DISCOURSE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

SOCIAL MEDIA, POWER, AND SOCIETY

Edited by
Eleonora Esposito and Majid KhosraviNik

Discourse in the Digital Age

This collection makes the case for existing critical discourse analysis theory and methods to meaningfully engage with the communicative parameters, power dynamics, and technological affordances of contemporary digital spaces.

This book lends a critical focus on discursive practices operating through the paradigm of social media communication, addressing the crucial inter-face of discourse and the participatory web with disciplinary rigour and a well-balanced focus.

This volume features chapters highlighting a diverse range of methods, including multi-sited ethnography, multimodality, argumentation studies, and topic modelling, as applied to a global range of case studies to present a holistic portrait of the latest methodological and theoretical debates in this space. The collection demonstrates the many and pervasive impacts of digital mediation on established discursive practices that are (re-)shaping existing social values, practices, and demands. In so doing, the collection advocates for a new tradition in critical discourse research, one which is rigorous in accounting for both solid discursive frameworks and the evolv-ing complexity of digital platforms, and which triangulates methodolo-gies in order to fully make sense of contemporary discursive practices and power relations on the online–offline continuum.

This collection will be of interest to students and scholars in critical discourse studies, digital communication, media studies, and anthropology.

Eleonora Esposito is a researcher at the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS) of the University of Navarra (Spain) and a Seconded National Expert to the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT) of the European Commission. A Marie Skłodowska-Curie Alumna (2019–2021), Eleonora has been investigating complex intersections between language, identity, and the digitalised society in a number of global contexts, encompassing the EU, the Anglophone Caribbean, and the Middle East.

Majid KhosraviNik is a reader in digital media and discourse studies at Newcastle University (UK). He is interested in the intersection of social media technologies, discourse, and politics. His most recent work pertains to the integration of analysis of technology and discourse under the notion of techno-discursive analysis as a model for the critical analysis of digital discourse formation and perception.

Routledge Critical Studies in Discourse
Edited by Michelle M. Lazar
National University of Singapore

Discourses of (De)Legitimization
Participatory Culture in Digital Contexts
Edited by Andrew S. Ross and Damian J. Rivers

Academic Irregularities
Language and Neoliberalism in Higher Education
Liz Morrish and Helen Sauntson

The Discourse of Perceived Discrimination
Perspectives from Contemporary Australian Society
Sol Rojaz-Lizana

Multimodal Legitimation
Understanding and Analysing Political and Cultural Discourse
Rowan R. Mackay

Discourses of the Arab Revolutions in Media and Politics
Stefanie Ullmann

Discourses of Global Queer Mobility and the Mediatization of Equality
Joseph Comer

Postdigital Disconnects
The Discursive Formation of Technology in Education
Marion Mathier

Discourse in the Digital Age
Social Media, Power, and Society
Edited by Eleonora Esposito and Majid KhosraviNik

Discourse in the Digital Age

Social Media, Power, and Society

**Edited by Eleonora Esposito
and Majid KhosraviNik**

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Contents

Contributors

Jessica Aiston is a postdoctoral research assistant in the School of Languages, Linguistics, and Film at Queen Mary University of London. Her PhD thesis (Lancaster University) investigated argumentation in an online "male separatist" community, while her broader research interests include digital communication; discourse analysis; and language, gender, and sexuality.

Nouf Alotaibi is an assistant professor at the University of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, Saudi feminism, and social media. Her most recent publication is a book chapter with Jane Mulderrig entitled "Debating Saudi Womanhood: A Corpus-Aided Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Saudi Women in the Twitter Campaign against the 'Male Guardianship' System", in *Exploring Discourse and Ideology Through Corpora* (Peter Lang, 2021).

Salomi Boukala is an assistant professor at Panteion University of Social & Political Sciences. She is a specialist on Greek political discourse and has published widely in the field of Critical Discourse Studies. She is the author of *European Identity and the Representation of Islam in the Mainstream Press: Argumentation and Media Discourse* (Palgrave, 2019). Her research interests are argumentation, the discursive construction of political and (supra)national identities, discriminatory discourse, ethnographic approaches, and media discourse.

Camila Cárdenas-Neira is an assistant professor at the Institute of Social Communication at Universidad Austral de Chile. She holds a PhD in translation and language sciences (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain) and has recently completed her postdoctoral research on linguistic landscapes at the Centre of Multilingualism, Discourse and Communication (MIRCo) (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain). She has

a background in Critical Discourse Studies, particularly in the analysis of multimodal texts developed in digital and urban spaces by social movements.

Oksana Dorofeeva is a PhD student at The Danish Center for Studies in Research and Research Policy, Department of Political Science at Aarhus University. She completed her BSc in sociology at the Higher School of Economics (Moscow) and her MSc in social sciences at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests focus on normativities and meaning-making in the context of digital technologies.

Eleonora Esposito is a researcher at the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS) of the University of Navarra (Spain) and a Seconded National Expert to the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT) of the European Commission. A Marie Skłodowska-Curie Alumna (2019–2021), Eleonora has been investigating complex intersections between language, identity, and the digitalised society in a number of global contexts, encompassing the EU, the Anglophone Caribbean. and the Middle East.

Siti Nurnadilla Mohamad Jamil is an assistant professor of linguistics at the Department of English Language and Literature, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia. Her research centres on argumentation analysis and campaign rhetoric, investigating how language shapes and constructs discourses related to race, racism, and marginalised communities within the diverse fabric of Malaysian society. She co-founded the Malaysian Discourse Research Group (MDRG) in 2020 and continues to co-convene its meetings on a monthly basis.

Majid KhosraviNik is a reader in digital media and discourse studies at Newcastle University (UK). He is interested in the intersection of social media technologies, discourse, and politics. His most recent work pertains to the integration of analysis of technology and discourse under the notion of techno-discursive analysis as a model for the critical analysis of digital discourse formation and perception.

Susanne Kopf is an assistant professor at the Institute for English Business Communication at WU Vienna, Austria. She holds a PhD in applied linguistics (Lancaster University, UK), and her research interests include Critical Discourse and Social Media Studies. Susanne has published in journals such as *Discourse & Society* and *Critical Discourse Studies*, contributed to edited volumes/book series, e.g. *Discourse Approaches*

to Politics, Society and Culture (Benjamins), and published the volume *Discourses of Brexit* (Routledge, with V. Koller and M. Miglbauer).

Alexandra Krendel is a researcher in linguistics and English language at Lancaster University, where she recently completed her PhD. Her research interests centre around how gender is constructed in online anti-feminist communities such as the manosphere and the potential harms associated with these communities.

Kseniia Semykina is a research assistant at the Laboratory for Studies in Economic Sociology in Moscow. She received a double master's degree in comparative social research at the Higher School of Economics and in East European studies at Freie Universität Berlin and did a research internship at ZOiS in the winter semester of 2018–2019. She has also been a board member of the DiscourseNet International Association for Discourse Studies since January 2020.

Dimitris Serafis is an assistant professor at the Department of Communication and Information Studies, Faculty of Arts at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. His research interests lie at the intersection of Critical Discourse Studies, social semiotics and multimodality, and argumentation studies, with his current focus being on topics such as racism, hate speech, populism and authoritarianism, and communication in times of crises. His recent publications include *Authoritarianism on the front page: Multimodal discourse and argumentation in times of multiple crises in Greece* (2023, John Benjamins) and "Critical Perspectives on Migration in Discourse and Communication" (2021, *Studies in Communication Sciences*; co-edited with J. Drzewiecka and S. Greco).

Helen Sissons is an associate professor of communications at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Her research sits at the intersection of professional communications practice, multimodal critical discourse studies, and linguistics. It specifically examines power relations between communications practitioners, their sources, and their audiences.

Philippa Smith is an associate professor in the school of language and culture at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. Fascinated with the relationship between discourse, communication and digital technologies, Philippa's research has covered areas such as (new)-media discourses, journalism practice, digital divides, discrimination, and online counter-speech.

Lorella Viola is a research associate in linguistics and digital humanities at the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH),

University of Luxembourg. She researches the implications of the digital for the conceptualisation of digital objects, digital practices, and digital knowledge production with a focus on heritage, material culture, and preservation. She also investigates the relationship between language, media, and society and develops critical, data-driven methodologies for digital humanities and digital heritage.

Yu Zhang (张宇) is an associate professor at the Beijing Information Science and Technology University, China. She received her PhD degree from Hong Kong Baptist University. Her work on doctor-patient online communication has been published in journals such as *Applied Linguistics Review*, *Discourse & Communication*, *Health Communication*, and the *Chinese Journal of Communication*. Her most recent publication is a book entitled *Affective Practice in Online Medical Consultations in China* (2022, Springer). Her major research interest is discourse studies in the context of health communication.

1 Discourse in the digital age
A critical introduction

Eleonora Esposito and Majid KhosraviNik

1. Discourse in the digital age: challenge and change

Digital technologies have given rise to a host of new ways for people to communicate, keep themselves informed and manage social relationships that have become an assumed and irreversible part of life in most societies. Not only has the Web 2.0 facilitated the emergence of digital counterparts for most existing forms and genres of communication, but it has rapidly generated a range of indigenous genres and communicative contents and practices of meaning-making. These, in turn, are increasingly becoming key discursive sites in a myriad of cultural, social and political arenas, with massive implications for our lives.

As the digital mediation technology continues to grow, the grand narratives on its social impact evolve. Older conceptualisations of the cybersphere, such as the dichotomy around the offline as 'real' vs. online as 'virtual', are increasingly being criticised within different scholarly traditions. Generational and technological shifts push towards a greater acknowledgement of the actual enmeshment between the digital and physical in our lived experiences and the resulting interaction of digital discourses with existing socio-cultural-political structures.

We are witnessing the evolution of a myriad of interdependent, contextualised digital communities in a scenario of constant connectivity, as digitally enforced geographies of space continue to function as strategic outlets for reimagining social life and power structures. Some of these phenomena, like hashtag activism (think *#BlackLivesMatter* and *#MeToo*, among others), have shown how such communicative affordances could build diverse networks for discourses of advocacy and mobilisation for social justice on both a local and global level (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Nevertheless, similar mediation technologies also contribute to facilitate, amplify, and even promote discourses of violence, hate, and terrorism (see Ghaffari, 2020; KhosraviNik & Amer, 2020). The digital dimension of violence perpetuates and reinforces already existing intersectional patterns of exclusion

and silencing of less represented actors, like women and minority people (Esposito, 2023).

With the change in the dynamic of mediation, access, and representation, we are faced with a paradigmatically new discursive mode that has been theoretically discussed as Social Media Communication (SMC) (KhosraviNik, 2017, 2020, 2023). It is through this new communicative model that the various established and emerging digital platforms and communication technologies keep impacting the content, style, and characteristics of discourses. A clear example of this is the nature of social media as a communicative context, where not only texts (be it written language or any tangible unit of data, such as a film or a meme) are used in their linguistic and multimodal combinations, but also meanings are communicated through emerging native digital practices and engagements, such as regimes of likes, community support, shares, tags, hashtags, and digital check-ins, among others. Some other changes are more *macro* in scope: for example, social media communication blurs the traditional boundaries between established social realms like work and play, public and private, entertainment and news, politics and citizenship. This, in turn, complicates the relationships between members of society and the discourses they are exposed to online. Since all these transformations are dynamic in nature, explorations of the inner complexity of SMC and its social implications largely play a follow-up game, and often with a considerable lag.

Unsurprisingly, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is among the disciplines that have had to consider the evolution of the SMC paradigm more closely. As an umbrella term for a wide but coherent bundle of methods and approaches which work under a shared rubric of principled aspirations, CDS scholarship has already set solid traditions in engaging with contemporary socio-political topics within a discourse formation and consumption prism. In particular, media and communication technologies have always had a special place in critical discursive research. This is primarily because these are deemed technologies of discourse formation, where discourse is postulated to derive from, behold, and exert power to affect lives around us. The contemplations around power, control and manipulation, which characterise a vast part of CDS scholarship, problematise the relationship between media and society and flag the role played by different technologies of communication.

However, while providing unprecedented opportunities for social research on bottom-up data in enormous volume and variety, the very open and dynamic complexity of social media–communicated discursive practices has been challenging several existing conceptualisations and analytical techniques in CDS. Changes have taken place around the notion of discursive power as defined within decades of theorisation, challenged by the emergence of much less static and predictable dynamics,

with clear implications for production, consumption and distribution processes (KhosraviNik, 2014). Communicative modes available in new digital communicative spaces, in fact, have facilitated the empowerment of digital "prosumers" in terms of contribution, engagement and impact and the consequent emergence of new forms of many-to-many participatory communication. Whether these forms are meant to be treated as mass or interpersonal communication and how to account for the dynamic and multidirectional nature of impact and power are only two fundamental questions when it comes to analysing digitally mediated discursive practices.

There is ample evidence that the critical aspirations of CDS are commonly upheld via focusing on the social ills under analysis, be it racism, misogyny or other hegemonic and exclusionary discourses. With an increasing volume of research on these topics happening using digital data, there is an urgent need to engage with the new communicative parameters, power dynamics and technological affordances. These processes of meaning-making hosted by digital media represent a key area to explore the nuances of existing or percolating systems of representations and perceptions in societies.

Overall, the digital tools through which we communicate still have a discursive function as they are commonly organised towards a certain discourse formation. However, digital technologies of communication do not readily lend themselves to many of the old assumptions in social science, and this is exactly what makes them interesting (and at times overwhelming) to investigate. The discursive practices regimented via an SMC paradigm are varied and diverse, and so are the epistemological and technical challenges they pose to researchers. As such, it is worth exploring the prognostic potential of engaging with the new digital context in a critical and socially meaningful way.

2.   Social media communication: potentials of a critical discursive perspective

In parallel with SMC and its rapidly evolving practices and affordances, the need to critically assess and adapt established paradigms, methods and tools, often expanding and combining them within an interdisciplinary outlook, has been developing across the field of discourse analysis. While many early studies were mostly descriptive of online language as a de-contextualised phenomenon (e.g. language of emails), Susan Herring's (1996) approach to computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) made a ground-breaking shift of focus towards digital interactions and user-related patterns of linguistic variability. According to Androutsopoulos (2008), this inaugurated a "second wave" in language-focused computer-mediated communication (henceforth, CMC) research that emphasised situated language use and

opened the field to investigations of sociolinguistic diversity in the digital sphere (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). The exploration of discursive dimensions of relational and self- and other-presentation processes in SMC represents a key area and extension to this type of investigation. Studies have shown how people commune around values on social media platforms through "ambient affiliation", enacted using evaluative language or semiotic resources such as hashtags and memes (Zappavigna, 2012). In the "collapsed" social media context, users also develop audience design strategies to address their imagined networked audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Androutsopoulos, 2014), transcend different media ("transmediality"), and construct and maintain communities across local and global spaces ("translocality") (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014).

With various scholarly points of view on a vast range of digitally mediated socio-discursive practices, the field has developed in all its diversity. At the same time, especially since the advent of Web 2.0 functionalities, we have witnessed a growing need for a critical agenda able to problematise techno-social issues of power and ideology in SMC (Spilioti, 2016). From ideological agendas and biases expressed in the discourses that circulate through digital media to the technological restrictions, ordering and interventions, including enforcing certain terms and conditions (Jones et al., 2015), SMC, despite its potential, is far from being liberated by dynamics of power. Digital technologies can be seen as inherently ideological regarding both "their political economies of access and control and [. . .] their potential as mechanisms or resources for both normative and resistive representations" (Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011, p. xxvi).

It is undeniable that the advent of the digital has forced new contemplation regarding the presupposed dynamics of media and society. The normalisation and penetration of the SMC take to task several shared backdrop assumptions: not only does SMC evolve drastically fast with new technological forces at play, but the new mediation system principally breaks away from the established paradigm of (mass) media communication. This has called for conceptual debates about the way we understand the impact of this mediation technology on society and how we are assuming discourse production and perception work on social media, among other aspects.

As a result of the rise of the SMC, critical discussions on new forms of media determinism and its justifications have resurfaced, largely around the increasingly crucial role played by technological specifications and affordances in the shape-up of social and communicative behaviours in digital spheres. In the meantime, despite the interdisciplinary claim of accounting for the processes of digital production/consumption/distribution, a large body of studies on SMC have not paid sufficient attention to the impact of mediation technology on processes of discursive practice.

One of the core assumptions in a critical approach to media discourse is that communication *matters*, beyond the mere transfer of messages, as the very site of processes of contention, orientation and positioning, giving shape to the cultural and political psyche of contemporary societies. More specifically, at the heart of "doing CDS" is the conceptualisation of identity as a discursive construct and the acknowledgement of the role played by social meaning-making in constructing, perpetuating, or challenging knowledge structures which in turn shape our social, political and cultural lives. As such discursive processes of identity building and social meaning-making are increasingly hosted in and conditioned by SMC, we can identify at least two core CDS features that come into play to critically account for them.

The first core characteristic, often flaunted as one of the star features of CDS, is *interdisciplinarity*. CDS has always been an interdisciplinary endeavour, not just by claim but as a theoretical and methodological necessity of integrating discourse with its normative critique. One of the reasons behind this distinctive feature is that the influences of CDS are diverse and can be traced to many thinkers, including Marx, Gramsci, the critical theory of the Frankfurt school, Bourdieu, Foucault, and other post-structuralists. Depending on the topic of analysis and researcher's approach, different critical social theories may be drawn on in the trademark CDS critical discursive contextualisation. Another reason is that, as a coherent network of representations, discourse can be sustained, constructed, reinforced, challenged, and reproduced via various communication strategies that need to be accounted for with methodological rigour.

While the main thrust of Critical Discourse *Analysis* (not *Studies*) is positioned within linguistics stemming from critical linguistics in the 1980s, other disciplines in social sciences have had their own developmental conceptualisation of discourse and its analysis. Media and communication studies, in particular, have traditionally been drawing on a Foucauldian notion of discourse and his critique in doing what is generally referred to as "discourse analysis". As a matter of fact, when applied to mediated discourse, Critical Discourse *Studies* (rather than *Analysis*) refers to a wider breadth of discourse work, for example, including multimodal analysis (e.g. visuality in media studies, music in pop culture). Disciplinary lines may prompt the researcher to focus on different emerging modes and genres of digital communication, but the threading point in CDS approach is its focus on *meaning-making content* (of any type) *and practices* (as a specific note for SMC) that stands as the key vantage point when dealing with digital media.

This interdisciplinary tendency in CDS also entails placing different degrees and qualities of emphasis on details of data analysis and integration of social theory. Integrating the processes of production and consumption

of discourses has been a key factor in gauging the power and range of impact envisaged for the discourse at hand. In doing this, CDS is always about accounting for meaning-making entangled in two contextual levels of technological amplification and socio-political contexts. That is, it aspires to see how mediation technologies are at work in amplifying or downgrading the reach and penetration of discourse, as well as accounting for the social context of who is communicating with whom, under what conditions, in what historical and cultural context and why.

The second, probably less obvious, core feature of CDS is that it is a socially oriented analysis of discourse and mediation in distinction from a media determinist understanding. While this debate may not have been part and parcel of teaching CDS, it has had a major impact on this scholarly trend at the top level. CDS has developed on the backdrop of wider scholarship in social sciences and media theory that has become a part of its assumptive apparatus. For example, the media effect theory has been the guiding principle of the plethora of CDS research on media discourse. Though not always very explicit, assumptions about mediation technologies and their impact of discursive power are at the core of fulfilling the Faircloughian notion of "discursive practice" in his three-level envisaging of CDS.

Aside from the fact that fresh debates around the quality of technological impact can (and should) be held (see KhosraviNik, 2019), the key assumption is that meaning-making is ultimately a human endeavour with social repercussions beyond the medium used. In particular, reducing human communication to technological affordances is counterproductive, as it would dilute social phenomena to cybernormalcy with dangerous consequences for the critical analysis of all intersecting forms of discrimination, hostility and abuse online (see KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018). Therefore, while meaning-making content and practices are at the centre of the critical discursive investigation of SMC, accounting for the role of mediation technology itself (as much as sorely necessary) is deemed to be part of the broader context for the CDS socially oriented research endeavour.

More generally, it is often challenging to walk the line between the often implicit assumption of universality in social media use (eventually resulting in some form of media determinism) and (over-)emphasising the important differences in societies (eventually falling into the trap of cultural essentialism). The global context of social media use may be radically different in various countries. While in some less or undemocratic contexts social media may potentially serve to fill the gap towards the maintenance of a public sphere and foster connections among the voiceless, the political inclination of discursive practices online may also be harshly and intrusively interfered with by various forms of censorship and control. Nevertheless, social and political contextualisation of the case under investigation for a CDS study

is to be regarded as a critically essential understanding, both for digital and non-digital data.

In the light of all this, Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) (KhosraviNik, 2017, 2020) would be viewed as setting the basic parameters of the CDS movement – as a socially oriented, discourse-centred, interdisciplinary approach – in the new technological context. SM-CDS refers to various ways of understanding the materiality of discourse and data, integrating various types and degrees of social theory, while accounting for the specific mediation technology and its impact in terms of shaping discourses and power. A socially oriented SM-CDS is deemed to navigate through the triangle of social, digital and discursive points. In other words, connecting the discourse and the social cannot be done effectively unless the digital context of use is also considered: among the three key aspects, the digital is simply a new, under researched, and underrated aspect for CDS (Esposito and KhosraviNik (2023) elaborate more on this topic).

Overall, we need to see CDS as part of a wider, culminating social scientific movement interested in developing approaches to analysing social media and the way they may impact society. Quantitative approaches in science and technology scholarship have already made substantial inroads in dealing with the availability of colossal digital data (often referred to as Big Data) to be used in several social, political, security and commercial fields. However, there is also an emerging interest in bringing in a more qualitative, socially oriented understanding of how people make sense of social media exposures and activities. More compelling results are likely to emerge from a synergic incorporation of more quantitative (*macro*) views on the magnitude and spread of digital discourses, and more qualitative (*micro*) approaches that can critically explicate them as a techno-social and cultural phenomenon.

In fact, while SM-CDS urges for a meaningful and critical integration of technological aspects into critical discursive analysis, some technology-orientated studies have started to recognise the value of integrating forms of discursive analysis of digital meaning-making. For example, Andre Brock (2016) discusses a Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) in arguing that isolated disciplinary applications of discourse or technological analysis do not suffice on their own and there should be a combinational approach to integrate technology and discourse analysis with a socially critical agenda. Benoit Dillet (2022) focuses on a specific techno-discursive characteristic of social media and aims to show how algorithms are at play in the production and consumption of political discourses online (on the algorithmic regimentation of discourses see also KhosraviNik, 2018). He crucially argues that the link between the social and the discursive is not a direct one, but there is technological design at play, in line with SM-CDS postulations of double contextualisation (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018).

Regardless of which side of technology or discourse one may come from, the central argument is that these two sides are increasingly intertwined and that technological design, digital practice and affordances are part of meaning-making and hence fall within the remit of CDS analysis (KhosraviNik, 2020). In their range of diversity and impact, CDS scholars have been very effective in combining social theory in their analysis as a key defining characteristic. The same is starting to happen, albeit at a slower pace, with digital theory and the focus on digital methods, tools and structural synergies between digital and social conceptualisations. Given its trademark focus on both the contents of meaning-making (i.e. what is being communicated) and the style of communication (i.e. how it is being constructed and why), CDS can and should be able to consider digital practice as well as various new digital affordances as part of the materiality and/or sites of meaning-making (KhosraviNik, 2020). This plasticity is what ultimately characterises the potential of SM-CDS to analyse digital discourse from a critical perspective that is technologically aware and socially oriented at the same time.

3.   Social Media–Critical Discourse Studies: key caveats

There is a lot of ground to cover when it comes to discussing mediation technology, how it works and why. To start with, it would include accounting for a macro-industrial aspect, related to the political economy of social media. Then it would entail elucidating the meso-communicative level, related to algorithmic manipulation, social media theory and attention economy, among other aspects. Finally, it would inescapably focus on micro-discursive dynamics is needed, including qualities of social media discourse, new forms, new meaning-making, artefacts, etc. This is obviously not an easy task, but critical contemplation and interdisciplinarity are the ways forward in digital CDS. In overall terms, by drawing on KhosraviNik (2020), a set of key notes can be considered in doing critical digital discourse studies as follows:

- Social media are conceptualised in terms of the new communicative dynamic they bring about (SMC), rather than referring to certain clusters of digital practices, like social networking sites (SNSs). SMC pertains to various (corporate, civil, institutional, cooperative) digitally facilitated spaces, platforms and practices, including (but not limited to) SNSs;
- For an SM-CDS to yield meaningful results, there is a need to re-examine the theoretical and methodological assumptions used in research on digital discourse. This includes how we assume digital discursive power works, as well as how the online discursive practice is interpreted, accessed, and analysed;

- SM-CDS aspires to unpack the nature of contemporary digital discourses by considering 'digital practice' as a unique and relevant dynamic, rather than simply doing CDS on the materials which happen to be on the Internet. In other words, it is characterised by an attempt to bring in technological impact as part of meaning-making;
- SM-CDS views discourse analysis as an investigation of meaning-making content and practices: old and new semiotic resources as well as patterns of meaning-making in action at both the production and consumption levels;
- Various research topics, contentions and case studies, including the classic CDS areas (e.g. collective identity, conflict, nationalism, populism, misogyny, racism, and immigration) are still highly (if not more) relevant areas at the intersection of old and new critical scholarship around contemporary discourses;
- Discourse is viewed as all forms of structured representations across a range of modalities of communication, including the newly emerging meaning-making artefacts and practices on social media like regimes of likes, community support, shares, tags, hashtags, and digital check-ins, among others;
- The discursive content analysed cannot be essentially separated from the digital practices of its production, distribution and consumption. In other words, the interconnectedness of discursive content and practice calls for some sort of a methodological approach which records and explains discourse formation and consumption, such as digital ethnography;
- Digital CDS is bound to account for the techno-discursive dynamic at hand, in one way or another. This includes investigating the impact of distributary strategies on discursive power and content, i.e., who sees what in what context and how the internal structure of the message is influenced by the intended circulation. Other considerations could include the impact of normalisation of the SMC rationale in shaping the quality of the content, for example, how the fabric and ingredients of the content are strategically designed for fake news, click-baiting strategies, affective engagement, and post-truth resonance;

It is important to note that these stipulated caveats are aspirational propositions, and different scholars may have distinct capacities and intentions to draw on them in different weightings. This may have an impact on valuing the details of discourse analysis and theories over the technological discussion, on the different types and levels of digital considerations and on the extent to which social theory and critique may be embedded in the study. This is partly about disciplinary rationales and varieties in scholarship backgrounds, tools and methods. As such, there is no way (and desire)

to control the details of research operations. In this sense, SM-CDS is not a clear-cut operational formula.

   Nevertheless, the caveats provide a broad signposting in considering a critical approach to discourse in the digital age to be enforced as much as possible. As this book was taking shape, these caveats worked as the general conceptual framework for the editors to usher the contributors into the parameters, without foiling the contribution of their research approach and the novelty of their case study. The main intention here is to call for a higher awareness and more frequent attempts to make some level of interdisciplinary out-research into the technological aspect of the digital discourse under analysis. In doing so, while this edited volume contains a variety of topics and approaches, there is a general threading line around SM-CDS as a rationale to approach digital discourse. This is not merely about the shape-up of a given case study, but mostly about opening some discussions as part of the main requirements in investigating digital discourse, its methods, tools and ethics.

4.   About this book

The present volume responds to the need to engage with the new communicative paradigm, power dynamic and technological affordances from a discursive perspective. In doing so, it aims to address the crucial interface of discourse and the participatory web with disciplinary rigour and a well-balanced focus, accounting for both the evolving interactional complexity of the digital realm and its societal implications. By means of present-day case studies, the 11 chapters in this book illustrate the many and pervasive impacts of digital mediation on established discursive practices by attempting to integrate methodological triangulations in tackling complex, socially oriented research questions.

   This edited volume is the embodiment of scholarly debate, engagement, and dialogue across academic communities. Contributors were originally part of two panels organised by the editors and accepted in two conferences that never took place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These were the 3rd MAPD (Multidisciplinary Approaches to Political Discourse) Conference, scheduled for June 2020 at the University of Liverpool, and the 8th CADAAD (Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines) Conference, scheduled for July 2020 at the University of Huddersfield. The calls for papers brought together both familiar faces and unacquainted researchers in a selection of established and early-career academics. This book is a reflection of this process . . . and a consolation prize. Engaging in this publication project was one of the ways in which we endured social isolation and kept the office door open during the difficult months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A main feature of this book is its multivocality. This is partially a reflection of how this publication project came about and partially determined by the nature of SMC as a multifaceted global phenomenon. Contributors present up-to-date cases studies and digitally facilitated political stand-offs from a diverse set of global settings, including Chile, China, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, Malaysia, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. They engage with a set of diverse digital platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Wikipedia, VKontakte, and Chinese e-healthcare platforms. While the various methods and approaches represented may consider the media/technology angle at different levels and intensity, the different contributions included in this book share several overarching key points.

To start with, chapters in this volume are characterised by a critical focus on the many and diverse discursive practices regimented via an SMC paradigm. They share the core principle that any SM-CDS is not merely a discourse analysis of online data but a synergic engagement with digital meaning-making, along with the new ways in which discursive production, consumption and, more importantly, distribution are at work. In doing so, they fall within the parameters of being context dependent, socially engaged, critically attuned, empirically based, and providing a rigorous analysis of digital meaning-making with a critical emancipatory aim. As a result, all contributions are systematic in analysis, rich in social theorisation and critical in going beyond descriptivism. They are characterised by a transversal focus on how both the production and perception of identity (be it individual or community/group/collective) take place across the cyberspace and how these notions re/shape existing discourses, along with the normalisation of certain social values, practices, and demands.

Also, chapters aspire to engage in re-evaluating the critical discursive tradition in the digital context and reflect whether new tools, notions and methods could be added to the existing repertoire. They present a range of interdisciplinary engagements, including multi-sited ethnography (Smith and Sissons), argumentation studies (Alotaibi; Serafis and Boukala), discursive-material analysis (Semykina and Dorofeeva), multimodal analyses (Cárdenas-Neira), the discourse-historical approach (Kopf; Mohamad Jamil), and topic modelling (Viola), and show how these integrations can be operationalised by means of case studies. Particular attention is given to the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methodologies for the investigation of controversial digital communities such as the manosphere (Krendel), as well as to diachronic, discourse-historical approaches allowing tracking the evolution of digital discursive communities such as Wikipedia (Kopf).

The first section of the book contains two chapters that focus more explicitly on the methodological, ethical and interdisciplinary implications of investigating social media data for social scientific purposes. **Jessica Aiston** provides an effective account of issues around ethical decision-making,

to be included in trademark CDS self-reflection regarding positionality and methodology. This is particularly important when social media data is analysed, as the linguistic, explicitly political and highly contextual nature of CDS research can make the ideals of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent more difficult to put into practice. As a bulk of CDS research concerns discriminatory or extremist discourse, particular attention has to be paid to potential revictimisation, reinforcement of unequal power hierarchies and safety risks for researchers themselves.

Lorella Viola's Twitter analysis is informed by digital media theory and critical discourse theory, expands on discourse-driven topic modelling (Viola & Verheul, 2019) and introduces a new analytical method for social media discourse analysis: discourse-driven text mining, which merges critical discourse analysis and text mining (i.e. bigrams and topic modelling). In her case study, she shows the potential of this fascinating new interdisciplinary prospect for SM-CDS, while at the same time shedding light on awareness of social inclusion in Italy. Her analysis shows that the almost exclusive focus on disability and poverty that has characterised the last decade of work has been leaving other intersecting factors of discrimination and vulnerability (e.g. gender, sexual orientation and age) behind.

The second and third sections of this book further explore the increasing incidence of entrenched discourses endangering fundamental rights and social cohesion as one of the most significant and complex drawbacks of the proliferation of user-generated content. In particular, the second section of this book is dedicated to the spike of technology-facilitated gender-based violence and misogyny as a new articulation of gender injustice and discrimination against women and girls (see Esposito, 2021; Esposito & Zollo, 2021; Esposito & Breeze, 2022). **Alexandra Krendel** focuses on the manosphere, an anti-feminist network of websites whose users believe that society is biased in favour of women and express hostile sentiments towards them. Her analysis shows how the manosphere as a text and place perpetuates toxic gender stereotypes and unequal gender relations in what is largely perceived as a broadly supportive space and credible source of knowledge by its members. The worrisome proliferation of this misogynist community is enhanced by the participatory affordances of the popular content aggregation site Reddit, explored as a key SMC site. In the same section, **Kseniia Semykina** and **Oksana Dorofeeva** show how the debate on breastfeeding in public spaces unfolds at the intersections between social norms and the everyday reality of motherhood and how both mothers' communities looking for safe spaces and misogynist groups find their digital space on VKontakte. In turn, the wider digital ecology of SNSs allows these different communities and spaces to be connected through digital regimes of appropriation and recontextualisation.

In the third section of this book, two chapters explore the extent to which the infrastructure of social media platforms allows users to create dedicated communities and spaces and fosters users' interactions unimaginable elsewhere. Too often, this brings to the next level of complexity debates that provoke heated discussions in the absence of social consensus. Long-standing socio-political issues, like anti-immigrant or antisemitic feelings, are entangled in and embodied by the multivocal digital discourses which try to make sense of them.

Siti Nurnadilla's chapter shows how online petitions on Change.org have come to represent an emerging genre and a new tool of xenophobic hate and discrimination, carving new and deepening existing social divides among different communities in multi-ethnic Malaysia. Since the contemporary political debate in Malaysia has largely been revolving around choosing who has the right to be cared for by the state and society in times of crisis, the digital environment helps in facilitating aggression against the Rohingya refugees, neutralising it as a normal psychological reaction and almost as a preventive behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a similar vein, **Dimitris Serafis** and **Salomi Boukala** show how the long-standing European debate on antisemitism currently unfolds in the digital agora, as Facebook fosters polarised debates in comment threads to the political cartoons published by the Greek newspaper *I Efimerída ton Syntaktón* (*EfSyn*). References to the Holocaust in these cartoons were discursively constructed as a (re)production of antisemitism by members of Facebook groups and pages of the Jewish community, who are actively engaged in countering this form of discrimination. However, Serafis and Boukala reveal the anti-communist rhetoric underlying the recontextualisation of classic antisemitic discourses and highlight the role played by digital debates in deepening existing dichotomies and social polarisation in the Greek socio-political context.

From a CDS perspective, one of the most interesting social media features is the great potential to provide new opportunities for citizens and marginalized groups in society to construct alternative collective identities and bypass top-down governmental and media power structures. The fourth section of the book explores how social movements have increasingly relied on the affordances of digital media to mobilise resources in order to easily distribute movement messages, goals and frames on both a local and global scale (see Esposito, 2018; Esposito & Sinatora, 2021).

In Chile, the student movement has been playing a key role in post-dictatorship social mobilisations (1990–2020). As the current generation masters the art of social media communication, **Camila Cárdenas-Neira**'s study shows that the student movement is also taking a leading role in the crisis and political change contexts. Young prosumers and activists build interdiscursive networks between narratives, characters and situations that

intersect with their daily lives, promoting interpretations consistent with their shared concerns or sensitivities. Capitalising on the digital affordances of Web 2.0, they can take a leading role and foster instances of interaction and deliberation that they can transfer to the rest of the society.

With a focus on Saudi Arabia, **Nouf Alotaibi**'s study shows how online activism can be crucial in the face of limitations around collective action in the physical world. Saudi women, in particular, have been capitalising on the affordances of the Web 2.0 to advance the campaign *#EndMale-GuardianshipSystem* against the legal system that works as a key impediment to their full participation in society. The analysis of these digital practices of (counter-)discourse sheds light on the power relations and hidden ideologies of the legal systems in place restraining women's rights in Saudi Arabia: digital discourses, in fact, only mirror the real life of Saudi women and the socio-economic and cultural injustice they face on a daily basis.

All contributions pay attention to the processes of sense making at the intersection of the technology and discourse formation and consumption, as well as to specific characteristics of the participatory web, such as the impact of increasing monetisation of everyday digital engagements and the appearance and consolidation of exciting new digital tools. In particular, the fifth and final section of the book focuses on the reconfiguration of power, knowledge and authority in established discursive practices as one of the most revolutionary effects of the SMC.

Yu Zhang delves into the global digitalisation of health communication with a focus on China, where the online mode of medical consultations is in its prime, not least in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. While e-healthcare reinforces the development of economy as the dominating value of the Chinese nation, Zhang shows that this is affecting the traditional power structure between doctor and patient. Formerly asymmetric and grounded in medical knowledge and expertise, exchanges between doctors and e-patients are now reshaped by e-healthcare consumerism: as e-patients can now exercise their right as healthcare consumers, doctors have to adapt to the new feedback-surveillance–featured system.

Not only doctors but also journalists seem to have to re-negotiate power and legitimacy in the digital age. **Philippa Smith** and **Helen Sissons** address the attitudes of New Zealand journalists towards digitally mediated communication in journalism practice. Between normalisation of digital upskilling and the reluctant acceptance of technological change, this ethnographic work demonstrates that a dichotomy between "online" and "offline" journalistic work is difficult to distinguish and bound to become obsolete. Techno-discursive features of SMC, such as notifications, hashtags, informality, and brevity of language, are contributing to legitimising it as

a daily journalistic practice, particularly in pressurised situations when the swift conveyance of information is vital for news deadlines.

If we were to choose a digital disruptor of the power-knowledge arrangements *par excellence*, that would be Wikipedia. **Susanne Kopf** delves into a discourse-historical analysis of the discursive construction and representation of Facebook on Wikipedia. With a focus on the timespan 2004–2020, Kopf's study shows the development of a distinction between the description of Facebook as a for-profit business, on the one hand, and a social media platform and community-building tool on the other. At the same time, she points out that this distinction does not seem to be based on a critical and full reflection on the importance of knowing and informing Wikipedia's audience about Facebook's capitalist motivations and the implications this may have.

The ultimate aim of this edited volume is to contribute to the establishment of a new tradition in critical discourse theorisation, research and practices, addressing the crucial interface of discourse and Web 2.0. In doing so, it hopes to rigorously account for a solid discursive framework and for the evolving complexity of the digital realm.

References

Androutsopoulos, J. (2008). Potentials and limitations of discourse-centred online ethnography. *Language@Internet*, *5*(8).

Bonilla, Y., & Rosa, J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist*, *42*, 4–17. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12112

Brock, A. (2016). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society*, *20*(3), 1012–1030. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816677532

Dillet, B. (2022). Speaking to algorithms? Rhetorical political analysis as technological analysis. *Politics*, *42*(2), 231–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720968060

Esposito, E. (2018). The social media campaign for Caribbean reparation: A critical multimodal investigation. In E. Esposito, C. Pérez, & J. Ferreiro (Eds.), *Discourses from Latin America and the Caribbean: Current concepts and challenges* (pp. 175–210). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Esposito, E. (2021). Introduction: Critical perspectives on violence against women in politics. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* (Special Issue 'Critical Perspectives on Violence against Women in Politics'), *9*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.00051.int

Esposito, E. (2023 forthcoming). Online violence. In E. Bjarnegård & P. Zetterberg (Eds.), *Gender, politics and violence*. Temple University Press.

Esposito, E., & Breeze, R. (2022). Gender and politics in a digitalized world: Investigating online hostility against UK female MPs. *Discourse & Society*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265221076608

Esposito, E., & KhosraviNik, M., (2023). Digital distribution processes and "new" research tools in SM-CDS. In M. KhosraviNik (Ed.) *Social media and society:*

Integrating the digital with the social in digital discourse (pp. 15–37). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Esposito, E., & Sinatora, F. L. (2021). Social media discourses of feminist protest from the Arab Levant: Transregional dialogue and digital mirroring. *Critical Discourse Studies* (Special Issue 'The Interplay of Identity, Voice and Resistance: Emancipatory Discourses in Action'). https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2021. 1999291

Esposito, E., & Zollo, S. A. (2021). "How dare you call her a pig, I know several pigs who would be upset if they knew": A multimodal critical discursive approach to online misogyny against UK MPs on YouTube. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* (Special Issue on 'Critical Perspectives on Violence against Women in Politics'), *9*(1), 47–75. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.00053.esp

Ghaffari, S. (2020). Discourses of celebrities on Instagram: Digital femininity, self-representation and hate speech. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), Special Issue on Social Media Critical Discourse Studies, 161–178.

Herring, S. C. (1996). *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social and cross-cultural perspectives*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Herring, S. C., & Androutsopoulos, J. (2015). Computer-mediated 2.0. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 128–151). Chichester: Blackwell.

Jones, R. H., Chik, A., & Hafner, C. A. (2015). Introduction: Discourse analysis and digital practices. In R. H. Jones, A. Chik, & C. A. Hafner (Eds.), *Discourse analysis and digital practices: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age* (pp. 1–17). London: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2014). Critical discourse analysis, power and new media discourse. In M. Kopytowska & Y. Kalyango (Eds.), *Why discourse matters: Negotiating identity in the mediatized world* (pp. 287–306). New York: Peter Lang.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 582–596). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2018). Social media techno-discursive design, affective communication and contemporary politics. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, *11*(4), 427–442.

KhosraviNik, M. (2019). Populist digital media? Social media systems and the global populist right discourse. *Public Seminar*. https://publicseminar.org/ 2019/10/populist-digital-media-social-media-systems-and-the-global-populist-right-discourse/

KhosraviNik, M. (2020). Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse Studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), Special Issue on Social Media Critical Discourse Studies, 119–123. https://doi.org/10.10 80/17405904.2020.1835683

KhosraviNik, M. (2023). *Digital discourse and society*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, DAPSAC Series.

KhosraviNik, M., & Amer, M. (2020). Social media and terrorism discourse: The Islamic State's (IS) social media discursive content and practices. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), Special Issue on Social Media Critical Discourse Studies, 124–143.

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *14*(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2018-0003

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

Seargeant, P., & Tagg, C. (2014). Introduction: The language of social media. In P. Seargeant & C. Tagg (Eds.), *The language of social media: Identity and community on the internet* (pp. 1–20). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spilioti, T. (2016). Digital discourses: A critical perspective. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 133–145). London and New York: Routledge.

Thurlow, C., & Mroczek, K. (Eds.). (2011). *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Viola, L., & Verheul, J. (2019). The media construction of Italian identity: A transatlantic, digital humanities analysis of Italianità, ethnicity, and whiteness, 1867–1920. *Identity*, *19*(4), 294–312.

Zappavigna, M. (2012). *Discourse of Twitter and social media*. London: Bloomsbury.

Part I

Digital discourses

Ethical and interdisciplinary reflections

2 Towards the ethical use of digital data in CDS
Challenges and opportunities

Jessica Aiston

1. Introduction

Traditionally, scholars working within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) have tended to engage with texts produced by institutions or elite figures, such as newspaper articles or political speeches, yet increasingly scholars are turning to data produced and disseminated online (KhosraviNik, 2017; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). Social media allows researchers unprecedented access to the voice of ordinary citizens, which previously required focus groups or interview methods (Koteyko, 2010; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). However, the application of CDS frameworks to social media data poses new challenges as well as new opportunities and thus requires reconsideration of several fundamental concepts and theories, such as recognition of the shift from a primarily one-way flow of content from symbolic elites to ordinary recipients, towards pluri-directional flows of content from a more diverse array of voices (KhosraviNik, 2014). In addition to this rethinking of theoretical concepts, new ethical research principles must also be taken into consideration.

Studies in which the researcher has contact with living persons are usually subject to approval from ethical review boards in order to minimise the potential harms that may befall participants during research. Here, researchers must consider principles such as confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. Confidentiality refers to the "accessing and sharing [of] personal information only on the basis of authorisation by the person concerned", while anonymisation comprises "making sure the person whose data is being used is not identifiable to others" (Felzmann, 2013, p. 20). Informed consent is "the process by which researchers can allow participants to negotiate, document and agree their contribution to a research project" (Page et al., 2014, p. 71).

Early studies considered analysis of digital content to be no different from analysis of any other written texts such as newspapers (e.g. Walther, 2002), and thus considerations of anonymity or informed consent were

deemed unnecessary. However, more researchers now recognise the blurry distinctions between a person and a text (Page et al., 2014) and between public and private (McKee & Porter, 2009) in social media and Internet research. Furthermore, KhosraviNik (2022) argues that analysis of social media discourse should ideally include ethnographic approaches such as systematic observation in order to account for the digital practices of production, distribution, and consumption. Therefore, concepts like harm and vulnerability should continue to guide our research, even if there is no direct contact with the users by way of interviews or face-to-face observation (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Researchers must endeavour to conduct their research in an appropriate and ethically sound manner that reduces risks of harm and maximises benefits to the users who produced the texts under analysis.

There is a wide array of literature published on the subject of Internet and social media research ethics (e.g. McKee & Porter, 2009; Zimmer & Kinder-Kurlanda, 2017). The Association of Internet Researchers has published three editions of their ethical research guidelines (see franzke et al., 2020 for the most recent version), and recommendations for Internet and social media research are increasingly included in disciplinary-specific guidelines (e.g. British Association of Applied Linguistics, 2016). However, as Gorup (2019) observes, the topic of research ethics is seldom broached within (critical) discourse studies; even works providing a step-by-step guide usually only mention ethics briefly, if at all. This observation has since been validated empirically by Stommel and de Rijk (2021), who found that ethics was only explicitly addressed in just over a third of articles involving social media data that were published in discourse-oriented journals between January 2017 and February 2020. A notable exception is the 2018 'Ethics in Critical Discourse Studies' special issue of *Critical Discourse Studies* (Graham, 2018). While this was certainly a welcome addition, the issue primarily focused on the normative and ethical values upon which analysts base their critique rather than the ethics of data collection. Therefore, further work is needed regarding the ethical use of data from social media in CDS research.

In this chapter, I argue that CDS scholars working with social media data must explicitly engage with research ethics and ensure that our decisions are transparent and well justified given the specific aims and tenets of the discipline. While CDS researchers may use different methodologies or analyse different types of data, they are united by a common goal: "the critique and challenge of hegemonic discourses, texts, and genres that re/produce inequalities" (Wodak, 2013, p. xxiii). Scholars take an explicitly normative, political stance and aim to "intervene on the side of dominated and oppressed groups" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 259). Given these emancipatory aims, consideration of ethical principles should be

particularly important – we cannot claim that our research agenda is "nurtured . . . by a sense of justice" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 34) if our work is unethical and harmful to the originators of the texts we analyse.

However, these aims and tenets may complicate the ethical decision-making process in several ways. Firstly, the fact that our research is textually oriented means that we need to consider how we reproduce data within publications and the implications of these decisions on anonymity and confidentiality. Secondly, CDS emphasises contextualisation, which could clash with the principle of anonymity. Thirdly, the critical and politically motivated character of our research may cause difficulties when obtaining informed consent if users object to having their posts scrutinised and labelled as ideological or discriminatory. Fourth, because research often focuses on discrimination, researchers may put themselves at risk when engaging with the text producers. Finally, because CDS entails self-reflection at each stage of the research (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), this should also extend to ethical decision-making.

In the meantime, given the increasing interest in CDS for studies into phenomena such as online hate (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018), this chapter also aims to address some of the ethical issues specific to this line of research, such as researcher safety. There is to date relatively little theorisation regarding these ethical dilemmas and their implications for actual research practice, with notable exceptions including Massanari (2018) and Rüdiger and Dayter (2017), although neither paper discussed CDS specifically.

In what follows, I discuss several ethical issues relevant to CDS, both more generally and more specifically to the study of digitally mediated hate speech. First, I discuss differing perceptions of publicity and privacy and how the blurring of boundaries between the two can impact ethical decision-making. Next, I consider three specific methodological decisions: whether to anonymise the source of the data, whether to publish verbatim quotes, and whether to obtain informed consent. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the increasing need to consider the researcher's safety and wellbeing.

2.   Public and private distinctions

Many researchers rely on the relative publicness or privateness of online data as a rule of thumb for judging whether the data can legitimately be used in research (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021). Given that the private sphere is often regarded as a space where "potentially powerful acts of dissent emanate" and where "marginalized interests and counter-publics are relegated" (Papacharissi, 2010, pp. 131–132), CDS scholars may also have legitimate interest in more private digital interactions. However, the

distinction between public and private digital interaction is often blurry, as social media frequently comprise spaces that are "neither conventionally public nor entirely private" (Papacharissi & Gibson, 2011, p. 75), and so McKee and Porter (2009) suggest conceptualising social media privacy/publicity as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. A single account's Twitter feed may include tweets which resemble interpersonal, dyadic conversations and posts which resemble institutionally produced texts designed for a wider audience. This mixture of communication types can cause great difficulty in ethical decision-making, as private interpersonal interactions require vastly different considerations from public institutional interactions.

Broadly speaking, data considered more private is thought to require more consideration than data considered more public. For example, informed consent and anonymity may be more important for research into a password-protected forum than a publicly accessible one (McKee & Porter, 2009). However, determining where a social media text falls within the public-private continuum can be difficult, and relying wholly on the technical privacy settings is not a failsafe solution. Facebook and Twitter profiles are public by default, and users may not know how to change these settings or even be aware of the possibility (Strater & Richter, 2007; van Dijck, 2013). In addition, although a social media platform's terms of service may state that having a public profile means one has consented to making their information public and hence usable for myriad purposes, many users do not read these terms of service, and the amount of technical jargon and legalese therein may impact comprehension (Ferguson, 2017). Therefore, researchers should not assume that having a public account is analogous to providing informed consent for one's posts to be used in research. Scholars have criticised platforms for placing the onus on individual users to monitor their privacy (Marwick & boyd, 2014) and allowing users to believe that they are in control of their privacy while simultaneously downplaying their selling of user-generated data to third parties (Fuchs, 2017). Therefore, relying on the technical privacy settings alone is problematic, and CDS scholars may take issue with privileging the views of powerful platform owners or administrators regarding user privacy.

Although their data may be available to anyone with an Internet connection, users may not necessarily perceive their posts as entirely public. While social media increases the *potential* for visibility, this is no guarantee (boyd, 2011). Consequently, many users expect their posts will be viewed only by a handful of people, or their "imagined audience" (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Bassett and O'Riordan (2002) found that users of an LGBT forum explicitly wrote that they did not want their families to find their posts, viewing the forum as a safe haven despite it being a public website anybody could view. Moreover, while a user may acknowledge that

their posts are publicly accessible and consent to anybody *reading* their posts, having their posts collected and republished in academic publications is a different matter (Markham, 2012). As Nissenbaum (2010, p. 2, emphasis original) argues, users care less about "simply *restricting* the flow of information but ensuring that it flows *appropriately*". Consequently, some researchers (e.g. Mackenzie, 2017; McKee & Porter, 2009) advocate respecting users' perceived privacy expectations rather than the technical privacy settings – just because we *can* access social media data for research purposes doesn't always mean we *should*.

Overall, the perceived levels of publicity and privacy are important to consider before making any specific ethical decisions such as whether to anonymise usernames, publish verbatim quotes, or seek informed consent. Generally, anonymity and informed consent are considered to be more important for data perceived to be more private than data perceived to be more public (McKee & Porter, 2009). However, the distinction between public and private digital interaction is often fuzzy, and researchers cannot rely on the technical privacy settings alone. As Marwick and boyd (2014, p. 12) rightly argue, it is a common misconception that if someone has posted information online, this means they "don't care" about privacy. Therefore, a CDS scholar may wish to account for the beliefs and expectations of the actual users, rather than privileging the desires of platform owners and administrators, who often violate privacy expectations and have a vested interest in keeping data public (Fuchs, 2017; van Dijck, 2013). Even if data are publicly available, a researcher should still consider ethical principles and aim to minimise potential harm to the users.

3.   Anonymity

Firstly, CDS scholars must decide whether to anonymise the source of data, which may include usernames or even the name of the platform. Within many research paradigms, anonymisation is taken for granted as the default position (Guenther, 2009): researchers are more likely to justify a *lack* of anonymisation rather than the presence of it. This is not unique to social media research; even in "offline" research projects participants are typically anonymised. The rationale is to protect participants from harm so that they can "plausibly deny" their participation (Herring, 1996, p. 157) and "to protect private information from becoming public when this is against the wish of the individuals in question" (Juffermans et al., 2014, p. 5). However, for social media data there is less consensus as to whether or not the real names, or more often usernames, of those involved should be published. The subsequent sections will discuss the main issues surrounding the anonymisation of usernames followed by the anonymisation of online communities and websites.

3.1.   *Participant anonymity*

Many social media posts are publicly available, and so some researchers have justified their decision to publish participants' usernames on the basis that no information is being published against the users' will (e.g. Juffermans et al., 2014; Kitchin, 2003). In this view, a researcher need not apply pseudonyms or redact personal information written in posts because the user has already decided to make this information public by posting it online in the first place. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that users may perceive their posts as more private, and consequently, researchers should not assume that principles of anonymity and confidentiality are automatically irrelevant if a post is publicly available (see Section 2). Decisions regarding anonymity should be specific to the research project at hand and justified according to context-specific factors, ideally taking into account users' own perceptions and intentions regarding their own privacy and publicity.

Firstly, Facebook has a "real names" policy, and consequently there is a strong tendency for researchers to anonymise data from this platform (e.g. KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014), though there are exceptions (e.g. Oyadiji, 2020). On the other hand, for platforms like Reddit where there is heavy use of pseudonyms (van der Nagel & Frith, 2015), some researchers may consider the data to be sufficiently anonymised already and take no issue with citing usernames in publications (e.g. Topinka, 2017). For platforms such as 4chan, users are anonymous by default, and so there is little need to create pseudonyms (Ludemann, 2018). While Facebook and Twitter appear to be more popular sources of data in CDS, scholars should also take interest in more pseudonymous platforms, given their interesting implications regarding identity work (van der Nagel & Frith, 2015), potentials for freer, uninhibited expression (Papacharissi, 2002), and hateful speech and polarisation (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018).

Conversely, others have argued that usernames should be treated like real names (Bruckman, 2002) and hence advocate redacting usernames to create a sense of "double anonymisation" (Rüdiger & Dayter, 2017). Furthermore, Bruckman (2002) points out that users often grow attached to their username and may use the same one across multiple platforms. Therefore, if a researcher publishes someone's Reddit username, they may also be publishing their Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram username, meaning myriad personal information has been made available and confidentiality has been undermined. Double anonymisation appears to be a widespread practice in discourse studies, as Stommel and de Rijk (2021, p. 281) found that quotations were "overwhelmingly" anonymised, even in papers that did not mention ethics. For example, discourse analyses of Reddit posts have provided no usernames (e.g. Heritage & Koller, 2020) or used generic labels like "User 1" (e.g. Subtileru, 2017).

Double anonymisation may be especially important if the data are sensitive or if participants are likely to experience harm if their offline identities were linked to the research, for example, minors, LGBT individuals, or political minorities (franzke et al., 2020, p. 17). In research involving hate speech and other contentious online phenomena, the researcher may wish to avoid linking people's identities to "anti-social or potentially criminal activity" (Wright, 2020, p. 3). The potential illegality of materials has been cited as a rationale for anonymisation in studies regarding hate speech on Facebook (Merrill & Åkerlund, 2018) and rape apologia in pick-up artist forums (Wright, 2020). In these cases, double anonymisation may be preferable in order to prevent users from being outed as members of certain communities against their will and prevent them from facing harm as a result of their online activities. On the other hand, some researchers may feel a moral obligation to protect the *targets* of this speech from harm and consequently take action such as flagging offending posts as hate speech (see Stern, 2003, for further discussion).

Conversely, there are also some occasions in which anonymisation itself may cause harm in the form of undermining text producers' legitimacy and credibility, especially if their goal is to achieve *publicity* rather than privacy. Social media is often lauded for its empowering and democratic potentials: due to the lack of gatekeeping process, anyone can create an account and broadcast their (critical) opinions – issues of access to the Internet notwithstanding – and thus social media may be used for activism, critique of dominant power structures, and promotion of minority or marginalised voices (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). Social media has helped to "decentralize" the processes of content creation and dissemination (ibid, p. 211), and so users may create their own independent media as alternatives to established media conglomerates. In such cases, anonymisation could undermine the text producers' goals of visibility and publicity. Bassett and O'Riordan (2002, p. 236) consider the double standard in which "offline" texts written by official bodies are rarely subject to ethical review and expectations regarding anonymity and consent. They warn that this "different valencing of online and offline texts" could inadvertently contribute to an "uneven power relation" which validates only texts "produced by major international companies as legitimate objects of study". Similarly, Hudson and Bruckman (2004, p. 129) caution that when people utilise the Internet to promote minority voices, anonymisation "reinforces the dominant paradigm from which they are trying to escape".

This is important for scholars in CDS: if our work aims to expose uneven hierarchies and processes of domination, we must ensure that we are not reproducing these within our own work. For example, if we give credit to a newspaper article yet anonymise a blog post on the same subject, this may inadvertently create the impression that the latter is less worthy of proper

citation and is less credible or legitimate solely because it was produced and disseminated over the Internet by a non-elite figure. It may contribute to uneven power relations, where top-down, official texts are privileged for analysis at the expense of grassroots or independent media, which may already lack the resources or power to compete with more established media (Bassett & O'Riordan, 2002, p. 136). CDS scholars must take care not to diminish the democratising or empowering potentials of social media (KhosraviNik, 2014) by presupposing that all users desire anonymity, just as we should not presuppose that all users desire publicity.

Researchers have also employed different anonymisation practices for different users based on their "situated identities" or "transportable identities" (Page, 2012). For instance, some researchers have anonymised the users of a subreddit but not its moderators (e.g. van der Nagel & Frith, 2015) or anonymised the accounts of "ordinary" users but not the accounts of corporations or celebrities (e.g. Formato, 2021). However, the distinction between powerful and powerless voices or public figures and ordinary figures on social media is eroding (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016), and there may be occasions where even an "ordinary" user may have goals of publicity (Markham, 2012) and so more nuanced strategies may be necessary. For example, Gillen (2018, p. 40) anonymised tweets where she felt the author was not "consciously projecting a specific celebrity Twitter identity" rather than relying on technical privacy settings. Alternatively, researchers may choose to engage the users within the research process and provide them the option to disclose or anonymise their usernames (e.g. Mackenzie, 2017).

Overall, decisions regarding anonymisation of participants are complicated. Although there is a strong tendency towards anonymisation within discourse analytic work on social media and there are several compelling reasons to do so, this does not mean that social media must *always* be anonymised. Instead, decisions regarding anonymisation should be context-sensitive, taking into account factors such as the relative vulnerability of participants and the potential for harm if their identities were connected with the research, the platform-wide culture of anonymity or pseudonymity, and users' expectations regarding their own privacy or publicity. Indeed, while anonymisation is intended to minimise harm, there are certain situations in which it could cause harm via undermining the users' goals of publicity and credibility. Ultimately, the researcher must use their discretion and weigh up the relative risks and benefits of anonymisation rather than make blanket decisions.

3.2.   *Community anonymity*

If research involves a particular online community, such as a forum, a researcher must also decide whether to extend anonymity to the community

or platform as a whole. The reasons for anonymising the overall source of the data are similar to the reasons for anonymising individual participants; King (1996, p. 121) argues that an "ethically responsible" researcher should disguise the source of the data in a manner such that the original posts are completely unidentifiable. For example, Wright (2020, p. 3) described his corpus as comprising texts originating from a "popular and publicly accessible PUA online discussion forum" without disclosing its name. King (1996) goes a step further and advocates anonymising even the *type* of group (e.g. whether it is an email list or bulletin board system) to further reduce the chances of discovery. However, the extent to which this is desirable, or even feasible, is limited for CDS, as it implies that the medium is trivial and that texts can be unproblematically isolated from their context. In some cases, disguise may prove impossible – if one is analysing short messages that use hashtags, for instance, it would take little effort to decipher that these posts most likely came from Twitter.

Within CDS, an understanding of the contextual background of a given text is integral in analysing its meaning. Researchers must provide background information, such as the text producer(s), the intended audience(s), the genre(s), or field(s) of action. Within the discourse-historical approach, texts are placed within a four-layer model of context: the immediate language or text-internal co-text, the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between texts, the extra-linguistic social variables and institutional frames, and the broader socio-political and historical context (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Regarding social media, scholars must account for the technological affordances and the specific "medium factors" and "situation factors" (Herring, 2007) which influence the interactions taking place (KhosraviNik, 2017; Unger et al., 2016). Furthermore, Pihlaja and Musolff (2016) highlight the importance of the platform's ideology and its impact on users' practices and interactions. For example, Ludemann (2018) explains how the "ephemeral, anonymous ecology" (p. 93) of 4chan facilitates production of racist discourse, while Massanari (2017) describes how the libertarian, pro-free speech ethos of Reddit administrators has led to the proliferation of "toxic technocultures". Therefore, to isolate a social media text from its context would prevent rigorous, critical analysis. At the very minimum, the specific platform should be identified in order to account for how the technological design and architecture impacts the meaning-making and possible interactions. However, there is more flexibility as to whether the community should be named. For example, when looking at texts from a particular subreddit, while it is important to discuss the impact of this community being hosted on Reddit, the researcher may prefer to avoid naming the subreddit itself. Such an approach was taken by Krendel (2020) in her study of sexist hate speech in an anti-feminist Reddit community.

