

Indeed, much of the previous research on plus-size fashion bloggers discusses norms or normativity. In an earlier study that focused on the community-building practices of the same bloggers (Limatius 2016), I discovered that, much like the eating-disordered forum participants in Stommel's (2008) study, the bloggers could be considered to form a *community of practice* (e.g. Wenger 1998). As a result of interacting with each other on a regular basis, the bloggers had formed a community with group-specific communicative practices, norms and behaviors, such as using linguistic politeness strategies, establishing an etiquette for crediting others when borrowing their material and linking to others' blogs (see Limatius 2016). Normativity was also a central concept in the work of Harju – Huovinen (2015: 1603), who studied how "fatshion" bloggers[4] coped with the hegemonic cultural norms that dictate female identity positions, as well as the subversive identity strategies they engaged in. They discovered that the 12 bloggers they studied employed several performative practices that displayed *appropriation*, *manipulation* and *negotiation* of the cultural discourses constructed around gender, fashion and the market (Harju – Huovinen 2015: 1618). Gurrieri – Cherrier (2013: 277) also addressed normativity in their research by considering how plus-size women used fashion to both subscribe to and challenge mainstream beauty ideals, as well as the ways in which this affected their identity work. The bloggers in Gurrieri – Cherrier's (2013: 290) study used three performative acts to (re)negotiate normative beauty ideals: *coming out as fat*, *mobilizing fat citizenship* and *flaunting fat*.

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[4]   In previous research, plus-size fashion bloggers are often referred to as "fatshion" bloggers or "fatshionistas" (a term derived from the adjective "fat" and the neologism "fashionista", i.e. an avid follower of fashion) (Scaraboto – Fischer 2013: 1239). As the bloggers in my data rarely use these terms themselves, I have chosen to use "plus-size fashion blogger". I also consider this term more appropriate because not all plus-size fashion bloggers necessarily identify as "fat", and the term can thus be interpreted to cover a larger demographic than "fatshionista". However, I use "fatshion blogger" or "fatshionista" when citing authors that have used these terms in their own work.

Downing Peters (2014) studied the *sartorial biographies* of three plus-size women in order to explore how fat identities are formed through practices of self-fashioning, as well as social channels such as blogging. She observed that for the women she studied, being fat was "not the only or even primary facet of their being", but it was a prominent theme when it came to dressing their bodies, and especially the way they perceived they *should* be dressing their bodies (Downing Peters 2014: 64).

Thus, the identity construction of plus-size fashion bloggers seems to be influenced by two kinds of norms. On the one hand, it is influenced by the beauty ideals of mainstream media that place plus-size women in the realm of the abnormal and, as a result, awaken a desire to resist these norms by creating new discourses around fatness and fashion. On the other hand, however, it is also shaped by the plus-size fashion blogging community itself, as specific ways of being a plus-size blogger are established within the group.

3. Social identity, narrative identity and categorical identity

In my analysis of blog posts and comments, I view the practices of identity construction through three theoretical lenses: social identity, narrative identity and categorical identity. I argue that the combination of these three perspectives provides a useful framework for my analysis, as they all highlight different aspects of identity, yet coexist and complement each other in the discourse of plus-size fashion blogs.

According to Benwell – Stokoe (2006: 25), social identity is "defined by individual identification with a group: a process constituted firstly by a reflexive knowledge of group membership, and secondly by emotional attachment or specific disposition to this belonging". Thus, language is used to mark an individual's belonging in social groups (Sophocleous – Themistocleous 2014), and group membership is made visible through shared linguistic and discursive practices. As well as identifying with a specific group, social identity is also constructed through dissociation with other groups. While individuals are perceived to share features with those in their in-group, differences with other groups' members are also accentuated (Grad – Martín Rojo 2008: 12). In my data, through the use of terminology and discourse, plus-size fashion bloggers both construct their identities as part of a specific social group (e.g. plus-size women, bloggers), and simultaneously distance themselves from outsiders (e.g. thin women, people who do not write blogs).

According to the narrative identity theory, identity consists of narratives that individuals construct for themselves and others (Grad –

Martín Rojo 2008: 10). Identity is a story, "where changes are part of the continuity and a host of narratives of being in the past, present and future are interwoven" (Grad – Martín Rojo 2008: 11). The blog as a genre has narrative elements, both when it comes to individual blog texts and the blog as a whole, since blogs usually contain archived texts from several years back. Blogs, while interactive via linking and commenting, and potentially community-building (Limatius 2016), are a genre that encourages the expression of personal experiences and opinions (Myers 2010: 118). Because of this, blogging is often characterized as an ego-centric form of online activity (Puschmann 2013: 88). However, a blogger nevertheless assumes the existence of an audience that is interested in their narrative – I find Myers' (2010: 8) comparison of blogs with television soap operas particularly apt, as both are "open-ended by definition", and "dead" when there are no longer new chapters to add. In the case of plus-size fashion blogs, the notion of narrative identity appears especially relevant, since many bloggers use their blogs to document their journey into the world of plus-size fashion and body positivity. When – or if – this journey is completed, the blogger might move on to other topics, or stop blogging altogether.

By categorical identity, Stommel (2008) refers to the ways in which actors "attend to and are attended to by categories in their naturally co-occurring interactions". Categorical identities such as "fashion blogger" or "fat acceptance activist" can be used in self-presentation in the interaction that takes place in the blogs, similar to the way eating-disordered girls in Stommel's (2008) study utilized categories like "anorectic" and "bulimic" in their forum posts.

The discourse phenomena I observed in my data sometimes featured overlapping identities – for example, in blog posts that discussed discovering body positivity, both concepts of narrative identity and social identity were relevant. Additionally, the line between social identity and categorical identity was not always clear. However, as category-based identity constructions can also be used to highlight the experience of an individual, as opposed to a member of a social group, I consider all three perspectives relevant for the present study.

4. Data and method

The data for the study consists of a corpus compiled from 20 UK-based, fashion-focused blogs (see Appendix 1) that are written by plus-size women. I searched for suitable blogs from a Facebook group aimed at plus-size

fashion bloggers, and contacted all bloggers that 1) had blogged actively in the year 2014, 2) had evidently interacted with other bloggers in the community (for example, through comments), and 3) whose blogs currently focused on the topic of plus-size fashion. The corpus was collected from the blogs of the 20 people who replied to my email and gave their consent for using their blogs as research material. The blogs are interconnected, as the bloggers often comment on each other's blogs, as well as interacting on other social media platforms. Most of the bloggers have interacted with each other face-to-face as well as online. Although all bloggers were active at the time of collection (January 2015), there was variation regarding the number of posts in each blog (see Fig. 1). Some of the bloggers had been blogging for several years, while some had only been blogging for roughly one year. Additionally, while some bloggers posted new content almost daily, others posted sporadically. As the group of bloggers included both well-known, semi-professional bloggers, and bloggers who were in the early stages of their blogging careers, I consider the group to be a fairly accurate representation of the UK-based plus-size fashion blogging community at the time of collection[5].

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13	B14	B15	B16	B17	B18	B19	B20
Posts	582	919	242	708	210	323	324	152	183	700	94	867	121	107	641	598	198	343	158	306
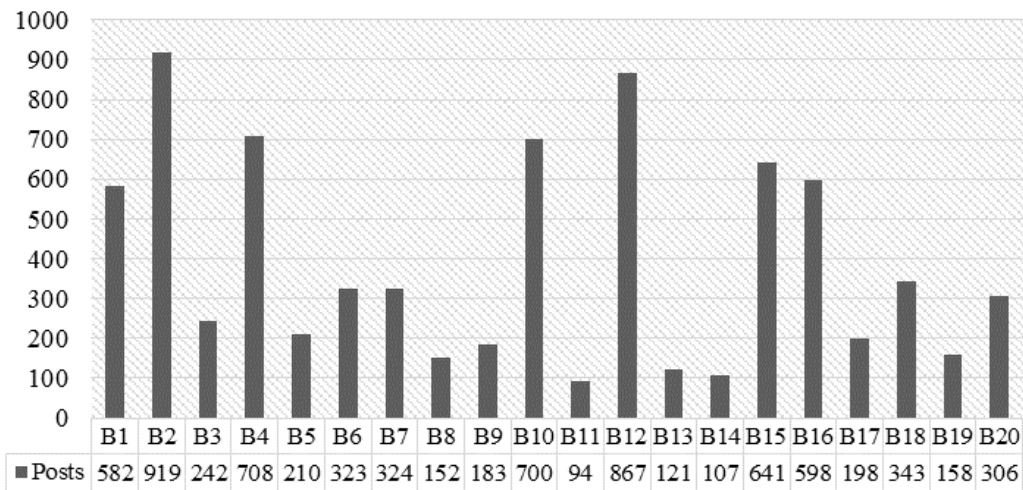
Figure 1. Number of posts in each blog (B1-B20)

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[5]   As plus-size fashion blogs have since become more common, the number of active bloggers has increased in the past two years.

Since altogether 7776 blog texts had been posted in the blogs before January 2015, it would not have been feasible to perform a qualitative analysis of all blog material. Before narrowing down the data to a corpus that could sufficiently answer my research questions, I studied the blogs carefully. Although I did not read every blog post word for word, I did look at all posts spanning from the beginning of each blog to January 2015, which gave me an insight into what kind of topics were typically discussed by the bloggers. Plus-size fashion blogs, as well as fashion blogs in more general terms, mostly focus on fashion promotion: the bloggers take photos of their outfits and write a review of the clothing items they are wearing. The idea is to give readers information about products they might be interested in purchasing – the blogger thus acts as a link between fashion brands and consumers. In some cases, the blogger has purchased the clothing items herself, but companies also send free samples to bloggers and pay them to promote their products. In addition to clothing, many plus-size fashion bloggers review other types of products and services.

The selection of blog posts for the corpus was based on qualitative interpretation[6]. Since the review posts focus heavily on the products and less so on the blogger herself, it became apparent that analyzing them would not reveal enough about practices of identity construction. For this reason, I decided to focus on posts that dealt with more personal issues[7]. I used three methods to find such posts. If the blog contained tags – i.e. keywords for identifying posts related to a specific topic – I used them to search for posts that appeared more personal and less commercial, such as posts tagged with the keywords "body positivity", "confidence", "life", "lifestyle", "health", "fat acceptance", "personal", "mental health", etc. For the blogs that did not use tags but contained a lot of material, I used the search engines incorporated into the blog layout, and searched for terms that had appeared as tags on other blogs. If the blog did not contain tags but was smaller in size (i.e. consisted of a relatively small number of posts), I picked posts that appeared suitable based on their title. For example, if a post was titled "Alexi Accessories", it was reasonable to assume that the main content of the post would be a review of accessories provided by the brand Alexi. However, if the post was titled "What a week…", I considered it more likely to contain details of a blogger's personal life, and thus focus more on her

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[6]   The present study is one part of my article-based PhD thesis, and while this paper has a qualitative emphasis, I have also studied a more extensive blog corpus and utilized quantitative, corpus-linguistic methods (see Limatius, under review).

[7]   Although the line between a commercial review and a personal post is not always clear, since some bloggers can insert reviews in posts that also discuss other topics.

identity than a product review. I included posts from various points in time. I first chose a month in the blog's archive – for example, June 2013 – and then picked the first relevant post I could find. Then I chose another month to find another post, and so on. However, I allowed for one exception in the sampling process. The majority of the bloggers had participated in a blogging challenge called "What being a fat woman is really like" in February 2014, and since those posts were particularly focused on the identity of a plus-size woman, I included all of them in the corpus.

Although previous research has mostly treated plus-size fashion blogs as one, coherent group, there is variation when it comes to the content of these blogs (see also Limatius, under review.) Some blogs in my data mainly focused on reviews, while others were heavily fat-acceptance-focused with extensive discussions on the blogger's identity as a plus-size woman. To achieve a balanced sample, I chose 10 posts per blog, resulting in a corpus of 200 blog posts (144820 words). As I was interested in the in-group dynamics of this specific group of bloggers, I also included all 1066 comments[8] that had been posted to the 200 blog texts before January 2015. Although not all comments on blog posts are from other bloggers, the bloggers I studied often interacted with each other through blog comments. The number of blog posts, the number of comments, and the word counts of blog posts and comments respectively are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Blog posts vs. comments in the corpus

Blog	Number of posts	Words in posts	Number of comments (before 2015-01-01)	Words in comments (before 2015-01-01)
1	2	3	4	5
Blog 1	10	6588	41	1796
Blog 2	10	9468	260	21769
Blog 3	10	5503	36	519
Blog 4	10	6646	67	3938
Blog 5	10	7392	2	50
Blog 6	10	8963	61	3338
Blog 7	10	8978	41	636
Blog 8	10	4579	43	1718

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[8] It should be mentioned that I myself write a blog and have interacted with some of the bloggers in my data prior to starting my research. There are three comments in the sample that have been posted by me. As the comments were posted before I started my research project, I chose not to exclude them from the sample.

1	2	3	4	5
Blog 9	10	6261	18	929
Blog 10	10	4523	30	1367
Blog 11	10	8459	35	2261
Blog 12	10	9239	44	1962
Blog 13	10	6530	39	2023
Blog 14	10	11972	38	2005
Blog 15	10	6317	13	2550
Blog 16	10	6637	58	1500
Blog 17	10	7026	32	863
Blog 18	10	4683	41	1100
Blog 19	10	9310	124	5120
Blog 20	10	5746	43	1524
Whole corpus	**200**	**144820**	**1066**	**56968**

In addition to the themes of fat acceptance, self-confidence and body positivity, the bloggers discussed a variety of other topics, such as traveling, their families, health, feminism, careers, and the blogging process itself. However, even in the posts that were not directly about being plus-size, the identity of a plus-size woman was often present. For example, when writing about traveling, a blogger might discuss not being able to go on an amusement park ride because of her size.

Topics related to life as a plus-size woman	Topics related to marginalization (based on other features than being plus-size)	Other topics
Fat acceptance Criticizing brands Challenging beauty ideals The meaning(s) of the word "fat" Weight loss Achieving body confidence Daily struggles of accepting one's body	Issues related to marginalization based on age, sexual orientation, height, etc. Discussion of taboo topiecs, such as facial hair on woman, anxiety and depression, health issues	Lifestyle and travel Careers Blogging advice Everyday "tips and tricks" Personal information about the blogger, such as mentions of friends and family

Figure 2. Topics discussed in the blog corpus

Several of the bloggers expressed other marginalized identities that intersected with their plus-size identity; issues related to being a short woman, a queer woman, a woman with facial hair and a woman in her forties were mentioned. The topics discussed in the corpus can thus be divided into three

categories: topics related to life as a plus-size woman, topics related to other marginalized identities, and more general topics. Examples of the topics discussed in the corpus are illustrated in Fig. 2 above.

The analysis of blog posts and comments was based on an inductive approach; I did not devise coding categories beforehand, focusing instead on patterns of identity construction that became apparent as I read the material. This approach turned out to be fruitful, because while I expected to find some of the phenomena that were present, it also revealed features that were unexpected. For example, the abundance of weight-loss-related identity work was not anticipated. The analysis combines linguistic analysis and discourse analysis, as I discuss both linguistic features (the bloggers' lexical and pronominal choices, see e.g. Herring 2004) – and discursive features (narrative elements, weight loss discourse) as means of identity construction.

5. Results

In the following sub-sections, I present the four types of identity construction I observed in the corpus. I will illustrate each category with excerpts from the blogs. Bolded text is used in the excerpts to highlight specific linguistic and discursive features.

5.1 Word choice: Fat or curvy?

Different perspectives to the body and its relationship with identity were reflected in the bloggers' choices in terminology when describing their (and other people's) bodies. In fact, these words were sometimes the topic of discussion in blog posts focusing on body positivity. The bloggers appear to engage in constant negotiations over the appropriate terminology that is to be used within the community. By describing themselves as "fat", "plus-size", a "BBW" (short for "big, beautiful woman"), "curvy" or "obese", they make a choice that defines how they want to be seen – and at the same time risk being criticized by other members of the community who may view these terms differently. In (1), a blog reader problematizes the author's use of the term "BBW" due to its connections to the adult entertainment industry – although she does cushion her statement by beginning with positive feedback ("I love your picture") and ending with a hedge ("that's only my personal experience with it").

(1) **I love your picture**. The first time I ever heard of BBW was 2-3 years ago, and **to be honest, I just do not have a good connotation of that term**. Most of the time that I see that, it is in a filthy almost pornographic type of content if it is not outright pornographic, and I just cannot get down with that terminology – **but that's only my personal experience with it**. (Comment on Blog 11)

To the commenter, the categorical identity of a "BBW" has negative connotations, while the blogger who wrote the original post found it to be more positive – a celebration of the beauty of bigger women.

The most prevalent phenomenon associated with word choice and identity construction in the blogs was the reclaimed use of the word "fat". While it is usually used as an insult in informal discourse (see Harju – Huovinen 2015 on the *destigmatisation* of fat), plus-size bloggers often strive to strip "fat" of its derogatory connotations by normalizing its use. Thirteen bloggers in the corpus used "fat" as a neutral self-descriptor, often purposefully:

(2) If someone wants to call me fat, it's **an obvious statement** of a visual tangible thing. So yes, I agree. I have fat, that's ok. Because I DO have fat. […] **That fat is there and it really isn't going anywhere** at the precise moment someone wants to use it in a negative term […] **Claim the word fat back** and YOUR right to not be threatened by a word with no power. (Blog 20)

In (2), the blogger names "fat" as an accurate word for describing her body; she has excess fat which "isn't going anywhere". For this blogger, self-identification as "fat" transforms the word from an insult into a factual statement, thus stripping it of its negative connotations. However, while this was a popular discourse on fatness in the corpus, there were also individuals who admitted that using the word outside the blogosphere was problematic because of other people's reactions, which were portrayed as a source of amusement and frustration:

(3) I am fat. I often laugh when people try to be 'nice' and pretend I'm not and they really don't get that **for me it is not a word I use to insult myself with**. It is simply a statement of fact and is not a reflection on how I feel about my beauty. **I am beautiful** … **and fat**, and the two go together. (Comment on Blog 4)

In (3), the commenter discloses that people perceive her calling herself fat as her insulting herself, although in fact she does not feel like being fat makes her any less beautiful. "Fat" is connected to ugliness in everyday talk, but in the discourse of plus-size fashion blogs, the concepts of "fat" and "beautiful" are not mutually exclusive. Thus, the word has acquired a new meaning when used in the context of the blogging community. However, one blogger also hinted that she would not be comfortable with outsiders using the word:

(4)   **Even if I use a word to describe myself that doesn't mean I give everyone else permission to**. I guarantee that every single person regardless of their size has used a word to describe themselves before that if someone else used against them, would be completely heartbroken. The notion that fat = something bad is everywhere. (Blog 6)

While the commenter in (3) was frustrated with outsiders not accepting the word "fat" as a non-derogatory descriptor, the blogger in (4) admits that she does not grant everyone the permission to use "fat", despite using it to describe herself. For her, "fat" can be empowering, but only when it is used by the people who can claim ownership over the term, i.e. people who belong to the social identity group of plus-size/fat people. Similar norms about using negative slang terminology exist in the LGBTQ+ community (e.g. Kelsey 2009), as well as other marginalized groups.

There were instances in two blogs in the corpus where "fat" was used in a way that clearly had negative connotations (e.g. a blogger saying that a dress made her "look fat"). Additionally, on one occasion, a blogger described herself as a "porker" in a clearly negative context. However, these occurrences took place in blog posts that were written in the beginning of the bloggers' blogging careers, so it is possible that at the time, the bloggers had not yet been familiar with ideas of body positivity and reclaiming "fat", as they would not have been integrated into the blogging community at this point[9]. It should also be noted that some bloggers use the reclaimed

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[9]   As another part of my PhD project, I interviewed the bloggers via an online questionnaire and inquired how they felt about the word "fat". Out of the 13 bloggers who replied only one admitted to currently having an issue with the term, and even she deemed the word "OK, when used in context". However, several bloggers mentioned that they had viewed the term negatively in the past, but had since grown to accept it – a result that can be seen to reflect the present study, since the only occurrences of derogatory "fat" were found in posts that were written early in the bloggers' blogging careers.

"fat" more frequently than others – in a quantitative investigation of body descriptors within the same group of bloggers, I discovered that bloggers who emphasized fat acceptance activism were more likely to use the term than bloggers who focused mainly on fashion- and beauty-related content, who in turn favored the term "plus-size" (Limatius, under review.) While none of the bloggers openly opposed using the word "fat" in their blog posts, two bloggers voiced their dislike towards the word "curvy", which traditionally has more flattering connotations than "fat":

(5)   …**for the love of all things please do NOT say that I'm curvy**. I do not take it as a compliment because I am not/do not view myself to be curvy and I feel that saying it is purely trying to **make my fatness fit in to yet another socially accepted norm/standard**. (Blog 11)

The blogger in (5) considers being called "curvy" more insulting than being called "fat", because she feels that people who use the word are trying to mold the concept of fatness into a more socially acceptable form – she emphasizes this by using capital letters in the word "NOT", as well as the exclamation "for the love of all things". If a plus-size woman does not identify as "curvy", other people's use of the term can appear as patronizing sugar-coating of facts. Again, the difference between using a certain term in the plus-size blogosphere and using it in other social contexts becomes apparent – while most people would assume "fat" to be an insult and "curvy" a compliment, here the connotations of both words become more complicated.

5.2 Group identity: "Us fat girls"

It was common for the bloggers to construct their social identity as one part of a larger group: plus-size women interested in fashion. In-groupness was particularly visible in statements where the blogger referred to the plus-size blogging community (or plus-size women in general) with the inclusive pronouns "we" and "us":

(6)   Fat girls shouldn't wear crop tops. YES **WE** SHOULD! (Blog 18)

(7)   The media really isn't kind to **us "Fat Birds"**, however, I read […] that yesterday, for the first time, Plus-Size Models were in New York Fashion Week! Could this be the beginning of a new era? First

NYFW, then the World! FATfashion World Domination… **Let's make it happen**! (Blog 8)

In (6) and (7), the bloggers use the inclusive pronoun both to state their own identity as "fat girls/birds", and to include their plus-size followers into a group that seeks to challenge the normative order of fashion. The blogger takes on the role of a leader, telling her audience what they can achieve through collective action, as a group (the courage to wear clothes traditionally considered unflattering on plus-size bodies such as "crop tops", or a "FATfashion World Domination"). A similar strategy is frequently used in political discourse (e.g. Fetzer 2014).

There were also instances in the corpus where the blogger did not construct group membership through inclusiveness, but rather by making a distinction between plus-size women and other groups – usually meaning thinner, straight-size women:

(8)   There really is nothing like pouring your heart out to a **fellow fat chick**. I love my **slim friends** and could share anything with them, but nobody quite gets you and has that sense of shared experience quite like a **fellow chubster**. (Blog 4)

The blogger in (8) describes the connectedness she feels when interacting with other plus-size women, to whom she jokingly refers to as "fellow chubsters". While calling others "fat chicks" or "chubsters" could be considered a *face-threatening act* (Brown – Levinson 1987) in most social situations, the fact that the blogger herself identifies with these words and includes herself in the group by using the word "fellow" justifies the terminology. Although she is also careful to protect the face of her "slim friends", the implication that only those who share her identity as a plus-size woman truly understand her is clear. It is also notable that the blogger uses more courteous language – "slim friends" instead of, for example, "skinny chicks" – when talking about the out-group. Using traditionally derogatory language like "fat chicks" in a humorous manner can be interpreted as a sign of in-groupness and closeness, while the politeness towards slim people signals distance.

Although the bloggers avoided being openly negative towards slim women – not all readers of plus-size fashion blogs are plus-size, and the body positivity movement also emphasizes the acceptance of all kinds of bodies – policing of the fat/slim boundary did take place in the corpus:

(9)   Being plus-sized myself, I would never read **"normal"** fashion blogs
        as I could never really relate to the blogger and/or find the clothing in
        my size […] I now tend to **exclusively** read plus-sized blogs and bask
        in all the awesome fashion and confidence that is put out from these
        amazing women. (Blog 10)

In (9), the blogger states that she only reads fashion blogs that are written
by plus-size women, because she does not find anything she can relate to in
straight-size fashion blogs. Interestingly, she categorizes all fashion bloggers
that are not plus-size under the term "normal" (in scare quotes); for her,
a clear dichotomy exists within the fashion blogging genre, and it is based
on body size.

     Although most of the in-group/out-group divisions focused on the
fat/slim boundary, there were instances in the corpus where the bloggers
constructed divisions within the identity group of plus-size women. Five
bloggers brought up concerns about plus-size women *body-shaming* each
other, as well as jealousy and competitiveness within the community, and
two more bloggers referenced to a distinction between an acceptable type
of fatness and an unacceptable type of fatness in the context of weight loss
discourse (i.e. they stated that while they had no desire to be thin, they
wished to be *smaller* plus-size women). In (10), the blogger is referring to
other plus-size women commenting negatively on bloggers' photos on
a plus-size fashion brand's Facebook page:

(10)   The thing which I find most shocking is a lot of the crappy comments
        are coming from **other fat women**. **Us plus bloggers** tend to be quite
        confident, and because **we** see so many types of bodies represented in
        plus fashion **we're** very accepting of all kinds of bodies. I think a lot
        of it comes down to **their** own internalised fat hatred, and because
        THEY wouldn't dream of wearing something, **they** try to bring down
        or embarrass those who can. Really the best thing **they** could do is read
        the blogs of some of the people **they're** sniping about, and then **they**
        might learn to love themselves, and consequently others. (Comment
        by the author of Blog 2 on Blog 8)

In this comment, plus-size fashion bloggers ("us") are portrayed as having
an expert identity when it comes to both fashion and body positivity,
whereas the commenters ("they") are portrayed as non-experts, and their
criticism is attributed to their own body image issues. A clear boundary is
drawn between the two groups through the use of personal pronouns.

5.3 Narrative identity: Body positivity as a journey

When discussing self-confidence, the bloggers structured their posts as narratives of discovering body positivity. All twenty bloggers in the corpus discussed the process of growing to accept their body, recounting a shift in identity "from one kind of person to another" (Benwell – Stokoe 2006: 137):

(11) I **hated** my body, I **was disgusted** with my size because every day I **was reminded** I wasn't normal. I **didn't look** like my friends, or girls on the TV, I **was verbally abused** by people at school, or insults were hurled at me in the street. I **was touched inappropriately** by boys who thought I should be grateful for the attention because I **was fat**. But nowadays, I **can genuinely say** I **hold** my head high and **have** embraced my body and **am** unapologetically fat. (Blog 4)

In (11), the blogger gives her readers a detailed view into who she used to be: a woman who strongly disliked her appearance and faced discrimination and abuse because she "wasn't normal". Following this account, however, she returns to the present moment, describing a different type of identity: a person who has accepted her body. Interestingly, although the blogger's past problems appear to have been caused by other people, such as bullies at school and the boys who harassed her, the focus of the narrative is the change that happens in her own identity. The blogger transforms from a passive object of insults and abuse to an active agent who is "unapologetically fat".

(12) I **was** so low…and then out of nowhere, I found a website called Tumblr which changed my life. There was girls and boys on there that challenged **the "norm"** and said that all bodies are beautiful regardless of shape, size, gender, age, background or lifestyle […] And **slowly, I stripped away years and years of scar tissue and baggage** that I carried around with me and I **became** one of those girls. (Blog 13)

Many of the narratives of discovering body positivity also included a social aspect – for fourteen of the bloggers, the change began with (online) social interaction. The blogger in (12) uses vivid imagery, such as stripping away "years and years of scar tissue and baggage", to describe her journey to self-acceptance, which culminates in her becoming part of the community that inspired her in the first place. The change that happens in her identity is attributed to her discovering a social group of body positive bloggers.

Similarly, the blogger in (13) names blogging as a catalyst for normalizing her body:

(13)   Plus size blog reading helped me feel more confident, **like there was a place for me in the world after all**. Blogging myself has given me even more – I know my shape and what suits me so much better from looking at photos of myself I take almost every day (vain, yup!) and my own body has become **normalised**. The more I look at myself, the more I like myself. (Blog 2)

Interestingly, all three bloggers in (11), (12) and (13) mention the concept of *normality* in their narratives. At first, they feel excluded from the category of normal, but as their narratives progress, it appears that the change in their identity also creates new ways of being normal within the newly discovered community.

5.4 Stigmatized identity: Weight loss

One group of plus-size fashion bloggers that seems to be struggling with their identity are those who are in the process of losing or wish to lose weight. Eleven bloggers in the corpus mentioned a desire to lose weight at some point. While one of these bloggers was open about the fact that she wished to lose weight to feel and look more attractive, and was unapologetic about it, others appeared concerned about possible criticism from the community, and weight loss was often justified with health-related motivations. Health-motivated weight loss was considered more acceptable than wanting to, for example, fit into smaller clothes:

(14)   **Just a quick note to say** I've rejoined Weight Watchers tonight. **I don't care about the numbers on the scale** but I do care about how my clothes fit and how I look, **as vain as that might sound**. For a while **I've** been going on about how **I** feel like I'm above my maximum weight for my body and that **I** need to do something about it. I'm **not planning on blogging much about it on here** but as it's **part of who I am** I wanted to share. I will be blogging on the WW site (weekly I hope) to share my progress. **I'm** doing this for **me** and **I hope you all wish me well in this xxxx** (Blog 16)

The excerpt in (14) is from a typical coming out as being on a diet post. The blogger feels the need to confess to rejoining Weight Watchers, because she

wants to be open about being on a diet, but at the same time she assures her readers that there will not be any weight-loss-related content on her blog. Thus, she assumes that this kind of content would not be well received. She also downplays the significance of her confession by framing the post as "just a quick note", and adds a self-deprecating remark about sounding "vain". Throughout the post, the blogger emphasizes the fact that weight loss is her personal choice by repeatedly using the first person singular pronoun, thus protecting the face of those readers who are overweight but do not wish to diet. She ends her post with a plea for support and a row of "kisses", represented by the letter "x", to display affection and solidarity towards her readers.

Even when the reasons behind the decision to lose weight were health-related, bloggers were apprehensive about sharing the information. In (15), the blogger states that she is "genuinely worried" she will be ostracized by some community members:

(15)   Being comfortable with myself and even loving certain parts of my squishy body **doesn't mean that I'm not allowed to want to change it**. I've been **scared** of openly admitting that I want to be **healthier** in fear of being accused of **not loving myself or others**. I am genuinely worried that there are certain people in this plus size community that will not believe that I am 100% fat accepting and body positive simply because I want to change something. It's built up the point that **I feel the need to justify** why and I suppose this is what this post is about. (Blog 6)

Interestingly, the same blogger had mentioned going to Weight Watchers meetings in blog posts that took place early on in her blogging career. In those posts, weight loss was only mentioned in passing, and no justification or apology was provided. A similar pattern could be observed in three other blogs as well – it appeared that these bloggers had started to view weight loss differently after becoming more involved in the plus-size fashion blogging community, which indicates the construction of a social norm within the group.

The emphasis placed on body positivity within the community makes weight loss discourse problematic – since accepting your body in its current state of being is viewed as a fundamental part of body positivity, voluntary changes to one's appearance potentially violate the norm. In her study on eating-disordered bloggers, Palmgren (2015: 49) discovered that there was

a hierarchy connected to eating disorders within the group: "one cannot have an eating disorder if one is not thin enough". The normative construction of body positivity in plus-size women's blogs has similar features: one cannot be body positive if one wants to change one's body. The categorical identities of body positive blogger and dieter are seen to contradict each other.

Interestingly, however, there were no negative responses from other bloggers in any of the weight-loss-focused posts in the corpus[10]. On the contrary, it was typical for other bloggers to show their support in the comments:

(16)   **Body confidence is about loving your body at whatever size** you are, not just if you are fat and happy with that. And at the end of the day [it's] **your** body, **do with it as you wish! X** (Comment on Blog 11)

The commenter in (16) stresses the blogger's agency in deciding what is best for her body, stating that body confidence is not about staying the same but rather about "loving your body at whatever size". Again, the comment ends in an affectionate "kiss".

The bloggers' apprehension about sharing their weight loss plans might stem from the fact that those plus-size bloggers who focus on fat acceptance activism strongly oppose the diet industry and the idea that women should change their bodies to be socially acceptable. Indeed, three bloggers in the corpus expressed that they were personally against dieting, although they made sure to state that they did not mind other people losing weight:

(17)   **I have chosen not to diet**, **I have chosen not to attempt to lose weight**. […] **This doesn't mean I think you should**, I would never, ever tell someone   not to diet or [lose] weight, that is **their choice** but what **I do ask is that you do it sensibly**, by making life long changes to your food intake and activity levels. (Blog 4)

The blogger in (17) goes on to describe her personal history with diets, thus justifying her opinion. Similar to the coming out as being on a diet posts, the blogger stresses that weight loss is a personal decision. However, in the same sentence she also contributes to the construction of an in-group norm by emphasizing the health aspect – one can lose weight, as long as one does it

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10   However, as most bloggers moderate comments, it is possible that negative responses would not have been published.

in a way that is deemed healthy. Both sides of the discussion on weight loss appear to be seeking middle ground, attempting to reconcile their personal views with what they think is the norm within the community.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The findings of the present study show similarities with previous research on plus-size fashion bloggers (e.g. Gurrieri – Cherrier, 2013; Harju – Huovinen, 2015) when it comes to the empowering effects that blogging has for plus-size women. Through blogging, these women have been able to construct safe spaces where they can feel a sense of belonging and peer support, as well as engage in identity work that transforms them from fashion outsiders to active agents who create their own fashion discourses. In my data, this was particularly apparent in narrative identity constructions, where engaging with the online community was pinpointed as a positive turning point. However, the findings also illustrate the significance of the in-group norms that restrict the expression of identity within the community. Although the idea of body positivity is based on equality between different types of bodies, the social identity of the bloggers is defined by an in-group/out-group mentality. Slim – or, as one blogger put it, "normal" – women are, unsurprisingly, seen as the *other*, but plus-size women can also be excluded if they fail in their performance of body positivity. Possible failures that were illustrated in the corpus included criticizing other plus-size women's appearance, and wanting to change one's body for reasons that were not health-related.

　　Considering one of the performative acts in Gurrieri – Cherrier's (2013) study was *coming out as fat*, it is interesting that the bloggers in my study used similar discourse when talking about losing weight. These bloggers seem to view body positivity as accepting the body in its current state – as something static. Because of this, weight loss is perceived as a violation of the norm. The use of apologies and justifications in weight loss posts shows how some bloggers are contradicted by their desire to lose weight, but at the same time remain a part of the community. Many of these justifications revolve around being healthy – another concept closely connected to the ideal of normality. However, even though the bloggers who were losing weight appeared to fear other bloggers' judgement, there was little evidence of bloggers reacting openly negatively to others' weight loss posts. While the members of the "Pro-Ana" online community studied by Yeshua-Katz (2015) policed group

membership through community norms to prevent false members from participating, the bloggers in my data seemed to police *themselves* based on a perceived notion of body positivity. Because of the bloggers' desire to be accepted as normal within the community, a body positive blogger identity, although meant to be empowering, could also be restrictive.

The concept of body positivity, and the ways in which social media influencers use it to their advantage is a relevant topic for further research. In September 2016, a US-based blogger, FatGirlFlow, stated in a YouTube video[11] that one could not be body positive if one followed a weight loss regime promoted by the diet industry, such as Weight Watchers. Following the publication of her video, she received a barrage of angry comments, as well as response videos where others explained their view on body positivity. In many of these responses, issues of marginalization and finding a safe place online were highlighted; on the one hand, people were afraid that if they lost weight, they would be shut out from the online community that had previously been a source of empowerment and support to them. On the other hand, those who supported FatGirlFlow's view stressed that there is already an abundance of safe places available to non-plus-size individuals on the Internet. The conversation around body positivity continues as the movement gains more and more publicity and, in the process, becomes increasingly commercialized.

The case of plus-size fashion bloggers illustrates that identity construction within online communities of marginalized people remains an important area of study. Since some of the practices for identity construction in the corpus – such as using the word "fat" as a non-derogatory term, or justifying weight loss with health reasons – seemed to develop over time as the blogger became more involved in the blogging community, diachronic perspectives to identity construction in online communities such as this are required. The present study offers a glimpse into the language-based identity construction of plus-size fashion bloggers through a qualitative analysis on 200 blog posts, but more extensive corpora are needed to see exactly how common certain phenomena, such as the reclaimed use of the word "fat", actually are (a project I am currently working on using corpus-linguistic methods; see Limatius, under review). Goals for future research include providing us with a better understanding of the potential benefits that online social interaction has for marginalized people, but also

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[11] FatGirlFlow's video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEzHgukgEAs&t=4s, accessed August 2017.

investigating the norms, rules and restrictions that are constructed within these communities. The bloggers in my data use their blogs to provide detailed accounts of their life experiences as plus-size women, including information on how they wish to be treated as consumers of fashion as well as social actors, what type of vocabulary they identify with, and what kind of problems they face in their everyday lives. Such information, publicly available through thousands of personal blogs, is certainly of interest to various actors ranging from corporations to NGOs and governments.

APPENDIX 1[12]

Blog 1: http://www.thecurvedopinion.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 2: http://www.xloveleahx.co.uk/, accessed January 2015

Blog 3: http://www.callmekim.net/, accessed January 2015

Blog 4: http://www.beckybarnesblog.co.uk/, accessed January 2015

Blog 5: http://blog.fashionlovesphotos.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 6: (Original blog no longer exists, but the author has a new blog and her earlier posts are available there) http://www.frivolousmama.com/, accessed September 2017

Blog 7: http://www.shemightbeloved.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 8: https://plussizeproud.wordpress.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 9: http://www.cardifforniagurl.co.uk/, accessed January 2015

Blog 10: http://www.nerdabouttown.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 11: http://www.radfatfeminist.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 12: http://www.whatlauralovesuk.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 13: (No longer active, but available online): https://fabulouslyfatfashion.word-press.com/, accessed January 2017

Blog 14: http://mayahcamara.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 15: http://www.doesmyblogmakemelookfat.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 16: http://www.seeingspots.co.uk/, accessed January 2015

Blog 17: http://www.adventuresofariotgrrrl.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 18: http://www.sugar-darling.com/, accessed January 2015

Blog 19: (No longer active, but available online): http://www.fatbeautyx.co.uk/, accessed January 2017

Blog 20: http://prettybigbutterflies.com/, accessed January 2015

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[12] Bloggers can hide posts from public viewing at any point after publication. As the posts for this corpus were collected in 2015, not all of them are currently visible on the blogs. However, I have archived copies of all posts and comments used in the corpus into a separate database, which enables me to access hidden posts as well as the publicly available ones. All posts in the corpus were publicly available at the time of collection in 2015.

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The poor in seventeenth-century England:
A corpus based analysis[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines changing perceptions of poor people in seventeenth-century England by means of a corpus analysis of the phrase *the poor* as it appears in the Early English Books Online (EEBO) corpus. We address the challenges of using a very large historical corpus and describe our methodological approach – our study is based upon a collocational analysis in which collocates are categorised in terms of how often they attach to *the poor* in each decade. Dominant popular discourses regarding people living in poverty tell us who these people were, the hardships they faced, and the type of relief, both official and charitable, they were given. We found that the phrase *the poor* was often associated with the criminalized poor at the beginning of the century but, as the decades progressed, the phrase was increasingly accompanied by collocates which presented poor people as deserving of compassion.

Keywords: corpus linguistics, history, early modern England, Early English Books Online, EEBO, collocations, poverty, the poor.

1. Introduction

Poverty was the principle social problem in Early Modern England (Coats 1976: 115). Hartlib (1650) described people in London "that lived upon Dogs and Cats these deer and hard times; others upon Beasts blood and Brewers graines boyled together, and the poor woman that killed her child, and

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dyed for it the last Sessions 1649. upon her examination, she confest extream need and feare of famine occasioned it". Poverty was seldom a static state: early modern people might encounter poverty at several points during their lifetimes. Research suggests that changing personal circumstances, such as having to support young children or entering old age, could make an individual particularly susceptible to financial pressures[2].

In this paper, we combine a corpus analysis with knowledge obtained from close reading of contemporary texts to examine language of the seventeenth century which was used when referencing poor people. We have published previously on groups who were thought to be poor but undeserving of help – variously referred to by words such as *beggar*, *rogue*, *vagabond* and *vagrant*. Yet what of the deserving poor, or the poor referred to using less loaded terms how were they represented in the seventeenth century? In this paper we explore whether, by using a less loaded search term, we can answer the following questions:

i.   what kinds of people were thought to belong to this category of poor (Section 4);
ii.   what form did poverty take (Section 5);
iii. were poor people regarded with sympathy or censure (Section 6) and
iv.   how did people of the time react to being compelled to support the poor financially through the state and personally (sections 7 and 8).

To do this we explore the ostensibly neutral phrase *the poor*. Historians have acknowledged the difficulty in identifying poor people in seventeenth--century England and have discussed the relevance and prominence of such contemporary terms and phrases as *pauper*[3]; *stragling poor*; *labouring poor*[4];

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[2]   The study of 'lifecycle' poverty, initially developed by Rowntree, is an important area for researchers studying early modern England. Stapleton (1993), for instance, has looked at inherited poverty in Odiham, Hampshire, and concluded that although large numbers of children could push a family into poverty, most people were already dangerously close to its precipice due to inadequate wages. Hence any small change in family circumstances could be disastrous. Williams (2011) uses case studies from one Bedfordshire parish between 1760 and 1834, highlighting the significance of gender and lifecycle poverty in relief claims. She shows that most regular payments went to orphans, families, single parents and the elderly.

[3]   The term *pauper* was not used in order to refer to a person in receipt of a parish pension until the late eighteenth century. Before then, it suggested someone who was destitute. See Hindle (2004b: 13).

[4]   The phrase *labouring poor* appears in the EEBO corpus for the first time in 1596 in a text by Edward Topsell. Hindle (2004a: 38-39) defines the phrase as "the under-

and *impotent poor*[5]. In the EEBO corpus, as will be shown shortly, the noun phrase *the poor*, in which no immediate modification of the word *poor* occurs, is far more frequent than any of the other phrases or words employed to describe poor people. Hindle (2002: 56) has written that "the poore was a notoriously elastic (perhaps even a 'gentry-made') term" and has emphasised that not every poor person claimed regular poor relief so was not necessarily a *pensioner* or *collecter* (see Hindle 2002: 55-56). Poor people did sometimes describe themselves as poor[6] and, by analysing the phrase *the poor*, in which no immediate premodification of the word *poor* occurs within the noun phrase, we can hope to explore a wide range of attitudes towards people who were considered to be impoverished by their contemporaries. Moreover, this group will potentially include poor people who were not yet, or not regularly, in receipt of official relief. Accordingly, it is through the phrase *the poor* that our exploration of the poor in the seventeenth century is undertaken.

2. Utilising sources: Reaching the poor of Early Modern England

Our understanding of the lives of poor people in seventeenth-century England is hampered by a scarcity of direct sources. There is a dearth of records authored by lower class people which is overwhelmingly due to

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employed or unemployed who were prevented by adequately maintaining their families either by prevailing levels of wages or structural problems in the economy". He explains that it was the *impotent poor*, rather than the *labouring poor*, who were deemed deserving by seventeenth-century policy makers on account of their inability to support themselves. *Labouring poor* was used throughout the seventeenth century and its usage burgeoned in the eighteenth century, most notably appearing in the writing of Daniel Defoe (e.g. Defoe 1700). At the end of the eighteenth century, the phrase was criticised by Burke (1836: 181), who argued that the term *poor* should be reserved for people who were unable to work. *Labouring poor* is a common identification in modern-day academic works, such as the corpus project, Letters of Artisans and the Labouring Poor (https://lalpcorpus.wordpress.com/).

[5]   See Slack (1995: 4) and Pearl (1978: 225). Also see Pelling (1998: 72-73) who has highlighted the most common terms used for the sick in the Norwich census of 1570. The author of 'An Ease for Overseers of the Poore' (1601) legally defined the impotent as those "deprived and destitute of all meanes to live" and noted that, since the time of Edward III, the definition of the term had expanded from meaning those who were weak or lame, to those who were unable to support themselves "by reason of Decrepitie; Infancie; Natiuitie; Casualtie; and Familie".

[6]   Shepard (2008: 51) has explored which words and phrases poor people used to describe themselves when asked for an estimate of their wealth in the English church

the widespread illiteracy of the time (see Cressy 1977: 141-150). However, historians have utilised an abundance of illuminating archival records, such as records of the church and secular courts. Beier (1985), for instance, has consulted records of county quarter sessions, of various borough courts, of houses of correction and of arrests by parish officials[7]. Other historians have turned to parish documents relating specifically to the administering of poor relief, such as overseers and churchwardens accounts and vestry records. Kent (1981) and Hitchcock (2012) have made use of surviving constables' accounts. Estate studies, such as Houston (2014), provide insight into the relationships between the landlord and tenant.

The vast majority of archival sources have not been digitised but this situation is changing. For instance, the Old Bailey Online website and the London Lives website offer scholars of late seventeenth- and eighteenth--century England invaluable online access to records of the time[8]. However, historians interested in the entire seventeenth century are less well served by these sites. Fortunately, scholars of Early Modern England have access to another digitised resource of unparalleled value, the website Early English Books Online (EEBO), which offers access to virtually every piece of literature printed in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and British North America between the years 1473 and 1700. In this study, we use a billion words from seventeenth-century writers[9], drawn from the transcribed version of Early English Books Online (EEBO) being constructed by the Text Creation Partnership[10]. Our analysis was conducted using CQPWeb, an online concordancing system[11].

Through an analysis of the EEBO corpus, we are able to uncover how the (mostly) men, from landlords and employers to social reformers and local officials, with social power in England construed the poor. This is of extreme importance not least because these contemporary discourses influenced changes in government legislation and arguably helped shape the New Poor Law of 1834. By engaging with the texts in the EEBO corpus,

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courts. Standard responses were variants along the lines of *worth nothing*; *worth little* or *not much*, but occasionally witnesses evaluated themselves as *poor*.

[7]   The disadvantages in relying upon the records of court proceedings have been discussed by McEnery – Baker (2017).