Decisions may also pertain to the researcher's safety, particularly when the project focuses on hostile online communities. For example, if a researcher has examined a white supremacist forum and names it within their paper and its users then search for the forum's name, they may find the paper within the search engine results. If the members dislike their representation, then the researcher may be vulnerable to abuse or harassment (see Chess & Shaw, 2015, for a discussion of how Gamergaters negatively reacted to their work). Anonymising the community could therefore lend the researcher some degree of protection by minimising their chances of discovery by members of the community and lend plausible deniability if they are discovered.

There are also issues with visibility and amplification. A researcher may prefer to anonymise a hateful online website to deny them traffic given the concern that by writing about a community, even in a critical manner, we are providing them exposure to a wider audience. By contrast, some researchers may prefer to expose the community in order to raise awareness and demand that platform administrators or policymakers take action. Phillips (2018) discusses this contradiction in the context of conspiracy theories and points out that amplifying misinformation in popular media can increase its visibility and lead to its normalisation, but *not* covering it can be just as dangerous, as coverage is needed to educate the public. The same concerns may also apply for academic research.

In sum, while extending anonymisation to the entire platform is likely to be problematic for CDS, there is more flexibility as to whether the researcher should anonymise the name of the community or part of the platform from which data originate. As I have previously argued, researchers should ideally take the community's expectations regarding publicity and privacy into account rather than make blanket decisions. However, there may be cases where the community's goals of publicity or privacy do not align with the goals of the researcher, and favouring the former would be undesirable. In the case of misinformation or hate speech, for example, the researcher must make a careful decision as to whether exposure or obscurity is more appropriate. Researchers must also take into account matters regarding their own safety and wellbeing, especially when dealing with hateful, hostile, or exclusionary communities (see Section 6). Finally, and most importantly, researchers must ensure that their decisions are consistent. Anonymisation in textual examples is insufficient, for instance, when the researcher also includes a hyperlink to the initial post or does not blur out the names entirely in screenshots.

4.   Reidentification of materials

Two of the major affordances of social media are persistence and searchability (boyd, 2011). Combined, they pose significant problems for CDS.

If a researcher includes a quote from social media in their publication, someone could easily identify its author by copying the text into a search engine and retrieving the original post. Therefore, several scholars have cautioned against the publication of verbatim quotes in order to prevent this reidentification (e.g. Markham, 2012; King, 1996). Instead, studies may include paraphrases (e.g. Massanari, 2019) or translations (e.g. Merrill & Åkerlund, 2018) rather than the exact text. Studies using computational methods may present only keywords and frequency data without any quotations.

However, the practice of paraphrasing or modifying discursive content is unsuitable for linguistic research when language itself is the object of study. Within CDS, discourse is conceptualised as existing within a dialectal relationship with society, being both "socially constitutive" and "socially conditioned" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 260). Consequently, discursive practices can have "major ideological effects" (ibid); even individual words and grammatical choices may reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies, in which case, slightly altering the data to diminish searchability would alter the data for examination and produce misleading results, reducing the level of analytical rigour. Therefore, Herring (1996, p. 160) argues that linguists must be allowed to cite verbatim examples in order to "identify and illustrate the phenomena under investigation".

There may be scenarios in which the original post is difficult – if not impossible – to retrieve, for instance, in studies of 4chan, as posts are deleted shortly after publication. On many platforms, content or communities deemed to be particularly offensive may be removed by administrators, or in the case of Reddit placed in a "quarantine" meaning that posts are not included within external and internal search engines (see Krendel, 2021; although quarantined subreddits are no longer publicly available to users without a Reddit account which will inevitably impact ethical decision-making in other ways; see Section 2). In these cases, a researcher may find it acceptable to reproduce content verbatim due to decreased risks of retrievability.

However, reproducing offensive or discriminatory texts may be problematic in other ways. On one hand, some researchers highlight the necessity of citing "a multitude of *unexpurgated* examples" (Jane, 2016, p. 14, emphasis original) in order to illustrate the "normalisation" of extreme and hateful language (Colley & Moore, 2022, p. 8). Online hate speech has a profoundly negative impact on equality and participation in digital spaces and indeed society at large (Jane, 2016; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018). Thus, reproducing only the mildest examples or representing hate speech via euphemisms such as "graphic" may function to trivialise the phenomenon or downplay its harms (Jane, 2016) and so would be inadvisable for CDS research aiming to critique and denounce the issue. On the

other hand, Massanari (2018, p. 5) considers whether reproducing hateful speech in publications could count as "a form of symbolic violence", and Phillips (2018) warns that reproducing extremist content could help to provide these groups with the amplification that they seek. Reflecting on their research into racist memes from 4chan, Colley and Moore (2022, p. 22) consider how they "inadvertently spread extremist content" by bringing offensive but outdated memes back into public consciousness when they had previously been forgotten (see also, Georgakopoulo, 2017). CDS researchers should thus also be aware of the potential negative consequences of disseminating harmful content and decide exactly how much offensive material is required to illustrate the scale of the problem without furthering the producers' goals of amplification. For example, Colley and Moore (2022) decided to only reproduce certain offensive terms once. Another option is to provide a content warning (e.g. Krendel, 2020) so that readers can make an informed decision as to whether they wish to continue.

Overall, there are several issues with publishing quotes from social media. Despite their searchability, it is often preferable to cite verbatim examples in order to adequately illustrate a particular linguistic phenomenon and maintain analytical rigour (Herring, 1996). Changing the language used would entail an analysis of the researcher's own paraphrases, which would radically alter results and may lead to accusations of "inauthenticity" or fabrication (Fuchs, 2017, p. 60). In response to these issues, a researcher may choose to reproduce only a few illustrative examples or only short fragments of quotes, as the longer the quote, the more likely it is to be unique. Alternatively, a researcher may choose to obtain consent from the users before republishing any of their material (e.g. Mackenzie, 2017; Section 5). For research into online hate speech specifically, researchers must also consider the potential risks and benefits of reproducing discriminatory or extreme content. In all cases, researchers must take care to ensure the transparency of their ethical decision-making process and reflect on any discomforts or difficult decisions.

5.   Informed consent

A key ethical principle is informed consent, where participants must fully understand "the goal of the research" as well as any "potential risks . . . and benefits" that may result from their participation (Enyon et al., 2017, p. 23). For Internet and social media research, there is no uniform consensus as to whether informed consent is necessary. On one hand, some have argued that since content published online is public information, informed consent is not required (e.g. Juffermans et al., 2014). This position appears to be more dominant within discourse studies (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021).

On the other hand, others point out that analysing and quoting someone's material without their consent could be interpreted as a privacy violation (Mackenzie, 2017; King, 1996) and that a public account is not synonymous with consent (see Section 2). Decisions should therefore be context-dependent and account for the users' perceived level of privacy and topic sensitivity. Similarly, Page et al. (2014, p. 72) suggest that informed consent is more likely to be required when "a project is likely to identify a particular individual", such as when usernames and verbatim quotes are to be publicised in research (see Sections 3 and 4).

However, Bassett and O'Riordan (2002, p. 236) note that gaining informed consent for Internet and social media research can often be "counter-productive and impossible, except under the most well-funded conditions". This is exacerbated if the researcher is aiming to collect large volumes of social media data, for example, in studies using corpus linguistics methods. The users themselves may be difficult to contact, especially if they have since deleted, abandoned, or been suspended from their account. For projects concerning anonymous and ephemeral platforms like 4chan (Ludemann, 2018), the researcher may not even know who to contact in the first place.

Given the fluid membership of online groups, researchers may need to ask for consent and identify themselves as researchers on multiple occasions, but this may be perceived as disruptive and the posts may be ignored or even removed (Hudson & Bruckman, 2004; Sugiura et al., 2016). Furthermore, users may cease participation after the arrival of researchers (King, 1996; Sugiura et al., 2016). An issue especially relevant for CDS is how this could alter the power dynamics within the community. By alerting users to our presence, we may cause more vulnerable members to drop out and instead leave ourselves with only the "more vocal, dominant" users (Herring, 1996, p. 163). Given our interests in issues of power and domination, CDS researchers should strive to avoid reinforcing uneven power relations within these online communities.

The nature of the research may also pose issues. Fuchs (2018, p. 393) claims that the "inherently violent" phenomena of racism and fascism mean that studies into these topics pose additional ethical challenges. Researchers examining racist, misogynistic, or otherwise extremist content may find it extremely difficult to obtain informed consent, and attempting to do so could even "endanger" the researcher (p. 389). This may be exacerbated when the researcher's work or identity "triggers strong ideological reaction" within a community (franzke et al., 2020, p. 10), such as a female researcher studying the "manosphere" (Krendel, this volume) or a Black researcher studying white nationalists. In such cases, Rüdiger and Dayter (2017) have suggested that researchers be exempt from informed consent requirements in order to protect themselves from harm.

Finally, the critical nature of CDS research means that users may be hesitant to give consent. For consent to be considered informed, participants must understand the purposes and goals of the research project (Enyon et al., 2017) and may refuse to consent for their social media posts to be used in studies of racist language, for example, even if the aim is not to critique individual behaviour (Fuchs, 2018; Herring, 1996). Additionally, Rüdiger and Dayter (2017, p. 260) note that groups with controversial opinions may "refuse to play along" out of concern they will be poorly represented, especially within "unobjective" research like CDS. Herring (1996) and Fuchs (2017, 2018) warn of a chilling effect in which researchers avoid topics that have the potential to make their sources feel self-conscious. This would mean important and urgent phenomena such as the normalisation of hate speech and the dissemination of racist or anti-feminist ideologies online (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018) would remain unresearched.

Although informed consent is considered a fundamental ethical principle that aims to reduce risk of harm, there are often barriers for pursuing it in CDS, and there may be cases in which its pursual can *increase* the potential for harm, both towards the users and the researchers. Researchers should ideally account for the context and community norms; if a community is considered to be more private or vulnerable, then informed consent may be necessary. However, if there are too many authors to contact or if the community is particularly hostile, then informed consent may be difficult to obtain, in which case, the researcher should think about representation; in the absence of informed consent, anonymity often becomes more important (Rüdiger & Dayter, 2017; Page et al., 2014). Ultimately, decisions about informed consent must be made on a case-by-case basis and should be well justified beyond matters of mere convenience.

6.   Protecting the researcher

Finally, considerations of the researcher's safety and wellbeing are equally important. Researchers who investigate "sensitive topics" may be at risk of harassment and abuse as a result of their research activities (Marwick et al., 2016, p. 1), though many resources discussing ethics focus exclusively on safeguarding participants with little consideration of the potential vulnerabilities of the researcher. Fortunately, this is starting to change – for example, the third version of the Association of Internet Researchers' (AOIR) ethical guidelines recognises the "growing need" to protect researchers (franzke et al., 2020, p. 11), and Marwick et al. (2016) provide some practical advice for researchers conducting "risky" research, such as making liberal use of the block and report features on social media and forming a support network with other researchers.

Massanari (2018, p. 2) writes that ethics review boards traditionally view researchers as holding more power than their participants, but online hate groups "complicate" and "radically shift" this dynamic. She uses the term "alt-right gaze" to discuss the dynamics of harassment against researchers and public figures, noting the discrepancies in power and visibility between a target and the anonymous users perpetrating the attacks. Some researchers may be especially vulnerable, such as students, women, people of colour, and LGBT people, and hence require more institutional support. Furthermore, Massanari notes that the research field is not a static place that can be left. Scholars of online harassment explain that its effects are especially devastating because social media have become a fundamental part of everyday life, and so simply logging out is not a viable solution (Jane, 2016). Academics are often expected to be "microcelebrities" (Massanari, 2018, p. 7) and use social media for self-promotion, but when our research concerns hostile groups known for harassment, we need to think about how we can publicise our work in a way that is visible to other academics but not to those in the community likely to harass us.[1] The risks do not end once the final paper is written but, given the persistence of Internet postings (boyd, 2011), will continue for long into the future. Universities and institutions must therefore make a stronger commitment to protecting researchers and develop policies designed to safeguard against harassment, rather than placing the burden on individuals alone. Institutional ethical review boards could include questions concerning researcher safety in ethical approval applications, for example.

As well as risks of harassment and abuse, there are also concerns for mental health given the "emotionally taxing" nature of the research (Marwick et al., 2016, p. 1). Rüdiger and Dayter (2017, p. 263) discuss feeling "shocked" while analysing pick-up artist field reports. Furthermore, they explain that their identities as female made the process of analysing the community's sexism more difficult because women are "expected" to dislike the community and so there is a tendency to "overcompensate" and "cast the subjects in a positive light" in order to prove that they are objective and not letting personal feelings obstruct their research (p. 264). This has implications for the analytical rigour and critical nature of CDS work and should be accounted for in self-reflection and self-critique.

Considerations of researcher safety will undoubtedly impact our ethical decisions. While a researcher may usually prefer to obtain informed consent, it may be advisable to refrain from interacting with the community in such instances in order to maintain a safe distance and avoid attention (Fuchs, 2018; Rüdiger & Dayter, 2017). As a result, the researcher may decide to emphasise anonymisation in the absence of informed consent (Rüdiger & Dayter, 2017; Page et al., 2014). Although research into discriminatory materials is certainly not new for CDS, given the new social

media landscape, we need to consider how we can prioritise our own safety and mental health so that we can continue to pursue our academic goals.

7. Conclusions

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for social media research ethics, and there is continuing debate regarding best practice. Decisions must be tailored to the individual research project and be continually reviewed throughout the course of the study, as new issues may emerge at later stages that could not have been foreseen at the beginning (Georgakopoulou, 2017). While making these decisions is seldom straightforward, the linguistic, explicitly political, and highly contextual nature of CDS research can make the ideals of anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent more difficult to put into practice. Furthermore, given that CDS is interested in issues of power and discrimination, it is imperative that researchers ensure that their research practices do not cause harm in the form of reinforcing unequal power hierarchies within social media communities, undermining the democratic potentials of social media, and contributing to the relative invisibility of already marginalised populations. CDS research concerning discriminatory or extremist discourse may face further complications. As well as the users producing social media data, we need to consider our own safety and ensure that we do not put ourselves at unnecessary risk by engaging in critical discursive research.

Ultimately, whether our research is into hostile or marginalised groups, it is important to engage in open dialogues about our ethical practices and decisions. This is especially important in CDS where critique entails self-reflection and critique of our own methodological and analytical procedures (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). However, despite vigorous academic debate regarding Internet and social media research ethics, explanations of ethical decisions are rare within discourse studies (Gorup, 2019), and even when present they are not necessarily comprehensive (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021). Going forward, CDS scholars must extend self-reflection and critique to their ethical decisions regarding methods of data selection, collection, and analysis. Researchers must explain the choices they made, why they made them, and how this impacted the research process. This should ideally include an account of how decisions changed during the course of a project or what sorts of decisions had to be avoided in order to maintain ethical integrity (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021). When researchers make difficult decisions, such as forgoing anonymity or informed consent, this must be well justified with clear rationale in order to set an example for new researchers and to allow for further evaluation and critique. As Stommel and de Rijk (2021) suggest, journal editors and reviewers could consider

requiring an account of ethical decision-making in order to enhance transparency and encourage self-reflection.

Finally, while this chapter has attempted to address some of the major issues relating to ethical data collection in CDS, there is still much scope for further theorisation. Given the importance of multimodality in CDS (van Leeuwen, 2014), future work could consider the specific ethical concerns surrounding the study of highly audio-visual platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok. Furthermore, there is an increasing amount of research examining terrorist and extremist materials on social media (e.g. Bouko et al., 2022; KhosraviNik & Amer, 2022), which will inevitably raise new ethical dilemmas concerning researcher safety and the illegal nature of materials. Finally, legal issues such as platform terms of service, copyright, and data protection laws continue to remain a neglected concern (Pihlaja, 2017), and although the most legal decision does not always correlate to the most ethical decision, such concerns are still worth attention.

Note

1. Researchers who have discussed facing targeted harassment due to their research include Chess and Shaw (2015), Cuevas (2018), Jane (2016), Parson (2019), Vera-Gray (2017), and Yelin and Clancy (2021), among others.

References

Bassett, E. H., & O'Riordan, K. (2002). Ethics of internet research: Contesting the human subjects research model. *Ethics and Information Technology*, *4*, 233–247. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021319125207

Bouko, C., Naderer, B., Rieger, D., Van Ostaeyen, P., & Voué, P. (2022). Discourse patterns used by extremist Salafists on Facebook: Identifying potential triggers to cognitive biases in radicalized content. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(3), 252–273. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2021.1879185

boyd, d. (2011). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39–58). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

British Association for Applied Linguistics. (2016). *Recommendations on good practice in applied linguistics*. www.baal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/goodpractice_full_2016.pdf

Bruckman, A. (2002). Studying the amateur artist: A perspective on disguising data collected in human subjects research on the internet. *Ethics and Information Technology*, *4*(3), 217–231. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021316409277

Chess, S., & Shaw, A. (2015). A conspiracy of fishes, or, how we learned to stop worrying about #GamerGate and embrace hegemonic masculinity. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *59*(1), 208–220. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2014.999917

Colley, T., & Moore, M. (2022). The challenges of studying 4chan and the alt-right: "Come on in the water's fine". *New Media & Society*, *24*(1), 5–30. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444820948803

Cuevas, J. A. (2018). A new reality? The far right's use of cyberharassment against academics. *American Association of University Professors*. www.aaup.org/article/new-reality-far-rights-use-cyberharassment-against-academics#.X3RDZNbTUWo

Enyon, R., Fry, J., & Schroeder, R. (2017). The ethics of online research. In N. G. Fielding, R. M. Lee, & G. Blank (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of online research methods* (2nd ed., pp. 19–37). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction* (pp. 258–284). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Felzmann, H. (2013). Ethical issues in Internet research: International good practice and Irish ethics documents. In C. Fowley, C. English, & S. Thousëny (Eds.), *Internet research, theory and practice: Perspectives from Ireland* (pp. 11–32). Dublin: Research-Publishing.net.

Ferguson, R. D. (2017). Negotiating consent, compensation, and privacy in Internet research: Parentslikeme.com as a case study. In M. Zimmer & K. Kinder-Kurlanda (Eds.), *Internet research ethics for the social age: New challenges, cases and contexts* (pp. 269–275). New York: Peter Lang.

Formato, F. (2021). Production and reception of fathers' construction of their daughter's sexuality on Twitter. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *18*(6), 637–654. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1816480

franzke, a. s., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C., & The Association of Internet Researchers. (2020). *Internet research: Ethical guidelines 3.0*. https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf

Fuchs, C. (2017). *Social media: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Fuchs, C. (2018). "Dear Mr. Neo-Nazi, can you please give me your informed consent so that I can quote your fascist tweet?" Questions of social media research ethics in online ideology critique. In G. Meikle (Ed.), *The Routledge companion to media and activism* (pp. 385–394). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2017). "Whose context collapse?": Ethical clashes in the study of language and social media in context. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *8*(2–3), 169–189. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2016-1034

Gillen, J. (2018). Cricket bats, #riotcleanup, and rhubarb: Everyday creativity in Twitter interactions around Test Match Special. *Language Sciences*, *65*, 37–47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2017.03.007

Gorup, M. (2019). Ethics of discourse analysis. In R. Iphofen (Ed.), *Handbook of research ethics and scientific integrity* (pp. 1–22). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76040-7_22-1

Graham, P. (2018). Special issue introduction on ethics in CDS. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *15*(2), 107–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2017.1421244

Guenther, K. M. (2009). The politics of names: Rethinking the methodological and ethical significance of naming people, organizations, and places. *Qualitative Research*, *9*(4), 411–421. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468794109337872

Heritage, F., & Koller, V. (2020). Incels, in-groups and ideologies: The representation of gendered social actors in a sexuality-based online community. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, *9*(2), 152–178. https://doi.org/10.1075/jls.19014.her

Herring, S. C. (1996). Linguistic and critical analysis of computer-mediated communication: Some ethical and scholarly considerations. *The Information Society*, *12*(2), 153–168. https://doi.org/10.1080/911232343

Herring, S. C. (2007). A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse. *Language@Internet*, *4*. www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2007/761

Hudson, J. M., & Bruckman, A. (2004). "Go away": Participant objections to being studied and the ethics of chatroom research. *Information Society*, *20*(2), 127–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972240490423030

Jane, E. A. (2016). *Misogyny online: A short (and brutish) history*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Juffermans, K., Blommaert, J., Kroon, S., & Jinling, L. (2014). Dutch-Chinese repertoires and language ausbau in superdiversity: A view from digital media. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *4–5*, 48–61. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2014.08.001

KhosraviNik, M. (2014). Critical discourse analysis, power, and new media discourse. In Y. Kalyango, Jr. & M. W. Kopytowska (Eds.), *Why discourse matters: Negotiating identity in the mediatized world* (pp. 287–306). New York: Peter Lang.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 582–596). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2022). Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), 119–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1835683

KhosraviNik, M., & Amer, M. (2022). Social media and terrorism discourse: The Islamic State's (IS) social media discursive content and practices. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), 124–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1835684

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *14*(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2018-0003

KhosraviNik, M., & Unger, J. W. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media: Power, resistance and critique in changing media ecologies. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 205–233). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

KhosraviNik, M., & Zia, M. (2014). Persian nationalism, identity and anti-Arab sentiments in Iranian Facebook discourses: Critical discourse analysis and social media communication. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *13*(4), 755–780. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.13.4.08kho

King, S. A. (1996). Researching Internet communities: Proposed ethical guidelines for the reporting of results. *The Information Society*, *12*(2), 119–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/713856145

Kitchin, H. A. (2003). The tri-council policy statement and research in cyberspace: Research ethics, the Internet and revising a "living document". *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *1*, 397–418. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JAET.0000025671.83557.fa

Koteyko, N. (2010). Mining the internet for linguistic and social data: An analysis of "carbon compounds" in Web feeds. *Discourse & Society*, *21*(6), 655–674. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0957926510381220

Krendel, A. (2020). The men and women, guys and girls of the "manosphere": A corpus-assisted discourse approach. *Discourse & Society*, *31*(6), 607–630. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0957926520939690

Krendel, A. (2021). From sexism to misogyny: Can online echo chambers stay quarantined? In I. Zempi & J. Smith (Eds.), *Misogyny as a hate crime* (pp. 99–118). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Ludemann, D. (2018). /pol/emics: Ambiguity, scales, and digital discourse on 4chan. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *24*, 92–98. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2018.01.010

Mackenzie, J. (2017). Identifying informational norms in Mumsnet Talk: A reflexive-linguistic approach to internet research ethics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *8*(2–3), 293–314. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2016-1042

Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet contexts. *Information, Communication, and Society*, *15*(3), 334–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.641993

Markham, A., & Buchanan, E. (2012). *Ethical decision making and internet research: Recommendations from the AoIR ethics working committee (Version 2.0)*. https://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf

Marwick, A. E., Blackwell, L., & Lo, K. (2016). Best practices for conducting risky research and protecting yourself from online harassment. *Data & Society Research Institute*. https://datasociety.net/library/best-practices-for-conducting-risky-research/

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, *13*(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444810365313

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2014). Networked privacy: How teenagers negotiate context in social media. *New Media & Society*, *16*(7), 1051–1067. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444814543995

Massanari, A. L. (2017). #Gamergate and the fappening: How Reddit's algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures. *New Media & Society*, *19*(3), 329–346. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444815608807

Massanari, A. L. (2018). Rethinking research ethics, power, and the risk of visibility in the era of the "alt-right" gaze. *Social Media + Society*, *4*(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2056305118768302

Massanari, A. L. (2019). "Come for the period comics: Stay for the cultural awareness": Reclaiming the troll identity through feminist humor on Reddit's /r/TrollXChromosomes. *Feminist Media Studies*, *19*(1), 19–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1414863

McKee, H., & Porter, J. E. (2009). *The ethics of Internet research: A rhetorical, case-based process*. New York: Peter Lang.

Merrill, S., & Åkerlund, M. (2018). Standing up for Sweden? The racist discourses, architectures and affordances of an anti-immigration Facebook group. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *23*(6), 332–353. http://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy018

Nissenbaum, H. (2010). *Privacy in context: Technology, policy, and the integrity of social life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Oyadiji, O. (2020). Politeness in the interactions of selected Nigerian news-based virtual communities. *Discourse & Communication*, *14*(2), 175–201. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1750481319890388

Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media: Identities and interaction*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Page, R., Barton, D., Unger, J. W., & Zappavigna, M. (2014). *Researching language and social media: A student guide*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Papacharissi, Z. A. (2002). The virtual sphere: The internet as a public sphere. *New Media & Society*, *4*(1), 9–27. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F14614440222226244

Papacharissi, Z. A. (2010). *A private sphere: Democracy in a digital age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Papacharissi, Z. A., & Gibson, P. L. (2011). Fifteen minutes of privacy: Privacy, sociality and publicity on social network sites. In S. Trepte & L. Reinecke (Eds.), *Privacy online: Perspectives on privacy and self-disclosure in the social web* (pp. 75–89). Berlin: Springer.

Parson, L. (2019). Digital media responses to a feminist scholarly article: A critical discourse analysis. *Feminist Media Studies*, *19*(4), 576–592. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1468348

Phillips, W. (2018). The oxygen of amplification: Better practices for reporting on extremists, antagonists and manipulators. *Data & Society*. https://datasociety.net/output/oxygen-of-amplification/

Pihlaja, S. (2017). More than fifty shades of grey: Copyright on social network sites. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *8*(2–3), 213–228. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2016-1036

Pihlaja, S., & Musolff, A. (2016). Discourse and ideology. In C. R. Hoffmann & W. Bublitz (Eds.), *Pragmatics of social media* (pp. 381–403). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Rüdiger, S., & Dayter, D. (2017). The ethics of researching unlikeable subjects: Language in an online community. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *8*(2–3), 251–269. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2016-1038

Stern, S. R. (2003). Encountering distressing information in online research: A consideration of legal and ethical responsibilities. *New Media & Society*, *5*(2), 249–266. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444803005002006

Stommel, W., & de Rijk, L. (2021). Ethical approval: None sought: How discourse analysts report ethical issues around publicly available online data. *Research Ethics*, *17*(3), 275–297. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1747016120988767

Strater, K., & Richter, H. (2007). *Examining privacy and disclosure in a social networking community*. SOUPS '07: Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on Usable Privacy and Security, 157–158. https://doi.org/10.1145/1280680.1280706

Subtileru, N. C. (2017). Donald Trump supporters and the denial of racism: An analysis of online discourse in a pro-Trump community. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, *5*(2), 323–346. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlac.5.2.08sub

Sugiura, L., Wiles, R., & Pope, C. (2016). Ethical challenges in online research: Public/private perceptions. *Research Ethics*, *13*(3–4), 184–199. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1747016116650720

Topinka, R. J. (2017). Politically incorrect participatory media: Racist nationalism on r/ImGoingtoHellForThis. *New Media & Society*, *20*(5), 2050–2069. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444817712516

Unger, J. W., Wodak, R., & KhosraviNik, M. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 277–294). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

van der Nagel, E., & Frith, J. (2015). Anonymity, pseudonymity, and the agency of online identity: Examining the social practices of r/Gonewild. *First Monday*, *20*(3). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v20i3.5615

van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Leeuwen, T. (2014). Critical discourse analysis and multimodality. In C. Hart & P. Cap (Eds.), *Contemporary critical discourse studies* (pp. 281–296). London: Bloomsbury.

Vera-Gray, F. (2017). "Talk about a cunt with too much idle time": Trolling feminist research. *Feminist Review*, *115*, 61–78. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41305-017-0038-y

Walther, J. B. (2002). Research ethics in Internet-enabled research: Human subjects issues and methodological myopia. *Ethics and Information Technology*, *4*, 205–216. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021368426115

Wodak, R. (2013). Critical discourse analysis: Challenges and perspectives. In R. Wodak (Ed.), *Critical discourse analysis: Volume I: Concepts, history, theory* (pp. xix–xliii). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2016). Critical discourse studies: History, agenda, theory and methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 1–22). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Wright, D. (2020). The discursive construction of resistance to sex in an online community. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *36*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2020.100402

Yelin, H., & Clancy, L. (2021). Doing impact work while female: Hate tweets, "hot potatoes" and having "enough of experts". *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *28*(2), 175–193. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1350506820910194

Zimmer, M., & Kinder-Kurlanda, K. (2017). *Internet research ethics for the social age: New challenges, cases, and contexts*. New York: Peter Lang.

3 Introducing discourse-driven text mining

A novel method to critically analyse discourses on Twitter

Lorella Viola

1. Introduction

With the escalating use of social media, the analysis of power as manifested through language – arguably the most important focus of critical discourse analysis (CDA) studies – has accordingly moved beyond small-scale approaches for better capturing how people use the digital medium to circulate ideologies and to create countless "versions of reality". It has been argued however that digital discourses challenge classic definitions of text, context, actions and interactions, power, and ideology upon which traditional discourse analysis tools and methods are based (Jones et al., 2015, p. 4). In this respect, linguistics research on digital media discourse has highlighted the unsuitability of traditional analytical paradigms for the analysis of the complex relationships between discourse and digital practices (e.g. Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011; Jones et al., 2015; Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019). Hence, in recent years, multiple important methodological contributions have been made to the field towards devising new frameworks especially conceived for the analysis of digital discourse (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Georgakopoulou & Spilioti, 2020; Herring, 2007; KhosraviNik, 2017, 2022). Large collections of tweets have, for example, been studied in corpus linguistics to analyse the discursive reaction to ideologically inspired murder (McEnery et al., 2015), misogynist speech (e.g. Hardaker & McGlashan, 2016), community affiliation and out-grouping strategies (Makki & Zappavigna, 2022), and how discourses of gender politics and gender relations are manifested through hashtags (Lutzky & Lawson, 2019). Studies have also looked at the practice of following as a discourse practice itself (McGlashan, 2020) and at social tagging as a resource for aligning around values (Zappavigna & Martin, 2018).

Despite these recent advances, what appears clear is that both the complex nature of digital communication and the fast-changing technological landscape demand a continuous update of research methods and paradigms as well as a combination of theories and methodologies – rather

than one single analytical framework – for understanding the social practices associated with digitally mediated discourse (Jones et al., 2015; Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019). KhosraviNik (2017, 2022) argues that this is because the complexity of this type of discourse needs to be rethought as a much more elaborate entity than non-digital discourse. Hence, social media discourse cannot uniquely be studied using old frameworks that have been elaborated for non-digital discourse. Rather, it requires a more elaborate constellation of methods than "simply doing CDS on the materials (which happen to be) on the Internet" (ibid., 121). Even the very understanding of discourse as concerned with social practice (Fairclough, 1992) is disturbed by the digital because the extremely convoluted assemblage of components brought about by digital technologies changes old social practices while creating new ones (Viola, 2023, p. 90). Jones et al. (2015, p. 3), for example, describe digital practices as:

> "assemblages" of actions involving tools associated with digital technologies, which have come to be recognised by specific groups of people as ways of attaining particular social goals, enacting particular social identities, and reproducing particular sets of social relationships.

As digital discourse can be understood as a tool for performing, maintaining, reproducing and transmitting digital practices (ibid.: 4), research in digital discourse analysis has recognised the necessity to draw on a range of theories from different disciplines, whose methods and research tools can be combined, elaborated upon, tested and adapted (Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019, pp. 3–4). To this aim, KhosraviNik proposes Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) (2017, 2022), a framework that aims to unpack the nature of contemporary digital discourses by considering digital practice as an inseparable component of the discursive content. The framework positions itself as part of critical social media studies, a field specifically interested in how power is exerted by platforms through relevance algorithms, design choices, business models, corporate strategies, and the multiple factors associated with the digital. At the same time, SM-CDS expands on social media communication (SMC), as the latter predominantly focusses on the content produced and distributed through social media but it overlooks the implications brought about by the digital for "the politics of discursive dynamics, the quality of the very content and the overall structure of discursive participation" (KhosraviNik, 2022, p. 120).

This chapter adds to this scholarly conversation by offering a methodological approach that may contribute novel analytical techniques to the

SM-CDS framework; it combines the linguistic approach of CDA originated in linguistics for the analysis of (non-digital) discourse with the computational technique of text mining, a method born in computer science for the specific purpose of dealing with large quantities of digital material. The aim is to bring a more digitally oriented perspective to digital discourse studies than the application of traditional corpus linguistics methods – originally developed for non-digitally produced texts – may provide.

The use case is the Italian public discourse of social inclusion on Twitter from 2010 to 2020. The intention is to investigate how during this time, that is the decade when the Italian government's fight against social exclusion intensified, the notion of social inclusivity was communicated within the Italian digital discourse of social inclusion. The analysis will specifically focus on how the communication of social inclusion was used by Twitter users to discursively negotiate their space for communal expression and interaction, and how these exchanges may reflect or part from the institutional conceptualisation of social inclusion. Expanding on discourse-driven topic modelling (DDTM – Viola & Verheul, 2019), this method widens the focus of the analysis to move from single case studies or primarily qualitative analysis to exploring large-scale patterns and discontinuities that may reveal the mechanisms involved in digital discourse formation and consumption. In this way, the propose method may meet the challenge of understanding the diversity of elements encompassing the affordances brought about by digital media and specifically Twitter. It is hoped that this merged approach will contribute fresh findings to the study of online media discourses of social inclusion in which works have been mostly qualitative in nature or limited to specific use cases (e.g. Brookes, 2019; Lin et al., 2018; Dickins et al., 2016; Ewart & Snowden, 2012).

2.   Academic discussion on social inclusion

There is surprisingly little literature about social inclusion, a notion typically conceptualised as simply being the opposite of social exclusion (Rimmerman, 2012); nevertheless multiple definitions of social inclusion have been attempted by both researchers and policy-makers which has resulted in a plethora of social categories in relation to whom the concept of social inclusion refers within the academic discussion on healthcare and social services alone, for instance, social inclusion is described as "the works related to promote equal opportunities and resources between people with and without disabilities" (García Zapirain & Mendez Zorrilla, 2013) in the context of access to mobile phones by disabled and elderly people. In reference to information literacy

of female inmates, social inclusion has been defined as "the act of making all groups of people within a society feel valued and important" (Cuevas-Cerveró & Agúndez Soriano, 2019), whereas in the context of poverty reduction, social inclusion is understood as "the provision of certain rights to all individuals and groups in society, such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education and training, etc." (Günaydin et al., 2015).

A similar density of definitions and formulations has also been found in the political discourse of social inclusion at large. In the context of analysing and measuring social inclusion globally, for instance, the United Nations (UN) defines social inclusion as "the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities" (Marlier & Atkinson, 2010), whereas for the Council of Europe, social inclusion is "the process of individual's self-realisation within a society" (Kovacheva, 2020) in the context of youth policy.

Although complex to navigate, what clearly emerges from the discourse of social inclusion is that it is often regarded as something societies should aspire to, being its direct opposite – social exclusion – an obvious expression of poor social cohesion. Yet such a binary paradigm has often been criticised for being too simplistic; particularly in the context of index measurements of social exclusion and social inclusion, which are in themselves problematic and not free from challenges of their own (e.g. Morgan et al., 2007). Snowden (2012, p. 65), in this respect, points out how in such overgeneralised discourse, both academic and political, cases in which exclusion may be chosen or even desirable are hardly ever considered. As it is generally assumed that social exclusion is never voluntary, "there is rarely mention of a deliberate and willing choice for self-exclusion from dominant or mainstream society" (ibid.). Consequently, social exclusion and social inclusion are often used in the literature as umbrella terms for all sorts of social disadvantage and marginalisation. Labonte (2004) argues that this ambiguity may be seen as the reflection of continuous, opaque negotiations of mainstream societies acting towards including individuals and groups within the very same social framework responsible for excluding them in the first place (p. 117). For example, like in the Italian case analysed here, governments' efforts towards including marginalised groups are mostly evident in targeted social inclusion policies, campaigns, and other large-scale initiatives. However, since such efforts never challenge the structures that create and perpetuate the marginalisation, assessing the value and reception of such efforts remains complicated. At the same time, implementing untargeted policies means overlooking social differences; this poses the high risk of exacerbating the same inequalities these actions aim to reduce because they will irremediably advantage those who are in a more favourable initial situation (ibid.). Indeed, another issue with modern notions of social inclusion is the dialectical

relationship between the explicit acknowledgement and identification of groups as the Other (Chamberlain, 2011) on the one side and the openness to include them without cancelling the differences on the other.

3.   Social inclusion in Italy

In Italy, the political debate around social inclusion has revolved around the development of an integrated approach to reduce social exclusion at the employment level, whereas other social aspects such as health, housing, disability, education, family, etc., have been tackled in a limited way within different frameworks of social governance (Catalano et al., 2016). The Italian governance of social inclusion policies has accordingly been targeted specifically towards implementing anti-poverty measures through several institutional actors at the national, regional, and local level; further support is typically provided by the third sector, which acts as a mediator at the local level. This means that at the policy level, in Italy being socially excluded translates into being excluded from the labour market.

Although access to social benefits has traditionally been allocated on the basis of earnings-related transfers – hence directly linked to access to the labour market (Agostini & Sabato, 2020) – it is primarily in the last decade that the fight against poverty and social exclusion has been a priority on the Italian governance agenda. More recently in the last five years, a growing number of measures have been implemented in order to make the labour market more flexible, facilitate job creation and extend social assistance and social protection coverage (Samek Lodovici et al., 2019). Since 2014, specific measures of this kind such as the Jobs Act reform have for instance reformed the labour input by making it more appealing for employers and so encourage jobs growth. To the same aim, later decrees such as the *Decreto Dignità* (Dignity Decree) restrict the use of fixed-term contracts and increase the costs of dismissals (ibid.). Major reforms including the *Riforma della Buona Scuola* (Good School reform) further tackle the Italian vocational education and training system in an effort to make it more suitable to respond to the labour market needs. In 2016, the Italian government additionally implemented two new measures, the Stability Law and the Support for Active Inclusion (SIA). These policies acted as a response to the worrying poverty rates which had increased by 4.8 percentage points since 2008, recording the highest incidence in more than two decades (Istat, 2018). These measures can be considered the predecessors of the so-called *Reddito di Cittadinanza* (Citizenship Income) and the *Patto per il lavoro e l'inclusione sociale* (Work and Social Inclusion Pact), two measures providing people living in absolute poverty with economic benefits and support for accessing the labour market; they were both introduced in 2019.

This brief overview shows that in Italy, the government's fight against social exclusion has been pursued mostly by implementing selected and targeted initiatives directly aimed at reducing social disadvantage. Because social inclusion is conceptualised as the opposite of social exclusion, it also highlights that the notion of social inclusion is, at least at the government level, closely tied to accessibility to the labour market and employment. This study explores if and to what extent, social inclusion is at the public level equally associated with concepts of poverty and unemployment and, if not, what other topics are understood as related to social inclusivity. By analysing the Twitter discourse of inclusion of the past ten years, the chapter will bring to light mechanisms of discourse formation, reception and proliferation as well as the role of digital media in such dynamics.

4.   Methodology and dataset

The chapter uses Twitter as a source of digital media communication to investigate how the complex and often problematic way the media report on and discuss social inclusion (as well as social exclusion) is received by the public. Historically, the media have always been instrumental to include otherwise marginalised groups, but today, digital media have radically changed the way information is generated, provided, circulated and acquired with direct consequences for their traditional societal role. The incredible speed at which information now travels does not require a high level of literacy from its users; at the same time, however, Internet users are exposed to a much broader range of news and issues and awareness than ever before, undoubtedly boosting the proliferation of new forms of participatory culture. Twitter users, for example, generate and circulate information themselves which, through retweets and comments, is further produced and reproduced. In this way, traditional media have been replaced as the once sole producers of media events.

This has to do with various factors specific to the nature of Twitter itself. Indeed, whilst still performing an interpersonal use, Twitter has become a global provider of real-time updates as well as a forum for discussions about any type of news, arguably becoming a window onto society. Through complex networks of intricate connections, users can interact with individuals as well as institutions, organisations, media outlets, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to mention but a few. Such a diverse mix of receivers and producers of information creates an extremely interesting representation of both contemporary societal structures and public trends which, besides being intrinsically worth exploring and analysing (Weller et al., 2013, p. 427), acquires even more relevance in relation to the ever-increasing important role in society performed by social media. Though not exhaustive by any

means, this platform is believed to be an extremely rich source of digital communication material that can allow researchers to study social practices at an unprecedented large scale.

For the analysis of the tweets, the study expands on discourse-driven topic modelling (DDTM) (Viola & Verheul, 2019), a method specifically developed to analyse large quantities of textual material without jeopardising the analytical depth of the results. DDTM merges CDA (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001) with topic modelling (TM); in this way, it provides the analyst with the necessary distance to identify the patterns obscured by data abundance, while at the same time pointing at possible avenues of interpretation. Due to the specific characteristics of tweets which typically include hashtags, the method presented here and labelled "discourse-driven text mining" (DDTMi) widens the range of quantitative analysis techniques to include bigrams, a contiguous sequence of two (*n*) items in a text. B-gram language models are probabilistic models for predicting the next item in a sequence of elements in which the probability of each item depends on the proceeding one. Because N-grams provide a comprehensive overview of how the words are distributed in the analysed material, this model, known as Markov chain (Gagniuc, 2017), is helpful when analysing large quantities of textual data that include hashtags. Here the investigation focuses on identifying patterns or changes in the patterns associated with tweets from 2010 to the first half of 2020 including two hashtags, interpreted as keywords (Weller et al., 2013; Zappavigna, 2012): *#InclusioneSociale* (Social Inclusion) and *#Inclusione* (Inclusion). The analysis will provide important insights into the concepts users associated with the notion of social inclusion as well as answer questions of discourse proliferation and awareness. For example, it will clarify how the meanings associated with the concepts of inclusion and social inclusion were shared and whether such meanings have changed over time and how.

The tweets themselves will be then analysed using DDTM. Similar to N-grams, topic modelling (TM) is a probabilistic measure that aims to find patterns in large textual repositories. However, whereas N-grams provide a sequence of the most probable n-items in a text, TM clusters together a set of several terms that co-occur in a statistically significant way, i.e. not necessarily sequentially. According to this logic, as each cluster is made of words mathematically likely to appear together, words are grouped according to similar uses. The intuition behind this technique is based on the semantic theory of language usage (Harris, 1954, p. 156), according to which words that are used and occur in the same contexts tend to convey similar meanings. If the meaning of a word can be inferred by its context, the opposite is true as well: words found in different contexts tend to purport different meanings. In practice, the TM algorithm runs statistical calculations multiple times

until it determines the most likely distribution of words into clusters, i.e. into 'topics' (Alghamdi & Alfalqi, 2015; Viola & Verheul, 2019). The TM algorithm used here is the latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA – Blei et al., 2003), the most widely used statistical model for TM. In addition to the topics' composition, this algorithm also provides crucial information about their distribution such as a quantification of the proportion that each identified word carries within each topic, called "weight", and the weight that each topic carries in each document as well as across the overall corpus. The weight information is central for obtaining insights into the distribution of the topics in the dataset, and it acquires even more relevance when plotted over time (Viola & Verheul, 2019). The combination of TM with CDA will further illustrate how the notion of social inclusivity has been verbalised, shared, and mediated on the social media platform.

The chapter argues that especially when combined, N-grams and TM bear great potential for the analysis of large-scale textual material – especially digital – as they provide more sophisticated results than if used separately (Poulston et al., 2015).

5.   Analysis and results

Tweets were collected by limiting the search to the hashtags #*Inclusione* and #*InclusioneSociale* from the beginning of 2010 to June 2020. Preliminary investigations showed that prior to 2010, there were no tweets including the selected hashtags. This finding may already indicate low levels of public reception and awareness of concepts of social inclusion and bringing valuable insights into practices of digital discourse formation and proliferation. For example, it shows alignment between digital discourse formation and proliferation and the fight against poverty and social exclusion in Italy, as the latter has become a priority on the governance agenda only in the last ten years. At the end of the collection stage, the dataset included 16,878 tweets of which 14,009 including the hashtag #*Inclusione* and 2,869 #*InclusioneSociale*. When plotted over time, these results interestingly show the increase in awareness towards the topic of social inclusion, with a sharp rise in the number of relevant tweets over time (2 in 2010 vs. 3,198 in 2019). Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of tweets based on the two hashtags per year.

As it is visible in Figure 3.1, tweets including the hashtag #*Inclusione* consistently outnumber those with the hashtag #*InclusioneSociale*; moreover, while the former shows an overall continuous growth, the latter displays a more stable trend. This may relate to the fact that national policies specifically framed as social inclusion measures such as the Work and Social Inclusion Pact were introduced in 2018–2019. It may also indicate
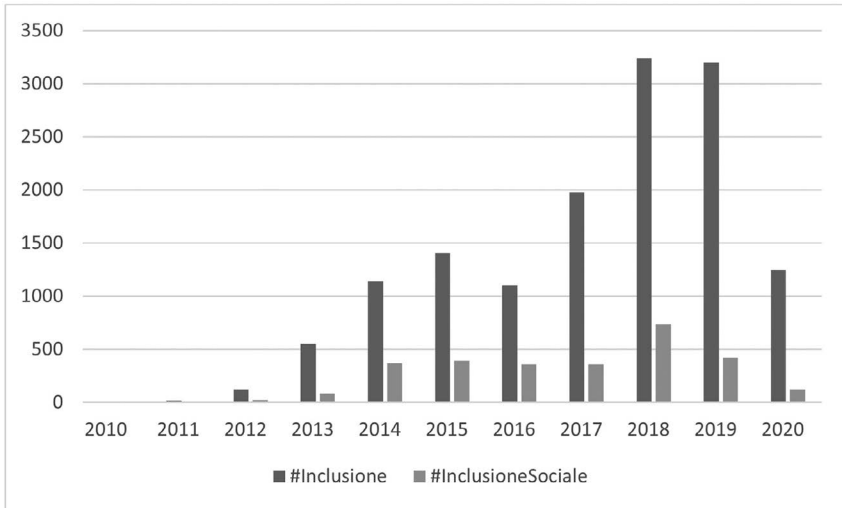
Figure 3.1 Distribution of the hashtags *#Inclusione* and *#InclusioneSociale* per year

that the notion of social inclusion has only recently been internalised by Twitter users. In the next section, a closer inspection of the composition of the two hashtags will clarify the differences and similarities in the way the two concepts have been expressed.

5.1. *Discourse-driven bigrams*

To obtain a more nuanced perspective of how the concept of social inclusivity has been received and mediated on Twitter, the bigrams associated with both hashtags (*#Inclusione* and *#InclusioneSociale*) are analysed; first their frequency is quantified, then their distribution is plotted over time. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 display the top 20 bigrams for the hashtags *#Inclusione* and *#InclusioneSociale* respectively.

The bigrams show similar results for both hashtags and suggest that the concept of inclusion is, in the aggregate, predominantly related to disability. However, the results also evidence a miscellaneous of sub-concepts such as employment, integration, sport, education, immigration, poverty. Although on the whole many of these sub-concepts overlap across the two hashtags, a variation in their distribution can be observed suggesting that the two notions are conceptualised by Twitter users as distinct entities. For example, *after disabilità* "disability" the three most frequently used
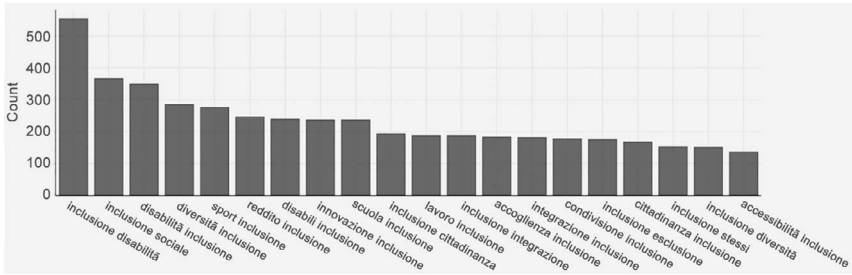
Figure 3.2 Top 20 bigrams of the hashtag #*Inclusione*
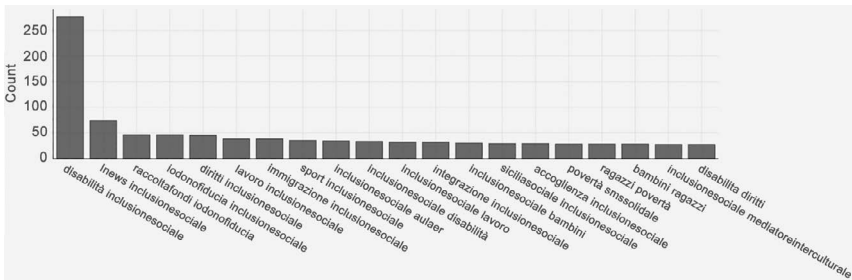
Figure 3.3 Top 20 bigrams of the hashtag #*InclusioneSociale*

hashtags associated with #*Inclusione* are *diversità* "diversity", "sport", and *reddito* "income". The last one, in particular, may refer to the *Reddito di cittadinanza* which, as mentioned in §3, is a measure providing economic support to families and individuals with an income considered lower than the absolute poverty threshold. On the dedicated Italian government's website, it is explicitly stated that this measure aims to actively contrast poverty, inequality and social exclusion (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2019). This is further reflected in the words *lavoro* "employment" and *povertà* "poverty", which are found in combination with the hashtag #*InclusioneSociale*. At the same time, the second most used hashtag found together with #*Inclusione* is #*Sociale*, which may suggest that the notion of social inclusion as a whole is still not fully internalised. This consideration would align with the fact that in the dataset the hashtag #*Inclusione Sociale* displays a frequency of occurrence considerably lower that #*Inclusione*. This result would be consistent with the fact that policies of social inclusion have only been implemented in the last five years. Finally,

integrazione "integration", *immigrazione* "immigration", and *diversità* "diversity" are found in connection with both hashtags, though they are more frequently found together with *#InclusioneSociale*.

The analysis moves now to explore the distribution of both hashtags over time to better illustrate how the reception of the concepts of inclusivity and social inclusivity has evolved in the last ten years. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show the distribution of the top bigrams for both hashtags over time.

Although in the aggregate, disability was the most frequent concept associated with both hashtags, the time plot shows that disability in fact only peaked in three years (i.e. in 2019 for *#Inclusione* and 2014 and 2018 for *#InclusioneSociale*). Therefore, although disability remains the core concept associated with inclusion, the results reveal a level of ambiguity around the topic as a miscellaneous of notions have been found in the public discourse. The bigrams show that both concepts are used almost interchangeably as umbrella terms for cognate notions such as digital inclusion, education, poverty, employment, sustainability. It is worth noticing that although references to the *Reddito di cittadinanza* are only found together with the hashtag *#Inclusione*, in 2020, 'employment' is found as the top bigram with *#InclusioneSociale*. This may suggest a more recent trend in which the public understanding of the concept of social inclusion is aligning with its conceptualisation at the institutional level. Future studies could integrate more recent data to confirm this intuition.
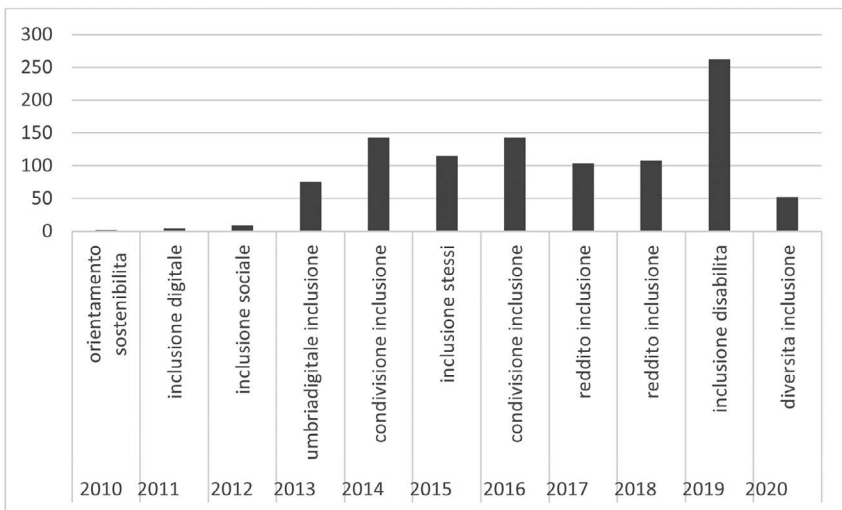
Figure 3.4 Distribution of the top bigrams for the hashtag *#Inclusione* per year
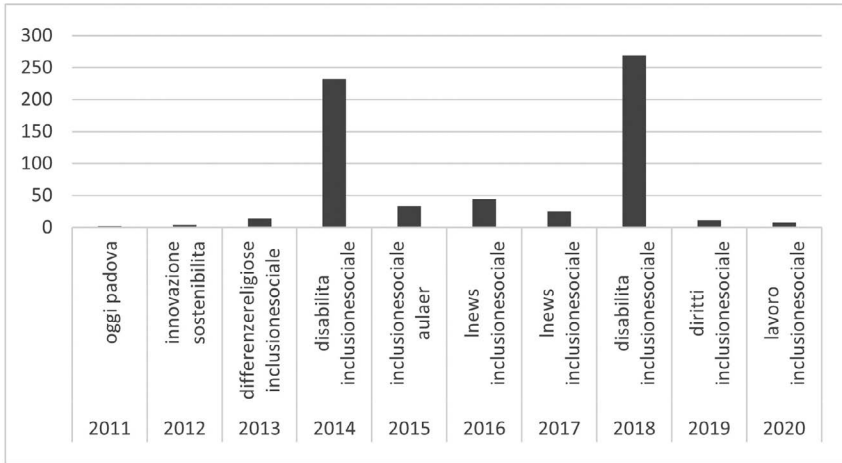
Figure 3.5 Distribution of the top bigrams for the hashtag #*InclusioneSociale* per year

5.2.   *Discourse-driven topic modelling*

The analysis now proceeds to the investigation of the tweets themselves to delve deeper into the discourse of social inclusion. The analysis of the bigrams showed that despite variations in the hashtags' distribution over time, on the whole no significant conceptual differences existed across the two hashtags; to perform DDTM the two sub-collections were therefore merged into one dataset. This machine-assisted analysis facilitates the discovery of key discourse topics understood as the CDS macro-level analysis. TM is performed by using *scikit-learn 0.23* (Pedregosa et al., 2011), a Python module integrating a wide range of state-of-the-art machine learning algorithms for medium-scale supervised and unsupervised tasks. The log likelihood method was used to determine the topic model with the highest statistical quality. With a score of −82088.63927509429, this was found to be the model with five topics. Table 3.1 shows the composition of each topic.

Once the topics are obtained, their composition requires close inspection so as to identify their semantic space and properly categorise them. In order to be understood and properly categorised. The first factor to consider is the ranking of each word within each topic (i.e., "the weight", *cfr*. §4). The weight of each term allows the researcher to disambiguate between terms that may appear across multiple topics but which may carry a different semantic connotation and/or relevance. For example, in Topic 1, the highest-ranked words are *scuola* (school), *società* (society),

Table 3.1 Topic composition: the table shows the top 20 words for each topic

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5
Inclusion (inclusion)	inclusion	inclusione	Italia (Italy)	inclusione
Scuola (school)	sociale	l'inclusione	inclusione	inclusionesociale
inclusione	sport	inclusionesociale	rt	Formazione (training)
Societa (society)	Lavoro (employment)	Diversita (diversity)	persone	cittadinanza
Digitale (digital)	disabilita	disabilita	Poverta (poverty)	diritti
Disabilita (disability)	reddito	dell'inclusione	Marzo (march)	Educazione (education)
Essere (to be)	Progetto (project)	Accessibilita (accessibility)	President (president)	Partecipazione (participation)
Condivisione (sharing)	Bambini (children)	Cultura (culture)	disabilita	Roma (rome)
Oggi (today)	inclusionesociale	disabili	open	lavoro
twitter	via	oggi	anffas	Percorsi (paths)
Integrazione (integration)	Innovazione (innovation)	inclusione	Stranieri (foreigners)	Ricercar (research)
Cittadinanza (citizenship)	disabili	progetto	Aperte (open)	Migrant (migrants)
puo' (can)	Sostegno (support)	Persone (people)	day	Parla (talks)
Scolastica (school, adj.)	scuola	Tema (topic)	via	Giovani (youth)
Sociali (social)	progetti	Citta (city)	inclusionesociale	Torino (Turin)
Dentro (inside)	Qui (here)	inclusione	inclusionesociale	Competenze (skills)
Via (away)	Accoglienza (hospitality)	Giugno (June)	porte	Autism (autism)
Giornata (day)	Mondo (world)	inclusione	twitter	Cittadini (citizens)
Student (students)	integrazione	lavoro	Esclusione (exclusion)	Opportunita (opportunities)

digitale (digital) and *disabilità* (disability). The word *scuola* also appears in Topic 2 but it ranks much lower than in Topic 1; this indicates that although *scuola* is discussed within the context of both topics, it is much more specific to Topic 1. Moreover, the words *scolastica* (scholastic) and *studenti* (students) appear in Topic 1 which further indicates a strong semantic space around education. In addition to the weight, the second factor that facilitates topic categorisation is the identification of the words that are unique to a topic. For example, the word *digitale* appears exclusively as part of Topic 1. In light of these considerations, Topic 1 is categorised as "Digital Education & Disability".

The highest-ranking words in Topic 2 are *sport*, *lavoro* (employment), *disabilità* (disability) and *reddito* (income), with the words *disabili* (disabled people) and *reddito* occurring several times. As disability and employment appear to be the most relevant subjects to Topic 2, the topic is categorised as "Sport, Employment & Disability". Topic 3 is categorised as "Disability & Accessibility" as it includes the words *diversità* (diversity), *disabilità*, *accessibilità* (accessibility), and *cultura* (culture), whereas Topic 4 is categorised as "Disability & Accessibility" since the words *povertà* (poverty) and *disabilità* appear to be the most salient. Finally, Topic 5 is the only topic which does not contain the word disability, even though the word *autismo* (autism) appears as one of the lowest-ranking terms. The topic seems to be predominantly about training (*formazione*), citizenship (*cittadinanza*), education (*istruzione*), rights (*diritti*), and migration (*immigrati*). The topic is categorised as "Immigrants, Education & Citizenship".

In addition to provide general insights into the diversity of subjects discussed, the process of categorising allows the researcher further explore how the topics distribute across the whole dataset. One way to do this is by computing their total weight distribution; Figure 3.6 shows the results.
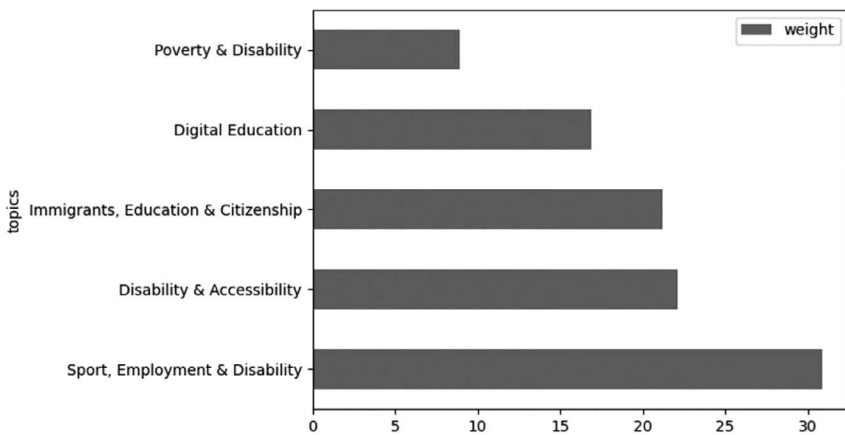
Figure 3.6 Distribution of the topics across the dataset

The topics' distribution is consistent with the bigrams' results: it shows that disability is by far the concept most strongly associated with the notions of inclusion and social inclusion as it is present in all five topics (though with different levels of saliency), with employment and education following shortly after. This may at first suggest a mismatch between the public and the institutional conceptualisation of inclusion, since 'social inclusion' is often used as a synonym for "access to the labour market". At the same time, however, employment is also largely found in the topics' composition suggesting that at least partially, the institutional framing of social inclusion is also internalised at the public level. The DDTM analysis will help clarify these points.

DDTM is now used to explore the distribution of the topics over time; through the analysis of changing trends and continuities it will be possible to obtain this provides a finer-grained picture of the social media discourse of inclusion. Figure 3.7 displays the results.