[8]   Old Bailey Online – The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674 to 1913 http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/ and http://www.londonlives.org/index.jsp

[9]   The exact figure is 996,472,953 words.

[10] See http://www.textcreationpartnership.org/

[11] See Hardie (2012) – readers can create a free account on CQPweb to explore the EEBO corpus by visiting https://cqpweb.lancs.ac.uk/

we are able to undertake an analysis which reveals patterns in discourses, changes in perception, and to unearth new insights into social relations between the propertied classes and the poor.

Some limitations of using the EEBO corpus should be noted here. The EEBO texts provided by the EEBO TCP consortium have minimal metadata – while we have (where known) for example i.) the author of the individual texts; ii.) their place of publication and iii.) the date of publication, other information, which would be useful for pursuing some research questions, are not provided by EEBO TCP. Most importantly, we have no genre classifications for the texts. So, for example, we cannot contrast automatically, at scale, the way in which a group like the deserving poor are represented in different genres of writing using this resource at present. Sometimes through the process of analysis the dominance of a genre in a representation may become so salient that it may be observed; as Baker – McEnery (2017: 160-161) found, the link between mentions of whores and plays in the latter half of the seventeenth century was so strong it was easily discovered through the techniques used in this paper. Later in this paper we similarly find we are able to comment on genre as our analysis proceeds. Nonetheless, EEBO, as any data source does, opens possibilities, but also does not enable, or at least easily facilitate, other promising avenues of research as it is currently configured.

Set against these disadvantages are the substantial advantages of the corpus approach – the data is open to all. Hence the analyses undertaken here can be repeated by anyone accessing the freely available CQPweb system – the need for us to provide lengthy listings of results is removed as those results can simply be repeated online. Similarly, the accountability of the results presented can be assured by this approach – all of the examples given here, and examples we do not focus on in this paper, are accessible to readers of this paper and may be used by them, in the spirit of the scientific method, to challenge and refine our findings. Also, should other techniques become available, or should readers wish to explore other features of the study which we do not here, again the study can be repeated with a publicly available data set and the work presented here recontextualized or challenged. So while our goal in this paper is to focus on the findings arising from an investigation of the representation of the poor in our corpus, the corpus lies open to others who wish either to further explore our method, use a different method, to gain access to the full findings for each analysis we present or to explore other features of this representation that we do not here.

3. Words and methodology

We approached this study having already read a wide array of seventeenth-
-century works regarding the condition of poor people. As noted, we
decided against exploring a number of evaluative descriptions of the poor
we had come across, such as *honest poor* or *impotent poor*, because these
phrases self-evidently represent poor people in a particular way. Moreover,
such phrases generated too few examples in the EEBO corpus for study.
Thus we used the much more frequent phrase, *the poor*, as the basis for
our investigation in order to obtain insight into how all kinds of people
experiencing poverty were perceived in their society[12]. This phrase occurs
81,930 times in the seventeenth-century material in the corpus. By contrast,
honest poor occurs 171 times and *impotent poor* occurs 78 times. Our main
tool of analysis entailed finding collocates of the phrase *the poor*. Collocates
are words which co-occur with a word to a greater extent than might be
ordinarily expected. They can help reveal the meaning of a word by
showing us what kinds of associations a writer made when using it. Note
that collocation explicitly accepts structure in the texts – it is not a 'bag of
words' approach to the study of language that is found in some techniques
such as topic modelling (see, for example, Blei 2012). Collocation works by
looking at structure, as evidenced by co-occurrence in the immediate context
of a word, and from that provides a window into looking at the interplay of
grammar and meaning in the immediate context of a word. The technique
not only expressly avoids the false premise that words are subject to random
association (see Kilgarriff 2005 for a critique of the notion that language can
be viewed as random) it also has the merit of appealing to psychological
reality – psycholinguistic experiments as reported by Durant – Doherty
(2010) and Millar (2011) provide evidence that the technique of collocation
is not simply something that can be computed and provide useful results, it
also seems to be a process with a close analogue in the human mind.

    Note that the corpus approach to the study of language is not
an automated approach – it requires, and guides, the interaction of distant
and close reading. The collocation analysis presents us with some high level

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[12] We asked CQPweb to find collocates of *the poor* in each decade of the seventeenth
     century, using the log ratio statistic, a window of 5 both left and right of the node, and
     a frequency of 10 for both collocate and node. Note that only the top 50 collocates of
     each decade were considered. The EEBO corpus has been annotated with normalised
     spellings by VARD (see Archer – Kytö – Baron – Rayson 2015) but we became aware
     in the course of our examination of concordance lines that VARD had not provided
     a normalised form for some terms. Hence, we searched for *the poore* alongside *the poor*.

linguistic abstractions from the text, but it is the analyst's interaction with those abstractions and, crucially, their close reading of texts which are linked to those abstractions which guide the process of meaning making from the corpus. Corpus linguistics cycles through distant reading, using processes such as collocation, but finds meaning not in an assumption that the distant reading allows one to make sense of the data, but by a critical exploration of the extent to which the distant reading makes sense of the data once texts are re-engaged with. The corpus approach is computer assisted text analysis, not computational text analysis *per se*.

Our focus in this paper is squarely on the dominant attitudes to the poor in written discourse. To reveal these, we use the ideas of consistent, terminating and initiating collocates (McEnery – Baker 2017: 25-28). Consistent collocates occur as collocates in at least seven decades of the century. Terminating collocates are consistent for at least three continuous decades and then cease being collocates. Initiating collocates are not collocates at the beginning of the time series being explored, but then become consistent for at least three decades and do not terminate. While these are admittedly heuristic measures of shifts in discourse, they have proved of use in exploring consistent and shifting patterns of meaning in discourse over time in our previous work (notably McEnery – Baker 2017). Our use of these measures in this paper is to explore stable attitudes to the poor in the seventeenth century (consistent collocates), attitudes being discarded (terminating collocates) and attitudes developing (initiating collocates).

Before we present our findings, it is necessary to address an issue which arose due to the polysemous nature of the term *poor*. Alongside being used to relate to poverty, *poor* was also used to characterise people who were humble or those who were pitiable. We initially attempted to find ways of isolating the instances when *the poor* was used to describe people with insufficient financial means. Our first attempt involved searching for instances when the automated part-of-speech analysis that the EEBO corpus had been provided with indicated that *poor* in the phrase *the poor* was a noun. From an inspection of concordance lines we believed that this would reliably identify examples of *the poor* relating to poverty. Unfortunately, there were no instances of this in the EEBO corpus which surprised us as we had seen such examples when reading some corpus texts. When we concordanced *the poor* and examined the part of speech annotation of it, however, we found that all examples of the word *poor* as a noun in the phrase *the poor* had been incorrectly assigned the label adjective. We then explored if we could manage this difficulty by restricting our choice of collocates for investigation

by only considering collocates to the left of the node. We hoped this might reduce collocates which expressed pity or referred to meekness, for instance, in a phrase such as *the poor child* – as an adjective the word would directly modify the right context, as a noun it would be directly modified by the left context. However, we found that this method excluded too many relevant collocates which did indeed refer to poverty but did not match this pattern of modification. Therefore, although time-consuming, we manually analysed both left and right collocates of *the poor*: after determining the principal meaning of each collocate of *the poor*, we proceeded to set aside those which usually expressed pity or suggested a person who was humble[13].

4. Who were the poor?

Given that our hope in using a neutral phase, *the poor*, was to access more neutral, or at least less inherently biased, views of how British society constructed poverty in the seventeenth century, the first question we must address is what do the collocates of the phrase tell us about who the poor were perceived to be? Consistent collocates provide insight into which social groups were most often associated with poverty throughout the seventeenth century. *Fatherless* appears as a top 50 collocate in every decade of the century, usually in religious texts. For instance, the phrase *the poor and fatherless* is often reproduced from the Book of Common Prayer[14]. This coordination of *fatherless* and *poor* suggests that both groups share characteristics or possess a similar status. *Orphans* also collocates consistently with *the poor* and again this occurs most frequently in religious texts, such as a translation of the Qur'an which was published in 1688: "Do no injury to Orphans, devour not the poor, and recount the graces that God hath conferred on thee" (Du Ryer 1688). However, *the poor* and *orphans* do not co-occur only in religious texts. Collocate analysis also highlighted a text by Sparke (1636) entitled 'The poore orphans court, or Orphans cry' which urged the crown to support both orphans and elderly people (see Davies 1986: 29). Sparke (1636) offers the first categorisation of the poor that we

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13   In cases where it was not entirely clear whether a writer was using *the poor* to mean a person who was deserving of pity or one who was living in poverty, we looked for evidence of financial circumstance in the surrounding text. For instance, if a description of a person as poor was preceded by a reference to them being cheated of all their money, then we considered this an instance of poverty. If no such reference to their financial circumstances was present, the concordance was disregarded.

14   See, for instance, The Church of England (1693).

have come across during the corpus analysis: "The poor I thus distinguish into three sorts: 1 Sturdy Rogues and Whores. 2 Blind and Lame. 3 Aged and Young". Those in the first category are dismissed by Sparke as "vermaine" and he suggests that those in the second might still support themselves by work. However, Sparke demonstrates more compassion for the "aged and the young", describing children who have been "cast off by wicked parents" and who are farmed out as apprentices by parish officials who wish to be released from the responsibility of their care. Sparke's solution was for ships to employ young children and for many of them to be shipped to New England at the expense of their parishes[15].

Widow, which collocates with *the poor* in every decade of the seventeenth century, sometimes appears in lists which also include the fatherless, such as in this sermon by Reynolds (1658): "I have remembered the Widow, the Fatherless, the Poor and Helpless, to provide for them". *Widow* mostly appears as a collocate in the R1 position[16] in the phrase *poor widow*; it is often unclear, in these instances, whether or not the widow is perceived to be an object of pity or believed to be living in poverty. However, *widow* also frequently appears in the R2 position in phrases such as *the poor indebted widow* (Cottesford 1622) and *poor famished widow* (Goodwin 1637), suggesting a clear link with poverty and spousal bereavement. Yet, it is possible that religious rhetoric, which suggested that all widows were suffering financial hardship, was misleading; the collocate *widow* led us to another text which suggests that widows were able to give charity as well as receive it. The fourth edition of Stow's 'Survey of London' (1633) with additions by the writer Anthony Munday listed widows who had made substantial charitable donations. For instance, Mistress Jane Baker "gave to the relief of poor maids marriages, an hundred pounds"; Mistress Margaret Search "gave unto Christs Hospital, twenty pounds"; and Mistress Sambach "gave to the poor of the parish of Saint Brides in Fleet Street, the sum of twenty five pounds yearly". These records not only tell us that many widows were financially solvent but they give us an idea of the kinds of people or institutions thought worthy of charitable relief[17].

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[15] This practice of shipping poor or orphaned children to the English colonies had already started before the publication of 'The poore orphans court, or Orphans cry' and continued right up until the 1960s.

[16] The R1 position means that the collocate immediately follows the node; the L1 position means that the collocate immediately precedes the node. In the R2 position, the collocate is the second word to the right of the node.

[17] The plural of *widow*, *widows*, also collocates with *the poor* consistently throughout the century and appears in similar texts to those of *widow*.

The term *beggars* is a terminating collocate as it collocates with *the poor* in the first three decades of the seventeenth century and then disappears. McEnery – Baker (forthcoming) have undertaken a corpus-based analysis of the criminal poor in Early Modern England and found that beggars were characterised in a consistently negative light throughout the century, being presented as foolish, idle, drunk and proud. At the beginning of the century, the poor were mentioned alongside beggars, suggesting that whilst the two were not necessarily considered synonymous, they were perhaps thought to have shared some common characteristics. For instance, Lawson (1689), in a famous work of political theory, declared: "Therefore the Magistrates should have a special care to order these, to cast out all idle people, all lazy beggars, and set the poor on work. None that can work should be idle, but take upon them some honest profession, and no professions or persons should be suffered, who bring detriment into the Common-wealth". The message was that some poor people who were able to work were choosing not to support themselves.

However, there is a discourse which carefully separates the persona of the poor person from that of the beggar. A proverb of the time stated: "The Poor have little, Beggars none, The Rich too much, enough not one"[18]. Thus the poor are needy but are perhaps not utterly destitute and they are separated from beggars. The Anglo-Irish clergyman, Hezekiah Holland (1649) praised a woman named Hellen Tomson because "you have sent your charity to the door, not knowing to whom, (it was enough they were poor People,) not desiring your left hand should know what your right hand did; also how oft you have chided with your servants for calling the poor, beggars (in contempt,) because perchance we are all such". It might be tempting to dismiss Tomson's dislike of the word *beggar* as an instance of something approaching Early Modern political correctness – after all, the poor people she helped do appear to have been engaged in begging. However, just as present-day political correctness is arguably in place for good reason and tells us a great deal about our own cultural values, so too is this passage revealing: the term *beggar* was clearly perceived to be a pejorative term and Tomson, and probably others like her, were disinclined to label any local poor in such a way.

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[18] This proverb is usually attributed to Benjamin Franklin. See, for example, Cordry (2005: 142). We believe this is an incorrect attribution. The EEBO corpus contains a handful of instances of this proverb, the earliest being in 1619, but Franklin was not born until almost a century later, in 1706. See Owen (1619).

This exploration of consistent collocates characterizing *the poor* is revealing – *the poor* has an inherently positive discourse prosody (Stubbs 2001), i.e. it is associated with collocates that incline us to a positive evaluation of the phrase. *The poor* are associated with groups that the society saw to be deserving. An association of *the poor* with less deserving – indeed vilified – groups such as beggars terminates early in the century, indicating that the concept of the undeserving poor was detaching itself from the deserving poor in the early part of the century, leaving the bare phrase *the poor* as inherently positive. It is worth noting that this is in line with the views quoted from Sparke earlier in this section – one group of poor people were being set aside from another. This differentiation in the lexis would explain equally why more positively (*the deserving poor*) and negatively (*the undeserving poor*) modified forms of the phrase are comparatively rare – words such as *beggar* and the unmodified form *the poor* were increasingly differentiated and represented through polar opposites in terms of evaluation through discourse prosody, obviating the need for explicit evaluative modification of a phrase like *the poor*.

This hypothesis is borne out when we look at the distribution of *the poor* relative to *the X poor*, where X indicates any immediate premodifier of *poor* in the noun phrase. The instances per million of *the X poor* declines after *the poor* stops collocating with words such as *beggar*, i.e. at the point where we would argue that a positive discourse prosody attaches to *the poor*. From a peak of 2.55 examples per million words of *the X poor* pattern in 1620-29, the frequency of the pattern declines to 1.93 examples per million in 1690-99. So while looking for a more neutral term to explore representation of the poor in the century, our study instead serves to underline the emerging polarized view of the poor in the century.

5. What form did poverty take?

Let us move now to consider how the poor came to be so. Some of this is implied in the previous section by words such as *orphan* and *widow*, which blur the distinction between identity and cause of poverty. Yet other consistent collocates are more general in referencing the cause of poverty – *distressed* and *needy* are consistent collocates of *the poor* throughout the seventeenth century. *Distressed* is sometimes used to describe the state of the poor – "pity the distressed state of the poor" (Alemán 1623) and is sometimes listed as a noun alongside the poor to refer to a group of people also in

need of assistance – "in assisting the distressed, and relieving the poor with plentyfull alms" (Hawkins 1632). *Needy* occurs overwhelmingly in the R2 position from *poor*. Of the 1,725 times that *needy* collocates with *poor* in the seventeenth-century EEBO material, 1,335 of these occur in the R2 position, all in the phrase *poor and needy* or *poor & needy*. We studied a random sample of 100 concordances from these 1,335 matches and found that all but six came from religious texts. The authors of these works sometimes quoted the Bible directly – indeed, there are 17 mentions of *poor and needy* in the King James Bible altogether[19]. Hunger is a state associated with *the poor*: *starve* is a consistent collocate; *hungry* appears in the top 50 collocates in four decades; and *starving* collocates with *the poor* in the 1690s. Thus poverty was linked with a lack of food. Many of the concordances, again religious in nature, question why the rich have so much and the poor so little: "Why should such a Lord, Gentleman, Merchant, &c. have so many Hundred Thousand Pounds a Year amongst them; and the Poor ready to starve?" (L'Estrange 1679).

Indigent is an initiating collocate, attaching to *the poor* in the 1630s, then disappearing, only to re-attach in the last three decades of the seventeenth century. Again it links to a general attribution of neediness, not to a source of poverty. In order to uncover if *indigent* was increasingly used to describe poor people as the century progressed, we searched the entire EEBO corpus for the term *indigent* and isolated instances where the term collocated with *poor*. We found that in 53 per cent of cases, *poor* attached to *indigent* in the L2 position, usually in the phrase *poor and indigent* or *poor & indigent*. In terms of distribution across the century, this phrase peaked in usage in the 1670s, 1680s and 1690s, with frequency per million words being respectively 0.28, 0.27 and 0.27. This does suggest that the term was associated with the poor more towards the end of the century. Writers suggested that the poor and indigent were deserving of pity; for instance, Blount (1692): "as for the Poor and Indigent, truly they deserve our pity". Interestingly, the phrase *indigent poor* only appears 14 times in the entire EEBO corpus. The phrase is used for the first time in the corpus by Edgeworth (1557) in a sermon calling for his flock to look upon "our indigent poor, and needy neighbours" with pity and compassion. There is one more instance of the phrase in 1622 (Malynes 1622); five instances occurring in three texts in the 1650s; and five instances occurring in two texts in the 1690s. In the 1650s and 1690s, these terms tend to appear in texts by social reformers, such as Malkin (1697) who discussed

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[19] https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/

the cost of maintaining "the Old, and Indigent Poor, and Children". The term does not appear in eighteenth-century texts in the corpus.

Overall, what is striking is that, other than the impoverished identities already identified, the texts are at best vague and at worst silent on the causes of poverty, at least at the level of discourse as viewed through the optic of collocation. So while discourse in the early modern period did link certain identities to poverty, those identities were linked to dependence, not occupation. We see public discourse identifying dependents such as orphans and widows as being poor, but we do not see specific professions associated with it. What we see rather are simply expressions of want, the source of which seems to be vague and general. Yet while the source of poverty may have, at times, been expressed in vague and general terms, the pitiable actions and nature of the poor was not, as the next section will show.

6. The state of the poor

In line with the emerging overall positive discourse prosody of the phrase *the poor*, collocates revealing attitudes to the poor evoke sympathy for a group of people suffering in hardship. This notion that the poor were oppressed was widespread in Early Modern English society. *Oppress* (with its variants *oppressing*, *oppressed* and *oppression*) is a consistent collocate of *the poor*. An analysis of this collocate shows that those who were deemed to be oppressing the poor were the rich, namely landlords, described by Hall (1663) as "those cruel men that rack Tenants, and enclose Commons to themselves, that oppress the Poor, and then when they die build them an Alms house" (Hall 1663; also see Perkins 1608) and usurers (see Jelinger 1679). However, the collocate does lead us to texts where, for the first time, the poor are given some real agency, albeit in a negative way. The poor are described as retaliating against oppression by envying, devouring and stealing from the rich – see Rogers (1662); Bisbie (1684); and Collier (1695). Yet, the poor are still presented as victims more than they are portrayed as criminals. *Rob* (with its variant *robbing*) is a terminating collocate which detaches itself from *the poor* after the 1640s. Poor people are not being described as thieves in these texts. The collocate usually appears in the L1 position in the phrases *rob/bing the poor*. Most of the relevant concordances emphasise that robbing the poor is a sin but make no accusations against particular individuals or social groups. For instance, Hare (1692), who was chairman of the general quarter sessions for Surrey, declared that "certainly to rob and defraud the Poor is a Crime

above the common Level". However, the theologian, Sanderson (1627), argued that a criminal underclass were responsible for indirectly robbing the poor: "as for those idle stubborn professed wanderers, that can and may and will not work, and under the name and habit of poverty rob the poor indeed of our alms and their maintenance: let us harden our hearts against them".

Grind/ing is a consistent collocate of *the poor*. It usually occurs in the L4 position, in phrases such as *grind the faces of the poor*, which is a direct quotation from Isaiah 3:15[20]. The people accused of doing the grinding in these examples are, respectively, landlords (see Stewart 1667) and usurers (see Hookes 1653). The discourse of usurers defrauding the poor is represented by other collocates: *lend/s* is attached to *the poor* consistently. Its variant *lending* and *usury* both occur in two decades, 1600-09 and 1670-79. The decade each of these collocates has in common is the 1670s and this can be explained by the publication of two texts concerning usury towards the end of this decade: an essay by Christopher Jelinger (1679), a German Puritan who had settled in England, and a reply by an anonymous writer, T.P. (1679).

In line with the developing positive discourse prosody of *the poor*, this seems to intensify as the century progresses. For example, *sighing* and *helpless* are initiating collocates, appearing in, respectively, the 1640s and 1650s and collocating in each decade thereafter. *Sighing* appears as a collocate due to its appearance in Psalm 12, the Evening Prayer: "Now for the comfortless troubles sake of the needy: and because of the deep sighing of the poor." – see, for example, Taylor (1647). *Helpless* and *the poor* are often coordinated together, suggesting commonality. Of the 277 times that *poor* and *helpless* collocate in the seventeenth century, they do so 63 times in the expression *poor and helpless*. For instance, the Calvinist writer, Bolton (1637), in a discourse against usury, observed that, "In the laws of Usury, and other prohibitions of oppression, express mention is made of the poor and helpless". This was, he reasoned, because the rich found it easiest to oppress the poor and that only those who were in need had occasion to borrow. Bolton also believed that "It is a more grievous sin to oppress the Poor". Again, the poor were presented as possessing little agency: they were powerless and easily subject to abuse.

Society's response to the group is shown in another consistent collocate – *hospital/s*. The poor are associated with ill health and disability in written discourse. In the sixteenth century, largely as a result of poverty becoming

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[20] http://biblehub.com/isaiah/3-15.htm. *Mocks* also enters the top 50 collocates of *the poor* in the 1640s and tends to appear in quotations of Proverbs 17:5.

a more visible problem, some parishes seized the initiative in order to help their local poor. London taxed its wealthier citizens in 1547 and the money collected was directly used to re-establish the hospital of St Bartholomew's. This was followed by the re-founding of Thomas's Hospital in 1551 which, like St Bartholomew's, catered for those struggling with disease or disability. Clarke (1654) tells us that: "King Edward the sixth was as truly charitable in granting Bridewell for the punishment of sturdy Rogues, as in giving Saint Thomas hospital for the relief of the poor". Christ's Hospital, founded in 1552, and Bridewell Prison and Hospital, established in 1553, housed foundling children and sturdy beggars – see Slack (1995: 8) and Holinshed (1808: 1061-1062). Pearl (1978: 207) has shown that London residents continued to be taxed to fund the hospitals in the 1560s and, from the 1570s, in order to support the parish poor. Dyer (2012: 45-48) has explained that hospitals aimed to give residents a healthy diet and some offered private rooms and outdoor relief, but they were usually located in towns and were only able to offer relief to the local poor. The collocate *hospital/s* leads us to a rare reference to the poor of a named place other than London, by Bohum (1693): "Croydon, or Croyden, Neomagus, a Market Town in Surrey, the Capital of its Hundred; seated near the Spring head of the River Wandle, nine Miles from London, where the Archbishop of Canterbury has a Country House: it has an Hospital for the Poor, and a Free-School for Children, founded by Archbishop Whitgift".

Bequests were considered an important part of fulfilling one's Christian responsibilities to the wider community and they provided a substantial source of support to poor people, even after the introduction of the Elizabethan Poor Law[21]. The concordances in which *the poor* collocates with *hospital/s* often emphasise the importance of charitable donations to hospitals or mention specific instances of charitable giving. Gregory (1675) observes: "It is Charity that Embalms a Man's name, and keeps it fresh and sweet for ever; there's no Tomb like an Alms-house, no Monument like an Hospital, no Marble like the Poor Man's Box". The collocate *hospital* highlights a text which reproduces the last will and testament of John Kendrike (1625), a draper who lived in London, who left five hundred pounds to the poor of Christs Hospital and fifty pounds to the sick in both Saint Thomas' Hospital and in St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Although there

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[21]   Dyer (2012) has looked at more than 4000 wills, dating from between 1430 and 1530, in order to explain how people living in poverty survived before the introduction of the Poor Laws.

is scholarly disagreement about the extent that unofficial poor relief was funded by charitable donations[22], it does appear that charitable bequests continued in significant numbers and even grew during periods of intense need: McIntosh (1988: 231), for instance, has calculated that in the parish of St Margaret's in Westminster, between 1584 and 1609, 66-75 per cent of the money distributed to the poor originated in donations and bequests and, moreover, it was these sources of funds which soared during times of crisis. Nevertheless, even increases in charitable activity could not keep pace with the continuing numbers of people who were requesting financial assistance and many parishes responded by attempting to reduce the cost of supporting the poor. Some communities stopped authorising poor widows to foster abandoned or orphaned children and instead invited employers to oversee their care in apprenticeships. A smaller number of parishes attempted to force able-bodied adults and children to become self-sufficient by means of work programmes, such as the cloth town of Hadleigh in Suffolk which established a workhouse in 1577 (see McIntosh 1988: 232).

Overall, the texts show the poor to be worthy of pity – they are oppressed, victims of crime and in need of medical assistance. They live in despair and in difficult circumstances. This is in contrast to studies of words such as *beggar* which have shown a much more negative evaluation, focussing on the shortcomings of the beggar and their own agency in their dependence. Again, the evidence points towards the semantics of *the poor* being quite distinct, and more positive, than that used for the criminalized poor.

7. Providing for the poor: Charity

What then was the response to the poor? How did Early Modern writers characterize what was and should be done to alleviate the condition of the poor? We have established that early modern writers exhorted their readers to give to the poor and that bequests to help people living in poverty were common. What other forms of charitable giving were common in the seventeenth century? To explore this, we analysed collocates which all seem to relate to charity which consistently appear in the top 50 collocates of *the poor*. These were *distribute/d* and *relief,* (with its variants *relieve*, *relieving* and *relieved*), *alms* and *charitable*. *Distribute/d* occurs in examples including instructions to churchwardens to ensure donations are distributed to

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the poor (Church of England. Archdeaconry of Worcester 1609); exhortations that charity intended for the poor should not be stolen (Bell 1609); and examples of exemplars of the community who gave to the poor during their lifetimes (Porter, J. 1632) and also after their deaths (Boreman 1669). Blount (1661), in his dictionary, tells us about a specific type of charitable donation: "We also call Alms distributed to the poor at a Funeral, Dole, quasi Deal, from the Sax". It was very common for attendees to receive a cash donation for attending a funeral and this ensured a respectable number of mourners for the deceased.

Relief and its variants usually appear in phrases such as *to relieve the poor and the needy* (Fonseca 1629) and *greatly relieving the poor and needy* (Mexâia 1623). Camden (1637) mentions the role of monasteries, during the time of Henry VIII "for the relief and maintenance of the poor and impotent". Bush (1650) draws readers' attention to legislation of 1647, 'An Ordinance for the Relief and Employment of the Poor, and the Punishment of Vagrants and other disorderly Persons'. The relevant concordances also include works by reformers such as Child (1690), who named the second chapter of his book: 'Concerning the Relief and Employment of the Poor'. Occasionally writers relate how people of other countries, both in historical and contemporary accounts, dealt with their poor. Purchas (1625), for instance, in a history of China, recounts how he asked why there were no beggars in the country and was told:

> in every City there is a great circuit, wherein be many houses for poor people, for Blind, Lame, Old folk, not able to travel for age, nor having any other means to live. These folk have in the aforesaid houses, ever plenty of Rice during their lives, but nothing else… When one is sick, blind, or lame, he makes a supplication to the Ponchiassi, and proving that to be true he writes, he remains in the aforesaid great lodging as long as he lives: besides this, they keep in these places Swine and Hens, whereby the poor be relieved without going a begging.

Charitable usually appears in texts describing the generosity of individuals or exhorting the wider public to such generosity. Despite *alms* consistently collocating with *the poor* throughout the seventeenth century, there is not a great deal of information in the corpus concerning what constituted alms. However, it appears that alms took the form of both food and money; Hindle (2004b: 12) has written that the provision of the latter gradually came to dominate in the seventeenth century. The Church of England (1691) asks

"have you a Box in the Church to receive the Alms of charitable persons for the Poor?" Moreover, it appears that money may have been the preferred type of charity from the point of view of the recipient. Horne (1619) writes: "A reproof of our unthankful poor, who scorn the alms that is not of their own choosing, and murmur against an alms of bread; where this godly poor man desired but an alms of crumbs". Vernon (1654) gives us the impression that some people donated a lecture to the poor alongside alms. He describes one woman from Leicestershire, Elenor Armestrong, who "would seldom send away the poor without a double Alms, relief for the body, and good counsel for the soul". The term *box* collocates with *the poor* transiently in the 1610s, 30s, 40s and 70s, and usually appears in references to the poor man's box, a container placed in churches for the receipt of alms. However, an analysis of this collocate also highlights a discussion surrounding the willingness of early moderners to give to the poor. Whereas Purchas (1625), above, merely described the relief schemes of another country, the well-known pamphleteer, Nashe (1613), went further to condemn his contemporaries' selfishness and argued that other countries relieved their poor far more effectively:

> If Christ were now naked and visited, naked and visited should he be, for none would come near him… In other Lands, they have Hospitals, whether their infected are transported, presently after they are stricken. They have one Hospital, for those that have been in the houses with the infected, and are not yet tainted: another for those that are tainted, and have the sores risen on them, but not broken out. A third, for those that both have the sores, & have them broken out on them. We have no provision but mixing hand over head, the sick with the whole. A halfpenny a month to the poor mans box, we count our utter impoverishing. I have heard Travellers of credit avouch, that in London, is not given the tenth part of that alms in a week, which in the poorest besieged City of France is given in a day.

Perhaps Nashe (1613) had a point. An interesting proclamation by Charles I (England and Wales, 1625) reveals the king's personal feelings towards the poor. After publishing restrictions on the practice of seeking healing by means of the king's touch, the King sought to dissuade the poor from approaching him during his travels by having his almoner "deliver his Majesty's Alms to the Overseers of the Poor, to be distributed amongst them, for their better & more equal relief, then they should receive by coming abroad in that dishonourable & indecent manner; which therefore his Majesty stringently

charge and commands them to forbear, and all Mayors, Sheriffs, Justices of Peace, Constables, and other Officers, to take due care of accordingly". It is clear that the King did not relish these opportunities for closer contact with his less privileged subjects.

One further collocate in the top 50 collocates of *the poor* is worthy of note – *liberal* is a terminating collocate which disappears from the top 50 collocates of *the poor* after the 1640s; before that, it usually appears in the L2 position – it occurs in this position in 166 of the 299 times the words collocate. All bar one of these 166 examples relate to the pattern *liberal unto/ to/toward/towards the poor*. The phrase is often used by writers describing the generosity of an individual, particularly saints, popes and rulers, who lived in the past. For instance, Trapp (1657) tells us that "Pope Alexander the fifth; was so liberal to the poor". However, a weaker discourse is present which criticises certain people or groups for their lack of liberality. Burton (1632), who was imprisoned for a long stretch for his later pieces which attacked the church hierarchy, wrote that those who were "liberal to the poor" must ensure that their alms are not taken by "a Monastical Society of lazy and lustful Abbey-lubbers"; Abbott (1600) who would eventually rise to become Archbishop of Canterbury, shared this anti-Catholic sentiment: "I do not find that the Priests were very liberal to the poor".

So in terms of individual responses to the poor, the public discourse is clear. It is governed by a set of practices regulated by the church and in giving to the poor members of society are modelling the behaviour of saints. Yet, as the example of Charles I shows, this process of giving is mediated. Unlike beggars, the poor do not directly receive relief from the charitable – the charitable donate through an agency to the poor. This mediation, of course, raises issues and concerns, deflecting, in some cases at least, opprobrium away from the poor and on to those who may misuse the alms donated. Yet what of state-controlled responses to the poor – do these follow the same pattern, i.e. mediated giving with the mediating party being the subject of criticism?

8. Providing for the poor: Official relief

Whilst 26 of the top collocates of *the poor* seem to relate to charity, only 10 relate to official relief. The focus on mediation is, perhaps, predictable, but unlike in the case of alms-giving, prominent amongst the collocates for official relief are terms referencing parish officials responsible for

collecting and distributing the parish rate. A number of spelling variants of the singular and plural of *overseer* are present as collocates**.** *Churchwardens* enters the top 50 collocates of *the poor* in the 1640s as an initiating collocate[23]. Elections for overseers of the poor and churchwardens took place annually at Easter time[24]. These positions were unpaid and often fulfilled reluctantly, usually by those men in the community who were able to give their time for free. The number of officials required to serve in each parish depended upon its size. In larger parishes two or three overseers might be appointed but in smaller communities one officer might undertake both positions simultaneously with the aid of an official collector of parish rates. The overseer made decisions regarding who was eligible for relief, usually by means of a face-to-face interview with the claimant, and also supervised its distribution. Churchwardens shared duties regarding the parish dole with the overseers but their accounts tended to be limited to expenses arising from the maintenance of the church building and other types of parish spending[25]. Churchwardens were often responsible for distributing charitable relief.

　　Overseers is the most popular term, collocating consistently with *the poor* from the 1620s onwards. An analysis of this collocate, from the 1620s to the 1690s, shows that over 555 of its 590 co-occurrences with *the poor* appear in the L2 position in the phrase *overseers of/for the poor*. *Churchwardens* usually appears in the L4 position (211 of 301 co-occurrences), in phrases such as *churchwardens or overseers of the poor* or *church-wardens and overseers of the poor* meaning that references to overseers and churchwardens often appeared in the same texts. Clearly the duties of these two parish officials were closely linked. In a number of cases, one author was responsible for a group of concordance lines. Some of these texts were guides written for parish officials, such as Robert Gardiner's 'Compleat Constable', first printed in 1692 and reprinted a number of times, and George Meriton's (1669) 'A guide for constables, churchwardens, overseers of the poor, surveyors of the highways, treasurers of the county stock, masters of the house of correction, bayliffs of mannours, toll-takers in fairs &c'[26]. Sparke's (1636)

23　The hyphenated version of *churchwardens* – *church-wardens* – is more commonly used in the seventeenth-century texts of EEBO.

24　The following description of the roles of overseers of the poor and churchwardens owes much to the website London Lives. See https://www.londonlives.org/static/ParishRelief.jsp

25　Dyer (2012: 73) believes that churchwardens did have a significant role in collecting and distributing alms but that their records were limited to their role managing church buildings because this is what the auditing process focussed upon.

26　See Hitchcock (2012: 28-30) for a discussion of the *Compleat Constable*.

'The Poor Orphans Court' emphasises the role of the Overseers of the Poor in identifying how many "impotent, poor, and Orphans" resided in their parish in order to allot them relief accordingly; to arrange work for children who were able to work; and to conduct beggars or loiterers who belonged to other parishes to the care of their own overseer of the poor or constable. Occasionally, the concordance lines throw light upon other duties required of overseers of the poor, such as collecting support payments from alleged fathers of illegitimate children (see Kilburne 1681). England and Wales (1699) provides an important example of supplementary legislation which, if ignored by parish officials, might result in their own punishment:

> After 1 September, 1697. every such person as shall receive Relief of any Parish or Place, and the Wife and Children cohabiting in the same House (except such Child as shall be permitted to live at home to attend some helpless Parent) shall, upon the Right Shoulder of their upper Garment, in a visible manner, wear a large Roman P, with the first Letter of the Name of the Parish or Place where the said person Inhabits, cut in Red or Blue Cloth, as the Churchwardens or Overseers shall appoint. The Poor person neglecting or refusing to wear such Badge or Mark, may be punished by any Justice of Peace of the County, either by ordering his or her Relief on the Collection to be abridged or withdrawn, or by Committing the party to the House of Correction, not exceeding 21 Days; and if any Church-warden or Overseer of the Poor, after the said 1 September. shall relieve any such Poor person, not wearing such Badge, he being Convicted by one Witness before a Justice of Peace, shall Forfeit for every such Offence 20 s. to be Levied by Distress and Sale of Goods, one Moiety to the use of the Informer, the other to the Poor of the Parish.

The poor then were to be visually marked and it appears that the crown was expecting some resistance to this new legal requirement.

So, as with individual relief giving, state relief giving focusses on those who mediate relief to the poor. In doing so the regulation and actions of those mediators is prominent in the discourse, again emphasizing the mediated and regulated nature of official poor relief. This contrasts markedly with the direct connection formed between the more negatively evaluated criminalized poor, where the transfer of alms was direct from donor to the recipient. Yet in replacing this behaviour with mediated giving, official relief, as personal relief did, shifted the focus of criticism from the poor to those who mediated the relief the poor received.

9. Conclusion

An exploration of *the poor* in Early Modern English is revealing of the society and language of the time. In the language, the expression is, at times, associated with the criminalized poor at the beginning of the century, but as the decades progress, the phrase is subjected to a process of semantic narrowing which leaves it with a positive discourse prosody. While the phrase could be treated as a near synonym of words such as *beggar* at the beginning of the century, within a couple of decades of the century beginning, the use of *the poor* as a near synonym of words such as *beggar*, as evidenced through collocation, ceases. The words *beggar*, *rogue*, *vagabond* and *vagrant*, as explored elsewhere (McEnery – Baker forthcoming), have a negative discourse prosody throughout the century. However, *the poor* narrows its meaning to focus on those who were thought to be what we might call the deserving poor – a group represented as being poor through no fault of their own, suffering from criminal acts and illness, and deserving of help. The lack of negative, judgemental collocates attached to *the poor* is perhaps surprising – indeed, we find that writers stressed the importance of compassion and our analysis reveals many instances of charitable activity and seemingly genuine concern for the less fortunate members of society.

The reason this happens, we would argue, is that language reflects social processes which change in this time. Society itself distinguishes between the deserving poor (those deemed worthy of state aid) and the undeserving poor (those who directly beg for support) in legislation. The fact that this legislation has an impact on language is undoubted in our view – as seen in the analysis in this paper, *the poor* attracts collocates which are directly related to the poor law from the 1620s onwards as was shown in the example of *overseers*.

As a demonstration of the importance of processes such as collocation and discourse prosody in the exploration of meaning change, the exploration of *the poor* is revealing. As noted at the beginning of the paper, there are few examples of the noun *poor* being directly modified by evaluative expressions such as in *the indigent poor*. Yet when viewed through the lens of collocation, the positive nature of the emerging positive discourse prosody of *the poor* in the century becomes clear. In exploring an issue of interest to historians, we also see the interface between language and society at work and the ways in which collocation can drive semantic change at the level of discourse.

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1699 *A continuation of the abridgment of all the statutes of K. William and Q. Mary, and of King William the Third, in force and use begun by J. Washington of the Midd. Temple Esq.; revised and continued after his death to the end of the session of Parliament, 27 April, 1696 and now further continued, from the beginning of the second session of the Third Parliament, 20 October 1696, to the end of the third and last session of the said Third Parliament, 5 July, 1698; with two new tables.* London.

Fonseca, C. de

1629 *Deuout contemplations expressed in two and fortie sermons vpon all ye quadragesimall Gospells written in Spanish by Fr. Ch. de Fonseca Englished by. I.M. of Magdalen Colledge in Oxford.* London.

Gardiner, R.

1692 *The compleat constable directing all [brace] constables, headboroughs, tithingmen, churchwardens, overseers of the poor, surveyors of the highways, and scavengers in duty of their several offices according to the power allowed them by the laws and statutes, continued to this present time, 1692: also directions for the London constables, to which is added a treatise of warrants and commitments proper for the knowledge of all constables, &c.* London.

Godwin, T.

1637 *Aggravation of sinne and sinning against knowledge. Mercie. Delivered in severall sermons upon divers occasions.* London.

Gregory, F.

1675 *Agape, or, The feast of love a sermon at the Oxford-shire feast, kept on Thursday Nov. 25, 1675 at Drapers-Hall in London: preached at St. Michael's Church in Cornhill.* London.

Hall, T.

1663 *An exposition by way of supplement, on the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth chapters of the prophecy of Amos where you have the text fully explained.* London.

Hare, H.

1692 *A charge given at the general quarter sessions of the peace for the county of Surrey holden at Dorking on Tuesday the 5th day of April 1692, and in the fourth year of Their Majesties reign.* London.

Hartlib, S.

1650 *Londons charity inlarged, Stilling the Orphans Cry. By the Liberality of the Parliament, in granting two Houses by Act, and giving a thousand pound towards the work for the imployment of the Poor, and education of poor children, who many of them are destroyed in their youth for want of being under a good Government and education, whereby they may be made serviceable for God, and the Commonwealth.* London.

Hawkins, H.

1632 *The history of S. Elizabeth daughter of the King of Hungary. According to sundry authours who haue authentically written her life, distributed into three bookes.* Rouen.

Holland, H.
    1649   [no title]. London.

Holinshed, R.
    1808   (reprinted from the 1577 ed.) *Holinshed's Chronicles [of] England, Scotland, and Ireland. Volume 3.* Ellis, H. (ed.). New York: Ams Press.

Hookes, N.
    1653   *Amanda, a sacrifice to an unknown goddesse, or, A free-will offering of a loving heart to a sweet-heart by N.H. of Trinity Colledge in Cambridge.* London.

Horne, R.
    1619   *Of the rich man and Lazarus. Certaine sermons, by Robert Horne.* London.

Jelinger, C.
    1679   *Usury stated overthrown: or, usuries champions with their auxiliaries,shamefully disarmed and beaten by an answer to its chief champion, whichlately apeared in print to defend it. And Godliness epitomized by ChristopherJelinger, M.A. Beza upon Matth. May a man with a safe conscience lend uponusury? No surely. And holy Usher, Arch-Bishop of Armagh, in his Body ofdivinity, pag. 300. Q. What is that which we call usury? It is lending inexpectation of certain gain. So he well stateth it against usury ill stated by T. P. Q. What do you think of it? If we speak of that properly, which the scripture condemneth, it is a most wicked and unlawful contract; which if we live and die in, without repentance, we are excluded out of the Kingdom of Heaven. Psal. 15.1,5. Ezek. 18.12,13. and chap. 22. But there is much questioning, which is that usury which the scripture condemneth. Therefore it will be our wisdom wholly to forbear it, and not to put our souls, which are of more value than the whole world, upon nice discourses, and subtil distinctions. Thus this holy man.* London.

Kendrike, J.
    1625   *The last will and testament of Mr. Iohn Kendricke late citizen and draper of London vvho departed this life the 30. day of December, anno, 1624. Full of notable workes of charity, worthy of lasting memory and imitation.* London.

Kilburne, R.
    1681   *Choice presidents upon all Acts of Parliament relating to the office and duty of a justice of peace. With necessary notes and instructions thereupon taken out of the said Acts of Parliament, and other particular cases in law adjudg'd therein. As also a more useful method of making up Court-Rolls than hath been hitherto known or published in print. By Rich. Kilburne, Esq; late one of His Majestie's Justices of the Peace for the county of Kent, and principal of Staple-Inn.* London.

Lawson, G.
    1689   *Politica sacra & civilis, or, A model of civil and ecclesiastical government wherein, besides the positive doctrine concerning state and church in general, are debated the principal controversies of the times concerning the constitution of the state and Church of England, tending to righteousness, truth, and peace.* London.

L'Estrange, R.
>   1679   *The free-born subject, or, The Englishmans birthright asserted against all tyrannical vsurpations either in church or state.* London.

Malkin, G.
>   1697   *A good-work for bad times, or, A way to make England rich and happy shewing how the charge of the war if it should continue may be born without any tax or pressure to the subject, and all the poor and idle persons in this nation may be employed or set to work, by which the nation will gain more than double the charge of the war as is herein plainly set forth, and the poor of all sorts that are not able to get their living by their work may be better maintain'd than now they are, without begging, and the children be brought up to work and taught to read, write and cast accompts, and be virtuously educated so as they may be serviceable to the nation: and also money will be made plenty and trade brisk, and some, amongst a great many, of the vast advantages that will accrue to the nation by it are here set forth: most humbly dedicated to the consideration of His Majesty and the Parliament.* London.

Malynes, G.
>   1622   *Consuetudo, vel lex mercatoria, or The ancient law-merchant. Diuided into three parts: according to the essentiall parts of trafficke. Necessarie for all statesmen, iudges, magistrates, temporall and ciuile lawyers, mint-men, merchants, marriners, and all others negotiating in all places of the world. By Gerard Malynes merchant.* London.

Meriton, G.
>   1669   *A guide for constables, churchwardens, overseers of the poor, surveyors of the highways, treasurers of the county stock, masters of the house of correction, bayliffs of mannours, toll-takers in fairs &c. a treatise briefly shewing theextent and latitude of the several offices, with the power of the officers herein, both by common law and statute, according to the several additions and alterations of the law, till the 20 year of His Majesties reign.* London.

Mexâia, P.
>   1623   *The imperiall historie: or The liues of the emperours, from Iulius Cæsar, the first founder of the Roman monarchy, vnto this present yeere containing their liues and actions, with the rising and declining of that empire; the originall, and successe, of all those barbarous nations that haue inuaded it, and ruined it by peece-meele: with an ample relation of all the memorable accidents that haue happened during these last combustions. First written in Spanish by Pedro Mexia: and since continued by some others, to the death of Maximilian the Second; translated into English by W.T.: and now corrected, amplified and continued to these times by Edvvard Grimeston Sergeant at Armes.* London.

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>   1613   *Christs teares ouer Ierusalem. Whereunto is annexed a comparatiue admonition to London.* London.

Owen, J.

    1619   *Epigrams of that most wittie and worthie epigrammatist Mr. Iohn Owen,*
              Gentleman. Translated by Iohn Vicars. London.

Perkins, W.

    1608   *A godly and learned exposition of Christs Sermon in the Mount: preached*
              in Cambridge by that reuerend and iudicious diuine M. William Perkins.
              Published at the request of his exequutors by Th. Pierson preacher of Gods
              word. Whereunto is adioyned a twofold table: one, of speciall points here
              handled; the other, of choise places of Scripture here quoted. London.

Porter, J.

    1632   *The flowers of the liues of the most renowned saincts of the three kingdoms*
              England Scotland, and Ireland written and collected out of the best authours
              and manuscripts of our nation, and distributed according to their feasts
              in the calendar. By the R. Father, Hierome Porter priest and monke of the
              holy order of Sainct Benedict, of the congregation of England. The first tome.
              Douai.

Purchas, S.

    1625   *Purchas his pilgrimes in fiue bookes. The first, contayning the voyages*
              and peregrinations made by ancient kings, patriarkes, apostles,
              philosophers, and others, to and thorow the remoter parts of the knowne
              world: enquiries also of languages and religions, especially of the moderne
              diuersified professions of Christianitie. The second, a description of all
              the circum-nauigations of the globe. The third, nauigations and voyages of
              English-men, alongst the coasts of Africa … The fourth, English voyages
              beyond the East Indies, to the ilands of Iapan, China, Cauchinchina,
              the Philippinæ with others … The fifth, nauigations, voyages, traffiques,
              discoueries, of the English nation in the easterne parts of the world …
              The first part. London.

Reynolds, E.

    1658   [no title]. London

Rogers, N.

    1662   *The rich fool set forth in an exposition on that parable: Luke 12, 16-22.*
              London.

Sanderson, R.

    1627   *Ten sermons preached I. Ad clerum. 3. II. Ad magistratum. 3. III.*
              Ad populum. 4. By Robert Saunderson Bachellor in Diuinitie, sometimes
              fellow of Lincolne Colledge in Oxford. London.

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    1636   *The poore orphans court, or Orphans cry. By M.S. Being a wel-wisher for*
              a speedy helpe of their misery, and an eye-witnesse of their present calamitie.
              London.

Stewart, J.

    1667   *Naphtali, or, The wrestlings of the Church of Scotland for the kingdom of*
              Christ contained in a true and short deduction thereof, from the beginning

of the reformation of religion, until the year 1667: together with the last speeches and testimonies of some who have died for the truth since the year 1660. Edinburgh.

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1633   *The survey of London containing the original, increase, modern estate and government of that city, methodically set down: with a memorial of those famouser acts of charity, which for publick and pious vses have been bestowed by many worshipfull citizens and benefactors: as also all the ancient and modern monuments erected in the churches, not only of those two famous cities, London and Westminster, but (now newly added) four miles compass / begun first by the pains and industry of John Stow, in the year 1598; afterwards inlarged by the care and diligence of A.M. in the year 1618; and now compleatly finished by the study & labour of A.M., H.D. and others, this present year 1633; whereunto, besides many additions (as appears by the contents) are annexed divers alphabetical tables, especially two, the first, an index of things, the second, a concordance of names.* London.

Taylor, J.

1647   *The psalter of David with titles and collects according to the matter of each Psalme: whereunto is added Devotions for the help and assistance of all Christian people, in all occasions and necessities.* London.

Topsell, E.

1596   *The revvard of religion. Deliuered in sundrie lectures vpon the booke of Ruth, wherein the godly may see their daily and outwarde tryals, with the presence of God to assist them, and his mercies to recompence them: verie profitable for this present time of dearth, wherein manye are most pittifully tormented with want; and also worthie to bee considered in this golden age of the preaching of the word, when some vomit vp the loathsomnes therof, and others fall away to damnable securitie.* London.

T.P.

1679   *Usury stated being a reply to Mr. Jelinger's Usurer cast whereto are adjoyned, some animadversions on Mr. Bolton's and Mr. Capel's discourses, concerning the same subject.* London: Printed for Robert Clavel.

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Dialogues of the dead:
Social identity in eighteenth-century anonymous satire

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores constructions of social identity in eighteenth-century dialogues written by the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800). These three satirical dialogues are set in the Underworld between mythological figures and contemporary type characters, and they were included in Lord Lyttelton's anonymously published *The Dialogues of the Dead* (1760). Social identity constructions in these texts are analysed through stance-taking, specifically in terms of evaluation and the identification of social values. Montagu's satires are instructional and judgmental, and the social values advocated through the voices of her characters are assumed to represent the author's own social identity and the values of the bluestocking circle. Through her judgment of the empty lives of fashionable women, entertainment-driven readers and the capitalist greed of the publishing industry, Montagu promotes the virtues of learning, morality, duty and self-discipline. Social values function as identity markers of her moral and rational mind.

Keywords: social identity, social values, stance, satire, eighteenth-century English, anonymity, historical linguistics.

1. Introduction

This paper examines social identity constructions in eighteenth-century anonymous writing when the author's identity is known[1]. Of key interest is how satire is used to guide the readers' perception of the values which

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the texts promote. In May 1760, Whig statesman and author George, Lord Lyttelton published a collection of twenty-eight satirical conversations that take place in the Underworld, the last three of which were written "by a different Hand" (Lyttelton 1760: vii, Ellis 2012: 417). This co-author, identified in the preface as Lyttelton's 'Friend' and described as 'a Genius […] capable of uniting Delight with Instruction', was Elizabeth Montagu, a founding figure of the learning-oriented Bluestocking circle (see Eger 2010, Pohl – Schellenberg 2003). According to Ellis (2012: 425),

> In the dialogue of the dead the voice of the dead was presented without a framing narrative: the dead speak to each other, the reader overhears. Lyttelton's preface lays out the rules obeyed by his dialogues, in which 'remarkable Persons' from 'the History of all Times, and all Nations' debate together in the afterworld.

The book was such a success that the printer could not keep up with demand, and the second edition was advertised already on the day the book was published (Ellis 2012: 424). The focus of this paper is on the three dialogues contributed by Montagu, which were her first venture into the publishing world.

It was a risk for a woman to engage in publishing in the eighteenth century and particularly in writing satire, and very few women seem to have tried their hand at this genre (Marshall 2013: 28). Anonymity, flimsy though it must have been in the fairly small literary circles of London, was a necessary protection and a common authorial practice, but given that a select group of friends knew of Montagu's project, we can talk of semi-anonymity rather than full anonymity. Montagu wrote to her friend Elizabeth Carter on 1 May, 1760 that she had written a dialogue "between Mercury and a fine modern Lady, for which ye fine Ladies wd hate me still more than they do, but I shall decline ye honour of their aversion by being unknown" (quoted in Ellis 2012: 423, note 32). Montagu's author identity presented a satisfying puzzle to the readers, and she was very happy with their guesswork; they mostly assumed her to be male (Ellis 2012: 430). When Montagu's author identity was revealed, she was accused of hypocrisy in her criticism of fashionable women.

As satire, these texts represent a genre of literature that involves critique of a particular topic and subsequently has a target, but which may also be instructive (Marshall 2013: 3). Marshall (2013: 31) distinguishes between three types of satire: attack, where the satire is essentially negative, distributive

justice, which allows exemplary critique through positive examples, and provocation, which aims to "provoke thought, issue a warning, or unsettle the reader". In the preface, Lyttelton speaks of "uniting Delight with Instruction, and giving to Knowledge and Virtue these Graces, which the Wit of the Age has too often employed all its skill to bestow upon Folly and Vice" (1760: vii). The aim of the dialogues was thus to instruct the reader in a pleasing manner and to promote knowledge and virtue. As they provide both positive and negative examples, the dialogues can be classified as distributive justice (Marshall 2013: 31).

A key concept in this paper is social identity, a person's sense of self derived from group membership(s) which "satisf[ies] a great many needs" (Deaux 2000: 26). Social identity refers to the relationship between personal and group identity, the two of them perceived to be intersecting (orthogonal) rather than involving two opposite ends (bipolar), and social identity theory investigates intergroup behaviour that is simultaneously individualistic and social (Brown – Capozza 2000: 8-9). The connection between language and social identity is "sociolinguistically distant" (Ochs 1993: 288), and linguistic constructions of social identity are often explored using the concept of stance-taking (see for example Bucholtz – Hall 2005, Johnstone 2007, Jaffe 2009, and Biber – Finegan 1989). Stance, or the linguistic expression of beliefs, emotions, attitudes and opinions, provides an indirect access to identity, and it is a useful concept in investigating social values and norms (Thompson – Hunston 2000). Normative orientations are universal in human societies, and norms (specific obligatory demands, claims, expectations, rules) and values (the criteria of desirability) form their most important realizations (Williams 1979: 15). Explicit and conceptualised values function as criteria for judgment, preference, and choice, and even when values are implicit, they have an effect in behaviour (1979: 16). Values are interlinked with one's sense of self and sense of what is appropriate: they are "used socially to present claims, to evaluate other people, to evaluate oneself, to attack others, to gain instrumental advantage. […] [They] are continually used as weapons in social struggles" (Williams 1979: 26). This potential of value as a weapon finds ample realizations in satire.

With regard to published historical texts that were edited and regulated from orthographical decisions to content and style and thus involve input from a number of people, the linguistic analysis of social identity is challenging. But the fact that the dialogues were published anonymously and were meant to be read as instructional texts provides helpful starting points. First of all, in Christopherson's (2007: 3041) words, "[i]ndividuals can use their anonymity

to almost become a different person without fear of being identified and negatively evaluated by those they know". Anonymity offers the writer a degree of freedom, a chance to be assessed without the assumptions attached to their 'true' identity (if they have a chance to be heard). Second, an instructional text intends to provide a relatively clear set of values and targets of criticism. The audience is meant to inspect and evaluate their own behaviour, if the shoe fits, and the behaviour of others, and to be persuaded to the author's viewpoint. I argue that in Montagu's dialogue project, there is a connection to the norms and values of the Bluestocking circle.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, I present my theoretical background of social identity theory and stance, the genre of satire, and the concept of anonymity. Then I introduce Montagu's three dialogues, focusing on the topics she has chosen, the characters she has picked to explore these issues, what they stand for, oppose, defend or criticize, and how the conversation flows in terms of turn-taking and power: who gets the last word, and who the reader is supposed to listen to and learn from. I then discuss the vices that Montagu raises up for criticism and the virtues that she promotes, leading the discussion to the social values behind the stances that are advocated through the voices of the characters.

2. Social identity and stance

Social identity refers to aspects of self-knowledge that are influenced by membership in specific social groups. It positions the self as an integral or interchangeable part of a social group which influences the individual's value sets, beliefs and perhaps even psychological traits (Brewer – Hewstone 2004: xi). Identity is formed through and by social relations, and identities that divide people into (for example) 'us' and 'them' are part of the normative structures of our lives (Wearing 2011: vii). Through the expression of evaluation, affect and other stances, identities are constructed in linguistic means. Stance can function as an index of individual or community value systems (Thompson – Hunston 2000: 5). Stancetaking reflects broader cultural norms and views of the period perhaps in line with cultural scripts, or "cultural norms, values, and practices which are clear, precise, and accessible to cultural insiders and to cultural outsiders alike" (Goddard – Wierzbicka 2004: 153). Stance can be viewed as a prerequisite for language use, and the informational function of communication may come second to stancetaking: "people adopt stances when they adopt ways of speaking", and these stances derive from our

understanding of who we are (or want to be) in relation to other people (Kiesling 2009: 178-179). Particular linguistic forms cannot be automatically connected to specific stances. Their meaning arises in the interaction. The context-dependency of stance thus makes it a complex framework to apply. In this paper the concept of stance is involved in identifying the topics of the dialogues, what norms or values they appear to represent, how the characters criticize or defend these topics, and what type of authoritative epistemic stances are employed, or who dominates the conversation and to what end. A largely qualitative analysis of the frequencies of the first- and second-person pronouns *I* and *you* is carried out to investigate the degree of character involvement.

With regard to social relationships as a dimension of social identity, the salient social groups include, first, the two authors and their immediate Bluestocking circle. Lyttelton and Montagu engaged in an informal practice of literary exchange; Lyttelton sent Montagu his dialogues and Montagu sent him her own texts, and this practice eventually included a small number of their friends, especially Elizabeth Carter as Montagu's critique partner (Ellis 2012: 422). Secondly, there are the dead, the characters chosen to convey views of the authors. And then there is the reading public, who make up the audience and perhaps also the targets of satire. The readers correctly recognized certain aspects of Montagu's identity simply by the fact that the essays existed: they would have correctly assumed that the writer was a native English speaker with classical learning and a certain understanding of life in the higher strata of society. They did not correctly peg her gender.

Following Deaux (2000: 21), group membership is likely to result in greater exposure to shared group representations and norms and group pressures for uniformity. Gender was a complex aspect of Montagu's social identity. In her youth, she spent time with literary figures in the circles of her friend Lady Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, the Duchess of Portland. At the age of twenty-two, Montagu wrote to her sister about her impressions of poet Edward Young:

(1)   the poetical D=r= Young is with us, I am much entertai_d with him, he is a very sensible Man has a lively imagination & strikes out very pretty things in his conversation, tho he has satirized the worst of our Sex he honours the best of them extreamly & seems delighted with those who act & think reasonably I think he had wrote a Satire against that composition of oddity affectation & folly which is call'd a pretty Sort of Woman, if any one has a mind to put on that character they

need but pervert their Sense, distort their faces, disjoint their Limbs, mince their phrases & lisp their words & the thing is done, grimaces, rite Sentences, affected civility, forced gayety & an imitation of good nature compleats their Character[.] (Elizabeth Robinson to Sarah Robinson. October 8? 1740. MO 5556)

She seems glad that Young, the satirist of "the worst of our Sex", gives credit to sensible and rational women, among whom she has reason to include herself. Montagu had a keen and critical eye for women who did not "act & think reasonably" and were pretentious and foolish in speech, manner and gestures. Roughly twenty years later, she wrote to Lord Bath about the attitudes that learned women had to endure:

(2)   Distinguish'd talents expose Women to a great deal of envy, & seldom assist them in making their fortunes. It is hard to say whether Women remarkable for their understanding suffer most from the envy of their own sex or the malice of the other, but their life is constant warfare. (1762, quoted in Eger 2010: 97)

As women were under constant scrutiny (she herself being a blunt critic of female behavior), she was not sympathetic towards women who made themselves, and so easily the entire female sex, a justified target for criticism. In her early correspondence with Lyttelton in the 1750s, Montagu made sure to maintain a thoughtful, analytical style even in the face of Lyttelton's witty, teasing and flirtatious responses (Ellis 2012: 421). She was careful to invest in sophisticated self-presentation. Anonymity allowed her to minimize the weight of gender identity in her work, "shifting [this] category to a low position in [her] identity hierarchy and stressing other, less conflicting identities instead" (Deaux 2000: 22). With gender identity to some extent out of the way, Montagu could claim other identities through her texts, and next I discuss the literary genre of her choice which enabled particularly negative stancetaking.

3. Satire

Satire was the dominant literary genre in the first half of the eighteenth century (Nokes 1987). It is "a two-toned genre, being both sweet and sour, a weapon and a toy", and in order to expose vice and corruption it relies

on "the invocation of social values and public responsibilities" (Nokes 1987: 17, 42). Satire is effective in producing and enforcing the 'us' and 'them' mentality which structures perception of social group memberships and their boundaries. It engages in "acts of exclusion, efforts of boundary policing, introductions of difference and distinction that create – rather than grow out of – an opposition" between the satirist and the target of satire (Bogel 2001: 12).

Successful satire has a social function in that it consolidates inter-group bonds; an intellectual function through linguistic creativity and the freedom from rules and rationality; and an aggressive function which emerges through the aim to ridicule the target, allowing the non-victim a feeling of superiority (Simpson 2003: 3). But if satire fails, it tends to destabilise and reshape the relationships between the satirist, the addressee and the target. Failure may distance the satirist from the satiree, and instead draw the satiree and the target of satire together (Simpson 2003: 8). Satire thus carries an element of risk.

In literary history, women have generally been excluded from the canon of satire. Marshall (2013: 28) does not attempt to include women in any great detail in her investigation of English satirical writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as women by and large do not seem to have taken part in this practice (although Marshall acknowledges that anonymous texts are a case apart). Reasons for women's absence include the lack of access to classical education and the conventions and traditions of satire, the domesticity of female spaces, discouragement of female aggression, and the "hostile images of gossip, nag, complainer, termagant, and virago" which "may have discouraged women from cultivating in public a form that deals in grumbling and railing" (Griffin 1994: 190). According to Ellis (2012: 423), Montagu's letters suggest "some uncertainty about the moral virtue" of publishing the dialogues. Elizabeth Carter did not believe satire to be a good method of instruction especially with regard to female manners, and she did not believe that exposing flaws to ridicule could be constructive. She hoped that Montagu would write a conduct book or in another improving genre instead (Ellis 2012: 431). Montagu's sister Sarah Scott, another professional author, did not consider it prudent for Montagu to publish the dialogues either, as it meant exposing oneself to censure (2012: 431). Women in Montagu's circle were thus cautious of her plans to publish her satires, but Montagu was no stranger to policing behaviour through biting irony, and she had the chance to publish under Lyttelton's protection and approval, so to speak.

In his dialogue between Mercury, Joseph Addison and Jonathan Swift, Lyttelton suggests that vehement and cruel satire does more harm than good:

(3)   Swift: Pray, good Mercury (if I may have liberty to say a word for myself) do you think that my talent was not highly beneficial to correct human nature? Is whipping of no use to mend naughty boys?
Mercury: Men are generally not so patient of whipping as boys, and a rough satirist is seldom known to mend them. Satire, like antimony, if it be used as a medicine, must be rendered less corrosive. (Lyttelton 1760: 29)

Maiming satire à la Swift was not the aim of these dialogues. Marshall (2013) distinguishes between different realms of motive, nature of judgment, and intensity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English satire. Some satirists were interested in educating like-minded readers; they could issue warnings, lament the state of things, or explore philosophical, political or social principles (Marshall 2013: 31-32). In terms of judgment, satire may be straightforwardly critical, mildly corrective, or essentially positive; actual exemplary judgment which emphasises virtue and downplays vice is less common, and Marshall (2013: 32) points out the importance of establishing the satirist's relationship to and attitudes towards the targets: "[d]oes he or she judge from a comfortably superior viewpoint, as Pope tends to do, or are subjects treated sympathetically, as by Fielding and Sterne?" The intensity of attack may be ferocious and angry, "sharp or tart", or cheerful and light (2013: 32). Satire may also establish difference instead of merely registering it (Bogel 2001). These combinations produce several varieties of satire. For this paper, I won't attempt to discern the minute characteristics of satire in Lyttelton's and Montagu's collaboration: my understanding is that their dialogues (and Montagu's in particular) are instructional and corrective, occasionally biting and not very sympathetic, but not particularly angry or violent, either.

The dominance of satire as a literary genre was over by 1760, "probably killed off by the novel"; this change indicates a shift away from a literature of type characters and towards the individual experience of fiction (Nokes 1987: 22, 90). However, dialogues of the dead were very popular between 1760 and 1780, starting with the publication of Lyttelton's *Dialogues*. More dialogues were written during this twenty-year period than in the previous one hundred years (Prince 1996: 224, Keener 1973, quoted in Prince 1996: 224, n. 22). Keener (1973) suggests that their popularity may derive from an interest in travelogues and in the instructive role of history, and from the popularity of biography, among other factors (in Prince 1996: 225).

4. The meaning of anonymity

In anonymous settings, aspects of social identity disappear from view. Montagu took pains to protect her author identity, and apparently Edmund Burke copied the dialogues in order to protect her handwriting from being recognized in the publishing process (Ellis 2012: 423). An early definition of anonymity classifies this state of existence and expression as "being among others, but without personal surveillance by them" (Westin 1967, in Pedersen 1997: 148). As a type of privacy, anonymity involves the presence of others, usually strangers, in the midst of whom one can lose oneself (Pedersen 1997: 153). Privacy, then, is a boundary control process in which the individual controls the amount and type of contact they have with others (Pedersen 1997: 147). Anonymous interaction with strangers provides a chance to "experiment with new social behaviors" (Pedersen 1997: 154): this is prevalent in present-day online communication, where anonymity potentially allows the expression of sensitive thoughts and emotions without fear of being identified and socially evaluated (Christopherson 2007: 3041). A similar phenomenon can be recognized in the 18th-century publishing world.

Between 1750 and 1790, over 80 percent of all new novels were published anonymously (Raven 2003: 143). Reviews were anonymous as well, and their tendency to malicious and critical scorn further encouraged authors to disguise their identities (Raven 2003: 155-156). Eighteenth-century readers accepted anonymous and pseudonymous publications as common authorial practices (Batchelor 2016: 80). According to Ellis (2012: 418), eighteenth-century women writers' venture into publishing was a "complicated paradox". Ellis argues that among women writers there remained "a significant resistance to the professional status of an author", manifested in the unwillingness to be publicly known as an author and in the "almost habitual recourse" to anonymous publishing (2012: 418). Only 14 percent of new novels published between 1750 and 1769 have been identified as the work of women authors (Raven 2003: 150). Montagu believed that anonymity would allow her a chance to become a published author, and that anonymity would protect her reputation from the "stigma of public recognition" and critical judgment (Ellis 2012: 423). She did not use a pseudonym for either of her published works, and Lyttelton went without a pseudonym as well.

Anonymity causes the self to be "perceived and presented less as a unique individual and more in terms of its similarity to the perceived prototypical attributes of the salient social group" (Lea et al. 2001: 528), which would explain why many people in Montagu's acquaintanceship were so sure that the author of the last three dialogues was a man. The salient

cues they'd picked up from the texts – demonstration of classical learning, perhaps also the judgment of fashionable women – undoubtedly made them think in terms of prototypes and default expectations. Elizabeth Carter doubted that Montagu's anonymity would be preserved (letter in Ellis 2012: 424, note 34), which turned out to be a correct assessment. Once Montagu's author identity became known, it triggered accusations of hypocrisy: her behaviour was scrutinized for ways in which she diverted from the values she promoted in her dialogues, and she was accused of piling blame on a group of people she belonged to. However, the dialogues were generally well received, and accusations of hypocrisy did not seem to bother her (Ellis 2012: 436-437). She was fairly well insulated from criticism.

5. Elizabeth Montagu's dialogues

I investigate Montagu's texts through the concept of social identity because of their interesting position regarding anonymous space, group values and the functions of the genre. As anonymous and instructional satires that are in a sense opinion pieces, the dialogues provide theoretical freedom for the author to express views without fear of embarrassment or retribution. The *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760) are set in the Underworld, between characters of fictional or historical background. Overall, the dialogues are didactic by nature, in that the author attempts to educate the reader and persuades them to adopt a particular viewpoint. Satires are essentially cast with type characters that can be imitated from classical models or based on contemporary figures (Nokes 1987: 23). The overall cast consists of classical figures and more contemporary personages such as Plato, Peter the Great, Ulysses and Circe, Joseph Addison and Jonathan Swift, John Locke, Queen Christina of Sweden and Chancellor Oxenstierna, Fernando Cortez and William Penn, and Mercury, 'an English duellist', and 'a North-American savage' (Lyttelton 1760: ix-xii, Ellis 2012: 425). The dialogues are an "elite space", as "all but two of the conversations […] are between named and celebrated men and women" (Ellis 2012: 425). Lyttelton's focus is on the Roman Civil War and the peace of Augustus, the Elizabethan period, and the English Civil War and Restoration, periods which provide Whig historical writing the opportunity to debate on liberty (Ellis 2012: 425, 526). Montagu's dialogues are more focused on the eighteenth-century society.

The characters in Elizabeth Montagu's dialogues come from Greek mythology and antiquity (Cadmus, Hercules, Mercury, Plutarch, Charon) and her own world, in the form of a fashionable lady and a rich bookseller.

The choice of characters indicates her classical learning, and the contemporary characters are used to critique Montagu's own eighteenth-century world.

5.1 XXVI: Cadmus and Hercules: Learned minds vs. active men

In the first dialogue, the mythical Greek king Cadmus, mostly known for his prominence in the arts (Ellis 2012: 427), and the hero Hercules (Heracles in Greek mythology) debate the merits of learning. The conversation begins when Hercules challenges Cadmus's merits to occupy a place on Mount Olympus: "Do you pretend to sit as high on Olympus as Hercules? Did you kill the Nemean Lion, the Erymanthian Boar, the Lernean Serpent, and Stymphalian Birds? […] You value yourself greatly on subduing one Serpent: I did as much as that while I lay in my Cradle" (1760: 291). Cadmus responds that his merits derive from introducing the art of writing in Greece. "You subdued monsters; I civilized men", he counters (1760: 292). If not for historians and libraries, the memory of Hercules's heroism would be long lost. At first Hercules is belligerent, but then he begins to listen, and his questions change from hostile challenges to genuine questions.

Cadmus defends science and innovation and the seemingly less active habits of scholars ("idle men", as Hercules scornfully describes them) by pointing out that "[t]he most important and extensive advantages mankind enjoy, are greatly owing to men who have never quitted their closets" (1760: 295). These advantages include the invention of the compass, advances in engineering, improvements in agriculture, and poetry, which enables people to remember "precepts of virtue and virtuous actions" (1760: 296). Cadmus is beginning to persuade his opponent: Hercules admits that science does have its uses when it comes to navigation and the advances in explorations. He is not so convinced of the value of arts, however, fearing they may render men "effeminate, luxurious, and inactive" (1760: 298)[2]. Cadmus responds that the purpose of sciences is not merely to assist, but to direct action and "moderate [the] too great ardor" of the active mind. The study of history instructs the warrior and the legislator on the path to virtue and self-discipline; "Heroes may kill Tyrants; but it is Wisdom and Laws that prevent Tyranny and Oppression" (1760: 292).

Cadmus is put on the defensive, but he soon dominates the conversation and eventually concludes the dialogue. Hercules is portrayed as

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[2]   Effeminacy and luxury are interconnected keywords in the eighteenth century with overlapping effects and connotations of wilting strength, indolence and degeneration (Cohen 1996: 5, see also Berg – Eger 2003 and Clery 2004).

a hot-headed hero who represents values that need to be moderated and enriched by learning and self-discipline. Neither character is a target of criticism: instead, the active heroic mind comes to understand the value of learning and art.

5.2 XXVII: Mercury and Mrs Modish, 'a modern fine lady'

In this dialogue, the Roman god Mercury arrives to escort a fashionable lady to the underworld, but she protests that she cannot possibly die just yet. Mercury misunderstands her meaning, believing that Mrs Modish wishes to live because of her husband and children. However, she corrects him: "I never thought myself engaged to *them*". The real reason is that her social calendar is full for the next two months. But perhaps he could come back in the summer when the social season is over: "Pray have you a fine *Vauxhall* and *Ranelagh*? I think I should not dislike drinking *the Lethe Waters* when you have a full season" (1760: 301). Mercury assumes (somewhat cunningly) that surely with a life like this she would not want to drink the waters of oblivion. Modish responds that "[d]iversion was indeed the business of my life, but as to pleasure I have enjoyed none […] Can one be pleased with seeing the same thing over and over again?" (1760: 302). Mrs Modish admits that the life she has led, and which she is loth to leave, "gave me the Vapours, spoiled the natural chearfulness of my Temper, and even in youth wore away my youthful vivacity" (1760: 302). As a (type) character whose purpose is to expose vice and failure, she readily admits her own. Mercury asks why she has continued this way of life: surely not for any assumption of merit? No, she responds: she has always been too busy to think at all. She has followed the bad advice and example of her friends and doctor, who assured her that "dissipation was good for [her] spirits" (1760: 302). Her husband has disagreed with this advice, but she has been more than happy to contradict him, ignoring her domestic duties and orienting herself to the fashionable world.

The lady's choices have been motivated by her desire to belong to the *bon ton*, the elusive and undefinable high society which is referred to in French. There is a footnote that explains the meaning of "*Du Bon ton*" for the reader: it is "a cant Phrase in the Modern French Language for the fashionable Air of Conversation and Manners" (1760: 303). With this annotation, the author makes a clear distinction between themselves and Mrs Modish, who is unable to explain what the bon ton means, even though she has admired and aimed at it all her life. One of the privileges of the bon ton is "never to define, or be defined"; "[i]n conversation it is not wit; in manners it is not politeness; in behaviour it is not address; but it is a little

like them all" (1760: 303). Perhaps Montagu is making fun of the phrase *Je ne sais quoi* by making Mrs Modish unable to explain what the bon ton actually is. Behaviour, social status, living in a certain part of London, suitable lack of virtue, and the corresponding possession of vice regulate admittance to the bon ton. Mercury is not impressed, and he disapproves Modish for having wasted her time and her health, faded her beauty and contradicted her husband for nothing. Mrs Modish asks what she should have done instead, and gets this indirect but clear answer:

(4)   I will follow your mode of instructing. I will tell you what I would
        not have had you do. I would not have had you sacrifice your time,
        your reason and your Duties, to fashion and folly. I would not have
        had you neglect your husband's happiness, and your childrens [sic]
        Education. (1760: 304)

Mrs Modish protests that she spared no expense on her daughters' education, having provided them with dancing lessons, music lessons, drawing lessons, and French lessons. But to Mercury this means that they have learned "religion, sentiments and manners […] from a dancing-master, music-master, and a chambermaid!" (1760: 305). Mrs Modish has not only ruined her own life, but prepared her daughters for the empty life of the fashionable world. She is judged to be a bad mother and wife, and Mercury advises her to "keep happiness her view, but never take the road that leads to it", just as she has done in life (1760: 305). Ellis points out that this dialogue, although the most popular of Montagu's dialogues, is also the most problematic (2012: 427): she attacks women above her own station and places herself at risk for accusations of hypocrisy. While Lyttelton's dialogues aim to "establish or defend established moral or critical certainties", Montagu's dialogues "attack the tenets of their own possibility: that there might be stable and enduring cultural value in print and amongst society women" (Ellis 2012: 428).

5.3 XXVIII: Plutarch, *Charon* and the Bookseller

In the third dialogue, Charon ferries a "troublesome and obstreperous" Bookseller across the Hades in order to be "awe[d] into order and decency" by Greek historian Plutarch (Montagu 1760: 306). Most of the conversation takes place between Plutarch and the Bookseller, with Charon, the ferryman of Hades, initiating and concluding their encounter. This is another critique of the morals of contemporary society which does not value education and self-improvement.

The wealthy and cynical Bookseller is unpleasantly surprised to find himself in a place where authors have power over booksellers, and he has no love for Plutarch, whose works have cost him money. Plutarch misunderstands why his books fail to sell in the contemporary world, and assumes that modern times and improved morals must have produced greater men and better writers: "I should be glad you would give me some account of those Persons, who in Wisdom, Justice, Valour, Patriotism, have eclipsed my Solon, Numa, Camillus, Scipio, &c" (1760: 309). But the Bookseller explains that Plutarch's instructional histories are no longer relevant. The modern readers, "negligently lolling" in their easy chairs (1760: 316), want to be entertained. In the present day, it is possible to read all one's life and have no learning or knowledge at all, "which begins to be an advantage of the greatest importance" (1760: 309). The educational function of history has been given up for "Adventures which never occurred, Exploits that never were atchieved, and Events that not only never did, but never can happen" (1760: 310): in other words, fiction. The Bookseller also mentions secret histories "in which there is *no secret* and *no History*", a genre of literature with an interest in sex and scandal that reveals noble characters "in a state of undress" (Bullard 2017: 5).

The message of this dialogue is that novels and romances, 'false histories', are potentially threatening entertainment that easily corrupts the mind. This is particularly harmful for women whose lives are constrained and who lack access to what the world could teach them. Without novels, the Bookseller muses, women "would remain long in *an insipid purity of mind*, with a *discouraging reserve of Behaviour*" (1760: 311). Plutarch now becomes concerned for the women and wishes he had written more about exemplary heroines, but the Bookseller assures him that women do not bother to read about good examples, as they are more interested in scandal and vilification of honourable reputations (1760: 310-311).

Plutarch finds this love of fiction problematic because characters in novels are not guided by dispassionate and prudent principles and cannot provide a good example. He allows, however, that fiction could be useful if it follows the rules of religion and morality, given that fiction authors are able to attract an audience and a writer's first responsibility is to always try to correct the vices and follies of the age. Women in particular could benefit from the example of domestic (rather than public and heroic) virtues. The Bookseller admits that certain authors of the period have aimed at this, specifically Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. In Richardson's *Clarissa*, "one finds the dignity of Heroism tempered by the meekness and humility

of Religion, and perfect purity of mind and sanctity of manners" (1760: 318). And Fielding, the Bookseller says, has "exposed vice and meanness with all the powers of ridicule", even if he does not really provide virtuous examples (1760: 319). The Bookseller does not give these opinions as his own, but refers to what he has been told by more convincing authorities (a clergyman and "the best judges") (1760: 318). At this point Charon steps in to take the Bookseller away, indulging in fantasies of punishment: "shall we constitute him Friseur to Tisiphone, and make him curl up her locks with his Satires and Libels?" (1760: 320). Plutarch takes a graver stance and reiterates his view of the responsibility of the writer. Authors are guilty of crimes they encourage, faults they tolerate, and the damage they have caused for the virtuous. They will be punished accordingly.

6. Stance and social values: Exposing vice, promoting virtue

Values are adopted and internalized through social group membership, as elements of social identity, and they serve as standards that guide behaviour towards certain morality- and competence-related goals (Williams 1979: 20, Rokeach 1979: 48). Montagu promotes values mainly through judgment. She satirizes the moral bankruptcy of commercially driven publishing (Ellis 2012: 428), thrill-seeking readers who turn to "absurd fancy" and "monstrous fiction" instead of instructive and virtuous history (Montagu 1760: 312), and the empty lives of high society women. Through this criticism she emphasises virtue and learning, rationality, morality, self-discipline and self-improvement.

The word *Ton* "highlights the foreignness and Frenchness" of the fashionable public space to which Mrs Modish belongs (Cohen 1996: 75). Montagu's stances reflect David Fordyce's *Dialogues Concerning Education* (1745-48), in which Fordyce asserts that politeness "must be cleared of French contamination" and promotes the instructive reading of history for the proper education of young men, in opposition to fashionable conversation with the ladies (Cohen 1996: 48). By the second half of the century, attitudes to learning French were ambiguous and associated with the problematics of 'displaying' female accomplishments (Cohen 1996: 65). In order to avoid this association of display, "serious young ladies" like Frances Burney, who could read French literature, might make a point of not speaking French (1996: 72). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, female politeness began to be domesticated and separated from the false politeness and meaningless

ceremony of the fashionable world (1996: 74-75). By condemning the behaviour of fashionable women, Montagu indeed calls upon them to acknowledge their family duties. Later in the eighteenth century, Hannah More contrasted the bluestocking assemblies "with the 'tainted affectation and false taste' of the Hotel de Rambouillet, the seventeenth-century Parisian salon, and also with her contemporary society, where 'Cosmetic powers' and 'polish, ton and graces' rule the day" (Eger 2003: 200). According to Eger, "[w]hile the bluestocking ideals of conversation and education for women were embedded in the rhetoric of commerce and luxury, they were solidly implanted on a bedrock of morality and concerned to promote learning above luxury" (2003: 200). The domestication of politeness, implied in the Bluestocking values of morality and learning, transformed politeness into a virtue and made it unproblematically available for women (Cohen 1996: 76, see Backscheider 2013 on the Bluestocking ideal of self-mastery).

An investigation of the pronouns *I* and *you* shows patterns of high involvement and subjectivity as well as more detached objective stances in the characters' speech. Hercules refers to himself and his heroic accomplishments more than Cadmus does, whereas Cadmus speaks more about learning, progress, inventions and other abstract concepts, focusing less on himself. Hercules engages Cadmus with questions (*What think you of their thin-spun systems of philosophy*), whereas Cadmus makes statements about Hercules's actions (past and proposed) and compares himself to Hercules. Mrs Modish talks about herself more than Mercury, and Mercury's role is to direct the conversation. While Modish ruminates about her life choices, talks about her routines and has difficulties with clear, precise expression (*I have told you as much as I know*), Mercury listens and responds with judgment and affect (*I am in a fright for you*). There is ambivalence in Mrs Modish's style, reflected in how she has drifted forward with the elusive bon ton as a directing force.

Plutarch is focused on self-reflection and observation and less on himself, whereas the Bookseller is persuasive and interactive (*I tell you, I assure you*). The second-person pronouns add to the Bookseller's more involved style: he engages Plutarch with direct address terms (*As to you, Plutarch*) and makes blunt statements about the financial trouble Plutarch has caused him and what Plutarch could do to please modern readers. The Bookseller's style of conversation is more direct and confrontational, but Plutarch is the moral winner, and in the end Charon somewhat abruptly declares that the Bookseller has now been sufficiently humbled.

Cadmus and Plutarch get the most space on the page, and they appear to be Montagu's mouthpieces. They both have a thoughtful style,

less belligerent than their companions'. Plutarch is learning- and value-oriented, and though Cadmus is somewhat assertive, he is more focused on abstractions than Hercules. The dialogue between Cadmus and Hercules stands out as a conversation where the character being educated is not morally deficient. Their discussion is rich with references to self-mastery and learning. When Cadmus states that the most important inventions of mankind "are greatly owing to men who have never quitted their closets", this state of privacy and confinement brings to mind women's lives: wouldn't a well-read woman, devoting what time she is able to spare for learning, also be able to make observations and inventions that benefit mankind?

Montagu emphasises commitment to group norms, but only when those norms are governed by the right morals; women in particular need to understand the perils involved when they aspire to belong to the wrong social group. The normative division into 'us' and 'them' which tends to structure social identities (Wearing 2011: vii) is prominently illustrated in the dialogues. 'Us' would be the people who value moral self-improvement, and 'them' are the vacuous and morally corrupt consumers who face eternal punishment in the afterlife. Montagu's style is at times comically ironic, but she shows her targets little sympathy. It is too late for Mrs Modish to redeem herself, and the Bookseller is ferried off to Minos and future punishment; all the exemplary characters are the classical figures who dwell in the Underworld.

The topics of the dialogues are not very subversive or original. Women and novel readers are an easy target, and Montagu criticizes those who are essentially the victims of their own errors. The possibility of fiction to provide good examples is perhaps the only case where Montagu offers constructive advice; and two of the dialogues do allude to women's possibilities to lead useful, fulfilling lives. Montagu was grateful that her love of reading kept her amused and occupied, particularly in solitude which could be mentally straining. "As Men are designed for active & publick life, I think a love of reading is hardly so necessary for them as for Women, to whom retirement is always safe, & sometimes necessary", she wrote to her father (in Eger 2010: 80). Mrs Modish has no redeeming qualities, but Richardson's Clarissa is presented as a virtuous example for female readers. Clarissa, of course, died a drawn-out death that deeply upset the readers, but Bowers (2013: 10) suggests that Richardson "wanted readers […] to believe that the novel's pervasive darkness is dispelled at last by the individual radiance and steadfast faith of its heroine". The main character's "contentment and self-control" at the face of her exemplary death "may have served as a kind

of wish fulfillment" (Bowers 2013: 18). Clarissa's Christian patience and self-mastery represent important themes in eighteenth-century women's fiction, and are in line with Bluestocking women's ideals of a good life (Backscheider 2013: 183-186).

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have explored social identity through the linguistic construction and expression of social values. Through investigating values and norms that a critical instructive text promotes we are able to distinguish elements of the author's social identity: what they stand for, their targets of identification, what they strongly distance themselves from. Satire can be a slippery slope in terms of irony, provocation and jest, but even with less ambiguous texts like Montagu's, what the author truly believes is not relevant: the key point is how they wish to be perceived and what values they want to be seen to embody. In this sense social identity and image are deeply interlinked.

In 1760, Lord Ferrars was sentenced to death for murdering his steward. Montagu considered it scandalous how women flocked to his trial decked with jewels, as if it was a social event. In the beginning of this letter she essentially states what Dialogue XXVII between Mrs Modish and Mercury is about, and she places the frivolous, unthinking Modish in this scene of human tragedy.

(5)   I have long been sorry to see the best of our Sex running continually after publick spectacles & diversions, to ye ruin of their health & understandings, & neglect of <P3> All domestick duties; but I own the late instance of their going to hear Lord Ferrers sentence particularly provoked me. […] in spite of all pretenses to tenderness & delicacy they went adorn'd with jewels, & laughing & gay, to see their fellow creature in the most horrid situation, making a sad end of this life, & in fearfull expectation of ye commencement of another. […] You will believe Mrs Modish was there, tho she does not mention it. (Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, 1760 May 1, MO 3034)

Montagu addresses here the problematic issue of female display and diversions in public spaces and expresses concern for the lack of empathy and understanding she has witnessed. In this letter, as in her dialogues, she

positions herself among the morally conscious reading ranks who seek to improve themselves, practice self-discipline and acknowledge their domestic duties. Anonymity gave her access to a public forum and diminished the risks involved, but compared to how distinct the novelist Maria Edgeworth's 'author-self' seems to be from her individual identity (Gallagher 1995: xix), Montagu author-self seems less disembodied from the person we see in her private letters. The dialogues should be read as an index of belonging, as embodying the social identity of a respectable learned woman who could contribute to the cultural progress of the age.

Montagu went on to publish an essay on Shakespeare in 1769, at first anonymously but in time under her own name. In 1777 she added her three dialogues to the fourth edition of the Shakespeare essay, with her name now displayed on the title page ("To which are now first added, THREE DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD By Mrs. MONTAGU", Montagu 1777). At this point, Montagu was a fêted patron of arts, a financially independent businesswoman and a public figure who specifically encouraged women writers (Eger 2010: 81). It was common knowledge that she was the author of all these texts, but to include her name on the title page in this age of anonymous publishing, even in that roundabout way which did not directly identify her as the author of the essay, must have been empowering.

A talented woman's life may have been constant warfare, but anonymity could offer space for intellectual creativity and values could be her weapon; a learned and virtuous eighteenth-century woman could depend on her values to distinguish herself from the false politeness of the bon ton. The right set of values, legitimized by the right kind of social group, could function as identity markers of a moral and rational mind. Frances Burney, who wrote a private journal to Nobody, encountered difficulties when her 1779 comedy *The Witlings* "seemed to be about Somebody, Elizabeth Montagu, the queen of the bluestockings" (Gallagher 1995: 229); next to the Nobodies, Montagu was a Friend and a Somebody.

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'Haha, what a twit I am'. The construction of a social identity in the comments sections of UK food blogs[1]

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the comments sections of a group of UK food blogs to investigate how bloggers shape their 'social identity' in direct interaction with the users. The bloggers' comments are analysed in view of Goffman's (1959) theory of society as a stage to see whether the food bloggers show their 'self-as-performer' (the real person) or their 'self-as-character' (a constructed persona). Moreover, the study uses Herring's (2004) criteria to understand if food blogs can be classified as virtual communities. Then, a qualitative analysis of instances of positive/negative politeness in the comments sections of the blogs aims at investigating the reactions to praise or criticism from the users. The application of politeness theory shows to what extent the blogger-user interaction is influenced by the users' perception of belonging to a (virtual) community.

Keywords: computer-mediated communication, food blogs, pragmatics, discourse analysis, culinary linguistics.

1. Introduction

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) along with linguistics studies have shown an increasing interest in the analysis of practices in the discourse of food. Food-related discourse plays a significant role also in the entertainment industry as it is testified by the popularity of renowned

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chefs who are present daily on dedicated TV shows and networks. For instance, the BBC 'Good Food' show and Food Network are dedicated exclusively to food preparation and how to serve dishes to guests or family. In addition, we witness the growth of the number of amateurs who use the public's increased interest in cooking and the spread of digital media to make a career through online platforms, such as food blogs, YouTube channels, social networks, etc., in which they show how to organise and prepare meals. Online 'cooking personalities' particularly exploit the affordances of the medium of food blogs to increase the reach of their popularity to the extent that they have become acknowledged experts with the publication of cookery books and participation in TV programs or public events. Food blogs are also places of social interaction where the 'expert' who created the blog meets the 'non-expert' who visits the blog and posts comments. However, this interaction is more complex than just a dual relationship between the author spreading professional knowledge and the public receiving it since visitors include novices, who want to learn how to cook more creative dishes, and amateur specialists, who interact with the blogger at a higher expertise level (cf. Diemer – Frobenius 2013, Cesiri 2016).

This study continues the work conducted in a previous contribution which investigated the lexico-grammatical features in the recipes sections of the '2015 Top 10 UK's Food Blogs' (Cesiri 2016). In that study, food bloggers were found to constantly present themselves as food lovers rather than authoritative figures to reduce the distance from the users. In the present contribution the assumption is that communication in the recipes pages of a food blog is unidirectional, while real interaction happens in the comments section. Here, users provide feedback on the recipes and exchange their ideas, share their opinions and experiences. Before analysing the comments sections, the study seeks to address the question whether food blogs constitute a virtual community. To do so, Herring's (2004) six criteria proposed to identify an online community are applied to the ten food blogs considered in Cesiri (2016). If the six criteria are met, the food blogs can be considered virtual communities 'guided' by a leader (the food blogger) who has a specific social identity, and whose norms the users must abide by to be accepted as members of the community. Then, in order to investigate how food bloggers shape their 'social identity', the comments are analysed using Goffman's (1959) theory of society as a stage, in its particular application to blogs (McGaughey 2010). Finally, the exchange of comments between food blogger and users is employed to analyse instances

of positive and negative politeness (cf. Brown – Levinson 1987). The aim is to see how they reciprocally position themselves and how the bloggers manage praise or criticism from their users.

1.1 The corpus

As indicated in Cesiri (2016) the food blogs used in this study were selected according to their 'popularity' on the Web and the food bloggers' activity of posting comments. The ranking of the food blogs in this sense was the one provided by the website *Vuelio* (former *Cision UK*), a journalist and blogger database, monitoring analytics. *Vuelio*'s ranking was formed taking into consideration search criteria such as "social sharing, topic-related content and post frequency" (<www.vuelio.com>), with data updated in June 2015. A later consultation of the *Vuelio* database produced a slightly different ranking. However, a decision was made to keep the same list of blogs as in the 2016 study to investigate that corpus more thoroughly. Thus the analysis conducted here includes an updated list of food blogs, and takes into consideration their recipes and comments sections. The database search produced the following list of 'UK's Top 10 Food Blogs':

1. *Deliciously Ella*, <http://deliciouslyella.com/>;
2. *The Curry Guy*, <http://www.greatcurryrecipes.net/>;
3. *Lavender and Lovage*, <http://www.lavenderandlovage.com/>;
4. *Honestly Healthy*, <http://www.honestlyhealthyfood.com/>;
5. *Tinned Tomatoes*, <http://www.tinnedtomatoes.com/>;
6. *A Girl Called Jack*, <http://agirlcalledjack.com/>;
7. *The Crazy Kitchen*, <http://www.thecrazykitchen.co.uk/>;
8. *Eat Like a Girl*, <http:// http://eatlikeagirl.com/>;
9. *Amuse Your Bouche*, <http://www.amuse-your-bouche.com/>;
10. *Belleau Kitchen*, <http://www.belleaukitchen.com/>.