The distribution of topics over time offers interesting insights. The topic "Poverty & Disability" (Figure 3.7) measures the lowest score across the dataset but it shows a clear peak in 2014. A historical-discourse triangulation provides a potential explanation: in 2014, it was found that within the European Union (EU), people with disability were between 30.2% and 36.7% more likely to be poor than people without disability. This confirmed that people with disabilities are much more exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion (European Commission, 2020b). In the same year, the Italian government launched two programmes co-funded by the EU: the *PON Inclusione* (National Operative Plan for Inclusion) and the *Programma Operativo FEAD* (Operative Programme). These two programmes were explicitly aimed at the fight against poverty, understood not just as a lack of income but also as a lack of opportunities to take part in society (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2014). As poverty and disability are framed in the context of accessibility to society as well as to the labour market, the topic does not in fact entirely part from the institutional conceptualisation of inclusion closely tied to employability.
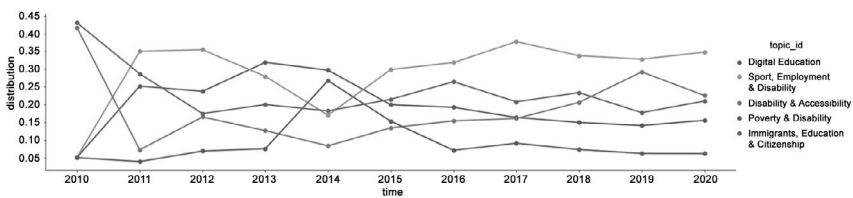
Figure 3.7 Distribution of topics from 2010 to 2020

Digital education (Figure 3.7) is the second most relevant subject discussed in the context of social inclusion; the results show that the topic peaks around the years 2013–2014. In those years, Italy implemented the *Piano Nazionale per la Scuola Digitale* (National Plan for Digital Education). Although the plan was officially launched in 2007, it was in 2013 that the programme was implemented on a structural large scale through the provision of Wi-Fi connection to all schools. In 2014, the Ministry of Education also launched the *PON per la Scuola 2014–2020* (National Operative Plan for Education, 2014–2020), which aimed to equip every school in Italy with a lab for digital education (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2014). In the document, it is said that the digitisation of education must be seen as part of a wider inclusive strategy: "Digital technologies and active methodologies are determining factors for facilitating a complete inclusion and for removing obstacles such as disability and special education needs, and to reach those students who cannot attend school[1]" (ibid.: 42). By grouping innovation, education, and inclusion together, the measure was also seen as a necessary requirement to stimulate professional growth and self-employment skills (ibid. 87). Although references to disability are made, the document once again clearly shows that also in the context of education, the institutional conceptualisation of inclusion is closely related to employment.

The third most frequently discussed topic is "Immigrants, Education & Citizenship" (Figure 3.7) with its highest peak in 2010. It was at the beginning of this year that the Italian Ministry of Education issued a list of guidelines for the inclusion of non-Italian pupils into the Italian educational system (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2010). The guidelines acted as a response to the fact that throughout the whole school path, non-Italian pupils consistently underperform compared to Italian pupils. The gap was found to be wider as pupils proceed to high school (from 19.3% in elementary school to up to 71.3% in high school). The composition of this topic, which includes terms such as "migrants", "participation", and "citizenship," suggests that the notion of inclusion is also intertwined with the public discourse of education and immigration. According to a report by the *Centro Ricerca e Mediazione Interculturale* – CREMI (Centre for Intercultural Mediation Research – Favaro, 2010), in the course of twenty years (from 1989 to 2010), the terminology used by the Ministry of Education to discuss the education of non-Italian pupils changed from "immigration and assimilation" to "intercultural integration" and finally to "inclusion" in 2010 (ibid., 1). The change in the institutional narrative seems to be reflected in the public reception of social inclusion and education.

"Disability & Accessibility" (Figure 3.7) is the second most frequently discussed topic in the context of inclusion, particularly in the years 2010

and 2019. The peaks can be explained by the fact that in 2010, the European Commission launched the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (European Commission, 2020a). The strategy described a set of objectives and actions for the implementation at the EU level of the disability policy and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The goal of the strategy was to "empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their rights and participate fully in society and economy" (ibid.). Specifically, the document mentions inclusion in reference to education and access to the labour market for people with disability. In 2019, a process for evaluating the same strategy began. The European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 focused on actions in eight priority areas: accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education and training, social protection, health, and external action. These words are also contained in this topic suggesting a close connection between institutional and digital discourse. Although the strongest focus remains on disability, the specific reference to inclusion in connection to favouring access to the labour market partially reflects the alignment of the aim of the action with the Italian conceptualisation of inclusion, ultimately always associated with employability.

Finally, the most frequently discussed topic in relation to inclusion is "Sport, Employment & Disability" (in Figure 3.7). Peaking in 2011 and 2012, it shows a consistently high trend since 2017. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the *Libro Bianco sullo Sport* (White Book on Sport – European Parliament, 2007), a document in which the European Parliament identifies sport as a crucial element for social inclusion, especially for people with disability. In the document, several strategic goals are listed such as increasing sport visibility across the member states and improving the European governance of sport. This document is considered the main contribution of the European Commission regarding sport and its role for all European citizens. Again, this shows that at the European level, social inclusion is mostly conceptualised as pertaining to disability and only marginally to employability, whereas at the Italian institutional level, inclusion means accessibility to the labour market. This is evidenced in both the topic composition and distribution which therefore, in turn, reflect social events and institutional actions taking place outside of the digital space.

6.   Discussion and conclusions

This chapter offered a methodological contribution to the SM-CDS framework for the analysis of digital discourse. This novel methodology, DDTMi, merges two text-mining methods – bigrams and topic modelling – with the sociocultural and sociohistorical depth of the discourse triangulation, to provide a critical contextualisation of the findings and a more

meaningful interpretation of the data. As it incorporates techniques specifi-
cally designed for the analysis of digital material, DDTMi offers a more
targeted way to navigate the complexities of digital communication and
digital practices than traditional approaches, and it may therefore be better
suited for the analysis of social media discourse.

The study took as a use case the Italian Twitter discourse of social
inclusion from 2010 to the first half of 2020; in this way, it contributed
new quantitative findings to social inclusion studies, which have so far
predominantly adopted qualitative approaches. On the whole, DDTMi
offered valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying digital discur-
sive practices. It revealed direct correlations between the institutional
and the public discourse. For example, the two conceptualisations of
inclusion in the discursively negotiated online space the two main insti-
tutional discourses: the one produced by the EU and the one produced
by the Italian government. The discourse triangulation showed that at
the European level, social inclusion is predominantly associated with dis-
ability, whereas in Italy, it has a clear focus on employability. Especially
within the context of Italian governance, the results showed that other
central social issues such as education, digitalisation and immigration
are ultimately always framed in the context of accessibility to the labour
market. The analysis also highlighted a partial overlap between the two
particularly in regard to the problematic access to the labour market for
disabled people.

The added value of merging the two methods was especially found in
relation to the identification of potentially direct correlations between the
institutional conceptualisations of social inclusion – as evidenced in policy
and measures implementations – and its societal reception as expressed
through language in the tweets. DDTMi proved very valuable as a means
to identify patterns that may clarify the mechanisms in which digital dis-
courses are produced and shared. For example, clearly identifiable peaks
and trends could be observed at very specific points in time when social
inclusion reforms, policies, or guidelines were released by either the EU
or the Italian national government. As institutions, politicians and official
figures are very prolific Twitter users, the discourse they produce is likely
to enter the public sphere very effectively and quickly, perhaps more than
it would via traditional media.

The merging of CDA with the TM technique also proved to be extremely
effective at obtaining a more easily interpretable categorisation of the top-
ics as well as an understanding of the distribution of the topics over time.
This combination of zoom-out and zoom-in perspectives offered a wide,
composite picture of Twitter users' discursive strategies. It revealed how
the assumptions and ideologies towards social inclusivity in Italy reflect
both the national and European institutional conceptualisations of social

inclusion. More specifically, disability was by far the most frequently discussed topic in the context of social inclusion; as the results have shown, it was present as a dominant theme in almost all the topics and in general, tweets containing the hashtag disability outnumbered all other tweets. At the same time, however, the topic that carried more "weight" was the topic categorised as disability, sport, and employability; the conflation of these discourses (i.e., employability and disability) may therefore also signal a higher sensitivity towards the topic of social inclusion in all its ramifications and social implications, such as access to digital infrastructures, to education, sport, and the labour market.

It is worth pointing out that with the sole exception of the issue of education of non-Italian pupils, other vulnerable social categories such as women, the LGBTQ+ community, elderly people, etc., are almost completely missing in the data. This may be understood as a consequence of the strong binary conceptualisation of social inclusion in relation to either disability or as being at risk of poverty. Especially in relation to the association of social inclusion with employability, this vision may be problematic: when employability becomes the ultimate goal societies should aspire to in order to be inclusive, other pressing issues may remain outside of the scope of social inclusion policies implementations. The risk to be is to overlook these issues which may be not perceived by the public as equally important. Discourses are formed through shared ideas but as the results of this study have shown, in the digital context, understanding how specific meanings are produced and shared, for instance through the identification of linguistic patterns, also crucially reveals underlying top-down notions that can generate and shape discourse in a very effective way.

The primary focus of the method presented in this study was the identification and analysis of linguistic patterns in the digital space; therefore, this study did not differentiate between the discourse's producers, i.e. Twitter users. Future research could widen the scope of the inquiry by disaggregating the data per unique user ID and include the analysis of retweets, for instance to investigate the network of tweets' relations. This could also broaden the diversity of perspectives and obtain a richer, more nuanced picture of digital communication strategies and practices.

As language repositories become ever larger and social media texts more and more become the preferred lens through which public discourse is seen, traditional corpus linguistics approaches may not fully capture the latent complexities of digital communication material. Devising new methods in linguistic analyses especially devoted to the study of digital communication can therefore be of great assistance to digital discourse analysis scholars who now are more and more

confronted with the challenge of analysing the complexities of textual material produced, mediated, shared and reproduced digitally. Whereas traditional quantitative methods undoubtedly still provide powerful means to access large quantities of language material, it is the devise of novel approaches beyond words' collocation analysis that may help digital media communication scholars and critical discourse linguists to navigate the convoluted ramifications of the factors involved in digital communication, such as the value of identifying otherwise not immediately evident patterns and discontinuities, make sense of the discovered relations and give the findings the required analytical depth.

Note

1. Le tecnologie abilitanti e metodologie attive sono agenti determinanti per rimuovere gli ostacoli, a favore di un'inclusione a 360 gradi, dalle problematiche relative alle disabilità, ai bisogni educativi speciali, agli studenti impossibilitati alla normale frequenza scolastica.

References

Agostini, C., & Sabato, S. (2020). Multilevel "arenas" for fighting poverty and social exclusion: National report (Italy) [Combating poverty in Europe: Reorganising active inclusion through participatory and integrated modes of multilevel governance]. *European Union*. http://cope-research.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/COPE_WP4_National_Report_Italy.pdf

Alghamdi, R., & Alfalqi, K. (2015). A survey of topic modeling in text mining. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, *6*(1). https://doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2015.060121

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

Blei, D. M., Ng, A. Y., & Jordan, M. I. (2003). Latent dirichlet allocation. *Journal of Machine Learning Research*, *3*(January), 993–1022.

Bou-Franch, P., & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, P. (Eds.). (2019). *Analyzing digital discourse: New insights and future directions*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brookes, G. (2019). Insulin restriction, medicalisation and the Internet: A corpus-assisted study of diabulimia discourse in online support groups, *Communication & Medicine, 15*(1), 14–27. https://doi.org/10.1558/cam.33067

Catalano, S. L., Graziano, P. R., & Bassoli, M. (2016). The local governance of social inclusion policies in Italy: Working via "organ pipes". In Martin Heidenreich and Deborah Rice (Eds.), *Integrating social and employment policies in Europe*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Chamberlain, S. (2011). "Whispers on the wind": Social inclusion and the media. *Journal of Social Inclusion*, *2*(2), 71. https://doi.org/10.36251/josi.34

Cuevas-Cerveró, A., & Agúndez Soriano, M. A. (2019). Research on information literacy and social inclusion of female inmates. In L. Oliveira & D. Graça (Eds.), *Infocommunication skills as a rehabilitation and social reintegration tool for inmates* (pp. 86–104). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-5975-7.ch004

Dickins, M., Browning, C., Feldman, S., & Thomas, S. (2016). Social inclusion and the Fatosphere: The role of an online weblogging community in fostering social inclusion. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, *38*(5), 797–811. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12397

European Commission. (2020a). European disability strategy 2010–2020: Employment, social affairs & inclusion. *European Commission*. https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1484&langId=en

European Commission. (2020b). Scheda Tematica per il Semestre Europeo. *Inclusione Sociale*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_social_inclusion_it.pdf

European Parliament. (2007). *Il Libro Bianco sullo sport della Commissione Europea*. www.acesitalia.eu/aces/il-libro-bianco-ue

Ewart, J., & Snowden, C. (2012). The media's role in social inclusion and exclusion. *Media International Australia*, *142*(1), 61–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1214200108

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change* (Reprinted). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Favaro, G. (2010). Per una scuola dell'inclusione. *Centro di Ricerca e Mediazione Interculturale*. www.cremi.it/pdf/per%20una%20scuola%20dell'inclusione.pdf

Gagniuc, P. A. (2017). *Markov chains: From theory to implementation and experimentation*. John Wiley & Sons.

García Zapirain, B., & Mendez Zorrilla, A. (2013). Independent living support for disabled and elderly people using cell phones. In M. M. Cruz-Cunha, I. M. Miranda, & P. Gonçalves (Eds.), *Handbook of research on ICTs for human-centered healthcare and social care services* (pp. 379–397). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-3986-7.ch020

Georgakopoulou, A., & Spilioti, T. (Eds.). (2020). *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (First published in paperback). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Günaydin, D., Cavlak, H., & Cavlak, N. (2015). Social exclusion and poverty: EU 2020 objectives and Turkey. In Z. Copur (Ed.), *Handbook of research on behavioral finance and investment strategies: Decision making in the financial industry* (pp. 170–186). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-7484-4.ch010

Hardaker, C., & McGlashan, M. (2016). "Real men don't hate women": Twitter rape threats and group identity. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *91*, 80–93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2015.11.005

Harris, Z. S. (1954). Distributional structure: Word. *Journal of the Linguistic Circle of New York*, *10*(2–3), 146–162.

Herring, S. C. (2007). A faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse. *Language@Internet*, *4*(1). www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2007/761

Istat. (2018). *La povertà in Italia*. www.istat.it/it/files/2018/06/La-povert%C3%A0-in-Italia-2017.pdf

Jones, R. H., Chik, A., & Hafner, C. A. (Eds.). (2015). *Discourse and digital practices: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 582–596). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2022). Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), 119–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1835683

Kovacheva, S. (2020). *EU-CoE youth partnership policy sheet Social Inclusion*. Council of Europe.

Labonte, R. (2004). Social inclusion/exclusion: Dancing the dialectic. *Health Promotion International*, *19*(1), 115–121. https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dah112

Lin, Z., Yang, L., & Zhang, Z. (2018). To include, or not to include, that is the question: Disability digital inclusion and exclusion in China. *New Media & Society*, *20*(12), 4436–4452. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818774866

Lutzky, U., & Lawson, R. (2019). Gender politics and discourses of #mansplaining, #manspreading, and #manterruption on Twitter. *Social Media + Society*, *5*(3), 205630511986180. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119861807

Makki, M., & Zappavigna, M. (2022). Out-grouping and ambient affiliation in Donald Trump's tweets about Iran: Exploring the role of negative evaluation in enacting solidarity: Pragmatics. *Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)*, *32*(1), 104–130. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.20048.mak

Marlier, E., & Atkinson, A. B. (2010). Analyzing and measuring social inclusion in a global context. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *29*, 285–304.

McEnery, T., McGlashan, M., & Love, R. (2015). Press and social media reaction to ideologically inspired murder: The case of Lee Rigby. *Discourse & Communication*, *9*(2), 237–259. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481314568545

McGlashan, M. (2020). Collective identity and discourse practice in the followership of the Football Lads Alliance on Twitter. *Discourse & Society*, *31*(3), 307–328. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926519889128

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali. (2014). *Direzione Generale per la lotta alla povertà e per la programmazione sociale*. www.lavoro.gov.it/ministro-e-ministero/Il-ministero/Organizzazione/Pagine/DG-per-lotta-alla-poverta-e-per-la-programmazione-sociale.aspx

Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali. (2019). *Reddito di cittadinanza – Cos'è*. www.redditodicittadinanza.gov.it/schede/dettaglio

Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca. (2010). *C.M.n.2 dell'8.1.2010 – Indicazioni e raccomandazioni per l'integrazione di alunni con cittadinanza non italiana*. www.cislscuola.it/index.php?id=2872&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=21519&cHash=e5c74bc127f686e7d10ed1f8b414713b

Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca. (2014). *Piano Nazionale Scuola DIgitale* (p. 140). Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca. www.istruzione.it/scuola_digitale/allegati/Materiali/pnsd-layout-30.10-WEB.pdf

Morgan, C., Burns, T., Fitzpatrick, R., Pinfold, V., & Priebe, S. (2007). Social exclusion and mental health: Conceptual and methodological review. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, *191*(6), 477–483. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.106.034942

Pedregosa, F., Varoquaux, G., Gramfort, A., Michel, V., Thirion, B., Grisel, O., Blondel, M., Prettenhofer, P., Weiss, R., Dubourg, V., Vanderplas, J., Passos, A., Cournapeau, D., Brucher, M., Perrot, M., & Duchesnay, É. (2011). Scikit-learn: Machine learning in python. *Journal of Machine Learning Research*, *12*(85), 2825–2830.

Poulston, A., Stevenson, M., & Bontcheva, K. (2015). *Topic models and n-gram language models for author profiling: Notebook for PAN at CLEF 2015*. CLEF.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 63–94). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rimmerman, A. (2012). *Social inclusion of people with disabilities: National and international perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139035668

Samek Lodovici, M., Nico, G., & Romaniello, D. (2019). Employment, vocational education and training and social policies in Italy: A review of employment, VET and social policies. *Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies Directorate-General for Internal Policies*. www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/631050/IPOL_STU(2018)631050_EN.pdf

Snowden, C. (2012). "I'm alright, thanks": Non-conformity and the media framing of social inclusion. *Media International Australia*, *142*(1), 64–73.

Thurlow, C., & Mroczek, K. R. (Eds.). (2011). *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Viola, L. (2023). *The Humanities in the Digital. Beyond Critical Digital Humanities*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Viola, L., & Verheul, J. (2019). Mining ethnicity: Discourse-driven topic modelling of immigrant discourses in the USA, 1898–1920. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*. https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqz068

Weller, K., Bruns, A., Burgess, J., Mahrt, M., & Puschmann, C. (Eds.). (2013). *Twitter and society*. New York: Peter Lang.

Zappavigna, M. (2012). *The discourse of Twitter and social media*. London: Continuum International Pub. Group.

Zappavigna, M., & Martin, J. R. (2018). #Communing affiliation: Social tagging as a resource for aligning around values in social media. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *22*, 4–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.08.001

Part II

Digital discourses of misogyny and gender-based violence

4 The Reddit manosphere as a text and place

A three-part analysis

Alexandra Krendel

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I use the *manosphere* phenomenon as a case study for illustrating how using three different methodologies to analyse the same phenomenon can reveal different aspects of language and ensure a degree of methodological rigour through triangulation. The three methodologies I chose to analyse the manosphere are informed by Androutsopoulos' (2013) distinction between thinking of computer-mediated communication as "text" to be analysed in terms of linguistic features and as a "place" to be analysed in terms of its social functions. I also consider how such methodologies can be bolstered by an underlying Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) framework. Such a framework links the micro aspects of manosphere discourse to the macro aspects of socio-political history and more mainstream language use. It also considers the specific discourse practices of a given platform when analysing digital discourses.

The manosphere is an online anti-feminist movement composed of groups who believe that men are systemically disadvantaged by feminist ideals in society (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). Some parts of the manosphere have been called male supremacy hate groups by not-for-profit advocacy groups such as the Southern Poverty Law Center (2018). In particular, I am interested in how the manosphere phenomenon manifests on the popular content aggregation site Reddit, where manosphere discussion groups known as subreddits share a platform with more mainstream content. Most of these manosphere groups have followings of over 100,000 subscribers each, and in these spaces, users write original text posts, share links to external content, and comment on each other's contributions. By analysing manosphere language from three methodological perspectives, I aim to establish in a triangulated and rigorous manner the extent to which it can be deemed hateful and promoting harmful ideas about gender dynamics. I also aim to establish how the Reddit manosphere functions as a community to consider the ways it may appeal to its users.

My study of the manosphere is motivated by KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018), who advocate a multidisciplinary critical discourse analysis approach to gender-based hostility. Such an approach combines linguistic approaches with literature from gender studies, an element of feminist critique, and provides the social context behind the phenomenon at hand. Following their lead, in this chapter I use literature from the field of feminist media studies to define and contextualise the manosphere phenomenon. In terms of critique, the proposed triangulated study of the manosphere aims to undertake both socio-diagnostic (i.e. demystifying the underlying attitudes and ideologies conveyed in language) and prognostic critique (i.e. using such findings in an applied way to make a material difference in wider society) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Reisigl and Wodak's (2009, p. 45) suggestion of "elaborating guidelines against sexist language use" is particularly pertinent to the present research, as I argue that the popularity of manosphere spaces is exacerbated by wider systemic issues with computer-mediated communication. These issues include the amount of sexualised abuse that women receive online (e.g. Jane, 2014), the Internet being widely unregulated for hateful speech against women (Gender and Policy Insights, 2019), and anti-feminist sentiments being prevalent on a variety of mainstream platforms (e.g. Trott, 2020, on YouTube; Ging et al., 2019, on Urban Dictionary).

This chapter considers three aspects of language posted by users who are part of the manosphere on Reddit and the production, consumption, and distribution of such language within this context. The first aspect is how male and female social actors are broadly represented across the five manosphere sub-groups. This is investigated using a corpus approach which utilised approximately 10.9 million words of data. This study allowed us (myself and my co-authors; see Krendel et al., 2022, for the full study) to make conclusions about the Reddit manosphere as a whole. The second aspect is how different types of actions, emotions, behaviour judgements, and object appreciations are ascribed to gendered social actors. This is investigated using a corpus-assisted discourse approach, as this enabled a more detailed qualitative analysis of gender representation. Both of these aspects approach the manosphere as "text" (i.e. in terms of linguistic features). The final aspect is how manosphere members act in relation to each other within the community. This is done using a purely qualitative approach to determine the extent to which manosphere members express in-group support for one another. This final study considers the manosphere as "place" (i.e. in terms of social functioning). This distinction between "text" and "place" is discussed in more detail in Section 3.

In what follows, I firstly define the five subsections of the manosphere and note the attitudes which unite these five subsections. I contextualise these attitudes within the wider socio-political history of feminism and

anti-feminism and consider the specific technological context of production, distribution, and consumption of these digital discourses. I then outline the methods I used to investigate the manosphere dataset; discuss the three studies conducted in turn, moving from the largest dataset to the smallest; and discuss the pros and cons of each method.

2. The Reddit manosphere

Broadly, the manosphere refers to a loose network of anti-feminist websites which provide discussion spaces for five sub-groups:

- Men's rights activists, who foreground perceived societal and legal disadvantages that men face (see Lumsden, 2019);
- Men going their own way, who advocate men should distance themselves from women to varying degrees (see Lin, 2017);
- Pick-up artists, who teach, learn, and practise formulaic tactics known as "game" to seduce women (see Dayter & Rüdiger, 2016);
- Involuntary celibates (incels), who define themselves as unable to have romantic and sexual relationships with women but wish to have such relationships (see Heritage & Koller, 2020);
- The red pill (*TRP*), who do not subscribe to any of the approaches discussed earlier but who still subscribe to the beliefs which underpin these communities (see Van Valkenburgh, 2021);

Some sub-groups of the manosphere have their roots in offline movements: men's right's activists in the men's liberation movement of the 1960s (Messner, 1998), men going their own way in the mythopoetic men's movement (Bates, 2020), and pick-up artists in the popularity of formulaic seduction advice given by self-proclaimed experts in the 1960s/1970s (Bates, 2020). These movements were contemporary with second-wave feminism. However, the term *manosphere* refers to the online, and thus international, manifestations of these communities. It could be argued that the affordances of the participatory web allow for the international sharing, developing, and strengthening of manosphere ideas.

The manosphere believes that the societal changes that second- and third-wave feminism brought for women have led to modern men being disadvantaged over women (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). As the manosphere resists what it considers to be mainstream feminist discourse, users see themselves as relatively powerless in wider society. Participation in the manosphere is framed internally as a somewhat emancipatory endeavour. Indeed, Ging (2019, p. 49) argues that the manosphere should be conceptualised as an "affective counterpublic since it appears to operate in similar ways but in ideological opposition to feminism and the left". Allan (2016)

makes a similar claim about the men's rights activist sub-group, in that this group has co-opted the language of feminism to describe their perceived struggles.

Furthermore, the manosphere can be considered the modern online extension of a wider societal backlash to second- and third-wave feminism (see Faludi, 1991). This backlash is strongly post-feminist in nature, in that it acknowledges the gains made by second- and third-wave feminists, but argues that any further feminist developments are not necessary (McRobbie, 2008). However, this argument is not rooted in socio-political reality, as women experience gendered discrimination, harassment (both online and offline), and gendered violence at a greater rate than men (Powell & Henry, 2017). This is not to say that men do not experience specific gender-related issues such as higher suicide rates than women. However, the manosphere argues that it is the adoption of feminist ideals which causes such issues. On the other hand, a feminist analysis could link such issues to hyper-masculinity discourses which, for example, encourage men to repress negative emotions other than anger (Kupers, 2005).

As posited by Siapera (2019), the manosphere can be characterised as a connective movement. This means that the discourse practices in these spaces facilitate the sharing of emotion-laden narratives. This is opposed to collective movements, which co-ordinate collective online or offline action and have leaders who help to facilitate this. The manosphere has been described consistently as an "affective public" (Papacharissi, 2014) in the past literature (Ging, 2019; Allan, 2016; Siapera, 2019), as their discourse practices are centred around the expression of emotion, particularly victimisation. Papacharissi (2014, p. 125) defines this as "networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment". This is not to say that such publics are characterised by irrationality, but rather by the intensity of their thoughts and feelings. Historically, the notion of "affective publics" has referred to emancipatory political movements on Twitter, such as the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt in 2011 and the Occupy Wall Street movement (Papacharissi, 2014). These "affective publics" seek to disrupt dominant socio-political narratives by expressing the viewpoints of the marginalised. Arguably, the manosphere attempts to frame itself in a similar way, although such a framing is not supported by the treatment of men in wider society.

Past literature from the fields of gender studies, media studies, linguistics, and data science has taken a broad range of methodological approaches to the manosphere and found that the manosphere is broadly characterised by extremist and derogatory language towards women. For instance, in the fields of gender studies and media studies, Lilly (2016) found in her qualitative analysis of 192 men's rights activist and pick-up artist websites that women were consistently called "bitches", "sluts", and "whores" and

represented as entitled, irrational/unintelligent, manipulative, and selfish. Furthermore, qualitative studies of both men's rights activist and pick-up artist communities noted the prevalence of justifications of violence towards women and posts which dismiss and minimise allegations of sexual assault (Lumsden, 2019; Wright, 2020).

Manosphere research by data scientists has aimed to take advantage of the sheer amount of data available to them. For instance, Farrell et al. (2019) acknowledge that common topics across the manosphere include portraying men as victims and women as victimisers, physical and sexual violence towards women, hostility towards women, belittling and exclusion of women, and the promotion of male privilege over women. From this, Farrell et al. (2019) developed nine lexicons to automatically detect these themes in multiple men-going-their-own-way subreddits, incel subreddits, and subreddits which mock incel subreddits. This computational quantitative approach allowed for the analysis of 6 million Reddit posts and enabled a larger study of 38 million posts from 57 subreddits and 8 forums across the manosphere. However, the accuracy of such lexicons detecting hateful language was inconclusive because computational approaches potentially ignore the context in which certain words are used (e.g. sarcasm). Furthermore, by including counter-incel language in the dataset, Farrell et al. (2019) seem to equate this with manosphere language.

Turning to where manosphere language can be found, some manosphere spaces have dedicated domains where discussion forums are hosted for users to discuss manosphere topics, and journalistic-style articles about manosphere talking points are published by figureheads in the community. As well as having dedicated domains, manosphere users have also constructed communities on more mainstream social media sites, with Reddit having been identified in the past literature as a common platform for manosphere groups to host their communities (Massanari, 2017; Marwick & Caplan, 2018).

Reddit is a content aggregation site with approximately 330 million monthly active users (FoundationInc, 2020), where users subscribe to topic-specific forums called subreddits which create a specialised feed of content for the user based on their interests. Users can create subreddits, both post original content and share content from other websites on subreddits, and comment on other users' contributions. Thus, users act as both text producers and consumers. In KhosraviNik's (2017) sense, these subreddits constitute sites of social media discourse, as participation between lay users is integral to their functioning. However, although users can follow other users to see their contributions on their specialised feed and privately message each other, Reddit is not a traditional social networking site in the sense that social interactions between users are not foregrounded (boyd, 2010). For instance, users do not have profile pages on Reddit with

any personal information (these pages show all the posts and comments made by the user), and users do not have friends lists. Rather, the sharing and discussion of content is the central function of Reddit. Nevertheless, Reddit can still be defined as a social media communicative space (in accordance with KhosraviNik, 2017), as it does facilitate communication between users.

Turning to distribution mechanisms, these subreddits are moderated by volunteers whose moderating privileges are subreddit-specific and involve ensuring that posts abide by both the subreddit rules and wider Reddit content guidelines. Reddit administrators can also ban or "quarantine" subreddits which violate the wider site guidelines. "Quarantining" ensures that posts from such subreddits are not visible anywhere else on Reddit (e.g. the front page) and that users must bypass a content warning page to access these communities. The subreddits dedicated to the men's rights activist and pick-up artist subsections (by far the largest subsections) of the manosphere operate publicly. However, the subreddit which hosts TRP content has been quarantined, and both men-going-their-own-way and incel content have been banned from the platform entirely. It should be noted that Reddit has historically been reluctant to quarantine and ban communities, as communities which are deemed controversial are more likely to bring traffic to the website (Massanari, 2017). Massanari (2015) has also noted that although Reddit hosts many disparate communities, it is a broadly anti-feminist space which allows sexist content across multiple subreddits, including the manosphere. It could be argued that by hosting manosphere spaces on such a mainstream site, Reddit gives manosphere groups the means with which to grow their userbase. This is because non-manosphere users are more likely to find such spaces if they are hosted on a website they already frequent.

3.   Applying CDS to the study of the manosphere: text and place

The previous studies highlight three methodological considerations of CDS and social media discourse, which informed my choice of methodologies for the present study. Firstly, data must be carefully selected, given the vast amount available, to ensure the phenomenon being researched is accurately captured. Secondly, systematic observations should be incorporated into one's analysis (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016) to ensure that data is not anecdotal in nature. Thirdly, researchers need to incorporate the micro context in which language is used in their analysis, as this context is essential for determining how meaning is constructed in a given community. For linguists, this necessitates an element of discourse analysis and also highlights the importance of reading the concordance lines when using corpus linguistic methods.

Furthermore, as CDS scholars, it is important to analyse the conditions under which the manosphere claims victimhood. To do this, a demystifying and appropriately contextualised analysis of the manosphere must be undertaken to determine whether manosphere beliefs are rooted in the socio-political realities on the ground. Such a contextualisation requires a vertical (societal) element (KhosraviNik, 2017), in addition to the horizontal level of digital discourse, to show how online manifestations of manosphere discourse are dialogically linked to the socio-political context of the offline world. Indeed, the case of the manosphere is of interest to CDS scholars, as notions of powerlessness and marginalisation have been co-opted by a group that arguably holds more power over women both online and offline.

Having identified the structural features, and some preliminary linguistic features, of the manosphere in the past literature, the three-way analysis presented here uses a triangulated approach underpinned by a CDS framework. Although triangulation is a well-established tradition in CDS research – see Reisigl and Wodak's (2009) discourse historical approach and Baker et al.'s (2008) corpus-assisted discourse analysis – such triangulation seeks to connect the micro aspects of language and the macro aspect of wider society. The present study seeks to achieve this by comparing the findings on manosphere language to more general language use. Moreover, the present studies use triangulation to show how common themes can be established within the same community using three distinct methods, as well as the unique themes that each method is suited to investigating.

Androutsopoulos (2013) discusses two epistemological perspectives that inform which research questions and data collection methods are appropriate when investigating computer-mediated communication. These perspectives are "text" and "place", and the present research aims to integrate both. Conceptualising such communication as "text" requires a researcher-oriented approach, in which a researcher analyses online language for features of interest. A "place" conceptualisation focuses on the social aspect of online communities and how their online activities are related to offline ones, and this is typically accounted for by contacting users and incorporating their perspectives into the research. Although Androutsopoulos (2013) recommends an ethnographic approach when investigating "place", I did not do this, as this could constitute a personal risk to the researcher in studies of gender-based hostility (see Aiston, this volume, for more details). For this reason, for the present study, I argue it is more appropriate for me to analyse the social aspect of the manosphere by undertaking a text-based analysis which does not involve contact with manosphere users.

Firstly, taking the "text" perspective, I seek to analyse how gendered social actors are represented in manosphere discourse. To investigate this question in a systematic manner, both male and female social actors are

considered. This enabled me to analyse representations of both the in-group (who are mostly men) and out-group (both women and also men who are not part of the manosphere). By analysing both, this approach seeks to capture a complete picture of how gendered social actors are perceived as relating to one another. It is also useful for determining how similar or different to each other the social actors are perceived as being.

Secondly, taking the "place" perspective, I seek to determine how the manosphere functions in terms of in-group social relations. This is arguably an under-researched aspect of manosphere language, as much space has been dedicated to acknowledging the extreme content of the manosphere. However, Mountford (2018) observes that alongside such extreme content, core topics of manosphere websites include "goals and growth", "teaching and learning", and "exercise". This suggests that manosphere spaces are not solely dedicated to using derogatory language about women. However, the way manosphere users use language to foster connections with one another is relatively under-researched by linguists (one notable exception is Dayter & Rüdiger, 2016). It is important to analyse "place" as well as "text" because the social functioning of the manosphere has the potential to affect user retention. Furthermore, the online discussions in the manosphere have the potential to influence offline behaviour, although this is impossible to ascertain through a text-based analysis of social relations alone. As is the case in both online extremist and non-extremist groups, if users receive support, advice, and express experiencing personal benefits from participating in the space, they may be incentivised to stay and participate more (De Koster & Houtman, 2008), as well as act on in-group advice.

In the following sections, I outline the methodologies I use to examine the Reddit manosphere as "text" (Methods 1 and 2) and "place" (Method 3). I also give a brief description of the findings of each study to highlight the benefits and drawbacks of each method.

4.   Method 1: a corpus-based analysis of five subreddits

This first study (see Krendel et al., 2022 for an extensive discussion) which views the manosphere as "text" investigates Marwick and Caplan's (2018, p. 553) claim that the manosphere is 'brought together by a common language that orients them in opposition to the discourse and rhetoric of feminism' from a linguistic perspective. To do this, the Reddit hub of each of the five manosphere sub-groups (as listed in Section 2) was identified, and the comments from the 200 most upvoted (and therefore most popular) posts of all time were collected from each of them. This resulted in a corpus of 1000 comment threads containing approximately 10.9 million words. With a corpus of this size, this study takes advantage of the vast quantity of

data available online while narrowing the collection down to what is arguably the most representative data from these communities. Such a large dataset lends itself to a broad but shallow approach in the analysis, as it allows for the establishing of trends across the five sub-corpora. The sub-corpora were drastically different sizes, with the largest totalling approximately 5 million words, and the smallest totalling approximately 900,000 words. This necessitated an approach which ensures that any findings were equally characteristic of all five sub-groups.

To determine which linguistic features are characteristic of the manosphere as a whole, linguistic features that occurred consistently in all five sub-groups were analysed. These features were the statistically significant key-key-words (Scott, 1997), which referenced gendered social actors when compared with a general corpus of online English (WebCorp, 2010), and the consistent collocates (Baker et al., 2008) which co-occurred with these social actor terms. Keyword analysis reveals the statistically significant indicators of the "aboutness" of a text, to use Scott's (1999) term, in comparison with a reference corpus. Collocation analysis shows the words which co-occur with words of interest with notable strength and/or frequency (as evidenced by statistical measures such as MI score and T-score, respectively). Collocates are said to reveal "the associations and connotations [words] have, and therefore the assumptions which they embody" (Stubbs, 1996, p. 172). Thus, keyword and collocation analyses can help to determine what representations occur in a corpus in a statistically significant manner. Typically, these measures are used to analyse one corpus. However, key-key-word and consistent collocate analyses capture the presence of such phenomena across multiple corpora. In the present study, the key-key-words needed to be key in all 1,000 comment threads which make up the corpus. The consistent collocates needed to occur up to five words to the left or right of the gendered social actor key-key-words at least five times in each sub-corpus and meet sufficiently high strength and confidence statistical thresholds in each sub-corpus. Corpus linguistic methods allow one to analyse a vast amount of language as it appears in the dataset in a statistically rigorous manner. This sets the method apart from semi-automated methods which have been used to analyse the manosphere in the past literature, such as topic modelling (Mountford, 2018) and detection of words associated with different lexicons (Farrell et al., 2019). These methods categorise groups of words as having different meanings without considering the context these words are used in.

Corpus linguistic methods allow a connection to be made between individual language use (the micro context) and how whole groups use language (the wider macro context). This is because observable patterns in language across texts demonstrate "the incremental effect of discourse" (Baker, 2006, p. 13) i.e. how individual language use becomes standard

across a given group. Furthermore, some corpus linguists argue that by considering measures such as frequencies of lexis, keywords, and collocations, researchers can make assertions about the psychological associations between concepts that language users hold (Hoey, 2005; Gries, 2017). These corpus methods can be an empirical way to analyse what is called the discourse-cognition-society triangle (van Dijk, 2014) in CDS research. Durrant and Doherty (2010) suggest that collocations with an MI score of 6 and T-score of 7.5 reflect psychological reality. However, without conducting neuroscientific studies which specifically test the consistent collocations identified in this study, it is impossible to determine whether these associations are truly psychologically real. Nevertheless, for this study, the T-score 7.5 threshold was implemented and the MI cut-off remained at the standard 3 (Hunston, 2002). Although the MI score threshold was originally intended to be 6 in line with Durrant and Doherty (2010), a cut-off of MI 6 meant that the majority of consistent collocates were originally discarded, which did not allow for a lengthy discussion of the data.

In total, 34 gendered social actor key-key-words were identified, with general terms such as *men/man* and *women/woman* occurring most frequently. Relational terms such as *girlfriend(s)* and *boyfriend* were also identified, alongside derogatory terms for female social actors (e.g. *bitch[es], whore[s]*), and in-group identification terms for male social actors (e.g. *pua, incel*). Furthermore, the female social actor key-key-words were more often pluralised (indicating collective identities) than the male ones.

Next, the consistent collocates of the four most common gendered social actor terms, *men, women, girls*, and *guys*, were analysed. Four hundred and thirty-two consistent collocates were identified and then sorted into five groups: topic indicators, descriptions, actions occurring to the left of the social actor term, actions occurring to the right of the term, and miscellaneous items. This enabled me to consider how power is discursively distributed among gendered social actors. This is due to the internal focus on power in the manosphere, as well as an interest in the distribution of power more broadly in CDS work. Overall, the analysis revealed that female social actors were represented as privileged over, and violent towards, male social actors. Male and female social actors were also constructed in intimate relationships with one another, and female social actors were constructed as lying about experiencing assault and passivated in dating/sexual contexts. This latter finding mirrors what has been established in the representation of *women* and *men* in multiple mainstream general corpora (e.g. Pearce, 2008). This comparison allowed us to contextualise this study's findings in terms of the wider macro context beyond the manosphere. Furthermore, the affective element of the manosphere was captured via consistent collocates referencing mental processes (*think, know*) and

the ascribed emotionality of *women*. However, this methodology did not capture the nature of this emotionality in detail.

A corpus-based approach which solely uses statistical methods such as keyword and collocation analysis is not sufficient for a comprehensive study of the manosphere. For instance, although common themes across the five sub-groups were captured, not all 432 consistent collocates could be described in detail for reasons of space. It was also impossible to capture much nuance in how the consistent collocates were used differently within the five sub-groups. Furthermore, although some social actors shared the same consistent collocates, a subsequent concordance line analysis revealed that these consistent collocates deviated in meaning. For example, the term *successful* referred to sexual success when it co-occurred with *women*, but referred to economic success when it co-occurred with *men*. Thus, a more qualitative concordance line analysis was necessary for the contextualisation of the statistically generated findings.

5.   Method 2: a corpus-assisted discourse analysis for transitivity and appraisal

This second study of the manosphere as "text" (see Krendel, 2020, for more details) used a corpus-assisted discourse approach to analyse the representation of gendered social actors in more detail. This was done using a combination of keyword and collocate analysis, transitivity analysis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, pp. 179–259), and appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005) analysis. This approach necessitated a much smaller corpus than the one discussed in Section 4, and thus only one manosphere subreddit was selected for analysis in this study: *TRP*. *TRP* was selected as it attracts users from the men's rights activist, men-going-their-own-way, and pick-up artist subsets of the manosphere. Approximately 70,000 words (posts and their associated comment threads) were collected from each subset of *TRP*, with the whole corpus totalling 214,269 words. Thus, this study aimed to establish trends about multiple manosphere groups with a dataset which allows for the use of more qualitative methods.

Firstly, the top 20 keywords in the corpus were gathered, compared with the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2008), and found that first- and second-person pronouns, swear words, and gendered social actor terms were among the most key in the corpus. These social actor terms were mostly pluralised, which indicated a preference for discussing collective identity (e.g. *women, men, girls* but also the singular *girl*) in this dataset. This corroborates the findings discussed in Section 4. Whereas only collective terms were analysed in detail in the corpus-based study, the study presented in this section analysed both the singular and plural forms of the lemmas *man, women, girl* and *guy* to further investigate when and

how social actors are individualised in manosphere language. A random sample of 10% of the available concordance lines for each social actor form was collected for qualitative analysis to ensure a representativeness sample across the corpus. This resulted in a total of 427 lines for analysis.

Whereas the corpus-based study analyses activation and passivation by observing whether a verb more frequently occurs to the left or right of the social actor term, a more fine-grained corpus-assisted discourse approach allowed for the analysis of different verb process types using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2013, pp. 179–259) transitivity system. Following Darics and Koller (2019), material processes (indicating material actions) and verbal processes (indicating speech) were considered more representative of agency than processes which denoted mental (thoughts and feelings), relational (being and becoming), behavioural (body language), and existential processes (existing). This distinction allowed for a more nuanced discussion of both power and the ideas expressed with these verbs (e.g. what is the thought or what attributes and values are ascribed to others). It also allowed for a discussion of processes involving verbs which could sometimes be classified as auxiliary (relational, existential) and thus too general for a corpus-based analysis which considered hundreds of consistent collocates.

Due to the manosphere's connective nature and status as an "affective public", it is important to consider how emotions are both expressed by manosphere users and ascribed to others. KhosraviNik (2018) argues that a methodology which focuses on affect, instead of argumentation, should be used to analyse such publics. To this end, Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory framework was used to consider the affective aspect of the community in more detail than was possible in the study in Section 4. I analysed the representation of authorial and ascribed affect, namely (dis)inclination, (un)happiness, (in)security, and (dis)satisfaction; the way human behaviour is judged (for how common it is and how capable, dependable, truthful, and moral a social actor is); and how they are appreciated in terms of aesthetics, convenience of access, and social value. Martin and White's (2005) engagement and graduation sub-systems were also used to analyse how different viewpoints were represented and how statements were intensified or mitigated. Lastly, the collocates (minimum frequency 5) of the analysed social actor terms were calculated to ensure that any observations made using the qualitative frameworks were characteristic of the dataset as a whole.

Despite the dataset being a fraction of the size of the one discussed in Section 4, similar findings were established across the two datasets. For instance, both studies found that male social actors were represented as victimised, whereas *women* and *girls* were largely passivated in dating/sexual contexts, described in terms of physical appearance and

abundance, and represented as deceptive. However, the corpus-assisted study revealed a previously hidden nuance to the corpus-based findings. For example, although male and female social actors were grammatically active at near-equal rates, the transitivity analysis revealed that female social actors were less semantically agentive than male ones. Furthermore, *girls* were represented as individualised and agentive in verbal processes, but only in dating/sexual contexts. *Men* were represented as immoral, although this immorality was excused by the in-group. Moreover, *women* were represented as immoral and as incapable of controlling their emotions and their behaviour. This was done using the terms hybristophilia (attraction to dangerous individuals) and hypergamy (seeking relationships with people who have more social status and economic resources than oneself). These terms are both characterised by neo-classical compounding, which is a feature of academic language. The formality of such language could have an effect on how convincing such assertions are to manosphere users.

Overall, by utilising a deductive analysis framework which foregrounds the emotions, judgements, and appreciations represented in the dataset, this study comprehensively considers the affective element of the manosphere. The amount of overlap between the findings of Sections 4 and 5 also demonstrates that it is not always necessary to obtain the largest possible dataset in order to carry out a detailed analysis of the "text" of a given community.

6.   Method 3: a qualitative analysis of in-group support and impression management

The final approach taken in this case study also focuses on the TRP subsection of the manosphere, due to its ideological similarities with the whole manosphere. In order to investigate the Reddit manosphere as "place", this study utilises concepts from the field of pragmatics to investigate the extent to which users signal support for one another and how TRP members may wish to present themselves. This is done to investigate the assertion made in the past literature (Mountford, 2018) that TRP, and other manosphere sub-groups, can be likened to self-help groups, due to a focus on teaching and learning and discussions about self-improvement. Thus, the motivation behind this case study is that of stylistic demystification, as it could be argued that the beliefs about gender relations which underpin the manosphere may be more palatable if they are expressed in a manner which resembles respected advice i.e. self-help material. To this end, the 10 most upvoted (and therefore most popular) posts of the month at the time of collection, and their associated comment threads, were collected. In total, these 10 posts have 2,094 comments associated with them, resulting in a

total of 2,104 posts and comments for analysis. Each post or comment was taken as the unit of analysis.

The speech acts which occurred in these posts and comments were identified inductively, and only those speech acts which were directed towards the in-group were labelled. The term speech act refers to an expression which both conveys information and performs a social function (see Searle, 1969). This included speech acts such as agreeing, disagreeing, and advice-giving. I then considered how each of these speech acts corresponded to face-enhancement and face-threat, in accordance with Locher and Watts' (2005) relational framework. I also considered how these speech acts corresponded to the impression management strategies posited by Jones and Pittman (1982), which concern how speakers wish to present themselves as likeable, competent, dedicated, threatening, or in need of help.

I also examine the extent to which the in-group status of the addresser and addressee affected the use of these speech acts. This is because in their group rules page, *TRP* signals that hierarchy members (members with a marker of in-group status next to their name, known as "flair") and their contributions are to be respected. This demonstrates that this hierarchy is a key feature of their community. Thus, members were sorted into a "hierarchy" or "regular" (no in-group status marker) category, and speech acts were recorded as occurring in three directions: between regular members or between hierarchy members (lateral communication), from regular members to hierarchy members (upwards communication), and from hierarchy members to regular members (downwards communication). By investigating the impact of this hierarchy on how members communicate with one another, this approach considered how power dynamics within the community affect in-group communication.

This study found that *TRP* shared some formal characteristics of online self-help groups intended for men (see Flynn & Stana, 2012, for their discussion of emotional support, personal disclosure, and advice-giving). Face-enhancing speech acts such as agreeing and complimenting/praising were more prevalent than disagreeing and criticising overall, and *TRP* was characterised by the speech acts of personal disclosure and advice-giving. The prevalence of face-enhancing speech acts suggests that *TRP* is a place for members to support each other's stances and give positive feedback about their opinions and actions. This could in turn influence user retention, as users may participate in the manosphere to receive such validation. However, face-threatening speech acts still occurred at a greater rate than expected for a community which describes themselves as a self-improvement group.

Although the prevalence of face-enhancing speech acts in *TRP* indicates that users wish to make themselves seem likeable within the community, speech acts also seemed to be used for self-promotion purposes. For

example, unlike traditional online self-help groups for men, much of the advice given in *TRP* was unsolicited, and some instances of personal disclosure involved users representing themselves as experts by using personal anecdotes. Furthermore, the most frequent speech act was users providing others with additional information about a given topic. Thus, users wished to present themselves as a credible source of information, and so the manosphere can be understood as a place for teaching and learning within the community.

It should also be noted that in-group user status has a strong effect on the distribution of such speech acts. For example, hierarchy members received a disproportionately high rate of face-enhancing speech acts from regular members, as well as face-saving strategies such as hedging. This could be interpreted as a strategic attempt by regular members to ingratiate themselves with the high-status members of the community. However, regular members also disagreed with hierarchy members, which could be interpreted as attempts to gain status and promote themselves by demonstrating knowledge over a high-status member. This indicates that the manosphere is a place which facilitates connection between its regular and higher-status members.

This study has successfully considered the manosphere as "place" in a way which does not involve directly engaging with manosphere users, which would pose a risk to the researcher (see Aiston, this volume). By comparing the features of *TRP* to the features of traditional online men's self-help groups, this enabled me to consider whether the *TRP*'s reputation as a potential self-help group was legitimate. Unfortunately, the amount of data which can be analysed in this manner is limited due to the heavily qualitative approach. However, for the analysis of "place", a qualitative approach ensures that whole posts and comments are read to ensure that user contributions are labelled accurately.

7. Conclusions

The three case studies discussed earlier demonstrate that, no matter whether a researcher comes from a more quantitative or qualitative background, many methodologies can be employed when adopting CDS as an overarching theoretical framework. The main advantages of Method 1 are that it utilises the large amount of data available to researchers of computer-mediated communication and enables us to capture broad trends across multiple aspects of the manosphere using quantitative and statistical means. However, this method does not allow for a detailed analysis of all the findings it generates. Contrastingly, while also incorporating quantitative findings from corpus linguistics, Method 2 allows us to analyse the data in a more qualitative manner which takes into account how

manosphere ideas are expressed in a variety of ways, which are not necessarily visible on a quantitative level. Utilising the appraisal framework in particular allowed me to pay more attention to the affective aspect of the manosphere. However, utilising this method necessitates using a smaller dataset, and thus the findings are not necessarily as representative of the community as a wider-scale study could be. Lastly, by utilising concepts from pragmatics, Method 3 captured how users support and challenge each other, which in turn could potentially affect user retention and their offline behaviours. This method also enabled the consideration of "place" without contacting the manosphere users themselves, which was necessary for protecting researcher safety. However, this means that any claims made about the motivations behind posting behaviours unfortunately cannot be confirmed or denied by the users themselves.

The overlap in findings from both the corpus-based and corpus-assisted discourse studies suggests that the largest dataset may not be necessary for exploring manosphere language. However, using such a large dataset gives credibility to similar findings obtained using smaller datasets. Furthermore, linking the findings of these studies to more general language (in the case of Sections 4 and 5) or to the genre that *TRP* claims to embody (Section 6) links the micro aspects of language established in these studies to the macro aspect of how language is used in wider society. This allows us to determine whether manosphere language is extraordinary compared to representations of gendered social actors in general corpora of English and how men support each other in other online men's groups. Lastly, considering the Reddit context specifically, where manosphere subreddits are banned, quarantined, or neither, is essential for considering the scope of potential consumption and distribution of such language.

Triangulating the three methods enables us to establish manosphere beliefs about gender dynamics in a systematic way, which takes advantage of statistical association measures and the representativeness of larger datasets and the multiple levels of analysis (using both discourse analysis and pragmatics) which can be achieved with smaller datasets. It is with this combination that we ultimately consider the Reddit manosphere data from both a "text" and "place" perspective (Androutsopoulos, 2013). This combination of methods allows us to examine the impact of mediation technology (in this case, Reddit) on platforming groups such as the manosphere and enabling both their discursive practices and sense of community to develop.

As for directions for future CDS research on the manosphere, the studies discussed in this chapter make limited use of the Reddit upvotes/downvotes, which could be used to measure the popularity of different topics in manosphere subreddits. Furthermore, Reddit posts can comprise pictures as well as texts, which would allow for a multimodal approach to these

communities, as has been done by media studies scholars examining manosphere spaces on Reddit (Cockerill, 2019). One aspect which has not been addressed in this case study of the manosphere is the argumentation strategies used within the five sub-groups. Although KhosraviNik (2018) asserts that an approach which foregrounds affect would be more appropriate for the study of affective publics such as the manosphere, I argue that the prominence in the manosphere of sharing information, as shown in the study detailed in Section 6, necessitates a future analysis of argumentation strategies.

Overall, the evidence from these three studies shows that the manosphere perpetuates problematic representations of gender dynamics and is seen by its members as a credible source of knowledge and as a broadly supportive space. Combined with the potential distribution of such language given the popularity of Reddit, this suggests that users may view the assertions and advice given in these spaces as legitimate and act on them as a result, although such a connection must be tentatively made. Future research could interrogate the relationship between online manosphere language and the offline actions of users to explore the extent to which the manosphere can be considered a potentially harmful space.

References

Allan, J. (2016). Phallic Affect, or why Men's Rights Activists Have Feelings. *Men and Masculinities*, *19*(1), 22–41.

Androutsopoulos, J. (2013). Online data collection. In C. Mallinson, B. Childs, & G. Van Herk (Eds.), *Data collection in sociolinguistics: Methods and applications* (2nd ed., pp. 236–250). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Baker, P. (2006). *Using corpora in discourse analysis*. London: Continuum.

Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., KhosraviNik, M., Krzyzanowski, M., McEnery, T., & Wodak, R. (2008). A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK Press. *Discourse & Society*, *19*(3), 273–306.

Bates, L. (2020). *Men who hate women*. London: Simon & Schuster.

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

Cockerill, M. (2019). Convergence and common ground: MRAs, memes and transcultural contexts of digital misogyny. In D. Ging & E. Siapera (Eds.), *Gender hate online: Understanding the new anti-feminism* (pp. 87–110). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Darics, E., & Koller, V. (2019). Social actors "to go": An analytical toolkit to explore agency in business discourse and communication. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *82*(2), 214–238.

Davies, M. (2008). *The corpus of contemporary American English (COCA)*. www.english-corpora.org/coca/

Dayter, D., & Rüdiger, S. (2016). Reporting from the field: The narrative reconstruction of experience in pick-up artist online communities. *Open Linguistics*, *2*(1), 337–351.

De Koster, W., & Houtman, D. (2008). "Stormfront is like a second home to me": On virtual community formation by right-wing extremists. *Information, Communication & Society*, *11*(8), 1155–1176.

Durrant, P., & Doherty, A. (2010). Are high-frequency collocations psychologically real? Investigating the thesis of collocational priming. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*, *6*(2), 125–155.

Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. New York: Crown Publishing Group.

Farrell, T., Fernandez, M., Novotny, J., & Alani, H. (2019, 30 June–3 July). Exploring misogyny across the manosphere in Reddit. *WebSci19*, Boston.

Flynn, M., & Stana, A. (2012). Social support in a men's online eating disorder forum. *International Journal of Men's Health*, *11*(2), 150–169.

FoundationInc. (2020). *Reddit statistics for 2020 (Demographics, usage & traffic data)*. https://foundationinc.co/lab/reddit-statistics/

Gender and Policy Insights. (2019). *When technology meets misogyny: Multi-level, intersectional solutions to digital gender-based violence*. https://gen-pol.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/When-Technology-Meets-Misogyny-GenPol-Policy-Paper-2.pdf

Ging, D. (2019). Bros v. Hos: Postfeminism, anti-feminism and the toxic turn in digital gender politics. In D. Ging & E. Siapera (Eds.), *Gender hate online: Understanding the new anti-feminism* (pp. 45–67). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ging, D., Lynn, T., & Rosati, P. (2019). Neologising misogyny: Urban dictionary's folksonomies of sexual abuse. *New Media & Society*, *22*(5), 838–856.

Gries, S. (2017). *Ten lectures on quantitative approaches in cognitive linguistics: Corpus linguistic, experimental, and statistical applications*. Leiden: Brill.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, M. (2013). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Heritage, F., & Koller, V. (2020). Incels, in-groups, and ideologies: The representation of gendered social actors in a sexuality-based online community. *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, *9*(2), 153–180.

Hoey, M. (2005). *Lexical priming: A new theory of words and language*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jane, E. (2014). "Back to the kitchen, cunt": Speaking the unspeakable about online misogyny. *Continuum*, *28*(4), 558–570.

Jones, E., & Pittman, T. (1982). Towards a general theory of strategic self-presentation. In J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (pp. 231–262). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 582–596). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2018). Social media techno-discursive design, affective communication and contemporary politics. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, *11*(4), 427–442.

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *14*(1), 45–68.

KhosraviNik, M., & Unger, J. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media: Power, resistance, and critique in changing media ecologies. In R. Wodak & M. Reisigl (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies* (pp. 206–233). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krendel, A. (2020). The men and women, guys and girls of the "manosphere": A corpus-assisted discourse approach. *Discourse & Society*, *31*(6), 607–630.

Krendel, A., McGlashan, M., & Koller, V. (2022). The representation of gendered social actors across five manosphere communities on Reddit. *Corpora*, *17*(2), 291–321.

Kupers, T. (2005). Toxic masculinity as a barrier to mental health treatment in prison. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *61*(6), 713–724.

Lilly, M. (2016). *The world is not a safe place for men: The representational politics of the manosphere* [MA dissertation, University of Ottowa]. https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/35055/1/Lilly_Mary_2016_thesis.pdf

Lin, J. (2017). Antifeminism online: MGTOW (Men going their own way). In U. Frömming, S. Köhn, S. Fox, & M. Terry (Eds.), *Digital environments: Ethnographic perspectives across global online and offline spaces* (pp. 77–96). Bielefeld: transcript. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/2821.

Locher, M., & Watts, R. (2005). Politeness theory and relational work. *Journal of Politeness Research*, *1*(1), 9–33.

Lumsden, K. (2019). "I want to kill you in front of your children' is not a threat: It's an expression of a desire, not of an intent": Discourses of trolling and gendered violence on r/MensRights. In K. Lumsden & E. Harmer (Eds.), *Online othering: Exploring violence and discrimination on the web* (pp. 91–115). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Martin, J., & White, P. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marwick, A., & Caplan, R. (2018). Drinking male tears: Language, the manosphere, and networked harassment. *Feminist Media Studies*, *18*(4), 543–559.

Massanari, A. (2015). *Participatory culture, community, and play: Learning from Reddit*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Massanari, A. (2017). #Gamergate and the fappening: How Reddit's algorithm, governance and culture support toxic technocultures. *New Media & Society*, *19*(3), 329–346.

McRobbie, A. (2008). *The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Messner, M. (1998). The limits of "the male sex role": An analysis of the men's liberation and men's rights movements' discourse. *Gender & Society*, *12*(3), 255–276.

Mountford, J. B. (2018). Topic modeling the red pill. *Social Sciences*, *7*(3), 1–16.

Papacharissi, Z. (2014). *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology and politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pearce, M. (2008). Investigating the collocational behaviour of MAN and WOMAN in the BNC using SketchEngine. *Corpora*, *3*(1), 1–29.

Powell, A., & Henry, N. (2017). *Sexual violence in a digital age*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). In R. Wodak & M. Reisigl (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (pp. 24–58). London: Sage.

Scott, M. (1997). PC analysis of key words- and key key words. *System*, *25*(2), 233–245.

Scott, M. (1999). *WordSmith tools help manual*. Version 3.0. Oxford: Mike Scott and Oxford University Press.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Siapera, E. (2019). Online misogyny as witch hunt: Primitive accumulation in the age of techno-capitalism. In D. Ging & E. Siapera (Eds.), *Gender hate online: Understanding the new anti-feminism* (pp. 21–43). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2018). *Male supremacy*. www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/male-supremacy

Stubbs, M. (1996). *Text and corpus analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Trott, V. (2020). "Gillette: The best a beta can get": Networking hegemonic masculinity in the digital sphere. *New Media & Society*. DOI: 10.1177/1461444820978293

van Dijk, T. (2014). Discourse-cognition-society: Current state and prospects of the socio-cognitive approach to discourse. In P. Cap & C. Hart (Eds.), *Contemporary critical discourse studies* (pp. 121–146). London: Bloomsbury.

Van Valkenburgh, S. (2021). Digesting the red pill: Masculinity and neoliberalism in the manosphere. *Men and Masculinities*, *24*(1), 84–103.

WebCorp Mini-Web Corpus. (2010). *WebCorp linguist's search engine*. http://wse1.webcorp.org.uk/home/syn.html

Wright, D. (2020). The discursive construction of resistance to sex in an online community. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *36*(1), 1–9.

5   Discourses of public breastfeeding on Russophone social media

A discursive-material analysis of VKontakte discussions

Kseniia Semykina and Oksana Dorofeeva

1. Introduction

Breastfeeding in what are considered public spaces is an issue on which there seems to be no consensus and that provokes heated discussions. For instance, breastfeeding photos attract significant media coverage and controversial public responses that do not always correspond with the frames provided by media reporting them (Midberry, 2017). Laws protecting a woman's right to breastfeed in public exist in many (Western) countries, sometimes along with fines for obstructing breastfeeding, like in Scotland (Giles, 2018). Celebrities such as Tess Holliday, Gwen Stefani and Pink have spoken out in favour of public breastfeeding (Bologna, 2016), and female politicians around the world continue to make statements on the issue by breastfeeding in parliaments (Goel, 2018). However, there are still many cases when women are asked to leave a public space if they want to breastfeed e.g. the case of the woman who was asked to leave a swimming pool in Texas (see Francis, 2019 for details). The same happened to another woman when she started nursing her child in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow (Zhenshchinu Poprosili Uyti, 2019).