Earlier analysis of the recipes sections showed that the style used by the food bloggers in the recipes and in the comments sections are slightly different. In the recipes sections, when they describe the ingredients and the procedure to make the dish, the register is more formal; it also shows the usage of domain-specific, technical terminology such as the indication of specific cooking techniques, tools or ingredients (Cesiri 2016). On the other hand, the narration of the memories, or of some story behind the dish, engages the users' attention and creates a sort of emotive link between the food blogger

and the public. In the comments sections (and, occasionally, in the narrative parts of the recipes sections), the language could be described as more colloquial and conversational. However, suggestions and further advice to personalise the dish are always to the point and use technical terminology despite the informal tone of the food bloggers' responses.

2. Food blogs as a genre

Blogs (or weblogs) are defined as "interactive webpages in which the blog owner, or author, posts regular updates. Blogs can be about a particular topic, current events, or personal thoughts and expression, much like that of a personal journal" (Blanchard 2004). Today, blogs have gone far beyond a mere personal journal and are used by their owners, a.k.a. bloggers, to share personal ideas as well as professional opinions, to set trends in domains such as fashion, cinema, travel experiences, and lifestyle in general, but also politics, and literature. Blogs are, moreover, sometimes seen as forms of journalism (Lasica 2003) to the extent that "journalists see blogs as alternative sources of news and public opinion" (Herring et al. 2004: 1). The power of blogs in many aspects of real life has attracted the attention of scholars who investigate to what extent (if any) the discursive practices already established in other genres of CMC (forums, electronic discussion lists, etc.) are present in blogs, and how these establish new practices and set new boundaries in CMC. For instance, Androutsopoulos (2011) reflects on how new digital media (such as blogs) influence already established writing practices and create new ones, as well as how the interface influences the creation of a digital identity (Androutsopoulos 2010). Leppänen (2012) investigates the language choices in the discourse of social media to see how "affective, social, and cultural alignments and affinities" (2012: 1080) are expressed by young Finns. Herring (2007) creates a scheme for a classification of genres in CMC, using blogs as a case study. Other studies draw a picture of a complex genre, in which blogs range from "individualistic, intimate forms of self-expression" (Herring et al. 2004: 1) to places for social action (Miller – Shepherd 2004) and sites where new personal connections are built (Baym 2010). More recently, blogs have been contrasted with other social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Baruah 2012, Bouvier 2015). Several other contributions focus on the sociolinguistic implications of blogging and use specific types of blogs as case studies. To name just a few, Luzón (2011) considers academic blogs, Limatius (2016 and this volume) analyses "plus-size fashion blogs", while Palmgren

(2015) examines blogging by "girls with eating disorders". What these studies have in common is the assumption that blogs go beyond traditional writing practices and the creation of social relations, while crossing the border between public space and the private sphere.

As regards the specific kind of blog investigated here, food blogs as a 'textual'[2] genre have only recently received more interest from scholars of CMC. The literature on food blogs is not as extensive as one might think considering the popularity that the genre has enjoyed in everyday life. Moreover, research into food blogs includes a variety of approaches that renders categorisation difficult. For instance, food blogs have been considered from the gender studies and feminist perspectives (Cairns et al. 2010, Salvio 2012); communication studies concentrate on food blogs as a kind of social media (Rousseau 2012), while sociological and cultural studies investigate how food blogs can affect eating habits, food culture (Lee 2014, McGaughey 2010), or how food blogs are used to communicate personal relationships with food and body image (Leggatt-Cook – Chamberlain 2012).

Domingo et al. (2014) investigate food blogs using "combined multimodal social semiotic, ethnographic and narrative methods" (2014: 2). The authors, however, use food blogs only as a functional means to prove that their framework is useful for the analysis of online material in general. On a similar note, Adami (2014) conducts a multimodal analysis on two versions of the same food blog to explore the "aesthetic meaning potential" (2014: 12) of a webpage constructed to achieve specific communicative intentions, which depend also on the accepted norms of the virtual social group that is targeted.

Corpus or discourse analyses have been employed in two studies thus far, (Diemer – Frobenius 2013 and Cesiri 2016). The former has drawn on a definition of food blogs as a genre, concluding that food blogs "are a written, asynchronous genre of CMC" (2013: 53). As it was also ascertained in Cesiri (2016), they are a complex sub-genre of blogs, containing recipes, information and discussion on nutrition, tales of personal events connected

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[2]   Here, the term 'textual' is used as in Herring (2004: 371) to refer to "any form of language, spoken or written, that can be captured and studied in textual form". It is important to point out that food blogs are not a 'textual genre' *stricto sensu*. Indeed, they are a multisemiotic genre since they use a combination of verbal and visual elements to make the users' browsing experience more appealing. Food blogs employ customised graphic design, both static and dynamic with animations, sounds, text, pictures and videos, hyperlinks, searchable archives and other features that allow users to directly interact with the food bloggers, such as comments, links to social media or the subscription to a newsletter.

to – or deriving from – the preparation of specific recipes. In the prototypical structure that recurs in every food blog, the pages are constructed as in the scheme presented by Diemer – Frobenius (2013: 56). This scheme is adapted as in Figure 1 below to describe the typical structure found in the food blogs examined in Cesiri (2016).

Banner	Social media logos

Title of the recipe	
Photo of the finished dish	Awards and reviews
	Other recipes
A few introductory paragraphs The recipe Concluding remarks	Advertisements
	Newsletter subscription
	Searchable archives
	Videos
Comments section	

Links to other recipes of the books by the blogger Presentation of the blogger with photo

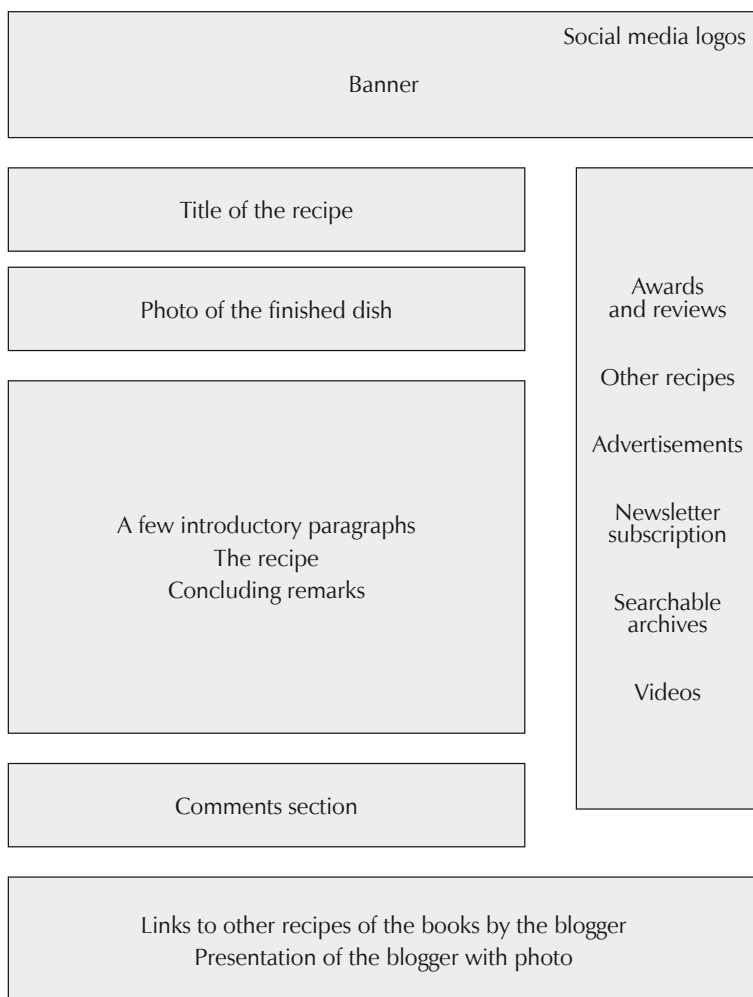Figure 1. Prototypical structure of the food blogs in the corpus
(adapted from Diemer – Frobenius 2013: 56)

As regards the textual aspects of the genre, the recipes sections show a recurrent pattern, which is also typical of the more traditional genre of cookbooks: the recipe is preceded by a few introductory paragraphs, in which the blogger informs the users of its origins and of his/her source

of information. Typical of the food blog genre is the part where the bloggers tell how the dish, or its preparation, is related to their personal experience or to some anecdote in their family history, including the description of emotions recalled thanks to that very recipe. The actual recipe follows giving information on the serving size, the time necessary for preparation, the level of difficulty and the list of ingredients. The verbal description of the preparation is accompanied by photos and/or videos of the different steps, and the addition of some more information on how to best serve or enjoy the dish. The abovementioned multimodal element is further enhanced by the sensory descriptions given in the recipes and in the comments sections, and which help create and enrich the phraseology typical of communication about food. The concluding remarks are usually in the form of one expressive sentence (e.g., 'Good, eh?', Cesiri 2016) or some expressions in the imperative tense (e.g., 'enjoy!', Cesiri 2016). The final part of the page is occupied mostly by the comments section, the object of the present study.

3. Food blogs as virtual discourse communities

Previous research has established that food blogs are places where expert knowledge (food bloggers and expert users) and 'common practice' (non-expert users) meet and interact (Cesiri 2016). However, the occurrence of interaction is not sufficient to identify virtual communities (i.e. where communicative practices are influenced by a sense of in-group identity) involved in food blogs. The following Sections are dedicated to addressing the question whether or not food blogs can be considered virtual communities. Such identification will be instrumental to a contextualisation of the interactional practices that emerge from the analysis of the comments, and to explaining some reactions of the users to the bloggers being praised or criticised.

The identification of a virtual community is not an easy task, considering the intangible communicative and physical boundaries that food blogs have as a genre of CMC. Using the literature available on virtual communities, Herring (2004: 352) identifies "six sets of criteria" that help identify a virtual community and that "suggest concrete ways in which the notion of 'virtual community' might be broken down into component behaviours that can be objectively assessed" (353). These criteria are (Herring 2004: 352):

1) active, self-sustaining participation; a core of regular participants;
2) shared history, purpose, culture, norms and values;

3) solidarity, support, reciprocity;
4) criticism, conflict, means of conflict resolution;
5) self-awareness of group as an entity distinct from other groups;
6) emergence of roles, hierarchy, governance, rituals.

Applying Herring's (2004: 353) criteria, the first one is met in the recurrent posts by certain users who receive regular replies by the blogger. Criterion number 2 includes the presence of searchable archives as well as the use of recurrent linguistic practices that are shared by bloggers and users alike. The criterion of solidarity and reciprocity is measured through the specific usage of speech acts such as expressions of positive politeness, while the fourth criterion of expression of conflict and its resolution can be measured by an analysis of "speech acts violating positive politeness" (Herring 2004: 353). The fifth criterion is evident when the comments contrast the 'us' as a group to the 'them' used to refer to some other food blog. Finally, the sixth criterion identifies the hierarchical roles among the participants that can be measured through the analysis of the participation patterns emerging in the comments where blogger and users engage in conversation-like interactions.

The application of these criteria to the comments sections of the food blogs reveals that only some of the food blogs meet them and can thus be properly considered as virtual communities, namely: *Deliciously Ella* (henceforth DE), *Lavender and Lovage* (L&L), *Tinned Tomatoes* (TT), *Amuse Your Bouche* (AYB). As for the remaining six food blogs, they show no interaction; occasionally the users post some comments but they do not receive an answer by the food blogger. Alternatively, if bloggers do reply, they write just a very short comment that does not encourage further interaction, such as a thank you note for the feedback on the recipe and for following the blog. These food blogs were excluded from the present analysis, which focuses only on those that involve interaction between bloggers and users. The next Section will show how the four food blogs selected meet the six criteria that identify them as virtual communities.

3.1 The food blogs as virtual communities

The first criterion of participation and presence of a core group of participants is easily measured in the users' comments[3]. The core participants are recognisable from the acknowledgement that they have been following

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3   The examples reported in this paper were taken from a pool of 1727 comments, thus divided: DE 1022, L&L 202, TT 333, and AYB 170. Most of the comments by the users,

the bloggers for a long time (1, 2, 3), from reference to older recipes (5 and 7) or to the personal life of the blogger. For instance, (4) refers to how busy the blogger is imagined to be, while (6) includes a reference to the blogger's son appearing in the photo accompanying the recipe:

(1)   Looks lush!! Love following your recipes… What steamer do you use? (DE);

(2)   This recipe looks amazing – I am obsessed with your blog! (DE);

(3)   Another gorgeous looking recipe and how interesting about how it got its name! (L&L);

(4)   Well, that looks simply wonderful! How in the world do you find the time to do everything you do?! (L&L);

(5)   Oooh these look lovely! As you know I've made sausages a couple of times recently […] (TT);

(6)   Look at how big Cooper is getting. These are pulled together beautifully […] (TT);

(7)   We love your beer batter, so this sounds like another recipe of yours that we will love (AYB);

(8)   Thank you once again for a lovely looking dish (AYB).

Criterion 2 is also fulfilled thanks to the presence of searchable archives in all the four blogs. The other aspect included in this criterion (a shared domain-specific language) is measured through the specific terminology used in the recipes by the bloggers. These are repeated with skilled expertise by the users, who sometimes also suggest alternatives to the original recipe, as in the following examples, which use specific terminology such as 'sautéing' in (9), the procedures explained in (10), or reference to alternative ingredients to personalise the blogger's original recipe (11, 12):

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and the replies by the bloggers, did not contain particularly articulate interactions, most remarks being just general 'thank you for the new recipe' by the users and 'thank you for your comment' by the bloggers. These examples were not chosen to be included in the present analysis since they show only the kind of interaction that is part of normal acts of '(n)etiquette'. Thus, the examples given in the following Sections, both users' comments and bloggers' replies, are all those that allow for the analysis of how the food bloggers keep their 'social identity' in their interactions with their users, especially in the case of criticism. The examples are reported verbatim from the comments sections of the food blogs; punctuation, spelling, and possibly non-standard forms are all as they were posted by their authors. When no other indication is provided, the comments come from the users and the blog in which they were posted is given in round brackets.

(9)   Wonderful! I made it last night and just soaked the tomatoes in warm water for about an hour prior to sautéing, and it worked wonderfully! (DE);

(10)   I made the sorbet this afternoon as I had some strawberries that were looking a bit tired. I only had regular elderflower cordial so I added a generous tablespoon of rose water instead (L&L);

(11)   Sylvia loves chickpeas so I must try these (though I don't like coriander so might try parsley) (TT);

(12)   Haven't tried these before. They look good. I imagine they'd be even better with a dollop of tomato chutney (AYB).

Criteria 3 and 4 are also fulfilled by the numerous acts of positive politeness and the expressions of support in the case of criticism (see Section 5 for background on politeness). As regards the last two sets of criteria (self-awareness as a group and emergence of roles and hierarchies), they are met when users name other food blogs with an implicit contrast between the 'us in this food blog' and the 'them in the other food blog'. This contrast is used to mark the personal sense of belonging to that food blog in particular, with no criticising intention towards the 'other' food blog, as examples (13) to (16) show:

(13)   Hey Ella! I found your website about 2 weeks ago and I wanted to eat vegan and gluten free for a while now but I just couldn't find enough delicious recipes and when I first discovered yours I was skeptical (DE);

(14)   Trying to pick a recipe from Tara's blog is practically impossible! I have made MANY dishes from her site and they're all fantastic. You ended up selecting a great one (L&L);

(15)   I will definitely give these a go, they are probably a lot healthier than the deep fried version I make from Jo Pratt's book and I'm sure even more delicious for it! (TT);

(16)   I loved this! I focus on beauty/lifestyle blogs so it's really refreshing to read through different kind of blogs :) x (AYB).

The last set of criteria (recognition of hierarchical roles) is met in those comments where users (the non-experts) ask the blogger (the expert, the 'leader' in the blog) to provide some advice on variation of ingredients or procedures to meet special conditions, or simply as a viable alternative to the original recipe. This is illustrated in the following examples, in which 'U' stands for the 'user' who posted the comment and 'FB' for the 'food blogger' who replied:

(17)   U: Hi Ella, when i made this, the chick peas kept popping and bursting all over my oven! Made a bit of a mess, is this normal? It was my first

time to bake chick peas Love your recipes! – FB: Yes they tend to pop as they're roasting. You could try putting the oven on a lower heat to avoid burning, hope you loved the bowl x (DE);

(18) U: I've always been hazy about coddled eggs. So basically they are a poached egg in a pot? – FB: Yes, it is a poached egg in a pot [User's Name], but with added extras! I think you would love them cooked this way! (L&L);

(19) U: Just found this recipe and really want to try it as good English style sausages, veggie or otherwise, are tough to find in France. Freezing half the batch would suit us, but would you recommend freezing at stage 5 or after stage 6? – FB: I would probably cook them a little then let them cool before freezing (TT);

(20) U: My husband isn't a fan of aubergine but I think he would eat this. It looks yumt to me! – FB: You could always stack it up with slices of roasted tomato or courgette instead :) (AYB).

4. The construction of the food bloggers' social identity

Cesiri (2016) established that, in the recipes sections, food bloggers tend to present themselves as food lovers with some expertise rather than as authoritative experts. This was interpreted as their desire to reduce the distance from their public and thus gain more popularity. However, in the previous Section we have seen that, in the comments, users consider the food bloggers to be real experts who can be addressed for advice and specific information. To clarify this contradictory characterization, Goffman's (1959) theory of society as a stage is employed here together with its specific application to bloggers (McGaughey 2010). This will help address the question as to which characterization of the food bloggers actually prevails: the food lover who is just sharing recipes or the expert sharing their specialised knowledge? Disentangling this question will be useful in the analysis of how food bloggers manage praise and criticism since their communicative strategies could be explained in light of their adherence (or the lack of it) to their preferred characterization.

According to Goffman's (1959) theory, people are social actors wearing a mask, i.e. a self-constructed social identity that is presented to the others (other actors) as if during a performance on stage[4]. However, as we decide

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[4] This idea is reminiscent also of Shakespeare's famous quote: "All the world's a stage, /And all the men and women merely players; /They have their exits and their

how to interact with other actors, our surrounding society, we also construct for ourselves two different social identities that are called 'self-as-performer' and 'self-as-character'. The former corresponds to the person who wears the mask, our real persona, while the latter is the mask itself, our constructed identity, namely the way we behave when interacting with other people. McGaughey (2010) applies this dual characterization to the cultural analysis of the personalities of two German food bloggers. The study finds that the two bloggers present idealised online identities, quite different from their identities in real life, thus they construct for themselves a 'self-as--character' which is considerably different from their 'self-as-performer'. This is especially evident in the different communicative behaviours they have in the recipes sections and in the comments sections, where they show their 'self-as-character' and their 'self-as-performer', respectively (McGaughey 2010: 89). The framework used in Goffman (1959) and in McGaughey (2010) was, then, applied to the analysis of the four food bloggers. The following Sections will describe the 'selves' that characterise the four food bloggers and make them recognisable by the core participants[5] of the virtual community engaged in interaction.

4.1 *Deliciously Ella*

DE presents herself to the public as a natural, fresh-faced woman in her thirties. She describes how her interest in cooking healthy food developed after being diagnosed with a chronic disease, which required major and sudden changes to her diet and lifestyle. The aim of the blog is to help people with similar health issues find a way of eating the appropriate food, cooked simply but gratifying to the taste. In the comments sections, she replies individually to users. More often than not she thanks them for their comments, even if these are just very brief expressions of enthusiasm for a new recipe. When asked specific questions, she replies extensively using many hedging devices (underlined), to lessen the authority of her 'voice', as the following examples show:

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entrances; /And one man in his time plays many parts, /His acts being seven ages" (*As You Like It*, II.vii, 1600 c.).

[5] For the criterion followed to select the examples, see fn. 3. As in the previous Section, 'U' indicates the comments of the users ('U1', 'U2', etc. indicate comments from more users in the same thread); 'FB' indicates the comments by the food bloggers; emphasis added throughout.

(21)   U: This recipe looks amazing – I am obsessed with your blog! I'm on
        Weight Watchers :(and worried about the oil in the recipe, do you
        think it would work if I followed the recipe but just left the oil out?
        – FB: So happy you're loving the recipes! You <u>could always</u> omit the
        oil in the mash as the potatoes <u>should</u> mash quite easily as they are
        although the chickpeas will dry out without the oil sadly x;

(22)   U: Hey Ella! I want to make this during the week for my dinners. […]
        I want to try this one in the coming week but just wondering if I could
        make it Sunday night and it would hold until Thursday? Or do you
        have to make it fresh every night? Look forward to your response
        – thank you again for these delicious recipes. […] – FB: Hi Emily, so
        pleased to hear that you're enjoying the recipes! I haven't tried keep it
        in the fridge for that long but I imagine that it <u>wouldn't</u> keep so well
        after four days, it's much better made fresh on the day as it can end up
        quite soggy otherwise. It <u>should</u> freeze well too! Hope you love it x.

Even when replying to criticism she is always polite in her apologies
(underlined in example 24), offering alternatives (in boldface in 24), and
trying to keep the user engaged in her blog (as in the salutation in 24), or
clarifying the user's doubts about a recipe (23); in the case of a highly negative
comment, she does not reply, leaving the other users to reply for her (25).

(23)   U: […] Lived in Italy for 25 yrs so understand olive oil. You use huge
        amounts! Vast no. of calories. May I have your thoughts, please.
        Thank you – FB: Hi […], I found that you need this amount of olive
        oil to make sure that […]. This recipe also serves 4 people so you need
        enough for all the servings! X;

(24)   U: hi there i haven been a vegan an gluten free cook for 25 years i have
        to say your recipes sound very exciting but sorry to say having tried
        a few i do find them very bland and a little bit expensive regards
        […] – FB: Hi [user's name], <u>I'm sorry you feel that way. Everyone
        has different taste buds and enjoys food in different ways</u>. **You can
        always alter the recipes slightly to suit your personal preference.** It's
        difficult for me to advise as this is a very personal thing. […] Really
        hope continue to make more of the recipes and start to enjoy them!
        <u>Have a lovely day x</u>;

(25)   U1: Ella, this is the second of your recipes where the amount of
        coconut milk has totally overwhelmed – and quite frankly ruined –
        the dish. I have now cancelled my order of your cookbook because

I am very doubtful that you actually cook these recipes before posting them. – U2: Hum, Marion, that's a bit harsh! I'm quite sure Ella does cook those recipes herself, and the amount of praise you can read in the comments will show you that most people who tried it loved it. So, maybe you didn't like it, and decided to cancel your book order, but there's no need to be mean about Ella's cooking skills. U3: Well said! I'm sure that the publishers wouldn't go ahead with this book if the recipes weren't tried and tested. U4: Everyone's taste is different. I always adjust recepies for my own taste. Just a suggestion…

The 'self-as-character' shown in the 'About' section of the blog is thus consistent with her 'self-as-performer' emerging from the comments section: an agreeable person, interested in keeping a friendly relationship with her public and avoiding engaging in 'conversations' with users that are showing a potentially aggressive attitude in their posts.

4.2 Lavender and Lovage

The L&L blog is constructed to communicate a deep connection with English traditions, with the 'countryside lavender' theme repeated in the choice of decorative elements in the pages (quite flowery) and in the combination of colours (using mostly white, lavender and pastel colours). The food blogger's 'self-as-character' – emerging also in the same pictures of the blogger – is that of a motherly middle-aged woman, with a still youngish, friendly and reassuring appearance. The food blogger's presentation of herself is that of a traveller, who has also lived abroad for some time, with a keen sense of affection for her English upbringing but with a knowledge of the flavours and traditions of other countries. The persona emerging from the comments section is consistent with that emerging from the self-presentation; she always replies, first thanking the user for the comment, and then making a point by adding some comment or detail (underlined sentences in the examples):

(26)   U: These are so cute! I love how golden they look and how perfectly burst those berries have popped!! […] – FB: Thanks [User's name], I love seasonal berries and blackberries have to be a favourite of mine, <u>but I have never added them to muffin type cakes before</u>!;

(27)   U: Those look delicious!! – FB: Thanks [User's name], <u>they WERE delicious, all gone now</u>!

To more specific comments, she replies in a very general but polite way never sounding too professional but consistent with the image of a food lover like the users. In general, she tries to be as polite as possible, sharing the feelings that the users express in their comments (underlined in 29 and 30), and also providing suggestions even when they are not solicited (in boldface in 28 and 29). When asked directly, she tries to reply as thoroughly as possible (30).

(28)   U: What a lovely recipe; I loved the Brambly Hedge books too – so nice that you could work an illustration into your post. – FB: Thanks so much for your kind comments [user's nickname] – **and do try this recipe if you have time**!;

(29)   U: I do miss lobster. […] Of course it looks wonderful, I'll just gaze and remember the days before a shellfish allergy! – FB: <u>It's such a shame about your allergy [user's nickname] and it's also weird how it just happened too</u> …… **hopefully you can make up for your lack of shellfish with more cheese and wine**!;

(30)   I'd love to make these – would you kindly post a conversion table to American measurements? thank you! – FB: There is a conversion table here four you to convert them! UK to US conversions.

4.3 Tinned Tomatoes

The 'self-as-character' presented by the food blogger is, in this case, a young mother and wife who specialises in vegetarian and vegan recipes for family meals. Simple recipes and genuine food is the *leitmotif* of her blog, recalled also in the combination of colours (white background, simple design and drawings of vegetables that remind people of those in old-fashioned cookbooks). The 'self-as-performer' emerging from her replies is consistent with her self-presentation: the tone is always polite with the addition of advice, often unsolicited by the users. As we see in (31) and (32), her feedback seems to come from a friendly expert rather than a food lover sharing her cooking experiments with her peers: she rewards the clever comments just like a teacher ('Good point!', 31), or builds upon something mentioned by the user to provide her own advice (underlined sentence in 32).

(31)   U: Bookmarked! These sound awesome. Bet they'd work really well as veggie burgers too :-) Thanks for sharing – FB: They probably would work well as burgers too […]. Good point! Glad you like them :);

(32) U: I grew up on pickled beets, or beetroot as my mom called it, even layering sliced pickled beets in sandwiches. […] – FB: I like the pickled beets sliced on a sandwich <u>that is spread with salad cream and topped with cheddar</u>.

When she finds an expert user, who highlights some flaws in the recipe, she replies keeping her 'identity' of an expert, lessening the relevance of her inaccuracy with the use of irony (underlined), justifying her slip-up (boldface) and adding additional suggestions for the recipe to compensate for the original mistake (italics), as in the following example:

(33) U: Looks great and it is lovely to have time […] interested the you have both flax seeds and linseeds in the recipe – in Australia flax seeds are called linseeds (though "flax seeds" is becoming more popular). These burgers would be great with a bit of nutritional yeast flakes and some lemon juice for a slight cheesy taste. […] – FB: <u>Haha, that shows how much I know</u>. **I bought the flax seeds and brown linseeds in the same health shop and didn't realise they were the same, although one is slightly ground**. <u>So funny!</u> *I did think about adding nutritional yeast, but wanted to keep the flavours pure this time. I have been using it to make Graham cheese sauce though.*

To the indirect criticism from another food blogger she replies in the same way as in (33). In fact, in (34) we see that she starts her reply with a laugh and some self-mockery (underlined), then she continues with a justification (italics) and further 'teacher-like' comment (boldface) that rewards the user for the clever remark. Then a small conversation occurs aimed at reducing the supposed threat that the criticism might have posed:

(34) U: They look great. Have you tried a burger press for them? I find that really helps veggie/vegan burgers to stick together. No mention of lentils or tahini in the ingredients though ;-) – FB: <u>Haha, what a twit I am</u>. *I have added them in now. Must have been distracted.* **Well spotted** :) – U: I'm always doing that and can never spot my own mistakes until I've published them. – FB: Well thanks for telling me :) I was probably answering Cooper's a million and one questions while I typed.

In the second part of (34) we see also that the user replies with the intention of lessening her/his criticism by mentioning the fact that s/he makes similar mistakes too. The food blogger acknowledges the attempt at mitigation with the description of the situation that led her to make the mistake in the first place,

a distraction caused by her son. This justification is useful to reduce distance from the users, by adding details from her personal life, and to stress the fact that the mistake was not due to carelessness. Thus the 'self-as-character' shown in the description of herself (a mother who runs a food blog) is consistent with her 'self-as-performer' replying in the comments sections.

4.4 Amuse Your Bouche

The 'self-as-character' of the fourth food blogger presents a young woman in her twenties, with a friendly, 'girl-next-door' look. Her short self-presentation is that of a shy person who runs a blog on vegetarian dishes. Her preference for simple recipes is also reflected in the graphic composition of the blog: light colours in the combination of white (the background), pastel yellow and orange (other graphic elements), with a simple and clear font type. The 'friendly shyness' acknowledged by the food blogger emerges also in the comments section where she tries to establish a personal connection with the users. In (35), when the user provides enthusiastic feedback on more than one element present in the original recipe post, the food blogger replies in a concise but friendly way.

(35)   U: I am digging YOUR definition of a "foodie" and why Yes, I would consider myself one! I am also digging the 24 hour food marathon! How awesome is that!! I totally WISH I could attend, I am sure it is worth every calorie! :) Also on my list of things I dig- these tarts! They are fabulous! Love that they are stuffed with leeks, broccoli and walnuts! Plus that smoked cheddar topping! SERIOUSLY YUM! Pinned! Cheers and thanks for sharing the deliciousness! – FB: Haha! Wow I love your enthusiasm ;) thanks for sharing!

In (36) and (37) she invites those users who are perceived as more or equally expert to provide feedback, thus presenting her 'self' as a food lover more than the expert.

(36)   U: That all sounds so good! Do you think it could be made with gluten free ingredients? – FB: I'm afraid I've not tried making the batter with a gluten-free flour, but if you do give it a go, let me know how it turns out! :);
(37)   U: I made this the other day with a number of modifications. It turned out well, so I thought I'd share […] – FB: Glad you enjoyed it! Your modifications all sound very reasonable :) thanks for the comment!

5. Managing praise and criticism in the comments sections

The users provide positive as well as critical feedback on the recipes proposed by the food bloggers. This kind of feedback may be useful to identify if and how the food bloggers respond by keeping the 'identity' they shaped for themselves in the blog. Moreover, it can also be used to examine how the sense of belonging to the community and in-group identity are reaffirmed by both bloggers and users. In this respect, the comments already analysed in the previous sections can be seen in the perspective of Brown – Levinson's (1987) politeness theory which includes the notions of face-threatening acts (FTAs) and negative/positive politeness. The authors draw their notion of 'face' from Goffman's (1959) ideas on the construction of our social identity (see Section 4). In short, 'face' is the individual "public self-image" (Brown – Levinson 1987: 62) which might be threatened by acts performed by our interlocutors. These threats might be addressed to our negative face (i.e. our "freedom of action and freedom from imposition", Brown – Levinson 1987: 62) or to our positive face (i.e. our "desire that this self-image [is] appreciated and approved of", Brown – Levinson 1987: 62). Within this framework, the notions of positive and negative politeness are strictly connected to FTAs directed by our interlocutors to our self-constructed image, or 'self-as-character', in Goffman's (1959) terms. Instances of positive politeness are those acts that keep the positive face intact just as negative politeness "is redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face" (Brown – Levinson 1987: 129).

If we apply these notions to the comments sections of the four food blogs, most of the interaction appears to be directed towards keeping the positive face of both users as members of the community and of the bloggers as the (perceived) 'leaders' of this community. Brown – Levinson (1987: 101) state that

> the linguistic realizations of positive politeness are in many respects simply representative of the normal linguistic behaviour between intimates, where interest and approval of each other's personality, presuppositions indicating shared wants and shared knowledge, implicit claims to reciprocity of obligations or to reflexivity of wants, etc. are routinely exchanged.

These linguistic realizations are fully in operation in the comments, such as in (1) to (8), (21), (22), (26) to (29), (35) and (37), where users and bloggers

show a sense of intimacy that favours social acceptance as well as in-group solidarity and membership. Indeed, these examples show that bloggers tend to use emphatic language to keep the users engaged and to reinforce the sense that they all belong to a community with strong social bonds.

As regards criticism, some users employ FTAs, addressed at the positive face of the blogger. In such cases, as we have already seen in the previous sections, the tendency of the food bloggers is to reply in such a way that their positive face is preserved (using face-saving acts). In fact, their replies to criticism involve irony and self-mockery (33 and 34) to minimise the potentially negative impact of the criticising feedback on their role of experts in their community. However, it may also be observed that criticism by users (such as in 33, 34, and 37) aims at keeping the sense of in-group solidarity. In the cases in which criticism violates this norm, the food blogger does not respond in similar terms but minimises the negative effect by emphasising the fact that the quantity of ingredients varies according to the serving size (23) or by providing alternative options that might satisfy the user's specific needs (24). In another case (25), in which the criticism is quite aggressive and poses a direct threat to both the positive and the negative face of the blogger, she does not reply. Instead we observe interventions of two other users who stand up for the blogger. As a result, they help to maintain her face (the face of their perceived 'leader') while reinforcing their membership in the group. Their replies are FTAs directed towards the positive face of the user who has criticised the blogger as they indicate that the flaws are not in the recipes but in the user's personal cooking skills. In this way, their self-constructed image of being 'more expert than the blogger' is ruined, and this is actually used to emphasise her social distance from the rest of the group. These replies are also directed against the user's negative face, since they indirectly obstruct their freedom of action (participation to the group) by identifying her as a non-member, whose comments are inappropriate for the community's shared norms of interaction.

6. Conclusions

The general picture emerging from the present analysis is that the bloggers present themselves as food lovers only superficially. In fact, they tend to reinforce their role as experts especially when they interact with expert users. In this respect, then, the difference between recipes (Cesiri 2016) and the comments sections is explained: the roles bloggers take in the recipes

and in the comments might differ, but the 'social identities' (or personas) that they construct in their blogs are consistent in both sections.

It was certainly difficult to ascertain the 'real' persona of the bloggers from the asynchronous interactions in the comments sections, from the recipes pages or from their presentation in the 'About' sections that are intentionally shaped by the food bloggers themselves. However, we might presume that a different persona would occasionally emerge – even unintentionally – in some of their replies, especially when they are exposed to cases of harsh criticism by some users. Unlike McGaughey's (2010) results, each food blogger's 'self-as-character' seems to match their 'self-as-performer'. If the 'self-as-character' permeates the whole food blogs, including the choice of pictures, combination of colours, and even the font used in the blog, it is the 'self-as-performer' that emerges in the food bloggers' narrations of real life events, of their families, or in the sharing of personal memories and experiences connected to the recipe. Moreover, my analysis has shown that the food bloggers wear four different self-constructed social masks as experts. DE and TT are the 'experts disguised as food lovers'; they both present themselves as friendly persons. Still, while the former always presents herself as more knowledgeable than the users, the latter uses more emphatic language, acknowledging mistakes with the pattern 'laugh – justification for the mistake – extra information', in which the 'extra information' is provided to reinforce her role as expert in the first place. L&L is the 'expert disguised as a motherly character'; her comments show a very polite lady who shares traditional memories about her upbringing in the English countryside but with an international touch from her travels abroad. Lastly, AYB is the 'open expert'; polite, less emotional in her replies than the other food bloggers, she reacts to criticism or negative feedback by providing some further advice. Strategies of positive politeness prevail in the comments sections of the four food blogs with the aim of reinforcing in-group solidarity and support. The latter is expressed especially in cases of aggressive criticism by some users who are indirectly silenced by other users who, by doing so, reclaim for the food blogger the role of 'leader and expert' of their community.

Finally, this study has shown that food blogs are an interesting genre of CMC that needs further investigation. The popular topic of food, its preparation and consumption rituals are the common ground that favours the friendly interaction of the leading figure of the blogger and the users. This characteristic opens the way to future studies on the discursive practices of this interaction and how they change when communication happens with perceived members and non-members, respectively. Also

worth investigating are gender-related issues that might influence the same discursive practices in the self-presentation pages as well as in the recipes, and if and to what extent gender-related differences are present in the comments sections in the way users interact with the food bloggers and/or other users. As already mentioned at the beginning of the paper, the corpus might also be extended with an updated list of food blogs that could enlarge the scope of data analysis and lead to further generalizations on the genre.

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Social identities in an institutional network:
Colonial Office correspondence on the Cape Colony
in the early nineteenth century[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a sociopragmatic analysis of the correspondence of the British Colonial Office pertaining to the colonisation of the Cape of Good Hope in the early nineteenth century. This setting poses fascinating questions related to the alignment of letter writers with the institution and the other actors, as well as to the ways in which social/institutional identities are constructed. In these processes, the participants' powers and obligations that are shaped by the institutional grid play a central role. At the same time, the growing professionalisation of the civil service determines linguistic expression in the Colonial Office. The paper provides a close characterisation of its internal dynamics, the power structures and the local grid of governance, as well as the transactional networks in 1796 and in 1827-30. My analysis focuses on the relation between institutional identities and person reference, and shows that Colonial Office correspondence is characterised by unique patterns of self- and addressee-reference, thus corroborating the precedence of local (institutional) factors over other determinants of person reference.

Keywords: early nineteenth-century institutional letters, person reference, historical sociopragmatics, British Colonial Office, Cape Colony.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the power structures and transactional networks in an institutional setting of early nineteenth-century British Colonial Office (henceforth CO), a government agency responsible for colonial policies. It

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[1]   I would like to thank the insightful reviewers for useful suggestions on the draft. The remaining infelicities are mine.

aims to reconstruct these structures and networks based on the internal correspondence of the officials. As the production and reception of letters is rarely individual, letter exchange is viewed as a specific semi-public domain of interaction (cf. Włodarczyk 2013a). The study focuses on the local and institutional aspects of identity projections that are recoverable from correspondence and poses the following questions: What kind of social and institutional spaces and identities emerge? What kind of relational work is observed in the data? Are interpersonal evaluations relevant to CO correspondence? These questions are addressed in a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the linguistic realisations of person deixis against the background of a theory of social distance as applied to the study into historical correspondence (Nevalainen – Raumolin-Brunberg 1995; Nevala 2004; Palander-Collin 2009a, 2009b and 2009c; Nurmi – Nevala 2010). Moreover, the paper assumes that epistolary interaction of institutional nature involves some conventions and restrictions on linguistic expression that may have been subject to change over time. Sociohistorical and institutional circumstances indicate the 1820s in particular as a time of transformation of the office's correspondence due to a range of regulatory attempts and steps taken by the Secretaries of State, Earl Bathurst and William Horton (Laidlaw 2005: 49, 88). Thus, the linguistic projections of social identities are likely to differ between the end of the eighteenth century and the late 1820s. Therefore, two datasets representing the two historically and institutionally important periods (1796 and 1827-30) were selected for analysis. In 1796 the British administrative rule over the Cape Colony was only taking shape and the institutional and procedural background of the correspondence was transitional and emergent. By the late 1820s, the CO has become a well-established institution and an efficient bureaucratic machine. Hence, the institutional spaces in which identities could be negotiated, may have become more defined and hierarchically segmented. In other words, in 1796 the global, i.e. more socioculturally grounded reference points for relational work would have been adopted (see Włodarczyk 2015: 158-159), while in the course of 30 years local norms may have become more conspicuous. Apart from the change in interaction modes and identity projections, an analysis of person reference demonstrates that institutional factors may have taken precedence over other determinants of person reference (e.g. social distance) in both periods. The study contributes to the understanding of the dependence of person reference on factors such as social (or family) hierarchies, gender and involvement. The results expand on this issue in line with the findings of Vartiainen – Säily – Hakala (2013) who demonstrate

that the complexity of person reference determinants goes beyond the effects of the gender variable and indicate the nature of the sender-recipient relationship as another significant parameter.

The paper is organised in the following way: Section 2 focuses on the theoretical background of social identities in historical linguistics and sociopragmatics, including the interface with person reference. In Section 3, I present a close sociohistorical and institutional contextualisation of the analysed datasets. Then, the collective and mutually sustainable identities in the CO are illustrated with some examples to show the factors that underlie their construction (Section 4). Section 5 is concerned with a qualitative and quantitative analysis of person reference in relation to the institutional identity work in the Colonial Office. Section 6 provides some concluding remarks.

2. Identity in historical linguistics and (socio)pragmatics

Theories of identity have proliferated in social sciences in particular, but as language is indubitably one of the tokens of identity, linguistic research in the area is also vast (see e.g. Tabouret-Keller 1998 for an overview). What different perspectives on identity have in common is the belief in the inherent dynamics and heterogeneity of the notion. Identity at any dimension, individual, communal, social, etc. is viewed as a process emerging in local discourse contexts (Bucholtz – Hall 2003) that performs chiefly a boundary marking function (e.g. *we* vs. *they*). In historical linguistics attempts have been made at reconstructing identities on relational and sociocultural levels in reference to the concepts such as social roles (Pahta et al. 2010) accessed primarily via the vast array of phenomena of person reference and social deixis. Moreover, linguistic manifestations of stance and affect have allowed a pursuit of identities in different historical periods in relation to social status, gender and professional roles (Nurmi – Nevala 2010). On the relational level, a number of sociocultural dimensions have been explored as underpinnings of identification processes and frameworks have been proposed for understanding the interfaces between discourses and identities (Wood 2009), and between individual and group identities.

Most recently, the usually binary focus of historical linguistic study on the macro dimension of the social and the micro dimension of the individual has expanded to cover what may be described as the medial level of small, well-defined communities. Such communities routinely engage in purposeful interaction with an intended, very often material outcome, i.e. professional communities (see Kopaczyk – Jucker 2013). The

CO correspondents, whose identities are of central interest to this paper, may be viewed as one such community. A focus on the transactional networks and their influence on language use constitutes a bridge between the micro and macro contextualisation, i.e. the medial contextual level. This level of analysis has been of particular interest to historical sociopragmatics. Among the central themes of sociopragmatic study are "(1) situated roles and identities, (2) relational notions such as "face" and "face-work", rights and obligations, power, social distance and affect, and (3) attitudes and opinions" (Culpeper 2009: 181). Moreover, Archer (Archer 2017) emphasises that sociopragmatics focuses on what variables are of significance to the contemporary understanding of the status systems of a given period. In a similar vein, Wood (2009: 188) views the concern of historical (socio) pragmatic in how social conditions affect the use of texts and identities of the participants in speech situations, but underlines the focus on communities. Thus in a sociopragmatic perspective we may view social identities not only as essentially related to the contemporary widely applied categories and values (global), but first and foremost to the specific category and value set that is of significance to a given community (local). This is not to claim that communities typically reinvent social spaces against the mainstream social divisions and perceptions, but that there is more to social identities observed locally, and in particular in a workplace or institutional setting, than may emerge from a global picture. In other words, inasmuch as social hierarchies feed into institutional ones, institutional hierarchies will take precedence over social hierarchies as institutions develop, solidify and as the communities involved become increasingly routine-based, exclusive and self-contained.

2.1 Identity in institutional settings

On the micro level of interaction, social identities are negotiated in interpersonal or relational work. This dimension normally involves engaging in the development, maintenance or otherwise shaping the relationships that connect the interlocutors. In workplace contexts, interlocutors are understandably bound by professional relations as part of their institutional identities, but, as research shows, they tend to step in and out of other (i.e. non-professional) social identities and roles at the same time (Kreiner – Hollensbe – Sheep 2006: 1317). Thus identities in the modern workplace are inseparable from individual mosaics of all the social and interpersonal binds. This is to say that the professional, i.e. transactional tasks people

engage in in the workplace are in most cases supported by interpersonal relational work (Bargiela-Chiappini – Harris 1996). Similar conclusions have been made about email correspondence by Bremmer (2006: 421), who shows that institutional identities are no less complex in this domain than in face-to-face interaction. As far as historical written data are concerned, merchant and diplomatic correspondence display similar patterns, with letter writers engaging in professional tasks and friendly interaction in a single letter (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006; Dossena 2010a and 2010b). These findings may be extended to the interactional setting of the CO, whose correspondence is also likely to bring together identities as social and identities as subjective constructs (cf. Tabouret-Keller 1998). The important question that may be raised in relation to this assumption is to what degree the interpersonal relational work plays a role in CO interaction. This paper shows that the role that the subjective and interpersonal play in shaping the institutional spaces of social identities in the CO should not be taken for granted. This is due to a range of contextual factors that call for rethinking the relational/ interpersonal dimension of the recorded interaction (see Section 4 below). It is also feasible to assume that the degree to which the interpersonal dimension of interaction may feature in the analysed setting may be revealed through the patterns of person reference, which is the focus of the next subsection.

2.2 Person reference

The domain of person reference, like all linguistic phenomena, is not randomly variable, but rule-governed and orderly (Enfield – Stivers – Levinson 2007). Although most studies into reference have been conducted within CA[2] and they have focused on first mentions in a stretch of conversation (see Enfield 2012 for an overview), their results point to more general, perhaps universal, mechanisms and may be tested against written historical data (Nevalainen – Raumolin-Brunberg 1995; Nevala 2004; 2009; Palander-Collin 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Nurmi – Nevala 2010; Włodarczyk 2013b). CA studies show that in the use of person reference, first and foremost, the principle of recognition operates: the form needs to allow unambiguous recognition of the referent. Secondly, there is a preference for minimisation (Sacks – Schegloff 1979)

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[2]   Data for CA usually cover interaction on low levels of formality among informants who know each other. Hence, the overall question in this study is how relevant their findings may be to written exchange conducted on relatively high levels of formality in the early nineteenth century.

which means that speakers tend to use a single reference form to designate a specific referent. When the two principles are in conflict, the former takes priority over the latter. A form that follows both principles is referred to as a "recognitional reference form" (Stivers – Enfield – Levinson 2007: 11).

Beyond such forms, speakers need to resort to other types of person reference, not only in cases in which the preferred form fails to achieve recognition (Stivers – Enfield – Levinson 2007: 13), but also if they aim at achieving more than just a reference to a specific person (Stivers 2007). In the latter case, we talk about "marked reference" or "alternative recognitionals" (Schegloff 2007: 500). Research shows, for instance, that first name (FN) is the preferred recognitional form in English when the referent is mentioned for the first time. In order to account for the differences between initial[3] and subsequent referential terms, Schegloff noticed two different patterns: FN for the former and pronominal reference for the latter (1996). In the case of self-reference and direct reference to the addressee, these are indeed achieved by default by means of pronominal forms (Schegloff 1996: 442). The above-mentioned principles apply to the data analysed here in following ways. In the initial reference (i.e. letter opening), a range of respectful terms of address and titles are employed to reflect the institutional and social hierarchies in which the interactants are involved. In the body of letters, in general, first and second person pronouns are the preferred forms of referring to the writer and addressee respectively. In other words, alternative (i.e. non-pronominal) forms of self and second person reference in the body of the letters may be considered as marked and particularly revealing in terms of the deictic and social spaces that they denote, hence they require further analysis (see Section 5.2).

2.3 Social dimensions of person reference

Social differentiation of language is related to the underlying social identifications and may be accessed through terms of address and person reference. Forms of person reference are related to social hierarchies with language tokens such as pronouns, nouns, etc. viewed as double indexicals that identify and locate a speaker within "a culturally specific moral order" (Nevala 2009: 77). Studies into person reference in historical letters (see Mazzon 2010 and Nevala 2010 for overviews; cf. Nevala 2004) have

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[3]   It is important to bear in mind the two distinct understandings of "initial" here: the first applies to the position in a stretch of discourse, the second to the ordering of referential terms (see Enfield 2012: 446)

mostly taken into account the dimensions of intimacy and social distance as determining their use. For instance, Palander-Collin has shown that in a set of sixteenth- and eighteenth-century English letters, self-mention and pronominal addressee reference are less frequent in letters to social superiors, where the needs of the recipient are in focus, while in the letters to social inferiors the incidence of self-referential terms and addressee reference is higher (Palander-Collin 2009a; cf. Palander-Collin 2009b: 268-69 and 2009c: 112). Moreover, in formal situations writers tend to use alternative nominal terms such as, for instance, indirect addressee inclusion that involves evasion of the second person pronoun (e.g. 'Your Lordship'; Palander-Collin 2009a: 60). In terms of pronoun frequencies, the above patterns are also observed when the intimacy[4] dimension is taken into account. Here, the focus on the writers themselves comes to the fore and surfaces in a higher incidence of self-reference between intimate interactants compared to strangers or formal, e.g. business, relationships. Overall, the use of first and second person pronouns in letters is related to the degree of personal involvement, i.e. the interactive dimension of communication, which manifests itself in referential terms, as well as in the markers of stance, cognitive verbs, contractions, etc. This aspect of communication has been characterised in detail and quantified in the well-known multidimensional analysis (Biber 1988: 89-91) based on PDE data, as well as in relation to historical texts (Biber – Finegan 1997). The model lists second- and first-person pronouns among the grammatical features that define the so-called *involved* dimension of interaction (in contrast to the *informational* production). Biber's analysis covers a broad range of features (23 positive and 5 negative factors in this dimension alone), so it is the co-occurrence of the self- and addressee referential pronouns with other features that characterises involvement. Thus pronouns are just one aspect of the involved dimension, but their role is particularly prominent in correspondence. In historical letters, according to Vartiainen – Säily – Hakala (2013: 252), "personal pronoun use is a multifaceted phenomenon" that is determined by politeness, relative positioning of the participants in communication, the subject matter, as well as by the construction of social identities. The authors focus on gendered styles, but they also demonstrate gender-internal differentiation in pronoun frequencies, thus showing complex patterning of their determinants. In particular, Vartiainen – Säily – Hakala (2013) indicate the role of specific

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4   The intimacy/familiarity dimension is excluded from the discussion as the reconstruction of the relevant variables for the CO employers is not feasible.

relationships between interactants, demonstrating in this way that factors underlying person reference patters go beyond the conventionally studied parameters of intimacy, social distance or gender. Similarly, in this study I aim to analyse the frequencies in the use of first and second person pronouns in relation to a conventional variable of (institutional) hierarchy to see if the data show consistency in this respect.

At this point, first and second person reference needs to be related to the specific setting of CO correspondence. First of all, the sociocultural background of CO letters implies restraint and the need to refrain from involvement overall (see Section 3 for details). Secondly, the institutional collective front imposes some limitations on relational work and interpersonal evaluation (see Section 4 for details). In relation to these contextualisations of the ways in which social/institutional distance is maintained in the Colonial Office correspondence and to the findings of previous studies into person reference the following hypotheses may be put forward:

1. a) In the letters to institutional superiors, self-reference will be avoided.
   b) In such letters, pronominal second person reference will not be preferred as an unmarked form, rather more distance-marking, socially and institutionally grading terms will be used.
2. a) In the letters to institutional inferiors, self-reference will be more frequent.
   b) In such letters, pronominal second person reference will be more frequent by the nature of the institution whose operation is based on giving and taking orders and due to the need to give space to addressee in order maintain the common front.
3.   As the segmentation of institutional space will be more visible in the established institution in 1820s, rather than in the transition phase, the above effects should be more visible in the later dataset (see Section 3 for details).

These hypotheses are tested in Section 5, following the presentation of the sociohistorical context of the two datasets provided in Section 3 and a description of the corporate identities in the CO in Section 4.

3. Sociohistorical context

In the nineteenth century exerting long-distance colonial governance involved the need to coordinate the development of infrastructure,

the legal system and colonial policies, and this resulted in the rise of an information/bureaucratic state. Here, not only writing in general, but information exchange, in particular, became central to exercising control over newly-acquired territories. Hence, among documentary genres and modes of communication, letter exchange embodied the triangle of writing, knowledge and power (Paisley – Reid 2014) in the period. This study focuses specifically on the correspondence pertaining to the establishment of the British rule in the Cape of Good Hope at the turn of the nineteenth century and the subsequent settlement in the late 1820s. In this period, British imperial affairs (beyond Ireland and British India) were conducted via the institution called the Colonial Office. The CO was a government agency established in 1801 together with the War and the Colonial Department in order to administer and control the rapid expansion of the empire (Laidlaw 2005: 41)[5]. The institution was supervised by the Third Secretary of State (acting for War and the Colonies), who was part of the cabinet, and so were the local representatives, i.e. the Governor of the colony, the local staff and institutions. In the official bureaucratic dimension, both centres of power (in Britain and in the colonies) relied on the work of clerks responsible chiefly for the production of correspondence, the filing and record, as well as the coordination of the dispatches. Confidential correspondence aside, research has shown that letters circulated relatively freely within the institution and that internal correspondence was frequently a result of communal effort with the higher officials employing their secretaries, or regular clerks, to produce clean/final copies for dispatch. Similarly, the external letters, i.e. to the citizens in the Cape Colony, may have been drafted by higher officials, but were also mediated by the lower clerks (Włodarczyk 2015). Although the degree of communal composition is impossible to verify in all cases, there is no doubt that correspondence was accessible to the CO staff in general, as producers and addressees, as well as for the purposes of archivisation. Hence, the data constitute a semi-public specialised domain of interaction which hosts multiple institutional, as well as social identities projected by the officials and clerks.

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[5] Prior to this, the Home Office managed the colonial affairs, apart from India and the associated territories (Banton 2008: 26). Banton gives details on the appointment of colonial (under)secretaries in the Home Office, and the third secretary in particular, since 1768 (American Department or Colonial Department). Young (1961: 14) gives 1795 for the establishment of a distinct Colonial Office, and the date is followed by some historians (McKenzie 2016: 64). In this paper, the establishment of the CO is understood as its institutionalisation beyond the Third Secretary (appointment of a private secretary, clerks, housekeepers and porters).

3.1 CO data

The government records[6] covering several decades (from February 1793 to April 1831) of the British activity in the Cape Colony were published in a monumental edition prepared by a historian of the colony, George McCall Theal between 1897 and 1905. *Records of the Cape Colony* (henceforth *RCC*) provide a handy primary source on the British educational, legal and cultural policy in the colony and has been used extensively by historians. Theal's work covers a range of public documents, such as proclamations, summaries of court cases and proceedings, financial returns and various reports on the colonial territory. Still, the correspondence of the colonial officials and clerks, i.e. the internal exchange within the Cape Colony, as well as between the local administration and institutions in London, constitutes the greater part of the edition. In this paper I focus mostly on two roughly equal samples of correspondence[7]: from 1796 (*RCC* 1) and from 1827-30 (*RCC* 32, 34 and 35), which I prepared for computational analysis. In terms of the number of the letters, the first sample is much smaller (96 letters) with relatively longer letters, while the second sample contains twice this number (185 letters) of much shorter ones. In the course of time, the circle of CO correspondents has expanded from 11 to 36 letter writers and from 15 to 37 addressees. Overall, the analysed data cover c. 117,000 words, 281 letters from 47 senders to 52 addressees. Table 1 presents the statistics on the data.

Table 1. CO data

Year	Wc.	Letters	Wc. per letter	Senders	Recipients
1796	58,981	96	614	11	15
1827-30	58,218	185	315	36	37
TOTALS	c. 117,000	281		47	52

3.2 Institutional organisation of CO in 1796: First steps in the administration

A letter from a British Admiral in charge of HM fleet at the Cape of Good Hope to a Dutch Admiral Lucas written on August 26th, 1796 signposts the

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[6]   Records of the predecessors of the Colonial Office are preserved in the National Archives and their facsimiles may be accessed via the State Papers Online database, among others (16th-18th centuries).

[7]   For the purpose of qualitative analysis that focuses on the identity spaces in the CO, I also used selected letters from volume 15.

British annexation of the territory from the Dutch East India Company. Following a peaceful takeover a year before this event, the British officials involved in the administering the territories at the Cape of Good Hope entered a period of institutional transition. In terms of the organisation of the administration, the officials at the Cape only received provisional support from London, while the external and internal status of the officers and officials was unclear, as were their administrative competences. Despite the fact that a more solid grid of administrative structure was only emerging, the interdependence of colonial and metropolitan institutions was very strong, with the regulations as to the competence and actions of the officials in the Cape Colony produced in accord with the circumstances. Initially, following the British military expedition to the Cape of Good Hope, General Craig, jointly with Admirals Elphinstone and Pringle, were in charge of the British governance of the Colony. Later Craig was appointed the Colony's first British governor (more specifically, Commandant of the Town and Settlement of the Cape of Good Hope; Theal 1908: 473). At the same time, a military position was introduced to the local government: Commodore John Blankett became Naval Commander.

        The hierarchy of power involved governor Craig answer to the king rather than to the Secretary of State, although the governor was engaged in one-way correspondence with the latter only. The correspondence of the British representatives in the new colony showed a strong insistence on approval and acceptance from Britain while little autonomy was attempted. At this stage, there was no defined "professional" line of duty that is distinctive for civil officials as opposed to the military. In this sense, the self-positioning against any "higher" authorities is very strongly marked by two types of ordering: social and military. The emerging institutional grid of power may be viewed as involving three levels: the government in Britain (level 1), the provisional government in the colony (level 2) and the Dutch institutions (level 3) (see Appendix 1). Within each of the tiers, institutions were supervised by the central position in the CO, i.e. that of the Secretary of State in Britain and the Governor in the Cape Colony. Posts of under-secretaries and secretaries, the latter introduced later (and operating for the 1827-30 dataset), involved the supervision of the institutions on the relevant levels. The institutions and their representatives on level 1 supervised the officials and the institutions on the lower level (2), and, indirectly, on level (3).

        Despite the clearly military character of the colonial government at this stage, the correspondence is dominated by the figure of Major General

Craig, whose ambitions were peaceful and constructive. Craig, who wrote the greatest number of letters in the analysed sample (see Table 2 and Appendix 2 below), emerges as a humane, thoughtful ruler and skilled strategist, is mostly guided by caution and a realistic judgment of the threats and vulnerability to the British position at the Cape. The chief recipient of Craig's letters was Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War. The next of Craig's correspondents (in-letters), the War Office in Britain addressed him implicitly on behalf of Henry Dundas, who failed to write a single letter to the Cape Colony in this period, despite the fact that other writers (e.g. Elphinstone) also addressed him directly. The third metropolitan addressee of Craig's was Admiral Evan Nepean, Dundas' protégée, who also represented the highest level of the institutional hierarchy. Correspondents in the colony, i.e. Generals Elphinstone and Pringle, may be placed on a par with governor Craig in the institutional hierarchy, although their role was most profound in the military expedition, not in governance. Also Commodore Blankett is best viewed as equal to the members of the provisional government. At the lowest level the Dutch institutions and the officials representing them may be seen. Here however, we only have incidental correspondence addressed to Craig (Appendix 1 and 2).

Table 2. Letters sent and received by major correspondents (1796)

Major correspondents 1796	Letters sent by	No of recipients	Letters received by	No of senders
Pringle (2)	6	1	1	1
Blankett (2)	7	4	–	–
Craig (2)	43	4	17	5
Elphinstone (2)	20	6	5	5
H. Dundas (1)	–	–	44	2
Nepean (1)	1	1	15	2
War Office (1)	14	3	–	–

Based on the institutional hierarchy outlined above (see Appendix 1 for details), three categories of letters may be distinguished: (1) the letters "up" (from level 1 to level 2, i.e. Dutch institutions to colonial authorities, and from level 2 to level 3, i.e. from the colonial officials to the supervising bodies in Britain), (2) letters "down" (the opposite of letters "up") and (3) equal letters exchanged on each of the levels (in reality the correspondence on level 2, i.e. among the officers who represented Britain in the colony).

3.3 Late 1820s: Internal tensions and external control

Since 1806 the British had employed an active policy on the Cape Colony
(Thompson 2001: 54-55). However, their first attempt at permanent
colonisation was only made in 1820 with the government plan that involved
the transport and allocation of land to c. 4,500 Britons. The arrival of the 1820
settlers and the inadvertent circumstances of the first years of the colonisation
engaged the CO in intense external correspondence with the settlers.
Towards the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century, however,
the initial difficulties were already under control and the administration
was more engaged in the internal tensions (Peires 1989: 477-79). The period
between 1827-30 was a time of many transitions of power, not only in the
local, but also in the metropolitan government with four Secretaries of State
and two governors. In the Cape Colony, governor Somerset resigned from
the office amid scandal following 12 years of service (1814-1826; cf. McKenzie
2016: 75). Politically and socially, the Colony witnessed tensions related
to the slave trade and freedom of the press. The turmoil related to these
events induced the government in London to carry out an investigation into
the work of the administration, the distribution of funds and the scope of
prospective political and administrative reforms in the Cape Colony. To this
end a Commission of Eastern Inquiry was founded by the Board of Trade
and sent to the Cape of Good Hope (Peires 1989: 496-97). The activity of the
Commissioners is visible in their rich correspondence with the officials in
Britain and their local representatives (see Table 3 and Appendix 3).

Within the thirty years of British presence, governors of the Cape Colony
had developed autocratic powers and the few regulations introduced by the
British government in order to impose some control over their actions failed
to change the situation (Thompson 2001: 63). In the face of this, the Colonial
Office administration in the Cape Colony was a much more autonomous
institution than its predecessor in 1796. On the other hand, the central
government's attempt at control through the Commission of Eastern Inquiry
show that the three-tier internal hierarchy had not changed substantially over
time. Institutionally, as historians frequently emphasise (Freund 1989: 344), the
British rule relied to a large extent on an extended administrative apparatus
characterised by increasing professionalisation as a mode of successful
colonial governance. The extension is not only clear in the much greater
number of correspondents (clearly due to the higher number of letters), but
also in the introduction of representatives for the highest officials in London
and in the Colony. The highest institutional position, Secretary of State, was
now represented by two under-secretaries (Hay and Horton). One of them,

William Hay, was one of the two most active of all the correspondents in the analysed dataset, followed by governor Bourke. Most letters were directed to Hay, not to the Secretaries (Bathurst, Goderich, Huskisson and Murray). Cape Colony governors also had their own secretaries or representatives of the local government (Plasket and Bird). Table 3 presents the major correspondents with their positions in the institutional grid marked by the level numbers: it will be observed that most letters were exchanged between the highest officials or their representatives in London (level 1) and the highest officials or their representatives in the Cape Colony (level 2). One relatively frequent correspondent represents an institution of Dutch origin (Fiscal Denyssen) positioned at level 3, as a local body supervised by the local British governance. In terms of institutional hierarchy crossing, the letters ('up', 'down' and 'equal') may be described in a manner similar to the correspondence from 1796 (see end of Section 3.2 above).

Table 3. Letters sent and received by major correspondents (1827-30)

Major correspondents 1827-30	Letters sent by	No of recipients	Letters received by	No of senders
Bathurst (1)	–	–	8	2
Bigge (1)	8	2	–	–
Bourke (2)	33	5	33	7
Comm. of Inquiry (1)	18	3	–	–
Courtenay (1)	4	1	7	2
Denyssen (3)	4	2	–	–
Goderich (1)	11	2	22	6
Hay (1)	32	12	63	21
Hill (1)	5	2	6	1
Huskisson (1)	18	1	5	4
Murray (1)	–	–	4	1
Plasket (2)	12	5	11	7
Somerset (2)	4	3	5	4

4. Corporate identities in CO correspondence

CO exchange takes place in a setting which is not only semi-public rather than interpersonal, but also the letters do not constitute one-to-one interaction, either on the level of production and reception, or on the level

of the identities that are projected in them. Moreover, as I would like to argue, pervasive corporate identities (i.e. maintaining the collective "line" or "front" to use Goffman's terms 1956: 54-55) seem to dominate over self-centred needs for building and negotiating individual positions in the institutional hierarchies. In his outline of the dramaturgical theory of human interaction, Goffman frequently refers to the operations of British civil service in the 20th century. These provide an apt analogy to the interactive setting analysed here. In particular, the notion of a *collective representation* (1956: 17) or a *common front* (1956: 53) that is purposefully maintained by institutional teams staging their performance before the audience is of great relevance. Similarly, in the CO communication, the importance of some general concerns, such as the impression management of the institution's reputation, rather than individualistic needs to establish one's own particular position may have prevailed in the Colonial Office correspondence. This may be further supported by the awareness of the publicity of the record[8], and of its persistence in time, which could be understood as a mechanism of internal censorship. If that was the case, not only did some politically sensitive content need to be filtered out[9], but also self-focus needed to be minimised for the sake of a collective front. Researchers who study interpersonal or relational work in interaction underline that in some cultures, especially highly hierarchical Eastern ones "[a]cknowledgement and maintenance of the relative position of others, rather than preservation of an individual's proper territory, governs all social interaction" (Matsumoto 1988: 405; cf. Culpeper 2011 for further references). Clearly, a concept that is foreign to egalitarian and (throughout the Late Modern period) increasingly individualistic British society (Culpeper – Demmen 2011) cannot be uncritically applied to the workings of the CO. Nevertheless, I would like to claim, despite some controversy around the concepts of "collective identities" or "professional identities" (Schnurr – van de Mieroop 2017: 7), that social identities in this institution may be viewed as mutually sustained/

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[8]   As historians have shown, British colonial affairs involved a dual system of managing official and unofficial information and correspondence in general, and in the Cape Colony (Laidlaw 2005; McKenzie 2016). However, the system was fraught with difficulty and it tended to backfire in many cases. Therefore, due to the disruptive nature of private correspondence of public officials (i.e. information dispersed through interpersonal networks), the system was banned in 1835. Since then colonial officials were only allowed private exchange with the Secretary of State. The early RCC volumes do not contain letters marked as "private", however, such designations may be found in the 1820s.

[9]   Consider for instance "hostile attentions of Parliament and the opposition press" (McKenzie 2016: 76) that the earliest British administrations faced.

sustainable. This means that the maintenance of the positions of others and the maintenance of individual positions or institutional hierarchies are at least of equal importance, while the former may sometimes take precedence over the latter. Below, I illustrate this point with some examples.

Throughout the military phase of the occupation (1795-96), British authorities in London supervised the expedition through the War Office, from which orders and instructions to the generals performing both military and administrative duties were coming. Interestingly, the order-giving role of this body was accompanied by profuse expressions of approval and praise for the officers (1):

(1)   It is **with the most lively satisfaction** however that, in adverting to these occurrences, I feel myself called upon, in obedience to the King's Commands, to signify to you His Majesty's **full and perfect approbation** of your **judicious and spirited conduct** on this occasion, and of the **zeal and exertion** manifested by all the Officers and Men under your command. His Majesty's confidential Servants are **perfectly satisfied** with the **propriety of your determination** (…). His Majesty **highly approves** of your proceeding (…) (War Office to General Alured Clarke, Jan 16th 1796; *RCC* 1: 311-312)

Another letter of the same date addressed to Admiral Elphinstone (*RCC* 1: 312) contains a similar expression of praise in almost the same wording. Rather than maintaining their own position of authority, the War Office did not refrain from approval and commendations even if the orders it issued ran contrary to the wishes of the officers in the Cape of Good Hope. For instance, in response to a plan of an expedition to Mauritius proposed by two generals operating in the colony, the War Office sent a lengthy justification of a refusal (c. 650 words), employing not only a range of elaborate hedges and remarkable understatements ("incompatible with", "I think", "without much easiness"), but also including enthusiastic expressions of praise for the fact that the generals had changed their minds (before the approval of the project could have been delivered from London) – see (2):

(2)   It would be incompatible with my ideas of public duty and inconsistent with the spirit of candour which I think it essential to maintain in all my official communications, to allow you to suppose for a moment that I could receive an intimation of this project, however **ably supported** by the arguments of your Dispatch, without much uneasiness, and

> it was consequently a **satisfaction** to me to find by your subsequent Letter of the 3rd of August, that you had been determined by the circumstances therein mentioned to send the Troops to their original destination [and not to Mauritius, MW]. (…) I therefore, both on public and private grounds, **sincerely congratulate** you on your having relinquished a project which, on the principles I have stated, no success in my opinion would have justified. (War Office to General Craig, Nov 20th 1796, *RCC* 1: 488)

In 1796 the War Office routinely applied strategies of approval and verbal rewards in their supervision of the officers in the Cape of Good Hope (even if the orders it gave suggested otherwise). Example 3 below implies that praise may have given way to some criticism three decades later, even in letters from institutional inferiors to superiors. However, a focus on the recipient, rather than on the self, may still have prevailed. In 1827, a colonial official addressing his superordinate with criticism seems preoccupied with the addressee's rather than his own territory. In the letter below (3), Richard Plasket (secretary to the local government) failed to authorise an appointment made by his superior, William Hay (under-secretary of state; see also Appendix 1 on the institutional power structure). The reprimand and refusal dominate the brief letter (fewer than 200 words) and involve a comprehensive justification. It opens as a conventionalised apology, so that the developing criticism cannot be predicted. This may add to the overall effect of the rejection of a proposed candidate, but may very well be seen as a strong, albeit an extraordinary mitigation. Apart from "Your provincial judge", which might be an instance of a marked, so-called indefinite usage of the second person pronoun to express contempt (cf. Busse 2002: 6), Plasket employs addressee reference very sparingly, while building a common front with the addressee by means of the first person plural pronoun and self-reference. Also, terms such as "Council", "the Council", "the new system" contain references to the institutions which both the writer and the addressee align with. On the contrary, the opponents, i.e. "the Commissioners" are placed at the distal end of the interactional space, as are "law officers". The refusal closes with an ironic remark directed chiefly at the competences of the third party (the central theme of the letter), which only mildly hints at the mistake made by the addressee. Here the *we* vs. *they* juxtaposition is also clear: "the little Scotch Colony" is not only conceptually far removed from the writer's (and addressee's) central position, but also geographically distant from the headquarters of the local British government represented by Plasket (3).

(3)   **I am sorry** you have proposed to put Sir John Truter **in Council**. I do
         not think he is by any means a popular man in the Colony, and **the
         Council** will then have two Chief Justices and three Military men.
         I think **the Commissioners** have overwhelmed **us** with law officers.
         We shall have an excess of justice with an excess of expenditure. **Your
         very provincial judge** for Albany is not **I fear** calculated to give eclat
         to **the new system** with the settlers. **I wish you** had sent him to the
         little Scotch Colony on the Baviaan's River, where he would have been
         more at home. (Plasket to Hay, Oct 20th 1827; *RCC* 34: 37-38)

As the examples above suggest, projections of the collective front, rather
than individualised self-presentation, characterise the correspondence of
the Colonial Office at the turn of the eighteenth century and in the 1820s.
In terms of the relational work, the praise that characterises Examples 1 and 2
above cannot be viewed as interpersonal, as it involves a routine of rewarding
officers following a military campaign similar to rituals of decoration. This
suggests that interpersonal evaluation, or personal involvement in general
are not central to the internal correspondence of the CO and that this aspect
does feature prominently in the construction of CO identities.

       Mutual trust and institutional loyalty are another aspect of corporate
identities that transpire from CO correspondence; so is sensitivity to public
sphere due to constant exposure to public and social evaluations. Previous
work on the internal CO exchange (Włodarczyk 2013a) and a case study into
external correspondence (Włodarczyk 2015) has revealed that these concerns
govern the expression of stance understood as linguistic manifestation
of (subjective) attitudes. In the overall highly routinised, controlled,
but elaborate and indirect forms of communication, stance is very often
constructed against "higher authority" – see (4)[10]. For example, the letter
writers build the credibility of such an authority through general references
to social and moral ideals and virtues, e.g. "ideas of public duty", "spirit
of candour" in (2) above. As (4) illustrates, ordinary communication occurs
between social equals, in which the highest official of the CO (Earl Bathurst,
Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, 1812-1827) addresses the highest
colonial official, the Governor of the Cape Colony, Lord Charles Somerset.
Bathurst writes on behalf of an official in the Navy and presents a case of
a colonial official, Bird, who has failed to follow some courtroom procedures

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[10]   Indirectness in exercising authority is common in CO letters, not least in external
       exchanges, as previous analyses have shown, and especially in the case of refusals
       (see Włodarczyk 2015: 164-165, 167 for more examples).

within the sanction of the Admiralty. Bathurst's own part in the entire case becomes clear in the last four lines, where he formulates a request ("I have in consequence to desire …"). Here, meeting the request involves Bathurst's authority to be transferred to Somerset, with an emphasis on the latter's delegation of the completion of the task ("your Lordship would be pleased to **cause a communication to be** immediately **made** to Mr. Bird"; emphasis added). Clearly, the ultimate addressee of the directive is the said Mr. Bird who is called to provide an explanation of his behaviour. Thus, at both ends of the exchange, we see the dynamic nature of power and authority which is distributed variously among the officials on different levels of the institutional hierarchy, but is rather reluctantly picked up by the writer, despite their high institutional position. This indicates that responsibility-shedding or sharing are a significant part of communication within the CO, while alignment with the institution is not necessarily direct, but may be mediated via a third party. In the exchange between the same officials presented below (4), this is a well-justified and skillful way of managing control over someone who is a social equal, but an institutional inferior, without compromising their status (McKenzie 2016: 78).

(4)   My Lord, – I do myself the honour to transmit to your Lordship a copy of a letter which I have received from the Treasurer of His Majesty's Navy, desiring to know whether Mr. William Wilberforce Bird continues to officiate in the office of Customs at the Cape of Good Hope, and stating that Mr. Bird has not only withheld from officers and seamen of His Majesty's ships prize proceeds to a considerable amount, but that he likewise contumaciously refuses to give appearances to sundry Processes issued against him from the High Court of Admiralty, and duly served upon him more than three years since. Connected with this subject, I also enclose copies of papers which have been transmitted to this department by desire of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty complaining of the conduct of Mr. Bird in withholding prize money from seamen of His Majesty's Service, and I have in consequence to desire your Lordship would be pleased to cause a communication to be immediately made to Mr. Bird directing him to furnish a Report on circumstances which appear to require the fullest explanation. I have &c. (Earl Bathurst to Lord Charles Somerset, Aug 10th 1822; *RCC* 15: 14)

Overall, the social identities emerging from the CO correspondence are negotiated both against internal dynamics of hierarchies and power and

against externally applicable social norms and expectations of communication, as well as in reference to a more universal code of conduct for the upper social classes. In most general terms, this code could be described as the contemporary ideology of politeness (Taavitsainen – Jucker 2010: 164).

5. Person reference in 1796 vs. 1827-30

In relation to the discussion of person reference provided in Section 2.2 above, Sections 5.1 and 5.2 tackle the social dimensions in an analysis of marked (i.e. non-pronominal) terms of address. A quantitative analysis of the conventional pronominal modes in the analysed sets of data follows (Sections 5.3 and 5.4): it is devoted to testing the three hypotheses presented above (Section 2.3).

5.1 Nominal address: Forms and functions

Table 4. Direct address in the opening formulae

Direct opening address	1796	%(of letters)	1827-30	% (of letters)
Sir	89	94%	140	76%
My Lord	1	1%	38	20.5%
Gentlemen	5	5%	4	2%
Other	–	–	3	1.5%
	95	100%	185	100%

As Table 4 shows, 'Sir' is the most common direct initial address in both datasets. In 1796, 94% of the letters started with this polite noun, including one case of 'Dear Sir' and one case of 'Honourable Sir'. Only 5 letters employed the less formal 'Gentlemen'. 'My Lord' was used once. In 1827-30, the range of initial address terms was broader and less consistent. 'Sir' accounts for the opening address in 76% of the letters, followed by 'My Lord' (c. 20%). The remaining terms include 'Gentlemen' (5 letters). In two letters no initial address is employed, which may be seen as one of the genre conventions of the petition next to the 3rd person reference to the addressee. In a number of cases, 'Sir' is modified by an adjective, or a possessive pronoun and an adjective (Dear Sir – 4; My dear Sir – 16) and in one case a surname is modified in this way ('My Dear Hay').

Table 5. Most common terms of address

Address term	1796				1827-30			
	Function							
	ALL	Direct (opening)	Direct (body)	Reference	ALL	Direct (opening)	Direct (body)	Reference
Sir	198	89 (45%)	85 (43%)	24 (12%)	183	140 (76.5%)	–	43 (23.5%)
Lord	34	1	–	33	135	34	4	97
Lords	–	–	–	–	28	–	–	28
Gentlemen	18	5	9	6	17	4	–	13
Lordship	32	–	6%	94%	191	–	120 (63%)	71 (37%)
Excellency	18	–	–	100%	21	–	–	100%
Mr.	41	–	–	100%	278	–	–	100%
Commissioners	29	–	–	100%	90	–	–	100%

When it comes to the letter body, terms of address occur in two basic functions: as direct address (including vocatives, like in the salutation), and as references to denote a particular person. As Table 5 above shows, 'Sir' in 1796 and 'Mr.' and 'Lordship' in 1827-30 are the most common nominal terms of address. In 1796, the dominance of 'Sir' is clear: no other term is used with similar frequencies and the remaining items do not exceed one third of the occurrences of 'Sir'. Moreover, the two datasets reveal a striking discrepancy in the functions of 'Sir' in letter body. In the first dataset, direct address, vocative 'Sir', is nearly as frequent as it is in salutations (43% to 45% of all occurrences), while in the second set there is not even a single example of this function in the letter body. A closer look at vocative 'Sir' in 1796 shows that it is restricted to the letters from Craig to Dundas, with two exceptions in the letters from Elphinstone and Blankett, both addressed to Dundas. The use of 'Sir' in this "conversational" manner might be viewed as Craig's idiosyncrasy in relation to this specific correspondent. Alternatively, the use of 'Sir' could be related to the fact that Craig, Elphinstone and Blankett were military men, so the instruction-taking context of the relationship (like that

of a classroom) may have been influenced by conventions of face-to-face interaction in the army[11] – see 5 and 6:

(5)   I have already had opportunity **Sir**, particularly in my letter of the 22nd September, of giving my opinion upon the sentiments of the Inhabitants of the Colony in General, relative to us (…) (Craig to Dundas, March 8th 1796; *RCC* 1: 336)

(6)   I do myself the honour to enclose You an Embarkation Return of these Regiments, as likewise a monthly return of the Troops remaining under my Command, in the latter you will doubtless **Sir**, perceive a considerable augmentation in our sick which has lately taken place (…) (Craig to Dundas, November 11th 1796; *RCC* 1: 486)

In 1827-30, 'Sir' is used predominantly in the salutation (76.5% of items) with the remaining items serving the purely referential function. In this set of data, direct nominal address (albeit not in the 'vocative' form) in the body is realised by the term 'your Lordship' (120 occurrences, next to 53 modifications by 'his' and 18 by 'their'). Terms such as 'Mr', 'Excellency' or 'Commissioners' do not have direct addressive functions or vocative form in any of the datasets.

Table 6. Lexeme 'lord' in referential function (1827-30)

1827	Occurrences	Genitives	Patterns	Occurrences	Patterns	Occurrences
(ALL) Lordship	191	57	(ALL ref) Lord	135	Lords	28
your lordship	120	38	Lord+SN	59	Lords Commissioners	21
his lordship	53	14	Lord+FN+SN	31	My Lords Commissioners	1
their lordships	18	5	Lord+title	5	My Lords	7
			Lord+FN	1		
			noble lord	1		

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[11]   Unfortunately, I have so far not come across studies into terms of address in military contexts in Late Modern Britain.

In the 1827-30 data, address based on the lexeme 'lord' is frequent (163 occurrences of 'Lord' and 191 of 'Lordship'). Table 6 below shows a variety of patterns and some examples for 1827-30.

5.2 Discussion

Terms of address in letter salutations noticed in 1827-30 are relatively more diverse than in 1796, which may be related to differences in the numbers of letters that the two datasets include. Alternatively, the use of the modifications of 'Sir' and the relative frequency of 'My Lord' indicates a transformed system of institutional power where less formal and more intimate initial address forms are used. Similarly, in the letter body, the increase in the use of 'Mr.', a relaxed and less formal term used outside of aristocratic circles (Görlach 1999: 41) is staggering (41 to 278). These findings may also be related to the social component of address systems over the first three decades of the nineteenth century. As British society moved slowly towards a more egalitarian organisation, the significance of marking social distance may have been gradually diminishing, even in the case of highly conventionalised formulae that characterised correspondence. However, we also need to note an increase in the use of referential 'Lord' (135 instances in 1827-30 vs. 34 in 1796). Most instances show the 'Lord' +FN+SN pattern (69, i.e. 51%). The second most frequent pattern, 'Lord'+SN (59, i.e. 44%) reflects the fact that the actors carried hereditary titles (as opposed to the military titles which predominated in 1796) that have become the preferred forms of reference (e.g. Lord/Viscount Goderich, who was Prime Minister between August 1827 and January 1828). The use of the so-called indirect addressee inclusion in the form of 'Lordship' preceded by a possessive pronoun, i.e. an honorific that is predominantly used by inferiors to social superiors (cf. Palander-Collin 2009a: 60), has grown significantly over time. Moreover, 'his Lordship', a variation of this form which may represent the addressee as a third party, did not occur in 1796, with 'your lordship' only occurring in 3 out of 32 cases of 'lordship'. The form 'their Lordships' (30 out of 32, including 5 genitives) that accounted for the vast majority of occurrences in 1796 was thus a plural reference and was not only infrequent compared to the second dataset, but seems not to have been conventionalised. Both 'Lord' and 'Lordship' indicate that despite the parallel social changes that would support the use of less distant terms, the institutional hierarchies have solidified compared to 1796 and a greater emphasis was placed on marking distance, in particular when referring to institutional superiors.

The significant share of 'lordship' in the 1827-30 data also indicates the expanded system of hierarchical contact procedures (i.e. local officials do not address the top official directly, but via their representatives; and the other way round, the representatives work as mouthpieces for the highest officials), whereby references to higher authorities (as third parties) are frequent and letter writers address and respond to letters on their behalf. It is interesting to notice that in terms of writers and addressees of the letters, 'Your lordship' has a restricted distribution. Predominantly, it is found in the letters to the recipients who are highest in the institutional hierarchy, Bathurst and Goderich. This strongly deferential honorific is employed when writing to superiors and is paralleled by 'you' evasion. 38 out of 120 cases of 'Your Lordship' are attributive, i.e. involve a genitive marking of a feature, or an action of the referent, rather than mentioning them directly. In four cases, 'My Lord' alternates with 'Your Lordship' (letters from Somerset, Donkin and Bishop of Calcutta to Goderich). However, Goderich himself also uses the term in the letters to his institutional subordinates. Another addressee of 'your Lordship' is Lord Charles Somerset, the colony's governor, in the letters from both Goderich and Hay, his institutional superiors. However, it is likely that Somerset's high social position combined with his lengthy service at the Cape Colony had determined reciprocal use of the honorific.

The findings presented above show two somewhat contradictory developments. First of all, a broader range of terms of address, modified salutations and an increase in the use of Mr. could be indicative of some social developments which were external to the Colonial Office, i.e. incipient transformation to a more egalitarian society. Contrary to this, an increase in the use of deferential terms, in particular the lexemes with 'lord' and indirect addressee inclusion in particular[12], underline tendencies for marking rather than reducing (social) distance. In line with the suggestion made above that local norms of behaviour may override some global tendencies, the emphasis on marking distance may be viewed as an internal development that reflects very specific institutional power relations. More general social changes are thus reflected in the data to a certain extent, while at the same time institutional power grids manifest themselves in opposition to external developments.

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[12]   This is not surprising if we take into account the fact that most letters address superiors, hence indirect addressee inclusion, rather than a straightforward 'you', becomes a natural choice. Interestingly, however, this tendency is visible only for the later dataset, indicating once more the institutional network of hierarchies that had solidified between 1796 and 1827-30.

5.3 Pronominal terms of address: Distance crossing

Table 7. Letters and word counts by institutional distance crossing

Distance crossing	1796	%	w. count	1827	%	w. count
up	63	65%	42,357	111	60%	41,507
down	24	25%	12,925	71	38%	15,256
equal	8	10%	3,699	3	2%	1,455
Totals	95	100%	58,981	185	100%	58,218

In addressing letters within the institutional power grids, writers cross the social and institutional spaces that separate them from their addressees (see Appendix 1 on the CO hierarchy and Sections 3.2. and 3.3 above on the details of institutional relations connecting the correspondents). In terms of the direction of distance crossing, letters upwards the hierarchy dominate in the analysed datasets (Table 7). As the letters to institutional superiors were so numerous, the results obtained for this set may be more representative than for the letters to institutional inferiors. However, in terms of word counts the letters 'up' and 'down' the institutional hierarchy taken as sets do not vary much, hence the respective sets ('up' vs. 'down') may be compared at the two points in time. Table 8 presents the overall as well as social distance differentiated frequencies of personal pronouns[13] in both datasets. As the normalised numbers (per 1,000 words) show, overall the frequencies of the first person singular pronoun are similar (25 vs. 27). Nor is there any striking difference between the occurrences of the second person pronoun (9 vs. 11). The frequency of third person singular pronouns (mostly 'he') has increased remarkably (9 to 18) over time. There is some difference in the frequency of the first person plural pronoun, with an increase from 4.6 to 8 occurrences per 1,000 words. Similarly, the use of the third person plural pronoun (9 in 1796 vs. 6 in 1827), has decreased considerably over time. Both observations may be related to the different historical contexts of the institution and its organisation at the two points in time. As far as the third person plural pronouns are concerned, the relative "outside" world orientation of the 1796 data in the historical context of the conquest and the significance of the inhabitants of the colony ('the others') explains their relatively high frequencies. In the 1820s, correspondence was about the internal affairs of the colony, rather than its connections with the outside world. The first

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[13]   The results include all the relevant inflected and reflexive forms.

person plural pronoun, whose frequency increases over time, may in turn be related to the participation of collective correspondents (e.g. commissioners of inquiry) in the 1827-30 dataset and to the emergence of a collective institutional representation that was more likely to characterise a mature institution. The changes in the use of the third person singular pronoun, which increased considerably over time, contrary to the development observed for 'they', is less readily associated with the sociohistorical context; it probably indicates more references to third parties in the 1820s. More analysis is provided below to shed some light on this issue.

Table 8. Counts and normalised (per. 1,000 words) frequencies of personal pronouns in the datasets[14]

Person	1796 raw	1796 norm.	1796 up raw	1796 up norm.	1796 down raw	1796 down norm.
1 sg.	1652	27	1320	31	261	20
1st pl.	276	4.6	246	6	24	2
2nd	544	9	202	5	292	23
3rd sg.	522	9	505	12	149	11.5
3rd pl.	896	15	692	16	167	13
Person	1827-30 raw	1827 norm.	1827 up raw	1827 up norm.	1827 down raw	1827 down norm.
1 sg.	1479	25	1201	29	256	17
1st pl.	498	8	451	11	44	3
2nd	658	11	318	8	333	22
3rd sg.	1035	18	708	17	325	21
3rd pl.	346	6	265	6	75	5

The graph below presents pronoun frequencies normalised (per 1,000 words) and distributed according to the institutional power factor (inferior to superior – 'up'; superior to inferior –'down') and the direction of the institutional distance crossing by the correspondents.

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[14]   Proportional tests confirm statitistical significance for the distributions of almost all pronouns in 1796 vs. 1827-30. H0 (p values <0.05) was not confirmed only for the third person singular pronoun in the 1796 set. I would like to thank my colleague, Professor Piotr Jabkowski for running the tests.
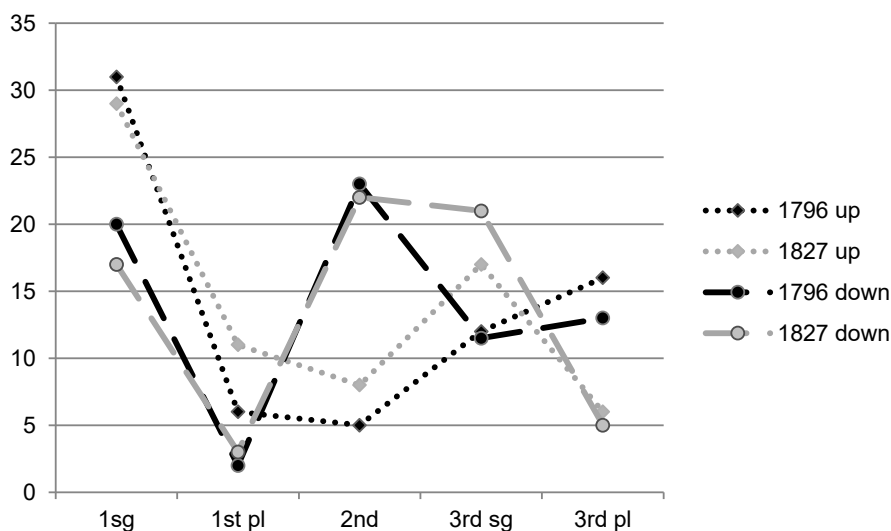
Figure 1. Normalised pronoun frequencies and distance crossing

5.4 Discussion

Frequencies of the first person singular pronoun[15] are higher in the letters from institutional inferiors to superiors (letters 'up') at both points in time ('I' – 31 and 29 occurrences respectively; per 1,000 words). The same frequencies are lower in the letters from institutional superiors, i.e. letters 'down' ('I' – 20 and 17). In this set, a slight frequency increase is observed over time. As far as the second person pronoun is concerned, the letters from inferiors to superiors (letters 'up') show considerably lower frequencies at both points in time ('you' – 5 and 8 occurrences per 1,000 respectively) while letters to inferiors ('down') show strikingly high frequencies (23 and 22 occurrences per 1,000 words), roughly double the average frequencies of 'you' overall. While they remain relatively infrequent, a slight increase in the use of the second person pronoun is observed in the letters 'up' (5 to 8), while in the letters 'up' its incidence is stable.

Regarding the hypotheses presented in Section 2.3 above the findings corroborate some of the assumptions, in particular with respect to the second

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[15]   Cf. Włodarczyk (2013b: 218-219, Tables 4 and 5) for normalised self-reference results in various historical correspondence sets. These range from 22 to over 60 occurrences per 1,000 words.

person pronoun (Hypothesis 1b and 2b). Indeed, in the letters 'up', lower frequencies of 'you' have been observed. Diachronically, the occurrence of this pronoun in letters to social superiors has increased, which may be related to the social changes in early nineteenth-century Britain mentioned above. In letters 'down', as predicted both by previous research and by the institution's reliance on the giving and receiving of instructions, frequencies of 'you' were relatively high and stable over time. The patterns of use of the first person singular pronoun, however, have surprisingly not been confirmed (see Hypothesis 1a and 1b). Although in the letters 'up', the frequencies of 'I' do not depart considerably from the average frequencies (all letters – 27 in 1796 and 25 in 1827-30 vs. 31 and 29 respectively in the letters 'up'), still they score relatively high. Moreover, in both data sets an increase by four occurrences per 1,000 words is observed over time in the letters to social superiors. In the letters 'down' contrary to the hypothesis (2a), self-reference was relatively infrequent (20 and 17 occurrences per 1,000 words), lower than average (27 and 25) and considerably lower than in the letters 'up' (31 and 29). To sum up, Hypotheses 1(a) and 2(a) were not corroborated, Hypotheses 1(b) and 2(b) were confirmed, consequently Hypothesis 3 only holds for second person pronouns.

6. Conclusions

This study set out to characterise social spaces in an institutional network of the British Colonial Office in the early nineteenth century. In the analyses presented above, relational work through which such spaces may be inferred was illustrated in a number of examples. Based on previous studies into institutional correspondence in the early nineteenth century, it was suggested that the interpersonal/relational dimension may not be easily inferred due to the semi-public nature of the data, and that the transactional nature of the letters may overshadow this aspect of communication. The examples have shown that interactants in the CO relied strongly on the need for the maintenance of a representational audience-orientated institutional line that underlined the relevant decision-making hierarchies. They also suggested that interpersonal evaluation, or personal involvement in general, do not seem to characterise the internal correspondence of the CO.