The issue with public breastfeeding seems to be particularly about the combination of lactating bodies and public spaces because in broad terms there is support for breastfeeding. Influential institutions such as World Health Organization and United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) (WHO, 2003) position breastfeeding as integral to the child's proper development (Wall, 2001), putting pressure on women to perform breastfeeding no matter what. However, public spaces are not very accepting of breastfeeding women, denying lactating bodies access to the public sphere, or granting access on the terms that breastfeeding be performed in a particular way, "with discretion", meaning showing as little skin as possible (Bartlett, 2002; Cook, 2016; Lane, 2014).

The plot only thickens when the Internet and social media are added to the mix: as Baym and boyd (2012) write, social media complicate and reconfigure the idea of public. Lactating bodies enter multiple online spaces of differential publicity and with different audiences as accounts of breast-feeding experiences and "brelfies" (selfies of breastfeeding women and breastfed children) are posted, shared and distributed. Online spaces are also not always accepting: Boon and Pentney show that breastfeeding photos do not fit into the mainstream "selfie" culture and disrupt the norma-tive orders of social media (Boon & Pentney, 2015). Moreover, in online discussions breastfeeding can be public in different ways: public online (as a brelfie taken at home and posted online), public mostly offline (when public breastfeeding in discussed without the process being very present, e.g. through photos, videos or even detailed descriptions[1]), and public both offline and online (if someone shares on social media a photo/video/experi-ence on breastfeeding in, for instance, a restaurant). This multiplicity of contexts, with different publics and audiences involved, orients digital dis-courses on public breastfeeding. A digital discourse on public breastfeed-ing would also be entangled with the affordances of the media it utilises (Machin, 2016): from language and photography to various online plat-forms where people participate in discussions.

In this study, we analyse the discursive construction of public breast-feeding in VKontakte[2] online communities through the lens of the Dis-cursive-Material Knot (DMK) framework (Carpentier, 2017, 2019). We study discourses on public breastfeeding appearing on social media as users' interaction with its affordances creates discussions unimaginable elsewhere. The infrastructure of social networking sites like Vkontakte allows users to create specialised spaces and communities: from those that promote misogyny and symbolic violence against women to women's and mothers' communities producing alternative subcultures, platforms for activism, and safe spaces for mothers. However, this infrastructure also allows these different spaces to be connected through reposts, hyper-links, etc. We analyse meanings as well as the interplays of affordances and practices that contribute to the discourse, trying to understand how being a *digital* discourse shapes the discourse on public breastfeeding on Vkontakte.

We start the discussion with an explanation of our theoretical approach to the topic and situating the phenomenon in vertical and horizontal con-texts. Then we describe the methodology of our study and the findings on the discourse as well as affordances and practices contributing to it. Finally, we conclude our findings by situating them within the wider contexts of Russian (online) gender order. Moreover, based on our analysis, we argue that attention to social media usage practices is crucial to understanding social media discourse.

2. Social media discourses through the lens of the discursive-material knot

Calls have been made for greater attention to the affordances of different semiotic resources and their influence on the discourse (Machin, 2016). Machin provides an example of photography's affordance and its claim to objectively record reality. Online platform affordances also contribute to the resources of meaning making: for instance, Bennet (2018) shows how hyperlinked texts allow for new legitimation strategies to be used by political actors. Thus, to make sense of digital discourses, one has to understand how they are produced not only in terms of text and meanings but also the technologies involved. The discursive-material knot (DMK) (Carpentier, 2017, 2019) is conducive to such a versatile approach for discourse studies, as the ontology of DMK suggests an entangled and non-hierarchical relationship between the *discursive* and the *material*, as well as a complementary dimension of *structure* and *agency*, all contributing to (re)definition and (re)production of social order.

We use the method of discourse-material analysis (DMA), which suggests that we can use concepts from discourse theory and new materialism as sensitising concepts to guide our attention during the analysis (Carpentier, 2017). In our analysis, we used several sensitising concepts. First one of them, *discourse*, is defined as "a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau, 1988, p. 254). Discourses are composed of *discourse moments* connected by the means of *articulation*, or "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). *Chains of equivalence* appear when discursive elements are articulated together in opposition to a negative identity (Laclau, 2005, p. 256). Discourse moments are organised around *nodal points*, partially fixating meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 112–113). Nodal points provide the discursive structure with a degree of stability, and that is how discursive patterns are witnessed by discourse analysts.

At the same time, we engage with the materiality of digital discourse on public breastfeeding. Discourse is entangled with the material reality in which it emerges (Carpentier, 2019). Barad even challenges the distinction between matter and discourses and sees the world as consisting of phenomena that include both "things" and "words" in their intra-action (Barad, 2003). If we see public breastfeeding as such a phenomenon, then it includes lactating and children's bodies and public spaces they enter as well as discourses about them and bodies and technologies involved in these discussions.

Internet (discourse) studies have been reporting on how platforms' affordances (their features allowing (or not) for certain actions) shape online

communication (e.g. boyd, 2010, 2014; Matamoros-Fernández, 2017; Merrill & Åkerlund, 2018). However, in accounting how the digital-material infrastructure of platforms enables certain discursive resources, it is crucial not to forget about the bodies and the actions, as the intended and the actual use of affordances might starkly differ. In her research on Facebook use in Mardin, Turkey, Costa (2018) describes how her interlocutors use Facebook with multiple accounts and pseudonyms against the "mainstream" model of one "true" Facebook account. Based on this knowledge, she pushes for investigating social media through the concept of affordances-in-practice, because "social media exist only through people's practices, and that digital architectures and their properties cannot be studied, described, and understood outside their situated practices of usage" (Costa, 2018, p. 3645). While affordances present users with limitations and possibilities, Costa shows that social media (discursive) practices vary, sometimes despite designers' intent, and affordances people do not make use of do not become "activated". Thus, it is the situated practices of platform usage (and non-usage) that contribute to social media discourses, not universal platform affordances.

3.   Context-setting crossroads: public breastfeeding online and in Russia

Public breastfeeding discourse generated on Vkontakte is shaped by an interplay of various contexts. It is bound with meanings constructing gender and motherhood, public (online) spaces, etc. In this section, we try to account for the digital and the sociopolitical context settings, as digital public breastfeeding discourse is to be explored at their crossroads language.

3.1.   Digital context

Social media discourse on public breastfeeding is characterised by the multi-facetedness of online platforms: they are both spaces of hostility and censorship aimed at female bodies and women and spaces of resistance both towards this inequity and dominant discourses on femininity, motherhood, etc. Researchers problematise the male-dominated atmosphere of many online platforms (Mantilla, 2013; Siapera, 2019b, 2019a) and note how many online spaces are generally hostile towards women (Siapera, 2019b; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018). Jane (2014a) called this hostility e-bile, claiming that "euphemisms and generic descriptors such as 'offensive' or 'sexually explicit' simply cannot convey the hostile and hyperbolic misogyny which gives gendered e-bile". Images of female bodies are especially vulnerable to online hostility and censorship from social media platforms. A case in point would be the Instagram guidelines: there is no restriction regarding

male nipples, whereas current guidelines allow images of female nipples only in contexts of breastfeeding, (after)birth, health issues (e.g. mastectomies), and on paintings and sculptures. The exclusion of breastfeeding photos and images from the ban happened in 2014 after activists and users protested the ban ("Will Instagram Ever 'Free the Nipple'?," 2019).

However, online spaces also become platforms for resistance against these tendencies and dominant discourses on gender. In the case of the Instagram policy, in July 2015 Micol Hebron published the "Internet Acceptable Male Nipple Template" (Figure 5.1), inviting women to cover their nipples with men's ones to go around this policy. The picture went viral (Hanson, 2015) and was used by the #freethenipple campaign, which problematised social norms regarding the relations between public spaces and human bodies.
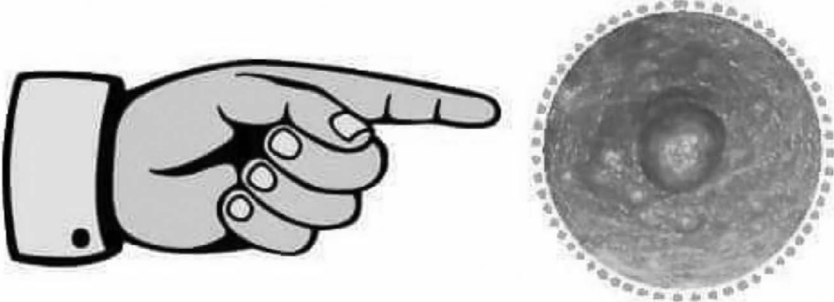
Figure 5.1 "Internet Acceptable Male Nipple Template"
Source: Artist: Micol Hebron (2015)

Online resources for mothers serve as sites where dominant discourses on motherhood are reified but also negotiated and resisted (Koerber, 2001; Lopez, 2009; Miklyaeva & Rumyantseva, 2018; Pedersen, 2016; Steiner & Bronstein, 2017). Mothers and parents find support online (Brady & Guerin, 2010; Lupton et al., 2016; Pedersen & Lupton, 2018), and this includes support for breastfeeding: people find both informational and emotional support on online forums (Gray, 2013; Rajagopalan, 2019; Regan & Brown, 2019). Online resources give space to alternative mothering narratives and thus create a broader picture of acceptable mothering (Koerber, 2001; Lehto, 2020; Lopez, 2009). Online communities can also work as platforms for lactivism, activism fighting for lactating bodies' place in public spaces (Boon & Pentney, 2015; Mecinska, 2018), which enable subversive significatory practices unimaginable in unmediated environments (Boon & Pentney, 2015, p. 1767). For instance, Boon and Pentney note that breastfeeding selfies, especially more "alternative" ones pushing the boundaries of acceptable mothering (e.g. featuring toddlers), do not fit into the selfie culture and destabilise mainstream social media spaces.

3.2. *Sociopolitical context*

Social media discourses are connected to the material sociopolitical context of society (KhosraviNik, 2017). The meanings evoked in the Russian online debates on public breastfeeding are embedded in the context of the profound changes that Russian society underwent after the dissolution of the USSR, including substantial transformations of discourses and structural conditions (e.g. family policies) shaping the phenomena of motherhood and breastfeeding. Importantly, in the post-Soviet era, responsibility for childcare switches from the state and society to parents, especially mothers (Temkina & Zdravomyslova, 2018). At the same time, women are expected to bear children to better the demographic situation in the country (Rivkin-Fish, 2010). Intensive mothering, the model where mothers become (mostly) bearers of responsibility for the children's wellbeing and are supposed to care for their children in labour-intensive, financially and emotionally demanding ways (Hays, 1996), becomes dominant (Avdeeva, 2020, p. 18; Issoupova, 2014; Nartova, 2015, p. 95). Breastfeeding is established as one of the most important practices ensuring the wellbeing of the child (Kornilova et al., 2010). At the same time, maintaining beauty becomes integral to women's identity (Attwood & Isupova, 2018), amplifying the sexualisation of their bodies and imposing on them the labour of keeping oneself aesthetically pleasing to others. This might create contradictory expectations of women when lactating (and maternal in general) bodies are not perceived as beautiful. The debate is further complicated as feminist ideas provide new interpretations of women's experiences

(Zdravomyslova, 2002). These "vertical" sociopolitical contexts feed into the "horizontal" context provided by social media and specific platforms (KhosraviNik, 2017).

4. Data and methods

We study the discourse generated in the debates on VKontakte, focusing on two opposite types of online communities: groups for mothers and parents, including one group dedicated specifically to breastfeeding, vis-a-vis spaces of online misogyny, or recreational nastiness, as Jane (2014a) puts it, aimed specifically toward mothers. These groups have their names derived from popular Russian-speaking Internet (derogatory) labels for mothers and contain grievances about mothers' behaviour and mock content from mothers' online communities. Table 5.1 contains information on each community.

   Posts and comments from these groups were collected using the Vkontakte application programming interface (API). To select texts on breastfeeding in public spaces (including online), we parsed the data using regular expressions made for a list of key phrases. The list was aimed to select texts relevant to the issue of public breastfeeding, and we were prepared to go too broad and filter later rather than miss relevant texts. To that end, regular expressions have been tested multiple times on subsets of the data. The final list included linguistic variations of the words/phrases "(public) breastfeeding", "breastfeed(ing) in (a) public (space[s])", "pumping with the breast covered", "feeding room(s)", "cover(ing) up", "flaunted breasts/boobs/cans", "(breast)feed in/on", "(breast)feed everywhere".[3] We included texts containing any of the key phrases. For the qualitative analysis, we created textual files that imitated the layout of Vkontakte discussions and made use of the data provided by the Vkontakte API, such as commenters' genders and likes and reposts of each text. As we started reading the texts, we noticed that additional hand filtering was needed, so during the first round of close reading and inductive coding, we filtered out the posts that contained key phrases but in fact were not relevant: were not about breastfeeding in public (e.g. posts on breastfeeding without mentioning the public component). We kept an inventory of the posts deleted and provided explanations for each choice. Table 5.1 presents the number of posts before and after this procedure.

   We followed DMA (Carpentier, 2017) as a methodological strategy, operating with concepts of discourse theory (such as discourse, nodal point, articulation, and chains of equivalence) and trying to account for the role of the material: mothers' and children's bodies and affordances of digital platforms. To zoom in on discursive strategies, we found helpful posing to the sample the set of questions that has been developed by Wodak and Reisigl (2001)

Table 5.1 Description of the corpus

Online community	N subscribers/followers[4]	Posts after automatic keyword search	Posts hand filtered (final)
allknowingmother: a feminist-oriented group for mothers run by activists, strictly moderated	36,996	98	26
thisisnormal: a page and an online community of a parenting online media, not very strictly moderated	56,265	32	29
ovulashkamen: a misogynist recreational group mocking mothers, moderated (without restrictions on hostility/aggression)	60,088	16	13
milkypixies: a breastfeeding support group, not very strictly moderated	67,251	331	53
mothersareus (two groups):[5] misogynist recreational groups mocking mothers	80,340 + 82,563	58 (21 + 37)	15 (6 + 9)
Total		520	136

as a part of their discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis and has been utilised in studies of self-other discourses and in the studies of racist and nationalist discourses specifically (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001; Merrill & Åkerlund, 2018). These questions ask how different groups of people are referred to linguistically, what characteristics they are attributed, what arguments are used to legitimate a particular way of treating them, and which points of view they represent (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001, p. 385). We coded the texts qualitatively using QDA Miner software in multiple stages and modified the codes between them. As two people were involved in the analysis, creation/modification of a code was accompanied by comments describing the code to the other analyst and demarcating the code from previously created ones.

5.   Ethics

Using social media data for social-scientific research presents considerable ethical challenges due to the issues of obtaining informed consent (debated

whether necessary when utilising data accessible without membership restrictions) and difficulties of protecting the anonymity and privacy of participants due to traceability of online texts (Beninger, 2017; Markham, 2012, see also Aiston, this volume). Researchers have problematised using "publicly accessible" data, arguing that accessibility does not mean the data was meant to be public (boyd & Crawford, 2012) and advise relying on the users' expectation of publicity and privacy (Gerrard, 2020). Because of the features of the debates – mostly led among strangers and *as* they were led among strangers – we considered our data public. Due to the number of participants in the online groups we selected, it was impossible to ask the participants' consent to use the data. As we considered data public, we found it possible to proceed nonetheless and protect the participants as much as possible through anonymisation. We changed all people's names to abbreviations[6] and group titles to pseudonyms in the analysed text files. Besides, the translation of the quotes into English means that they cannot be easily found through search engines.

6.   Nodal points of the discourse

In our analysis, we identified five major nodal points that frame discussions on public breastfeeding in Russia: *naturalness*, *intimacy*, *aesthetics*, *social norms*, and *the needs of the child*. This section describes the workings of each identified nodal point in the symbolic field constructing the meaning of public breastfeeding in VKontakte online communities.

The first nodal point we explore is the *naturalness* of breastfeeding. Proponents of public breastfeeding emphasised that "Breastfeeding is a natural and very beautiful process"[7] (*milkypixies* post 114661); therefore, nursing in public should be normalised: "I wonder when the natural will become the norm? The baby is eating, well, that's wonderful" (*thisisnormal* post 165639, comment 165745, female participant). This nodal point was mostly invoked in the community devoted to sustaining breastfeeding, and it is likely to be part of the natural mothering discourse that has circulated in Russia since the 2000s (Avdeeva, 2020, p. 18), which propagates, among other things, breastfeeding on cue as a desirable form of a child's nutrition.

In order to destabilise the articulation of breastfeeding as natural, opponents of public breastfeeding built chains of equivalence to other "natural" processes, and specifically those presented as completely unacceptable in public spaces: defecation, urination, sex, masturbation, nudity, or picking one's nose. In e-bile groups, these equalisations appear even when nobody uses the naturalness articulation. It seems that it stays at the backdrop of people's imagination as a position to be ridiculed, in line with the marginal status of the natural parenting model in Russia (Avdeeva, 2020). In turn, opponents contest these equivalency chains by pointing out that

breastfeeding, unlike defecation or urination, does not cause harm to people around.

> You compared urinating and feeding. Does milk stink? Is it unhygienic? Does it transmit infections and stain buildings? It looks like the answer is no, so I can feed my baby wherever I want.
>
> (*allknowingmother* post 19051, comment 19083, female participant)

For those who privileged the nodal point of *aesthetics,* the opinion on public breastfeeding depended on whether they found mothers' breasts aesthetically pleasing. In our data, it was mostly men who supported this articulation, often conflating aesthetic pleasure with the sexualisation of breasts. If breasts were considered arousing, then men applauded the opportunity to see them in public places: "and even here no one is against the breast! Everyone is outraged because one cannot see it well because of the child!" (*mothersareus* post 507717, comment 508100, male participant). Others held the opinion that "Not all boobs are the same. The goods of nursing women do not have any aesthetic value, rather, the contrary" (*ovulashkamen* post 114197, comment 114310, female participant) and expressed disgust at mothers' breasts commonly described as ugly, veiny, saggy, with stretch marks and chapped nipples. *Tas(ty)titties, sag(gy)titties*, *cans, milkers, udder* are among labels for breasts that are used for feeding the child while failing to cause aesthetic pleasure in others. This way, users of such groups engage in recreational nastiness (Jane, 2014b) directed against women, performing e-bile towards them (Jane, 2014a). These articulations, while glaringly misogynistic in their display of a consumerist attitude towards female bodies and a level of hostility for those bodies that do not manage to please, are in line with dominant post-Soviet gender expectations of maintaining a woman's body in accordance with standards of femininity (Porteous, 2018) that, in the case of breastfeeding, becomes opposing to motherhood.

To contest the primacy of aesthetics in the construction of the meaning of breastfeeding, users built several types of equivalential chains. Some claimed that if breastfeeding looks unaesthetic and evokes disgust, then so should eating by adults: "why don't you turn away when you eat? I hate to watch strangers chew" (*milkypixies* post 198171, comment 198544, female participant). Others insisted that all breasts should cause disgust if mothers' breasts do: "In many of your VK news feeds 'cans' flicker now and then, and that is not disgusting to you. And feeding a child is disgusting?" (*mothersareus* post 546171, comment 546183, female participant). Another articulation equates breastfeeding with other phenomena that can be considered unaesthetic but are still very present in everyday social

life: "fat" or "ugly" people, people in unstylish clothes, men walking topless.

Another major nodal point we found in the discourse on breastfeeding is *intimacy*. First, bonding between the mother and the child that happens during breastfeeding is considered intimate. The sentiment is mostly mentioned by breastfeeding mothers:

> I look my baby in the eyes, smile, communicate with him, stroke him. It's all deeply intimate. (. . .) The presence of strangers around does not at all contribute to relaxation and the mood for feeding).
>
> (*milkypixies* post 139673, comment 139883, female participant)

Opponents of public breastfeeding established chains of equivalence between breastfeeding and sex or adults kissing to argue for exclusion of such intimate practices from public spaces. Defenders saw it as close to kissing or petting the child, which are intimate but considered normal.

Another aspect of public breastfeeding invoking heated debates is the intimacy of showing the breast. The possibility of inclusion of lactating bodies into public space often relies on women's ability to perform breastfeeding with discretion (Lane, 2014). As one user put it, "For me, the breast remains an intimate part of the body, even when milk gushes out of it" (*thisisnormal* post 356687, comment 356892, female participant); thus, the lactating breast requires careful management not to transgress the norms (Wall, 2001, p. 594). Women who were perceived to perform breastfeeding without discretion were either marked as *yazhmateri*[8] who were *showing off*, holding a *performance*, disturbing the accepted normative order, or *whores* who engaged in *exhibitionism*, *nudism*, or *fetishism* and could be compared to men showing their penis to strangers, completely sexualising the act of breastfeeding. To avoid breaking norms, users suggested that mothers could cover their breasts, turn away, use maternity rooms, or abstain from visiting public spaces with small children altogether. Yet others considered breastfeeding as naturally discrete, arguing that clothes or the child's head sufficiently cover the breast.

Some discussion participants, mainly women with breastfeeding experience, attempted to destabilise the nodal point of intimacy. They rejected the signification of breastfeeding as intimate: "When you give breast a hundred and fifty times a day, it's just an ordinary everyday part of life" (*allknowingmother* post 21536). Some matched this process to eating, implying that wherever adults are allowed to eat, infants should be as well. Others signified breastfeeding primarily as natural and beautiful, using labels such as *perverted society* or *narrow-minded moralists* for those "vulgarising" it. Many articulated feeding the child as the breast's

natural and primary function, resisting widespread sexualisation of women's breasts. They also pointed out that (images of) women in revealing clothes are accepted in society. If that is normal, they argue, then so should be breastfeeding.

Social norms serve as another crucial nodal point in online discussions on public breastfeeding. Those arguments appeal to respect for "the society" and what the authors consider norms of public behaviour that everyone should adhere to. Consider explanations of some of the pejorative labels attributed to publicly breastfeeding women:

> And it is those mothers who say "I don't give a shit about society, it is only important for me that the child is comfortable" – those are called *ovulyashkas*.[9]
>
> (*thisisnormal* post 155834,
> comment 156219, male participant)

> This is also a separate topic of the mega-egoism of some "*yazhmateri*": here I am, I gave birth, so the whole world is obliged to me, here is my child, you all owe him: you have to praise, be touched, admire, coddle him.
>
> (*milkypixies* post 139673,
> comment 140023, female participant)

Thus, women who nurse in public are perceived as disrespecting public norms, namely putting the interests of the child before the interests of "the society", or expecting others to change their behaviour for them. They are stigmatised as being egoistic, aggressive, and seeking attention from others. In many cases, users attempting to stigmatise the mothers' behaviour imagined themselves as speaking on behalf of society, indicating that the aforementioned norm has a hegemonic status.

Reactions to taken-for-grantedness of these social norms are numerous. Some chose to conform to what they saw as the norm imposed on them to "respect the interests of others" or "make compromises", or because they perceived the society members as supportive and caring for them. Others did not agree that the interests of the society should prevail given the common negative attitudes towards mothers: "I do not bother respecting people who do not respect me" (*thisisnormal* post 397065, comment 396746, female participant). Still, many who held a similar opinion did not challenge the perceived norms, choosing to "conform to society to avoid unnecessary aggression and negativity" (*mothersareus* post 587560, comment 587598, female participant).

Many users, especially in mothers' online communities, articulated "social norms" as oppressive, discriminatory, shaming, and generally unjust towards mothers. As one mother put it, discourses aimed at

disciplining mothers' behaviour in public spaces "create a very unpleasant, annoying background that makes it clear that mothers have no place in society, that they need to stay at home and be as inconspicuous and convenient as possible for EVERYONE except themselves and their child" (*thisisnormal* post 396746, comment 397022, female participant). Such signification allows participants to see their experiences as part of structural injustice and normalise negative feelings about them. For users doubting the structural pressure on mothers, the label "white coat" (meaning the hypocrite pretending to be the only one unstained by imperfection) is commonly used, and in extreme cases, users can be banned for such opinions. Breastfeeding in public was also constructed as a woman's right that must be respected by society and fought for. This signification is most marginalised outside mothers' groups, labelled as *manifest, propaganda/aggressive imposition, feminism, or fanaticism* and opposed by the claim that others have the right not to see breastfeeding mothers and/or have negative feelings about them.

Participants also used other strategies to destabilise the nodal point of social norms. Some attempted to marginalise the position of opponents of public breastfeeding by claiming that a normal person would not react negatively to a nursing mother, pointing out that their personal opinion is not a social norm, or highlighting relativity and historical embeddedness of social norms. Others insisted on prioritising the wellbeing of the mother and/or the child over societal expectations. They used two arguments. First, that children need to be breastfed to survive and develop, outweighing people's possible dissatisfaction with seeing breastfeeding. Secondly, that mothers could suffer from mental health problems due to isolation from society should they try to avoid public breastfeeding at all costs. Users also often mentioned that public order can be maintained at a way smaller cost if people simply looked away instead of demanding special self-management from mothers. These contestations come from intensive mothering discourse putting responsibility for fulfilling the child's needs on the mother (Hays, 1996).

This argument about the child's wellbeing brings to the forefront the last nodal point – *needs of the child* – which appeared predominantly in mothers' communities. It was virtually absent in the e-bile groups *ovulashkamen* and *mothersareus*, where significations of breastfeeding privileging the child's needs were contested, in many cases through ridicule. In communities for mothers, the discussion on the primacy of children's needs was more nuanced. Users commonly equated breastfeeding to eating by adults, claiming that children should be able to eat in public places. The signification of breastfeeding as a fulfilment of the child's needs can also lead to a stance against breastfeeding in public, as the child can get nervous, scared or distracted and have problems digesting food or because it is

not hygienic. Thus, going to a maternity room or at least covering the child is equated with proper care for the baby.

The primacy of the child's needs is normally not contested, but simply absent from the discourse of opponents of public breastfeeding. However, some contestations are present, most often in the form of comparing the child's needs to the sexual needs of adults:

> Bitch. Let me, too, start running around with my husband and blowing him on every corner. (. . .) And to all the dissatisfied appeals I will yell: "I am a wife! He has instincts and needs, don't you see? For me, my and his own needs come first".
>
> <div align="right">(ovulashkamen post 14995,
comment 15074, female participant)</div>

7.   Tools/methods of construction of the digital discourse VK

This section reports on how platform affordances of Vkontakte and user interactions with them contribute to particular methods of discourse construction. For instance, discourse scholars have long studied intertextuality and recognised its contribution to the discourses (e.g. Fairclough, 1992), but accounting for the (hyper-)intertextuality within social media discourses means paying special attention to (creative) practices of social media use.

7.1.   *Recontextualisation of the previously created content*

The participants of the discussion often used images (personal breastfeeding photos, memes, caricatures), stickers/emojis, videos and links to other resources to support their argumentation. This content functions as preconstructed "bricks" from which users can build new texts or as tools to support their arguments. They can also be created by professional communicators and thus convey their messages more eloquently. With such tools available, commenters might draw on them to express their opinions rather than create new texts:

> I'll leave it here: (link to a video created by a popular breastfeeding activist). It is simple: no one can say it better than [activist].
>
> <div align="right">(milkypixies post 198171,
comment 198602, female participant)</div>

For instance, the comic (Figure 5.2) created by David Horsey and published on *The Spokesman-Review* website in 2012 (Laird, 2012) found its

Figure 5.2 Comic by David Horsey
Source: Laird (2012)

way to discussions on public breastfeeding on VKontakte and was used by commenters to stress that clothes or images that expose breasts do not seem to arise debates as heated as those on public breastfeeding.

The interpretation of such content is shaped by the new context in which it is put and the supplementary text (if present). While the image by Horsey is used to illustrate an argument matching the message of the drawing, members of the misogynistic groups we explored share user-generated content collected from web forums and groups for mothers (posted as screenshots or copied texts) to "shock", "horrify", and entertain other participants of the group:

> On the topic of severe *ovulyashkas*. I found a blog of one fan of breast-feeding and slings, her son is 1.5 years old, breastfed. Complementary foods in the form of sausages, vinaigrettes and other things. The mother does not follow a diet, as she feeds, she stuffs herself with kebabs, vinaigrette, spicy and fried foods. The child has diathesis, sometimes scratches his face until it bleeds. So, go and be horrified. (link)
>
> (*ovulashkamen* post 204462,
> comment 204489, female participant)

Texts and images taken from other platforms are one of the major content types in these online communities. Recontextualised, these texts become vulnerable to ridicule, and concerns raised there become delegitimated as they are understood as laughable and/or stupid. Appropriating content means that participants do not have to create new argumentation against mothers' actions (including public breastfeeding) because negative sentiments that the appropriated content provokes work as arguments on their own and reinforce hostility. For instance, a post from a breastfeeding support community arguing against comparing feeding breasts with penises was posted with detailed humorous counter-arguments for each thesis of the original text. Moreover, full access to original content allows the participants of the misogynistic groups to learn the vernacular and parody it to demean those who use it:

> Do you not like a sucking shitter? You're a fucking freechild and a sexist. Do not envy my deliciousness, flat-board, when you give birth, you will understand.
>
> <div align="right">(ovulashkamen post 114197,
comment 114333, male participant)</div>

In this comment, the user employs several words assumedly used by mothers. The level of absurdity of this expression and the comedic hyperbole is meant to undermine and ridicule by extension those who might make similar (but serious) points, such as arguing that protesting public breastfeeding is sexist and hostile to children. The activity of this group shows how original content created by a stigmatised group can be intentionally used as a weapon against its creators. The usage of this strategy is facilitated by the affordances of both Vkontakte (allowing to repost and share images, texts, and links) and platforms the content is appropriated from (the accessibility of content without being a member, the possibility to share) as well as practices of social media use. One example would be privacy settings of online groups, but, more importantly, this discursive strategy is concordant with how people use social media: looking for and sharing content that makes an impression on them.

Commenters' user profiles can also be used in a discussion. While some commenters decided to attach their photos or share their personal experiences, in several cases, information from their profiles was brought up by others. Similar to Facebook, comments on VKontakte feature authors' avatars and include links to their profiles. This way, users "bring" their profiles into the discussions, and other participants might make use of them to contextualise commenters' arguments. Depending on the argument made and the contents of this "context" of the personal profile, the relationship

between them can be used to make sense of the argument produced and/
or to delegitimise it:

> the problem is that since the child wants to eat ONE SHOULD COVER
> UP, put on a shawl and that's all, what's the problem?
>
> <div align="right">(mothersareus post 853677,
comment 853746, female participant)</div>

> Reply: in some of your photos one can see more breast than the nursing
> mothers show [photos attached]
>
> <div align="right">(mothersareus post 853677,
comment 853823, female participant)</div>

The interpretations of the accessed profile information influence the ways
comments are reacted to. The ways content travels around online spaces
(including not only from where to where but also how it is recontextual-
ised, *who* "brings" the text into the context and *how*) contribute to the
discourse along with those texts. Moreover, when the participants do not
make use of such features, the affordances do not get enacted, signifying
the role of *practices* and not only affordances in social media discourses.

7.2.   *Contexts, norms, conflicts, and entertainment*

Discussions happen, and discourse gets constructed within online groups
that have their normativity (pronounced in groups' descriptions or evi-
dent from their posts and comments of the subscribers) and to some extent
enforced by moderation. Users assume that a group has a certain position
on the topic of public breastfeeding and take it into account while evaluat-
ing statements made by participants:

> It is funny that you oppose breastfeeding pictures, in a breastfeeding
> group.
>
> <div align="right">(milkypixies post 101640,
comment 101647, female participant)</div>

This comment implies that participants' comments should be in concord-
ance with the context they are put in, namely the group's purpose and
normativity. However, while groups have an evident stance on public
breastfeeding, the participants do not just pick online spaces where they
can create common discourses with like-minded people. Most publica-
tions caused heated discussions with controversies and conflicts; comment-
ing under one thread in the breastfeeding support group was even shut
down by the moderators. Nowhere did participants seem close to being

unanimous in their position on public breastfeeding, with women writing about their disgust in the community for breastfeeding women and defenders of mothers speaking against the ridicule in misogynistic e-bile groups. Even comments in the feminist and rather strictly moderated group (*allknowingmother*) for mothers include controversies and hostility (although they are usually quickly cleaned). Participants seem to be aware of this tendency, and some became frustrated with the salience of discourse they thought contradicted the group's position on the matter (with which they solidarise):

I'm shocked by the comments.

(*milkypixie*s post 198171,
comment 198232, female participant)

Reply: Me too. So much condemnation in a group about breastfeeding.
(*milkypixies* post 198171,
comment 198236, female participant)

Thus, despite the existing and evident normativity of the online communities we have explored, it is not fully reflected in the discourse, as the users do not seem to restrain from disagreeing comments and/or disputes with people who have shared an opposite point of view. The seeming inability to leave alone messages expressing adverse ideas on public breastfeeding contributes to creation of discourse through combative arguments and chains of disagreements. Researchers have noted that certain features and effects of social media and mediated communication in general provide a fertile ground for higher levels of hostility and hate (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2012; Siegel et al., 1986). And while exposure to aggressive comments and posts might be upsetting and damaging, some users shared that they expect and sometimes even hope to see conflicts:

God, opening the comments, I foresaw the bf[10]-feud, and the instructions on how others should live and what they should do, and all this is really here. Thank you, thisisnormal, for not letting me down.

(*thisisnormal* post 43866,
comment 44037, female participant)

So, I don't get it. The topic has been out for three minutes. And where is all the "no, well, this is too much", "but I consider this process intimate", "they should have sat down to poop there as well"? Oh, no, everything is fine and in place.

(*thisisnormal* post 127242,
comment 127248, female participant)

In many ways, the aggressive and inflammatory comments in the discussions fit descriptions of Internet trolling: they irritate and lure people into arguing and might be entertaining for others (Dynel, 2016). Dynel emphasises how problematic it is to define trolling and how multifaceted this phenomenon could be. However, there are reasons to claim that what we found is much more complicated. Conceptualisations of trolling presume that trolls annoy and lure innocent users into meaningless conflicts. We, on the other hand, see that users 1) expect to see conflicts, including particular arguments; 2) still participate in such discussions; and 3) try to convince their opponents. Finding entertainment in conflict seems to be a key practice for understanding the discourse we observe as participants, again and again, get engaged in similar heated debates.

8.　Concluding discussion

In this chapter, we analysed the discourse on public breastfeeding in VKontakte online communities, the features of the platform and users' practices that shape these discussions. We found the nodal points related to *needs of the child* and *naturalness* to be most salient in communities for mothers. These are in accordance with intensive mothering ideology that puts responsibility for the child's wellbeing predominantly on the mother (Hays, 1996) and natural, or attachment, parenting, which puts special emphasis on breastfeeding (on cue) to ensure the child's wellbeing (Avdeeva, 2020; Faircloth, 2010). However, these parenting ideals come into conflict with other ideals, namely the expectations about behaviour in public spaces and respecting "society". Previous research showed that breastfeeding is perceived as a disruption of public order in a variety of contexts (Bartlett, 2002; Lane, 2014), and the discussions on Russian social media concur with this, indicated by the centrality of the nodal points of *social norms* and *intimacy*. Any perceived failure to perform breastfeeding appropriately, namely, without disturbing others in any way and/or making the breast visible, resulted in shaming and aggression towards mothers. Another set of expectations is pinpointed by the nodal point of *aesthetics*: discussion participants outside mothers' communities considered breastfeeding as ultimately unaesthetic and generally unpleasant to see, which contributes to the exclusion of nursing mothers from public spaces, including online ones.

In her seminal work on working mothers, Hays (1996) describes "the cultural contradictions of motherhood": women are supposed to be fully dedicated to their children at home and while staying fully dedicated workers as well. In our study, we find publicly breastfeeding women situated in the turmoil of several cultural contradictions between mothering ideals – intensive mothering and natural mothering as one of its versions (Faircloth, 2013) – and other discourses circulating in Russian society. These

contradictions are very telling on the status of women in Russian society: in many ways, women are seen primarily as mothers and are ascribed sole responsibility for children (with fathers being invisible in mainstream discourse) while not being properly supported by the state in bringing up children (Rivkin-Fish, 2010; Rosenholm et al., 2010; Shpakovskaya, 2015). Moreover, maternity is expected of women, but so is performing beauty labour to keep their bodies aesthetically pleasing (Porteous, 2018), even to strangers. Judging by the discussions, it seems often incompatible with mothering and (on-cue) nursing, which is deemed important as part of being a mother and framed by medical experts as the most preferable means of infant nutrition (WHO, 2003). The pressure of being beautiful is the reason some women in Russia choose not to have children at all (Attwood & Isupova, 2018). Overall, these contradictions make performing "good" motherhood and femininity that would be evaluated positively by others impossible as long as rules of appropriate motherhood are shaped by such a combative and versatile discourse which we witnessed in the public breastfeeding discussions.

The aggressive sanctioning of mothers' behaviour not fitting the criteria for appropriate feeding can be interpreted as a case of online misogyny observed in a variety of contexts (Jane, 2014b; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Siapera, 2019b). We saw how mothers' content can be appropriated by the e-bile groups, and other women (and mothers) exhibit internalised misogyny and hostility towards breastfeeding mothers. Moreover, lactating bodies are objectified and sexualised (or condemned for not being sexy enough) by commenters. While gender-based hostility online is a widespread phenomenon, the internet in Russia is an especially hostile environment.[11] Furthermore, the culture of aggression and shaming of women who speak up against structural inequalities and violence is generally present in the Russian public sphere (Rajagopalan, 2019). This desire to aggressively affirm one's interpretations and values can be read as a way of coping with the increased uncertainty which came with the pluralisation of gender norms after the collapse of the USSR (Temkina & Rotkirkh, 2002) by imagining one kind of gender order as unchangeable and symbolically excluding the deviant others.

Despite widespread online hostility towards women not meeting the standards of "good motherhood", there are also communities for mothers that problematise these norms. As well as allowing mothers to blow off steam and engage in recreational chatting, such communities "encourage articulation of ideas that have a hard time finding their place in the offline world" (Koerber, 2001, p. 237), as they provide a space for sharing individual experiences that point to systemic inequalities and injustices and normalise negative feelings about these experiences. This counter-hegemonic activity is supported by strict moderation rules, as well as local normative orders

that signify the individualisation of structural problems as unacceptable. In this sense, communities for mothers that we studied can be understood as consciousness-raising groups (Anderson & Grace, 2015; Pruchniewska, 2019). However, as we have pointed out, even these such communities (like *allknowingmother*) are not fully safe spaces, as adverse views and conflicts happen there as well.

Online discourses present both opportunities and challenges for researchers. Marjut Johansson argues that new discussion forums he studied "do not represent a digital agora in a sense that they could be called a space of true citizens' debates" (Johansson, 2017, p. 10). The same holds for VKontakte discussions on public breastfeeding: as well as trying to make sense of reality and produce/discover/problematise norms, participants sought controversial entertainment in these discussions. There are platform affordances that allow for that, and these affordances get activated by user practices. For instance, affordances of a set of platforms allow both the e-bile groups to appropriate mothers' content and for the mothers to create moderated (almost) safe spaces where they set the rules (however, e-bile groups we observed did not have strong moderation, and mothers did not appropriate or recontextualise content for e-bile purposes). These practices significantly shape the discourse produced, as, for instance, e-bile groups actively appropriate and recontextualise content from mothers' communities and use it to perform their recreational hostility towards women. Moreover, users of various groups engaged in combative discussions, made sarcastic arguments (such as a female user's appeal to a husband's sexual needs: if a child's needs are catered to, so should the needs of a husband and wife be respected) and derived entertainment from controversies and disagreement on public breastfeeding. This influenced the (often very strong and/or derogatory) language used as well as the arguments made.

Based on our analysis, we aim to accentuate that such conflictual, hostile (e.g. misogynistic) and entertainment-seeking ways of engaging with social media are a part of the (digital) discourse production and are not isolated phenomena of flaming, trolling, etc. To make sense of digital discourses, we need to pay attention to such social media practices and understand how they shape the discourses. In that, we call for further exploration of the role of affordances but also practices of social media in discourse studies, as usage of the same platform (and discourse produced) can vary within one platform: our study is only one example of that. Costa (2018) presented an illuminating case of creative Facebook use, illustrating that practices vary and that affordances only get enacted in practice. Practices (conventional and not) are especially essential to consider for scholars implementing the framework of discursive-material analysis (Carpentier, 2017), as attention to practices means that both materiality *and* agency are acknowledged as well as discourse and structure.

Notes

1. The question of whether an online discussion on breastfeeding (for instance, by people who haven't had the experience) makes it public *online* can have multiple answers with good argumentation.
2. VKontakte is a social media platform popular among Russophone internet users. A reported 97 million users are active every month, as of 2018–2019, according to VKontakte's description https://vk.com/about (accessed on 09.12.2020). VKontakte imitates the layout and functions of Facebook but also has unique features; for instance, it allows its users to upload, share and listen to music on the platform.
3. The list of Russian regular expressions is available upon request.
4. Group information accessed on 23.11.2020.
5. We considered posts from these groups together since they are similar in their titles and declared purposes and their content partially overlaps (same messages posted in both groups).
6. Abbreviations were constructed out of two first letters of the first and last name.
7. Here and further in the text, the translations have been made by the authors.
8. Literal translation: "I am a mother" – mothers who are regarded as demanding society to cater to their and their children's needs based on their status as mothers.
9. *Ovulyashkas* literally translates to "women during ovulation" and is used as a pejorative label for pregnant women and mothers who seem too invested in their mothering.
10. Bf = breastfeeding.
11. Russia is ranked among 5 (out of 25 studied) countries with the lowest Digital Civility Index in 2020 (Microsoft & TRG, 2020) and in the top 3 on the probability of facing online trolling, hate speech, discrimination, misogyny, and similar hostile behaviors (Microsoft, 2020).

References

Anderson, W. K., & Grace, K. E. (2015). "Taking mama steps" toward authority, alternatives, and advocacy: Feminist consciousness-raising within a digital motherhood community. *Feminist Media Studies*, *15*(6), 942–959.

Attwood, L., & Isupova, O. (2018). Choosing whether to have children: A netnographic study of women's attitudes towards childbirth and the family in post-Soviet Russia. In L. Attwood, E. Schimpfössl, & M. Yusupova (Eds.), *Gender and choice after socialism* (pp. 133–158). Cham: Springer.

Avdeeva, A. (2020). *Natural parenting in contemporary Russia: When "nature" meets kinship*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Faculty of Art.

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *28*(3), 801–831.

Bartlett, A. (2002). Scandalous practices and political performances: Breastfeeding in the city. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *16*(1), 111–121.

Baym, N. K., & boyd, d. (2012). Socially mediated publicness: An introduction. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *56*(3), 320–329.

Beninger, K. (2017). Social media users' views on the ethics of social media research. In L. Sloan & A. Quan-Haase (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social media research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Bennett, S. (2018). New "crises," old habits: Online interdiscursivity and intertextuality in UK migration policy discourses. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *16*(1–2), 140–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2016.1257753

Bologna, C. (2016, August 26). 50 famous moms who got real about breastfeeding. *HuffPost*. www.huffpost.com/entry/50-memorable-celebrity-breastfeeding-moments_n_57bf1e48e4b04193420de9d1

Boon, S., & Pentney, B. (2015). Selfies| virtual lactivism: Breastfeeding selfies and the performance of motherhood. *International Journal of Communication*, *9*, 14.

boyd, d. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

boyd, d., & Crawford, K. (2012). Critical questions for big data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon. *Information, Communication & Society*, *15*(5), 662–679.

Brady, E., & Guerin, S. (2010). "Not the romantic, all happy, coochy coo experience": A qualitative analysis of interactions on an Irish parenting web site. *Family Relations*, *59*(1), 14–27.

Carpentier, N. (2017). *The discursive-material knot: Cyprus in conflict and community media participation*. New York: Peter Lang.

Carpentier, N. (2019). Enriching discourse theory: The discursive-material knot as a non-hierarchical ontology. *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs*, *9*(2), 369–384.

Cook, A. B. (2016). Breastfeeding in public: Disgust and discomfort in the bodiless public sphere. *Politics & Gender*, *12*(4), 677–699.

Costa, E. (2018). Affordances-in-practice: An ethnographic critique of social media logic and context collapse. *New Media & Society*, *20*(10), 3641–3656. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818756290

Dynel, M. (2016). "Trolling is not stupid": Internet trolling as the art of deception serving entertainment. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *13*(3), 353–381. https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2016-0015

Faircloth, C. (2010). "If they want to risk the health and well-being of their child, that's up to them": Long-term breastfeeding, risk and maternal identity. *Health, Risk & Society*, *12*(4), 357–367. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698571003789674

Faircloth, C. (2013). *Militant lactivism?: Attachment parenting and intensive motherhood in the UK and France* (Vol. 24). New York: Berghahn Books.

Fairclough, N. (1992). Intertextuality in critical discourse analysis. *Linguistics and Education*, *4*, 269–293.

Francis, M. (2019, June 13). A breastfeeding woman was told to leave a Texas pool: This public shaming of mothers has to stop. *NBC News*. www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/texas-pool-told-breastfeeding-woman-leave-public-shaming-mothers-has-ncna1017146

Gerrard, Y. (2020). What's in a (pseudo) name? Ethical conundrums for the principles of anonymisation in social media research. *Qualitative Research*, 1468794120922070.

Giles, F. (2018). Making breastfeeding social: The role of brelfies in breastfeeding's burgeoning publics. In *Social experiences of breastfeeding: Building bridges between research, policy and practice* (pp. 187–203). Bristol: Policy Press.

Goel, I. (2018, August 6). Moms on the job: Lawmakers across the world who breastfed while at work. *The Indian Express*. https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/politicians-breastfed-babies-parliamentary-5292566/

Gray, J. (2013). Feeding on the web: Online social support in the breastfeeding context. *Communication Research Reports*, *30*(1), 1–11.

Hanson, B. (2015, July 23). Male nipple template to FreeTheNipple and Micol Hebron go viral. *Chapman Newsroom*. https://news.chapman.edu/2015/07/22/male-nipple-template-to-freethenipple-and-micol-hebron-go-viral/

Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hebron, M. (2015). *Articles about my digital pasty designed to fight censorship of female nipples*. http://micolhebron.artcodeinc.com/pages/nipples-articles-about-my-digital-pasty-designed-to-fight-censorship-of-female-nipples/

Issoupova, O. (2014). TyzheMat': Neizbezhnyy geroizm i neizbyvnaya materinstva [You are a mother: The inevitable heroism and inescapable guilt of motherhood]. *Demoscope Weekly*, № 585–586. www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2014/0585/analit02.php

Jane, E. A. (2014a). "Your a ugly, whorish, slut" understanding E-bile. *Feminist Media Studies*, *14*(4), 531–546.

Jane, E. A. (2014b). "Back to the kitchen, cunt": Speaking the unspeakable about online misogyny. *Continuum*, *28*(4), 558–570. https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2014.924479

Johansson, M. (2017). Everyday opinions in news discussion forums: Public vernacular discourse. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *19*, 5–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.03.001

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 582–596). Abingdon: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *14*(1), 45–68.

Koerber, A. (2001). Postmodernism, resistance, and cyberspace: Making rhetorical spaces for feminist mothers on the web. *Women's Studies in Communication*, *24*(2), 218–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2001.10162435

Kornilova, G. M., Zabolotnaia, L. N., & Safina, L. Z. (2010). Rol' meditsinskikh uchrezhdeniy v podderzhke grudnogo vskarmlivaniya [The role of medical facilities in support of breastfeeding]. *Prakticheskaya Meditsina* [Practical Medicine], *6*(45).

Laclau, E. (1988). Metaphor and social antagonisms. In *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 249–257). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Laclau, E. (2005). *On populist reason*. London: Verso.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.

Laird, D. (2012, July 13). *Breast feeding in public | The spokesman-review*. www.spokesman.com/blogs/commcomm/2012/jul/13/breast-feeding-public/

Lane, R. (2014). Healthy discretion? Breastfeeding and the mutual maintenance of motherhood and public space. *Gender, Place & Culture*, *21*(2), 195–210.

Lapidot-Lefler, N., & Barak, A. (2012). Effects of anonymity, invisibility, and lack of eye-contact on toxic online disinhibition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *28*(2), 434–443. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.10.014

Lehto, M. (2020). Bad is the new good: Negotiating bad motherhood in Finnish mommy blogs. *Feminist Media Studies*, *20*(5), 657–671.

Lopez, L. K. (2009). The radical act of "mommy blogging": Redefining motherhood through the blogosphere. *New Media & Society*, *11*(5), 729–747. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809105349

Lupton, D., Pedersen, S., & Thomas, G. M. (2016). Parenting and digital media: From the early web to contemporary digital society. *Sociology Compass*, *10*(8), 730–743.

Machin, D. (2016). The need for a social and affordance-driven multimodal critical discourse studies. *Discourse & Society*, *27*(3), 322–334. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926516630903

Mantilla, K. (2013). Gendertrolling: Misogyny adapts to new media. *Feminist Studies*, *39*(2), 563–570.

Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice. *Information, Communication & Society*, *15*(3), 334–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.641993

Matamoros-Fernández, A. (2017). Platformed racism: The mediation and circulation of an Australian race-based controversy on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(6), 930–946.

Mecinska, L. (2018). Embodied online activism: Breastfeeding activism (lactivism) on Facebook. *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network*, *11*(2), 21–38.

Merrill, S., & Åkerlund, M. (2018). Standing up for Sweden? The racist discourses, architectures and affordances of an anti-immigration Facebook group. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *23*(6), 332–353. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy018

Microsoft. (2020). Civility, safety & interaction online: 2020: The rising tide of incivility. *Russia*. https://query.prod.cms.rt.microsoft.com/cms/api/am/binary/RE4oUSX

Microsoft, & TRG. (2020). Digital civility index report. *Civility, Safety & Interaction Online*. https://query.prod.cms.rt.microsoft.com/cms/api/am/binary/RE4p1Jf

Midberry, J. (2017). Photos of breastfeeding in uniform: Contesting discourses of masculinity, nationalism, and the military. *Feminist Media Studies*, *17*(6), 972–987.

Miklyaeva, A. V., & Rumyantseva, P. V. (2018). "#Onazhemat": Implitsitnye sotsial'nye predstavleniya o materinstve v sovremennom rossiyskom

internet-diskurse ["#Sheisamother": Implicit social beliefs about motherhood in the modern Russian internet discourse]. *Zhenshchina v Rossiyskom Obshchestve* [Woman in Russian Society], *1*(86), 67–77.

Nartova, N. (2015). Mapping motherhood: Girls as mothers in contemporary Russia. *Girlhood Studies*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2015.080108

Pedersen, S. (2016). The good, the bad and the "good enough" mother on the UK parenting forum Mumsnet. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *59*, 32–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2016.09.004

Pedersen, S., & Lupton, D. (2018). "What are you feeling right now?" Communities of maternal feeling on Mumsnet. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *26*, 57–63.

Porteous, H. (2018). "A woman isn't a woman when she's not concerned about the way she looks": Beauty labour and femininity in post-soviet Russia. In *The Palgrave handbook of women and gender in twentieth-century Russia and the Soviet Union* (pp. 413–428). London: Springer.

Pruchniewska, U. (2019). "A group that's just women for women": Feminist affordances of private Facebook groups for professionals. *New Media & Society*, *21*(6), 1362–1379.

Rajagopalan, S. (2019). Misogyny, solidarity and postfeminism on social media: The work of being Diana Shurygina, survivor-celebrity. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *22*(5–6), 739–762. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549419856828

Regan, S., & Brown, A. (2019). Experiences of online breastfeeding support: Support and reassurance versus judgement and misinformation. *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, *15*(4), e12874.

Rivkin-Fish, M. (2010). Pronatalism, gender politics, and the renewal of family support in Russia: Toward a feminist anthropology of "maternity capital." *Slavic Review*, *69*(3), 701–724.

Rosenholm, A., Nordenstreng, K., & Trubina, E. (2010). "We must all give birth: That's an order": The Russian mass media commenting on VV Putin's address. In *Russian mass media and changing values* (pp. 91–113). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Shpakovskaya, L. (2015). How to be a good mother: The case of middle class mothering in Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *67*(10), 1571–1586. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2015.1101210

Siapera, E. (2019a). *Gender hate online: Understanding the new anti-feminism* (pp. 21–43). Cham: Springer.

Siapera, E. (2019b). Online misogyny as witch hunt: Primitive accumulation in the age of techno-capitalism. In *Gender hate online: Understanding the new anti-feminism* (pp. 21–43). New York: Springer.

Siegel, J., Dubrovsky, V., Kiesler, S., & McGuire, T. W. (1986). Group processes in computer-mediated communication. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *37*(2), 157–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(86)90050-6

Steiner, L., & Bronstein, C. (2017). Leave a comment: Mommyblogs and the everyday struggle to reclaim parenthood. *Feminist Media Studies*, *17*(1), 59–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1261840

Temkina, A., & Rotkirkh, A. (2002). Sovetskie gendernye kontrakty i ikh transformatsiya v sovremennoy Rossii [Soviet gender contracts and their transformation

in modern Russia]. *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniya* [Studies in Sociology], *11*, 4–14.

Temkina, A., & Zdravomyslova, E. (2018). Responsible motherhood, practices of reproductive choice and class construction in contemporary Russia. In L. Attwood, E. Schimpfössl, & M. Yusupova (Eds.), *Gender and choice after socialism* (pp. 161–186). Cham: Springer.

Wall, G. (2001). Moral constructions of motherhood in breastfeeding discourse. *Gender & Society*, *15*(4), 592–610.

WHO. (2003). *Global strategy for infant and young child feeding*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Will Instagram ever "free the nipple"? (2019, November 22). *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2019/11/22/arts/design/instagram-free-the-nipple.html

Wodak, R., & Reisigl, M. (2001). Discourse and racism. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 372–397). Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Zdravomyslova, E. (2002). Overview of the feminist movement in contemporary Russia. *Diogenes*, *49*(194), 35–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/039219210204919406

Zhenshchinu poprosili uyti iz Tret'yakovskoy galerei iz-za kormleniya grud'yu [A woman was asked to leave the Tretyakov Galery because of breastfeeding]. (2019, November 11). *Wonderzine*. www.wonderzine.com/wonderzine/life/news/247053-tretyakov-gallery-breastfeeding

Part III

Digital discourses of hate and discrimination

6 "Reject Rohingya and Send Them Back!"

Digital discourses of nationalism and xenophobia in the time of a pandemic

Siti Nurnadilla Mohamad Jamil

1. Introduction

During the early days of Web 2.0, some scholars were hopeful that the Internet could operate as a virtual extension of the public sphere – much more than this, the cybersphere was celebrated as a virtual space where our national identity could be potentially circumvented and made irrelevant, especially when embracing an idea of global citizenship (see for example Poster, 2001; Dahlberg, 2001, 2004; Bohman, 2004; Erikson, 2007). But that is yet to (or will never) happen. In particular, xenophobia, rooted in perceived differences of identity, culture, background, did not die with the emergence of the cybersphere as envisioned earlier. On the contrary, the affordances of digital spaces and technologies only contributed to extend the quantity and quality of the phenomenon.

This chapter examines the ways xenophobic aggression is discursively constructed in a Malaysian anti-Rohingya online petition's comment section. In the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the political debate revolves around choosing who has the right to be cared for (and who has not) by the state and society in times of crisis. Here, the focus on the attempts to mark "one's own" off from "the other" is based on "relational comparisons" (Abdelal et al., 2009), in which A's collectivised identity is explicitly compared with B's based on what A is not. In this respect, negative views/attitudes toward B which form the defining part of B's collective identity would fall within the category of xenophobia.

While signees express their affinity for the shared vision of a larger community when signing a petition, analysing the (optional) public comment in the "I am signing because . . ." section sheds light on their epistemic "justification". By "justification", this chapter refers to the normative term prototypically associated with "rational", "reasonable", and "warranted". This allows us to unpack the evaluations, beliefs and conditions of civic ostracism that exclude the Rohingya community from benefits of civic membership, based on ascriptions of foreignness that in turn are based on ideas about belonging.

The aim of this chapter is twofold: firstly, investigating the linguistic manifestation of nationalism, or simply put, the discourse of "we-ness" when constructing "Us" and the "Other" through the signees' discursive strategies in order to justify (or rationalise) their nationalist-xenophobic discourses; and secondly, focusing on how the digital environment helps in facilitating such aggression, neutralising it as a normal psychological reaction and as a prophylactic behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Apart from this introduction, the chapter is divided into five sections. Section 2 briefly explains the socio-political context of Malaysia and the story of Rohingya refugees. Section 3 contains a brief delineation of the concepts of nationalism, xenophobia and the digital environment in times of crisis. Section 4 presents the discourse analytical framework that allows the approach to discursively realise xenophobic nationalist discourses in a methodical way. The content-related topoi employed in the signees' justifications were identified, analysed, and, more importantly, evaluated in Section 5.

2.   The socio-political context

Malaysia is a country of diversity: 69.8% of its inhabitants are Malay/Bumiputera,[1] 22.4% are Chinese, 6.8% are Indians and 1.0% are listed as "others" (see Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). The federation is multiconfessional, but Islam is the official religion (as stated in Article 3) and the most widely professed religion in the country, with the proportion of 63.5%, followed by Buddhism, 18.7%, Christianity, 9.1%, and Hinduism, 6.1% (see Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022).

As of the end of June 2022, Malaysia still hosts between 184,080 and 500,000 un/registered refugees despite not being a party to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention, nor to its subsequent 1967 protocol (UNHCR, 2022). Most are from conflict-affected areas in the predominantly Buddhist country Myanmar (formerly Burma), including over 200,000 United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR)–registered Rohingyas (also known as Arakanese, a minority Muslim ethnic group in Rakhine State), making Malaysia home to the largest number of Rohingya refugees among the ASEAN[2] countries in Southeast Asia and the fourth highest number worldwide (Sukhani, 10 July 2020; Alisha Noor, 10 June 2021). Three key reasons Malaysia has been a preferred destination for the Rohingyas to expect sanctuary include 1) the once-permitted access for asylum seekers arriving via the sea, unlike neighbouring ASEAN countries; 2) the freedom to practise their religion in a Muslim majority Malaysia; and 3) the lesser chance of feeling alienated or isolated due to the existing Rohingya community, who has been informally settled in the country for three or four generations (see Equal Rights Trust and Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, 2014; Daniel & Puteri, 2020; O'Brien & Hoffstaedter, 2020; Togoo & Ismail, 2021).

Historically, the Rohingyas enjoyed equal rights as the other 135 ethnic groups after Myanmar gained its independence from British colonialism in 1948. However, the 1982 Citizenship Act of Myanmar came as an overnight shock as it fails to recognise the Rohingyas as a registered ethnic group. As a result, a majority of them have been rendered stateless, and those who have fled the systematic campaign of violence, institutionalised discrimination and abuse from the state security forces are regarded as *stateless refugees* (Parashar & Alam, 2018; de Chickera, 2021; see also Article 1, 1954 Convention, UNHCR, p. 6). The International State Crime Initiative (ISCI) report from October 2015, which was based on a study by researchers at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), captures and documents the myriad strategies employed by the highest echelons of Myanmar government, civil society groups, Buddhist monks, and members of the ethnic majority Rakhine community to destroy the Rohingya-Muslim identity (Green et al., 2015). The genocidal campaign[3] is ongoing, supported by the brutal military crackdown ("clearance operations"), or what the United Nations described as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" (Beech et al., 19 October 2021; see also O'Brien & Hoffstaedter, 2020).

Malaysia's criticism of Myanmar over the Rohingya issue has always been vocal (see e.g. Sukumaran, 25 September 2019; Tasnim & Siti Nurfatihah, 10 December 2021). Unfortunately, the absence of a legal framework for refugees in Malaysia itself means those who are not registered (or awaiting registration) under the UNHCR are potentially susceptible to arbitrary arrest for immigration offences, detention in appalling conditions until their release may be negotiated with the UNHCR, caning, extortion, human trafficking, and deportation back to the persecution that they fled (see, among others, Lugar, 2009; Hoffstaedter, 2014, 2019; Chhoa-Howard & Yesudas, 9 October 2020; Togoo & Ismail, 2021; Melzer et al., 2021).

When COVID-19 struck, the intense uncertainty of the pandemic (see Kassim, Pang, Mohamed et al., 2021) and the looming economic recession (see e.g. OECD Report, 2020; Noor et al., 2020; Choong, 22 October 2020; *The Star*, 20 May 2020) worsened the situation. The large number of already existing Rohingya refugees, as well as the prospect of more refugee boats arriving (Hafidzul, 16 April 2020; *Harian Metro*, 17 April 2020), were perceived as an affront to many Malaysians, who felt that this was a direct threat to their socio-economic livelihood, especially amidst the difficulties caused by Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO) during the pandemic. This was aggravated by the circulation of hoaxes/fake text messages on social media about Rohingya refugees getting daily allowances, UNHCR cards providing them with legal immunity, getting driver's licenses, and other supports. In parallel, widely shared anecdotal stories about the Rohingya refugees did not only reproduce stereotypes about this marginalised group, especially in terms of "their way of life and lifestyle" versus "the values we all share", but they also stoked fears

in the society and hate towards the stateless Rohingya refugee community (see e.g. UNCHR Malaysia, 29 April 2020).

3.   The digital environment, nationalism and xenophobia during the pandemic

In principle, the nonterritorial nature of the digital space potentially dilutes the homogeneity of national-cultural identities and distinctiveness. According to Erikson (2007), the early Internet was part of an era of idealism where *netizens* would leave the bonds that tie them to the place, language and culture of their nation when they went online. When one's identity transcended geography or imagined political borders, the eroded collective sense of national identity on the Internet as a virtual extension of the public sphere would contribute to the construction of global citizenship (see e.g. Dahlberg, 2001; Bohman, 2004; Hansen, 2006; Ariely, 2012). This line of thought prompts the possibility of breaking away from the boundaries of citizenship and the experience of xenophobia. Poster (2001), in his study of the internet, sees this transformational potential of digital platforms stemming from their impact on how human beings are interpellated as social actors. This interpellation comes to materialise a "self that is no longer a subject since it no longer subtends the world as if from outside but operates within a machine apparatus as a point in a circuit" (p. 16), especially when it becomes increasingly mediated by the digital communication networks.

Unfortunately, in practice, this is not always the case – the pandemic, for instance, has confined us all in our geopolitical physical places, while at the same time people have been using the Internet to both form and reaffirm their nationality and seek out communities based on nation and national understandings of the world. However, the original notion of nationalism itself is not necessarily irrational, extreme and violent. According to Miller (2008), nationalism constitutes three basic components: the first component is simply the idea that a real nation exists which can differentiate its citizens from those who belong to other nations; the second component is emphasising the practical implications of national membership that entails rights and obligations; and the third component primarily refers to political independence and self-determination.

Therefore, in a context of deepening crisis, when people's psychological security is undermined, their anxiety is precipitated and deep-seated fears are awakened, the nation-oriented reactions[4] would actually be helpful: firstly, in terms of providing an imaginatively constructed "safe space", i.e. secured, protected, recognised physical territory for the citizens, and secondly, in terms of reinforcing a sense of control and support by declaring shared solidarity of being "all in the same boat" among those in the "imagined community" (see Anderson, 2006). At this point, it is crucial to clarify that even though Anderson (2006) presents nationalism as a way of

imagining and thereby creating community, our assumption about a nation as "an imagined community and a mental construct" (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 22) in no way implies that it is not "real". On the contrary, it "is real to the extent that one is convinced of it, believes in it and identifies with it emotionally" (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 22).

In this chapter, nationalism constructed during the COVID-19 pandemic is treated as a mass phenomenon, not so much due to the fact that it is not socially relevant until it acquires mass proportions, but rather because nationalist ideology is, by and large, collectivistic. Such a sense of collectivism then helps to reinforce and enhance the much-needed community cohesion in times of crisis. Many studies have linked the collective efficacy that comes from the rise of group-perceived cohesion to greater community resilience, which is reflected in faster recoveries (e.g. Cagney et al., 2016), lower odds of developing depression (e.g. Lê et al., 2013), higher likelihood of maintaining life satisfaction, and more positivity about their future prospects (Jung, 2019) after traumatic events.

Unfortunately, as observed by Sampson (1968): "any increase in group cohesion seems to be gained at the price of heightened hostility towards outgroups" (p. 33), especially when the landscape characterised by fears created by the COVID-19 pandemic acts as a typical form of critical juncture for nationalism to become xenophobic, i.e. behaviour specifically based on the perception that the other is foreign to or originates from outside the community or nation. Markel and Stern (2002, p. 757) write: "Despite the dramatic changes in demography, the meaning of citizenship, and the ability to treat and cure acute and chronic diseases, foreigners were consistently associated with germs and contagion" (p. 757).

This is perhaps unsurprising: throughout history, research has shown how diseases often coincide with outbreaks of perceived threat, hate, and fear that re/construct the outgroups/Other (however defined) as vectors, which then leads to xenophobic and prejudicial attitudes (e.g. avoidance, blame and retaliation) toward them (see Faulkner et al., 2004; Cohn, 2018; Tabri et al., 2020). The explanation behind this has roots in both sociology and psychology. Douglas's (2003 [1966]) influential work *Purity and Danger* posits a powerful homology between the social and the biological. She argues that fear of pollution is common, as is the use of ritual to protect the social *body* from contamination, where the *body* is regarded as a "symbol of society . . . a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious" (p. 114). This then connects the robust link between disgust sensitivity and broader xenophobic attitudes and behaviours to the behavioural immune system (BIS) – i.e. the primary mechanism to facilitate behaviours that minimise infection risk, which have been established by many researchers (e.g. Faulkner et al., 2004; Schaller et al., 2015; Ackerman et al., 2018).

At this point, while it is crucial to dispense with the well-worn dichotomies of "online versus offline" and "virtual world versus real world" due to the interconnected and fluid nature of physical-digital spaces, it is equally important to acknowledge the affordances of digital media technologies which contribute to reshaping nationalism-xenophobia dynamics (see also KhosraviNik, 2020). By affordances, this chapter refers to the possibilities that any object offers for action. This does not mean that an object does not have particular properties; however, these properties only emerge through interaction between actors and those objects. The way in which an actor interacts with an object is not, though, only related to its physical properties but also to social norms and rules (Gibson, 1979; Meredith, 2017). As emphasised by KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018), these affordances "act as a *force multiplier*, both in terms of sheer quantity and vitriolic quality of interactions" (p. 47), which further facilitate the bottom-up xenophobic and discriminatory communicative practices due to the physical separation, as summarised in the conceptual model in Figure 6.1.

Digital affordances have been highly conducive to the proliferation of xenophobic discourses, especially with the existing three key elements for online xenophobia to thrive in any online civic spaces: 1) opportunities to express views, 2) opportunities to directly address and have an impact on the imagined Other, and 3) opportunities to persuade the imagined Us to follow their views (Jakubowicz et al., 2017, pp. 100–101). Moreover, the cultural and technological dimensions of the digital environment further contribute to the expansion of "toxic techno-cultures" which actively exclude various users (see Massanari, 2015; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; KhosraviNik, 2020). The concept of "online othering" also offers a means of analysing and making sense of online behaviours which seek to (re)draw boundaries in, around, and between virtual spaces and shape the
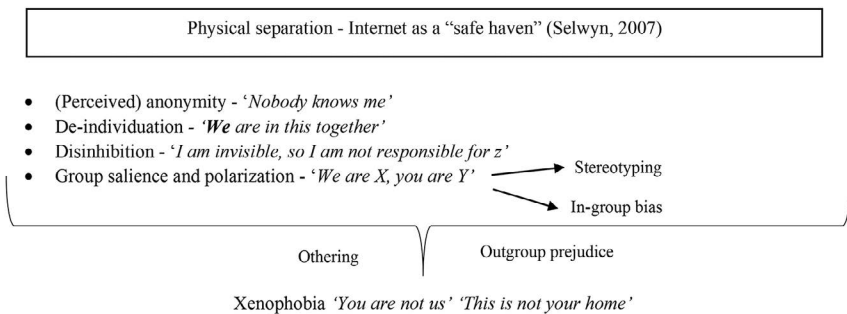
Figure 6.1 Digital media affordances in facilitating xenophobia

Source: Adapted from KhosraviNik & Esposito (2018)

rules and norms concerning which individuals and groups are endowed with status and legitimacy when it comes to participation and those who are not. However, since divisive discourses are not always direct, to comprehend its subtleties, it is imperative to consider their social context. Therefore, taking my lead from KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018), rather than reducing this phenomenon to digital affordances per se, this chapter includes a double critical contextualisation of research findings at both digital participatory and social and cultural levels in Section 5.

4. Materials and methods

This chapter analysed the petition "*Tolak Rohingya & Menghantar Mereka Pulang Kerana Menuntut HAK Mereka Dari Malaysia!!!*" first posted on 22 April 2020 (Reject Rohingya & Send Them Back for Demanding Their Rights from Malaysia) by *Suara Netizen* (The Voice of Netizens) on Change. org.[5] Change.org is an online petition site where users can create or sign a petition unheeded and undirected, requiring only a signature from its participants, and a facultative comment; any individual can create a petition, and there is a large global audience participating within the site. As of 9 AM (MYT), 30 April 2020, the petition garnered the endorsements of over 96,000 signees. However, this study only collected and analysed comments on the first day when the petition was first published on 22 April 2020, as the petition was removed entirely on the next day as it was reported to be spreading hate, discrimination and justification for governmental actions against one of the most vulnerable populations during the pandemic. A total of 1,758 comments were collected using an online scraping tool exportcomments.com. These comments came in a variety of writing styles, from exclamations to prose. They range from two words ("Reject Rohingya" [*Tolak Rohingya*], "*Negaraku, Malaysia*" [Malaysia, my country"]) to brief (15–25 words) statements to short (approximately 500 words) texts.

  Since one's justification for signing the petition is very much one's personal opinion, theoretically, the text included in the petition is a form of a complex verbal action that is goal-oriented. As such, a petition must be defended and supported, which explains why they exhibit certain argumentative structures and strategies, such as proving (or making) their own positions plausible and/or others' untenable. While there is little or no proper argumentation in social media interactions, and the communication is usually truncated with a high affective character (see KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014), it is worth highlighting that what this chapter dealt with was mostly short-cut comments laden with presuppositions, trigger notes and existing knowledge, which I approached as argumentation. As far as argumentation analysis goes, the discourse-historical approach (DHA) is the approach within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) scholarship that explicitly incorporates argumentation

as a key discourse strategy (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). The collected comments were then analysed using DHA's discursive strategy, i.e. argumentation's content-related topoi, which is not rigid and static, but a dynamic concept (see also Reisigl, 2014; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, Kienpointner, 1997).

Here, topoi, or *loci*, a classical term from the Aristotelian topical tradition, literally means a "place" for finding arguments, wherein "place" is often understood metaphorically as a "place" in the mind – referring to topoi as many kinds of mental places (see Eriksson, 2012; Kienpointner, 1997). Since topoi define the aims of an argument, their analysis has then been regarded as a useful approach in finding and uncovering deeper meanings in discourse and in critiquing arguments in an efficient manner (e.g. Kienpointner, 1997; Boukala, 2016). Boukala (2016) argues that DHA's list of topoi (see also e.g. Reisigl & Wodak, 2001) is more specific, and most of them seem to relate to the Aristotelian topos of consequence. But again, since the analysis in this chapter is inclined towards material topoi, context is key. As fundamentally reminded by Rubinelli (2009): "what is more appropriate in a specific context is still a matter of [a] scholar's creativity and understanding of the interlocutor. Clearly the selection of the scheme is influenced by the questioner's general knowledge of the subject" (p. 23). Therefore, the available lists of topoi (see e.g. Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Boukala, 2016) were utilised to guide me in the analysis based on the contextually specific arguments that the signees used in their justifications.

Lastly, since Malaysia is a multiracial and multilingual country, the comments were posted both in Bahasa Malaysia and English. The translations of Malay language data into English are my own. The process of translating the material was two-tiered: it was initially done in a side-by-side procedure with another Malay-language speaker, in which possible wordings were discussed before the final translated texts were verified by a second Malay-language speaker. The translation was intended to be kept as literal as possible, except where modifications were necessary in order to preserve conversational style. However, Malay-English translation poses its own translation challenges, as these two languages come from different language families (see e.g. Azmi et al., 2016). Therefore, maintaining equivalence when translating Malay-language content is not a straightforward task, especially when it involves inappropriate equivalent words (collocation aspect) and equivalent words according to field as well as cultural differences. Since translation is an interpretive act, some meaning may get lost in the translation process (see the discussion in Van Nes et al., 2010). Therefore, the comments were analysed in the original language instead of translated texts to minimise potential limitations in the analysis.

5.　Results and discussion

On the first day when the petition was posted, the sense of nationalism constructed by the symbolic boundaries between "us" and "them" in the online petition comments can already be seen through the use of "we-discourses".

This includes the hegemonic inclusion of speaker-groups primarily via first-person plural pronouns: Malaysian "*kita, kami*" and English "*we, us, our*". Such collectivised grammaticalisation of the signee's reference to himself or herself conceptualises group identity between the *insiders* and the *outsiders*, hence emphasising the sense of (un)belongingness. Across the discourse of "we-ness", the signees employed three prevailing topoi about "Us" when expressing their justifications for signing the online petition against the Rohingya refugees.

As illustrated in Figure 6.2, almost half of the arguments used to justify the signing of the online petition against the Rohingya refugees is based on the topos of patriotic values. This suggests that the discursive (re)imagining of a homogenous and united Malaysian nation is not represented as an overt nationalism in the sense that we discussed in the earlier section, i.e. irrational, surplus, and alien; rather it appears as "'patriotism" – natural, reasonable, and necessary, manifested linguistically through the dominant expression of love towards the country and fellow citizens. For instances:

> Topos of patriotic values: "if we are the citizens of this country, we should show our love for this homeland and protect this country".

(1) "We love Malaysia/*Kami sayang Malaysia*";
(2) "We love our country/*Kami sayang negara kami*";
(3) "This is our country/*Ini negara kami*";
(4) "We care about our nation";
(5) "I'm truly Malaysian. Malaysia only for truly Malaysians";
(6) "Defend our homeland to the last drop of blood/*Pertahankan tanah air kita sehingga ke titisan darah terakhir*";
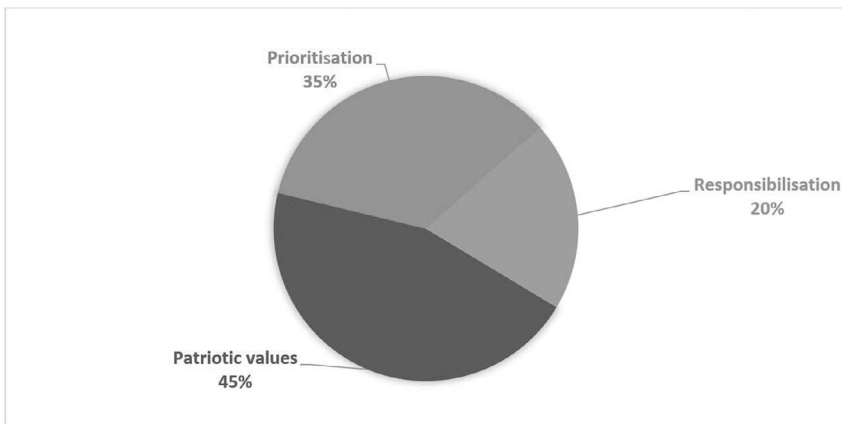
Figure 6.2 Prevailing topoi across the discourse of "we-ness"

Here, such patriotic values involved not only the deployment of the first-person pronouns "I" (singular) and "we" (plural) but also the deictic choices of an emotion-laden term in Malay "*tanah air*" and English "*homeland*", which entails a particular legal demarcation of participatory boundaries of the imagined national homogeneity. "*We*" then places "us" within "our" homeland, i.e. "my" home, "your" home, "our ancestry and family's home", hence the home for all of "us", the home of homes, the place where all of "us" are at home. This metaphorical HOME is used to identify a particular piece of land that gives shape to a spatial identity, a sense of belonging, internal solidarity, and pride. In addition, it provides a sense of territorial rootedness, which is organically accompanied by emotional attachments for that imagined space, and members within it, to be protected, defended and cared for, as no stakes are more compelling than the safety of the HOME and everything within it.

Such sense of patriotic values echoes the essence of the Malaysian national anthem: "*Negaraku . . . tanah tumpahnya darahku*"/"*My country . . . for whom I am willing to spill my blood [to defend it]* ". Here, when an argument is generally placed within a place, such as a homeland, it makes the topos to be beyond argument, as the process of argumentation itself rhetorically reaffirms such values and belongingness and, to certain extent, ownership as well as autonomy. It is also worth noting that in the online petition comments, the indexical expression Malay "*ini*", in English "*this*" in "*Ini negara kami/This is our country*" cannot be physically indicated or pointed to, as opposed to when it is used in face-to-face spoken conversations: "*This* is my pen" or "*This* man". Therefore, when such deictic expressions are used by the signees to express their demands, "*negara kami/our country*" stretches beyond their actual individual locations. In this case, the deictic "this" now becomes the whole context that is unambiguous and can be unimaginatively imagined by at least the members of the imagined national community, although it cannot be apprehended in its totality, making the nationhood a national space that is more than just a geographical location. Again, such implicit nationalism masquerading as patriotism presents the nation as a natural entity that is completely detached from nationalism, as it discursively intensifies the naturalness and obviousness of the existing nation-state.

The discourse of we-ness involves more than the construction of a particular national "us" in a particular territory, because the existing nation-state cannot exist without the people living within it. The topos of prioritisation is therefore inextricably linked with, if not part of, the topos of patriotic values across the discourse of "we-ness", which again emphasises the sense of national identity for those who are said to inhabit,

or deserve to inhabit, their own nation-state. This is brought to the fore in the justifications by the signees that follow:

Topos of prioritisation: "if this is our country, then we should be prioritised over the outsiders".

(7) "Malaysian for Malaysians";
(8) "Please take care of Malaysian people first";
(9) "The rakyat's interest is more important than anything else"/*Kepentingan rakyat Malaysia lebih utama dpd (sic) segalagalanya*;
(10) "Let's take care of our poor and striving to come up brothers and their families in the kampungs suburbs and interiors;
(11) "Malaysians must Help the Malaysians First";
(12) "There are still many Malaysians who are in need of help. Our rights etc"/*Rakyat Malaysia ramai lagi yang perlu dibantu*;

Here, the construction of nationalism is naturalised when it is subsumed under a conclusion rule: "our people first", i.e. since a *rakyat* (nation) should have their state (nation), it is right that "we" possess "our" own state and our exclusive rights should be acknowledged. As a result, the demands of border control and repatriation expressed in the signees' justifications are constructed as reasonable and uncontroversial because the state is normatively obliged to prioritise the interests of the *rakyat*. The topos of prioritisation in the comments of the online petition is then based on two assumptions: 1) Rohingya refugees are seen to have detrimental effects upon the interest and wellbeing of the *rakyat* and 2) it is morally permitted for Malaysia to assign more weight to the interests and wellbeing of the *rakyat* than to the one of Rohingya refugees. Within this topos of prioritisation, there are the topoi of burden and finance which both predicate that the Rohingya refugees draw on state resources at the expense of the *rakyat*:

Topos of burden: "if a person, an institution or a country is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens" (Wodak, 2001, p. 76),

(13) I agree sent them back . . . Coz Malaysia is already full of refugees;
(14) We don't want our country full with (sic) foreigners;
(15) We do not want Malaysia to be filled with foreigners/*Kami tak mahu Malaysia dipenuhi warga asing*;
(16) The influx of illegal immigrants inhibit our socio-economic [development]/*Lambakan PATI merencatkan sosio-ekonomi kita*;
(17) We have enough foreigners already;

Here, the lexical triggers of a containment construal, "full of", "*dipenuhi*", and "enough", make explicit the inference that the country has a limited capacity. The binary construal further justifies the dichotomous social groups of "us" and "them" as individuals are further conceptualised as "insiders" and "outsiders" using the CONTAINER scheme, which operates as a "principle of division" (Chilton, 1996, p. 147, see also Lakoff and Johnson (2017 [1980])). The exclusivity of the "us" group in terms of spatial division, i.e. bounded space that could exist in two, three or more dimensions and may be mental, metaphorical or physical rather than uniquely as a three-dimensional entity, is strengthened. This self-other dichotomy realises a de-spatialisation strategy which treats the 'outsiders' as being from a different place or space than "me" (I) or "us" (We); they (refugees, foreigners, PATI/illegal immigrants) are "displaced" (Hart, 2010, p. 57). However, as linguistically manifested in the excerpts earlier, the online petition comments are more concerned about the build-up of pressure *within* the CONTAINER, presupposing that the CONTAINER has already been penetrated, and this is based on at least three premises: 1) a gradual increase of "outsiders" in the CONTAINER; 2) the reaching of a critical point of the CONTAINER; and 3) the overflowing of the CONTAINER, which all heighten emotional fears of the "insiders", as they are now faced with the constant threat of perforation and rupture during the pandemic due to the number of these outsiders ("*lambakan*", "influx") – and therefore in need of removal of these "outsiders" via repatriation: "Send them back", "*hantar mereka pulang*", as illustrated in Figure 6.3.

Rohingya refugees/
'foreigners'/
illegal migrants
(PATI)

Malaysia

Malaysians/*rakyat*
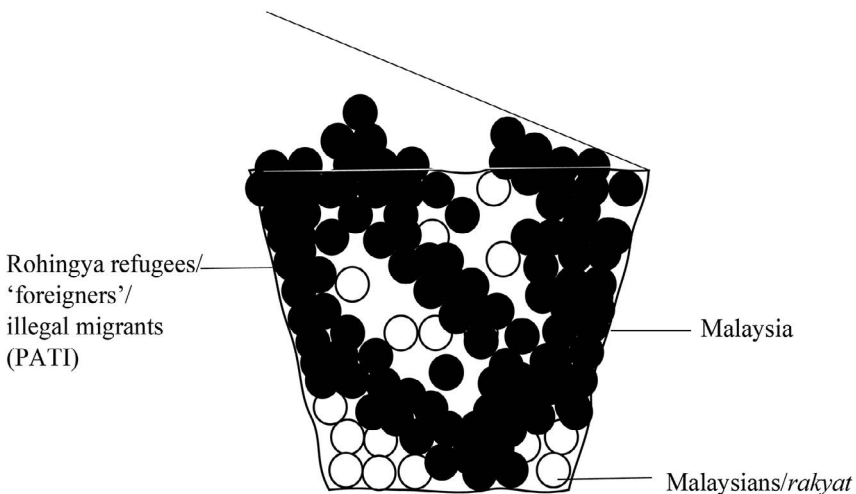
Figure 6.3 Malaysia as a CONTAINER in online petition comments

Since Malaysia is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees fleeing from their home country using improper channels are not legally recognised by the Malaysian law. This is firmly emphasised by the Home Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin in The Star[6] and Berita Harian[7] on 30 April 2020. Therefore, under Malaysian Immigration Act 1959/63,[8] when these refugees arrive in Malaysia, they are entering the country undocumented and are regarded as "illegal immigrants" by default.[9] Therefore, it is also worth noting how the signees conflated the Rohingya refugees with "foreigners" and "illegal immigrants" (or Malay: "*pendatang asing tanpa izin*, PATI") in the comments of the online petition. When the terms are all used interchangeably, it fails to distinguish each term contextually, hence predicating the refugees and immigrants as a homogeneous group that poses similar problems of border protection and sovereignty to the nation. Evidently, the term refugee is also used with more derogatory labels "illegal", "illegal immigrant", "illegal migrant", "illegal immigrants with UNHCR card", and "Rohingya Illegal Immigrants".

The different nomination strategies used to represent the Rohingya refugees in the online petition comments presuppose lack of a proper background about the community. Here, it is crucial to recognise that labelling is not merely an issue of semantics, but these categories have consequences. Failing to recognise the differences between the categories, terminologically or otherwise, makes the conflation of the terms highly problematic. First, the confusing terms background the causes of their flight, their rights and our responsibilities to them even as citizens of non-signatory country (see e.g. Hoesch & Laube, 2018). Second, some abuses of the asylum system by undocumented migrants cause the public view of migration to be generalised – giving it a taint of criminality, downplaying its positive aspects, and focusing solely on control. Third, mentioning the non-Malaysian origin of suspects and criminals in reports on (violent) crimes creates the impression that the amorality of a lawbreaker has something to do with his or her ancestry or origin. Fourth, where refugees are seen as little more than a sub-group of irregular migrants, the control of their movement is likely to take precedence over meeting their protection needs. Fifth, refoulement, the return of a refugee to a territory where his or her life or freedom is threatened, is but one, potentially grave, consequence. Finally, when the public tacitly accepts refugee as an occupation, people are deprived of their humanity and dignity since they are considered a burden to the nation.

Specific instances of the topos of burden can also be observed in the topos of finance:

> Topos of finance: "if a specific situation or action costs too much money or causes a loss of revenue, one should perform actions which diminish the costs or help to avoid the loss".
>
> (Wodak, 2001, p. 76)

The premise on economisation perpetuates the image of refugees as economic burdens and a threat to the host country's prosperity and welfare which should prioritise the *rakyat*. While this also emphasises the "Malaysian first" rhetoric, it also evokes the sense of socio-economic insecurity and fears of not having enough, especially during the pandemic and the cordon sanitaire period. Consider the comments (18–21) that follow:

(18) Reject these pollutants in Malaysia! There will be economic downturn if they are still here;

Here the reference to Rohingya refugees as "pollutants" dehumanises the community and thus further accentuates the symbolic boundaries between "us" and "them". Such references also realise a predicational strategy by attributing the qualities of "pollutants", i.e. "contaminants that get into the natural environment, beyond permitted limits, and cause deleterious effects to the inhabitants in a visible way" (Panigrahi et al., 2019) to Rohingya refugees. Given the connotative connection constructed between the refugees and peril, this also constitutes a topos of danger: "if there are specific dangers and threats, one should do something against them" (Wodak, 2001, p. 75). This is further manifested in the transitive verb "reject", which explicitly positions the community as actively unwanted. It is also worth noting that the apodasis (then-clause, i.e. "there will be economic downturn") is mentioned before the protasis (if-clause, i.e. they are still here), foregrounding the possibility of the consequence although not yet actualised or taking place through the use of the modal "will". While the subjectively modalised utterance again highlights the sense of socio-economic fear, e.g. "fear of economic downturn caused by the Rohingya refugees", it is crucial to acknowledge the distinction drawn between the contingent and assumed event does not depend on any objective, ontological notion of "future reality", but on the signees' conviction that the predicated event will at some future moment constitute reality.

Similarly, in (19), a connotative connection between the virus of the pandemic, economic difficulties, and the refugees are made, albeit implicitly, which is realised in the illocutionary structure "they *have to* go back . . ."

(19) They have to go back, economically we are struggling now. We have to think really hard in opening our economy, this lockdown is taking its toll on us. We can't have a 2nd or 3rd wave of this virus;

Notice that the use of the objective "have (main verb) + to (infinitive)" here expresses impersonal obligations of the subjects of *have to*: "They" (the refugees) and "We" (Malaysians, the *rakyat*). Here "they" are obliged or forced to "go back", and "we" are obliged or forced to "think really

hard in opening our economy" act by a separate, external power (i.e. in this case, the law, the pandemic, the Movement Control Order [MCO], the COVID-19 virus), distancing such justifications from emotions, subjective motivations or personal biases, etc. Consider the following excerpt:

(20) We don't want Rohingya anymore, we don't want to waste our tax money on them. Government has their *rakyat* to concern about not the foreigners;

(20) includes the negation of the propositional attitude verb "want", which takes the sentential complement and expresses a relation between two arguments, the subject, i.e. "we" and tautological propositions: 1) "don't want Rohingya anymore" and 2) "don't want to waste our tax money on them". This relation expressed by the verb concerns a future preferentiality. Notice that the adverb "anymore" also infers the existential quantification of 1) the number of Rohingya refugees in the country and 2) the money spent on the Rohingya refugees; with 2) "[evoking] a violation of social contract insofar as members of the in-group have paid a cost without gaining a [maximum] return" (Hart, 2010, p. 75) since the arguments also centred on the distribution of taxpayers' hard-earned money as well as national income that must prioritise the Malaysians ("us") first rather than assisting the 'illegitimate communities' ("them"). In conjunction with the topos of finance here, the topos of prioritisation is also exemplified in (20) which further amplified the symbolic boundaries between "us" (i.e. the *rakyat*) and "them" (the foreigners). Similarly, in (21):

(21) We should focus on helping Malaysians first and to rebuild our economy and our SMEs. Keep our house in order;

The use of the deontic (as opposed to epistemic) modal verb "should" reflects the probability of contextually given goals, given the prejacent, and given that we focus on helping Malaysian first and rebuild our economy and our small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), it is probable that contextually salient goal(s) are satisfied. The salient goal(s) are also embedded in the metaphoric phrase "keep *our* house in order". Such a topos of prioritisation very much overlaps with the topos of responsibilisation. Consider the following excerpts:

Topos of responsibilisation: "if they are not part of us, they are not our responsibility".

(22) We need to take care Malaysian priority, not our responsibility to take care them, just back to where they come from;

(23) They don't belong in Malaysia and Malaysians don't owe them;

(24) Rohingya is not Malaysia's responsibility. They must be returned to their own country/*Rohingya bukan tanggungjawab Malaysia. Mereka wajib dipulangkan ke negara asal*;

(25) Malaysia's for Malaysians and not for illegals or UNHRC Rohingya migrants. Send them to Coxbazar or any 1st world country;

The repeated occurrences of the de facto shift of responsibility[10] from the sovereign government to other international third parties such as the United Nations, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), regional cooperatives like ASEAN or state actors, either bilateral or multilateral, weaken Malaysia's accountability to accept or host any refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the signees' justifications, the responsibility shift is linked to blame shifting, in which the third parties are represented as not doing enough for the refugees. This shift of responsibility is evident with justifications that suggested Rohingyas should go somewhere else, especially the Western countries, to seek refuge. The function of international actors was questioned in the public comments as they argued about the lack of financial assistance to the Malaysian government in order to assist the migrant/refugee communities in Malaysia. Instead of looking at it as the positive aspect to leverage the powerless and vulnerable people, the public sees it as something that could threaten their national identity, which further dichotomises the local and Rohingya refugee communities. Humanitarianism is not seen as a good cause to develop solidarity and a sense of multiculturalism in the country; instead, it is perceived as a burden.

At this juncture, it is safe to conclude that on one level, the inclusionary status of "we" operates on three crucial points in expressing the signees' demands in the petition: 1) the signee's reference of the imagined insiders (i.e. the *rakyat*/Malaysians) is either anaphorically dependent on which members of this community were already introduced in some way or other in the previous discourses, or what constitutes as "we" is automatically and uncritically accepted hence taken for granted; 2) the imagined insiders, although multiracial, are determined homogenously to be one group (i.e. Malaysians); and 3) the membership of the signee is explicitly stated (i.e. "*We Malaysians . . . .*", "*sebagai warganegara Malaysia*", "*Rakyat Malaysia*", "*hak kita*", "*our rights*", "*This is our country, not yours*"), excluding others from the membership in this group at the same time.

But on another level, the inclusive reference is shifted to an exclusive reference of the insiders, leading the civil discourse to *ethnic* nationalism through exclusivity. The construction of inclusive "we-ness" goes hand in hand with the construction of not only the "Other", as discussed earlier,

but also the exclusive "we-ness" in the justifications of the signees when signing the petition. For instance:

(26) If not [they] will be like the swollen-headed Chinese and Indians who want to be equated with bumiputera/. . . *kalau tak jadi macam cina dan india, dah besar kepala sekarang.nak di samaratakan dengan bumiputra*;

(27) Learn from the history of immigrants to Malaya now they want to be masters on our land/. . . *belajar dr sejarah pendatang ke tanah melayu sekarang mereka mahu jd ketuanan*;

(28) (We have had enough) with current ethnic who is busy claiming ownership/rights of the Malays/*Cukupla bangsa ada skrg ni yg sibuk nk tuntut hak milik melayu*;

(29) This Malay land is definitely for our progeny in the future, not for foreigners/*Bumi Melayu sememangnya utk anak cucu kami akn datang. . . bukan utk pendatang*;

These excerpts intensify the premise that Malays are always regarded as being at the centre of the country's national politics and life; therefore, they operate at the apex of the hierarchy. Such exclusivity has created a two-class system of citizenship in Malaysian politics. Therefore, in constitutional terms, it appears that *bumiputera* Malaysians constitute "first class citizens", while non-*bumiputera* Malaysians, such as Chinese and Indians, constitute "second-class" citizens (see Siti Nurnadilla, 2020). This collective membership identification adds something to whom "we" are, which is, I argue, a powerful justification for what "we" rightfully can do with what is "ours". Such narratives in the discourse of the petition comments also echo the reproduction of a Malay privilege schema: a mental representation that bundles together the conceptual division between Malays (or "*Bumiputeras*") and non-Malays ("non-*Bumiputeras*"), along with a sense of entitlement or rightful claim to some class of distinctive benefits.

6. Conclusion

Nationalism remains one of the world's most powerful ideologies: "like air, nationalism is both ubiquitous and elusive" (Bieber, 2018, p. 519); it is so common that somehow it is often treated as the 'natural' state of affairs until a crisis hits. In this chapter, nationalism is more than a political ideology when we recognise it as an important source of meaning and identity. As such, it provides a framework for both unity and division. Nationalism is generally expected to thrive in times of crisis like a pandemic when several reasons for fears are encountered:

these include fear of the virus, of the number of daily infected cases, of death, of economic instability, of the unknown, of the number of refugees. In principle, almost anything can be constructed as a threat to "Us", an imagined homogenous people inside a well-protected territory during the pandemic in Malaysia. Fear makes people more likely to develop nativist attitudes and adopt some form of "othering" in their daily interactions, providing a key ingredient for everyday nationalism to thrive (Wang, 2021).

The study found a significant interplay of nationalism and cyberspace as the new affordances of digital means of communication provide a "third place" to users, which enables the construction and dissemination of bottom-up discourses of nationalism. In doing so, in contrast to what was envisioned during the early internet, the study confirmed Erikson's (2007) thesis, who ascertained that nationalism remains a powerful ideology in a digital and global era. As a matter of fact, the cyberspace empowers the citizens of nations and allows the emergence of bottom-up national discourses. However, the findings also raised points of criticism. As Calhoun (1993) warns earlier, nationalism that tends towards pseudo-democracy of sameness based on descriptive, evaluative, or normative attributes, which defines what members of the same category are supposed to have in common and how members of other categories are different from them, will no longer be benign.

In this chapter, I have also shown how online petitions, as an emerging genre, can be used as a tool of hate, carving new (and deepening existing) social divides among the marginalised refugee communities. At the same time, they provide the necessary sense of community and purpose under three overarching topoi across the discourse of "we-ness", namely patriotic values, prioritisation and responsibilisation, to weather trying times during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings also suggest that the discursive (re)imagining of a homogenous and united Malaysian nation abnormalises the presence of the Rohingya refugees (i.e. the foreigners) while neutralising the *rakyat*'s (citizens) xenophobic reactions to their presence. In other words, the dislike of or prejudice against outsiders, non-nationals or foreigners is not always openly hostile or aggressive, but rather can come in a form of innocent concerns and fears, as well as anxieties caused by the pandemic, hence, justifying the repatriation in the online petition comments. These key findings highlight the insidious nature of less overt forms of discriminatory speech that continue to reinforce the division of us and them – which are often downplayed as harmless expressions in times of crisis, but yet, its power lies specifically in its sociality: "online" othering discourses are produced in a public digital space of online petition for the purpose of others seeing it, interacting with it and defending it.

The findings also show that the personal characteristics of "us" (in-group) and "them" (out-group) in the imagined communities are ultimately problematic when taken for granted as stable and invariant among individuals, thereby creating a de facto second-class citizenship for the Chinese and Indians in Malaysia. Echoing van Dijk (1987): "this dimension of ethnic prejudice is sometimes seen as its most racist core because it is along these lines that in-group members feel superior to out-group members and, hence, entitled to the priorities, privileges, and power that underlie the other prejudice categories" (p. 210). During hard times like the pandemic, an inclusive Malaysian nationalism is needed, in opposition to reactionary and exclusionary nationalism, together with a new framework for economic and social reform that would be able to secure the rights and opportunities for all in the post–COVID-19 reality.

Notes

1. Bumiputera is a Malaysian term to describe Malays and indigenous peoples, often translated as "native Malaysians". The term originates from Sanskrit; it translates literally as "sons of the land" or "sons of the soil".
2. ASEAN, officially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is a political and economic union of ten Southeast Asian states – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
3. The nature of the genocidal campaign against the Rohingyas has also been explained in O'Brien and Hoffstaedter's (2020) work: All crimes of genocide, as defined in the Genocide Convention, are being perpetrated by the Burmese government and military, including killing members of the group (e.g. executions); causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group (e.g. rape, beatings); deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part (e.g. isolation and segregation, limiting access to food and healthcare); imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group (e.g. legal restrictions on reproduction); and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (e.g. forcible displacement of Rohingya, including children). These crimes are being carried out with the specific and targeted intent to destroy the Rohingya, in whole or in part.
4. Reaction in terms of national territories, priorities and communities: e.g. closing of borders, movement control orders, mandatory quarantine, medical and social aid restrictions within state borders, etc. (see also Bieber, 2020; Wang, 2021; Antonsich, 2020).
5. www.change.org/p/muhyiddin-tsmy-gmail-com-tolak-rohingya-menghantar-mereka-pulang-kerana-menuntut-hak-mereka-dari-malaysia
6. Mazwin (30 April 2020).
7. Mahaizura (30 April 2020).
8. Laws of Malaysia Act 155 Immigration act 1959/63.
9. A migrant is someone who moves away from their country for many reasons. An illegal immigrant is someone who may move away for the same reason, but they do it without the proper documentations or through the proper channels (see e.g. UNCHR, 11 July 2016).
10. Such responsibilities come in many forms such as in financial, humanitarian, legal assistance, or military intervention.

References

Abdelal, R., Herrera, Y. M., Johnston, A. I., & McDermott, R. (2009). *Measuring identity: A guide for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ackerman, J. M., Hill, S. E., & Murray, D. R. (2018). The behavioral immune system: Current concerns and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *12*(2), 57–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12371

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Antonsich, M. (2020). Everyday nation in times of rising nationalism. *Sociology*, *54*(6), 1230–1237. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520930178

Ariely, G. (2012). Globalization and the decline of national identity? An exploration across sixty-three countries. *Nations and Nationalism*, *18*(3), 461–482.

Azmi, M. N. L., Ching, L. T. P., Norbahyah, J. Haziq, M. N., Habibullah, M., Yasser, M. A., & Jayakumar, K. (2016). The comparison and contrasts between English and Malay languages. *English Review*, *4*(2), 209–218.

Beech, H., Nang, S., & Simons, M. (2021, 19 October). "Kill all you see": In a first, Myanmar soldiers tell of Rohingya slaughter. *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2020/09/08/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-genocide.html

Bieber, F. (2018). Is nationalism on the rise? *Assessing Global Trends, Ethnopolitics*, *17*(5), 519–540. DOI: 10.1080/17449057.2018.1532633

Bieber, F. (2020). Global nationalism in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Nationalities Papers*, 1–13. DOI: 10.1017/nps.2020.35

Bohman, J. (2004). Expanding dialogue: The internet, the public sphere and prospects for transnational democracy. *The Sociological Review*, *52*(1), 131–155. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00477.x

Boukala, S. (2016). Rethinking topos in the discourse historical approach: Endoxon seeking and argumentation in Greek media discourses on "Islamist terrorism". *Discourse Studies*, *18*(3), 249–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445616634550

Cagney, K. A., Sterrett, D., Benz, J., & Tompson, T. (2016). Social resources and community resilience in the wake of superstorm sandy. *PLoS One*, *11*(8).

Calhoun, C. (1993). Nationalism and civil society: Democracy, diversity and self-determination. *International Sociology*, *8*(4), 387–411. https://doi.org/10.1177/026858093008004001

Chhoa-Howard, R., & Yesudas, M. (2020, October 9). Malaysia's inhumane crackdown on migrants, refugees. *Malay Mail*. www.malaymail.com/news/what-you-think/2020/10/09/unfettered-powers-fatal-gaps-malaysias-inhumane-crackdown-on-migrants-refug/1911091

Chilton, P. (1996). *Security metaphors, cold war discourse from containment to common house*. New York: Peter Lang.

Choong, J. (2020, October 22). Covid-19 economic blues heighten fears of job security and unemployment among Malaysian workers, study finds. *Malay Mail*. www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/10/22/covid-19-economic-blues-heighten-fears-of-job-security-and-unemployment-amo/1915270

Cohn, S. K. (2018). *Epidemics: Hate and compassion from the plague of Athens to AIDS*. Oxford: Oxford Academic.

Dahlberg, L. (2001). Extending the public sphere through cyberspace: The case of Minnesota E-democracy. *First Monday*, *6*(3). https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/838/747

Dahlberg, L. (2004). The Habermasian public sphere: A specification of the idealized conditions of democratic communication. *Studies in Social and Political Thought*, *10*, 2–18.

Daniel, T., & Puteri, N. A. Y. (2020, 23 April). Malaysia shouldn't use coronavirus as an excuse to reject Rohingya refugees. *South China Morning Post*. www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3081225/malaysia-shouldnt-use-coronavirus-excuse-reject-rohingya-refugees

de Chickera, A. (2021). Stateless and persecuted: What next for the Rohingya? *Migration Policy Institute*. www.migrationpolicy.org/article/stateless-persecuted-rohingya

Department of Statistics Malaysia, DOSM. (2021). *Demographic statistics third quarter* [Press Release]. www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/pdfPrev&id=N05ydDRXR1BJWVlTdDY4TldHd253dz09

Department of Statistics Malaysia, DOSM. (2022). *Report on the key findings population and housing census of Malaysia 2020* [Press Release]. www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/pdfPrev&id=akliVWdIa2g3Y2VubTVSMkxmYXp1UT09

Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Equal Rights Trust and Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies Report. (2014). www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Equal%20Only%20in%20Name%20-%20Malaysia%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf

Erikson, T. H. (2007). Nationalism and the internet. *Nations and Nationalism*, *13*(10), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2007.00273.x

Eriksson, A. (2012). Argumentative topoi for refutation and confirmation. In F. H. van Eemeren & B. Garssen (Eds.), *Topical themes in argumentation theory* (pp. 209–220). London: Springer.

Faulkner, J., Schaller, M., Park, J. H., & Duncan, L. A. (2004). Evolved disease-avoidance mechanisms and contemporary xenophobic attitudes. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *7*(4), 333–353. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430204046142

Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Houghton Mifflin.

Green, P., MacManus, T., & de la Cour Venning, A. (2015). *Countdown to annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*. London: International State Crime Initiative.

Hafidzul, H. M. N. (2020, April 16). TUDM patahkan cubaan masuk PATI Rohingya. *Harian Metro*. www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2020/04/567502/tudm-patahkan-cubaan-masuk-pati-rohingya

Hansen, M. (2006). *Bodies in code: Interfaces with digital media*. New York: Routledge.

Harian Metro. (2020, April 17). Tolak kemasukan Rohingya bimbang covid-19. www.hmetro.com.my/global/2020/04/567964/tolak-kemasukan-rohingya-bimbang-covid-19

Hart, C. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis and cognitive science: New perspectives on immigration discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hoesch, M., & Laube, L. (2018). *Studying migration policies at the interface between empirical research and normative analysis*. Proceedings of the 2018 ZiF Workshop. https://philarchive.org/archive/MILORT-2

Hoffstaedter, G. (2014). Place-making: Chin refugees, citizenship and the state in Malaysia. *Citizenship Studies*, *18*(8), 871–884. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2014.964549

Hoffstaedter, G. (2019). Arrested refugee mobilities: Optics as bordering techniques in Malaysia. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, *34*(3), 521–546. https://doi.org/10.1355/sj34-3b

Jakubowicz, A., Dunn, K., Paradies, Y., Mason, G., Bliuc, A.-M., Bahfen, N., Atie, R., Connelly, K., & Oboler, A. (2017). *Cyber racism and community resilience: Strategies for combating online race hate*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jung, J. Y. (2019). Socio-psychological recovery from disasters through the neighbourhood storytelling network: Empirical research in Shinchimachi, Fukushima. *International Journal of Communication*, *13*(21).

Kassim, M., Pang, N. T. P., Mohamed, N., Kamu, A., Chong, M. H., Ayu, F., Syed, S. A. R., Omar, A., & Jeffree, M. S. (2021). Relationship between fear of COVID-19, psychopathology and sociodemographic variables in Malaysian population. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-020-00444-4

KhosraviNik, M. (2020). Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2020.1835683

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Pragmatics*, *14*(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2018-0003

KhosraviNik, M., & Zia, M. (2014). Persian nationalism, identity and anti-Arab sentiments in Iranian Facebook discourses: Critical discourse analysis and social media communication. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *13*(4), 755–780. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.13.4.08kho

Kienpointner, M. (1997). On the art of finding arguments: What ancient and modern masters of invention have to tell us about the "ars inveniendi". *Argumentation*, *11*, 225–236.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2017 [1980]). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Laws of Malaysia Act 155 Immigration act 1959/63. www.agc.gov.my/agcportal/uploads/files/Publications/LOM/EN/Act%20155.pdf

Lê, F., Tracy, M., Norris, F. H., & Galea, S. (2013). Displacement, county social cohesion, and depression after a large-scale traumatic event. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology: The International Journal for Research in Social and Genetic Epidemiology and Mental Health Services*, *48*(11), 1729–1741. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-013-0698-7

Lugar, R. G. (2009). *Trafficking and extortion of Burmese migrants in Malaysia and Southern Thailand: A report to the committee on foreign relations, U. S. senate*. Washington, DC: DIANE Publishing.

Markel, H., & Stern, A. M. (2002). The foreignness of germs: The persistent association of immigrants and disease in American society. *The Milbank Quarterly*, *80*(4), 757–v. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.00030

Massanari, A. L. (2015). *Participatory culture, community, and play*. New York: Peter Lang.

Mazwin, N. A. (2020, April 30). Rohingya refugees have no right or basis to make demands, says Home Minister. *The Star*. www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/04/30/rohingya-refugees-have-no-right-or-basis-to-make-demands-says-home-minister

Melzer, N., Morales, F. G., Toomey, L., Steinerte, E., Estrada-Castillo, M., Malila, M., & Hong, S.-P. (2021). *Malaysia: UN experts appalled by deportation of migrants to Myanmar despite court order*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/02/malaysia-un-experts-appalled-deportation-migrants-myanmar-despite-court

Meredith, J. M. (2017). Analysing technological affordances of online interactions using conversation analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *115*, 42–55. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2017.03.001

Miller, D. (2008). Nationalism. In D. John, H. Bonnie, & P. Anne (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political theory* (pp. 529–545). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Noor, A. A., Othman, J., Lugova, H., & Suleiman, A. (2020). Malaysia's approach in handling COVID-19 onslaught: Report on the Movement Control Order (MCO) and targeted screening to reduce community infection rate and impact on public health and economy. *Journal of Infection and Public Health*, *13*(12), 1823–1829. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiph.2020.08.007

Noor, A. (2021, 10 June). Malaysia home to largest number of Rohingya refugees in Southeast Asia. *The SunDaily*. www.thesundaily.my/local/malaysia-home-to-largest-number-of-rohingya-refugees-in-southeast-asia-MC8433853

O'Brien, M., & Hoffstaedter, G. (2020). "There we are nothing, here we are nothing!" The enduring effects of the Rohingya genocide. *Social Sciences*, *9*(11), 209. MDPI AG. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/socsci9110209

OECD. (2020, March 2). *Interim economic assessment coronavirus: The world economy at risk*. oecd.org/economic-outlook

Panigrahi, S., Velraj, P., & Rao, T. S. (2019). Functional microbial diversity in contaminated environment and application in bioremediation. In S. Das & H. R. Dash (Eds.), *Microbial diversity in the genomic era* (pp. 359–385). Amsterdam: Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-814849-5.00021-6

Parashar, A., & Alam, J. (2018). The national laws of Myanmar: Making of statelessness for the Rohingya. *International Migration*, *57*(1), 94–108. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12532

Poster, M. (2001). *What's the matter with the Internet?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Reisigl, M. (2014). Argumentation analysis and the discourse-historical approach: A methodological framework. In C. Hart & P. Cap (Eds.), *Contemporary critical discourse studies* (pp. 67–96). London: Bloomsbury.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2016). The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 23–61). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rubinelli, S. (2009). *Ars Tropica: The classical technique of constructing arguments from Aristotle to Cicero*. Amsterdam: Springer.

Sampson, R. Y. (1968). *The psychology of power*. New York: Vintage Books.

Schaller, M., Murray, D. R., & Bangerter, A. (2015). Implications of the behavioural immune system for social behaviour and human health in the modern world. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, *370*(1669), 20140105. https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2014.0105

Siti Nurnadilla, M. J. (2020). Malaysia belongs to the Malays' (*Malaysia ni Melayu Punya*): Categorising "us" and "them" in Malaysia's mainstream Malay language newspapers. *Critical Discourse Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2020.1834419

The Star. (2020, May 20). MCO sees spike in domestic violence cases. www.the-star.com.my/news/nation/2020/05/20/mco-sees-spike-in-domestic-violence-cases

Sukhani, P. (2020, July 10). The shifting politics of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. *The Diplomat*. https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/the-shifting-politics-of-rohingya-refugees-in-malaysia/

Sukumaran, T. (2019, September 25). Mahathir blasts Myanmar and United Nations over Rohingya "genocide". *South China Morning Post: Southeast Asia*. www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3030350/mahathir-blasts-myanmar-and-united-nations-over-rohingya

Tabri, N., Hollingshead, S., & Wohl, M. J. A. (2020, March 31). Framing COVID-19 as an existential threat predicts anxious arousal and prejudice towards Chinese people. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/mpbtr

Tasnim, L., & Siti Nurfatihah, P. (2021, December 10). Malaysia stands behind Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi. *Sinar Harian (English)*. www.sinarharian.com.my/article/177146/ENGLISH/Malaysia-supports-Aung-San-Suu-Kyi

Togoo, R., & Ismail, F. (2021). Security dilemma of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. *Open Journal of Political Science*, *11*, 12–20. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2021.111002

UNCHR. (2016, July 11). *UNHCR viewpoint: "Refugee" or "migrant": Which is right?* www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html

UNCHR Malaysia. (2020, April 29). *UNHCR Denies fake news on daily assistance for all refugees*. www.unhcr.org/en-my/news/latest/2020/4/5ea9242c4/unhcr-denies-fake-news-on-daily-assistance-for-all-refugees.html

UNHCR. (1954). *Convention relating to the status of stateless persons*. www.unhcr.org/ibelong/wp-content/uploads/1954-Convention-relating-to-the-Status-of-Stateless-Persons_ENG.pdf

UNHCR. (2022). *Figures at a glance in Malaysia*. www.unhcr.org/en-my/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html

van Dijk, T. A. (1987). *Communicating racism: Ethnic prejudice in thought and talk*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

van Nes, F., Abma, T., Jonsson, H., & Deeg, D. (2010). Language differences in qualitative research: Is meaning lost in translation? *European Journal of Ageing*, 7(4), 313–316. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-010-0168-y

Wang, Z. (2021). From crisis to nationalism?: The conditioned effects of the COVID-19 crisis on neo-nationalism in Europe. *Chinese Political Science Review*, 1–20. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-020-00169-8

Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (1st ed., pp. 63–93). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Liebhart, K. (2009). *The discursive construction of national identity* (A. Hirsch, & R. Mitten, Trans.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (Original work published in 1998).

7 Subtle hate speech and the recontextualisation of antisemitism online

Analysing argumentation on Facebook

Dimitris Serafis and Salomi Boukala

1. Introduction[1]

When the Greek chief executive officer (CEO) of Pfizer, Albert Bourla, announced the effectiveness of the company's vaccine against COVID-19 in 2020, the Greek society and mass media joined the world's enthusiasm. However, Bourla's Jewish origins led to several conspiracy theories on Greek social media, delivered both by right-wing and left-wing websites: these theories were questioning the actual existence of COVID-19 and the company's results, even comparing Albert Bourla to Nazi criminals.

This event prompted us to examine the multiple faces of antisemitism in Greece and how they are reproduced or fought in the terrain of social media. In this chapter, we decided to present the online debate on two highly ambiguous political cartoons that were published by the Greek left-wing newspaper *I Efimerída ton Syntaktón* (*EfSyn*). The cartoons were purportedly meant to criticise a series of public policies proposed by New Democracy (henceforth ND), the Greek conservative party and member of the European People's Party.

In 2018, ND, at the time the main opposition party, proposed a set of measures to increase competitiveness in Greek labour market. Among other things, the party suggested that, in some cases, the established eight-hour work schedule should be replaced by a twelve-hour one, in line with relevant initiatives in other EU member-states. In 2020, while ND was in power, the newspaper commented on the government's tertiary education bill. Among other measures included in the bill, surveillance systems were to be placed at Greek universities and a special police force was to be created to guard the institutions. The two cartoons (Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2), authored by *EfSyn* resident cartoonist Kostas Grigoriadis, summarise the newspaper's criticism against these initiatives.

In both cases, the cartoons released by *EfSyn* aimed to put the accent on the authoritarian characteristics of ND and their policies by providing

Figure 7.1 Screenshot of EfSyn (2018)[2]

Figure 7.2 Screenshot of EfSyn (2020)[3]

close associations between the Greek conservative party and the Nazi regime. However, the evident employment of the Holocaust was construed by members of Facebook groups and pages of the Jewish community as a (re)production of this form of antisemitism, leading them to oppose such discursive constructions as disrespectful towards Holocaust's victims, as well as naturalising Nazi horror and humiliating Jewish communities.

1.1. *Satire or antisemitism?* EfSyn *political cartoons on a thin line*

Unquestionably, both *EfSyn* cartoons establish very obvious visual and multimodal *intertextual linkages* (see Kristeva, 1980, on intertextuality) with the Holocaust and the Auschwitz concentration camp, the very place where the Nazi horror against Jews was exercised.

In Figure 7.1, intertextuality is quite evident since the cartoon portrays Auschwitz's entrance. The cartoonist paraphrased the message at the entrance gate, "The 12-hours schedule sets you free" (in Greek), creating meaningful associations to the notorious Nazi slogan *Arbeit macht frei* "Work sets you free". In Figure 7.2, the relevant cartoon included the message "Studies set you free", sketched above what looks like the entrance of a Nazi concentration camp, placed under surveillance cameras and in front of a razor wire. On that wire, the poster signed by the "Ministers of Citizens' Protection and Public Education" provides information about "Students' yard time", as in the case of prisoners' yard time in a concentration camp.

The overall representations could be interpreted as an explicit "spatiali[s]ation" of Jews' extermination, since in both the cartoons "social actors are represented by means of reference to a place with which they are, in the given context, closely associated" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 46). In other words, Greek employees and students are represented in terms of the exterminated Jews, in the very place where these last suffered the SS horror and, ultimately, died. The specific meaning construction along with the established intertextuality can be seen as enhancing further meaning implications through various *recontextualisations* (see Bakhtin, 1986, p. 89; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010). In this particular case, *EfSyn* fiercely criticised ND's policies as totalitarian by creating analogies between the Greek employees (Figure 7.1) and students/members of the academic community (Figure 7.2), suffering through ND's political choices, and the Jews that suffered the Nazi horror of the Holocaust in the World War II. In that sense, the cartoons' constructions attempted to assign ND the characteristics of a totalitarian force, similar to the Nazi SS, thus providing a severe criticism on aspects of the (Greek) political reality (see Samson & Huber, 2007; Tsakona, 2008). Given this very obvious parallelism, *EfSyn*'s satirical cartoons were ferociously criticised as being antisemitic and disrespectful towards the Holocaust memory, particularly by members of Facebook pages of the Jewish community.

1.2. *Investigating the antisemitism debate on Facebook*

Against this backdrop, in this chapter we focus on the examination of Facebook posts and comments against what has been perceived as instances of antisemitic hatred on Greek Facebook, by drawing on the premises of

Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS). SM-CDS is a set of guidelines within the broader scholarly area of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), which pay particular attention, among other things, to the affordances and the socio-technological context that determines discourses in social media, with the overall aim to critically unravel the ways social power inequalities are (re)produced in digital meaning making and practices of the relevant public sphere (see (KhosraviNik, 2018, 2022; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, among others).

Through the lens of SM-CDS, we particularly focus on the Facebook group *The Jewish Heritage of Greece* and the Facebook page *Protocols Without Zion* who oppose the veiled antisemitism communicated through the two cartoons. We analyse two posts and the comments made by the users of the two online communities on the relevant dates when the two cartoons were published by *EfSyn* in 2018 and 2020, respectively.

To that end, we employ principles and tools from the discourse-historical approach (DHA) (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) and the argumentum model of topics (AMT) (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019), aiming to highlight the standpoint arguments and couplings put forward by the members of the aforementioned Facebook groups/pages against the socio-historical premises that back up antisemitism in Greece. More specifically, our study aspires to provide insights into the socio-historical context in which commonly accepted (endoxical) premises may be established, before being challenged via the relevant argumentative schemes (topoi) in dialectical syllogisms (see Boukala, 2016). In doing so, we intend to sharpen the analytical armoury of SM-CDS by offering an in-depth investigation and focusing on two interrelated levels: the socio-historical *vertical* (macro-)level as this is encoded or opposed in the (micro-)level of *communicative content* – or the textual level, in terms of a more traditional CDS approach (KhosraviNik, 2017).

In what follows (Section 2), we pinpoint some theoretical issues revolving around the ways hatred may be facilitated by apparently humorous and sarcastic representations. Then, in Section 3 we propose a methodological synthesis to analyse the macro- and micro-level of users' argumentation against the background of an established antisemitism in the Greek context. Section 4 encompasses the data presentation and analysis. In light of the analysis, we sketch a discussion and some conclusions (Section 5).

2.   Theoretical perspectives: subtle hatred, normalisation and online discourse

2.1.   *Stereotypical assumptions in political cartoons*

Political cartoons are often considered to be multimodal artifacts that can effectively reinforce ideological (discriminatory) views through the

humorous or sarcastic portrayals they project against the socio-political reality (see Tsakona, 2008, pp. 383–384, p. 388; see also Weaver, 2013, pp. 486–487). As Tsakona (2020) observes, "in their effort to come up with a 'clever' twist or surprising punch line, [humour producers; cartoonists, in our case] may overlook the fact that they may make allusions which attack, offend, or marginalise specific individuals or social groups" (Tsakona, 2020, p. 44). In doing so, as in our case, it has been shown that cartoonists establish intertextual links with previous texts, while the consequent recontextualisations that these hone may end up "naturalising certain stereotypes" (Tsakona, 2020, p. 46; see also Werner, 2004) and thus normalising existing exclusionary views. *EfSyn*'s choice to spatialise and thus recontextualise the Holocaust in order to provide a sarcastic and ironic representation against the perceived ideological opponent (i.e. ND) could be seen as a case where the cartoonists, perhaps not even knowingly, drew on stereotypical assumptions regarding the historically "othered" Jewish populations in the Greek context. What seems to be quite important here is that antisemitic humour and the prejudices that this brings to the fore are globally disseminated as "a type of sick humour" (Dundes & Hauschild, 1988, p. 57), which, in its turn, "relies on older stereotypes that have not been significantly altered in modernity" (Weaver, 2013, p. 486).

   As we will show in Section 3, Jewish communities have been historically perceived as 'Others' in Greek society (see e.g. Margaritis, 2005) and, as such, it can be assumed that antisemitic stereotypes have been naturalised throughout the years, implicitly penetrating humorous representations of both far right and apparently anti-racist perspectives in various aspects of the public sphere (see Weaver, 2013, p. 496), being able to facilitate, in this sense, discriminatory and/or hatred perspectives in the relevant social context. In other words, hatred perspectives (such as antisemitic ones) may be found in the most unexpected angles of the public sphere, being expressed even by users that aim to combat against such discriminatory hatred; this is something, we believe, a CDS perspective is potentially able to emphasise.

2.2.   *Subtle hatred reasoning online*

As a matter of fact, the alarming increase of hatred and aggression has been highlighted by various discourse-analytical studies (see Assimakopoulos et al., 2017; Assimakopoulos & Vella Muscat, 2017; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018, among others). As Kopytowska (2017, p. 5) pinpoints, "[w]ith new technical solutions, new forms of expression and new public spheres, there is no doubt that mediatized hate speech reaches wider audiences and is likely to have more substantial effects". Consequently,

scholarly approaches have paid particular attention to social media platforms, with a view to studying how (sexist, racist, antisemitic, etc.) hatred can be facilitated (or opposed) in such a new communicative environment. In fact, "[o]ne of the most significant and complex drawbacks of the proliferation of user-generated content . . . is the acutely increasing incidence of online hate" (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018, p. 47), since social media "technologies have broken the uni-directionality of content flow from producers to consumers via (gated) mass media practices; and, at least on the face of it, have empowered ordinary users by having the option to participate in text production and distribution" (KhosraviNik, 2014, p. 291). Accordingly, from a critical discourse-analytical perspective, it is emphasised that "with the increasing availability and growth of digitally mediated linguistic data and the impact of social media in various aspects of social, political and economic processes, a socially oriented approach [. . .] cannot remain oblivious to these changes" (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 206).

In the specific context of this case, we claim that such a critical perspective on social media discourses should also deal with the quality of resistance to hatred and discriminatory attitudes as this is constructed in bottom-up discourses on Facebook. As we will show, it is in circumstances like these where hate speech may be subtly reproduced, despite the potential lack of intent.