     The issue of the degree of personal involvement was approached through the analysis of the linguistic realisations of person deixis against the background of a theory of social distance as applied to historical correspon-

dence (Nevala 2004; Palander-Collin 2009a, 2009b and 2009c; Nurmi – Nevala 2010). The most striking result pertains to the frequencies of use of the first person pronoun. These show that the differentiation along the institutional hierarchies produces effects that run contrary to those reported in previous studies and to the predictions formulated on the basis of such studies. Institutional inferiors do not avoid self-reference in the letters 'up', and its incidence is similar to the frequencies of 'I' in personal correspondence (cf. Palander-Collin 2009c: 112). Institutional superiors do not use more, but considerably fewer self-referential pronouns in letters 'down'. Why do frequencies of 'I' in letters 'up' strikingly exceed those found in letters 'down'? Why do these relatively low frequencies decrease even further over time? I would like to offer a twofold explanation for these findings. First of all, the institutional distance in the CO is gradable and the majority of letters only cross one level of the hierarchy (Appendix 1). In connection to this, distance crossing is not considerable at all times, so its effects on pronominal patterns may not be visible. Secondly, letters 'up' tend to have a reporting/ informational function pertaining in particular to the activities of the writers following previous instructions from institutional superiors. For this reason, the letters 'up' remain self-focused as they respond to the instructions issued in letters 'down'. The instructions, in turn, are visible in the high incidence of second person pronouns in the letters down (in line with hypothesis 2b). Having received specific instructions, inferior writers feel obliged to provide a comprehensive and detailed report and to underline their engagement in the tasks, or to provide detailed explanations of their own role and participation in the processes and events that they describe. Building their own self-image in front of superior addressees is thus essential, and institutional space is dominated by self-reference not for one's own sake, but in connection to the instructions, expectations, duties and responsibilities explicitly or implicitly communicated or imposed by their social superiors.

The relatively low frequencies of the first person singular pronoun in the letters to social inferiors are striking in light of Hypothesis 2a. These are most likely related to the fact that instruction giving in the CO is mediated via representatives of highest officials who report on their decisions and actions. Although the mediators remain institutionally superior to their addressees as if by extension (of the prerogatives of the officials on whose behalf they write), they will not be in a position to overuse self-reference because they are not direct sources of the messages that they convey. This fact also sheds some light on the relatively high frequency of the third person singular pronouns and their increase over time. Third person singular pronouns are

more frequent in the letters 'down' (highest officials are presented as third parties) than on average and in the letters 'up'. In both sets of letters their use reflects the mediation and "indirectness"[16] of communication procedures in the Colonial Office: in correspondence on somebody's behalf, the source of the message, be it up or down the institutional hierarchy will be referred to as third party. The increase in the third person singular pronoun over time may in turn be ascribed to the growing role of institutional mediation between the low and high officials of the CO.

In the institutional correspondence analysed above, many patterns were observed which are both in line with the findings in the literature and some that run contrary to these. As far as the latter are concerned, the unexpected tendencies must have been determined by the specific sociocultural and institutional factors that determined the communication in the CO. Overall, CO correspondence emerges as a local domain characterised by unique patterns of self- and addressee reference corroborating the precedence of institutional factors over individual ones. Moreover, my study has demonstrated that a male-only upper class institutional setting, where social distance is relatively hard to assess, or participants are social equals, poses a range of fascinating questions related to the alignment with the institution and the other actors, as well as to the ways in which multifaceted social/institutional identities are constructed in correspondence. In these processes the participants' rights and obligations as well as their relative positioning in the institutional grid play a central role. At the same time, the insistence on the values of genteel society characteristic for Late Modern Britain and the growing professionalisation of the civil service shape linguistic expression in the Colonial Office.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge some limitations of the surviving data related to the institutional procedures that regulated communication of the officials and clerks. As historians have shown, British colonial affairs involved a dual system of managing official and unofficial information and correspondence in general, and in the Cape Colony (Laidlaw 2005; McKenzie 2016). The private and confidential layer of this system is not retrievable through official record, neither are the "real" workings of diplomacy, which mostly progresses through face-to-face encounters and spoken interaction.

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[16]   Cf. also metacomments like the following one: "I desire that it may be distinctly made known to the Civil Servants of the Cape Government, that it is not competent for them to address themselves directly to me or to my office, without the sanction or cognizance of the Governor, or of the Officer administering the Government of the Colony" (RCC 34: 268; Huskisson to Bourke, December 1827).

As a result, it is more likely that in the emerging information state, where writing and power are closely linked, the written record was central to announcing decisions and the control of information transmission, but unlikely to have been central to the decision-making process itself. Taken that the "private and confidential" exchange remains outside the data we are looking at, we are dealing with a highly sterile setting of identity projections filtered through the need for reputation management and confidentiality constraints, as well as being limited in content. Therefore, the set of institutional correspondence under scrutiny only provides a very restricted access to the patterns of communication in more general terms, even within the realm of the institution. However, we may assume that, as much as the underhand transactions conducted within the private networks of the key decision-makers remain obscure to us and continue the tradition of the oral and informal side of diplomacy, the institutional representations that persevere essentially reflect the resulting politics and policies to some extent. These written representations are governed by their own dynamics and diachronic developments and as such constitute a fruitful research ground.

APPENDIX 1
Metropolitan and local power structures and major correspondents in CO (1796 and 1827-30)

Hierarchy	Location	Position	1776	1827-30
LEVEL 1	London	(Third) Secretary of State for War and the Colonies	Henry Dundas (First Secretary for War)	Earl Henry Bathurst (1812- April 1827)
				Viscount Goderich (30 April 1827-Sep 1827)
				William Huskisson (Sep 1827-May 1828)
				Sir George Murray (30 May 1828-Nov 1830)
		Under-Secretary of State for War and the Colonies	–	R.W. Hay (1825-36)
		Parliamentary (Deputy) Under-Secretary	–	Wilmot Horton (1821-28)

LEVEL 1	London	Institutions	War Office Evan Nepean (Under-Secretary)	Treasury William Hill (1826-28)
			–	Agent for the Government of the Cape of Good Hope R.P. Courtenay
	London & Cape Colony		–	Commissioners of Inquiry John Thomas Bigge William Blair William Coolebroke
LEVEL 2	Cape Colony	Commanders of the British Forces (Sep 1795-Nov 1795)	Vice Admiral Sir George Keith Elphinstone	–
			General Alured Clarke (Commander- -in-Chief of India)	–
			Admiral Thomas Pringle	–
			Major General Craig	–
		Governor	Major General Craig (1795-97)	Lord Charles Henry Somerset (1814-26)
			Major General Francis Dundas (1798-1803)	Major General Richard Bourke (1826-28)
		Chief Secretary to Government in the Cape Colony	–	Richard Plasket
			–	Christopher Bird (1822-1824)
LEVEL 3	Cape Colony	Institutions	Fiscal	Daniel Denyssen
			Landdrost of Albany	Major Dundas
			Dutch institutions	Court of Justice
				Burgher Councillors
				Burgher Senate
				Landrost (Bresler)
				East India Company
(LEVEL 4)	Cape Colony	Citizens (the Dutch and the 1820 settlers)		

APPENDIX 2
Correspondents in 1796
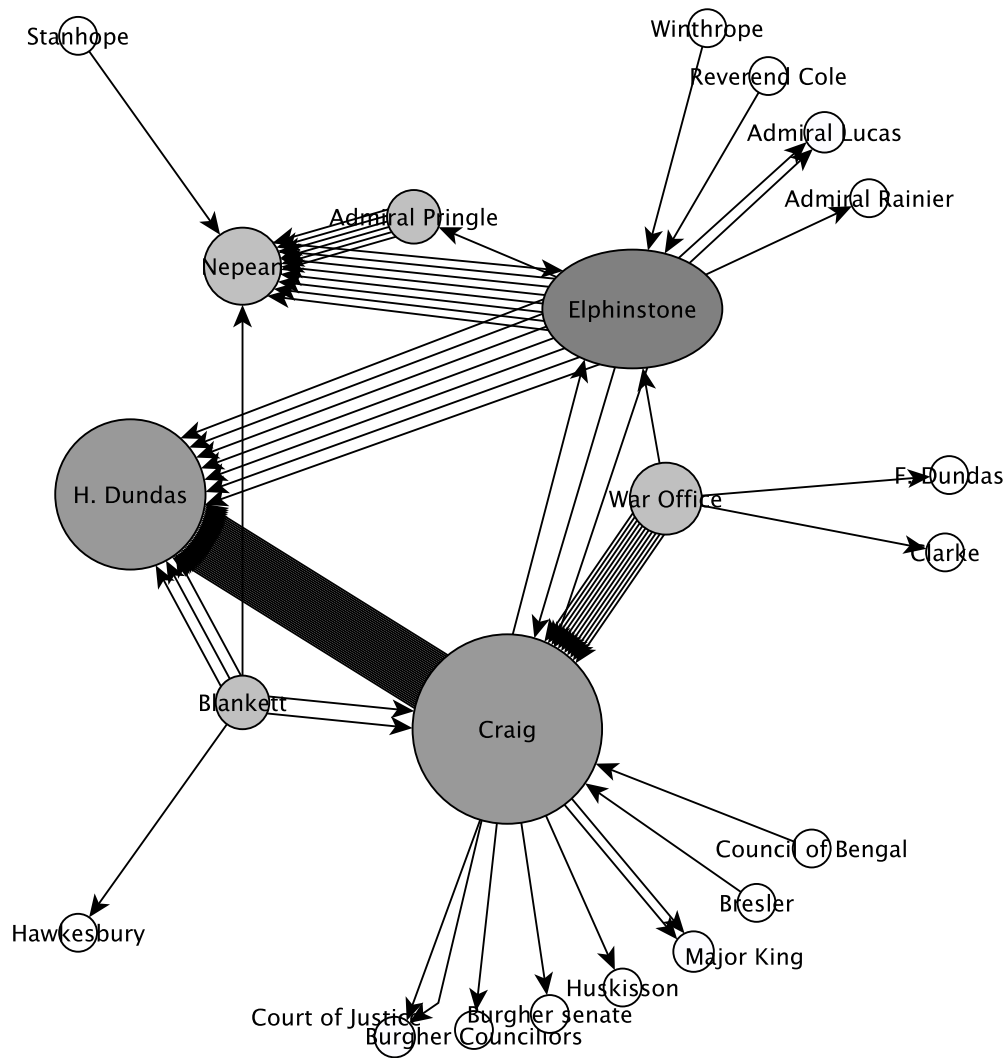
APPENDIX 3

The circle of Hay' correspondents in 1827-30
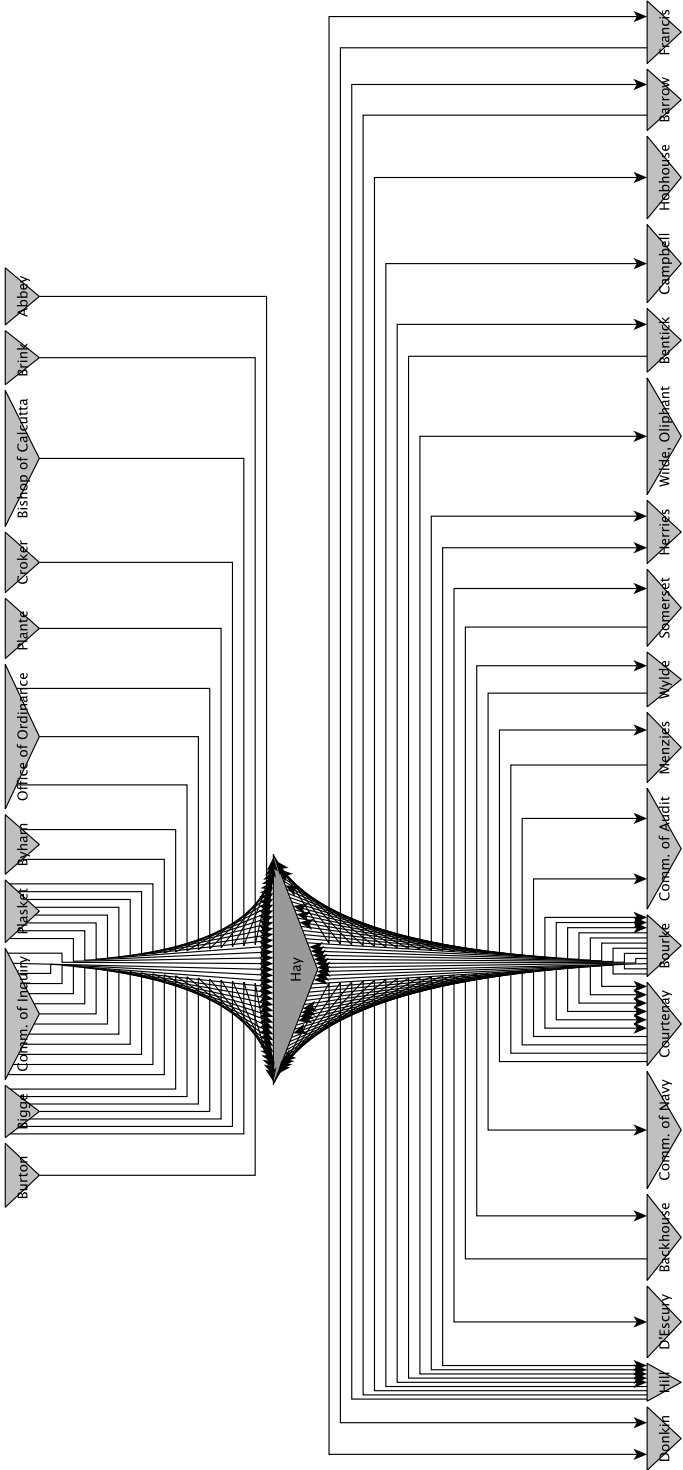
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Constructing the defendant role
in the trial proceedings of the Old Bailey:
Guilty or not guilty

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the construction of the defendant role in the trial proceedings of the *Old Bailey Corpus, 1720-1913*. The aim is to find out how defendants position themselves discursively in the courtroom and in relation to the crime they are accused of. With keyword, phrase frame and cluster tools we map linguistic patterns comparing them in time and between men and women. The usage of two keywords *innocent* and *guilty* are analysed more closely in context as they explicitly position the defendant in relation to the charges. The analyses highlight various aspects of the defendant role construction on different levels of granularity and link findings to the changing context of the courtroom and the judicial system.

Keywords: Old Bailey proceedings, legal language, defendant role, language practices, linguistic patterns.

1. Introduction[1]

This paper focuses on the construction of the defendant role in the trial proceedings of the *Old Bailey Corpus, 1720-1913* (Huber et al. 2012). We are interested in how the defendants express themselves discursively, whether there are diachronic changes in language practices associated with the defendant role, and how these linguistic practices can be captured

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with various analytic tools. We analyse the defendant role construction
on different levels of language starting from linguistic patterns including
keywords, phrase frames and clusters that can be observed only with
quantitative methods. We then move on to the utterance level to see how
two particularly telling keywords, *innocent* and *guilty*, are used in context to
negotiate the defendant's position in relation to the charges.

The methodology reflects an integrative understanding of language as
a social practice that relates to the speaker's characteristics and communicative
intent, to the nature of the situated activity and its institutional context as well
as broader contextual resources and societal structures (cf. Layder 2003/1997:
76-82; Fairclough 1992). We also adopt the broadly-accepted view that
identities are constructed in interaction and that linguistically they may be
indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, or linguistic structures
and systems (Bucholtz – Hall 2005). As role identity means "fulfilling the
expectations of the role" (Stets – Burke 2014: 69), we believe that quantitative
corpus analyses of the data can reveal habitual patterns of defendant speech
that relate to the defendant role. On the utterance level, then, we can perhaps
see interactional negotiation in action and capture more nuanced defense
strategies. These various analyses are assumed to reveal and relate to larger
ideological structures and legal processes.

As an institutional role, the role of the defendant is restricted in
many ways, e.g., by the legal system and courtroom practice, but the time
period also saw many changes in this respect and the role of the defendant
changed. Most importantly, the assumption of innocence (rather than guilt)
gradually became part of the judicial system and the role of the defense
council developed (Beattie 1986, 2001). It is then meaningful to ask whether
the discursive construction of the defendant role changed and how
specifically. In addition to the defendant role, people facing charges in the
courtroom had other facets to their identity as well. While role identities
are constructed in interaction vis-à-vis other roles, such as teacher-pupil
and doctor-patient, group identities based on broad social categories such
as race, class and gender do not necessarily require interaction with group
members, but they are still part of a person's social identity across situations
(Stets – Burke 2014: 69; Stets – Burke 2000). As the data provide us access to
gender as a salient group identity of the defendants, this feature is included
in the analysis.

We shall first discuss the legal system in the eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries in order to depict the institutional and ideological circumstances
pertaining to the defendant role in different time periods in the Old Bailey.

Earlier studies on historical courtroom language provide insights and points of comparison to the defendant role especially in the context of the pre-nineteenth-century courtroom, but the nineteenth century covered in this study has not been explored to any great extent so far.

2. The legal background

2.1 The Old Bailey

The Old Bailey Central Criminal Court was a court house in West London, and the main district court of the urban area. Unlike the rural courts, the Old Bailey carried the same legal staff from assize to assize, and it met more frequently than any other court in the country at the time. The growing urban population of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries kept the court busy, and the Old Bailey quickly became notorious for its haste and industrial scale of dispensing justice: "The unseemly hurry of Old Bailey trials in the early nineteenth century was disgraceful; the average length of a trial was few minutes" (Baker 1979: 417).

The defendants passing through the Old Bailey were often either working class or poor residents of the London area (Emsley 1989; Beattie 2001). This was reflected in the crimes documented in the *Old Bailey Proceedings*: the court dealt largely with larcenies, pickpocketing, and other thefts. Both men and women were represented among defendants, albeit women much less frequently and in terms of somewhat different offences. The average Old Bailey defendant of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a white male, from a working class or poor background, and accused of theft, grand larceny in particular. And, more often than not, he was judged guilty of the offence and either executed or transported to the colonies. Likewise, the average female defendant was white, poor or working class, and accused of grand larceny. What sets the genders apart, excluding the difference in numbers, is that women were rarely accused of violent crimes such as murder or assault, and the objects they stole were domestic in nature, whereas men had a much wider social context and thus much more varied criminal opportunities (Emsley et al.: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Gender.jsp).

The trial proceedings were formal, and the judge had the responsibility to act as the overseer of the formalities, as well as make sure that the jury obtained all the information it needed to reach a verdict. The judge

was also expected to act as the authority ensuring that both parties were granted an equal and fair hearing. The trial started with rounding up the defendants from the prisons, and charging them with the bill formulated at the magistrate's office. The defendant was expected to plead guilty, or not guilty, with heavy persuasion towards the latter, since a guilty plea meant that the sentencing would happen immediately without any mitigation. If the defendant pleaded not guilty, the actual trial commenced.

First, the prosecutor offered his account of the events, which in turn was followed by testimonies of the prosecutor's witnesses. The defendant was supposed to cross-examine the witnesses, and at the end deliver their own version of the events. The jury was expected to decide which narrative of the alleged crime was the truth, and the judge would decide whether the narrative mitigates or aggravates the guilt (Beattie 1986: 95). In practice, however, the judge had considerable power in influencing the jury to reach the verdict he preferred, and many judges made their preferred verdict clear in the summary they provided at the end of the trial.

During the beginning of the period defense lawyers were not allowed to help the defendant in the trial, and before the end of the eighteenth century they were rarely involved in the formulation of the defense in general. The use of a lawyer in itself was seen as suspicious in the eighteenth century still, since "plain and honest defence" (Hawkins 1721: 400), with a nearly supernatural belief in truth always coming through, was seen as the only acceptable way of defending oneself.

Finally, the physical layout of the Old Bailey court room(s) also warrants a mention, since the physical reality of the defendant at the time of the trial helps to understand some features of the data. The building itself was located at the immediate vicinity of the Newgate Prison, which housed most of the accused between the assizes. The courtroom was organised to emphasise the adversarial nature of the trial, juxtaposing the defendant with the prosecutor and his witnesses at the centre of the room, and with the barrister students and other members of the audience at the wings. The jurors sat at the vicinity of the defendant, in stalls to her or his right. Prior to the installation of gaslight in the nineteenth century, a mirror was used to reflect light on the face of the defendant so that the members of the jury could see her or his face better, and a sounding board was also used to amplify the defendant's voice (Emsley et al.: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/The-old-bailey.jsp). These peculiarities may help to explain some of the short speech acts of the defendants in the data, since it can be assumed that this physical reality was rather overwhelming, especially for first-time offenders.

2.2 The judicial system and the legal principles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

The main guiding principles and the way people conceptualised judicial issues and the question of guilt of the accused prior to the eighteenth century were a mixture of Aristotelian logic and Germanic legal principles. The legal focus had been on royal offences up until the sixteenth century (Baker 1979), and not on criminal offences concerning individuals. The non-political crimes were traditionally dealt with communally, within the social context of the accused and the defendant in village gatherings. All of these crimes were, at the core, a conflict between two parties: the plaintiff and the accused. In order to take the matter to a trial, there had to be a point of disagreement between the two. Most often this point was the narrative of the events leading to the alleged crime. The jurors, originally the neighbours or fellow tribesmen of the accused and the plaintiff, had to decide which narrative was the truth. Physical factors did not usually feature in the process, excluding crimes involving extreme physical harm. As a matter of fact, the word *evidence* referred still in the early nineteenth century largely to testimonials rather than forensic evidence, which has become the primary meaning of the word today. Furthermore, the principle governing the trials was the assumption of guilt, unless the defendant could prove her- or himself innocent.

As the power of the crown solidified further and the administration became more centralised, the upheld social harmony was realised in the form of King's Peace. Felonies were thus reconceptualised as crimes against the King's Peace (e.g. Archer 2005; Langbein 2003), and thus the parties of felony cases were conceived to be the crown and the accused. The victim, although he served as the prosecutor, was merely a witness, and witnesses were ordinarily regarded as disinterested (Langbein 2003: 38). This helps in part to explain the different treatment of defendants and prosecutors in terms of disallowing or allowing legal counsel. Furthermore, as the defendant was expected to prove his or her innocence, it can be argued that criminal offences were regarded as a question of the defendant's general morality rather than essentially legalistic in nature.

As the crown took over as the prosecutor, other changes also took place: the jurors were, especially in the urban courts, not the peers of the defendant, but affluent men and often veterans of multiple trials, and a judge was appointed to precede over the trial and its formalities (Baker 1979; Beattie 2001). The assumption of guilt was still the main guiding

principle, as was the adversary, conflict-centred trial. As a matter of fact, the trial could not proceed if the defendant refused to plead not guilty, since no logical conflict could be identified without it. Furthermore, while pleading guilty was possible, in the eighteenth century most judges discouraged this plea, since a guilty verdict in a felony always carried either a death penalty or transportation to the colonies.

As a whole, the judicial system of the eighteenth century was an institutionalised version of the medieval legal system and an interesting combination of the central power of the crown and the common law tradition. The king was the highest authority and the crown was often the *de jure* plaintiff in the criminal trials, since it was the King's Peace that was broken by the criminal, but the king did not hold absolute power over his subjects, at least when it came to sentencing them to death. Due to this mixture, the English legal system was considered particularly fair, as defendants were allowed and required to defend themselves and they could not be condemned to death without the verdict of their peers (see Baker 1979; Beattie 1986, 2001).

The vivid discussion around the main judicial principles of the eighteenth century culminated in the turn of the century, first in the Penitentiary Act of 1779, which enabled incarceration as a punishment for felonies instead of a capital punishment, and in 1820 as official assumption of innocence until proven guilty. This change reflects the change in the conceptualisation of criminal behaviour and its causes: instead of removing an irredeemably immoral person from society, the aim now was to rehabilitate the individuals and address the reasons behind criminal behaviour. Additionally, with the growing population and the loss of the North American colonies in 1776, it is quite likely that capital punishment, i.e. death or transportation, was no longer a viable option even from a logistic point of view.

Another major development of the time was the institutionalisation and acceptance of lawyers as a standard part of trial proceedings (Gallanis 2006; Rama-Martinez 2013). The chair of law, which was established in 1828, paved way to a more uniform legal education in universities, but as noted by Baker (1979: 149), the most distinguished lawyers of the time were still largely lacking legal formal education. Unlike in the earlier centuries, the nineteenth-century defendants were allowed a lawyer, who assisted them throughout the trial. Some proceedings of the trial were transferred solely on the shoulders of the lawyer, such as cross-examination of the witnesses.

In spite of the growing role of legal counselling in the trials, the defendant was still expected to deliver the end speech.

3. Language practices in the courtroom and the defendant role

Historical courtroom language and the linguistic construction of various courtroom roles have been studied especially in the pre-nineteenth-century context, but the nineteenth-century developments are covered to a lesser extent from the perspective of language. Culpeper – Kytö (2010), for instance, use the *Corpus of Early English Dialogues 1560-1760* to map recurrent word combinations (i.e. lexical bundles / clusters) in Early Modern English courtroom discourse and compare findings with the present-day courtroom data available in the *British National Corpus*, but the nineteenth century is not included.

Their analysis shows clear diachronic changes in the language practices, which reflect the roles in the courtroom as well as the general institutional context and the principles governing the activity. For example, there are very few interpersonal bundles (e.g. I THANK YOU, I AM SURE, I DON'T WANT) compared with the genre of plays regardless of the period, which probably relates to the rigid turn-taking structure of the trials (Culpeper – Kytö 2010: 120). Early Modern and Present-day trial proceedings are also similar in that they show bundles relating to question-answer adjacency pairs. However, these bundles are somewhat different in the two periods as the Early Modern English question bundles relate to eliciting a crime narrative (with the most frequent question bundle being DO YOU KNOW), while the Present Day English ones focus on cross examination (with the most frequent question bundle being WHAT DID YOU) (Culpeper – Kytö 2010: 127)[2]. Moreover, present-day trials have lost most of the narrative lexical bundles (e.g. THERE WAS A, HE DID NOT, THAT HE WAS) and emphasise circumstantial (e.g. AT THE TIME, AT THAT TIME, NINETEEN EIGHTY EIGHT) and organizational bundles (e.g. IN RELATION TO, A MATTER OF, IN THIS CASE) (Culpeper – Kytö 2010: 139, 121). Culpeper – Kytö (2010: 139) conclude that their findings may reflect a "shift in the courtroom from giving crime narrative to cross-examination, and a shift towards a more formal and formalised register".

Gender is another aspect covered in Culpeper – Kytö (2010: 332), where they hypothesise that "in public and formal discourse, women

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[2]   Culpeper – Kytö (2010) include all the speaker roles, not just the defendant role.

generally speak less than men in mixed-sex interactions, *except* in situations, such as the courtroom, where cooperation can be coerced". Their data, just like ours, is predominantly between men, whereas women are only a small minority. Their results are not quite straightforward, and the low amount of female speech complicates comparisons. On the one hand, male examined have 25.1 words per utterance, while female examined have 26.9 words per utterance, but the social status of the examined seems to affect the length of utterances. Male high examined have 41.3 words per utterance and male low examined 21.8, but for women the social status seems to have the opposite effect as female high examined have 15.0 words per utterance and female low examined 58.7 (Culpeper – Kytö 2010: 335).

Archer's (2005) study on question-answer patterns in treason trials from 1640 to 1760 is another extensive source of early courtroom practices in England. She suggests that new discursive practices were emerging at the time and that the speaker roles shifted. At the beginning of the period the judges were the primary examiners and the defendants were responsible for their own defense, but the introduction of lawyers in the 1730-1740s led to the "flowering of the art of interrogation" (Archer 2005: xvi). Archer (2005: 166) shows that from 1720 to 1760, the witnesses have the most prominent role in the courtroom as they produced the majority of the utterances. The defense counsel was the second most prominent role, the judge the third, the prosecution counsel the fourth and the defendant the sixth. According to Archer (2005: 91) the prosecution counsel from the 1720s did what the judge had previously done.

The defendants remained in a difficult position as they had no power to shape responses in the courtroom. Even if they had a right to request a response, they did not often succeed in obtaining the relevant information to secure their freedom. The introduction of the defense counsel helped to alleviate some of the problems of the defendants. Witnesses appear to be questioned more thoroughly by the lawyers than they had been by the judges and they began to display self-protective strategies when interacting with the lawyers such as resolute denials and/or emphasising the accuracy of their account. Moreover, Archer (2005; 2007: 206, 192) suggests that defendants tried to remain active especially in times when there were no defense counsels. In practice, this meant that they did not merely answer questions but also actively questioned witnesses and even (re)initiated new exchanges when interacting with judges.

In Archer's (2005: 168-170) data the judges have a very prominent role as questioners, which is different from today's courtroom where defense and

prosecution counsel perform the questioning. During the timespan covered in Archer's study the judges' role changed and the interaction mostly transferred to defense and prosecution counsel, and the jury. In particular, the prosecution counsel's role as examiners of witnesses became more and more important, whereas defense counsels were only slightly more active than the defendants they were defending. All in all, various speaker intentions include, for example, seeking information, seeking clarification, seeking confirmation, querying, undermining, accusing, providing information, denying an allegation, and evading (Archer 2005: 267).

In addition to the studies cited above, the English legal context before the nineteenth century has been studied at least by Kryk-Kastovsky (2009), Cecconi (2012), and Chaemsaithong (2014). For earlier centuries, we also have several studies of historical American courtroom discourse as various interactional aspects of the Salem witch trials of 1692-1693, in particular, have attracted researchers' attention (e.g. Hiltunen 1996, Kahlas-Tarkka – Rissanen 2007, Chaemsaithong 2009, Doty – Hiltunen 2009, and Grund 2012). Other individual trials, such as Chaemsaithong (2012) on the construction of the expert witness identity in one Philadelphia trial of 1787, have also been studied.

These studies are more qualitative, discourse analytic studies on specific strategies adopted in the courtroom and by defendants. Cecconi (2012) focuses on selected seventeenth century trials and explores them as a type of verbal duelling where, interestingly, even low status defendants may challenge the court's authority. Kahlas-Tarkka – Rissanen (2007) show how the defendant's cooperativeness was crucial for successful defense in the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. Unsuccessful defendants, on the other hand, resorted to quite opposite discourse strategies denying their guilt and all involvement in witchcraft, or even questioning the validity of the evidence or the intelligence of the court. In the Salem trials, like in the Old Bailey trials of most of the eighteenth century, guilt was assumed, and as a result resorting to negative politeness seems to have been the best strategy, as Kahlas-Tarkka – Rissanen (2007: 4) claim. Many successful strategies identified by Kahlas-Tarkka – Rissanen (2007: 6) as well as Hiltunen (1996: 35) can be observed in the *Old Bailey Corpus* data. These include cooperativeness in providing the court with sufficient but not too many details, minimizing one's own involvement and implicating other people and/or the devil and being humble, repenting and willing to help. The Old Bailey data, however, often contain very little defendant speech per trial, and it is not necessarily possible to follow the development of specific strategies through the trial.

4. Data and methods

The Old Bailey trials from 1674 to 1913 have been recorded in *The Old Bailey Proceedings*. The accounts of the trials were published after each session and they were originally a popular commercial success. In the course of the nineteenth century the audience of the periodical was narrowed down from the general public to lawyers and public officials as the growth of newspapers provided a new channel for popular news distribution (Emsley et al.: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Publishinghistory.jsp).

    The Proceedings are generally regarded as a reliable source of early courtroom practice although they hardly present a comprehensive account of everything that was said during a trial (see Emsley et al. https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Value.jsp). Culpeper – Kytö (2010: 52) and Cecconi (2012: 25), for example, discuss the nature of historical trial records as evidence of language use, considering different aspects of the process of transcribing speech that have most likely affected the outcome. Producing an entirely accurate transcription in the noisy circumstances of the courtroom was hardly possible without any technical support apart from shorthand writing. Most likely, transcripts were also cut down, and all speech uttered in the courtroom has not been recorded in the Proceedings. Nevertheless, the ability to provide the public a convincing account of the actual trial has been considered one of the commercial assets of the Proceedings.

    Even if it is difficult to know for certain how faithfully the scribes wrote down the words uttered during the trials, Huber's (2007) study suggests that scribes treated spoken language and prose separately and that reported passages to some extent can be taken as representation of speech although they clearly lack some spoken features such as hesitations, false starts and fillers (see also Traugott 2011, for the audiences of the Old Bailey trials). To quote Culpeper – Kytö (2010: 52), for purposes of our research it is important "that the text purports to be authentic spoken interaction", but the scribal influence has to be kept in mind when interpreting results.

    The dataset for this study was extracted from the *Old Bailey Corpus Online, version 1.0* (Huber et al. 2012) by searching for the speaker role 'defendant' in the online search interface. The search yielded 17,738 defendant speech events (as they are called in the *Corpus*), ranging from the year 1725 to 1919. Example (1) illustrates a speech event, which in this trial is also the only speech assigned to the defendant:

(1)   I made no Operations in taking the Mare: I did not break the Stable, nor take the Mare. It was a young Man who used to go with me to

> Emmery's House; he told me what he was going about, and I have
> had no Friends this 17 Years, 'till I kept Company with this young
> Man. I am but 17 Years old, and never wronged any body in my Life
> before (t17360721-29; Male; Theft, animal theft; Guilty)[3]

As illustrated in Fig. 1, women are underrepresented in the data. There is
also a clear decrease in speech events just before the turn of the twentieth
century, which can be explained by the lack of surviving *Proceedings*:
only around one third of the publication has survived and been digitized
(Hitchcock et al. 2012). In 1875, less than 20 trials can be found in the data,
and some years, like 1879, are missing from the material altogether. Despite
these gaps, it is evident that the role of the defendant has decreased in time
in the *Old Bailey Corpus* data, with fewer speech events and words.
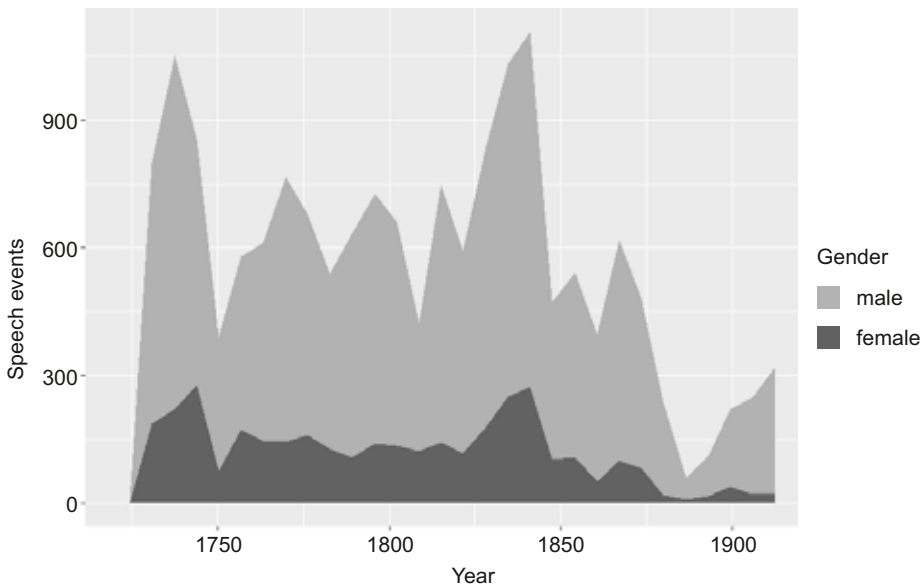
Figure 1. Overview of the defendants' speech events in the *Old Bailey Corpus*
by gender

The defendant role is not the most prominent role in the courtroom. The *Old
Bailey Corpus Stats* provided online (Huber et al. 2012) show that in terms
of word count the most prominent speaker role in the corpus data is the
witness, followed by victims, defendants, lawyers and judges. The bulk of

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3   The references in the examples give the following information: the trial code
       in the *Old Bailey Online*; Gender of the defendant; Charge; Verdict. The first
       four digits after t in the trial code give the year of the trial.

words in the corpus produced by witnesses is about nine times more than the word count of the defendants.

We used *WordSmith Tools 6.0* to explore the data (Scott 2012). The specific tools used include keywords, phrase frames and clusters as well as collocates. Keywords are words that occur unusually frequently or infrequently in the corpus in comparison to a reference corpus. In keyword analysis the defendant statements extracted from the *Old Bailey Corpus* were compared to British texts of a comparable period in ARCHER 3.1, which is a multigenre diachronic corpus representative of historical English registers. This analysis highlights characteristic language of defendant statements in comparison to "general" English in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and answers the question what is discursively typical of the defendant role. Phrase frames are groups of wordgrams identical but for one word and they show in more general terms than clusters what kind of patterns occur frequently in the data. Clusters are recurrent combinations of words, in this case three-word clusters were searched for[4]. Finally, two keywords, *innocent* and *guilty*, were chosen for a more nuanced inspection on utterance level, and collocate analysis was used to help identify patterns of use. For diachronic comparison the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was deemed as an appropriate, albeit artificial, dividing line on the basis of legal developments. The "eighteenth century" includes *Old Bailey Corpus* data from 1725-1799 and the "nineteenth century" covers the years 1800-1919.

5. Analysis

5.1 Distribution of defendants' talk in the *Old Bailey Corpus*

Table 1 (and Fig. 1) illustrate the reality of the Old Bailey: the defendants were largely male, and the trials were numerous and speedy, with little input from the defendant. Furthermore, when women were prosecuted, they did not perform as many speech events, nor did they use as many words as the male defendants. On average women have around 20 words less per defendant than men. While the average speech event of the defendant in the data is very short, there are great individual differences in the length of the speech events: the word counts per speech event range between 1 and 1653 words for women, and between 1 and 3529 words for men. However, long and wordy

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[4]   For a discussion and methodology concerning clusters (or lexical bundles), see e.g. Culpeper – Kytö (2010: 104-111), and for keywords, see e.g. Archer – Culpeper (2009).

speech events are the exception in the data. Most of the lengthy speeches were associated with complex crimes and the defendant's relatively high status in society, such as a doctor accused of manslaughter when his patient died (t18360404-906; Male; Killing, manslaughter; Guilty, with recommendation), but high social status and complex crimes are both rare in the data.

Table 1. The average word counts of defendants' speech events in the *Old Bailey Corpus* by gender

	Women	Men
Word count	141 469	624 887
Word count per defendant	58.4	77.4
Word count per speech event	39.7	47.4

The gender difference in the amount of talk is partly due to the different criminal profiles of women and men. Men engaged in various criminal activities, whereas women were rarely accused of violent crimes, such as murder or manslaughter, which in the data tend to correlate with longer speech events. Likewise, the educational gap between the genders meant that women were less likely to be involved in complex crimes such as forgeries or accounting crimes, which by their very nature require lengthier explanations than a simple robbery. However, since the most common crime for both genders was larceny, it seems that the accused women were linguistically less prominent in the trial environment than men in a way that is not explained solely by the different criminal profiles. One possible reason for this difference comes from the physical and social reality of the Old Bailey: an overwhelming courtroom, with all male judicial staff and an audience staring down on the defendant, must have been a difficult situation for a woman facing charges.

If the word counts of the trials from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are compared (Table 2), a change can be observed: the speech turns are slightly longer, and both women and men seem to participate more actively as defendants in the eighteenth century.

This change in word counts can most likely be traced to the changing judicial principles and logistics of the court room: during the eighteenth century defense lawyers were rare and not allowed to help in the cross examination, but in the nineteenth century their role in the proceedings grew. Furthermore, with the changes in laws and sentencing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the defendants did not have to literally argue

for their life. With the official codification of the presumption of innocence, the defendants also did not have to argue for their innocence in the same manner as they did under the presumption of guilt.

Table 2. The word counts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the *Old Bailey Corpus*[5]

	18th century			19th century		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Total word count	69 822	230 982	300 804	71 647	353 602	425 249
Word count per defendant	60.7	73.7	70.2	56.3	71.9	68.7

However, Fig. 2 shows clearly that despite the trajectories of change and the famed fairness of the English legal system, the reality was bleak for most people brought before justice in the Old Bailey.
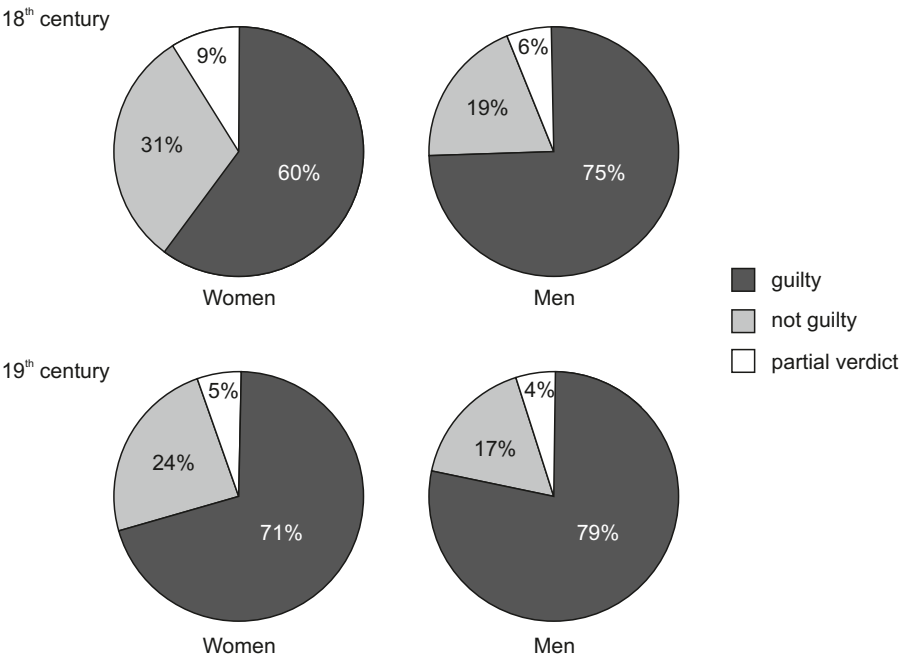

Figure 2. The verdicts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the *Old Bailey Corpus* by gender

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[5] Without the 20 outliers with over 1,000-word speech turns.

The conviction rates were high with less than 20% of men found not guilty. With the limited death penalty, the jurors clearly felt even more comfortable sentencing defendants in the nineteenth century than in the eighteenth century as the conviction rates increased from 75% to 79% for men and from 60% to 71% for women. This can be interpreted as a rather fixed societal concept of the defendant role, with a strong bias towards the idea of the defendant's guilt. Thus, it is natural that many defendants chose to communicate their stance on this imposed role, even if they were not otherwise vocal during their trials, as discussed below.

5.2 Keywords, phrase frames and clusters

So what did the defendants say in their defense? We used keywords, phrase frames and clusters to observe typical patterns in defendant speech and hence characteristic language use constructing the defendant role. Table 3, first, lists the top-35 most keywords, and Table 4, the twenty most frequent three-word phrase frames in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Table 5 then compares the most common three-word clusters in the *Old Bailey Corpus* with findings in Culpeper – Kytö (2010) providing a time line of courtroom discourse extending from the end of the sixteenth century up to the present.

The keywords listed in Table 3 exemplify the top keywords in both centuries by gender. They are all highly significant, with keyness of the last item indicated in the table. In general, men produced many more highly significant keywords than women, probably because of the higher amount of speech by men in the data. On the basis of the keywords, there seems to be a lot in common between the genders as well as diachronically, which highlights the continuities in the genre. This is not to say that there are no differences, but they are likely to be on a finer level of detail. We can say that the defendants typically narrate past events (various past tense verbs) in the first person (keywords *I*, *me*) with specific references to people (e.g. *he*, *man*, *woman*), objects (e.g. *money*, *watch*), and places (*street*, *house*, *shop*).

It is evident that defendants are concerned with "what happened" and "who did" (cf. also (1) above) as part of establishing the "truth" – as well as their innocence in most cases. The keywords support this idea as they seem to pertain to the observable "reality". Moreover, the verb *know* emerges as a specific stance item contributing towards the construction of a strong epistemic stance of certainty, and another verb *saw* indicates how important evidential stance and first-hand experience were in defendant

statements. In addition, negation is a salient feature of defendant speech, as in (2) and (3) (keywords included in Table 3 are in italics).

(2)   *I was* drinking a pint of Beer, and the *Man* and this Slater *came* in together, and we drank together; but when *I would go* home, *he* started *up* and *said*, *he had* lost his *Money*; *I said*, *I* had *not* wrong'd him, but he call'd the *Watch*, tho' *I saw* none of his *Money*, nor do *I know* the *Man*. (t17370114-32; Male; Theft, pocket picking; Not guilty)

(3)   I left the prosecutor at the public-house in company with two women; *I* afterwards *saw* a *mob* in the *street*, and *was* taken – nothing *was* found on *me*. *I know* nothing of *it*. (t18180909-217; Female; Theft, pocket picking; Guilty)

Table 3. The top-35 keywords in defendants' speech in the eighteenth and nineteenth century by gender

18th century		19th century	
Women	Men	Women	Men
1	2	3	4
I	I	I	I
me	me	me	me
said	said	said	was
went	did	did	did
he	went	he	said
did	was	gave	he
asked	he	went	went
money	came	my	not
came	my	was	my
woman	took	money	had
she	asked	came	asked
took	up	asked	came
gave	man	not	**saw**
house	house	*she*	took
up	him	took	him
watch	money	had	street
my	going	told	money
things	there	shop	gave
pawn	not	out	got
was	know	**saw**	told
go	street	prosecutor	house

1	2	3	4
them	watch	**never**	shop
would	had	house	them
never	go	*woman*	up
prosecutor	told	got	man
shop	them	them	prosecutor
husband	**saw**	policeman	going
had	coming	up	out
not	prosecutor	pawn	road
out	would	know	get
know	out	it	**know**
stairs	got	street	bought
going	**never**	things	policeman
saw	nothing	him	**never**
street	bought	watch	it
(keyness 216,63)	(keyness 328,17)	(keyness 237,13)	(keyness 370,69)

Some gender differences pinpointing to the different realities and positioning in the world emerge in keyword comparisons. Particularly salient keywords in female defendants' statements include *she*, *woman* and *child*[6], which suggests that women's lives and crime scenes involve other women and they are more domestic than in the case of men, as shown in (4)-(6).