Moreover, when one deals with hate speech, we should note that what lies at the centre of official definitions of prosecutable hate speech[4] "is the word 'incitement', which [. . .] renders the intention to trigger potential actions against members of protected groups a precondition for considering a speech act hate speech, assuming, thus, a link between hate speech and hate crime" (Baider et al., 2017, p. 3). However, there is an increasing body of literature which recognises that "explicitness cannot be the only determining criterion in the identification of hate speech" (Assimakopoulos, 2020, p. 179; see also Weber, 2009, p. 5; Assimakopoulos & Serafis, 2020; Serafis, 2022).

In many cases, hate speech consists of

> inflammatory, offensive comments or comments characterised by prejudice and intolerance that . . . may not be considered hate speech in the legal sense, [but] they arguably still constitute hate speech in that they may have a devastating effect on their recipients.
>
> (Baider et al., 2017, p. 3)

This opaque realisation of hate speech can be seen as an intrinsic part of discriminatory discourses (see van Dijk, 1991; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Richardson, 2004; Baker et al., 2013) and therefore part of instantiations

of discriminatory, antisemitic discourse. In the case of antisemitic hatred, implicitness often occurs because

> explicit manifestations of . . . antisemitic attitudes are taboo in many countries post World War II and the Holocaust, after the huge numbers of war crimes and mass murders committed and huge levels of institutional racism and discrimination implemented.
>
> (Wodak, 2017, p. 15; see also Engel & Wodak, 2013)

A key point here is that subtlety in hate speech in public communication is directly linked to its inherent *argumentativity* (see Amossy, 2009a, 2009b; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 27). In other words, it is the reasoning schemes in the background that permeate hatred discourses through naturalising harmful premises and thus make them more effective against the intended target(s). Therefore, from a critical discourse-analytical perspective, the analysis of "rhetorical devices and argumentation schemes employed in different cultural and sociopolitical contexts which convey [or oppose, in our case] such agonistic and exclusionary meanings" (Wodak, 2017, p. 15) is timely and much needed in order for critical discourse analysts to be equipped to unravel subtle forms of hate speech in both top-down and, most importantly, bottom-up social media discourses.

3. Macro- vs. micro-level methodological considerations

3.1. A (macro-) perspective: antisemitism in the Greek political spectrum and the public sphere

While claiming that the effectiveness of subtle forms of hatred discourse lies at its intrinsic argumentativity, an accepted premise is that argumentativity and specific claims do not exist in a limbo. Socio-historical conditions determine their emergence by providing the common ground on which the interlocutors build their argumentative moves in social media platforms. In other words, in the present case, a profound knowledge of the conditions that favour antisemitic hate in the Greek context is necessary. New digital environments have undoubtfully facilitated the (re-)emergence of hatred attitudes, and thus a particular focus should be on the affordances and constraints of the new medium; nevertheless, "the construction, perception and communication of hate is primarily a social construct, i.e. constituted in the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic context of the society" (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018, p. 48). Therefore, from a SM-CDS perspective, this kind of macro-level parameter should be equally considered while discussing the discursive emergence of antisemitism. By doing so, "a social, historical, cultural, psychological, or political account

is provided for explication of the discourse under investigation" (Khosra-viNik, 2017, p. 586). As such, there is a need for a thorough discussion on the socio-historical conditions that have favoured the emergence of antise-mitic hate in Greece.

In its 2014–2015 survey, the Anti-Defamation League designated Greece as the most antisemitic country in the European Union. Sixty-nine percent of Greeks affirm that Jews have too much power in busi-ness and international finance, as well as too much control over global affairs and government (Antoniou et al., 2019). Moreover, a plethora of anti-Jewish stereotypes and strategies of blaming "Jews" are adopted by Greek politicians (both right-wing and left-wing) (Antoniou et al., 2019). The rise of antisemitism and the normalisation of racist rhetoric in the Greek public sphere prompted us to present here a brief descrip-tion of popular Greek stereotypes regarding the Jews and the Greek Jewish heritage that are diffused from popular culture to the Greek political spectrum.

According to Ampatzopoulou (2020), stereotypes are built upon the binary opposition between the Self and the Other, and the image of the Jew was utilised to intensify the Greek Self on the basis of religious and ethnic discrimination. Popular stereotypes such as "Judaism as illness" and the representation of Jews as assassins of Christians and greedy were adopted by the Greek popular culture and mainly expressed via the metonymy of Judas. Thus, the Jew became a "local foreigner" (Ampatzopoulou, 2020, p. 29) that was distinguished due to economic and religious aspects and cultivated envy and rancour that were illuminated during the Greek war of independence (1821–1830), the formation of the modern Greek state and the modern antisemitism (1930s) that was marked by the pogroms in Thessaloniki (Margaritis, 2005, pp. 30–47). On that basis, it comes as no surprise that Jewish populations may be the actual object – the "Other" one can "make fun of" – or used in order to develop a sarcastic representa-tion of socio-political reality in Greece.

Another parameter of the propagation of antisemitism in Greece is relevant to the Greek translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1932, an antisemitic text that is still one of the most popular books in Greece (Psarras, 2013). The aforementioned work of fiction has also inspired many Greek political figures and led to the cultivation of anti-semitism as a parallel to anticommunism during Metaxas's dictatorship (1936–1941), the Greek civil war (1946–1949) and the colonels' dicta-torship (1967–1974) (Psarras, 2013). The Greek far right has adopted antisemitic stereotypes and many popular political figures, such as Geor-gios Karatzaferis, the leader of Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS); Kon-stantinos Plevris; the current minister for development and investment Adonis Georgiadis; and Golden Dawn's leader, Nikos Michaloliakos, who

predicated the historical truth of the *Protocols* and its racist discourse (ibid.) The *Protocols*' diffusion was also linked to the Greek left wing, especially after the transition to democracy (1974) and through the prism of anti-Zionism (Psarras, 2013; Margaritis, 2005). Until recently, political figures of the left have demonstrated the deep roots of antisemitism in Greece via statements regarding the exploitation of the Holocaust by the Jews[5] and the representation of the current prime minister as Moses and an enemy of the Greek nation.[6] Although historically both Greek Jews and communists fought the Nazis, their common stories were silenced and haunted Greek society through the domination of antisemitism and the intentional oblivion of the Jewish Holocaust in Greece. The memory of the muted crime against the Greek Jewish population was officially recognised in 2005 (Molho, 2014) as Greece, under the Stockholm Declaration, undertook the responsibility to commemorate those who died in the Holocaust. However, the memory of Shoah is still seeking its position in the Greek collective memory and creates debates in the terrain of public history and social media (Eleutheriou, 2019).

We will examine one of those debates in Section 4. At the same time, we intend to show whether and how the discursive transference from otherness to sameness could become possible and permissible via the study of *EfSyn*'s cartoons, which were then uploaded on the *Jewish Heritage of Greece* Facebook group and the *Protocols Without Zion* Facebook page. What becomes evident here is the socio-historical context that allows a negative conceptualisation of Jewish populations in the Greek public sphere. In that vein, hatred reasoning against them may emerge even in covert forms. Moreover, it is largely against this background that Jewish communities perceive the relevant meanings (e.g. *EfSyn*'s cartoons) as offensive antisemitic statements that must be addressed.

3.2. A (micro-) critical discourse-argumentation synthesis

Focusing on the analysis of the micro-level of *communicative content* (see KhosraviNik, 2017), we firstly employ tools from the DHA with a view to study *discursive strategies* that permeate users' comments against the perceived antisemitic set of cartoons launched by the left-wing newspaper *EfSyn*. In particular, we pay attention to 1) "nomination strategies" to study the "discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions"; 2) "predication strategies" to show "the discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions (positively or negatively)"; and 3) "argumentation strategies" where we illustrate the "justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness" through the use of topos/topoi and fallacies (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 33).

Moreover, regarding the last set of strategies, DHA perceive topoi as being some kind of

> content-related warrants or "conclusion rules" which connect the argument(s) with the conclusion, the claim . . . justify[ing] the transition from the argument(s) to the conclusion [, realised in terms of] conditional or causal paraphrases such as "if x, then y" or "y, because x".
> (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 35; see also Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, pp. 75–80)

Within the same framework, Boukala (2016, 2019) further claims that topoi should be examined in relation to dominantly accepted values in particular socio-historical contexts, realised in terms of the Aristotelian concept of *endoxon* (plural: *endoxa*). By illustrating how antisemitic perspectives have been historically cultivated in the Greek context (see the previous section), we can now plausibly explain the range of shared endoxical values against which members on the aforementioned Facebook groups/pages argue in the examined case. Thus, the examination of the macro-historical level can embody the micro-analysis of an SM-CDS approach. More specifically, as Boukala (2016) maintains, it is the *topoi/endoxa* interrelation within the Aristotelian *dialectical syllogism* that can demonstrate the starting points from which something is claimed in a particular socio-political situation, as the one analysed here.

In order to deepen the analysis of particular claims retrieved in comments against *EfSyn*'s cartoons, we employ the quasi-Y structure provided by the AMT (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019), which particularly examines how argumentative inferences are developed on the basis of topical and endoxical premises (see Salahshour & Serafis, 2022; Serafis, 2022, 2023; Serafis et al., 2020, 2021, for the integration of AMT through a CDS prism).

More specifically, the AMT distinguishes between a "procedural inferential component" and a "material contextual component" that form each single argumentation. The first one includes the "locus" (*topos* in Latin), that is the (onto)logical relation that governs the argumentative move, and its realisation, i.e. the "maxim", which is an inferential principle that can be seen in terms of different conditionals. For example, in a "cause-effect" relation a possible maxim could be "if the cause is present so does the effect" (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019, pp. 208–209). The second component comprises the "endoxon" and the "datum", a factual premise, which actually emerges from the discursive analysis of the text (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019, pp. 214–215); in our case, the analysis of nomination and predication strategies could help us unveil the datum in each case (see also Boukala & Serafis, 2022a, p. 209). At the intersection of the aforementioned components, we can unveil the "first conclusion/minor premise" before moving

step by step towards the "final conclusion", which represents the defended claim (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019, pp. 208–216, for an overview).

All in all, through this analytical synergy, a SM-CDS perspective can sharpen its analytical apparatus by explaining the implicit argumentation and the specific claims that emerge in the micro-communicative content level in relation to the macro-historical context where values and views are being established. In other words, our approach aims to pinpoint the socio-historical context against which topoi interrelate with endoxical premises that users share while juxtaposing the perceived antisemitic hatred of *EfSyn*'s viewpoints as well as offer a scrutiny of the standpoint-argument pairs that are implicitly honed in on social media discourses. On the basis of these premises, next we focus on the analysis of our case study.

4.   Juxtaposing or embracing hatred online?

For this chapter, we particularly focus on the Facebook group *The Jewish Heritage of Greece* and the Facebook page *Protocols Without Zion*. We followed their posts regarding the two cartoons published by *EfSyn* as members or followers of each medium. Our data were collected the very day when the posts against the cartoons were made in 2018 and 2020, respectively (i.e. two days in total). The posts were followed by fifteen comments on the post made by *The Jewish Heritage of Greece* in 2018 and four on the post made in 2020; two comments followed the post made by the *Protocols Without Zion* in 2020. We carefully collected and analysed all the comments.

When it comes to the political and ideological background of the two media, with respect to the first medium (*The Jewish Heritage of Greece*), this is self-defined as "a group created in 2011 with the aim of highlighting the cultural heritage that the various Jewish communities have created and accumulated through their centuries of presence in Greece". Moreover, the group "condemns antisemitism as a heinous phenomenon that affects and penetrates horizontally society having nothing to do with political position". Finally, the members promote "the condemnation of anti-Zionism, that is, the questioning or even denial of the right of the Jews to have their own nation-state, Israel". The group counts 6,700 members.[7] Regarding the second medium under study (i.e. *Protocols Without Zion*), this consists of a Facebook page (approximately 1,300 followers) "against anti-Jewish hatred", acting in favour of a deeper "[u]nderstanding [of] the disguise of anti-Semitism in 'anti-Zionism', the anti-imperialism of idiots". As explicitly stated, it is "[t]he truly progressive approach to the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict".[8]

As transpires from the aforementioned definitions, we deal with two quite different media in terms of organisation and political background. The Facebook group *The Jewish Heritage of Greece* is considered to be a

group without evident political and/or ideological orientation. Members participate and post in the group only in respect to issues addressed by the foundational principles of the group (i.e. promotion of the Jewish cultural background in Greece, condemnation of antisemitism/anti-Zionism). In the other case, the Facebook page *Protocols Without Zion* is considered to be a left-wing page that aims to intervene against Jewish hatred by bringing to the fore a progressive approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The converging point of both media is the condemnation and struggle against antisemitic hatred, which is particularly relevant to our case.

Moving to our analysis, on the Facebook group *The Jewish Heritage of Greece* the following post was accompanied by the reproduction of the relevant cartoon (see Figure 7.1):

> Anyone who makes "cartoons" on current political issues, using or referring to the Holocaust, demonstrates implicitly that s/he is pro-Nazi. With such a shameful cartoon, the pro-government [i.e. SYRIZA's left-wing government] newspaper *EfSyn* is equated to "Stochos" [i.e. a far-right newspaper] and similar nationalist tabloids.[9]

On the relevant predicates of the post, the newspaper is explicitly characterised as a "pro-Nazi" voice associated with other nationalistic voices in the Greek mediascape: "Anyone who makes 'cartoons' on current political issues, using or referring to the Holocaust, demonstrates implicitly that s/he is pro-Nazi" and "*EfSyn* is equated to 'Stochos' and similar nationalist tabloids". In this sense, the post creates meaningful associations between nationalist and leftist newspapers (exploiting *EfSyn* and Stochos as reference points of this analogy) that are based on the parallel usage of the Holocaust memorial by these media voices. This could be paraphrased as follows: In an analogous way to the pro-Nazi voices, *EfSyn* makes fun (i.e. "cartoons") of the Holocaust. In the argumentation strategies realised here, the topos of syllogism that starts with something specific and concludes with something general (induction) (Aristotle, Rhetoric, B23, 1398b) is employed, elaborated by the conditional scheme: *if someone makes fun of or creates cartoons based on the Holocaust, then she or he is considered pro-Nazi*. The aforementioned topos in parallel with the previous analogue scheme establishes a generalisation that marks *EfSyn* and the left wing as antisemitic.

Following suit, in AMT terms, the argumentative inference that stems from the aforementioned comment could be seen as governed by the *locus from the whole and its parts* (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019, pp. 255–256) in the procedural-inferential component of the quasi-Y structure.[10] This locus could be realised in terms of a maxim: *if X is true for the part, then X is true for the whole*. On the material-contextual component, the endoxon that seems to be accepted is the following one: Nazi voices ridicule the

Holocaust, while the datum which interrelates with that is the following three-fold one (with its negative meaning): 1) *EfSyn* makes "cartoons" on the Holocaust; 2) *EfSyn* is equated with Stochos and other nationalist tabloids; and 3) anyone who makes fun of the Holocaust is a Nazi. Then, at the intersection of datum and maxim, a first (fallacious) conclusion could be: *EfSyn* is an antisemitic newspaper, paving the way to the final conclusion/claim: *EfSyn* and the left wing in general are antisemitic forces (see Figure 7.3).

Moreover, several users commented on that post. For example:

(1) [E]ither they have a complete lack of judgment on issues that apt to the respect of religious groups' suffering or their (superficially) progressive ideology is related to the Nazis . . . no reasonable person who respects human dignity and the darkest pages of history, would use this figure to communicate ideas, which, however, might be correct;
(2) No bastard has the right to play, make cartoons or do politics on the bones and the ashes of all those who were exterminated in the Nazi death factories.!!! DISGUSTING SCUMS. . . . But who has lost the sense of shame for you to find it, you miserable subhuman, vile parasites [verbatim];
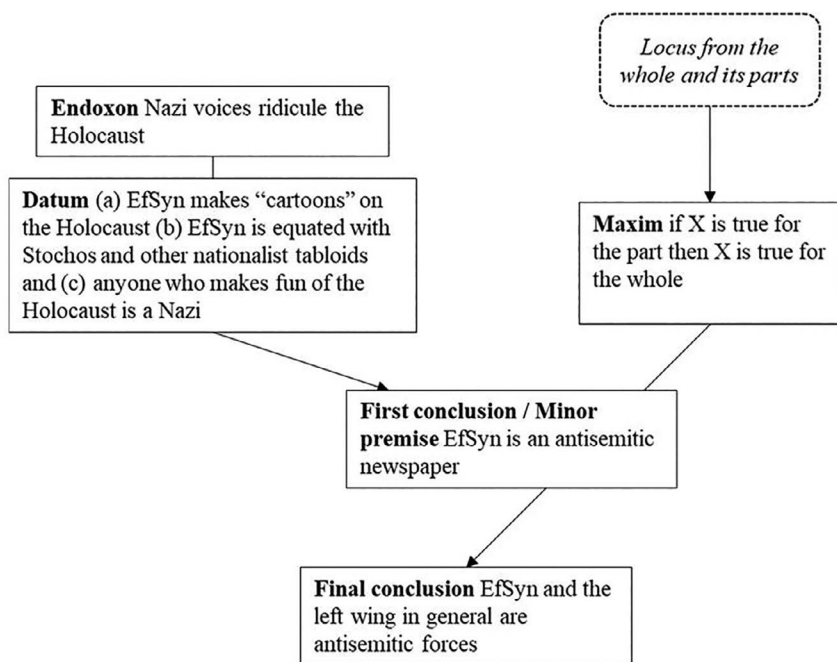
Figure 7.3 AMT reconstruction – topos of syllogism

What strikes our interest in these comments is the use of specific metaphors along the lines of the respective nomination strategy: "DISGUSTING SCUMS", "miserable subhuman", "vile parasites" that are used in comment (2). It is worth mentioning that the relevant dehumanising metaphors are part of metaphors typically used by far-right, neo-Nazi forces against migrants, Jews, etc., in order to accelerate hatred aggression against them. What is evident, in light of this, is that the member of the group surprisingly makes an explicit recontextualisation of Nazi propaganda against the Jews (Ampatzopoulou, 2020) in order to oppose what she or he perceives as antisemitic hatred against the Jewish community. The predicate "No bastard has the right to play, make cartoons or do politics on the bones and the ashes of all those who were exterminated in the Nazi death factories . . .!!!" explicitly states that humorous or sarcastic commentaries that exploit the Holocaust are unacceptable choices.

Although on the basis of these strategies the commentator explicitly and strongly criticises the decision of *EfSyn* to publish such a cartoon, the utilisation of the aforementioned nominations leads to a recontextualisation of classic antisemitic rhetoric (Ampatzopoulou, 2020). This is furthered by the predicates used by the aforementioned comment (1): "their (superficially) progressive ideology is related to the Nazis . . . no reasonable person who respects human dignity and the darkest pages of history, would use this figure to communicate ideas". According to this, the left "ideology" is characterised as "(superficially) progressive" as well as "related to the Nazis". An important element here is that the commenter recognises that the ideas that are relevant to the opposition to neoliberal strategies on labour and education might be correct; however, the usage of the Shoah and the insult to the Holocaust survivors lead to an ultimate hybris. The associations between the left and the Nazis are quite evident in both comments.

On the argumentation stemming through the comments, once more, the topos of induction (see earlier) emerges. The inference seems to be led, once more, by the *locus from the whole and its parts* (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019, pp. 255–256; see also earlier), which is realised in term of the maxim: *if X is true for the whole, then X is true for the part*. On the material-contextual component, an accepted endoxon could be: ridiculing the Holocaust is not acceptable and the related datum is 1) leftist ideology that humiliates the Holocaust is related to the Nazi and 2) those who humiliate Jews' exterminations are scums, subhuman and parasites. At the intersection of maxim and datum the first conclusion could be: the left-wing *EfSyn* is a pro-Nazi (scum, subhuman and parasite) voice, leading to the final conclusion: left ideology is related to Nazi strategies (see Figure 7.4).
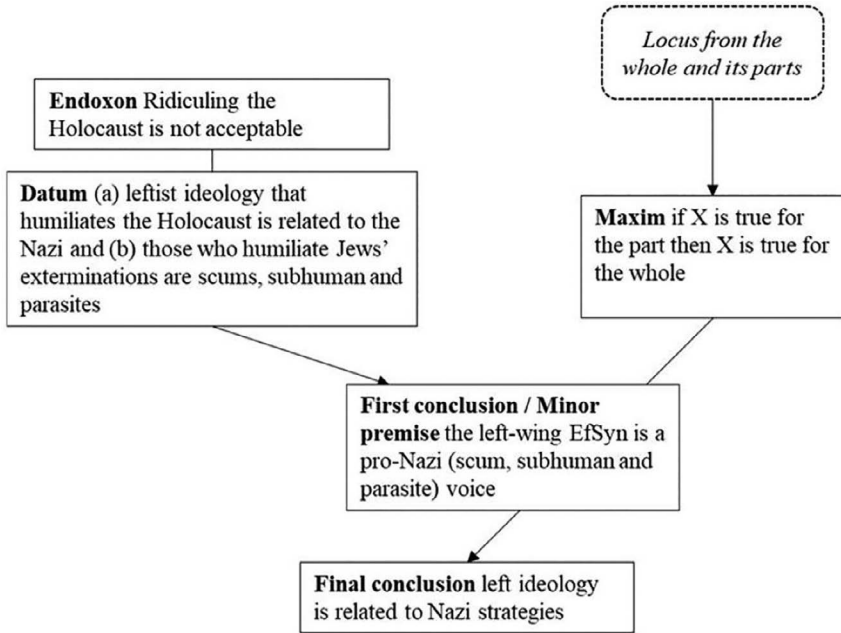
Figure 7.4 The AMT reconstruction – topos of induction

In this climate, another commenter notes:

(3) People who do not learn lessons from their history will sooner or later make the same or similar mistakes. And especially the left wing has a great political responsibility if so many people have become fascists and voted for far-right parties, and even bigger when the left does not respect the Jewish memory.

Concerning the analysis of the predication strategies penetrating this excerpt, the commenter here associates the left with the empowerment of far-right forces: "the left has a great political responsibility if so many people have become fascists and voted far-right parties", while explicitly stating that "the left does not respect the Jewish memory". According to the comment (3), this is perceived as potentially resulting in a repetition of the World War II horror, as implied in the clause complex, which is justified on the basis of a topos of history (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 80): "People who do not learn lessons from their history will sooner or later make the same or similar mistakes". What seems to be most important here is the fact that, through an inductive reasoning on the basis of the topos of

induction (see earlier), the left is constructed as being responsible for the rise of the far right. In this particular case, this induction can be further labelled as the topos of the leftist antisemitism, relying on the conditional *"if the left wing does not pay respect to the history and the Holocaust, then it is responsible for the society's move to right-wing extremism"*.

The inference triggered on the basis of this discursive construction is led by a *locus from final cause* (Rigotti & Greco, 2019, p. 259), realised in terms of the following maxim: *if the cause is present, the effect will be present too*. The endoxon underpinned here could be: the Holocaust memory should be respected. The datum that emerges from the textual construction could be the following: 1) the left has a great responsibility for the rise of the far right and 2) the left does not respect the Jewish memory. At the intersection of the two components of the quasi-Y structure, the first conclusion is the lack of respect of the left for the Jewish memory causes the rise of the far right, while the final conclusion/claim could be the left will be responsible if the Holocaust is repeated (e.g. through the rise of right-wing extremism that the left favours) (see Figure 7.5).
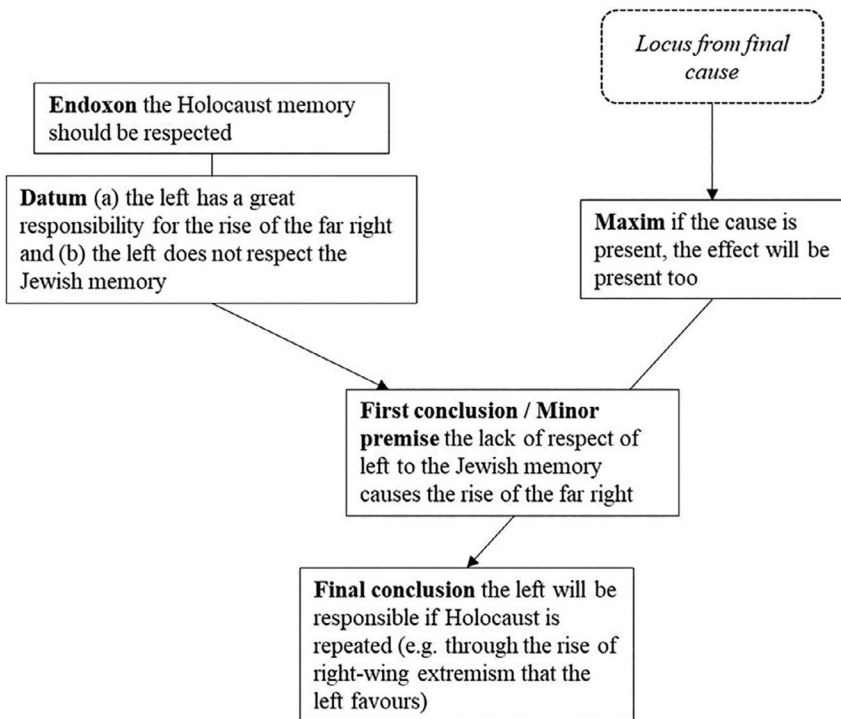
Figure 7.5 The AMT reconstruction – topos of history

In 2020, commenting on the second cartoon released by *EfSyn* (see Figure 7.2), a member of the Facebook page *Protocols Without Zion* posted:

> It is well known by any reasonable and honest person that making fun of Holocaust is shameful for the victims and shows that those who proceed to such an action are characterized by lack of intelligence.

In particular, the post provides a generalisation that characterises those who make comments similar to the ones provided by *EfSyn*'s cartoon as "shameful for the victims" and as stupid ("lack of intelligence"). The respective characterisations are justified on the basis of the fallacious topos of indication (Rhetoric, B23, 1401b), which can be paraphrased as: "if someone makes fun of the Holocaust, then she or he is not characterised by ethos and does not afford compassion to the victims". It is worth mentioning that here the commenter avoids any political references and creates a generalisation based on victimhood; she or he makes an appeal to emotion and especially compassion via the victims of the Holocaust.

The inference triggered is governed by the *locus from definition* (see Rigotti & Greco, 2019, pp. 252–254), which could be realised in terms of the maxim: *if the definition is predicated/negated of some entity, then the defined thing is also predicated or negated of the same entity*. The shared endoxon is, once more, sketched along the following lines: making fun of the Holocaust is shameful, and the datum is whoever makes fun of the Holocaust does not respect the victims and is not intelligent. Then, at the intersection of the two components (i.e. procedural-inferential and material-contextual), the first conclusion could be disrespectful/shameful and stupid voices make fun of the Holocaust, while the final conclusion/claim would be *EfSyn* is a disrespectful/shameful and stupid voice (see Figure 7.6).

On the same cartoon (see Figure 7.2), a member of the group *The Jewish Heritage of Greece* posted:

> I am ashamed to upload the *EfSyn* cartoon that equates Greek universities and Auschwitz. Of course, they [i.e. *EfSyn*] are not ashamed. These people have no moral barrier when they aim to criticise the opponent. They are ready to humiliate even the most sacred symbols of humanity. They do not even care if they insult the memory of 6 million dead and their relatives. And then they pretend to promote humanitarian ideals; shame on them. There is no way to improve themselves.
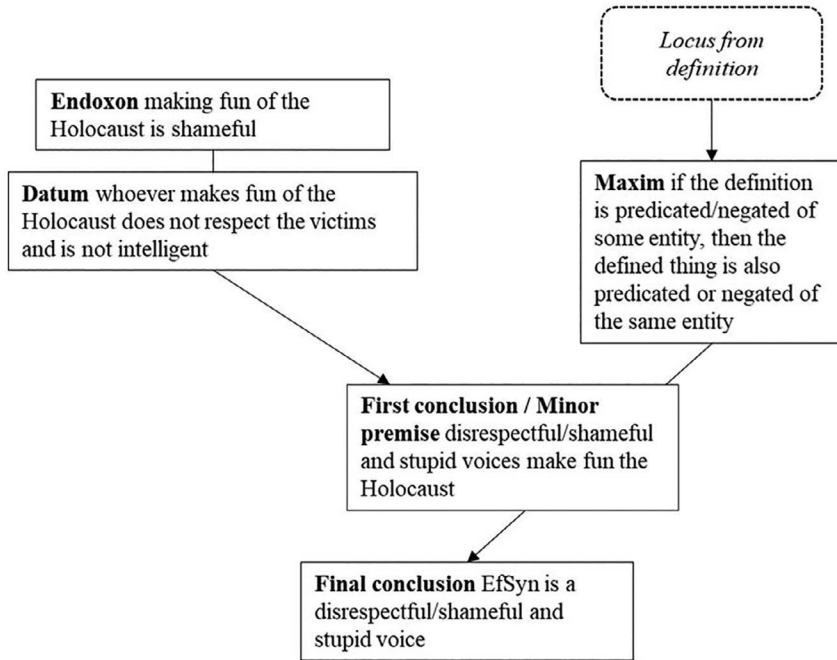
Figure 7.6 The AMT reconstruction – topos of indication

The post was accompanied by comments like the following one:

> I was ashamed to see it. . . . This is not called criticism of the opponent, it reveals that: I am not aware of my actions. Leftist bastards who do not understand anything.

Once more, the predicates realised in the post represent *EfSyn* as a voice that lacks morality ("These people have no moral barriers"), while intentionally making fun of the Nazi horror ("They are ready to humiliate the most sacred symbol of humanity"), since they do not care about the Holocaust of Greek Jews and the memory of the Shoah in general ("they insult the memory of 6 million dead and its relatives"). The relevant characteristics are explicitly expressed and summarised in the nomination "Leftist bastards" in the accompanying comment. All in all, the criticism developed here is on the usage of Holocaust symbols and the fact that *EfSyn* insults the memory of Shoah.

The implicit argumentation is based, again, on a synthesis of the topos of induction or topos of the leftist antisemitism (see earlier), while evident is an appeal to negative emotions that leads to a generalisation according to which
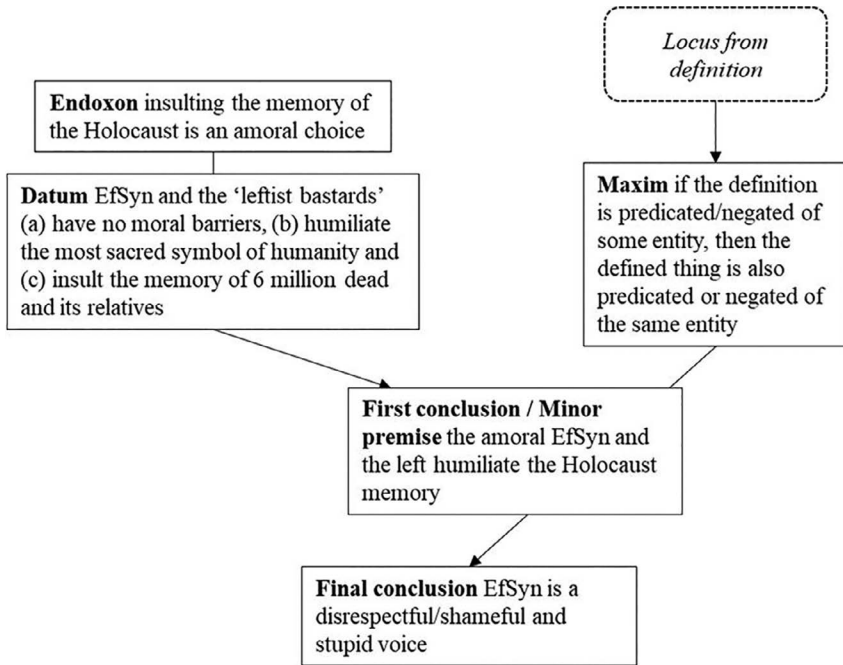
Figure 7.7 The AMT reconstruction – topos of induction or topos of the leftist antisemitism

the left ("bastards") are antisemitic amoralist forces. Defined like this, the inference that is triggered here is based, again, on the *locus from definition* (see earlier), which could be realised by the following maxim: if the definition is predicated/negated of some entity, then the defined thing is also predicated or negated of the same entity. The shared endoxon is, once more, something along the following lines: insulting the memory of the Holocaust is an amoral choice, and the datum is *EfSyn* and the "leftist bastards" 1) have no moral barriers, 2) humiliate the most sacred symbol of humanity, and 3) insult the memory of 6 million dead and its relatives. Then, at the maxim/ datum intersection, the first conclusion could be the amoral *EfSyn* and the left humiliate the Holocaust memory, while the final conclusion would be *EfSyn* and the left are antisemitic voices (see Figure 7.7).

5. Discussion and conclusions

In sum, as we show in our analysis, the discourse and argumentation of members of the Facebook groups and pages under study attribute an intention to humiliate the Greek Jewish community to *EfSyn* by disrespecting

the Holocaust and the memory of those who died in the Nazi concentration camps. Moreover, the reasoning that permeates the analysed discursive constructions inductively assigns antisemitic characteristics not only to the specific newspaper but to antizionism and the left as a whole, which, according to the commenters, is closely related to the Nazis. The left wing is perceived as responsible for the rise of far-right political parties, while in some cases, the perceived antisemitism is addressed by the members of the Facebook pages/groups on the basis of dehumanising metaphors and similar linguistic wrappings (e.g. "subhuman", "parasites"). As a matter of fact, the same means are repeatedly employed in antisemitic Nazi rhetoric against Jews and other groups excluded by the Nazis. It is on that basis that the overall argumentation becomes problematic as it becomes about (re) producing and justifying hatred against the left wing.

In other words, what emerges from our data is an overall anti-leftism or, better, anti-communist rhetoric, which is commonly addressed by far-right voices against the left wing in the Greek context (see Boukala, 2021). The humiliation of the Holocaust and the Jewish memory is opposed by some of the commenters on that (hatred) basis. As implied at the beginning of this chapter, hatred can take many forms and appear even in the most unexpected corners of the digital landscape. As evidenced in the light of our analysis, the perceived antisemitic hatred (*EfSyn*'s cartoons) is addressed in an anti-communist rhetoric by members of Jewish online communities, making the relevant debate extremely problematic, since it is deepening existing dichotomies and polarisation in the Greek context.

It is worth mentioning here that we dealt with two different Facebook groups and pages in terms of political orientation (i.e. a left-wing page and a rather non-political group), which share a common interest against antisemitic hatred. What we aim to pinpoint here is that, in general terms, information regarding the digital context (i.e. who these people are, what their politics are, how they are connected to other groups online, how they link to what kinds of politics offline, etc.) becomes extremely relevant for SM-CDS scholars. In other words, we need to have access to such information to be able to make better sense of what it is that social media platforms are pragmatically communicating and to what end. This information is important, in our case, to identify, for example, if we are dealing with a group of ordinary Jews who are taking up the new affordance of social media to find a voice and show their grievance against antisemitism. However, if we are dealing with a group which is well connected and organised and political and active, etc., then we are not really talking about a pure bottom-up discourse but some kind of organisational discourse. This is why we need to go deeper into the digital context of production and circulation of this particular discourse. However, the methodological orientation of the chapter and the short analysis do not permit us to generalise

these findings. Future research on broader datasets and with a different analytical focus could address this restriction adequately.

In theoretical and methodological terms, we assume that our approach provides some benefits as part of the toolkit of SM-CDS that could be adumbrated as follows: 1) the theoretical discussion on subtle forms of hate speech seems to be quite important. According to the restrictions imposed by (national and international) public institutions to penalise explicit incitement to hatred attitudes, communication of hate is increasingly coded in subtle forms, while appearing in the most unexpected angles of the public sphere. Therefore, mechanisms such as humour should be considered as facilitating (re)production of hatred stereotypes in contemporary societies. Concurrently, 2) since hatred does not consist only of statements that incite to hate, the reasoning that permeates discriminatory hatred discourses should be re-examined along with the opposing discourses that, although they aim to address hate, may end up reproducing the very same lines of reasoning. In order to do so, the micro-level of communicative context should be cross-examined with rigorous analytical tools.

On this last point, we should pinpoint that the emerging studies within SM-CDS exploit, and rightly so, interdisciplinary methodological integrations (see e.g. Boukala & Serafis, 2022b, 2023) in order to better understand the new tendencies, affordances and genres of communication in the rather unchartered mosaic of platforms and spaces which constitute the new digital participatory mediascape (see KhosraviNik, 2022). We moreover claim here that this exploration should go hand by hand with a rigorous sharpening of the analytical toolkit that will smoothly incorporate traditional macro-contextual and micro-communicative analysis in the new socio-technological and techno-discursive context, advancing in this sense the methodological acumen of critical discourse-analytical scholarly practice. This is where this chapter has positioned itself and aspired to contribute to by analysing Facebook commentary on *EfSyn*'s political cartoons and exploring the arguments underlying the recontextualisation of classic antisemitic discourses.

Notes

2. Cartoon by Kostas Grigoriadis. Publicly available at: Του Κώστα Γρηγοριάδη | Η Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών (efsyn.gr) (last accessed: 26.08.2022).
3. Cartoon by Kostas Grigoriadis. Publicly available at: www.efsyn.gr/skitsa/277174_skitso-tis-efsyn-k-grigoriadis-16012021 (last accessed: 26.08.2022).
4. See the definitions provided, for instance, by the Council of the European Union (2008) and the UN General Assembly (1996), as summarised by Baider et al. (2017, p. 3).
5. Syriza's former deputy minister of education, Theodoros Pelegrinis, mentioned in his parliamentary speech (18 September 2016) that Jews utilised the Holocaust to earn international sympathy: www.protagon.gr/epikairotita/44341231352-44341231352
6. See the KIS (Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece) announcement on the political spot of Syriza: https://kis.gr/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=19&limitstart=35&fontstyle=f-smaller
7. See more here: www.facebook.com/groups/234850653248507/about (last accessed: 14.09.2021).
8. See more here: www.facebook.com/protocolswithoutzion (last accessed: 14.09.2021).
9. Data translation was made by the authors.
10. A locus is included in the so-called *loci from extensional implications*, in Rigotti's and Greco's terms (ibid).

References

Amossy, R. (2009a). The New Rhetoric's inheritance: Argumentation and discourse analysis. *Argumentation*, *23*(3), 313–324.

Amossy, R. (2009b). Argumentation in discourse: A socio-discursive approach to arguments. *Informal Logic*, *29*(3), 252–267.

Ampatzopoulou, F. (2020). *The other in persecution: The image of the Jew in literature and cinema*. Athens: Patakis. In Greek.

Antoniou, G., Kosmidis, S., Dinas, E., & Saltiel, L. (2019). *Antisemitism in Greece today*. Thessaloniki: Heinrich-Böll Foundation. In Greek. https://gr.boell.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Antisimitismos_2019-LR.pdf

Assimakopoulos, S. (2020). Incitement to discriminatory hatred, illocution and perlocution. *Pragmatics and Society*, *11*(2), 177–195.

Assimakopoulos, S., Baider, F. H., & Millar, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Online hate speech in the European Union: A discourse-analytic perspective*. Cham: Springer.

Assimakopoulos, S., & Serafis, D. (2020). Hate rhetoric and hate speech: Homophobic tendencies in online news portal comments. In S. Boukala & A. Stamou (Eds.), *Critical discourse analysis: (De)constructing the reality in Greece* (pp. 589–621). Athens: Nissos. In Greek.

Assimakopoulos, S., & Vella Muskat, R. (2017). Exploring xenophobic and homophobic attitudes in Malta: Linking the perception of social practice with textual analysis. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *13*(2), 179–202.

Baider, F. H., Assimakopoulos, S., & Millar, S. (2017). Hate speech in the EU and the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. Project. In S. Assimakopoulos, F. H. Baiden, & S. Millar (Eds.), *Online hate speech in the European Union: A discourse-analytic perspective* (pp. 1–6). Cham: Springer.

Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., & McEnery, T. (2013). *Discourse analysis and media attitudes: The representation of Islam in the British press*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

Boukala, S. (2016). Rethinking topos in the discourse historical approach: Endoxon seeking and argumentation in Greek media discourses on "Islamist terrorism". *Discourse Studies*, *18*(3), 249–268.

Boukala, S. (2019). *European identity and the representation of Islam in the mainstream press: Argumentation and media discourse*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boukala, S. (2021). "We need to talk about the hegemony of the left": The normalisation of extreme right discourse in Greece. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *20*(3), 361–382.

Boukala, S., & Serafis, D. (2022a). Securitization, emergency and the rediscovery of responsibility in times of pandemic: Analyzing political discourses from the European South. In S. Oswald, M. Lewiński, S. Greco, & S. Villata (Eds.), *The pandemic of argumentation* (pp. 203–223). Cham: Springer.

Boukala, S., & Serafis, D. (2022b). A Facebook discourse-oriented ethnography of Greek Jewish heritage. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research design* (pp. 869–885). London: Sage.

Boukala, S., & Serafis, D. (2023). Towards an ethnographic approach to social media discourses: Exploring ethnic nationalism and the Greek "right" to the name "Macedonia". In M. KhosraviNik (Ed.), *Digital discourse and society: Integrating the digital with the political* (pp. 83–106). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Dundes, A., & Hauschild, T. (1988). Auschwitz jokes. In C. Powell & G. E. C. Paton (Eds.), *Humour in society: Resistance and control* (pp. 56–66). London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

EfSyn. (2018). Screenshot of EfSyn 2018. Comic by Kostas Grigoriadis.

EfSyn. (2020). Screenshot of EfSyn 2020. Comic by Kostas Grigoriadis.

Eleutheriou, X. (2019). *Public history as a conflict issue: The Greek Jewish Holocaust on the internet*. Athens: Taxideutis. In Greek.

Engel, J., & Wodak, R. (2013). "Calculated ambivalence" and Holocaust denial in Austria. In R. Wodak & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), *Analysing fascist discourse: European fascism in talk and text* (pp. 73–96). London: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2014). Critical discourse analysis, power and new media discourse. In Y. Kalyango & M. Kopytowska (Eds.), *Why discourse matters: Negotiating identity in the mediatized world* (pp. 287–306). New York: Peter Lang.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), *Handbook of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 583–596). London: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2018). Social media techno-discursive design, affective communication and contemporary politics. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, *11*, 427–442.

KhosraviNik, M. (2022). Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), 119–123.

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *14*(1), 45–68.

KhosraviNik, M., & Unger, J. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media: Power, resistance and critique in changing media ecologies. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 205–233). London: Sage.

Kopytowska, M. (2017). Introduction: Discourses of hate and radicalism in action. In M. Kopytowska (Ed.), *Contemporary discourses of hate and radicalism across space and genres* (pp. 1–12). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Margaritis, G. (2005). *Undesirable compatriots: Evidence of the destruction of minorities in Greece*. Athens: Vivliorama. In Greek.

Molho, R. (2014). *The Holocaust of the Greek Jews: Studies of history and memory*. Athens: Patakis. In Greek.

Psarras, D. (2013). *The best seller of hatred: The protocols of the Elders of Zion in Greece, 1920–2013*. Athens: Polis. In Greek.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. London: Routledge.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2016). The discourse-historical approach (DHA). In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 23–61). London: Sage.

Richardson, J. E. (2004). *(Mis)Representing Islam: The racism and rhetoric of British broadsheet newspapers*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Rigotti, E., & Greco, S. (2019). *Inference in argumentation: A topics-based approach to argument schemes*. Cham: Springer.

Salahshour, N., & Serafis, D. (2022). (De-)constructing New Zealand PM Jacinda Adern's initiative to wear the hijab after the Christchurch terrorist attack: Critical perspectives on newspapers' discourse and argumentation. *Journal of Argumentation in Context*, *11*(2), 157–179.

Samson, A. C., & Huber, O. (2007). The interaction of cartoonist's gender and formal features of cartoons. *Humor*, *20*(1), 1–25.

Serafis, D. (2022). Unveiling the rationale of soft hate speech in multimodal artifacts: A critical framework. *Journal of Language and Discrimination, 6*(2), 321–345.

Serafis, D. (2023). *Authoritarianism on the front page: Multimodal discourse and argumentation in times of multiple crises in Greece*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Serafis, D., Greco, S., Pollaroli, C., & Jermini-Martinez Soria, C. (2020). Towards an integrated argumentative approach to multimodal critical discourse analysis: Evidence from the portrayal of refugees and immigrants in Greek newspapers. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *17*(5), 545–565.

Serafis, D., Raimondo, C., Assimakopoulos, S., Greco, S., & Rocci, A. (2021). Argumentative dynamics in representations of migrants and refugees: Evidence from the Italian press during the "refugee crisis". *Discourse & Communication*, *15*(5), 559–581.

Tsakona, V. (2008). The humorous representation of the political reality: The example of political cartoon. In P. Politis (Ed.), *The discourse of mass communication:*

The Greek case (pp. 381–411). Thessaloniki: Manolis Triandafyllidis Foundation. [in Greek].

Tsakona, V. (2020). Scrutinising intertextuality in humour: Moving beyond cultural literacy and towards critical literacy. *The European Journal of Humour Research*, *8*(3), 40–59.

van Dijk, T. A. (1991). *Racism and the press*. London: Routledge.

van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Weaver, S. (2013). A rhetorical discourse analysis of online anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic jokes. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(3), 483–499.

Weber, A. (2009). *Manual on hate speech*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Werner, W. (2004). On political cartoons and social studies textbooks: Visual analogies, intertextuality, and cultural memory. *Canadian Social Studies*, *38*(2). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1073912.pdf. Last accessed: 19.02.2021.

Wodak, R. (2017). Saying the unsayable: Denying the Holocaust in media debates in Austria and the UK. In M. Kopytowska (Ed.), *Contemporary discourses of hate and radicalism across space and genres* (pp. 13–40). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Wodak, R., & Fairclough, N. (2010). Recontextualizing European higher education policies: The cases of Austria and Romania. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *7*(1), 19–40.

Part IV

Digital discourses of counter-hegemony and protest

8 From participatory politics to fan activism

Digital discursive practices during the Chilean student mobilisations

Camila Cárdenas-Neira

1. Introduction

To date, several researchers have explored communicative practices in recent social movements such as *Occupy* in the United States (Fuchs, 2013; Mortensen et al., 2019), the *Indignados* in Europe (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2012) and civil rights in Latin America (Calderón & Castells, 2020; Sierra Caballero & Gravante, 2018). These studies have established local and global connections that frame the context of the Chilean student movement (2011–2013) and foreground the features these demonstrations have in common within a longer cycle of contention. Among these features, the social demands targeting capitalism and neoliberal policies through the political use of technology is found to be the strongest connection (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2015; Fuchs, 2014). The case of the student movement in Chile – as the first country where the neoliberal experiment was tested in the 1970s (Insunza et al., 2018; Saavedra, 2019) – offers an interesting point of view to find out how youth communicative practices have challenged this socio-economic model through interrelated protest and discursive actions. In this scenario, young people play a role as catalysts of political change around the world (Jenkins et al., 2015; Jenkins, 2016), and, particularly in Chile, students have shifted the paradigm in post-dictatorship social mobilisations (1990–2020), expanding the struggle for free, public, and quality education to other social rights (Cárdenas-Neira & Pérez-Arredondo, 2022).

Although some studies have found a positive correlation between youth political participation and the use of social media (e.g. Fernandez-Planells et al., 2014; Valenzuela et al., 2014), little attention has been paid to the role of young people in the construction of counter-hegemonic discourses and in-group identities through online platforms (e.g. Cabalin, 2014; Georgalou, 2015). As some Social Media Critical Discourse Studies scholars point out (KhosraviNik, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2020; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016; Unger et al., 2016), social media underscores a wide variety

of non-dominant identities, such as those of young people or other margin-
alised social actors. Moreover, the interconnectedness of digital and urban
spaces of contention (Martín Rojo, 2016) fosters new social and political
power relationships which give voice to non-elitist text producers, who
continuously oppose the discourses of the establishment (KhosraviNik,
2014). Thus, common citizens internalise their identities through social
media–based communication, especially in online communities focused
on issues, topics, and shared interests around political debates and activ-
ism (KhosraviNik, 2017, 2018). Indeed, activists resort to specific tech-
nologies of protest accessible to them, and they utilise their communicative
resources within their affordances to consolidate resistance discourses in
the participatory web (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016; KhosraviNik, 2017).

A salient feature of youth activism is the close relationship between par-
ticipatory politics and popular culture. As Jenkins (2016) explains, partici-
patory cultures can support, and sometimes even encourage, civic action
and grassroots activism. According to Brough and Shresthova (2012), the
political potential of these cultures lies "in the ways cultural codes and
discourses are challenged and remixed, as well as the ways in which the
resulting content is consumed and reconfigured as a resource for mobilisa-
tion" (para. 4.9). As these authors argue, the way young people recycle,
merge and personalise these cultural contents influences the emergence and
circulation of more vibrant and playful activist discourses. One source of
discursive production is *fan activism* (Jenkins, 2015), which offers a set
of familiar metaphors, characters, and symbols that are transformed and
reappropriated by young people to critique the dominant order. In this
regard, fan activism provides novel frames that nurture political struggles
and increase their persuasive power when based on logics of distributed
participation, such as those supported by social media.

This chapter addresses how the Chilean student community of Uni-
versitario Informado utilised specific multimodal genres to propagate the
ideological underpinnings of the movement, encouraging affiliation and
commitment of young protesters. Specifically, it analyses how political
posters, cartoons, and memes are elaborated, adapted, and linked over
time to frame free, public, and quality education as a right to be gained
through demonstrations and guaranteed by the state. Firstly, it seeks to
show that the shaping of a diverse repertoire of multimodal genres is essen-
tial to sustain the activist discursive practices that students engage in on
social media such as Facebook. Secondly, it aims to demonstrate that these
practices reinforce youth political identity by reusing fictional imaginaries
from popular culture. Consequently, both the configuration of this rep-
ertoire and the discursive practices that exploit it are based on recurrent
strategies of textual reappropriation and remediation that interconnect not
only online but also offline texts to enhance students' mobilisations.

This chapter is organised into four sections. Section 2 outlines the theoretical background that situates students' discursive practices mediated by social media, paying attention to the conformation of online communities which strategically manage multiple multimodal texts to satisfy their communicative purposes, such as those supporting fan activism. Subsequently, Section 3 describes the research operations considered to carry out the multimodal critical analysis of the selected corpus. In Section 4, the analysis of political posters, cartoons, and memes is presented, emphasising the features that these multimodal genres have in common and that allow the reification of education as an object in dispute. Finally, Section 5 discusses the results and offers some concluding remarks on how popular culture content functions as socio-cognitive resources that enhance the framing and ideological potential of youth activist practices.

2.   Theoretical background

As social movements have shown in the last decades, while the market colonises an increasing number of common goods co-opted by a profit-oriented logic (education, health, social security, environment, to mention a few), various foci of struggle emerge for the decommodification of these rights (Saavedra, 2020). This is the case of the student protests that have recently arisen worldwide against the commodification of public education, in general, and higher education, in particular (Della Porta et al., 2020). In Chile, high school and university students have contributed to the secularisation of education and the most recent reforms in the educational system, which have granted free-access higher education to thousands of low-income young people (Guzmán-Concha, 2017). In parallel, behind these sectoral demands, the student movement has advanced a process of socio-political transformation in Chilean society, which has recently culminated in the social outburst of October 2019 (Somma et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, this is the most profound crisis in the democratic history of the country, which has challenged the neoliberal socio-economic model inherited by the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990) (Cárdenas-Neira & Pérez-Arredondo, 2022). Post-dictatorship student mobilisations have progressively criticised the way in which this model has reproduced the structural inequality and extreme social segregation (Cabalin, 2012).

From 2006 onwards, students have carried out multiple actions of urban and digital activism, spaces they have intensively occupied to organise themselves and improve their mobilisation and propaganda mechanisms (Cárdenas-Neira, 2016a). As demonstrated in their latest campaigns, students do not dissociate their collective actions from the media and technological devices which make them possible (Cárdenas-Neira, 2016b). In this context, the activists' choice of specific political performances involves

certain media and technological practices that, in turn, also affect the polit-ical performances themselves (Mattoni, 2013), influencing the continuous reconfiguration of their protest and communicative repertoires (Mattoni, 2017). These interconnected repertoires expand the range of contentious and contesting tactics they admit due to the convergence of old and new media outlets, as well as offline and online environments where protest actions take place (Treré & Mattoni, 2016). This convergence not only explains features such as coordination, simultaneity, and interconnectivity of these actions in both urban and digital spaces but also reveals the com-plex spatial, political, and communicative relationships that social move-ments shape when they shift from one site to another (Martín Rojo, 2016).

In this scenario, some of the primary dichotomies that guided the study of contemporary social movements have become obsolete. On the one hand, the real/virtual dichotomy that differentiated the political outcomes of pro-test actions carried out in the streets and on social media are no longer operative since activists integrate instantaneous and ubiquitous insurgent communities (Castells, 2009). On the other hand, since web-based partici-patory technologies allow disputing hegemonic positions and ideologies, the dichotomy of powerful/non-powerful voices is eroded as more content is generated and consumed through user-centred, interactive, and multi-modal texts (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). According to the Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies (hereafter MCDS) approach (Ledin & Machin, 2017, 2019; Jancsary et al., 2016), in settings of power struggles, multi-modal discourse favours counter-hegemonic stances and actions, offering opportunities for voices that would otherwise remain marginalised and thus prevented from occupying a more prominent place in society.

Hence, as activists establish ever-closer connections in various technol-ogy-mediated contexts of participation, they exploit opportunities to cre-ate interdiscursive and intertextual links between the multimodal texts they use and continuously recontextualise to communicate their protest (Unger et al., 2016). For example, these links arise when a digital genre device such as a meme shows up at the physical location of a march, or vice versa, when a photograph featuring a march circulates on Twitter or Instagram with a distinctive hashtag. It follows, then, that the (re)creation, dissemination and remediation of multimodal texts allow members of online communities to express, interact and negotiate their knowledge, identities, and ideologies in situated, complex, and innovative ways (Leppänen et al., 2014; Tagg & Seargeant, 2016). In this respect, online environments constitute semiotic spaces where multiple multimodal genres intervene (Bateman, 2008; Heyd, 2016). Users employ such multimodal genres to fulfil a range of communi-cative purposes, as well as to represent themselves and others, shaping their alliances and senses of belonging. Accordingly, it is necessary to deepen the study of these frequently changing and hybrid genres, which pose a

theoretical-methodological challenge when applying or adapting current methods of linguistic or semiotic analysis (Jewitt, 2016; Page, 2016).

In recent years, Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (hereafter SM-CDS) researchers have pointed out that this mixture of genres constitutes a primary feature of the new communicative ecology (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016; KhosraviNik & Sarkhoh, 2017). According to Orlikowski and Yates (1994), members of a community rarely depend on a single genre to communicate; rather, they tend to use multiple, differentiated, and inter-related genres over time. Therefore, to understand their communicative practices, "we must examine the set of genres that are routinely enacted by the community"; that is, their "genre repertoire" (p. 542). For these authors, this notion emphasises how technologies affect the collaborative work of groups and what consequences this mediation has on their actions, relationships, identities, expectations, and norms.

In the digital sphere, Heyd (2016) notes that the concept of genre should be assumed by analysts as a functional term "that is focused more on communicative purpose and effect than on rigid textual and linguistic features" (p. 89). In this direction, they need to pay major attention to the extrinsic dimension of genre, answering questions such as "what are the social practices that go along with this form of communication, what do users try to achieve through it, . . . and what is the societal impact of the genre?" (Heyd, 2016, p. 94). This approach involves shifting the focus from what an online community *is* to what an online community *does* (Angouri, 2016). In this regard, Herring (2004, p. 355) highlights six relevant criteria for operationalising an online community: 1) active, regular and self-sustained participation; 2) shared history, purpose, culture, norms and values; 3) solidarity, support and reciprocity; 4) criticism, conflict and means of conflict resolution; 5) self-awareness of the group as an entity distinct from other groups; and 6) emergence of roles, hierarchy, governance, and rituals.

In a similar vein, but attending to a digital activism context, Gee (2005, p. 223) contends that activists often organise themselves and others within what he calls "affinity spaces". In such spaces, people who share little, and even differ drastically on other issues, affiliate around a same cause and coordinate their communicative practices based on their uses of available signs. As Gee (2005) explains, an affinity space is distinguished by 1) being organised primarily in terms of common interests, goals, and efforts, and only secondarily in terms of gender, age, race, or social class; 2) possessing an internal (i.e. design and content of signs and their relationships) and an external grammar (i.e. thoughts, beliefs, values, norms, actions, and interactions); and 3) encouraging, providing, or bringing together various types and degrees of knowledge (i.e. generic, expert, novice, explicit, implicit, among others), whether for individual or distributed acquisition. Gee (2005) also

suggests that "young people today are confronted with and enter more and more affinity spaces" (p. 231). Especially when interacting on social media, they see a distinct and possibly powerful vision of learning, engagement and identity when they do so. Thus, learning becomes a personal and social trajectory, as they share aspects of that trajectory with others over time.

In the political arena, Jenkins (2016) asserts that participatory politics is a form of political action that is embedded in the daily practices of young people. In this scenario, popular culture intersects with civic participation to promote political change, relying more on socio-cultural dynamics than on governmental institutions, as the latter tend to constantly exclude or marginalise youth actors. Following this author, social movements reappropriate the contents of popular culture that are more concordant with the collective frames and identities of their members, namely, those that transmit images or stories that activate more prior knowledge and provoke more emotional responses. Additionally, their members assume that these contents are eventually familiar to other individuals or groups, albeit at a superficial level, fostering transversal concern and adherence (Brough & Shresthova, 2012). In sum, such contents configure communicative strategies aimed at superimposing the topics of fictional worlds on real worlds, giving a playful and pleasurable character to social struggles (Jenkins, 2016).

In this line, Jenkins (2015) distinguishes a type of activism that originates from participatory political cultures, called *fan activism*, which "refers to forms of civic engagement and political participation that emerge from within fan culture itself, often in response to the shared interests of fans and frequently conducted through the infrastructure of existing fan practices and relationships" (p. 208). Fan activism provides "an alternative set of metaphors and analogies that are already part of young people's lives" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 223). The utility of these metaphors and analogies lies in creatively deploying fictional contents, from which activists co-construct meanings that make sense of current social problems. More importantly, narratives play a preponderant role in fan activism. The reason is simple: fictional realms are not an accumulation of isolated references, but rather a collection of pieces suitably assembled into a recognisable plot. Consequently, fan culture focuses not only on storytelling; these stories are ramified and catalysed through diverse media, usually interconnected (i.e. "transmedia storytelling" [Jenkins, 2008, p. 21]).

3.   Research design

Universitario Informado (hereafter UI) is a Facebook community that adopts a left-wing political stance and is motivated by a concrete political agenda emanating from the student movement at the national level.

Therefore, from the beginning of the mobilisations, it constituted itself as a crucial actor in the socio-political and media scenario, as it fosters grassroots activism and aligns its members around the actions and principles of struggle that will lead to the educational reform and the broader social uprising (cf. Sarkhoh & KhosraviNik, 2020). IU was created on June 2, 2011, "as an alternative media to the almost null coverage of the traditional media to the student movement", which has as its "primary objective to be an agent for raising awareness and shaping public opinion in favour of the Common Good", as stated in the description of its fan page (Universitario Informado, 2022). Initially, it was founded and managed by students at the University of La Serena (ULS), but it has been transferred to anonymous collaborators over time. UI is still active today and has some 407,272 followers (in the months of data extraction, it had about 130,000). During the student mobilisations, UI was dedicated to reporting on the state of paralysed or occupied universities and disseminating calls for national marches, official statements or petitions and assembly resolutions. Gradually, the community reinforced its communication and propaganda channels, making explicit its arguments supporting the student struggle. To date, UI seeks to report on national current affairs, especially political conflicts involving other social movements or protests.

Between June 2011 and December 2013, UI generated over 18,000 posts, which were retrieved, organised, selected, quantified and described using web usage mining and data visualisation methods (cf. Cairo, 2019; Castillo & Baeza-Yates, 2010). The interactive and multimodal nature of such data demands the use of a mixed-methods approach to adequately contextualise online discursive practices and successfully analyse large volumes of (meta)data (cf. KhosraviNik, 2017; Page, 2016).

As Mautner (2005) suggested early on, the field of Critical Discourse Studies should implement techniques with crawling agents that collect texts from websites at regular intervals and attend to a given list of sources, which would help the resulting corpus to be more clearly delineated both quantitatively and qualitatively. In recent years, SM-CDS scholars have argued that any research project using social media data must define which attributes are to be captured by the corpus and which methods will be used to elucidate them (Unger et al., 2016). As KhosraviNik and Unger (2016, p. 232) point out,

> the new framework for dealing with social media data must go beyond just accessing new resources and genres of data . . . and should be used to keep developing an interdisciplinary abductive approach that draws on relevant media and technology (and other) theories.

One of the primary concerns of SM-CDS is to reconstruct the interactive context in which social media data appear and proliferate in detail, observing:

> i) the nature of the data, ii) how is the text received (e.g. number of likes or shares, what is the nature of the comments), iii) the possibilities provided by the genre(s) of communication, and iv) the semiotic features of the language(s) used.
>
> (Unger et al., 2016, p. 14)

Following these guidelines, this case study (cf. Page et al., 2014) focuses on reconstructing the fan activist practices that take place in UI by inquiring into 1) what the potentialities of Facebook during the period examined are, 2) what the characteristics of the genres it admits are, and 3) what the features of the semiotic modes these genres exploit are (cf. Unger et al., 2016).

This study aims to show that some methods from data science such as web usage mining and data visualisation can be suitably applied to conduct critical multimodal analyses using social media data produced by online activist communities. These methods contribute especially to the initial stages of collecting, systematising, and characterising huge volumes of data generated over extended periods of time, providing a panoramic view to capture how users develop their discursive practices as they strategically manage the repertoire of multimodal genres available to them.

3.1.   *Quantitative research operations*

The quantitative methodological operations involve three steps. Firstly, the computer programming of a crawler provided free access to the Facebook library via the application programming interface (API). In this way, 18,306 posts are obtained with their respective links and metadata (i.e. creation date, messages, likes, shares, comments), which are downloaded as a text file and subsequently organised in an Excel spreadsheet, allowing the researcher to discriminate the most popular posts among the community, i.e. those most often shared by their members.

Secondly, the data was segmented to facilitate quantitative and qualitative analysis. Hence, the period under study is divided into 11 quarters, ordering posts according to the number of shares. Subsequently, the 15 most shared posts (including entries and comments) per quarter are selected, ensuring that they are clearly related to the student movement. Therefore, the corpus consists of 211 entries and 7,635 comments.

Thirdly, word clouds and graphs are created using data visualisation to determine, among other features, what the most utilised genres during the period 2011–2013 are (see Figure 8.1) and what the semiotic and
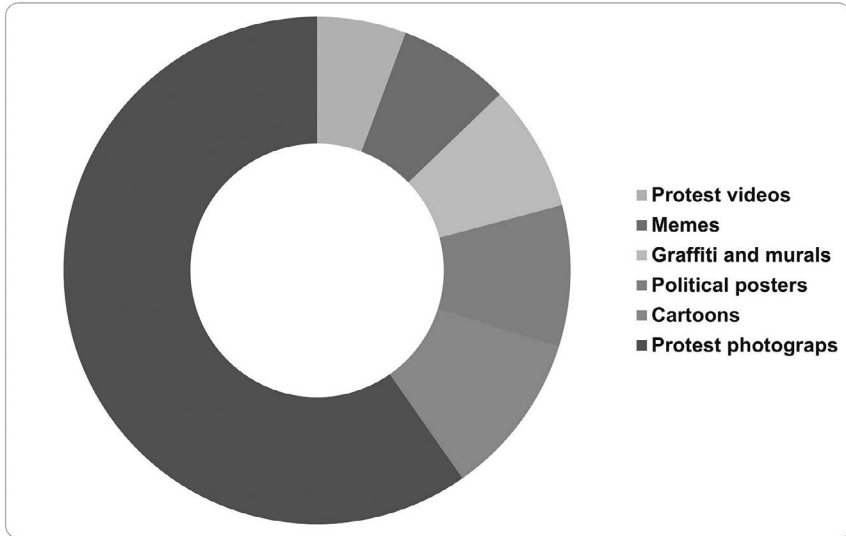
Figure 8.1 Repertoire of multimodal genres on UI
Source: Graph by the author.

hypertextual resources that these genres exploit are. This description is key to identifying how the repertoire of multimodal genres on UI is configured and what purposes they pursue. This repertoire includes the genres shown in the figure.

3.2. *Qualitative research operations*

The qualitative analysis seeks to reveal how these genres are used to satisfy specific communicative purposes as the student mobilisations progress. This analysis begins with modelling criteria to achieve a topological organisation of the most popular UI multimodal genres. Developments within Systemic Functional Linguistics suggest complementing the typological analysis of genres with a topological analysis. Lemke (1999) explains that a topology is a set of criteria that makes it possible to determine degrees of proximity between the members of some category based on particular parameters. Thus, objects can be brought together in a space demarcated by the links between them. Depending on the criteria adopted, objects that are more similar in one dimension can be observed as being closer to each other, and those that are less similar can be observed as being further apart. As Bateman (2008) notes, analysts can move along a continuum of

variation that helps to capture relationships between multimodal genres across semiotic space (see also Bateman et al., 2014).

This study considers two criteria of topological organisation: 1) by narrative proximity (genres that inform about events) and 2) by conceptual proximity (genres that inform about things) (Martin & Rose, 2008); however, the chapter only focusses on the latter (for more details see Cárdenas-Neira, 2018). The organisation of multimodal genres by conceptual proximity includes political posters, cartoons and memes as they inform about causes, claims, and demands, which are objects of reification processes (Scollon, 2008) from the students' point of view (e.g. education, equality, social justice, and so on), and, as such, their meanings undergo displacements and transformations when they are disputed in both urban and digital spaces (Cárdenas-Neira, 2016a).

Building on Bednarek and Caple's (2017, p. 19) analytical framework of multimodal discourses, the study covers the intertextual and intersemiotic analysis of Facebook posts focusing on patterns across texts (a "text-as-corpus" perspective). Specifically, these patterns are observed through the identification of several strategies of text reappropriation and remediation, which are transversal to the corpus and reveal central features of fan activist practices based on contents of popular culture (Cárdenas-Neira, 2018).

a) *Transmedia expansion* allows the analyst to assess how particular meanings associated with fictional narratives, and their respective characters or figures, are amplified as they are transferred from one discursive genre to another or from one medium or site of interaction to another (Lemke, 2005, 2009a, 2009b). Transmedia expansion works mainly when a chain of meanings reinforces senses of belonging and shared identities (Lemke, 2013) that are crucial for activists, on the one hand, and when it activates humorous effects and recognisable incongruences (Kövecses, 2015) that encourage these memberships, on the other.

b) *Metaphorisation* allows the analyst to discover how certain, more abstract concepts are understood in terms of more concrete ones (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), structuring our experience through diverse symbolic resources emanating from fictional universes (Jenkins, 2015). Whether texts employ monomodal or multimodal metaphors (Forceville, 2008), not only do they frame issues according to the conceptual structures involved but they also influence social interactions in which these metaphors are preferred by activists to satisfy certain ideological intentions (Semino et al., 2016). These framing processes have been extensively examined by social movement scholars (Snow, 2004), yet have not been systematically related to the use of different types of metaphors.

c) *Entextualisation* (Leppänen et al., 2014) and *resemiotisation* (Iedema, 2003) allow the analyst to reconstruct both the trajectory and the

changes of meaning that a text adopts when it is reused and resignified in different contexts. In this sense, the characters, figures or symbols of a fictional world are decontextualised and recontextualised when they are superimposed on the real world, altering their original appearance, value or scope according to the activists' interests.

For space reasons, this chapter only reports and discusses the multimodal critical analysis of a limited number of examples: two political posters, five caricatures and one meme. These examples intentionally illustrate specific instances of fan activism, but this does not imply that the texts that make up this set of genres deal exclusively with this phenomenon. Each example has a code that includes the publication date (quarter_ month_day_year); in addition, the Spanish-English translation as close as possible to the original meaning is provided. All examples correspond to posts whose access settings are public and are reproduced here in the form of screenshots. As is usual with content produced and distributed on social media, it is not possible to identify the authorship of all texts. This is due to the fact that, in some cases, the authors sign the political posters or cartoons, but in others they do not; this happens, for example, with memes. In any case, UI usually reposts this content because it is related to the political interests shared by the community. Since the sample was selected on the basis of a popularity criterion, it is to be expected that the more a text goes viral, the more difficult it is to trace its origin.

4.   Analysis and discussions

Political posters, cartoons and memes contribute to configuring the reality of the student movement in polarised terms, as they communicate complex messages regarding the collective identity of their members (in-group) and, above all, signal their position concerning their opponents (out-group). In other words, they constitute reference points for those who seek to understand and engage with their campaigns while challenging those who aim at containing or delegitimising them (us vs. them). As this analysis attempts to show, political posters, cartoons, and memes are typically associated with the representation of objects in dispute, whose meanings are contested by the conflicting sides: the student movement, on the one hand, and the political authorities, on the other. This framing relies on written-visual designs which serve an explicitly propagandistic function.

Each of these multimodal genres has its trajectory within the genre repertoire of the student movement and admits technological, material and expressive innovations that have repercussions on how social revolt is imagined and organised during the educational conflict. One of these innovations is related to the influence of popular culture as a source of

imaginaries, which are transferred from the sphere of mass consumption to the sphere of youth mobilisations. This influence implies, in turn, a generational bond that favours the recognition of these common imaginaries and their amplification to other audiences. Furthermore, it reveals a link between identities and affects, which offers additional value to student communicative strategies (Brough & Shresthova, 2012; Jenkins, 2016).

To begin with, the student movement's political posters are created to be disseminated in both urban and digital spaces to display unique senses of locality and territoriality (Gerbaudo, 2014). This framing is strongly supported by a metaphorisation process based on the event structure metaphor (Lakoff, 1993), where notions such as states, changes, processes, actions, causes, purposes and means (as target domains) are cognitively assimilated in terms of space, movement, and force (as source domains).

As illustrated in Figure 8.2, student posters fulfil a motivational framing task (Snow, 2004) because they seek to encourage the occupation and defence of the streets. The representation of urban space in these designs includes ontological metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which conceive the street as a container that holds social forces and demarcates the perimeter within which they become visible. These examples show the following metaphors: STATES ARE LOCATIONS, insofar as protesting is equivalent to being/taking/going out to the street; ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED

Figure 8.2 Examples of political posters posted in UI: collective actors and actions

Source: www.facebook.com/UniversitarioInformado/photos/a.162010973865427.45705.1616 40787235779/417857464947442 (left); www.facebook.com/UniversitarioInformado/photo s/a.162010973865427.45705.161640787235779/529682033764984 (right).

MOVEMENTS, since protesting is equivalent to moving voluntarily through space; and MEANS ARE WAYS since walking is the way/path to a greater destination/purpose (education as a universal right). Besides, if destinations are not only objects but desired locations, the metaphors PURPOSES ARE DESIRED PLACES and TO ACHIEVE A PURPOSE IS TO ARRIVE AT A DESIRED LOCATION emerge, where the location constitutes a utopian place (i.e. political victory).

Furthermore, these examples represent social actors through a strategic extension process (Snow, 2004) which aims to integrate children into the mobilised segments of the population. Although many young activists are underage, this identity tends to go unnoticed, especially when political and media powers seek to criminalise their protest actions (Cárdenas-Neira & Pérez-Arredondo, 2022). The students reconnect with this identity by recontextualising popular culture contents – such as cartoons – to bring the movement's struggle closer to children, exploiting a more playful and affective generational bond. In this way, they seek to justify their demands to the public, thus gaining more support and approval.

On the one hand, in the example Q3_08_27_2012, the slogan is openly inclusive and consistent with the cartoon, while their characters are complicit and smiling, through the metaphor HAPPINESS IS A PLEASURABLE PHYSICAL SENSATION (Kövecses, 2010, p. 99). Children appear carrying dolls, pets, and musical instruments in an ambience of fun and festivity; this contrasts with the stereotyped news coverage of demonstrations, which exacerbate aspects such as violence and destruction. This strategy fosters a reframing process that subverts these hegemonic frames based on ideas of deviance and moral panic (Pérez-Arredondo & Cárdenas-Neira, 2019). Hence, emphasising the role of children responds to a framing task (Snow, 2004) seeking to sensitise the population about the student struggle's legitimacy and power.

On the other hand, example Q2_04_09_2013 constitutes an instance of fan activism, where transmedia storytelling works complementarily to extend fictional universes and transfer them to real life. This example reappropriates the superhero of the Chilean TV show *31 Minutos*, *Calcetín con Rombos Man*, with an entertainment as well as combative intentionality. This TV show (a parody of the *60 Minutos* news program broadcast during the dictatorship) always supported the student movement and other social issues, mixing humour and criticism towards the dominant powers (entrepreneurs, the press and the political elite, among others). *Calcetín con Rombos Man* is a character known for defending the rights of children around the world. By juxtaposing the domains of reality and fiction, it appeals to another kind of engagement, one in which emotional connection and civic duty merge. In this design, the written text located at the top edge maintains an intertextual relationship with the famous superhero quote "Because every child has the

right to enjoy a quality show" (alluding to the *31 Minutos* TV show). Then, the character and his quote are recontextualised and resemiotised to improve the argumentative potential of the poster (cf. Zhao, 2018). In turn, *Calcetín con Rombos Man* appears at a podium (as usual when he gives advice to the spectators), to which the inscription "VERITAS" is added. Visually, an orientational metaphor is obtained (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) in which GOOD/RIGHT/TRUE IS UP (Kövecses, 2010, p. 64) completes the meaning of the slogan (i.e. to mobilise is a right).

Figure 8.3 includes co-thematic texts (Lemke, 1999) that present the incongruence "real v/s imagined – possible v/s impossible" proposed by Kövecses (2015, p. 135), as the fictional characters *Superman* and *Goku* are recontextualised in the scenario of student mobilisations. In these cartoons, the dimension of the real-possible corresponds to the students' confrontation with the police, while the dimension of the imagined-impossible corresponds to the intervention of both heroes as protagonists of the educational conflict. They perform a motivational task (Snow, 2004), but each cartoon also assigns them a narrative role: their actions are integrated into an epic story about the student revolt. To interpret these actions, it is essential to intertextually link the cartoons to the primary texts (comic/manga) from which these references emanate, thus expanding transmedia storytelling of diverse scope.
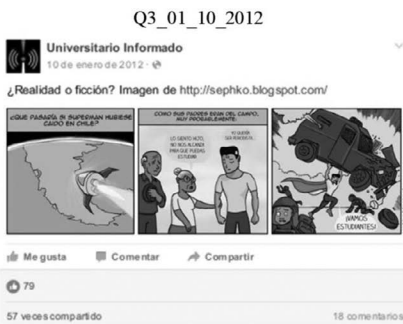
Figure 8.3 Examples of cartoons posted in UI: collective objectives

Source: www.facebook.com/uinformado/photos/a.151506711602212 (left); www.facebook.com/uinformado/photos/a.233383583350342 (right).

Example Q1_01_10_2012 best manipulates this incongruity for humorous purposes. The dialogue between the characters recontextualises basic arguments of the original plot (through the [re-]circulation of the narrative in Bednarek's (2017) terms) that activate two key inferences: that *Superman*'s parents, being peasants, do not have the money to pay for his higher studies and that this barrier causes him so much frustration that he decides to protest along with the students for free education. The metaphor INDIGNATION IS A WEAPON underlies the attack on the police: through resemiotisation, *Superman* embodies a feeling that is common to all young people who join the same cause (i.e. EMOTION IS A PHYSICAL FORCE) (Kövecses, 2010, p. 108). This micro-story (Georgalou, 2015) aims at sharing attitudes about the seriousness of the problem (i.e. young people see their future as jeopardised due to financial limitations), on the one hand, and about the need to rise and solve it, on the other. Thus, like Superman, it is expected that other young people feel morally compelled to mobilise on behalf of their peers.

Similar strategies work in example Q3_08_18_2013, but other background knowledge is also required. Firstly, this example establishes an intertextual relationship with the well-known flashmob *GenkiDama for Education* (see García & Aguirre, 2016), an instance of transmedia storytelling which allowed the protagonists of this manga to be part of the student world as agents of a narrative that they construct together (i.e. the victory of the movement over the government). Secondly, *Goku* is recognised as an honourable warrior who summons the energy of the universe (*Ki*) to defeat his enemies; in this case, such energy (*Kame Hame Ha*) comes from the hope/conviction that drives young people to bend the police and maintain the protests. In this cartoon, the metaphor COURAGE IS A WEAPON symbolises the heroic dedication of the warriors/students metonymically represented in *Goku*, who is willing to sacrifice himself for his comrades, advocating for ideals and goals that are also his. This defence, in turn, is also symbolised through the metaphor EMOTION IS A PHYSICAL FORCE (i.e. a ball of energy welling up from within him and channelled from the palms of his hands).

These examples show that cartoons propose a diagnostic framework (Snow, 2004) according to which government authorities and the police forces are responsible and accomplices, respectively. However, they can also shed light on controversial aspects of the educational system such as profit and selection. As illustrated in Figure 8.4, both cartoons construct the metaphor EDUCATION IS A COMMODITY, which presupposes two articulated ideas: 1) education can be bought and sold subject to the law of offer and demand and 2) those who can pay can also capitalise on their investment and obtain higher profits in the long term. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 193) point out, "in an industrial culture such as ours, there is a

Figure 8.4 Examples of cartoons posted in UI: education as a commodity

Source: www.facebook.com/uinformado/photos/a.239788972731718 (left); www.facebook.com/uinformado/photos/a.162010973865427/843758962357288 (right).

correlation between the amount of time a task requires and the amount of work it requires to perform it", so the more time and work it takes, the more valuable it is. Consequently, a person who possesses education has an added value compared to one who does not, and the more education he or she has, the higher that value will be. Hence, individuals and the groups into which they are classified can be stratified and hierarchised, thus perpetuating various subordination, segregation and exclusion mechanisms.

On the one hand, example Q3_09_21_2013 recontextualises the *Mario Bros* character to reframe the notion of education as a commodity, as defended by the government and former President Sebastián Piñera (see also Figure 8.5). Like the previous examples, this instance of fan activism needs background knowledge related to the video game and its plot. *Mario Bros* must win coins to get lives (1 extra life for every 100 coins) and thus cross the worlds that separate him from Princess Peach. In each game, the player tests his or her ability to win as many coins as possible and knows that he or she will have more lives to complete the levels as compensation. However, in real life, students know that, regardless of their skill or effort, the money they make will never be enough to pay for their education (hence the inscription x 99).

On the other hand, example Q2_04_06_2013 recontextualises a typical scene from the Mexican TV series *El Chavo del 8*, which is in turn resemiotised. In this cartoon, both semiotic modes are clearly assembled. In
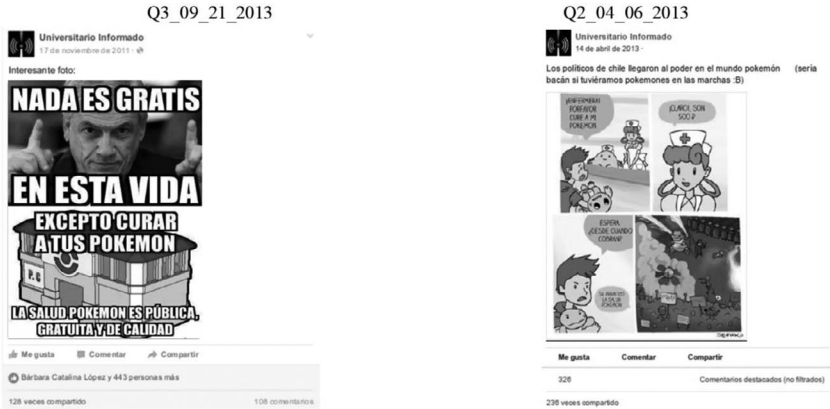
Nothing is life is free; Except for healing your pokémon;
Pokémon health is public, free, and top-quality

Nurse, please cure my pokémon; Sure, it's 500p; Wait,
since when do they charge?; Pokémon health has
been privatised

Figure 8.5 Examples of memes and cartoons posted in UI: free education as a right

*Source:*www.facebook.com/uinformado/photos/a.162010973865427/531858433547344   (left);
www.facebook.com/uinformado/photos/a.162010973865427/531859656880555 (right).

the written mode, the mention of profit, co-payment and selection allows inferring that only wealthy students can be assured their right to a public and quality education, while the visual mode expresses the incongruence "large quantity v/s small quantity" (Kövecses, 2015, p. 136) to represent that most low-income students are denied this right. Although profit, co-payment and selection are in fact different things, they come together in this design to delegitimise several of the foundations that support the educational market model. Therefore, this cartoon challenges the previous frames that support its reproduction and seeks to replace them with others that guarantee free education as a right.

The examples in Figure 8.5 extend this tension around the framing of education. In these cases, the meme – and the cartoon that expands it – introduces dissenting voices whose arguments must be constantly counter-framed through counter-memes that tend to minimise or neutralise ideological attitudes detrimental to the student movement (cf. Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Milner, 2016). It is not surprising, then, that these counter-memes frequently point to the usual enemies of the movement and other-represent them negatively as obstacles to reaching the desired goal (i.e. FREE, QUALITY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION IS A WAY). As the students propose, the only way to eliminate the segregation and inequality reproduced by the education system is to avoid entrepreneurs from enriching themselves at its expense.

Example Q4_11_17_2011 also recontextualises the metaphor EDUCA-TION IS A COMMODITY (cf. Semino et al., 2013), but, in this case, it main-tains a direct intertextual relationship with two statements made by former President Sebastián Piñera during student mobilisations: "Because educa-tion serves a twofold purpose, it is a commodity; it means knowing more, understanding better, having more culture. However, education also has an investment component, which is to improve our capabilities to contribute to the country's productive process"; "Nothing in life is free, someone has to pay" (TeleSurTV, 2011). This example features a panel of stocked images where two embedded memes are contrasted. This contraposition refers to the plot of the anime *Pokémon*, according to which injured Pokémon receive free medical care in the centres set up for their trainers. This juxtaposition between reality (i.e. educational conflict) and fiction (i.e. Pokémon's plot) serves to argue that Piñera is wrong (i.e. social rights are not for sale) as well as to refute the market logic that underlies his statements.

Between the previous example and the example Q2_04_14_2013 emerges a piece of transmedia storytelling based on another instance of fan activism and re-circulation of narrative. Each example constitutes an intertext for the other (Lemke, 1999), and they reinforce mutually to pro-vide a mythical model of social action (Van Leeuwen, 2008) with which the established socio-economic order is delegitimised. This cartoon assumes that "Pokémon health is public, free and top-quality", as the preceding meme proposes. Thus, when Blue takes Squirtle to the medical centre, he is surprised to discover that Pokémon health has been privatised, and then he must pay 500 Pokémon dollars for the treatments. The micro-story con-cludes with a mass revolt against the privatisation measure. Therefore, this example builds an exact analogy with the student struggle for free educa-tion while blaming the ruling class for turning fundamental social rights into marketable objects.

5. Conclusions

The analysis reveals that political posters, cartoons, and memes produced, consumed, and distributed on the UI community intervene in the pro-cesses of (re)framing crucial concepts for the student struggle (e.g. free, public, and quality education), which are conceived from the movement's perspective as objects in dispute whose meanings must be continuously delimited and reinforced. This conceptualisation implies, in turn, making use of several strategies of text reappropriation and remediation, which serve young people to dismantle the frames of hegemonic ideologies (e.g. commodification and privatisation of education) protected by the political elite. Thus, they resort to various figurative means, especially those derived from popular culture and fan-fiction narratives, whose plots, characters, or

figures and symbols are repeatedly recontextualised and resemiotised to fit the frames proposed by the students. In particular, it is through procedures of metaphorisation and transmedia expansion that such meanings become available to members and supporters of the movement.

Although some authors acknowledge that popular culture content does not play a substantial role in social mobilisations (Brough & Shresthova, 2012; Jenkins, 2015, 2016), they do agree that this content helps draw attention to issues which are invisible or have been manipulated or portrayed negatively. In the case of the student movement, young people engage in fan activist practices to communicate their discourses on transforming the educational system to their peers and the general citizenry more effectively. By selecting vibrant and playful content, they seek to activate fundamental background knowledge and emotional responses to understand the educational conflict. In this regard, fan activist practices creatively propagate the movement's ideological underpinnings, allowing its members to link, amplify, and modify central beliefs to legitimise their collective struggle.

Therefore, the multimodal genres studied fulfil specific communicative purposes related to creating a common socio-cognitive base that sustains in-group actions and identities. To prefigure the desired educational transformation, abstract concepts concerning the consecration of social rights or the eradication of market or profit-driven logic, to mention a few, are concretised through the reappropriation of fictitious referents that encourage the participation and alignment of young people within the UI community. In this vein, the examples analysed not only make complex concepts intelligible but also help students to assimilate outrageous or harmful experiences, thus providing them with alternative points of view aimed at reframing previously internalised attitudes about education or adopting others more aligned with the vindications of the movement. More importantly, these texts collaborate in shaping the student revolt through collective learning, modelling how and why to mobilise, against whom, and for what reasons.

Indeed, young prosumers of digital content already know how to design, disseminate and modify the multimodal texts they manage on social media (Bezemer & Kress, 2017). It is not surprising, then, that they turn to these genres to connect with the issues that affect them. By doing so through their closest symbolic universes, young people build interdiscursive networks between narratives, characters and situations that intersect with their daily lives, promoting interpretations consistent with their shared concerns or sensitivities. Milner (2012) calls this capacity for action *transformative literacy*: when popular culture operates as an interface between individual consciousness and grassroots activism. Hence, current generations take a leading role in the crisis and political change contexts as they foster instances of interaction and deliberation that they can transfer to the rest of the society.

References

Angouri, J. (2016). Online communities and communities of practice. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 323–338). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Bateman, J. (2008). *Multimodality and genre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230582323

Bateman, J., Evangelisti, P., & Bhatia, V. (2014). *Evolution in genre: Emergence, variation, multimodality*. New York: Peter Lang.

Bednarek, M. (2017). Fandom. In C. R. Hoffmann & W. Bublitz (Eds.), *Pragmatics of social media* (pp. 545–572). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110431070-020

Bednarek, M., & Caple, H. (2017). Introducing a new topology for (Multimodal) discourse analysis. In P. Chappell & J. S. Knox (Eds.), *Transforming contexts: Papers from the 44th international systemic functional congress* (pp. 19–25). Wollongong: 44th ISFC Organising Committee.

Bezemer, J., & Kress, G. (2017). Young people, Facebook and pedagogy: Recognizing contemporary forms of multimodal text making. In M. Kontopodis, C. Varvantakis, & C. Wulf (Eds.), *Global youth in digital trajectories* (pp. 22–38). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Brough, M., & Shresthova, S. (2012). Fandom meets activism: Rethinking civic and political participation. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, *10*. http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0303

Cabalin, C. (2012). Neoliberal education and student movements in Chile: Inequalities and malaise. *Policy Futures in Education*, *10*(2), 219–228. http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2012.10.2.219

Cabalin, C. (2014). Online and mobilized students: The use of Facebook in the Chilean student protests. *Comunicar*, 22(43), 25–33. http://dx.doi.org/10.3916/C43-2014-02

Cairo, A. (2019). *How charts lie: Getting smarter about visual information*. New York: WW Norton & Company.

Calderón, F., & Castells, M. (2020). *The new Latin America*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Cárdenas-Neira, C. (2016a). Representation of youth political action on social networks: Critical analysis of discursive practices produced during student mobilizations in Chile (2011–2013). *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales*, *30*, 77–99. https://doi.org/10.4206/rev.austral.cienc.soc.2016.n30-04

Cárdenas-Neira, C. (2016b). The Chilean student movement (2006–2016) and the use of the social web: New action and communicative interaction repertoires. *Última Década*, *24*(45), 93–116. http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-22362016000200006

Cárdenas-Neira, C. (2018). *Protest discourses and social media: Analysis of activist discursive practices produced in Facebook community Universitario Informado during the student mobilizations in Chile (2011–2013)* [Doctoral' thesis, Pompeu Fabra University]. E-Repositori UPF. https://repositori.upf.edu/handle/10230/36188

Cárdenas-Neira, C., & Pérez-Arredondo, C. (2022). Polarization and the educational conflict: A linguistic and multimodal approach to the discursive (re)construction of the Chilean student movement in the mainstream media and Facebook. In E. Morales-López, L. Filardo-Llamas, & A. Floyd (Eds.), *Socio-political polarization and conflict: Discursive approaches* (pp. 171–191). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Castillo, C., & Baeza-Yates, R. (2010). Web retrieval and mining. In M. J. Bates & M. Niles-Maack (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of library and information sciences* (pp. 5615–5622). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Della Porta, D., Cini, L., & Guzmán-Cocha, C. (2020). *Contesting higher education: Student movements against neoliberal universities*. Bristol: Bristol University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781529208627.001.0001

Della Porta, D., & Mattoni, A. (2014). *Spreading protest: Social movements in times of crisis*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Della Porta, D., & Mattoni, A. (2015). Social networking sites in pro-democracy and anti-austerity protests: Some thoughts from a social movement perspective. In D. Trottier & C. Fuchs (Eds.), *Social media, politics and the State: Protests, revolutions, riots, crime and policing in the age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube* (pp. 39–65). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Fernández-Planells, A., Figueras-Maz, M., & Feixa, C. (2014). Generation #: Youth movements in the hiperdigital age. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud*, *14*(1), 107–120. https://doi.org/10.11600/16927 15x.1416301115

Forceville, C. (2008). Metaphor in pictures and multimodal representations. In R. Gibbs, Jr. (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought* (pp. 462–482). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fuchs, C. (2013). *Occupy media! The occupy movement and social media in crisis capitalism*. Winchester: Zero Books.

Fuchs, C. (2014). *Social media: A critical introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446270066

García, Ó., & Aguirre, F. (2016). Spatial practices and narratives: The GenkiDama for education by Chilean students. In L. Martín Rojo (Ed.), *Occupy. The spatial dynamics of discourse in global protest movements* (pp. 157–178). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. http://doi.org/10.1075/bct.83.07gar

Gee, J. P. (2005). Semiotic social spaces and affinity spaces: From the age of mythology to today's schools. In D. Barton & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice: Language, power and social context* (pp. 214–232). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511610554.012

Georgalou, M. (2015). Small stories of the Greek crisis on Facebook. *Social Media + Society*, *1*(2). http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2056305115605859

Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the streets: Social media and contemporary activism*. London: Pluto Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183pdzs

Gerbaudo, P. (2014). Spikey posters: Street media and territoriality in urban activist scenes. *Space and Culture*, *17*(3), 239–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331213501127

Guzmán-Concha, C. (2017). Undoing the neoliberal higher education system? Student protests and the Bachelet reforms in Chile. *World Social and Economic Review*, *8*, 32–43.

Herring, S. (2004). Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online behaviour. In S. A. Barab, R. Kling, & J. H. Gray (Eds.), *Designing for virtual communities in the service of learning* (pp. 338–376). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805080.016

Heyd, T. (2016). Digital genres and processes of remediation. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 87–102). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

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

Insunza, J., Assael, J., Cornejo, R., & Redondo, J. (2018). Public education and student movements: The Chilean rebellion under a neoliberal experiment. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *40*(4), 490–506. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1590179

Jancsary, D., Höllerer, M., & Meyer, R. (2016). Critical analysis of visual and multimodal texts. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 180–204). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jenkins, H. (2008). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2015). "Cultural acupuncture": Fan activism and the Harry Potter Alliance. In L. Geraghty (Ed.), *Popular media cultures: Fans, audiences and paratexts* (pp. 206–229). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jenkins, H. (2016). Youth voice, media, and political engagement: Introducing the core concepts. In H. Jenkins (Ed.), *By any media necessary: The new youth activism* (pp. 1–60). New York: New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/9781479829712-002

Jenkins, H., Ito, M., & Boyd, D. (2015). *Participatory culture in a networked era*. Cambridge: John Wiley & Sons.

Jewitt, C. (2016). Multimodal analysis. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 69–84). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2014). Critical discourse analysis, power and new media discourse. In Y. Kalyango & M. W. Kopytowska (Eds.), *Why discourse matters: Negotiating identity in the mediatized world* (pp. 287–306). New York: Peter Lang.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. Richardson (Eds.), *Handbook of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 582–596). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2018). Social media techno-discursive design, affective communication and contemporary politics. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, *11*, 427–442. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-018-0226-y

KhosraviNik, M. (2020). Digital meaning-making across content and practice in social media critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(2), 119–123. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1835683

KhosraviNik, M., & Sarkhoh, N. (2017). Arabism and anti-Persian sentiments on participatory web platforms: A social media critical discourse study. *International Journal of Communication*, *11*, 3614–3633.

KhosraviNik, M., & Unger, J. W. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media: Power, resistance and critique in changing media ecologies. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 205–233). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (2007). Online memes, affinities, and cultural production. In M. Knobel & C. Lankshear (Eds.), *A new literacies sampler* (pp. 199–227). New York: Peter Lang.

Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kövecses, Z. (2015). *Where metaphors come from Reconsidering context in metaphor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (2nd ed., pp. 202–251). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ledin, P., & Machin, D. (2017). Multi-modal critical discourse analysis. In J. Flowerdew & J. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 60–76). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Ledin, P., & Machin, D. (2019). Doing critical discourse studies with multimodality: From metafunctions to materiality. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *16*(5), 497–513. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.1468789

Lemke, J. (1999). *Typology, topology, topography: Genre semantics*. https://bit.ly/3eyqxiz

Lemke, J. (2005). Critical analysis across media: Games, franchises, and the new cultural order. In M. Labarta Postigo (Ed.), *Approaches to critical discourse analysis* (pp. 1–22). Valencia: Universidad de Valencia.

Lemke, J. (2009a). Multimodal genres and transmedia traversals: Social semiotics and the political economy of the sign. *Semiotica*, *173*(1/4), 283–297. http://doi.org/10.1515/SEMI.2009.012

Lemke, J. (2009b). Transmedia traversals: Marketing meaning and identity. In A. Baldry & E. Montagna (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary perspectives on multimodality: Theory and practice* (pp. 576–596). Campobasso: Palladino.

Lemke, J. (2013). Multimedia and discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 79–89). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Leppänen, S., Kytölä, S., Jousmäki, H., Peuronen, S., & Westinen, E. (2014). Entextualization and resemiotization as resources for identification in social media. In P. Seargeant & C. Tagg (Eds.), *The language of social media* (pp. 121–136). London: Palgrave Macmillan. http://doi.org/10.1057/9781137029317

Martin, J., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. London: Equinox.

Martín Rojo, L. (2016). Taking over the square: The role of linguistic practices in contesting urban spaces. In L. Martín Rojo (Ed.), *Occupy: The spatial dynamics of discourse in global protest movements* (pp. 47–76). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/bct.83.03mar

Mattoni, A. (2013). Repertoires of communication in social movement processes. In B. Cammaerts, A. Mattoni, & P. McCurdy (Eds.), *Mediation and protest movements* (pp. 34–56). Bristol: Intellect.

Mattoni, A. (2017). A situated understanding of digital technologies in social movements: Media ecology and media practice approaches. *Social Movements Studies*, *16*, 494–505. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2017.1311250

Mautner, G. (2005). Time to get wired: Using web-based corpora in critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, *16*(6), 809–828. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0957926505056661

Milner, R. (2012). *The world made meme: Discourse and identity in participatory media* [Doctoral' thesis, University of Kansas]. KU ScholarsWorks. https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/10256

Milner, R. (2016). *The world made meme: Public conversations and participatory media*. The Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mortensen, M., Neumayer, C., & Poell, T. (2019). *Social media materialities and protest: Critical reflections*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315107066

Orlikowski, W., & Yates, J. (1994). Genre repertoire: The structuring of communicative practices in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *39*(4), 541–574. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393771

Page, R. (2016). Moving between the big and small: Identity and interaction in digital contexts. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 403–407). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Page, R., Barton, D., Zappavigna, M., & Unger, J. W. (2014). *Researching language and social media: A student guide*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003121763

Pérez-Arredondo, C., & Cárdenas-Neira, C. (2019). The hooded student as a metaphor: Multimodal recontextualization of the Chilean student movement in a broadcast news report. In E. Esposito, C. Pérez, & J. M. Ferreiro (Eds.), *Discourses from Latin America and the Caribbean* (pp. 107–138). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93623-9_4

Saavedra, J. (2019). *The media commons and social movements: Grassroots mediations against neoliberal politics*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429460258

Saavedra, J. (2020). Subversive communication against neoliberalism. *Popular Communication*, *18*(3), 155–169. https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2020.1781858

Sarkhoh, N., & KhosraviNik, M. (2020). Social media discourses of Arabism and the negotiation of self in the Middle East. *World Englishes*, *39*, 609–622. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12502

Scollon, R. (2008). Discourse itineraries: Nine processes of resemiotization. In V. Bhatia, J. Flowerdew & R. Jones (Eds.), *Advances in discourse studies* (pp. 233–244). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Semino, E., Deignan, A., & Littlemore, J. (2013). Metaphor, genre, and recontextualization. *Metaphor and Symbol*, *28*(1), 41–59. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2013.742842

Semino, E., Demjén, Z., & Demmen, J. (2016). An integrated approach to metaphor and framing in cognition, discourse, and practice, with an application to metaphors for cancer. *Applied Linguistics*, *39*(5), 625–645. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amw028

Sierra Caballero, F., & Gravante, T. (Eds.). (2018). *Networks, movements and technopolitics in Latin America*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65560-4

Snow, D. (2004). Framing processes, ideology, and discursive fields. In D. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 380–412). Malden: Blackwell Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470999103.ch17

Somma, N. M., Bargsted, M., Disi Pavlic, R., & Medel, R. M. (2020). No water in the oasis: The Chilean spring of 2019–2020. *Social Movement Studies*, *20*(4), 495–502. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2020.1727737

Tagg, C., & Seargeant, P. (2016). Facebook and the discursive construction of the social network. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 339–353). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

TeleSurTV. (2011). *Nada es gratis en la vida, afirma Piñera al aprobar ley* [Video]. Youtube. https://youtu.be/N8obrkDjLz8

Treré, E., & Mattoni, A. (2016). Media ecologies and protest movements: Main perspectives and key lessons. *Information, Communication & Society*, *19*(3), 290–306. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1109699

Unger, J. W., Wodak, R., & KhosraviNik, M. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 277–293). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Universitario Informado. (2022). *About*. Facebook. www.facebook.com/uinformado/about/?ref=page_internal

Valenzuela, S., Arriagada, A., & Scherman, A. (2014). Facebook, Twitter, and youth engagement: A quasi-experimental study of social media use and protest behaviour using propensity score matching. *International Journal of Communication*, *8*, 2046–2070. http://dx.doi.org/1932–8036/20140005

Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zhao, W. (2018). Protest in style: Exploring multimodal concision in rhetorical artifacts. In M. Höllerer, T. Daudigeos, & D. Jancsary (Eds.), *Multimodality, meaning, and institutions* (pp. 119–149). Bingley: Emerald Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2017000054A005

9 Analysing digital discourses of the #Endmaleguardianshipsystem campaign in Saudi Arabia

A focus on YouTube and news media

Nouf Alotaibi

1. Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, no political parties, civil society organisations, or marches are allowed. Notwithstanding this, Saudi women's rights activists, aware of the importance and impact of social media during the 2011 Arab Spring (see Arif, 2014; Bebawi & Bossio, 2014; Castells, 2015), began capitalising on the newly found affordances of digital public platforms in order to bring about relevant socio-political change. Among the numerous social media campaigns they engaged in, the #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem campaign has sparked the most widespread public debate since its inception in 2016.

Within the male guardianship system (henceforth, MGS), Saudi women's decision-making powers are subordinated to those of a male relative. Under this system, a Saudi woman must have a male guardian (i.e. one of her close relatives), who is in charge of providing written consent for her to participate in a wide variety of activities. Activities include, for instance, applying for official documents, undergoing certain types of surgery, and working in the governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Based on certain interpretations of Islamic texts, the MGS originally applies in two cases: within a marriage and when travelling. However, it was extended in Saudi Arabia to other institutions (e.g. universities, hospitals) in the 1980s by the powerful religious tier. Historically, two major events led to strictly applying this system in Saudi Arabia compared to other Muslim countries in the Gulf and globally: the *Sahwa* movement (the Islamic Awakening) and the seizure of the holy mosque in Mecca in late 1979.

Firstly, the *Sahwa* movement resulted from the marriage of the existing Islamic ideology in Saudi Arabia, *Wahhabism*, with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood brought to the country in the 1960s (Lacroix, 2015). The *Sahwa* adopted extreme conservative social values, along with their control over Saudi intellectual inputs through the education system. For example, female education was under the control of the religious establishment from early 1961 in order to "follow the objective of keeping the

schools' curriculum in the private sphere to train girls to be good mothers and obedient wives" (Al-Fassi, 2013, p. 209).

Secondly, the siege of Mecca by armed anti-government groups provided the context for expanding the control of the religious establishment over the public sphere (Al-Fassi, 2013; Moaddel, 2006). For example, women's voices and appearance on TV and radio and their photographs in newspapers were banned (Commins, 2006). Between the 1980s and 1990s, religious institutions began to wield power in the public sphere; as a result, Saudi women were increasingly restricted in access to education, employment, and freedom of movement, which resulted in a dramatic change in economic status for them (Al-Fassi, 2013).

The online campaign ‏سعوديات_نطالب_اسقاط_الولاية‎#, ('#EndMaleGuardianship-System', hereafter #EMGS) to eliminate the MGS is one of the widespread and recent campaigns; however, it was not the first of such demands. One of the many attempts to end the MGS took place in 2004, when Saudi businesswomen criticised the requirement of having a male guardian and, as a result, they were declared exempt by the Saudi Ministry of Commerce (Al-Fassi, 2013; Yamani, 2008). The 2016 #EMGS campaign generated an online petition that gathered 14,700 signatures from both Saudi men and women. It was sent to King Salman bin Abdulaziz in October 2016, while the hashtag continued trending daily until August 2019. Since then, new regulations have been enacted regarding the abolition of guardian consent across a variety of government offices. A royal order issued in August 2019 met an important demand of the campaign, whereby women above the age of 21 can now be issued a passport and travel without permission from a guardian. At the same time, the #EMGS has been considered by many to be against God's law, as it refuses a current interpretation of Islamic cultural practices.

Unsurprisingly, the campaign led to heated debate in Saudi society, whose main platform has been Twitter, and then it extended to other public forums, such as YouTube and online news media. Two sides are engaged in this debate: the female activists and liberal clerics who support the end to MGS (hereafter "anti-MGS") and the conservative clerics and their supporters (some Saudi women among them) who oppose the campaign and wish to maintain the MGS (hereafter "pro-MGS").

This chapter aims to investigate the main arguments found in anti- and pro-discourses around the MGS on public YouTube and institutional news media corpora, based on two datasets: a corpus of user-generated 32 YouTube videos and 52 online news articles from four Saudi news organisations.[1] Toulmin's (1958) model of argumentation was applied to deconstruct the arguments, and this was then overlayered with an evaluation of the arguments in light of Aristotelian appeals – logos, ethos, and pathos (Aristotle, 2008) – to report the strength of the arguments and the types of emotional impact on the audience/readers.

In the following sections, this chapter will shed light on the social problem under investigation and then will provide a theoretical context in order to understand its roots. Issues around data collection and analyses, together with emerging results, will be discussed along with a comparative investigation between discourses of the public vs. institutionally provided articles online. The digital public domain offers a window into the complex dynamic discourses of power and gender in contemporary Saudi society and reveals the arguments used to demand a change or maintain the status quo. Focusing on the MGS campaign, this chapter critically investigates digital discourses around gender inequality and new changes in Saudi Arabia.

2.   Background and context for the study

Theoretically, this study draws on social justice (Fraser, 1995), cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) and connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) as an attempt to understand the root of this social problem (i.e. the applications of the MGS) and the reaction to its end.

In particular, it draws on Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice (1995) and her distinction between socioeconomic and cultural injustice. Although the two are intertwined and lead to overlapping demands, the former is rooted in the political-economic construction of a society, for instance, exploitation, economic marginalisation, and deprivation, and the latter is rooted in the social paradigms of representation, interpretation, and communication, for instance, cultural domination, misrecognition, and disrespect. This intermingling is shown in the campaign of #EMGS, in that it called for both cultural and socio-economic change, since from the former flows the latter. Under the MGS, Saudi women were economically marginalised due to their official treatment as legal minors. In addition, cultural injustice causes cultural devaluation and the denial of legal rights, while socioeconomic injustice results in the inability to access adequate economic benefits, e.g. full and equal access to employment in the public and private sectors.

How can injustice be redressed, then? According to Fraser, "neither redistributive remedies alone nor recognition remedies alone will suffice. Bivalent collectivities need both" (1995, p. 78). The recognition remedy for cultural injustice involves "revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups", and the redistributive remedy requires transforming the political-economic structure of a society and abolishing the MGS (Fraser, 1995, p. 73). Thus, for Fraser (1995), it is necessary to consider the politics of cultural recognition and redistributive equality as mutually inclusive.

A new form of cultural recognition for Saudi women has been observed recently. In interviews, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman has openly

acknowledged that Saudi women are currently being denied their full rights and has promised action to improve their status (Bloomberg, 2018; CBSNews, 2018; TIME, 2018). In addition, the plans of Saudi Vision 2030 introduced in 2016 combine social reforms, through "promoting a more 'moderate' Islam and expanding rights for women" (Moshashai et al., 2020, p. 389), and economic reforms, through diversifying investments rather than relying heavily on oil revenues. In favour of social reform, a halt has been called to divisive and extremist discourse and the power of the religious police (known as the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice) has been controlled (Moshashai et al., 2020).

In 2017, several political and economic initiatives to improve the position of women were launched. Indeed, 2017 was referred to as "the year of Saudi women" due to the various major changes affecting them, for example: "the appointment of Princess Rima to head the Multi-Sport Federation, the naming of Fatima Baeshen as the spokesperson for the Saudi embassy in Washington, DC, choosing Hind Al-Zahid as the executive director of Dammam airport, and naming Sarah Al Suhaimi as head of the Saudi stock market" (Mustafa & Troudi, 2019, p. 135). At the end of the year, the king issued an order to lift the driving ban on women and started to prepare for this change to be brought into effect in 2018. This recognition of women's rights is a barometer of a wider shift in Saudi public discourse, as manifested in the #EMGS and explored in the following sections.

Conservative ideology and cultural hegemony in Saudi Arabia

Gramsci's (1971) theory on hegemony explains the non-discursive elements of a social practice under investigation and focuses on understanding the particular ideological discourses and social relations of power. His work focused on the centrality of culture and ideology to the maintenance of power by a dominant group, who maintains power over social groups in public (education, art, law, etc.) and private domains by promoting certain ideology, values, morality, religion, and so forth. Unlike the democratic capitalist state on which Gramsci's work focused, Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy with extremely strong ideological forces at play. Nonetheless, certain aspects of Saudi society can be understood better with recourse to Gramsci; namely, the role of hegemony and cultural-ideological consent as largely realised through religious ideology.

In Saudi society, the dominant social group adheres to a conservative religious ideology. The *Sahwa* has influenced many aspects, such as the Saudi media sector and the education sector, with its extreme social views "in particular when it came to women's role in society" (Lacroix, 2015, p. 170). The pro-MGS participants in this study are supporters of this conservative ideology, calling for the traditional women's role and the

patriarchal hegemony. The twin dimensions of political and civil society are reflected in the role of the religious police in Saudi society. At the political-societal level, the religious police has operated as a key coercive force; at the civil-societal level, it has also had a role in maintaining cultural and moral norms until recently.

However, with the announcement of Vision 2030, the status quo is being threatened by new policies, for instance, the suspension of the religious police in 2016. In addition, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, in an interview with the *Guardian* in 2017, vowed to return the kingdom to moderate Islam and said, "Honestly we won't waste 30 years of our life combating extremist thoughts, we will destroy them now and immediately". This was later followed by various cultural and economic changes, one of which was the aforementioned rescinding of the ban on women driving and the changes to the guardianship system.

The Saudi Arabian public sphere

A significant concept for democratic theories and key to a critical explanation of the relationship between the media and democracy is elaborated in Habermas' (1989) theory of the public sphere. A public sphere is "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state" (Habermas, 1989, p. 176). The public sphere depended on critical reasoning in debate and deliberation to reach a consensus and formulate public opinions: activities that took place in coffee houses and salons and later evolved with the proliferation of the press in the nineteenth century. With the advent of the Web 2.0, the current global question is whether newspapers, arguably as a form of public sphere, are challenged by the social media communication paradigm in promoting or stifling rational debate and in constituting a further erosion of the critical-rational public sphere.

This question also applies to Saudi Arabia. Althiabi (2017) examined the emergence of social media and its impact on journalism practices in the country, specifically how social media is blurring the lines between politics and entertainment and placing pressure on traditional media to create content that reflects a more everyday lived experience. The digital public sphere allows Saudi citizens to participate in public discourse because of its characteristics, e.g. being "more inclusive, [and] encouraging citizens to express their subjectivities, which invariably stimulates political engagement" (Althiabi, 2017, p. 191). For example, one of the YouTube channels, BanaTube, is described as shedding light on the situation of women and their affairs and interests; however, it "is not revolutionary in the traditional sense, and does not call for direct action" (p. 189). He states that this sphere is in the very early stage of providing the instruments to express views in public discourse.

The application of the idea of the Habermasian public sphere in its physical domain is restricted in Saudi Arabia, but it may apply to a digital domain, thanks to the accessibility of social media and other participatory technologies. In this regard, the Internet provides a virtual public space in which individuals can locally and globally communicate and (re)produce information, and it can also be referred to as a "new global public sphere" (Castells, 2008, p. 90). At the same time, the free space provided by social media platforms is impacted by legal restrictions in Saudi Arabia, resulting in yet another regulated public sphere, more similar to traditional newspapers rather than the Web 2.0.

The #EMGS as connective action

In a digital world in which new social movements benefit from the use of technologies in offline and online collective action, Bennett and Segerberg (2012, 2013) proposed two logics of actions behind the recent protests, such as the Arab Spring, *los Indignados* and Occupy Wall Street: the familiar, collective action and the less familiar, connective action. Connective action (i.e. digitally networked activism) is a logic that is similar to but not the same as collective action (i.e. offline networked activism). While having a resource-rich organisation and shared-identity populations are the core of the more familiar logic of collective action, having personal communication organised through social technologies is the core of the connective action. In addition, both actions may co-occur within the same ecology of action, which is called a hybrid collective-connective action network. In this hybrid network, the organisation operates in the background of the action and social networks are built through technologies to enable personalised engagement.

Focusing on the Saudi women's campaign against the MGS, Alsahi (2018) analysed the #TogetherToEndMaleGuardianship (#EMGS) under the lens of connective action. She argued that "Twitter-based networks could be used to mimic certain bureaucratic organising functions, while serving as the connective tissue" (p. 302). Connective action is reflected by more personalised content and hashtags that allow messages to reach across to the Saudi public and the international community. However, the campaign also used some collective action tactics. Thorsen and Sreedharan (2019) mentioned a variety of individual offline acts, identifying the themes that reflected women's online and offline involvements in the #EMGS campaign. Although the movement "represented a networked structure of exchange and a form of organization" (Alsahi, 2018, p. 316), combined with some individual acts, the activists stressed that "the lack of a named leader [or organisation] reflected their shared unity as a social movement" (Thorsen & Sreedharan, 2019, p. 14). Thus, it can be said that the #EMGS campaign is predominantly a form of connective action and should be explored as such within a Social Media–Critical Discourse Studies paradigm.

3. Research design

This study draws on a critical discursive approach in order to explore the role of language in shaping the public construal of women's rights in Saudi society. In particular, it positions itself within the emerging field of study defined as Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS), characterised by a critical interest in the diverse social media platforms and the new kind of communication that they bring along (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). Unlike the traditional mass media characterised as a linear, one-sided, and one-to-many flow of text, social media provides a more interactive, participatory, and many-to-many flow of texts (KhosraviNik, 2014). Thus, the notion of power also changed from being controlled by the elites/privileged and centralised into being decentralised and offering non-elites, ordinary, and marginal individuals the space to express socio-political issues through online social practices (Kelsey & Bennett, 2014; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). In addition, Kelsey and Bennett (2014) argue that social media provides an opportunity for resistance and oppositional power because the existing unfixed power relations in any discursive process can change and develop according to the contextual environments in which they are produced. Online discourse can reflect a struggle hidden in the real world when the public post and/or discuss it online in an attempt to influence each other.

For SM-CDS, discourse is the central unit of analysis whereby the interest is not merely in investigating interactive communication in the media but also in how it shapes and is shaped by the socio-political sphere (thereby analytically dissolving the boundary between online and offline worlds) (KhosraviNik, 2017). Moreover, online discourse is seen as stretching across mediatised and social practices, rather than being limited to one form/outlet. That being said, SM-CDS aims to consider the findings within a wider offline and online context, although some analysts decided "to analyse texts and communication practices in a single outlet" (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 586). In doing that, it is important to understand the conceptually crucial aspects for a viable SM-CDS: horizontal digital context and vertical social context, whereby the former is not equivalent to the latter, but one complements the other. The horizontal digital context covers the intertextuality among textual practices on (potentially) multiple sites and the interconnectedness of social media users through observation and by linking the available textual platforms and practices horizontally across the sites, platforms, and genres (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 585). The vertical social context "links both the micro-features of textual analysis and horizontal context to socio-political context of users in society" (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 585).

My analysis covers the horizontal digital context in Twitter, YouTube and online news articles and vertically links the findings to the Saudi socio-political context (Figure 9.1). The horizontal digital context covers
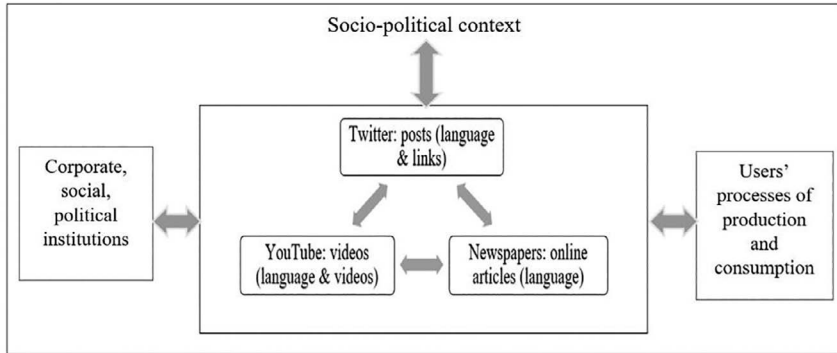
Figure 9.1 A framework for corpus-assisted critical analysis of social media discourse
Source: Adapted from (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016)

the norms of production, consumption and distribution of texts on three platforms: Twitter, YouTube, and online news.[2] The *corporate, social, and political institutions* concern the affordance of these social media sites in Saudi society and particularly in relation to the Saudi women's online resistance. The horizontal context also deals with the *micro- and meso-levels* of the three platforms (e.g. a tweet contains a link to a YouTube video or online news article, or vice versa). The *users' processes of production and consumption* cover the interconnectedness of online users through observation (e.g. having two groups: the anti- and pro-MGS) and the textual patterns used to legitimate their stance. This horizontal digital context is linked to a broader socio-political context in the vertical social context, i.e. the analysis of videos and online news articles is socio-politically and historically contextualised in relation to Saudi society.

To facilitate comparison of the strategies used by the two sides of the campaign, YouTube and news media corpora were collected and analysed, as explained in the following section.

Data and methods

Data was collected from YouTube (as social media discourse) and webpages of Saudi newspaper organisations (as institutional discourse).[3]

First, the YouTube search resulted in a wide range of videos, which is unsurprising given YouTube's "multiple roles as a high-volume website, a broadcast platform, a media archive, and a social network" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 5). In order to obtain a more representative set, videos were filtered concerning their types (i.e. genres). YouTube videos to be included were categorised into television interviews (i.e. episodes originally

aired on TV), video selfies or velfies (i.e. a snapchat video), and vlogs (i.e. "video blog") (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 145). To sum up, inclusion criteria were as follows: Saudi participants, timeframe (July 2016 to October 2018), selected genres and the number of views (2K minimum). Thirty-two videos were collected and transcribed using ELAN, a multipurpose and multimedia annotation tool. The videos, then, were divided into two categories based on the stance of speakers (anti-MGS and pro-MGS) in order to understand the patterns used in the arguments for or against the end of MGS. However, two videos also include two guest speakers defending the two opposite sides; after transcribing, their part was extracted and assigned to the belonging categories: anti-MGS or pro-MGS.

Second, a list of Saudi news organisations that covered the MGS or reported the campaign #EMGS was generated. A search on Google using the same keywords for collecting the YouTube videos resulted in ten Saudi news organisations. Within their website, the term 'guardianship' (*ālwlāyh*) was searched in order to collect all related articles from July 2016 to October 2018; the results were 127 newspaper articles. However, a list of inclusion criteria was needed in order to focus on the most relevant ones. Thus, the news organisations were examined based on four criteria: their age, their offline-online existence, how active they are on Twitter,[4] and how many hits of the search term were returned. Following these criteria, the data of analysis was taken from four news organisations: *Sabq* newspaper, *Akhbaar24* news, *Okaz* newspaper, and *Alriyadh* newspaper. Fifty-two newspaper articles were collected from the four Saudi news organisations. Similar to the YouTube videos, the articles were categorised based on the stance: anti-MGS, articles that supported the campaign against the MGS, for example, an *Okaz* newspaper article titled 'Guardianship on women, the minefield of awakening movement' (accessed September 2016), and pro-MGS, articles that argued against the campaign, for example, an *Okaz* newspaper article titled 'After the illegal birth on Twitter, 680 days exposed the hashtag #EndGuardianshipSystem' (accessed May 2018) (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 shows that three of the news organisations have articles supporting the campaign, whereas one heavily reported against it. Interestingly, the overall stance, i.e. arguing for the campaign, contradicted the

Table 9.1 Newspaper articles in two categories: anti-MGS and pro-MGS

News organisations	Anti-MGS articles	Pro-MGS articles	Total
Sabq online news	4	10	14
Akhbaar24 online news	9	7	16
Okaz newspaper	14	3	17
Alriyadh newspaper	3	2	5

hypothesis that controlled news media might be against the campaign and would aim to maintain the status quo, depicting the campaign as an external threat to the traditional values of Saudi society.

Both datasets were analysed following Toulmin's (1958) model of argumentation in order to deconstruct the arguments and then overlayered with an evaluation of the arguments in light of Aristotelian appeals – logos, ethos, and pathos (Aristotle, 2008). Liakopoulos (2000) suggested five steps for conducting an argumentation analysis: having a representative sample, summarising the main ideas, identifying the argumentative parts and applying a reliability test, organising all arguments in a schematic representation, and finally interpreting the results within the context and reporting the level of the arguments' completeness. Although measuring the argumentation completeness is a significant step in indicating the argument strength, the strength could be tested in many forms, one of which is by evaluating the argument structures through a close look at the content of the argument. The content carries the expected output in order to persuade the audience.

By combining two frameworks, the analysis of the dataset was conducted in a process of six steps, the first step being transcribing the YouTube videos and dividing the content of the two datasets into anti- and pro-MGS.

Then, the researcher needs to understand the nature of the datasets before summarising the main arguments. Two types of the YouTube dataset were found: persuasive monologue and persuasive dialogue. The former has two major components, "the intuitive 'case building' of presenting arguments in support of the thesis" and the varieties of technique in presenting the thesis's counterarguments and defeating them (Reed & Long, 1997, p. 3). The latter has one crucial feature, retraction, that is not involved in the monologue (Reed & Long, 1997). The differences are mainly concerning the set of limits that influence the creation of both; however, there is no intrinsic difference in the process of analysing the structure of an argument (Reed, 1998). Thus, the dialogue data were extracted to be placed into the belonging category previously mentioned.

The main arguments then were summarised. To identify the argument parts, it is necessary to devise appropriate definitions in advance, based on Toulmin's conceptualisation, due to the lack of consistent and clear definitions of the argument parts in his model (Liakopoulos, 2000). The definitions relied on the context in which the research is taking place. In this study, the argumentation structure was more controversial and formal. Therefore, the definitions were in the context of a more formal social debate which depends on "explicit facts and with a view to supporting legal decision-making" (Liakopoulos, 2000, p. 157). In *The Uses of Argument*, Toulmin (1958) proposed an argument structure containing five segments: claim, data, warrants, backing and rebuttal.[5]

After analysing the argument parts, the claims (i.e. arguments) were collected under thematic clusters. In addition, the argument parts were given special weight in light of the Aristotelian appeals (2008): *ethos* (the speaker/writer's moral character), *pathos* (the appeal to the hearers/readers' emotions), and *logos* (the appeal to logic or reason). The last step was testing the reliability by conducting an intra-coder reliability measure in order to clarify the coding process that has been followed and to overcome any identification difficulties.[6]

4.   Findings

YouTube corpora

Both YouTube corpora include seven arguments in total, each of which is represented in turn. Each corpus presents a set of arguments in support of their stance regarding the #EMGS. On the one hand, the anti-MGS provide a descriptive image of Saudi women's living situations under the MGS, along with issues concerning other rights (e.g. driving). In Example 1, they argue that the only way women can achieve success is with the permission of their guardians; in Aristotelian terms, we might characterise this as a form of pathos appeal, inviting pity or sympathy for those women who do not have the necessary support or consent from their guardians.

Example 1

<div dir="rtl">

نجاح المراة مرهون بوجود ولي امر متفهم.
</div>

A woman's success in life is totally dependent on the existence of a
   caring and an understanding guardian.