(4)   The *woman* that pick'd him up, was a little *Woman* big with *Child*, and her Husband brought the Watch to me, and desired me to Pledge it for him. (t17340911-47; Female; Theft, theft from a specified place; Guilty, theft under 40s)

(5)   I was taken very bad in Bed, between 5 and 6 in the Morning. I came down Stairs, and call'd for help as well as I could, but there was Nobody else in the House. The next Door was an Ale-house, and a Noise being there, I believe they could not hear me. And being violent ill, and in great Extremity of Pain, I was deliver'd in the Kitchen. I never saw the *Child* move, nor never laid Hands on it; but it got that Bruise on the Head by falling from me, and then in a fright I took it up and carried it to the Vault. (t17340424-21; Female; Killing, infancticide; Guilty)

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6   *Child* is the 63rd and 99th keyword in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively.

(6)   I was at the fire, and a *woman* with a *child* asked me to hold the bundle;
        I could not find her afterwards. (t18030914-29; Female; Theft, grand
        larceny; Not guilty)

Men, on the other hand, frequently refer to their life and crime on the street
and in public: e.g. *horse*, *road*, *thief*, *goods*, *work*, *business*, *trade* and *cart*. Other
people involved in their statements tend to be men (*mr*, *man*) more so than
in women's statements, apart from *wife*. Examples (7)-(9) show some of these
keywords in context and how they evoke the male sphere.

(7)   I was a stranger about that part. I was looking for work. I met two or
        three of my *trade*, and they made me intoxicated at the Castle. I am
        a native of Gloucester. (t18360404-1005; Male; Theft, simple larceny;
        Guilty)

(8)   I was on the stand at ten o'clock in the morning, came home at half-
        past six o'clock in the evening. I know nothing about these *goods* being
        moved. I went in the evening to have a glass of liquor. I met a porter in
        the gate-way, who asked me to go and fetch something out of the loft
        which my mate had to take care of. I was out the whole day in Barker's
        service at the East India Docks. (t18360509-1164; Male; Theft, simple
        larceny; Guilty)

(9)   I was running down the *road* to go home to warm myself, being very
        cold, and a gentleman stopped me. I asked him what he stopped me,
        for as I had not stolen any thing. (t18380129-5760; male; Theft, simple
        larceny; Guilty)

Phrase frames further reiterate the same narrative orientation with several
first-person frames (I WAS *, I WENT *, I HAD *) as well as prepositional phrases
(IN THE *, OF THE *, ON THE *), which can be used to specify locations as well as
time points and relations between various entities (Table 4). Similarly, negative
frames are prominent including I * NOT, DID NOT * and I NEVER *. Negative
expressions relate to the denial of guilt or intent to do wrong, or to some part
of the charges or participation in criminal action as illustrated in (10):

(10)   He sent me to get his coat as he was tipsy – I got it, and gave it to
        him; *I never saw* it again. (t18320705-36; Male; Theft, simple larceny;
        Guilty)

Table 4. The top-20 phrase frames in defendants' speech in the eighteenth and nineteenth century

Phrase frames	
18th century	19th century
I WAS *	I WAS *
I * NOT	I * NOT
I HAD *	I HAD *
IN THE *	DID NOT *
I WENT *	IN THE *
DID NOT *	I WENT *
AND I *	I * TO
I HAVE *	AND I *
OF THE *	I HAVE *
THE * AND	THE * AND
I * TO	THE * OF
I * THE	HE SAID *
HE * ME	I SAID *
I DID *	OF THE *
I NEVER *	ME TO *
ME TO *	HE * ME
I * A	TO THE *
I AM *	IT WAS *
A * OF	I * IT
I * IT	ON THE *

Finally, diachronic changes in the discursive construction of the defendant role are not evident in our analysis of keywords and phrase frames as the eighteenth and nineteenth-century results in Tables 3 and 4 are very similar. Major changes seem to have taken place only after the nineteenth century. In Table 5, Culpeper – Kytö's (2010) analysis provide a point of comparison even though their data include courtroom dialogue in general. In spite of this, their Early Modern English results and ours are very similar. In the pre-twentieth-century courtroom all the roles seem to be constructed interactively between *I* and *you*, whereas the present-day data shows a preference for topical and circumstantial ideational clusters.

Table 5. The top-twenty rank-ordered three-word clusters in the defendant speech in the *Old Bailey Corpus* and in Culpeper – Kytö (2010)

EModE trials (Culpeper – Kytö 2010: 116-117)	18th century Old Bailey defendants	19th century Old Bailey defendants	Present-Day English trials (Culpeper – Kytö 2010: 116-117
DO YOU KNOW	I DID NOT	I DID NOT	IN RELATION TO
I DID NOT	I KNOW NOTHING	I WENT TO	WOULD HAVE BEEN
DID YOU SEE	I WAS GOING	I DO NOT	AT THE TIME
I DO NOT	I WENT TO	DID NOT KNOW	YES MY LORD
HE TOLD ME	HE SAID HE	I SAID I	MY LORD I
AT THAT TIME	I SAID I	I WAS GOING	AT THAT TIME
OUT OF THE	I HAD BEEN	ASKED ME TO	NINETEEN EIGHTY EIGHT
I TOLD HIM	OUT OF THE	I WAS IN	PART OF THE
HE DID NOT	DID NOT KNOW	HE SAID HE	A MATTER OF
THERE WAS A	I NEVER SAW	I WAS NOT	THE END OF
I WENT TO	KNOW NOTHING OF	I HAD BEEN	THERE WAS A
IT IS NOT	IN MY LIFE	WAS GOING TO	MY LORD THE
THAT HE WAS	I WAS COMING	I KNOW NOTHING	IN THIS CASE
WHAT DO YOU	I WAS IN	DO NOT KNOW	OUT OF THE
DID YOU EVER	IF I WOULD	I HAVE BEEN	I DON'T KNOW
HE SAID HE	AS I WAS	OUT OF THE	AS FAR AS
AN ACCOUNT OF	WAS GOING TO	WENT TO THE	IN NINETEEN EIGHTY
DO NOT KNOW	ASKED ME TO	I COULD NOT	BE ABLE TO
I CANNOT TELL	I TOLD HIM	I TOLD HIM	GOING TO BE
I DON'T KNOW	DID NOT YOU	AT THE TIME	IN RESPECT OF
I CANNOT SAY	I WAS NOT	I HAD NO	IT WOULD BE
I DESIRE TO	ME IF I	I NEVER SAW	WHAT DID YOU
GIVE AN ACCOUNT	I NEVER WAS	WAS IN THE	THE FACT THAT
ONE OF THE	SAID HE WOULD	HE DID NOT	A HUNDRED AND
YOU KNOW OF	I AM A	I HAD NOT	MY LORD YES
THE BISHOP OF	THERE WAS A	TOLD ME TO	AS TO THE

5.3 Innocent or guilty: A closer look at two keywords and their collocations

Finally, we shall focus on the individual words *innocent* and *guilty* and their use in context as they most explicitly highlight the defendant role and link defendants directly to the crime and the charges against them. These words are also keywords in defendant speech in the sense that they are statistically more frequent in defendant speech than in the comparison corpus (ARCHER). They are not among the top 35 keywords and therefore not included in Table 3, but they are still highly significant, with keyness values ranging from 45.00 to 277.49.

As the trial aims at establishing whether the defendant is guilty or innocent, the defendants somehow need to position themselves in relation to the crime and to the culprit role imposed on them. However, they do not necessarily use the words *innocent* or *guilty* to indicate how they feel about their position, but can say e.g. *I do not deny it* to indicate guilt, or *I never stole a horse in life* to take an innocent stance. Between these two extremes we can see other stances to the crime including a factual approach like *I pawned them for a man*, where the defendant admits at least some involvement in the crime. Alternatively, the defendant can adopt an ignorant stance and deny knowing anything at all. Many of the defendant speech events in the data fall between the two extremes, with defendants contesting the presented narrative, or otherwise distancing themselves from it. Fig. 3 exemplifies these different stances.

GUILTY

I do not deny it
I have nothintg to say for myself
I don't wish to give the Court any further trouble, I am guilty of the fact

FACTUAL

I pawned them for a man

IGNORANT

I now nothing at all of it

NOT GUILTY

I am quite innocent of any thing of the kind
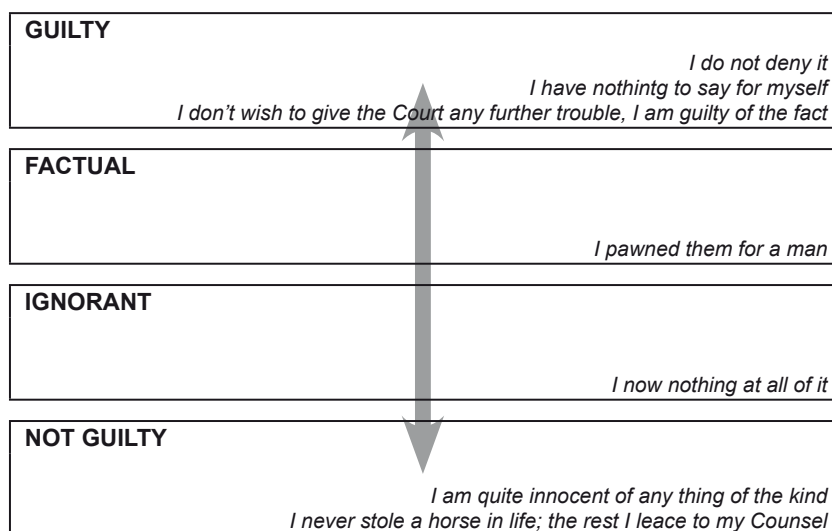*I never stole a horse in life; the rest I leace to my Counsel*

Figure 3. Stance cline from guilty to not guilty in defendants' speech events in the *Old Bailey Corpus*

The words *innocent* and *guilty* can be regarded as indicative of affective stance as they cannot just simply be taken at face value as factual statements (cf. Jaffe 2009). In addition, affective stance emerges in a few clusters including *am very sorry*, *beg for mercy*, *I hope you*, which often show the defendant's remorse, whether they directly admit or deny guilt, as in (11) and (12).

(11)   I had no intention to defraud Mr. Shaw; I meant to pay him. *I am sorry*; I should have paid him if I had had time. (t18500506-1024; Male; Theft, embezzlement; Guilty, with recommendation)

(12)   and two girls said "Are you stabbed?" I could not speak, and they said, "The boy is stabbed". When I came to my senses I said, "I am not stabbed". I heard no more till I was taken by the police. That is all I have to say, *I beg for mercy* and I know I shall get justice. Have mercy upon me my Lord, have mercy; don't hang me; my father is an old man and I have no one to help my mother and my little brothers and sisters and what am I to do. (t18620303-306; Male; Killing, murder; Guilty, with recommendation)

Perhaps due to signalling an extreme stance, both *innocent* and *guilty* are relatively infrequent in absolute terms in the data, occurring only 633 and 309 times respectively in the entire dataset of over 17,700 speech events. Both words typically occur with the same most common orientational lexical units, which identify the speaker, and other elements that link the speaker to the crime. Utterances such as *I am innocent of the crime* and *I am not guilty of the charge* are very common during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Amplifying and affective adverbs, including *very, quite,* and *never*, are frequent collocates of both *innocent* and *guilty*, and they are slightly more common in the nineteenth century (Table 6).

Table 6. Collocates of *innocent* and *guilty;* collocate horizon 5L 5R

Innocent		Guilty	
18th century	19th century	18th century	19th century
1	2	3	4
I	I	I	I
am	am	of	the
the	the	not	of
of	of	the	not
as	it	am	to

1	2	3	4
it	was	was	am
my	as	to	was
child	a	and	have
to	me	my	it
was	and	that	**pleaded**
unborn	to	**never**	**plead**
is	my	a	me
and	**charge**	in	had
me	**quite**	been	in
affair	is	any	if
very	in	me	this
a	not	you	a
quite	that	thing	aged
thing	never	such	but
that	have	it	and

A closer analysis of the collocates reveals that *innocent* and *guilty* were used in different defence strategies. Furthermore, the use of the word *guilty* changes from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. This supports the idea that 'defendant' as a societal concept and social role as well as the judicial reality are different than in the latter period.

The word *innocent* is more common of the two, occurring 252 times in the eighteenth century and 381 times in the nineteenth century. It is used to convey a not-guilty stance, and it is often accompanied by an amplifying adverb, such as *very, entirely,* or *quite.* The *innocent* construction most often occurs either at the beginning or at the end of a more complex speech event (Examples (13)-(16)) that either presents an alternative narrative to the one given by the prosecution, or questions the integrity of the witnesses of the prosecution. Sometimes the word *innocent* and the extreme stance it signals are mixed in the same speech event with less extreme stances, such as an ignorant stance (16).

(13)   I am *quite innocent* of it. (t18690816-711; Male; Royal Offences, coining offences; Guilty)

(14)   How they came there I know not; I am *as innocent as the child unborn*. My fellow-servants conveyed them there, in order to get rid of me. (t17700425-66; Male; Theft, grand larceny; Guilty)

(15)　　If she has got the Foul Disease, *I am innocent*; for I am a clean Man; and if she is rotten with it, *I am innocent as an Angel.* (t17390117-25; Male; Sexual Offences, rape; Guilty)

(16)　　*I know nothing about these things; I am innocent of it*; girls used to frequent the house as well as me[…] (t17771015-26; Female; Theft, theft from a specified place; Guilty, lesser offence)

The comparison structures (*(as) innocent as*) are characteristic of the eighteenth century, and so is firmer stance taking. Facing death or transportation overseas, most defendants had a good reason to fight the presumption of guilt as strongly as possible. Furthermore, the speech events are slightly longer during the eighteenth century, and the comparison structures contain supernatural allusions within the Christian moral framework: the defendants compare themselves to an unborn child, either generally or to unborn Jesus, and angels (Examples (14) and (15)). This can be interpreted as a response to the surrounding conceptions of guilt and criminality of the time: since the question of the eighteenth century trial was of the morality of the defendant, they framed their defence accordingly.

During the nineteenth century, the use of the word *innocent* changed. As the judicial process was further institutionalised and formalised, the defendant speech events likewise show elements of technicalities. Instead of pleading general innocence, the defendants argued innocence of a particular charge, and sometimes even mixed a guilty stance with the statement. Likewise, the comparison structures found in the earlier century are much rarer, and the reference is not necessarily to a supernatural being but to an ordinary child as in (17):

(17)　　I am as *innocent as the child my wife has in her arms*. It is all villainy and spite; he told them what sort of a man I was, and got them to perjure themselves. It is an old grudge. (t18610408-360; Male; Theft, animal theft; Guilty)

Finally, sometimes the word *innocent* is not used to characterise the speaker, but a co-defendant (Examples (18) and (19)). This behaviour seems to be somewhat more typical in women's speech, as they claim that their family member is innocent, but due to the underrepresentation of women, nothing conclusive can be said about gender differences. During the nineteenth century these uses of the word *innocent* are also often accompanied with a confession of

the speaker's guilt, as it no longer carried a death penalty for the speaker. As can be expected, similar cases in the eighteenth century are extremely rare, occurring only a few times under uncommon circumstances (19).

(18)   *Whatever I am, my mother is quite innocent*; indeed she is. (t18231022-164; Female; Theft, theft from a specified place; Guilty)

(19)   *I own myself guilty of the Charge. I am willing to dye, and beg that I may dye. But Tripland is an innocent Man*. When we were in New Prison, I said to Beck, why will you swear against Tripland, when you know he is innocent? And says Beck to me again, I must hang Three, or else I shall never get my Discharge. (t17320223-35; Male; Violent Theft, highway robbery; Guilty)

The word *guilty* occurs less often in the material, appearing 126 times in the eighteenth century and 183 times in the nineteenth century. This can be explained by the unwillingness of the defendants to adopt a guilty stance, and an intuitive aversion towards any lexical items that might align the jurors against them. However, this particular word is used quite differently in the eighteenth century from the nineteenth century. In the earlier period, the word almost always appears in a negative construction, *I am not guilty of* or *I never was guilty of*. As the nineteenth-century defendants also had the option of partial pleading – and many of them used this strategy in their defence (21) – the defendant acknowledged their guilt in one part of the indictment, but argued other parts. This type of behaviour is predominantly male in the data; only one female uses the word for negotiating the specifics of her indictment. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century many of the male defendants who chose to use the word *guilty* did so with more varied structures, using conditionals and rhetorical questions more than in the earlier period (Examples (22) and (23)). This can perhaps be explained with more widespread literacy, and also the judicial procedures that now allowed the use of written speeches and defense lawyers.

(20)   *I am not guilty of the charge* – the words were put into the child's month [sic] at the office. (t18271206-221; Male; Theft, simple larceny; Guilty)

(21)   I lived with Mr. Hider six months ago; I left and came back again; *I am guilty of the ring and waistcoat, the others I know nothing about*. (t18451027-2062; Female; Theft, stealing from master; Guilty, with recommendation)

(22)   *If I was guilty I should plead guilty*, but I am totally innocent of it. (t18730407-271; Male; Theft, pocketpicking; Not Guilty)

(23)   I was always given to understand that burglary was breaking into a house violently. *I admit the robbery, but do not consider I am guilty of burglary*. (t18920307-389; Male; Theft, burglary; Guilty)

As mentioned earlier, during this era pleading guilty in order to prove co-defendants' innocence is much more common than before. Since a guilty verdict no longer meant the end of the defendant's life and the question of guilt had been reconceptualised as a judicial technicality rather than a question of morality, many defendants felt comfortable confessing crimes. Many also apparently pleaded not guilty prior to trial, but then used their defense speech to confess the crime but contest the narrative and "set the record straight".

(24)   *I pleaded guilty before the Magistrate*. I have declined to bring any one to speak to my character, as it would be hurtful to their feelings. I throw myself on the mercy of the Court. I have been in great distress, and was in liquor at the time. (t18380129-596; Male; Theft, simple larceny; Guilty)

(25)   I don't care. I am not a man to lie. I own to the truth of what I done. What I done I done in a drunken fit. All I have to say is what is written on that paper. […] *But what I plead guilty to is a different thing to what I plead unguilty to*, and that is the evidence given against me by a couple of liars who knew nothing whatever about the fire until they were told how it came alight by the police […] (t19100426-16; Male; Damage to Property, arson; Guilty)

(26)   I shot the woman because she was fifty times worse than a common street harlot, and her husband knows it, and he is a bigger liar than I am. *I am guilty, my lord*. (t19020407-349; Male; Killing, murder; Guilty)

6. Summary and conclusion

In this study we set out to explore the linguistic construction of the defendant role in the *Old Bailey Corpus* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The aim was to find out how defendants positioned themselves in the courtroom and in relation to the crime they were accused of and whether there were

any changes in time as courtroom practices changed. Defendants' language practices were understood as complex acts which can be observed and interpreted on several levels including broader social and societal practices, specific contexts in place and time as well as in defendant discourse and individual utterances. We started off by contextualizing defendants in the contemporary courtroom and in the Old Bailey and proceeded to the linguistic analysis using both quantitative methods on the whole data set to reveal typical patterns in the defendant role, as well as a close reading of examples of statements containing explicit claims of innocence or guilt.

On the whole, we can say that the defendant role is about constructing a position where past events are narrated from the speaker's point of view and often through denial; in essence, the evidence or counter-evidence is in the defendant's narrative. This is a constant feature of the defendant role in both centuries – as well as before –, and major changes in courtroom discourse and the linguistic construction of the defendant role seem to have taken place only after the nineteenth century. Conviction rates showed that guilt was deeply embedded in the defendant role, but as the defendant's status in the courtroom changed we assumed that there might be linguistic changes as well. We did observe a slight shortening of defendant speech events in the data as well as changes in discourse strategies where *innocent* and *guilty* were used to take an overt stance towards the charges. Both of these changes possibly relate to changes in courtroom practices and the legal system as in the nineteenth century the defendants' status improved: they were assumed innocent until proven guilty; they were allowed lawyers that assisted them throughout the entire trial; and death penalty was less often the only option for those found guilty. For example, the extreme denial of guilt and claiming to be *innocent* (*as a babe unborn*) is more characteristic of the eighteenth century, which seems to reflect the moralistic nature of the earlier trials and the basic assumption of defendants being guilty unless they can prove themselves otherwise. During the nineteenth century neither the societal nor the judicial context required such an extreme stance.

Furthermore, the analysis showed evidence of gender differences in the judicial proceedings, as well as a more general separation of spheres of life between women and men. Women are far less present in the proceedings and thus the data they have produced is scantier, but in general they were far less often involved in serious crimes and their conviction rates were lower than those of men. Moreover, they seem to have been slightly less vocal in the courtroom than men. To us, this gender difference seems plausible as the courtroom was a male-dominated arena with judges and lawyers being men.

However, this result in the amount of speech is somewhat contradictory to the findings in Culpeper – Kytö (2010), but the difference to their study may stem, for example, from a different social composition of the defendants and different type of crimes dealt with. Finally, the analysis of the words *innocent* and *guilty* showed some gender differences as women were more prone to admit guilt and speak for the innocence of others, while men were more likely to resort to a technical "trick" of admitting guilt on some parts of the charges but not on others.

Zooming the analytic lens from a distant to a close view we can capture simultaneous but slightly different processes. In this case the changes in the judicial system seem to have had an impact on some aspects of the linguistic construction of the defendant role, which could be observed when closely inspecting specific discourse strategies, but the more global change of the courtroom discourse was not yet clearly evident in the nineteenth-century data and the findings suggest that the nineteenth-century courtroom still links to the past discourse traditions and that discourse traditions in such an institutional context change gradually.

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"Get the snip – and a job!" Disagreement, impoliteness and conflicting identities on the Internet

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the construction of disagreement and the emergence of conflict talk in the comment boards of the British Mail Online newspaper website. It focuses on the case of a young unemployed couple, parents of six, who are asking Social Security fora four-bedroom flat. By resorting to a threefold framework for the analysis of disagreement – backgrounded, hedged and foregrounded disagreement (Scott 2002, Walkinshaw 2009) – it concentrates on the linguistic and discursive strategies which online speakers employ to disagree in a more or less explicit way. In light of the diversity of negative responses to this specific news report case, which range from mildly disapproving comments to blatantly offensive remarks, it also explores the interactional factors which influence the management of face and the occurrence of (im)politeness. Such factors as anonymity, asynchronicity, spatial disconnection and, crucially, third-party targeting are advanced as possible explanations. Furthermore, the fact that online interaction is multi-party seems to lead to what is coined "multi-topic argument", at the same time as the public character of the exchanges prompts the expression of strongly ideological positions regarding the broad concept of social class, as well as specific issues of unemployment, housing and parenting policies. Crucially, the article explores how relational work in such a complex participation setting influences the online construction of individual and group identity vis-à-vis the reification of the "us vs. them" rhetoric. Last but not least, the article also discusses the way in which a typically plural and open public online platform, with no moderation or censorship, turns the exercise of freedom of speech into the expression of hate, discrimination, and prejudice.

Keywords: disagreement, (im)politeness, Internet, conflict talk, identity, social class.

1. Introduction

The study of comment forums on the Internet provides rich evidence for a particular, and to a certain extent innovative, type of verbal interaction. Unlike interpersonal conversation, talking in online newspaper comment boards is an asynchronous and long-distance phenomenon, which makes the linguistic exchanges assume a delayed and sometimes impersonal character (Baron 2003; Hardaker 2010; Yus 2011). Additionally, as a multiparty conversation, several voices are at play simultaneously and several alternative (and, indeed, conflicting) topics tend to be raised (Marcoccia 2004; Lewis 2005; Lorenzo-Dus et al. 2011). This influences the expression of opinions and the negotiation of agreement and disagreement. What is more, the anonymous nature of online discussion forums naturally affects – indeed, decreases – the speakers' concerns for redressing face (Goffman 1955, 1967) and avoiding conflict (Donath 1999; Eisenchlas 2011). Although online comment boards are public, reaching a wide, multinational audience, the fact that the contributors' identities are concealed may cause some speakers to volunteer polemical opinions and to assume strong ideological positions more willingly than in restricted, face-to-face dialogues (see e.g. Graham – Hardaker 2017). Moreover, as the risk of actual retaliation seems to diminish, Internet talk reveals the occurrence of impolite and aggressive elements more easily than talk in personal interaction does so.

The purpose of this article is to analyse a specific case of computer-mediated communication, namely the comment pages of the British *Mail Online* newspaper website. The news article under investigation, published in July 2013, reports on the case of a destitute family of eight. The parents, a young unemployed couple, are asking Social Security for a four-bedroom flat to accommodate their steadily growing brood. The focus of the present analysis is the readers' linguistic responses to the news report context in general (family benefits in the UK) and to the legitimacy of the couple's housing request in particular, given that their unemployment does not seem to encourage them to undertake family planning. This response varies in strength along the disagreement scale, sometimes assuming an explicitly impolite and even aggressive character. It also involves questions of identity in terms of age and social class, at the same time as it is closely embedded in political, ethical and moral issues (on the importance of morality for research on im/politeness, see e.g. Arundale 2013; Haugh 2013; Kádár – Márquez-Reiter 2015; Kádár – De La Cruz 2016).

The discussion starts by providing a synopsis of theoretical approaches to online communication. Secondly, it reviews the methodological framework of Politeness Theory (Brown – Levinson 1978/1987), against which Impoliteness Studies have to be considered, the online expression of disagreement being one such manifestation. Then, the textual analysis section looks into the computer-mediated dialogues according to three categories: backgrounded (or implicit) disagreement, hedged disagreement (mitigated with face work) and foregrounded (or explicit) disagreement. The treatment examines the speech act of disagreeing in light of the employment – or, conversely, of the avoidance – of face redress strategies. It also aims to analyse the negotiation of identity issues in conflict-ridden Internet discourse (see e.g. Blitvich 2009), in terms of the establishment of coalition, rapport and solidarity (Bruxelles – Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004; Spencer-Oatey – Zegarac 2017), as well as the construction of a sense of community (Baym 1995; Castells 2000; Locher 2004; Hopkinson 2013). Finally, the article investigates the creation and/or reification of segregation strategies in ideology-organised participation frameworks (Upadhyay 2010), where freedom of speech frequently, and ironically, progresses towards hate speech (Calvert 1997; Kinney 2008; Hardaker – McGlashan 2016; Langton 2012).

2. Linguistic approaches to online communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has been at the forefront of linguistic, communication and sociological studies since the close of the 1990s, when it became a widespread phenomenon. One of the initial angles of approach was of a contrastive nature, viewing CMC as opposed to face-to-face dialogues. Against the backdrop of Conversation Analysis (CA, Sacks et al. 1974; Atkinson – Heritage 1984; van Dijk 1985), researchers struggled to establish how the specific technological nature of the new medium affected both the linguistic message and the communicative interaction. Devoid of co-presence and simultaneity, Internet exchanges required other categories of analysis, which CA instruments were unable to provide. CA notions such as turn taking, overlap, and interruption, among others, could not apply to the early forms of CMC, namely email. Its asynchronous and spatially distant character, together with its written but informal nature, challenged existing analytical frameworks.

Androutsopolous (2006; see also Locher 2010) regards these research issues as belonging to what he calls the first "wave" of linguistic approaches

to the new media – that of computer, or technical, "determinism", which focused on describing the idiosyncrasies of the language used in CMC, mainly in email exchanges. Yates (1996), Baron (1998) and Crystal (2001), for example, attempted to incorporate this interactive genre into existing communication models. Consequently, they regarded it either as a form of oral speech, which happens to be written for transmission purposes, or as a message written in the traditional format but transmitted through a new electronic medium (as in job applications, online hotel bookings, family letters). Other authors (Ferrara et al. 1991; Maynor 1994; Collot – Belmore 1996) tried to devise a symbiotic approach to email exchanges by integrating properties of both the oral and the written registers into a so-called "e-style".

Baron (2003) also approached email language in comparison with face-to-face conversations, by exploring both their similarities and differences. The former include informality (use of contracted forms, preferred coordinate clause constructions), conciseness (short messages intended for short answers) and temporariness. The differences between the two communicative forms include the occurrence of more radical informal usages in email than in interpersonal talk (such as colloquial forms of treatment, frequent omission of greetings, use of direct speech acts), a greater variability of the response time (which is due to the asynchronous nature of email which, even if extended, is acceptable, unlike face-to-face exchanges which demand instant response), and the fact that email can be printed, edited and stored, unlike oral exchanges which, unless recorded, are typically ephemeral.

When chat-rooms, discussion forums, newsgroups and other Internet sites of open-access participation became pervasive, the changing discursive nature of cybernetic communication attracted new criticism. Understanding the interpersonal dynamics and the pragmatic competencies of participants in virtual forums, with their frequent anonymity and multimodality, took central stage. This is what Androutsopoulos (2006) calls the second "wave" of scholarly research into CMC, which brings social and contextual factors – namely, the users and the online situation, respectively – into the scene. Marcoccia (2004), for instance, discusses several features of the so-called "online polylogues", such as manipulation mechanisms which anonymity favours, namely the fact that the author (the actual producer of the message) can safely hide behind the speaker (the persona holding the nickname that appears on the screen). Lewis (2005), on the other hand, analyses French and British online boards of political discussion (a case of what she calls "many-to-many interaction") and she remarks that plural communication tends to be fragmented into sub-exchanges, that is, multi-party interactions tend

to be broken down into a number of overlapping dialogues (each taking place between two speakers). Clarke (2009), employing a Critical Discourse Analysis framework, also focuses on the interpersonal relationships among trainee teachers online, especially the discursive construction of the legitimisation strategies used. Also, Montero-Fleta et al. (2009) study the degrees of formality in two types of chat-rooms (a Catalan one, on football; and a British one, on the Palestinian crisis) whereas Savas (2011) aims to understand the individual and contextual differences in varying stylistic options detected in synchronic forums.

The study of reader responses in discussion forums on the Internet, particularly with regard to the analysis of participation frameworks, face and identity (along the same lines as the present article), characterises what Androutsopoulos (2006) calls the third (and, so far, last) "wave" of CMC analysis. Donath (1999) stands among the first to study the ways in which members of online communities carefully construct their positive face, trying to manage their profiles so as to project desirable images of themselves that do not necessarily correspond to what they are in reality. Other experts have put forth an alternative reading: cybernauts no longer wish for a public image of classiness, learning, or civility. Baron (2003), for example, posits that contemporary American society, in face-to-face exchanges and in CMC alike, has witnessed the fall of "public face". Changes in perception of social class differences, the upsurge of inter-class mobility, the fact that education does not necessarily lead to economic success, and the great importance attributed to youth culture have resulted in "less impetus to learn the fine points of etiquette or dress up for job interviews" and less public respect for developing "the sophisticated thought and language that higher education traditionally nurtures" (Baron 2003: 90).

Even though online speakers are not co-present, it should be stressed, as does Locher (2010: 1), that "online communication is as real as offline interaction". She quotes from Wood – Smith (2005: 20), who remark that when people interact online – either with their true names or with pseudonyms – they may "consider the effects of online interaction just as impactful as those one might encounter in a face-to-face scenario". This is in line with what Haugh – Kádár – Mills (2013) reclaim as a legitimate field of Interpersonal Pragmatics. Indeed, Internet communication *is* interpersonal, insofar as it takes place between real, existing individuals, as opposed to e.g. fictional characters, and involves relational management.

More recent approaches to online (im)politeness have actually emphasised the important role that relational work plays in the construction of online identities. Blitvich (2009), for instance, influentially discusses

the emergence of a new American news genre, that of news as (impolite) confrontation, which depends on a joint construction of identity by the hosts, the guests and the audience. Being impolite is therefore expected and encouraged in such interactional settings. Upadhyay (2010) also addresses the issue of group identity, by claiming that discussants may resort to linguistic impoliteness as an exclusion mechanism, to discredit an out-group's position. This, he holds, is one of the three strategies speakers may use to be impolite, the other two being a communicative strategy, to express disagreements, and an argumentative strategy, to query opposite ideological standpoints. Upadhyay also maintains that impoliteness is connected with the discussant's siding with, or against, a group's ideological stance and objectives, that is, a group's identity. Eisenchlas (2011) proposes another explanation for online impoliteness. He argues that it is the very nature of the Internet medium that makes face concerns become more insignificant than in face-to-face contact. The Internet is democratic, anonymous, and discontinuous, which makes interactants more easily disregard social conventions such as respect, hierarchy and deference, let alone accountability.

Yus (2011) also applies a politeness framework to analyse what he coins "Internet-mediated communication". Yus (2011: 257) interestingly remarks that the employment of politeness strategies online is not necessarily the user's choice, but often the platform moderator's imposition, in such various forums as blogs, discussion boards and chatrooms. Yus (2011: 270) is also aware that the Internet, being used all over the world both asynchronously (in email and texting) and synchronously (in chatrooms), "is particularly appropriate for an analysis of the trans-cultural differences in the use of politeness". The specific nature of online talk influences the use, or misuse, of politeness. Such factors as "the lack of physical co-presence and the reduced nonverbal contextual support" (Yus 2011: 263) affect the choice, or dismissal, of certain politeness strategies. Like other written media, such as letters or the printed newspapers, the Internet does not boast resources otherwise available to speakers in everyday communication. By way of compensation, it does afford other conversational aids that do not exist in other forms of communication: emoticons, for instance, can attenuate the propositional content of an utterance or mask its illocutionary force, much along the lines of what politeness does (Yus 2011: 168).

Herring – Stein – Virtanen (2013) have recently offered a substantial volume on the pragmatics of CMC, including relevant articles on (im) politeness. The use of small talk as a politeness strategy in workplace email exchanges (Hössjer 2013), for instance, is discussed alongside the

employment of so-called "flaming", or insulting, a consensually impolite interactive attitude on a listserv (Danet 2013; on "flaming" see also Richet 2013). In addition, resorting to repair strategies, such as apologies, in chat room and email conversations (see Baker-Jacobs – Garcia 2013; Harrison – Allton 2013, respectively) is regarded as a way to overhaul the online occurrence of face-threatening acts.

Even more recently, Graham – Hardaker (2017) have also charted a current trend in digital media analysis that concentrates on *im*politeness, rather than politeness. Together with some authors mentioned above, they refer to Angouri – Tseliga (2010), Dynel (2015), Langlotz (2010), Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2011), Perelmutter (2013) and Richet (2013). Interestingly, Graham – Hardaker (2017) point out a rather curious characteristic of some forms of online impoliteness: its habitual, or at any rate recurrent, nature. The authors (2017: 803) state: "Spammers, Pimpers, Flamers and Trolls are of particular interest since these labels are frequently associated with deliberate, habitual impoliteness online" (on "trolling", see also Hardaker 2010, 2013, 2015, and Hopkinson 2013).

Now that the textual genre of written online communication has been outlined, an overview of key theoretical points is necessary. Therefore, the next section will survey a few essential premises of Politeness Theory and their impact on Impoliteness Studies (see also Ermida 2006, 2009 & 2014).

3. Aggression, disagreement, and impoliteness

The occurrence of conflict, an aggressive form of divergence, has long been seen as a dispreferred incident in interpersonal communication. Brown – Levinson's (1978/1987) classic book departs significantly from the claim that one of the main goals of politeness is to neutralise aggression: "[…] politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol […], presupposes [a] potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it" (Brown – Levinson 1987:1). The authors add that politeness "makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties", requiring the interlocutors to identify possible symptoms of conflict through "constant vigilance" and to master a "precise semiotics of peaceful vs. aggressive intentions" (1987:1). As such, politeness should be understood as an important method of "social control" (1987: 2).

Another foundational contributor to the study of politeness, Leech (1983), also conceives of politeness as a remedy for conflict and aggression. Moreover, he considers disagreement to be a dangerous pathway for

aggressive interaction. His Principle of Politeness aims to avert or resolve any hostility between speakers, in such a way as to keep "the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (Leech 1983: 82). This Principle of Politeness is divided into six maxims, namely those of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy. Importantly, the Agreement Maxim is stated thus: a) "Minimise disagreement between self and other", and b) "Maximise agreement between self and other". Diminishing disagreement is listed first because, as Leech (1983: 133) claims, "avoidance of discord is a more weighty consideration than seeking concord". Leech also holds that "there is a tendency to exaggerate agreement with other people, and to mitigate disagreement by expressing regret, partial agreement, etc." (1983: 138). Another means that speakers employ to prevent disagreement is the use of indirect speech acts (Searle 1975), for instance through modalisation and passivisation. Indirectness is inversely proportional to impoliteness: the more indirect the speaker, the less impolite and the less likely to cause conflict.

The management of conflict is closely related to the power differential between speakers, and this has also been clear from the emergence of politeness studies. Power is one of Brown – Levinson's three "sociological factors" that are crucial to "determining the level of politeness which a speaker will use to an addressee" (1987: 15), namely: Power, Distance and Ranking of the Imposition. Power has a strong bearing on the progress of the conversation, because if the interlocutor is "eloquent and influential, or is a prince, a witch, a thug, or a priest", he may well impose "his own plans and his own self-evaluation" (1987: 76). As a result, he will threaten (a) the positive face of the hearers, by showing he does not respect or appreciate their opinion, and (b) their negative face, by intruding upon their territory and requiring them to accept his (cf. Goffman 1955, 1967).

Brown – Levinson approach the issue of agreement vs. disagreement clearly in their theory of politeness. "Seeking agreement" and "avoiding disagreement" are complementary strategies that aim at establishing common ground between the speaker and the hearer, thus "indicating that S and H both belong to some set of persons who share specific wants, including goals and values" (1987: 103, see also 112-113). Speakers wish to agree, or to appear to agree, so eagerly that they may resort to "token agreement". Brown – Levinson (1987: 114) refer to an earlier study by Sacks (1973), in which a "Rule of Agreement" determines "the remarkable degree to which speakers may go in twisting their utterances so as to appear to

agree or to hide disagreement". An example is when a speaker replies to a preceding utterance by saying "Yes, but…", rather than a blunt "No". We will see occurrences of token agreement, or what I call "disagreeing by agreeing", in the corpus analysed in the next section.

The idea that agreeing is preferable to disagreeing is considered in other early works. Pomerantz (1984: 70) claims that even weak disagreements, being dispreferred answers, resort to delaying strategies such as hesitations, requests for clarification, "no talk", turn prefaces, partial repeats and other repair initiators. And Kakavá (1993: 36) points out that the speaker who disagrees does so reluctantly because s/he is likely vulnerable to censure and counter-attack, given that disagreeing is a potential "generator of conflict", and also of confrontation, argument, and dispute. It is perhaps because of this conflict potential, and collateral psychological damage due to face harm, that disagreement tends to be regarded as a dispreferred response.

In a somewhat later work, Locher (2004) supplies an important approach to disagreement from the standpoint of Politeness Theory and also within the framework of power relations. She takes the notion of "conflict" as the nexus that brings together other important concepts, since, as she puts it, it "can be argued to link the exercise of power, politeness and disagreement on a general level" (2004: 94). In light of Waldron – Applegate's (1994: 4) definition of a verbal disagreement as "a form of conflict" insofar as it is "characterized by incompatible goals, negotiation, and the need to coordinate self and other actions", Locher (2004) holds that disagreeing speakers are in conflict not only in terms of content but also in terms of the protection of both the hearer's face and their own. Locher (2004) stipulates eight categories of expressing disagreement, showing different degrees of politeness: using hedges, giving personal or emotional reasons for disagreeing, using modal auxiliaries, shifting responsibility, stating objections in the form of questions, using the conjunction "but", repeating an utterance, and disagreeing in a non-mitigated way. We will see how some of these categories function in the corpus under analysis. In the meantime, we may simply note that Locher, at this point (2004), sides with those that take disagreeing to be a dispreferred action.

Other researchers, however, do not think so, and claim that disagreements, just like arguments, do not have to be negatively connoted or emotionally damaging. Schiffrin (1984: 329), for instance, holds that disagreements may be part of the expected speech situation – as in "sociable arguments" – and thus be gratifying and pleasant experiences for the speakers involved. She also remarks that even though arguments

may initially seem to boil down to conflict talk, they may in fact constitute instances of "cooperative", or healthily "competitive", communication (Schiffrin 1990: 241). Goodwin (1990: 85) views disagreement – or its stronger version, argument – as a reaction that is not necessarily a dispreferred or negative one. Accordingly, "despite the way in which argument is frequently treated as disruptive behaviour, it is in fact accomplished through a process of very intricate coordination between the parties who are opposing each other". In a similar vein, Kotthoff (1993: 193) claims that "once a dissent-turn-sequence has been displayed, opponents are expected to defend their positions", showing fewer reluctance markers, which converts disagreement into a "preferred" reaction. Locher (2010), moving on from previous discussions (see Locher 2004), reasons likewise: the expectations about what is, or is not, polite vary considerably, just like assessments of appropriateness. Regulations like those of Netiquette (Shea 1994) are by no means universally observed. Sometimes, Locher (2010: 3) claims, impoliteness may even be the "norm", especially in online media that focus on political issues, and according to Angouri – Locher (2012), disagreement may actually be expected, rather than just tolerated. Instead of being an exceptional, or dispreferred, speech act, disagreeing is not necessarily negative. Likewise, Hopkinson (2014) studies the prevalence of aggressive verbal antagonism in Internet discussion forums. He argues that the effects of such behavior may be constructive and beneficial, not only to the speaker but also to the discourse community as whole. The use of a variety of face-attack moves helps speakers enhance their own face and that of the group to which they belong.

An important reflection on the desirability of (impolite) disagreement in certain settings and relational contexts is Harris's (2001) study of political discourse, in which being "politically impolite", as she puts it, is actually not only usual but desirable. The same may be said to apply to online debate forums such as the one analyzed in the present article, where State benefits are the object of discussion. It should be noted that since impoliteness essentially constitutes a matter of evaluation (Eelen 2001), online impolite disagreement also occurs within an evaluative, and necessarily relational, framework, where what is deemed (im)proper derives from social practices and established rituals. The point here is that on the Internet it is not only customary to voice (impolite) disagreement but also *expected*, especially when it comes to political discussion. In other words, impoliteness, again, seems to be the norm, at least among certain layers of respondents. Of course, not every online commentator sanctions impoliteness; certain participants, sometimes

as bystanders, act as politeness moderators, as if there were a moral order by which to abide. Kádár – Márquez-Reiter (2015) interestingly discuss the phenomenon of "bystander intervention" in light of what they call the "moral oughts" (Kádár – Márquez-Reiter 2015: 241; see also Culpeper's 2011 "social oughts"), that is, what is expected behaviour-wise from participants in certain discourse communities. We shall see whether the strong interactional antagonism on the *Daily Mail* comment thread prompts moral judgments, or conversely whether its political nature ritually frames, and interactionally condones, any form of linguistic excess.

Meanwhile, a pair of important taxonomies of disagreement require mention. The first is by Scott (2002), who distinguishes between two basic types of linguistic disagreement which "exist on a continuum of increasing explicitness and escalating hostility": "backgrounded" disagreement and "foregrounded" disagreement (2002: 301). Scott divides "foregrounded disagreement" into two subtypes, namely "collegial disagreement" and "personal disagreement", which may include "ad hominem attacks" depending on the target that the disagreeing speaker has in mind.

The second taxonomy is by Walkinshaw (2009), who, following Scott's lead to some extent, proposes four categories of disagreement. To illustrate these categories, he provides a fictitious example in which a speaker replies to the question of whether he likes a second-hand sofa:

1. Explicit / direct disagreement: "I don't like this couch at all". The literal meaning of this "face threatening act", or FTA, which carries just one possible interpretation, will only be used "if the speaker is not concerned with retaliation from the hearer" (Walkinshaw 2009: 73)
2. Disagreement hedged with positive politeness: "It's a nice couch, but I don't like it". In this case, expressing appreciation of the hearer's likes, wants and preferences reduces the strength of the disagreement.
3. Disagreement hedged with negative politeness: "You've obviously set your heart on it, but I don't like it". This includes the mitigating strategies oriented towards the hearer's desire to act freely as s/he chooses.
4. Implied disagreement: "Um, well, it's certainly an interesting colour…" This roughly corresponds to Brown and Levinson's "off-record" strategies, such as hinting and giving vague, unfinished replies, which liberate the speaker from the onus of only one communicative intention, and thus of the responsibility for the FTA.

Although Scott (2002), Locher (2004), Culpeper (2011) and Walkinshaw (2009) analyse and systematise the interpersonal occurrence of disagreement, it is

important to note that they do not do so in terms of virtual communication. The present article, therefore, feeds on the foundational input of such studies and expands the field of analysis into online talk.

Other recent studies on disagreement do consider online discourse. Graham (2007), for instance, examines how deviation from expected norms of polite interaction in an email community, when it comes to the expression of disagreement, results in conflict and renegotiation of identity. Blitvich (2010), conversely, analyses the normalisation of impoliteness in online discourse, which she dubs "youtubification", especially when politics is involved – as is the case, significantly, of the present corpus of analysis. Angouri – Tseliga (2010), likewise, discuss how instances of disagreement in online fora have a tendency to escalate up an impoliteness scale, showing signs of deliberate aggressiveness. Langlotz – Locher (2012) identify cases of expression of emotional stance in news website postings through conceptual implication, explicit expression, and description of emotions. And Bolander (2012) surveys the use of (dis)agreement in personal/diary blogs, where the participation framework encourages explicitness, even though there is a greater need to signal responsiveness explicitly when readers address other readers than when readers address bloggers.

The next sections will analyse the forms that the participants in Internet comment boards employ to express agreement and disagreement, and we will try to identify the different linguistic strategies used to express confrontation and rebuttal, as well as, conversely, alignment and approval. It seems that agreement occurs when a) there is a feeling of a shared experience of events and situations (on the concept of networked community, see e.g. Baym 1995 and Castells 2000), and b) for moral reasons, i.e., when readers feel it is wrong not to support people in need. On the other hand, disagreement takes place owing to the factors of Distance, Anonymity and Third-Party, as well as, crucially, Freedom of Speech. In fact, the feeling of unaccountability that comes with expressing opinions outspokenly, here disagreeing with State benefits to the point of resorting to slurring (Croom 2013) and flaming, shows a joint, discursively sanctioned, construction of segregation of certain vulnerable social groups (Calvert 1997; Kinney 2008; Hardaker – McGlashan 2016; Langton 2012). The following sections intend to test these hypotheses.

4. A case study: Preliminary description

The corpus of texts under investigation in the present article constitutes a portion of a long comment thread (on the whole, 2.1K comments) taken

from the *Mail Online* newspaper website, in the hours following the publication of an article entitled "Jobless couple who claim £27,000 a year benefits want a new council house because they've had SIX children 'by accident' while living in a one-bedroom flat" (July 16, 2013).

A revealing photograph accompanies that article. The picture shows the six young children, ranging from an eight-year-old girl to the two three-month-old baby twins, staring at the camera in a cluttered living-room. The father, wearing a beanie and a sporty urban outfit, has a worried expression, but also a somewhat "hooligan" quality to his looks, with his hands loose, not touching his children, whereas the mother, pale and dishevelled, looks exhausted and alienated while holding the two-year-old between her knees.

Both parents are both unemployed, the newspaper states, "because Maggie [the mother] is depressed and has mental health problems, while Gavin [the father] has to stay in their cramped home to look after her and their family". The news report was made because they are asking Social Security for a bigger home, namely a four-bedroom flat, to lodge their continuously increasing number of offspring.

The focus of the present article is the readers' linguistic reaction to the report, especially in terms of how legitimate the couple's housing request is deemed to be, since the couple's lack of employment does not seem to prevent them from having more and more children. Most of the readers' responses are based on the issue of age, because the couple is relatively young, or that of class, because the family is clearly of the lower socio-economic class. However, the responses are also strongly rooted in political, ethical and moral questions. The interaction quickly takes on a confrontational character, turning the management of disagreement, and conflict, into a key issue. Furthermore, the overall analysis of the texts becomes an interesting case study of argumentative discourse in general and "multi-party argument" in particular (Maynard 1986, Goodwin – Goodwin 1990: 100), lending itself to an examination of the employment – or dismissal – of face redress strategies usually at work in face-to-face interaction.

In total, the corpus comprises 492 posts, written in the initial six hours following the publication of the news article, each of which containing one or more sentences, which amount to 19,628 words. These posts boast a dialogical nature – or, along Marcoccia's lines (2004), a "polylogical" character – since they involve more than two participants, and many of the utterances respond to more than one speaker at a time.

5. Expressing disagreement in the *Mail Online* comment corpus

The expression of disagreement in the corpus under analysis derives from the fundamental question of whether or not the couple deserves a new home, but at times it also originates in one of a range of related topics, which the commentators introduce, discuss, drop, and even retrieve as the argument proceeds. This partly accounts for the complexity of the corpus material, insofar as the disagreement turns occur in a succession that is not dyadic, but multiparty, exhibiting different lines of discursive input. More precisely, the various points of disagreement in the exchanges correspond to the following:

a) Disagreeing about poor families deserving child support benefits;
b) Disagreeing about poor people having too many children (a situation which could be resolved by way of contraception, or even sterilisation),
c) Disagreeing about the right-wing's (and more specifically the *Daily Mail*'s) demonization of the poor;
d) Disagreeing about the appraisals of this particular couple's lifestyle (represented by their untidy house, poorly cared for children, and gaunt appearance).

Additionally, the speech act of disagreeing is closely associated, indeed overlaps, with other speech acts, such as criticising, protesting, and reprimanding. In fact, from a Speech-Act Theory perspective, the composition of the discourse is intricate, insofar as the illocutionary force of the utterances covers a broad spectrum, from ostensive condemnation and criticism, to encouragement and support, as well as warning and advice. In argumentative terms, two sides build up from the outset of the discussion: a judgmental side and a sympathetic side, which quickly and easily clash. From a Conversational Analysis standpoint, the ways the turns are constructed bears on the asynchronous nature of the polylogue. Even though interruption and overlap are not possible in this non-presential medium, direct responses to previous comments do come up, whereas other posts exist autonomously, not acknowledging previous discursive input. It is also interesting that the length of comments varies a great deal; rather long turns alternate with single-liners and even one-word replies.

From the perspective of Im/politeness Studies, the essential theoretical framework to be used, the texts boast a high level of intricacy. The anonymity of the discussion forum promotes the free expression of opinion, which may account for the frequent occurrence of politeness infringements. Moreover,

the third-party factor, i.e. the absence of those targeted (the unemployed couple) in the actual conversation, may explain the "outspoken" character of many replies (Kádár – Márquez-Reiter 2015; Kádár – De La Cruz 2016), which more seldom occurs in daily face-to-face interaction, where speakers tend to be more observant of civility conventions. It is important to note that, according to Leech (1983: 133), "politeness towards an addressee is generally more important than politeness towards a third party".

The next section is divided into three parts. This division follows the three major classes of disagreement strategies present in the corpus.

5.1 Backgrounded disagreement: Hinting and the unsaid

As disagreements potentially harm the hearer's, as well as the speaker's, face, online commentators usually avoid performance of the "face-threatening act" (FTA), or at least attempt to soften its negative impact. As Brown – Levinson posit, going "off record" protects the speaker insofar as "it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act" (Brown – Levinson 1987: 211). Scott (2002: 74) calls off-record disagreeing "backgrounded disagreement" and confirms that it is a way to escape accountability for the FTA because the speaker hides safely beneath implicitness and indirectness. In truth, off-record strategies require inferential efforts on the part of the recipients by offering conversational implicatures, since FTAs typically violate Grice's cooperative maxims (1975). Instances of backgrounded disagreement in the present corpus reflect many of the linguistic mechanisms which Brown – Levinson (1987: 69) advance: "metaphor and irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies, all kinds of hints as to what a speaker wants or means to communicate".

Metaphor, which compares two elements without the use of a comparative particle, is a "category of Quality violations, for metaphors are literally false" (Brown – Levinson 1987: 222):

(1)   Still no excuse to live in a *pigsty*. – Kellieozzy, Soton. [Italics mine, henceforth.]
(2)   Cap their benefits and for goodness sake sterilise this baby *factory*! – Remy, Manchester.
(3)   They're *rabbits* going at it in front of the kids no doubt. – Concertante, Venus.

The occurrence of similes in the texts points to an infringement of Grice's (1975) Quantity Maxim, as the speaker does not give enough information,

leaving it to the recipient to infer what is being aimed at. Many discussants refer to the couple as animals of one kind or the other, but do not offer any additional explanation – the pejorative innuendo being all too familiar to a cultural community. Of course, this also breaks the Quality Maxim (strictly speaking, it is false that human beings are rabbits or rats):

(4)   Why should people be rewarded for rutting *like rabbits* and being bone idle? – Teacher, Birmingham
(5)   Why would one keep on bearing kids *like rats* whilst staying in one bed house? Think about it. – Chaucer, Windsor.
(6)   These people who breed *like cattle* but refuse to pay for their own family are just reprehensible. – Newshound, Liverpool.

The following simile, of a somewhat sexist nature, compares the mother to a specific object:

(7)   she's popping them out *like a vending machine*!!! – Winnerping, Lancashire.

Similes also concern the couple's appearance. The phrase "looks like" is present in the following situation, which exhibits social class prejudice and a hint of ethnicism, given that the word "clampit" implies a backward redneck white person:

(8)   All that money and they *look like clampits*! Give me my tax money back i'll [sic] show you how to look half decent! – Geordie2014, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Employing rhetorical questions is another case of Quality Maxim violation, since it helps the speaker lessen the strength of the disagreement. As Brown – Levinson (1987: 223) explain, "to ask a question with no intention of obtaining an answer breaks the sincerity rule on questions". The corpus is laden with rhetorical questions of all sorts. Some are emphasized by a row of question marks, which "leave[s] their answers hanging in the air" (Brown – Levinson 1987: 223) and spare the speaker the responsibility for the propositional content of the utterance. The great majority of such questions concern the use of contraception:

(9)   Not heard of a condom then or do they fail as well? – Mjs1302, Chelt.
(10)   So condoms don't work? I wonder what the manufacturers have to say about this? – St George, Portsmouth.

(11)   How pathetic, how can a condom not work??? – Olivette, Northampton.

(12)   What about the 'withdrawal' method of contraception?? Sorry TMI but we've used that method for 10 years. – Kelstar, Belfast.

Other readers hint at vasectomy ("the snip") or phrase it explicitly, even if they soften it with a question mark:

(13)   What's wrong with him doing his bit of birth control, has he not heard of condoms or 'the snip'? – Kitty51, Bexleyheath.

(14)   If all contraception seems to 'fail', how about keeping your knees together or getting the snip? – Bertha, Buckinghamshire.

(15)   By the way… too much for his manhood to have a vasectomy? – Karen, Cardiff.

(16)   Why didn't he just get a vasectomy? Why is it always up to the woman? Disgusting, the pair of them. Poor kids having to live like that. – Tishtoshtess, Sheffield.

One last type of rhetorical questioning targets the way the family live:

(17)   Why should they get another property when they clearly have no respect for the one that currently live in? – Tomcatx1, Birmingham.

(18)   What a dirty floor… ever heard of a hoover?? – MrsS, Bucks.

However, there are also readers whose rhetorical questions do not attack the couple in the article, and instead side with the "poor and needy" in general:

(19)   I'm not at all religious, but I was under the impression we were supposed to be a nation with Christian values? What sort of people don't help the poor and needy? Because that's what the MAJORITY of people on benefits are – they just need help. John51, London.

The questions other readers ask seem to be of a different kind; they constitute real requests for information or clarification:

(20)   £540-a-month in jobseekers allowance? Don't you have to be actively looking for a job to be entitled to that? – Tinkerbelle, Brighton.

(21)   How are they entitled to job seekers allowance if they're not looking for jobs??? I notice her tattoos though… – Annie, Dublin.

Irony, which intends to convey the opposite of what is said (Quality infringement, once again), also expresses implicit disagreement. The corpus contains a large number of ironical utterances:

(22)   Congratulations, great family, good luck! – LadyUmbrella, South-West.

(23)   *The pride* of Great Britain, and a vision of it's [sic] future – all created by Lib/Lab/Con. – Owen Hales, Halesowen.

(24)   I also have a boyfriend and although its [sic] been very difficult and I really don't know how we've done it, have managed to NOT get pregnant. *I must be a genius*. – Alexandra, London.

(25)   *I feel so thrilled and privileged* to be paying tax to support this beautiful couple so they may continue breeding and bringing up their *delightful* little children to carry on in the *same sweet way*. – Cleeboy, Crawley.

(26)   *I'm always having babies by accident*. I'm just casually walking down the street and pop, yet another baby. – Au Contraire, Wirral.

It should be noted that quite a few ironical comments bear on social class. The following discussants refer to the man's physical appearance and the quality of their home in a deprecating and jocular fashion, as if making fun of their obviously low class status:

(27)   Well, he looks like a catch! – Triggertastic, Birmingham.

(28)   I feel sorry for him, the insulation in his house is obviously very poor if you need to wear a wooly [sic] hat in a heat wave. – Devonianlad, Plymouth.

(29)   Asbestos floor tiles nice. – Anonymous, London.

Unlike irony, sarcasm does not convey the opposite of what is said (thus violating the Quality Maxim); instead, it means *more* than what is actually stated (thus violating the Quantity Maxim), which is why it also known as "understatement". So as to express disagreement about the couple's claim that their fertility is accidental, commentators write:

(30)   Has he tried actually putting the condom on? That might help. – Pixi, Hampshire.

(31)   Perhaps they need help understanding on which part of the male anatomy the condom should be affixed. – Cassandra44, London

(32)   Maybe he should stop wearing a hat and start wearing something on a different part of his anatomy! – Keith, Kettering,

(33)   May I make a suggestion as to a foolproof way of taking the pill and NEVER becoming pregnant. Remove pill from packet and place it between the knees. Keep it there for as long as hubby feels amorous. Works every time! – Steveh2731, Malvern.

(34)   What's wrong with "not tonight, I've got a headache"… and if he still
       insists, sleep in the bathroom… – SpeaksTheTruth, New Mills.

All of these are sarcastic comments, understated suggestions that the
couple's situation is their own fault. So are the next passages, where readers
also express disagreement and criticism of the young parents' ways, by
insinuating what they are doing wrong, or *not* doing:

(35)   I'm amazed reading this but I best not spend too much time
       commenting as I need to get back to work and earn some money so
       this family does not starve! – Klhull0, Hull.
(36)   I should give up work have loads of kids, cover myself in tattoos and
       smoke like a chimney, then ask for a move from my tiny cramped flat
       that houses me and my two disabled children – Mel, London.
(37)   Looks like a bar of soap wont go amiss – Rockvilla, Glasgow.

The references to the fact that the pair do not try to work and provide for
their family, or do not keep their house clean, and instead waste their money
on frivolous expenses, like tattoos and tobacco, also constitute instances of
hinting. Hints, as Brown – Levinson (1987: 211) mention, are a typical strategy
of indirectness, serving to downplay the illocutionary force of the utterance
– in this case, of disagreeing and criticizing. Hints flout the Relation Maxim
in that they require the recipient to establish the relevance of the utterance
to the issue at hand. The use of interjections (of repulsion and nausea, like
"yak" and "yuck") or marker of scepticism (like "ahem", which mimics the
clearing of one's throat) also constitute hints that the speakers lay out for the
reader to decipher:

(38)   I think you need to spend more time cleaning your house rather than
       making babies – *yak*! – FTMum, York.
(39)   Wouldn't let a dog live there *yuck* – Bella, Liverpool.
(40)   Celibacy is always an option if nothing surgical or medical works
       ahem you could spend that time cleaning instead? – Tiffany17,
       Dublin.

Finally, the employment of generalisations is one last off-record strategy
Brown – Levinson mention, which may be used to express implicit
disagreement. The use of general and impersonal discursive subjects like
"people" or "you" (a substitute for "one") helps speakers express their
disagreement in a backgrounded way:

(41)   *People* have to be RESPONSIBLE! It's common sense that you don't
        have kids until you know you can bring them up properly! Don't
        expect the taxpayers to do it for you!! – Hotchocolate1, London.

(42)   I've never understood why *people* without a lot of money tend to live
        in filth. I myself […] struggle to make ends meet. Yet I would never let
        myself or my children live like that! I think if you have a clean home it
        makes you feel better and healthier. – Nicola, Blackpool.

(43)   *People* who work are depressed as well. – J93, Leicester.

(44)   Dam [sic] the benefits are good in Britain not surprised that *people* are
        moving in for them. – Dawn5651, Woodstock.

(45)   We live in a country that wipes *people*s [sic] backsides. When will it
        change?? – Hanns C, London.

The same can be said of the following general statements, which are
additional cases of impersonalisation (through nominalisation). The
speaker uses the impersonal plural form in "scrounging thieves" and,
again, the generic "people". Furthermore, he resorts to a popular saying,
which is another way to direct his point away from someone in particular.
This is what Scott (2002) calls "collegial disagreement", instead of "personal
disagreement". Even though the confrontational, even insulting, attitude
of the post is clear, the couple discussed in the article is not addressed or
mentioned directly:

(46)   I am getting fed up of the scrounging thieves of our country.
        I understand that their [sic] are people who actually get benefits for
        the right reasons but this is another joke. BEGGARS CANNOT BE
        CHOOSERS. – Andrew, Dubai.

The following is a very interesting case of one commentator replying
directly to another. The first speaker ("José Luis Hernández", probably
a fake name) employs an obviously provocative tone, whereas the second
one ("Themanattheback") shields himself behind a conditional sentence
with impersonal subjects ("everyone, no one") and a vague object ("this
attitude"):

(47)   "I love big families, I have one too. And I don't work. Looking after
        the kids is a demanding enough job and we have a RIGHT to have
        children. The tax payer should support this." – José Luis Hernández,
        Northampton. And *if everyone had this attitude there would be no one left
        to pay tax / subsidise them*! – Themanattheback, Newbury.

5.2 Hedged disagreement: Positive and negative politeness

Comments that express disagreement but attempt to alleviate its impact in a polite way occur abundantly in the corpus and cover both positive face and negative face. The corpus exhibits several examples of each. Let us start with positive politeness, which is aimed at the "positive self-image that [the speaker] claims for himself" (Brown – Levinson 1987: 70) and can be used to remedy the face-harm inherent in disagreement. Walkinshaw (2009: 73ff) also examines the use of positive politeness in disagreements, which he regards as an attempt to lessen disagreement by expressing appreciation of the hearer's likes, wants and preferences.

This is done through the use of hedges, (i.e. linguistic elements that tentativise the illocutionary force of the utterance) which this section will analyse. As Brown – Levinson explain (1987: 145), a hedge is "a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is *partial*, or true only in some respects […]". The quintessential hedging device is the use of adverbs "perhaps" and "maybe", which typically show that the speaker does not wish to lose face by sounding too critical or outspoken, though they can also carry an ironical tone:

(48) *Perhaps* if they worked and spent time and energy cleaning their home they would be too tired to keep making babies. – Maz, Colchester.

(49) *Perhaps* they should read about contraceptives and the uses they have… – Scott, Durham.

(50) *Perhaps* if you embarked on job searching in your spare time instead of in the bedroom these 'accidents' wouldn't happen. – Lucy, Cleveland.

(51) That flat doesnt [sic] look too clean to me, *perhaps* instead of (pardon the pun) breeding, *perhaps* he should have painted the walls … and she done a bit more cleaning. – Me, Somewhere over the Rainbow.

(52) *Maybe* if she was working she would not feel so depressed? Especially as he is a stay at home dad – therefore child care is not an issue. – Jaylouise, Birmingham.

(53) If she didn`t spend so much time on her back *maybe, just maybe,* she wouldn`t be so depressed the more you see of this the more you know E.D.S. is right in carrying out the much needed welfare [sic] reforms. – Yellow hand, Wednesbury.

The use of "I think" and "I don't know" are hedge phrases that speakers use to redress their positive face by pretending not to be certain of their disagreement:

(54)   Time for the snip *I think* – Berkshire, Reading.

(55)   *I think* people should learn to take responsibilities of their actions not blaming the council. – Chaucer, Windsor.

(56)   "I am too young to get sterilized"… what, she wants more children in the future? *I think* simple economics rather than age should have made the decision for her several children ago! – Charles, Bristol.

The employment of "I don't know", together with modal verbs, serves similar purposes. So do adverbs like "really", "rather", and "quite":

(57)   *I don't know* what is more surprising, the fact that they believe others are responsible for supporting them or that the government does!! – Iseult, Glendale.

(58)   *I don't know* what the solution is to be honest – but neither parent looks capable of getting a job that would pay sufficently [sic] well to fund so many offspring. Sterilization *would seem* to be the kindest solution for such families *really*. – Sara1, Home Sweet Home.

Claiming common ground by using in-group identity markers and first-person plural pronouns (we, us) is a positive politeness strategy which Brown – Levinson (1987: 107, 127) also note: "by using an inclusive 'we' form, when S really means 'you' or 'me', [the speaker] can call upon the cooperative assumptions and thereby redress FTAs". This works as a solidarity strategy of pretending the speakers are part of a group (see also Chilton 1990: 217), which helps them, as well as their positive face, feel protected:

(59)   *We* almost need to go back to the system of Council Estates where all these wasters can be housed in the same community! – JohnakaJJ, Farnborough.

(60)   The article is like *we* 'owe' them something! I hate this country and the benefits scroungers in it! Makes you wonder why *we* work at all! – Wood5y55, Reading.

(61)   Why should I have to fund their lifestyle, *we*'re all struggling in the recession, it's just not fair. – JackieAlonso, London.

(62)   At 26 this person could produce another 6 by the time she is finished – what size of house will she want then? *We* need to say NO now. – Patr0702, Edinburgh.

The use of "us" (in the phrase "the rest of us") works along similar lines:

(63)   I fail to understand why they cannot work like *the rest of us*. – Maz, London.

(64)   You breed 'em, you house and feed 'em! Don't expect *the rest of us* to pick up the tab for your irresponsibility. – Mark R, Coventry.

(65)   Don't be so ridiculous, WHY should they have been GIVEN a house? They should have done what most of *the rest of us* do and WORK to support themselves and their ever-growing family before it got to this stage. – Anon, Around.

(66)   Oops, how did that happen? X6. Why should *the rest of us* have to pay for their kids? – Redkite, UK.

The following commentator uses a more resigned tone and refers to "us fools" as a fait accompli:

(67)   The system is so flawed and while it is there will always be people like this wether [sic] they be lazy or just smart who take advantage of it and leave *us fools* to work. – Max, Reading.

The establishment of coalition (Bruxelles – Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004) between speakers has a negative side effect: the expression of prejudice and discrimination. The following, clearly xenophobic, comment also employs the pronoun "we" so as to redress an even stronger expression of disagreement and conflict. Also noteworthy is the use of the hedge "maybe" here:

(68)   Maybe *we* should deport all of these lot [sic], along with serious criminals and illegal immigrants to some colonial island *we* own and then give it back to the closest country. The Falklands seems a natural choice. – Samo, Warrington.

This shows that the expression of group identity and bonding is, paradoxically, very close to hate speech (Calvert 1997, Kinney 2008, Hardaker – McGlashan 2016, Langton 2012). By uniting with a group, speakers oppose another group, in what constitutes the "us vs. them" or "ingroup vs. outgroup" dichotomy (e.g. van Dijk 1991: 207). As an ultimate form of verbal aggression, hate speech "expresses hatred, contempt, ridicule, or threats toward a specific group or class of people" (Kinney 2008), which in the present case can be said to be the poor generally, but also the immigrants. A xenophobic, nationalist observation very similar to the previous quote above, sporting the same ideological duality, is made through the use of the determiner "our":

(69)   How come the hate preachers have large houses etc. and immigrants
        that come to our Country with large families and get houses straight
        away… And *our* British families get put on the bottom of the ladders
        ???? – Old timer, Cardiff.

The same sort of ideology transpires in the next comment, where this speaker
also blasts immigrants:

(70)   Yes the parents are irresponsible but let's look after *our own* by
        not giving all *our houses* to people who weren't born here! – Scott,
        Liverpool.

However, a different discursive line emerges in the following post, where
"a nation such as ours" is construed as wealthy and supportive of those in
need:

(71)   Lovely children. Not their fault at all. No child deserve [sic] this kind
        of crampy living in a wealthy nation *such as ours*. – Ancient Landmark,
        Homeboy.

Similarly, the next commentator aligns with the genuinely needy and
considers the fakes a minority, exhorting "the rest of us" to be compassionate:

(72)   Some people aren't able to support themselves like *the rest of us* – a very
        small percentage of these people might be lazy, but for the majority,
        the hand-outs from the benefits system are a complete lifeline. – Anne,
        Berkshires.

Besides pronominal forms, another "in-group identity marker" is address
markers. Endearment terms such as "love", or "dear", are used yet again to
minimise the strength of the speaker's disagreement, or else to add a note
of irony:

(73)   Cross your legs, *love*. Welcome to "Once" Great Britain. I give up! –
        Joetechie, London.
(74)   Condoms are cheaper *luv* [sic] – Cant-cook-cucumber, Here.
(75)   If contraception won't work for you, there's only one thing for it *dear*.
        Keep your knees together! – Betty, Workshop.
(76)   I was very fertile also, falling for one on the pill and the other on the
        coil. I sent my husband off for a vasectomy very quickly after that. Its
        [sic] not rocket science *dear*. – Carol, Reading.

Similarly, the next commentator addresses his "fellow readers" directly, which is way of gaining their support and averting potential confrontation:

(77)   That, *fellow readers*, is what squalor looks like. – SPitcher, Xavia.

A common discursive strategy used to protect positive face is what I will call "disagreeing by agreeing". Speakers use it to pretend they agree with a certain part of the argument – though by no means all of it – and thus sound understanding and sympathetic, thus shielding their positive self-image. On the other hand, they also use it to save the face of the hearer whose opinion they do not actually share. Brown – Levinson (1987: 114-5) refer to "pseudo-agreement", or "token agreement", in situations where a speaker begins by stating agreement but "carries on to state his own opinion which may be completely contrary to that of the first speaker". In the following passages, the speakers begin by using an agreement phrase, like "I can understand", or "I fully sympathise", or "granted", but then move on to disagreeing by using adversative conjunctions, like 'but' and 'however':

(78)   *I can understand* having one child by accident. Two maybe. *But* SIX?… Don't lie! – Daniel McDaniels, Birmingham.
(79)   *I fully sympathise* with people who genuinely suffer from depression *but* this is a typical story of poor me the world owes me a living. To [sic] depressed to work *but* OK to have sex. – Julie, Lancashire.
(80)   *Granted*, the living conditions are unsuitable for the children, *but* having a child is the responsibility of the parents. – Mark, Watford.

The use of certain modal verbs is yet another form of token agreement:

(81)   She maybe [sic, "may be"] super fertile, *but* if her idle ****** husband got off his backside and found a job he might be too knackered to have sex! – Bladerunner, Arboga.

Other speakers start by denying that they are wishing the couple any harm, which is an obvious way of protecting their own face and not looking insensitive or heartless, only to end up using the ultimate disagreement marker:

(82)   *I am by no means* wishing any ill treatment or any child to go without *but* we have to stump out the problem with the 'CHILD MEAL TICKET PARENTS'. – Cheryl342, Oxford.

However, not all occurrences of this linguistic particle – *but* – signal disagreement regarding the couple's lifestyle. The following two comments work the other way, supporting the young unemployed parents, against the dominant condemnation that other commentators express:

(83) I have worked since I was 15 and have been fortunate enough to continue to do so part-time even after having 3 kids as I have a good job and have never had to be on benefits, *but* I believe when families need support they should have it at my tax paying expense. – Karen, Leeds.

(84) Bit bored of this benefits propaganda now, *but I still think* that each case should be judged individually, we can all see which ones take the pee and which ones genuinely found themselves in a situation where they temporarily need financial support. – MyName, MyTown.

One final occurrence of "but" deserves mention, first because the commentator capitalises it, as if she were aware of its key role in her utterance, and secondly because it is another instance in which the *Daily Mail* is targeted for criticism. Interestingly, she states her disagreement regarding the couple's benefits very straightforwardly, but then hedges her disagreement toward the newspaper with "I think":

(85) I don't agree they should have so many benefits out of tax payers, like myself. *BUT I think* it's so unfair of the DM to publish articles like this with pictures of the children in for them to get labelled and laughed at school. – Georgia, London.

Let us now turn to the second type of hedged disagreement: that of redressing it with negative politeness. This has to do with linguistic behaviour which has the purpose of showing respect for the hearer's negative face, that is, their freedom of action, their wish not to be intruded upon or hindered in any way. Instances of disagreement hedged with negative politeness are infrequent in the corpus, except in apologies (see Locher 2004: 134). These, in fact, are one important way of lessening the strength of disagreements and thus protecting the speaker's image for any possible conflict coming their way. There are many examples in the corpus of the use of "sorry", often followed by "but", once again:

(86) *Sorry* about this but I have to say if ever there was a picture that sums up all that is dreadfully wrong with the United Kingdom today this is it. – Rick, Teesside.

(87)   *Sorry* but I don't believe them. I feel sorry for the kids. – Stokie, stoke-on-Trent

(88)   Sterilsation [sic] works every time! *Sorry* but I have little sympathy for anyone who thinks it is ok to spend £150 a month regularly on Storage! Just too much stuff! It is people like this who give the honest Jobseekers a bad name. – Karen Carealike, Stirling,

(89)   I'm *sorry* but poverty is just being used as en excuse for laziness… there is no excuse to live in a dirty home or bring up children in squalor especially if you've got not job. – IAmNoWhere, SomeWhereOverThere.

(90)   The floor looks like it hasn't been cleaned for months. I'm *sorry*, but there's no excuse to be living like pigs! Poor children :(You don't have to be rich and live in a mansion or palace to have a clean home! – Ella, Essex.

(91)   They look like drug addicts. *Sorry* but fact! – Lisa, London.

The use of indirect imperatives, instead of blunt orders, is a second way of redressing the interlocutor's negative face. The following cases are suggestions mitigated through the use of "how about" and modal verbs:

(92)   *How about* cleaning the house for the children that they have instead of making more babies! – Grantpo, Old.

(93)   *How about* that boy gets a job? Looks healthy enough! – B19jfm, Macclesfield.

(94)   *How about* leaving off the sex for a bit and not increasing taxpayer's burden any more? – Keithy, London.

(95)   *How about* some derelict farm on the Outer Hebrides? He *could* help renovate it, as he's home all day. It's not like they are going to have to worry about commuting. And they won't need electricity, looks like they make their own entertainment. – Pixeedude, Oxford.

(96)   *Could* try doing some housework! – Chels, London.

5.3 Foregrounded disagreement: Going on record

The last means the *Mail Online* readers employ to express disagreement is to do it openly, with no face redress whatsoever. Scott (2002) calls this category "foregrounded disagreement", a term which Walkinshaw (2009) later takes up, whereas Locher (2004) refers to it as "unmitigated disagreement". All three researchers echo Brown – Levinson's "bald-on-record" strategies

for performing an FTA, which involve "doing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible" (1987: 69). The reasons Brown – Levinson (1987: 69) offer to explain such strategies are urgency, efficiency, negligible threat to face and vastly superior power of the speaker. These reasons differ from the ones Locher (2004: 143) presents, namely:

a) when it is more important to defend one's point of view than to pay face considerations to the addressee (see also Kotthoff 1993);
b) in contexts where the relationship of the interactants minimises the potential risk of damage to the social equilibrium;
c) when the speakers wish to be rude, disruptive or hurtful (see also Beebe 1995 and Culpeper 1996)

In the present corpus, some disagreements are so direct that the speaker simply states: "I don't agree". This is the case of the following comments:

(97)　*I don't agree* they should have so many benefits out of tax payers, like myself. – Deborah, Tunbridge Wells.
(98)　*I don't agree* the house looks dirty, rather difficult to have clothes for 8 people in a one bedroom place. – Foxie, Washington.
(99)　*I don't agree* their benefits should be cut. Would it be better to make them homeless, children taken into care? – Colin77, Kent.

Other bald-on-record expressions of disagreement include lexical choice meant to attack the hearer's face. Use of certain adjectives, in particular, is a frequent way to make disagreement explicit – and disparaging:

(100)　Clearly so *dumb* they can't work out how to use contraception. – Melbournegirl, Melbourne.
(101)　1 accident fair enough 2 accidents again fair enough 3 accidents now your [sic] pushing it 4 accidents you must be *stupid* 5 accidents you must be *brainless* 6 accidents you don't deserve anything let alone a new house. – Ap, Cardiff.
(102)　There is no way she has gotten pregnant five times while using contraception! Call it was it is – *feckless*, *lazy* scrounging! – Dave, Birmingham.
(103)　It is called keeping it in your pants or he could get a vasectomy, however that word could be a bit long for their *simple* minds to understand. – James, Edinburgh.

"Flaming" (Danet 2013, Richet 2013; see also "slurring", Croom 2013) is the practice of insulting someone on the Internet, publicly and often in a group, and it reveals not only the "outspoken" nature of bald-on-record FTAs, but also the normalization of a group behaviour where disrespect and segregation attract support, hence the importance of a study of impoliteness in the context of hate speech (Calvert 1997, Kinney 2008, Hardaker – McGlashan 2016, Langton 2012). In addition to such adjectives, certain nouns (and nouns-adjective collocations) can be utilized to disagree, or, significantly, even insult, strongly:

(104) This *irresponsible git* [Br. slang for "silly, annoying person"] probably would claim a vasectomy breached his human right to procreate. – Norman Churcher, Hastings.

(105) People like this disgust me. *Idiots*. They can prevent themselves from future "accidents". – Laurenbaebex, Leeds.

(106) Go out and look for a flat in the private sector you *lazy s*ds*, you get enough in benefits to pay your own rent! – Concerned, Plymouth.

(107) Goodness just look at them and probably bringing up another generation of *scroungers*! – MandyS, Solihull.

(108) *Vile*, absolutely *vile*! I am a 27 year old woman working fulltime in London earning less than what these *cretins* get and they do absolutely nothing except produce and expect us to pay for it!! – Lollypops, Wimbledon.

(109) *Workshy, selfish idiots* who expect the rest of us to keep them in money. – Sunking101, Leeds.

The use of direct directives (cf. Searle 1969) to give advice (which, in itself, is a threat to the hearer's negative face) increases the strength of the FTA, especially when accompanied by exclamation marks:

(110) Clean your house! – Nicole, Somewhere Exotic.

(111) Use the all-modern method of birth control. Stop copulating. Get a job on nights and another one part time during the day. Sell the bed. – John Todd, Okehampton.

(112) Get a grip of yourselves and make the best of what you have, however difficult it is! Your children don't deserve this! – Luke, Cambridge.

(113) Now, stop grizzling about your lot, rent a 4 bed house privately and go get jobs the pair of you. It'll keep you busy so less time to get pregnant again, and working tax credit will pay for increased rent! – Skyrah, Bournemouth

(114) Get off your excusable rectums and stop giving excuses to why you cannot get a job, use contraception like every other normal human being with a brain, be grateful for what you have been given rather than complain about what you should have. Take a large look at other people in countries of your same situation and see how you would take how they live in society!! – Rpotts, London

An interesting occurrence of direct imperatives is the following post, where an inflamed devotee sides with the accused, introducing another line of disagreement:

(115) Let he who is without sin cast the first stone. Don't be a judge, for Christ will turn you into the judged!!! – Jesus Is Lord, City of God.

Presuming, or assuming, one knows this couple's thoughts, feelings, or personality is a very common way for readers to go bald-on-record about disagreeing with their lifestyle. In so doing, they disrespect the couple's negative face at the same time as they outwardly violate one of Leech's (1983) politeness maxims, the Approbation Maxim ("Minimise dispraise of other"). Brown – Levinson correctly specify that protecting the hearer's negative face implies not to "presume /assume", which includes "avoiding presumptions about H, his wants, what is relevant, or interesting or worthy of his attention – that is, keeping ritual distance from H" (1987: 144). In the next passages, the speakers explicitly make guesses and express intrusive values of judgment about a third party:

(116) "Gavin tried using a condom as well". *I guess* it was more uncomfortable than sleeping on the floor. – GBrooks, Ottawa.

(117) *She's totally lying* about failed contraception. The implant is almost 100% effective, as is the injection if taken on time – add into that condoms also. – Dave, Birmingham.

(118) *They did this purely to get a big house*… and when they have got the big house *they will suddenly make sure* they don't have any more kids – Mel, London.

(119) I'm super fertile, contraception doesn't work on me lol. *She's such a joker* and I haven't come across that line before in my entire life. – Chaucer, Windsor.

(120) *Nice try*, both condoms and the diaphragm work by blocking sperm, you can be as fertile as you like lady, if it cant [sic] access an egg you

cannot get pregnant. But then again *you'd have nothing to moan about right!* – Floflo, UK.

A curious form which explicit disagreement assumes in the corpus is what Goodwin and Goodwin (1990: 97) call "content shift within argument". In the following passage, the speakers introduce new topics into the argumentative line – be they abortion, or the Royal Family, or Wars, or International and Home Politics, or even the British way of life:

(121) Why have all those children if your circumstances don't allow it? Would one or two not be enough. It seems so irresponsible … *yes i* [sic] *am talking about abortion here* people and i [sic] know its very controversial but i'm [sic] pro-abortion so there you go! – NoHopeInHell, West London.

(122) Give them a bigger house and more money. …sooner spend my taxes on this family than on pointless wars and the royal spongers. – Cornish Rebel, Republic of Kernow.

(123) They are beautiful kids and shouldn't be involved with this publicity, but that's the point. Successive liberal lefties have caused these problems, pretending we can all live in their socialist utopia where the money just appears. – Waguitarman, Nottingham.

(124) Makes me question why my Grandfather gave his life in WWII. I'm sure he was fighting to protect the British way of life. Is this what the "British way of life" has become? I can imagine him turning in his grave. – Steve, Coventry.

It is noteworthy that raising new topics in the middle of an argument is a double symptom of disaffiliation: from one party involved in the dispute on the one hand, and from its opponent party on the other. According to Maynard (1986), "non-collaborative opposition" works as follows:

> […] [D]isputes, although initially produced by two parties, do not consist simply of two sides. Rather, given one party's displayed position, stance, or claim, another party can produce opposition by simply aligning against that position or by aligning with a counterposition. This means that parties can dispute a particular position for different reasons and by different means. It is therefore possible for several parties to serially oppose another's claim without achieving collaboration. (Maynard 1986: 280)

This sort of interaction is fertile ground for ideological and political dispute. If someone criticises the "lefties", someone else may quickly rise up to criticise the "tories", or any party in power for that matter:

(125) This benefit bashing that is being promoted by the tories (to take the focus away from their banker friends that have caused the recession we are in now) is going too far. Who would honestly prefer to live in a society like Brazil where the poor have to build unregulated favelas in order to survive? – Richard67, Sheffield.

(126) Our taxes are hugely mismanaged by the government – regardless of the party in power. Some people think that UKIP are the answer, which would be hilarious if the consequences weren't real. But they are. – Paul, Belfast.

One point which brings quite a few readers together regards disagreeing with the *Daily Mail*. This type of relational work is, yet again, a sign of the establishment of coalition and rapport as well as a sign of a strengthened sense of community and belonging. Most such comments show support for the poor in general and for this couple in particular, but they also reveal an attack on the newspaper for its conservative and manipulated (or manipulative) political standpoint. The explicit – actually, outspoken (on "outspokenness" as a strategy for voicing moral judgements, see Kádár – Márquez-Reiter 2015; Kádár – De La Cruz 2016) – nature of the following posts is shown by hostile adjectives, direct statements and blunt accusations:

(127) Hundreds people died from benefit reduction, especially disabled. *Why don't you publish this statistics? Because government told you!!!* – Iana, Carlisle.

(128) *A news story that is designed* to make *YOU* think that all people on benifits [sic] are like this couple. *Do not fall for this evil, anti-poor propaganda.* – Jon, Manchester.

(129) It's a shame that the poor are subjected to this level of national humiliation in order for *news outlets to exploit their situation and use it for political gain.* This family clearly need help. […] To me *this article is exploitation of poor people situations.* And the comments… Sad. – Mrsc, London.

Some posts curiously address the newspaper as if it were a person, making their antagonistic and challenging character more acute (on addressivity see e.g. Werry 1996):

(130) *Here you go again Daily Mail*. I wonder how many heart attacks *you are responsible for*. You must be paying these people for the story or else it is a fabrication. They know they will be vilified and can surely not expect sympathy. – Hoskiz, Cardiff.

(131) *DM why do you keep running these stories*? Is there a competition for how much hate *you can whip up??* – Andrew47, Brighton.

(132) So bored of hearing about this, DM. *You're a paper* for the selfish, small minded and self important – if there was a benefits system that offered decency and a heart, *you'd be first on the list*. – John Dough, London.

The moral weight of these judgements also makes clear the evaluative nature of impolite behaviour, as well as the existence of a moral order that sustains and sanctions it. The above comments constitute what Kádár – Márquez-Reiter (2015: 240) regard as the "participants' metacommunicative voicing" of their "perceptions and understandings of moral principles". Other commentators speak of the *Daily Mail* in the third person, and instead address its readership directly:

(133) *I urge readers of the Daily Mail* to not jump to the misleading conclusions articles like these force upon *you*. Just remember the benefit system is there for us all, and *one day you too may find yourself in need of support*. – Kevin Foster 123456, Dorset.

(134) This article and pictures are all carefully composed by the DM to make *your blood boil and believe* that all working class families are out for a free buck. The majority of people on benefits are pensioners and working families. – Pluto103, Aylesbury.

One final aspect concerning bald-on-record expressions of disagreement has to do with giving personal or emotional reasons for disagreeing (see Locher 2004: 113). The confessional, self-disclosing nature of the following comments – which can be seen in the use of the first person pronoun – makes the authors' face more vulnerable. That is perhaps why the commentators adopt a defensive stance:

(135) *I work* to provide for my family and can't have anymore because *I simply can't afford* it. Why should *I pay* for your family – Jenn29, Newcastle.

(136) Cant [sic] work as she suffers depression… *I have suffered with depression for years and if it was not for the medication and routine of coming to work and having a laugh while *I make money for my family*, I too could

be as bad as them… Don't insult legitimate depression suffers [sic] WHO ACTUALLY WORK!!!!! – Catherine, Kent.

(137) Get yourselves organised! *I got pregnant* very easily too – all my husband has to do is look at me! However *I had the coil fitted* after my third and bingo, no more pregnancies! I've had my family now and we are not on benefits, we pay for ourselves! – jeeves197141, London.

Instead of giving strictly autobiographical information, the following discussants make reference to relatives close to them:

(138) *My grandmother had 10 children* by accident and her husband worked all hours that god sent to pay for them, *she had no help*. One of these should try working – Bell, Norwich.

(139) Those poor children look in desperate poverty. I'm one of 5 children and *my mother brought us up in the late 70s alone*. She worked evenings when my nana could put us to bed, we had very little but we were clean and had everything we needed. Can't help but feel sorry for these kids. – Ken, Liverpool.

(140) *I live* in a council flat and *everyone in my building* who gets some form of benefit also has a family member who works full time. – Jrstf, Manchester.

(141) *My boss* whos [sic] just retired and worked for 50 years has just been refused housing as he dosnt [sic] qualify, and yet paid into the system for years, and this guy hasn't had a job for 8 years and does qualify?? – Triggertastic, Birmingham.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined how readers of the *Mail Online* manage the expression of disagreement and the emergence of conflict talk. A number of dichotomous patterns have surfaced in this particular case of "multi-party argument" (Maynard 1986; Goodwin – Goodwin 1993: 100), such as alignment vs. disaffiliation, sympathy vs. indifference, acceptance vs. denial, confirmation vs. rebuttal, and collaboration vs. uncooperativeness. Still, the organisation of different types of stance and perspective has in a number of cases proven to be sensitive to face concerns. In fact, bluntly oppositional and adversarial input is also present in the argumentative conflict. Whatever the ideological position of the speakers, the expression of social identity and a sense of identification, or lack thereof, pervade the corpus.

The analysis, guided by Im/politeness Studies, has shown that the expression of disagreement in the corpus of comment posts subdivides into three main types: "backgrounded" disagreement, i.e. covered, implicit, or mild disagreement; "hedged" disagreement (Walkinshaw 2009), i.e. redressed with positive and negative politeness; and "foregrounded" disagreement, i.e. overt, explicit, or unmitigated disagreement (Scott 2002). Regardless of category, speakers seem to be aware that disagreeing does have "an impact on relational issues" and on face issues, by aggravating, maintaining, or enhancing face (Angouri – Locher, 2012: 1569). The incidence of blatant impoliteness, through bald-on-record disagreement with no face redress whatsoever, sometimes goes as far as actual insults. In fact, the expression of opinions contrary to the couple's Council request is at times so violent that it resembles hate speech (Calvert 1997; Kinney 2008; Hardaker – McGlashan 2016; Langton 2012): against the poor, against "losers", against "underdogs". Possible reasons for this may be the sense of unaccountability that anonymity and distance bring about, both in spatial and temporal terms (exchanges are not face-to-face or synchronous). The neglect of face concerns (Donath 1999; Eisenchlas 2011; Yus 2011) may indeed be due to the fact that retaliation, apart from verbal retaliation, is unlikely in the context of the Internet, and, as a result, participants often feel empowered (Brown – Levinson 1987: 97) to assault their opponents' – and especially a third party's – face.

In fact, on the Internet disagreeing with an absent party, let alone criticising, deriding, or humiliating such a party, is much less risky than inflicting such treatment on someone who is physically present. Along lines put down by Leech (1983: 133), I have proposed to call this important discursive element the "third-party factor" (Ermida 2014). The fact that Gavin and Maggie (the unemployed parents of six) are not taking part in the polylogue makes their face more negligible at the same time that it reinforces the readers' confidence to show their disapproval of, and lack of support for, the young couple's predicament – and also to do so in an overtly rude way. Additionally, the fact that some readers feel no empathy towards the poor, or the unemployed, or those in need, may have to do with their lack of personal experience, in a direct or indirect way, of such difficult situations. Hence the strength of the "us vs. them" and "ingroup vs. outgroup" dichotomies (van Dijk 1991) that such comments voice. Yet again, these dichotomies reflect the online construction of readers' identity, especially as far as social class is concerned. It also reveals the conflict between a strong moral trend in telling right from wrong, and the workings of a community setting that approves of impolite, aggressive and politically incorrect flaming (Danet

2013; Richet 2013). The outspoken nature of many bald-on-record excerpts also discloses the strong evaluative nature of (im)politeness, which in some contexts is even regarded as the norm (Arundale 2013; Haugh 2013; Kádár – Márquez-Reiter 2015; Kádár – De La Cruz 2016).

On the other hand, agreement occurs, I propose, for (a) personal/ emotional reasons and (b) for political/ideological ones. In the former case, agreement results from a feeling of a shared experience of events and situations, or a sense of community (Baym 1995; Castells 2000; Locher 2004, Hopkinson 2013) or collective identity; in the latter case, agreement ensues when readers adopt a left-wing view of the role of the State in supporting the poor and needy. It is common that the expression of this solidarity-inspired ideology (be it socialist or religious, especially "Christian") often comes hand in hand with an attack on such conservative and reactionary tabloids as the *Daily Mail*. Whatever the case, the motivations for agreeing/ disagreeing that this analysis has detected reveal two types of interpersonal stance: a supportive/sympathetic stance (which Bruxelles – Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004 call "coalition") and a disaffiliated /judgmental one. At the same time, these types of stance assume two kinds of target: a personal, ad-hominem target, i.e. the couple discussed in the article; or a collegial one, i.e. all those that the couple represent (see Scott 2002).

Finally, this study has identified instances of illocutionary force overlap and multi-topic development. The speech act of disagreeing may blend with other illocutions in the readers' comments, for instance in contexts of complaining, criticising, protesting, or reproaching. In fact, disagreeing seldom occurs in an argumentatively pure form. Also, the comment thread often breaks into several new topics, sometimes moving drastically away from the initial discursive point. From vasectomy and jobseeker allowances, the discussion examined proceeds quickly to abortion, immigration, drug addiction, international politics, UKIP, and the British way of life. Sometimes, such new topics create a new comment thread, sometimes not. They may go unanswered, or they may be resurrected later in the polylogue. One topic that does pervade much of the corpus is social class. The parents of six are said to live in a "pigsty" and look like "clampits", which should make them feel ashamed as British people, but "at least" they "were born in this country" and have "beautiful blond children". The construction of social class prejudice, with hints of ethnicism, indeed emerges between the lines of the comment texts, being a recurrent ideological pattern that readers either align with and approve, or disaffiliate from and condemn, in line with the usual dichotomous nature of conflict talk.

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