The anti-MGS also argue for the #EMGS campaign by explaining its importance and aims and the possible future outcomes for women aligned with the goals of Vision 2030. Example 2 characterises it as a feminist campaign which is powerful, peaceful, and law-abiding. This description evokes a sense of confidence and trust in those leading the campaign, and is perhaps a pre-emptive defence against the negative connotations sometimes ascribed to feminist movements; Fraser (2012) describes this negativity as "tapp[ing] into a certain orientation toward revolt and feminism" (p. 5). In addition, describing the campaign as principled and law-abiding is considered a form of ethos appeal, promoting respect and support to the ethical values of the campaign and its proponents. Example 3 is visionary in nature, aimed at getting the audience to participate in the #EMGS by painting a positive picture of the future if the campaign succeeds.

Example 2

حركه نسوية قوية جدا وحملة سلمية مقيدة و ماشين على النظام.

This is a very powerful and peaceful feminist movement that follows the rules.

Example 3

بيشوفوا كيف الانتاج في الوطن لو ساقت المراة وتاخذ باقي حقوقها شوفوا كيف الاقتصاد بيزيد.

When women start driving and gain their legal rights, we will see an increase in national production and economic growth.

Despite their efforts to end the MGS, the anti-MGS are aware of the nature of Saudi society and the reaction to the campaign that could result. Example 4 argues that the different Saudi ideologies, mainly *Sahwa*, have made women's issues a point of contention. This has two types of rhetorical appeals: the pathos appeal here provokes a sense of pity towards women, and the logos appeal refers to sets of ideologies concerning only women, e.g. their black dress, specific subjects to study, and certain jobs to work at.

Example 4

التيارات في المملكة متصارعة على المراة.

The Saudi ideologies are fighting over women's issues.

On the other hand, the pro-MGS disagree with these claims and argue that Saudi women and their situation are misrepresented in the #EMGS campaign. In Example 5, the pro-MGS campaigners argue that the anti-MGS campaigners do not know women's rights and picture women as being controlled. This implies anti-MGS campaigners' ignorance of the law according to the pro-MGS.

Example 5

يظنون انها لا يمكن ..خلاص..مغلق عليها لا في مالها ولا في عملها ولا في زواجها ولا في شأنها الا كلها تحت هالرجل.

They [anti-MGS campaigners] think that it is impossible for a woman to have control over her money, to choose her job, or her partner; she is under the man's control.

The pro-MGS negatively explain the aims of the campaign. Example 6 argues that the #EMGS campaign is a call for "absolute freedom". In general, this concept is negatively contextualised in Saudi society; as Al Fassi (2016) explained, "'Feminism' has a negative connotation in Saudi Arabia, as does the term 'emancipation' as both are usually

associated with Western hegemony and sexual freedom" (p. 188). This negative connotation thus invokes feelings of enmity in the audience and helps to construct an ad hominem attack on the ethos of their opponents (i.e. anti-MGS campaigners). Example 7 argues that the #EMGS campaign is not a spontaneous movement; it is systematic and directed. This implies that it has been orchestrated by unknown individuals with hidden agendas. Thus, it provokes two feelings: enmity towards those unknown 'movers' and fear of their actions and hidden purposes. It is also a form of ethos appeal, indicating the disloyalty and betrayal of those who support the #EMGS.

Example 6

انت تتكلم حاليا عن حرية مطلقة هي هاذي مشكلة.

The problem is that they want absolute freedom.

Example 7

عن عمل واضح الملامح انه ممنهج وموجه وعمل لايمكن يكون عشوائي في أي حال من الاحوال.

Their work is obviously systematic and directed, it is impossible that [it] is
   spontaneous in any way.

In Example 8, the anti-MGS are considered ignorant and outsiders in the pro-MGS corpus because of their supposed illiteracy in terms of the advantages of the MGS for women; this tends to attack their ethos by ad hominem arguments.

Example 8

يغلب ظني ان اكثر من يتكلم عن الولاية لم يقرأ أحكامها الشرعية ولافائدتها للمرأة.

The majority of them (i.e. the anti-MGS) have not read about Islamic
   legislation with regard to male guardianship or its benefits to women.

The pro-MGS stance is discussed in both corpora. In Example 9, the anti-MGS argue that the pro-MGS focus on clarifying the definitions of the MGS rather than on the actual problems the system causes for women. This has a pathos appeal, evoking a sense of shame for ignoring women's suffering, and an ethos appeal showing the pro-MGS campaigners' morals when focusing away from the actual problem and discussing the definitions. Example 10 discusses the reasons for the pro-MGS refusal to end the MGS. It also attacks the ethos of the pro-MGS, in which the anti-MGS campaigners argue that the pro-MGS feel

threatened by the end of the MGS, i.e. because of their fear of losing power and authority over women.

Example 9

التركيز كله على تعريف والاختلاف في تعريف الولاية مو مهم مقارنة بمعاناة النساء.

The attention given to the definition of the concept of male guardianship is
   irrelevant when it comes to the suffering of women.

Example 10

التمسك بالولاية لانها تهدد سلطتهم سلطة الذكور سواء كانوا من المؤسسات او مواطنين.

Those who are still holding onto the guardianship system, whether
   individuals or institutions, are doing so to maintain their male dominance.

Comparing the arguments of the pro-MGS stance in the anti-MGS corpus to those in the pro-MGS corpus showed an agreement. In Example 11, the pro-MGS argue that their role is to enlighten the public about the truth of the MGS in order to fully understand its benefits and how it operates. Thus, they wish to focus on its definitions more than its problems. This is a form of logos appeal, indicating the multiple definitions of guardianship, for instance, protecting, caretaking, and so on; each can reflect different relations between men and women, i.e. wife and husband, daughter, and father. Example 12 argues for their role in speaking out against the #EMGS campaign and represents it as a divine role. This perhaps tends to categorise the campaign as a sin and defines it as being against God's will which, in turn, attempts to delegitimise it.

Example 11

لابد من تسليط الضوء على عددا من المفاهيم والمصطلحات المصاحبة لمفهوم الولاية.

A number of concepts and definitions related to the guardianship system
   must be highlighted.

Example 12

الله تعالى أمرنا ان نبين الحق للناس إذا تبين الحق لناس خلاص الغاية التي اريد ان اصل إليها لذلك الكلام
الذي قادر على ان ينكر منكرا.

Allah, the Almighty, commanded us to show the right path to people and
   that is the goal I want to achieve; thus, it is our responsibility to deny
   wrong deeds.

In addition, both corpora refer to Islamic principles in relation to the MGS. The anti-MGS in Example 13 argue that there is nothing in Islam about the MGS as practised today; this is a logos appeal that aims at convincing the audience of the origin of the MGS. In Islam, the only mention of guardians

is in the two cases of marriage and travel, although the latter has various exceptions and is not as strictly required as the former. In August 2019, in fact, a royal decree was issued that women above the age of 21 are able to travel without a guardian's consent. The pro-MGS in Example 14 argue that the need for the MGS is why it was instituted and why it needs to be maintained. It shows a form of pathos appeal, evoking trust and confidence in the MGS because, as they claim, it is Islamic.

Example 13

اي ولاية اخرى غير الزواج ليست من الدين.

Any other law regarding guardianship rule, apart from marriage, isn't part of religion.

Example 14

شرع الاسلام الولاية للضرورة.

Guardianship is established by an Islamic provision to meet a need.

Moving from the Islamic base to the legal one, a set of arguments discusses the role of the government in this matter and how this could be defined in relation to the international law. In Example 15, the anti-MGS argue that the regulations of the MGS are in breach of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). For example, if a woman wants a passport, she needs a male guardian to sponsor the application, unlike the issuing of passports for men. It has two types of rhetorical appeals: the logos appeal is the intertextual reference to the UN convention, and the pathos appeal is made by provoking a sense of pity in the audience. These have a rhetorical impact on the audience, alerting them to the breach of international law and its support for an end to the MGS.

Example 15

اعتقد ان هناك تمييز ضد المراة فيما يتعلق باستخراجها لجواز السفر مقارنة بالرجل وهذا مخالف لبنود الاتفاقية.

think there is discrimination against women when it comes to obtaining a passport compared to men; this is against the CEDAW.

However, the pro-MGS argue for three governmental roles. Example 16 argues that the government must ignore campaigns such as this one because of their way of demanding, i.e. by threatening and blackmailing. The pathos appeal here evokes anger towards the anti-MGS campaigners, as they are portrayed as inciting public outcry. It also indicates their ethos as dis-loyal and a betrayal. If these calls result in what they want, the pro-MGS

campaigners claim that it will give rise to the possibility of more campaigns asking for more rights. This view of what might happen if these demands receive a response engenders fear. Example 17 argues that the MGS should be adjusted based on certain criteria (e.g. health status or the financial ability of the guardian), rather than ending it entirely. This shows the ethos of the pro-MGS campaigners as being considerate of some regulations that need adjustment. Example 18 argues that the new changes in the country would give women their rights; thus, no further actions are needed to end the MGS. The logos appeal is here shown in the intertextual references that concern new policies, e.g. lifting the driving ban and the royal decree of 2017, which are considered empowering and liberating for women.

Example 16

لكن اذا حققت مطالب هالاشكال بهالاسلوب المليء بالابتزاز والاستفزاز ماتدري بكره وش يطلعلك.

We should not respond to the demands of those who blackmail and antagonise us, because you never know what they would come up with tomorrow.

Example 17

اسقاط الولاية في حاله عدم الكفاءة التي يتم قياسها بالصحة او القدرة المالية.

Ending the MGS should be measured by the male's health status or financial ability.

Example 18

التغيرات التي صارت حاليا في المملكة فيها حرية للمرأة وفيها تمكين المرأة.

The changes that are currently taking place in the Kingdom are empowering and liberating for women.

In Example 19, the pro-MGS argue against CEDAW because it pertains to Western countries and should not apply to an Islamic country. This evokes enmity towards the #EMGS campaign, which is represented as a means of Westernising Saudi society.

Example 19

اتفاقيه سيدو تكلمنا عنها قبل شوي وهي في الحقيقه خطيرة جدا وانا اسميها دستور الامم المتحدة فيما يتعلق بقضايا المراة.

The CEDAW, which we have mentioned before, is in fact a very dangerous treaty that can be considered as the United Nations' Constitution on women's issues.

Lastly, both corpora include a set of arguments concerning the (social) media. In Example 20, the anti-MGS claim that the online world gives

them a place to express their needs, as well as introduces different perspectives to society in various issues.

Example 20

<div dir="rtl">دخولها لمعترك الفضاء الافتراضي غير كثير حتى تفكير المجتمع تجاه المواضيع.</div>

Introducing the campaign online has helped change the way the public
thinks about certain issues.

However, the pro-MGS in Example 21 argue that both social and traditional media amplify the #EMGS campaign and manipulate the public into believing that women are being oppressed under the MGS. This pathos appeal evokes anger towards the media agencies for their role in supporting #EMGS and perhaps tends to convince the audience of the idea that the MGS is being misrepresented.

Example 21

<div dir="rtl">يشاع والتضخيم الاعلامي الي نشوفه في وسائل الاعلام ان اعتقدت ان المرأة فعلا عليها الضغوط.</div>

It is the amplification that we see in the media that makes women look
oppressed.

The evaluation of the appeals in both YouTube corpora reveal that logos appeals were frequently applied to (de)legitimise the #EMGS campaign (Figure 9.2 and 9.3). In the anti-MGS, the citations included are political (e.g. the crown prince's interviews) and Islamic (e.g. Quranic verses), while in the pro-MGS corpus, citations concerned policies (e.g. Vision, 2030) and Islamic texts (e.g. Quranic verses).

The pathos appeal, i.e. evoking the feeling of the audiences, varied in the corpora; for instance, the anti-MGS evoked pity and confidence (Figure 9.4), while the pro-MGS evoked enmity and anger towards the #EMGS campaign and the anti-MGS (Figure 9.5). The ethos appeal, i.e. the speaker's moral character, was mainly focused on convincing the audience using logical arguments, along with invoking feelings. While the anti-MGS reflected their ethos through demonstrating the fairness for women that would result from ending the MGS, the pro-MGS showed their concern for abused women by calling for adjustments to the MGS.

News media corpora

While the anti-MGS news media corpus has seven arguments, the pro-MGS corpus has five arguments. Each corpus presents a set of arguments
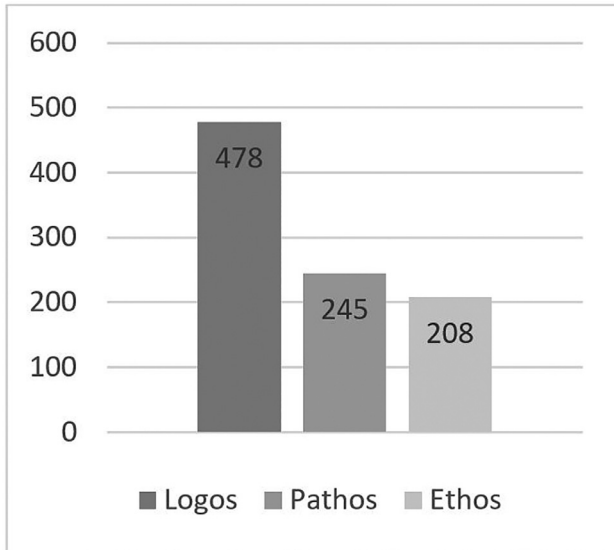
Figure 9.2 The three argumentative appeals in the anti-MGS YouTube corpus
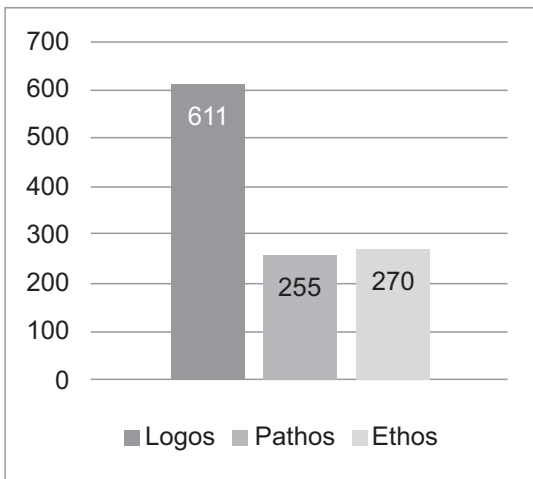
Figure 9.3 The three argumentative appeals in the pro-MGS YouTube corpus
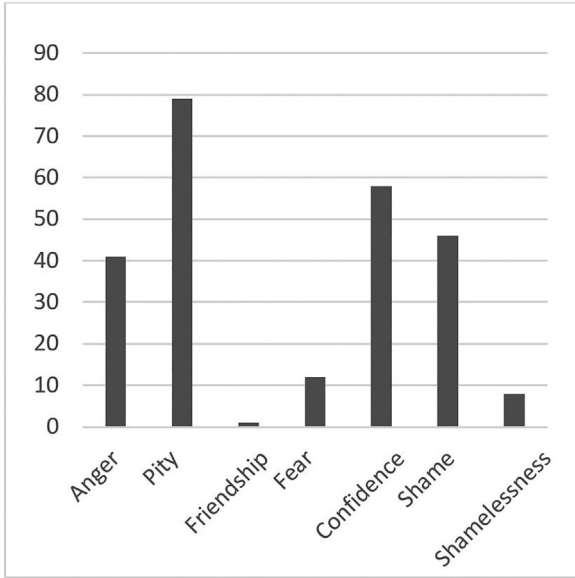
Figure 9.4 The seven emotions in the pathos appeal in the anti-MGS YouTube corpus
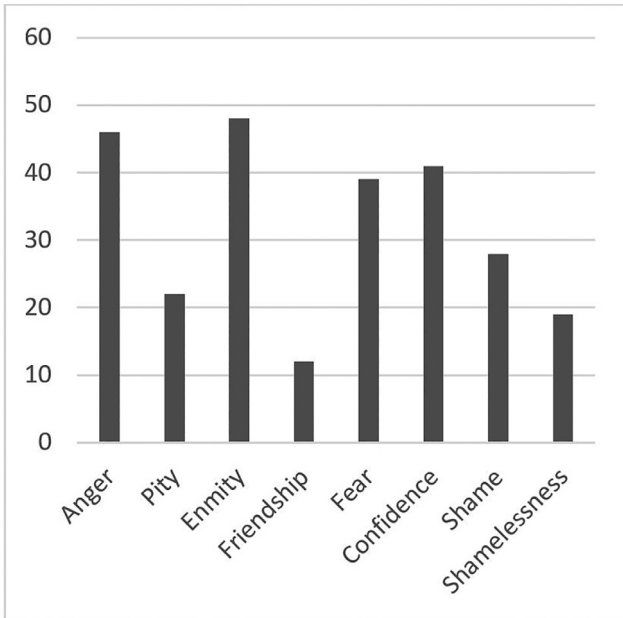
Figure 9.5 The eight emotions in the pathos appeals in the pro-MGS YouTube corpus

in support of their stance regarding the #EMGS. In the pro-MGS corpus, a set of arguments discusses the nature of the #EMGS and the aims of the anti-MGS, along with the reaction of society towards the campaign. The #EMGS and the anti-MGS are negatively contextualised. Example 22 argues that the #EMGS campaign and the anti-MGS are against Islamic principles. This belief is supported by an intertextual reference produced by a religious scholar who is against the #EMGS and its demands. Given his authority, the campaign obtains a non-Islamic characteristic, and thus no-one would support it. In addition, this evokes fear of the campaign and the anti-MGS in the readers, as well as attacks the anti-MGS's ethos.

Example 22

واعتبر المطلق أن المطالبات بإلغاء الولاية وإسقاطها تتعارض مع الشريعة الإسلامية ولن تجد لها في المملكة شخصاً يسندها.

Al-Mutlaq considered calling for the end of the male guardianship system inconsistent with Islamic law and there would be no-one supporting it in the Kingdom.

The pro-MGS consider the campaign to be a conspiracy against the government, society and religion. Example 23 argues that the #EMGS is using women's rights as an excuse for a hidden agenda. This aims to evoke fear of this agenda in the readers and enmity towards the anti-MGS campaigners.

Example 23

وتحت شعار حقوق المرأة نشط الهاشتاق، ظهر فيها أنها تسير بخطة وليست بعفوية.

The hashtag end male guardianship system was activated under the umbrella of women's rights and it seems that it has following a plan rather than being spontaneous tweets.

In turn, the anti-MGS refuse these claims by their opponents. Example 24 clarifies that the #EMGS campaign "is not a call for female rebellion", as claimed by the pro-MGS, who used such ad hominem arguments in order to attack its proponents.

Example 24

غير صحيح مايقال بأن هذه دعوة للتمرد النسائي.

This is not true that it is a call for female rebellion.

Notably, both corpora utilise the Islamic base in their arguments for or against the MGS. On the one hand, the anti-MGS question the existence of Islamic evidence for applying the MGS in institutions. Example 25 argues that there is no mention in the Quran of the concept of guardianship as

used today. Moreover, Example 26 argues that Islam gives women their rights and places them in a proper position; therefore, the demands to end the MGS are compatible with Islam. The example intertextualises a proposal of a female Shura member to end the MGS; this intertextual reference lends power to the position of anti-MGS and also evokes a sense of encouragement and confidence in readers about participating in and supporting the #EMGS campaign.

Example 25

القرآن ليس فيه أي ذكر للولاية بالمفهوم المتعارف عليه في قوانيننا.

The guardianship system as we know it in our law today is not mentioned in the Qur'an.

Example 26

أعطاها الإسلام من الحقوق والواجبات ووضعها في المكان اللائق بها ولذلك مناقشة توصية الدكتورة لطيفة الشعلان بمنع الولاية على المرأة إنما يقف على أرض صلبة أساسها ديننا.

Islam has given women certain rights and duties, and placed them in their rightful position; thus, the discussion of Dr Latifa Al-Shalan's recommendation to end the guardianship system at the Shura council stands on solid religious grounds.

On the other hand, the pro-MGS focus on the divine nature of the MGS. Example 27 argues that the MGS is men's responsibility assigned to them according to Islamic teachings and that, despite its misuses, it is originally designed for women's benefit. This evokes the feeling of confidence in its legitimacy and implication. Example 28 argues that the MGS is not an abusive system and meant well originally; this has an ethos appeal in reflecting an understanding of the misuse of the MGS by comparing how it was originally intended and what it has turned into.

Example 27

أكد أن الولاية جزء من القوامة الذي كلف بها الرجُل ربانياً.

The guardianship role is part of the divine roles and responsibilities of men.

Example 28

مبيناً أن الولاية في الأصل ليست ولاية تعسف.

The guardianship system was originally not an abusive system.

The pro-MGS's arguments are usually aligned with the Islamic view of women's rights (i.e. responsible and having full rights over their lives), and the MGS is considered supportive in this narrative. With the MGS, women

are supposed to be treated as "queens" and "well-protected pearls" with "protection and care" from their guardians; this was evident in the representations of Saudi women when discussing the legitimacy of the MGS on Twitter by the pro-MGS (Alotaibi & Mulderrig, 2021).

The call for changes in relation to women's situations vary in both corpora. The anti-MGS argued for changes by three actors: the role of official authorities, the Islamic institutions, and society, mainly men. Example 29 argues that there are "many contradictions" in these regulations, creating vagueness around the MGS and questioning its legitimacy. Therefore, the officials should start taking action in regard to the MGS; in Aristotelian terms, this can be characterised as a form of logos appeal, discussing the inconsistent application of the MGS, for example, some universities used to ask their female students for consent while others did not. Example 30 argues that the Islamic interpretations by religious institutions are strict, particularly when it comes to women's roles; this might be because of the absence of official feminine voices in Islamic interpretations. This is a form of pathos appeal, evoking pity towards these strict interpretations with regard to women's rights in Islam. Example 31 applies a pathos appeal with a friendly tone, "gentlemen", to evoke trust in their judgment. It discusses the situation of the other half of society, women, and the need to recognise their rights by trusting them and ending the MGS. Although a woman is trusted to raise her boys to men, among many tasks, she requires their consent to practise her rights; this argument urges the society to think about the MGS and participate in changing it.

Example 29

والتي تعد غير واضحة بل ضبابية إلى حد بعيد كما ان قضية الولاية أيضاً بها العديد من المتناقضات فيما يخص الأنظمة واللوائح.

There are many contradictions in the regulations attached to the
　guardianship system, which make it really unclear and vague.

Example 30

اؤكد انه لا يعُقل أن تبقى المرأة رهينة التفسيرات والاجتهادات البشرية التي يمكن أن تضيق عليها.

Surely, it is inconceivable for a woman to be held hostage to the human
　interpretations that could restrict her.

Example 31

نتحدث عن نصف المجتمع يا سادة (المرأة) فكيف نعترف بها ونثق بقدراتها أمام هذه المهام الجمة، ثم نقصيها عندما يتطلب الأمر الاعتراف بحقوقها وكرامتها وولاية نفسها.

Gentlemen, we are talking about half of our society (women); how come we
　appreciate and trust their abilities to do great tasks, yet we exclude them
　when it comes to their rights, dignity, and independence?

In addition, the anti-MGS discuss the relation between institutions and Saudi women. Example 32 argues against the assertion that women have no authority in dealing with institutions and that in any relation between an individual and an institution, the consent of a third party should not be required to obtain the legal services. It is the case that there are certain categories requiring the consent of a third party, i.e. those who are unable to deal with official procedures. However, women do not belong to any of these categories, although they are treated as if they do under the MGS. This evokes a sense of shame in placing women in those groups. Example 33 argues that the MGS can allow unstable and abusive guardians to exert their power over women. Such an argument gives rise to two points: are they using the MGS to facilitate their act of abuse, or does the MGS authorise guardians to act in an abusive way? In both cases, however, the MGS could be a tool to abuse women. This evokes two feelings: fear of the legal authority the MGS lends to abusive guardians and pity for the women rendered powerless by the legal situation.

Example 32

يُفترض أن من أي علاقة بين الفرد -رجل أو امرأة- وبين الدولة لا تشترط موافقة شخص آخر لإتمام تلك العلاقة أو التصرف.

The state should not require the consent of another person for any individual (man or woman) to complete dealings.

Example 33

هناك بعض الأولياء يتعسف في استخدام مفهوم الولاية، ودائما المرأة هي الحلقة الأضعف والضحية في مثل هذه القضايا.

Some male guardians abuse the concept of guardianship, and women are always the victims in such cases.

The pro-MGS, in contrast, support partial changes to the MGS due to the misuse of some guardians, rather than ending it entirely. Example 34 argues that there is unjust behaviour by a very few guardians, but this does not mean the MGS should end. The evaluation of this example reflects an ethos appeal (i.e. the writer's moral sense) by admitting the misuse of the MGS, but then the writer proposes that this does not justify abolishing the system because it is an Islamic regulation; it seems that the claim of having a religious base is used to uphold the MGS.

Example 34

صحيح يوجد بعض الرجال ظلمة لكنهم قليل جدًا لايعني الغاء حكم شرعي.

It is true that there are a few abusive men, but that does not mean that we should end an Islamic regulation because of them.

The anti-MGS address the reaction of society to the new changes and events. Example 35 argues that the reaction to ending the MGS has been positively influenced by a series of events, e.g. the speech of the crown prince. This intertextual reference, when the crown prince was asked during an interview with *The Atlantic* about the guardianship system, lends legitimacy and power to the #EMGS campaign. He said that such a system had not existed previously, and he supported women's rights and there would be more changes to come. This evokes a feeling of trust in the upcoming change and encourages the readers to consider or continue participation in #EMGS.

Example 35

ترك حديث ولي العهد الأمير محمد بن سلمان؛ بشأن قضية الولاية على المرأة ردود فعل إيجابية في أوساط المجتمع.

Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's speech about the guardianship system has had a positive impact on Saudi society.

The evaluation of the appeals used in the arguments in both news media corpora revealed a predominant use of the logos appeal to (de)legitimise the #EMGS campaign (Figure 9.6 and Figure 9.7). In the anti-MGS, the citations included policies (e.g. the travel policies for women) and Islamic
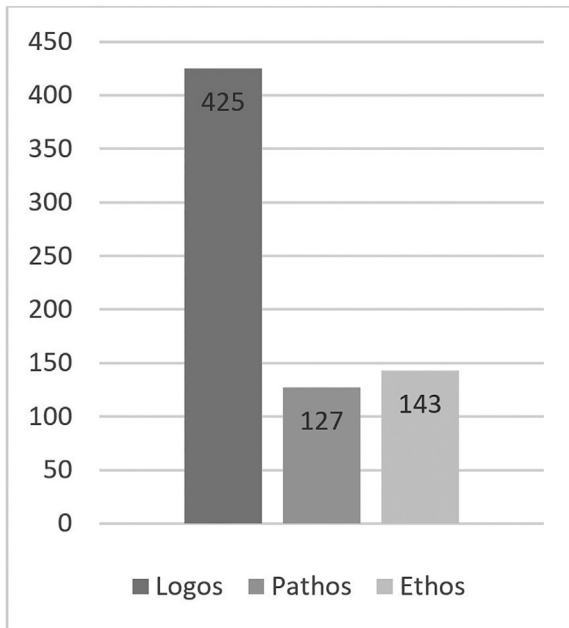
Figure 9.6 The three argumentative appeals in the anti-MGS news articles
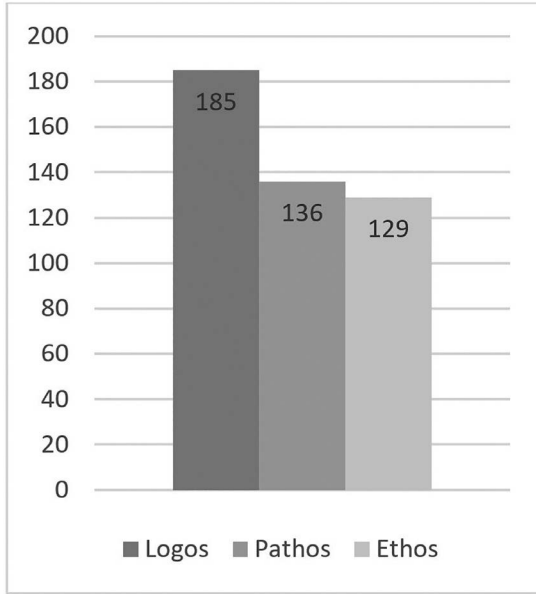
Figure 9.7 The three argumentative appeals in the pro-MGS news articles
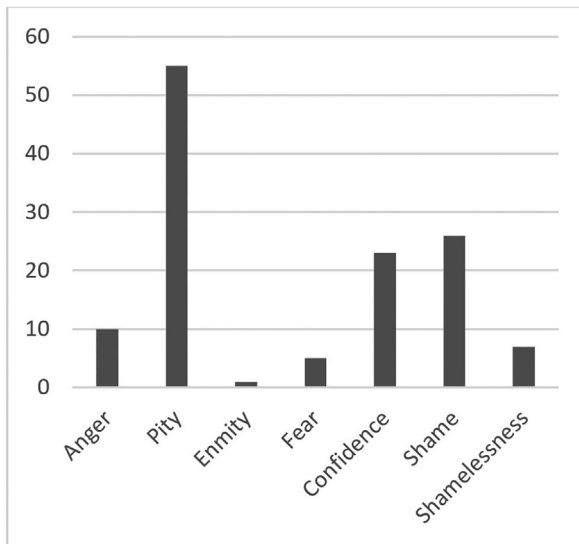
Figure 9.8 The seven emotional categories of pathos appeal in the anti-MGS news articles
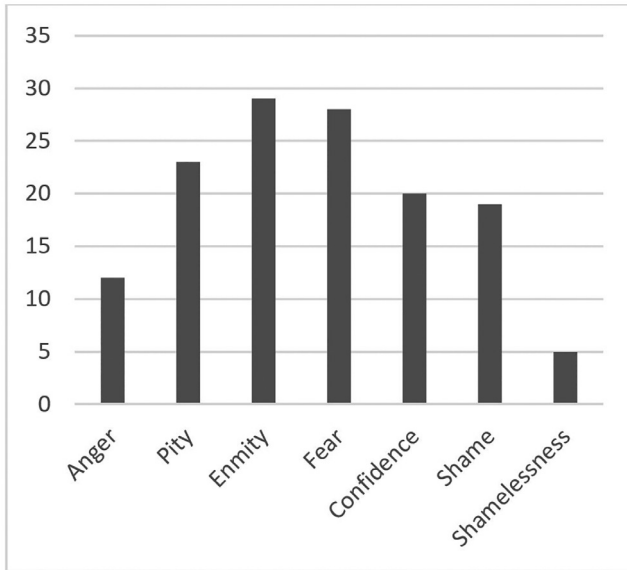
Figure 9.9 The seven emotional categories of pathos appeal in the pro-MGS news articles

references (e.g. the Prophet's saying: "no marriage without *wili*" [i.e. a guardian]), while in the pro-MGS corpus, the citations included policies (e.g. the policy of cybercrime) and Islamic references (e.g. the Quranic verse, *An-Nisa* 34).

The pathos appeal aimed at evoking the readers' feelings, e.g. pity and shame in the anti-MGS corpus (Figure 9.8) and fear and enmity in the pro-MGS corpus (Figure 9.9). The ethos appeal was about the writer's moral character, for instance, showing credibility and knowledge in examining the original intention of the MGS in the anti-MGS corpus and the call to adjust the MGS for abused women in the pro-MGS corpus.

5. Comparison of YouTube and news media corpora

The findings revealed a strategic set of arguments in the "public" (YouTube) and "institutional" (news media) corpora, explaining how the #EMGS campaign relates to other elements of the existing reality to (de)legitimise the end of the MGS. Both anti-MGS corpora focused on three main arguments: the Islamic basis for the MGS, the changes needed to align with Vision 2030 and defending the #EMGS campaign. First, the Islamic basis for legitimising the MGS was questioned, and it was argued that it never

existed, other than in the two cases of travel and marriage. This oppression came from the radical religious teachings during the *Sahwa* that had influenced Saudi society. Thus, other applications of the MGS in (non-) official institutions needed to be abolished. Second, both corpora argued for changes by the government, religious institutions and society. These changes would help empower women and achieve the goals of Vision 2030. Third, they denied the allegations in relation to the #EMGS campaign, for example, ruining society and Islamic teaching, supporting this argument by discussing the flaws of the MGS. However, differences between the arguments in each corpus were observed, one of which concerned the notable references to international law, specifically CEDAW, in questioning the legality of the MGS in the anti-MGS YouTube corpus, unlike the anti-MGS news media, which never mentioned this aspect.

Also, the two pro-MGS corpora shared similar arguments: the Islamic basis for the MGS, the aims of the #EMGS campaign, the partial changes and Saudi law. First, both corpora argued that the MGS is Islamic and assigned to men for women's sake; thus, it cannot be ended. Second, the aims of the #EMGS campaign were associated with a set of claims, e.g. conspiracy against the government, society and religion; such claims are not surprising because similar patterns were also observed in the arguments made by the proponents of banning driving (Almahmoud, 2015; Aljarallah, 2017; Alotaibi, 2017; Bahammam, 2018). Third, partial changes to the MGS were discussed in favour of certain cases, e.g. guardians who misused the MGS, rather than ending it entirely. Finally, both argued that Saudi women, in general, enjoyed their rights protected by Saudi law; thus, no major changes in legislation were needed, and this also implied that the MGS is better for Saudi women as an attempt to maintain the patriarchal order. In such a masculine society, women are "depicted as needing to be protected, controlled, and guided within an authoritarian, paternalistic, and protective framework" (Al-Rasheed, 2015, p. 293). However, differences between the arguments in each corpus were observed, one of which was the Westernised claim in terms of applying international law in the pro-MGS YouTube corpus, unlike the pro-MGS news media, which never mentioned it.

It was also observed that the four corpora applied the same structure of appeals: logos, pathos and ethos. In the pathos appeal, they showed similarities and differences. For example, both anti-MGS corpora aimed to provoke pity in discussing women's situation under the MGS; however, they varied in that the anti-MGS YouTube corpus revealed confidence in the forthcoming changes, while the anti-MGS news media evoked a sense of shame. Both pro-MGS corpora aimed to provoke enmity towards the #EMGS campaign and the anti-MGS, but they differed in that the YouTube corpus showed anger while the news media promoted fear.

6.   Conclusion

The findings revealed consistent patterns across these "public" (YouTube) and "institutional" (news media) corpora in the use of argumentation strategies on the respective sides of the debate. The anti-MGS made significantly more use of two sets of arguments concerning the role of the government and the Islamic base of the MGS. Their arguments were also drawing on appeals to pathos to invoke the feeling of pity and confidence in their readers' or audience's minds. The pro-MGS, on the other hand, had a set of arguments framing the campaign as non-Islamic and a conspiracy against the values of Saudi society, government, and religion. Their arguments were reinforced with a general tone of enmity and fear. Investigating these discourses within two contexts, the horizontal digital context and vertical social context, allowed the identification of the intertextual strategies used to convince the readers/audience with the arguments. These discursive strategies were deliberately picked in the arguments in order to fit the Saudi society's values and ideologies, particulary in regard to the MGS (KhosraviNik, 2017).

In the struggle for a more empowered society, this study aimed at contributing to our critical understanding of this social campaign by bringing together practices of the (counter-) discourse, as well as unfolding the power relations and hidden ideologies of the legitimising systems that seek to control women's rights. In particular, the study shed light on online discourses that mirror the real life of Saudi women within the MGS and the socio-economic and cultural injustice (Fraser, 1995) they face on a daily basis. MGS emerged as an issue in need of intertwined recognition and redistributive remedies, i.e. revaluing on the cultural level and inclusive on the political-economic level, both high on the agenda in the country since the first announcement of Vision 2030 strategic framework.

Under the umbral of SM-CDS, the non-discursive elements were also investigated. One of these elements is power and ideology that work behind the *Sahwa*, which started characterising Saudi women's role in the 1960s and has been fully operational since the 1980s. The findings revealed how the pro-MGS argued for the MGS with the support of the conservative ideology, e.g. the divine role in protecting and serving women through the MGS. However, with the new government direction announced in Vision 2030, Saudi society is witnessing the emergence of an anti-conservative ideology that can be described as a "moderate" one. In this context, the religious figures in the country have expressed different interpretations of the MGS that were heavily intertextualised in the anti-MGS campaign.

Social media has the ability to initiate a socio-political change depending upon the surrounding conditions (Clark, 2016). Online activism, in the context of Saudi Arabia, may have been significant in this context due

to the limitations around offline collective action. As argued by Castells (2015), the online social movement made it possible to increase the level of involvement of participants due to its decentred and unbounded characteristics. In this research, the discussion of this social problem was found to have moved from one platform, Twitter, to other platforms, e.g. YouTube and online newspapers. In doing so, the vulnerability of the movement could be protected from the threat of repression (Castells, 2015).

Although the changes to the MGS cannot directly be attributed to the #EMGS campaign, the hashtag may have contributed to offline action, e.g. signing a petition to the king and sending an individual telegram to his office. The #EMGS campaign can be contextualised among the many efforts of Saudi women to demand their rights through negotiating their roles with the forms of authority and problematising their situation. The discourse of the #EMGS campaign has led to heated debate and negotiation with the public to challenge the system of patriarchy and marginalisation under the MGS. It also allowed women to produce their arguments with alternative interpretations in ways unprecedented before social media, as Saudi women discussed a different role than the one imposed on them and may continue to do so in the future.

Notes

1. This study is part of a larger research project dealing with the Twitter social movement #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem. The first phase investigated the representations of Saudi women by analysing Twitter corpora and drawing on a socio-semiotic and CDA approach (Alotaibi & Mulderrig, 2021).
2. Unlike the main research project, because of space limitations, this chapter only focuses on two platforms: YouTube and news websites.
3. First, Google's search engine with its advanced search was utilised to find a sample of related videos in the YouTube archive. The keywords for the YouTube dataset were the same as those in the Arabic hashtag of #EndMaleGuardianshipSystem in the timeframe (July 2016 to October 2018). In order to be selected, the videos' title must contain at least one of the following terms: *ālmrāh ālsʿwdyh* "Saudi woman" OR *ālsʿwdyāt* "Saudi women" OR *ālwlāyh* "guardianship" OR *wly* "male guardian" OR *āsqāṭ* "abolish/end".
4. The main focus of the main project is Twitter; thus, it was considered rather than Facebook.
5. The *Claim* (C) is the challenge and logic conclusion of an argument, and it is the answer of what the speaker/writer is seeking to establish or convince the audience/readers with. The *Data* (D) is the foundations for the C containing facts, proofs or religious principles, and it is the answer of why you get to this conclusion. The *Warrant* (W) is the bridge connecting D to C, containing general statements, regulations, and all justifications used to authorise the C, and it is the answer of how you get there and what you have to go on. The *Backing* (B) of the W is the clarifications that possess classifications, examples, religious sayings and traditions, official statements, and statistical facts/reports in order to support the authority and currency of the W. The *Rebuttal* (R) is the exceptions of the C, and it is the answer of if that is always the case. These definitions of the argument parts were given after the researcher did two stages of coding: 1) on part of the

data to check the context and her understanding of the concepts of each part and
2) on the entire data to see what may come up as a new structure.
6. For the YouTube dataset, k = .819, and for the newspaper articles, k = .885.

References

Al-Fassi, H. A. (2013). Saudi Arabia. In N. J. DeLong-Bas (Ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of Islam and women* (Vol. 2, pp. 208–213). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al Fassi, H. A. (2016). Saudi women and Islamic discourse, selected examples of Saudi feminisms. *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, *14*(2), 187–206.

Aljarallah, R. (2017). *A critical discourse analysis of Twitter posts on the perspectives of women driving in Saudi Arabia* [Master's thesis, Arizona State University]. Arizona State University Research Repository. https://keep.lib.asu.edu/items/155782

Almahmoud, J. (2015). *Framing on Twitter: How Saudi Arabians intertextually frame the Women2Drive campaign* [Master's thesis, Georgetown University]. Georgetown University Research Repository. https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/760905

Alotaibi, A. (2017). *Why the panic? Gendered moral panics and the Saudi ban on women driving* (Publication No. 10253808) [Master's thesis, The George Washington University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Alotaibi, N., & Mulderrig, J. (2021). Debating Saudi womanhood: A corpus-aided critical discourse analysis of the representation of Saudi women in the Twitter campaign against the "Male guardianship" system. In M. Fuster-Márquez, J. Santaemilia, C. Gregori-Signes, & P. Rodríguez-Abruñeiras (Eds.), *Exploring discourse and ideology through corpora* (pp. 233–262). Bern: Peter Lang Publishing.

Al-Rasheed, M. (2015). Caught between religion and state: Women in Saudi Arabia. In B. Haykel, T. Hegghammer, & S. Lacroix (Eds.), *Saudi Arabia in transition: Insights on social, political, economic and religious change* (pp. 292–313). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alsahi, H. (2018). The Twitter campaign to end the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Arabian Studies*, *8*(2), 298–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/21534764.2018.1556871

Althiabi, S. (2017). *The emergence of social media networks and their impacts on professional journalism practices in Saudi Arabia* (Publication No. 27767475) [Doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Arif, R. (2014). *Social movements, YouTube and political activism in authoritarian countries: A comparative analysis of political change in Pakistan, Tunisia & Egypt* [Doctoral thesis, University of Iowa]. University of Iowa Research Repository. DOI: 10.17077/etd.ej7y9nzm

Aristotle. (2008). *The art of rhetoric* (W. R. Roberts, Trans.). Megaphone eBooks. www.wendelberger.com/downloads/Aristotle_Rhetoric

Bahammam, L. (2018). *Gendered discourses and discursive strategies employed in Twitter-hashtagged debates about Saudi-women's issues* (Publication No. 164945878) [Doctoral thesis, University of Reading]. University of Reading Research Repository. https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/82516/

Bebawi, S., & Bossio, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Social media and the politics of reportage: The "Arab Spring"*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action. *Information, Communication & Society*, *15*(5), 739–768. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). *The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bloomberg. (2018, October 5). *Saudi Crown Prince discusses Trump, Aramco, arrests*. www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-10-05/saudi-crown-prince-discusses-trump-aramco-arrests-transcript

Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2009). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Castells, M. (2008). The new public sphere: Global civil society, communication networks, and global governance. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *616*(1), 78–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311877

Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

CBSNews. (2018, March 19). *Saudi Arabia's heir to the throne talks to 60 Minutes*. www.cbsnews.com/news/saudi-crown-prince-talks-to-60-minutes

Clark, R. (2016). "Hope in a hashtag": The discursive activism of #WhyIStayed. *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(5), 788–804. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1138235

Commins, D. (2006). *The Wahhabi mission and Saudi Arabia*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Fraser, N. (1995). From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a "post-socialist" age. *New Left Review*, *212*, 68–93.

Fraser, N. (2012). Nancy Fraser, Une Philosophe Rebelle (L. Downs, & J. Laufer, Trans.). *Travail, Genre et Sociétés*, *27*(1), 5–27.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Q. Hoare, & G. Nowell-Smith, Trans.). New York: International Publishers.

Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeoise society* (T. Burger, & F. Lawrence, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Kelsey, D., & Bennett, L. (2014). Discipline and resistance on social media: Discourse, power and context in the Paul Chambers "Twitter Joke Trial". *Discourse, Context and Media*, *3*, 37–45.

KhosraviNik, M. (2014). Critical discourse analysis, power, and new media (digital) discourse. In Y. Kalyango & M. W. Kopytowska (Eds.), *Why discourse matters: Negotiating identity in the mediatized world* (pp. 287–306). New York: Peter Lang.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 582–596). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M., & Unger, J. W. (2016). Critical disocurse studies and social media: Power, resistance and critique in changing media ecologies. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed., pp. 205–233). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Lacroix, S. (2015). Understanding stability and dissent in the Kingdom: The double-edged role of the jama'at in Saudi politics. In B. Haykel, T. Hegghammer, & S. Lacroix (Eds.), *Saudi Arabia in transition: Insights on social, political, economic and religious change* (pp. 167–180). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Liakopoulos, M. (2000). Argumentation analysis. In M. W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: A practical handbook* (pp. 152–171). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Moaddel, M. (2006). The Saudi public speaks: Religion, gender, and politics. *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *38*, 79–108.

Moshashai, D., Leber, A. M., & Savage, J. D. (2020). Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the national transformation plan and Saudi fiscal reform. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *47*(3), 381–401.

Mustafa, R. F., & Troudi, S. (2019). Saudi Arabia and Saudi women in research literature: A critical look. *Asian Social Science*, *15*(2), 133–141.

Reed, C. (1998). *Is it a monologue, a dialogue or a turn in a dialogue?*. Brunel University. www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Is-it-a-Monologue%2C-a-Dialogue-or-a-turn-in-a-Reed/0f1f50c76c7a8cd80d9e54eff9c91d816c94f66d

Reed, C., & Long, D. (1997, May 15–17). *Persuasion monologue*. OSSA Conference Archive. https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1935&context=ossaarchive

Thorsen, E., & Sreedharan, C. (2019). #EndMaleGuardianship: Women's rights, social media and the Arab public sphere. *New Media and Society*, *21*(5), 1121–1140. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818821376

TIME. (2018, April 5). *Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman talks to TIME about the Middle East, Saudi Arabia's plans and president Trump*. https://time.com/5228006/mohammed-bin-salman-interview-transcript-full/

Toulmin, S. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yamani, M. A. Z. (2008). *Polygamy and law in contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Reading: Ithaca Press.

Part V

Digital discourses of power, knowledge, and legitimisation

10 The disruption of power asymmetry in online medical consultations in China

A Social Media Critical Discourse Studies approach

Yu Zhang

1. Introduction

The digital world has seen the revolutionary application of Web 2.0 to health communication, enabling people to have a dynamic, interactive, and collaborative participation in dealing with health issues on their own. Owing to the advancement of Internet technology applied to healthcare, the general public are now able to consult a health expert online anytime and anywhere.

According to existing studies, there are several advantages to this e-healthcare revolution. Consultations with health professionals in virtual settings is beneficial to patients/caregivers in terms of interaction-enhancing effects (see Dedding et al., 2011). E-patients (i.e. including patients and caregivers) are enabled to provide more details about their (or the care receivers') illness experiences or health problems, due to the absence of constraints on time and space. They also have an increased opportunity to self-disclose their stories more openly, due to the anonymous feature of computer-mediated communication (Dedding et al., 2011). More importantly, online medical services also likely encourage health experts to take a more patient-centred and cooperative approach to healthcare delivery, because doctors are more likely to be aware that e-patients may have equipped themselves with extensive expertise related to their health conditions via the Internet or healthcare services offline (Pounds, 2018).

While peer-to-peer health communication has been intensively studied, the digital practice of "ask the experts" is under-researched, particularly in non-Western contexts. Existing studies on online communication between health experts and e-patients have explored linguistic features of advice giving (see Locher, 2006, 2010), identity construction of health experts and of e-patients (see Fage-Butler & Anesa, 2016; Locher & Hoffman, 2006; Mao & Zhao, 2019b; Zhang, forthcoming), empathic responses by health experts (see Pounds, 2018; Pounds & De Pablos-Ortega, 2015;

Zhang, 2021a), discourse features of doctors in terms of mitigation (see Mao & Zhao, 2019a) and trust establishment (see Zhao & Mao, 2019), and popularising biomedical information by health experts (see Anesa & Fage-Butler, 2015).

Against this backdrop, there seems to be a lack of specific scholarly attention to online discursive power relations between e-patients and doctors. While doctors are acknowledged as the powerful party in medical consultation, the traditional powerful/powerless dichotomy can be disrupted in online spaces (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). In fact, a semi-expert position seems to be constructed and assigned to e-patients in online communication, by e-patients and their doctors alike, for dealing with health problems (Fage-Butler & Anesa, 2016; Mazanderani et al., 2013). This semi-expert position may suggest a different power relationship between doctors and e-patients in the digital world, as positions can affect the distribution of power (Davies & Harré, 1999; Munro, 2010) and the change of individuals' positions is related to a shift of power, making them at times powerful and at other times powerless (Baxter, 2016). It is important to understand power relations in digital healthcare practice because this way we come to shed light on social practice as bound up with issues of power relations (Baxter, 2016).

This study focuses on exploring healthcare practice in the digital world, with a focus on power relations between doctors and e-patients in online medical consultation (OMC) platforms in the context of China, a leading country in terms of digitalisation of healthcare (Milcent, 2018). While e-healthcare plays an increasingly important role in the revolution of the healthcare system in China, there are very few studies on the discursive dimension of Chinese e-healthcare practice. In China, the shortage of healthcare professionals is more severe than the global shortage of healthcare workers (Wu et al., 2016), and the pressure of medical workplace violence and disputes is increasingly intense (Hall et al., 2018). To solve these issues, the e-healthcare industry has been supported and promoted by the Chinese government. Already in 2018, the application of Internet technology to healthcare industries was officially highlighted in the "Internet Plus Healthcare" policy issued by the Chinese government,[1] encouraging medical facilities to develop their affiliated "online hospital". The support of the development of online medical services has been leading to a further popularity of OMC services among the public: Chinese OMC platforms are now in their prime, not least in times when the COVID-19 pandemic made access to medical facilities difficult (for details see Zhang, 2021a).

Integrating insights from Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS), especially regarding the new dynamic of discursive power, this study examines a corpus of 100 text-based OMC cases which were selected from three widely used e-healthcare platforms in China. In the following sections

of this chapter, I introduce the research context of this study, specifically the context of OMC in China. Then, I present data and methods. Finally, I illustrate findings with examples, along with a discussion. The findings show the emergence of non-traditional power relations between doctors and e-patients, which include highlighting e-patients' "reward"/"coercive" power as well as softening and negotiating doctors' "expert power".

2.   The social media nature of Chinese OMC platforms

OMC activities in China are mediated by e-healthcare websites, and almost all of these platforms are managed by Internet companies (Analysys, 2018). Most OMC platforms offer video, telephone, voice messaging, and text-based consulting services, and some of the text-based consultations are publicly available for viewing. The median fee per OMC in general is about RMB 20, which is much less than the average outpatient consultation fee: RMB 245.5 (National Health Commission, 2017; Xie et al., 2017). Similar to face-to-face consultations, each OMC usually involves only one e-patient and one doctor and consists of an interaction via instant messages, similar to WhatsApp. Doctors' professional information is posted on their affiliated OMC platforms: most OMC doctors work in public hospitals funded by the government, and some work in private hospitals (for further details see Zhang, 2021a).

OMC platforms in China usually provide a review/evaluation system for e-patients to provide feedback on OMC doctors' work performance. E-patients' evaluations/comments on their doctors' service are publicly posted on a related OMC website, which can be viewed by all web users. The presence of an evaluation system characterises OMC websites as professionalised social media, where different forms of connection and interactions take place. For example, OMC doctors are connected with e-patients via medical consultations and their resulting comments/evaluations. OMC doctors are also connected with each other, due to the competitive relationship generated by the evaluation system among doctors working on the same OMC platform. Also, e-patients and potential e-patients are connected with each other by the system of reading and writing comments/evaluations. Besides, OMC platforms can affect health choices in the "offline" world, because patients/caregivers might choose a doctor to consult in a hospital or medical institute based on their online evaluations/comments.

Albeit not framed within an institutional context, the recent e-healthcare development reinforces the dominate value of the Chinese nation – the development of the economy. The development of digital technologies serves to optimise social resources and produce more economic benefit for the Chinese society. In parallel, the development of a digital-healthcare

culture in China facilitates the commercialisation of medical discourse. Central to the e-commercialised medical discourse is the commercialisation of healthcare mediated through OMC websites that are managed by private Internet companies and that have an evaluating and commenting system for e-patients to assess doctors' services. The new media for medical consultation – OMC websites – strengthens the traditional values of commercial practice, that is, competition and consumption, which is in line with the idea that new media often performs the same function as "old media" in terms of reflecting and reinforcing preferences and ideological assumptions (Jones et al., 2015). These values reinforce a key value in the process of commercialisation of healthcare – consumerism – which has a potential to challenge power structures (Fox et al., 2005).

This e-commerce mode of OMC services reinforces the commercialisation of healthcare – "a set of approaches to health care provision that are borrowed from business and commerce" (Guseva, 2014, p. 782). Healthcare services are sold and bought by doctors and e-patients, respectively, on e-healthcare platforms. In such a commercial context, the satisfaction of customers of healthcare services should be of high priority. In this way, e-patients as OMC consumers are empowered by OMC platforms that feature an evaluation system. Power relations reflected in OMC practice suggest doctors' accommodation to consumerism – providing satisfying services for consumers and prioritising the interests of consumers (see Boix & Lizarza, 2012). OMC services are treated like a commodity which is sold by doctors to earn a good reputation from their health consumers or, in other words, to promote themselves. While the phenomenon of commodification of health, medicine, and healthcare has been explored before in a face-to-face clinical context (see Henderson & Petersen, 2002; Tonkens et al., 2013), we will see how such consumerism is reinforced and foregrounded also on OMC platforms, in particular on platforms with an online evaluating system which affects doctors' professional reputation in both online and offline contexts.

3.   Data and methods

One hundred text-based one-to-one instant messaging OMC cases were selected from the archived OMC texts that were posted on the question and answer sections of three well-known e-healthcare platforms. Each of these three platforms has a review/commenting system for e-patients to assess their doctors' performance. Regarding data sampling, Anesa and Fage-Butler's (2015) online data selection criteria – interactivity and recency – were adopted. Concerning interactivity, the first 50 OMC conversations that have more than six turns (i.e. ≥6) were collected from each of the three e-healthcare websites. Then, a further sampling was conducted

according to the recency criterion. OMC conversations that were initiated before the year 2018 were removed. In total, 100 OMC conversations were selected (42, 30, and 28 OMC conversations from each of the platforms). The data are publicly available for viewing (i.e. they are open access and not password-protected).

Those 100 OMC cases are examined by a SM-CDS approach (KhosraviNik, 2017). The background of the Chinese healthcare system and the empowering role of the new digital healthcare space make SM-CDS an appropriate approach to this type of data. SM-CDS, in fact, is both a digital and social-oriented approach and closely connects digital textual practice and related social media communicative context with the larger social and political context. This approach foregrounds the role of social media in shaping or affecting discursive practice and power in the physical world. Consequently, SM-CDS allows one to interpret discursive practices on social media within a socio-political context of a particular society (KhosraviNik, 2017), as meanings are within a society and social context, rather than language or other semiotics per se (KhosraviNik, 2009). While the institutional power of (or behind) discourse may be compromised or backgrounded on OMC platforms, the power in discourse can still be the focus of the commercialised e-healthcare practice (see KhosraviNik, 2014). It is thus of relevance to data analysis, as it allows one to examine and interpret the data in light of the contemporary Chinese context.

4.   Findings

4.1.   *Highlighting e-patients' reward/coercive power*

Building upon French and Raven's (1959) definitions of "reward power" and "coercive power", it can be said that e-patients can exert reward or coercive power over their doctors, to be regarded as two mirroring and opposite systems, owing to the evaluation system. On the one hand, e-patients have the ability to "reward" doctors, as they can manage positive valences or outcomes (by providing positive comments about their doctors' performance) and remove or decrease negative outcomes that doctors desire (by not providing negative comments). This power can be constructed by either e-patients or doctors, or both (the construction of reward power by doctors can be realised through displaying their desire for getting their e-patients' "reward"). On the other hand, e-patients have the control over the negative valences or outcomes that doctors do not want to be imposed; doctors can predict or perceive that they will get a negative outcome if they fail to conform to their e-patients' expectations. This power can be constructed by e-patients or doctors, or both (the construction of

e-patients' coercive power by doctors can be realised through displaying doctors' desire for not getting their e-patients' "coercion").

As mentioned earlier, each of the OMC websites in question has an evaluating system for e-patients to rate their doctors' performance after each consultation is closed, and such feedback is posted on each doctor's profile webpage that can be viewed by web users. The feedback process is anonymous. That said, e-patients can choose to give feedback non-anonymously by disclosing personal information in their comments. This feedback system enables e-patients to have control over positive and negative evaluations on their doctors' performance. In other words, e-patients' feedback has an important influence on doctors' reputation online, but it can also affect doctors' reputation offline. Before registering for a medical visit to a doctor in a hospital, in fact, patients/caregivers may search on the Internet for information, which helps them choose a doctor to consult; they tend to consult a doctor with more positive comments or evaluations (Perrault & Smreker, 2013). In a word, e-patients participating in online medical services are endowed with the right of giving positive or negative feedback on doctors' performance, which can affect a doctor's professional reputation, and doctors are legitimated to expect to get or desire positive comments and evaluations, which in turn highlights the reward/coercive power of e-patients (see example 1 next).

Example 1

P: 👍*清楚了*

 👍 Got it.

D: 感谢您的提问，如果有没和您解释清楚的请及时和我沟通（了解宝宝情况）；您可选图文咨询与电话沟通与我联系，**这样您可长时间的、随时的咨询，** 咱们可给宝宝一个及时、全面、适合宝宝的答案！宝宝的茁壮成长，是我与您共同的目标，请仔细观察宝宝自身状况的变化，**发现异常情况随时与我联系！或找我咨询一些不懂的问题！**让我们共同努力，给宝宝一个健康成长的环境😊👍。**如果您满意我的回答，可以给我好的评价，每一个评价都是我积极向上的动力和您对我的认可，及工作的成绩和骄傲**(很重要哦☉∀☉)，谢谢😊😊😊或加上您要表达的🖤谢谢合作。

Thank you for your question. If there is anything I didn't explain clearly, please communicate with me in time so that I know the baby's condition. You can choose the text-based consultation or teleconsultation to contact me. **You can consult me at any time and over the long term**; that way, we can give the baby a timely, comprehensive,

and proper answer! Our common goal is for the baby to grow up healthy and strong. Please carefully observe any changes in the baby's condition, and feel free to contact me if you find anything abnormal! **Or, you can contact me to ask questions about anything you don't understand!** Let's work hard to provide annvironmentt suitable for the baby's healthy growth 😊 🐾. **If you are satisfied with my answer, you can give me good comments.** Each comment motivates me to make progress. It shows your approval of me, and it also shows my job performance. It is something I can be proud of. It is very important. **Thank you** 😊😊😊. **Or, you could add a** ♥ **to my profile webpage. Thank you for your cooperation**.

Example 1 is extracted from an OMC case in which the e-patient consults the doctor about his or her child's health condition. It shows that the doctor has a strong desire to take advantage of the OMC website for establishing a long-term relationship with the e-patient and getting positive comments (see the text in bold). Besides, the doctor points out how important an e-patient's comments are to her (see the underlined text). In this way, the e-patient's right of evaluating and commenting on the doctor's performance is foregrounded or highlighted. In other words, the e-patient's reward/coercive power is highlighted by the doctor through expressing their desire for positive comments and evaluations. The foregrounding of the reward/coercive power is mediated within the seeking of a long-term consultation relationship. The pursuit of a long-term relationship constructs a responsible image of the doctor, which may contribute to the elicitation of positive feedback. In short, example 1 indicates that the doctor has a strong desire to benefit from the e-patient's exertion of reward power and to avoid the e-patient's exercise of coercive power. It further indicates that there is likely a shift of power from the doctor to the e-patient, which highlights the e-patient's right of providing positive or negative comments on the doctors' performance.

Example 1 also indicates that, to some degree, doctors may have no or have less control over the benefit or privilege they will get from their e-patients' evaluations on their performance, since they cannot control their e-patients' assessing behaviours under the surveillance of the feedback system. The elicitation of positive feedback or the highlight of e-patients' reward/coercive power thus presumably indexes the disempowerment of doctors. This disempowerment may in turn motivate doctors to make efforts to elicit positive comments so as to proactively pave the way to getting positive feedback, as is shown in example 1. While the expert power of doctors can be understood as being backgrounded in the empowerment of e-patients and the disempowerment of doctors, there is another power relation orienting to softening or mitigating doctors' expert power, as illustrated in the next section.

238 *Yu Zhang*

4.2. *Softening doctors' expert power*

It has been widely acknowledged that power asymmetry in medical encounters is largely associated with the medical knowledge gap between health experts and lay people. Medical knowledge and expertise help construct the professional and authority identity of doctors and enable doctors to exert "expert power" (French & Raven, 1959). Doctors adopt different ways to exercise their expert power in medical consultations, such as through asking questions, giving orders, offering advice, and interrupting patients/caregivers (for examples see Byrne & Long, 1976; Beckman & Frankel, 1984; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991; Chen & Li, 2011; Niu et al., 2014). The mastery of medical knowledge appears to result in the dominant role as a doctor (Lynch & Bogen, 1994). The dominant way that doctors conduct a consultation reinforces their expert power. However, this study finds that doctors in the OMC context capitalise on the construction of sameness with their e-patient (see example 2) and the use of kinship terms (see example 3) to soften their expert power.

Example 2[2]

P: 那做完治疗牙齿会不适吗 谢谢医生，您真贴心
我两个宝宝相差一岁半, 每天都有操不完的心哪
Then, will I feel uncomfortable after the treatment? Thank you, doctor. You are so caring.
I have two children. There's one-and-half year age gap between them. Each day I'm always busy with taking care of them.

D: 这个我知道, 不过单从你给我的照片来看, 你左下 的第二恒磨牙的颜色也有点不对, 可能是光影的原因
因为**我也是爸爸**，我爱人平时对孩子的照顾关怀都能看到, *天下的母亲都是一样的, 所以说母爱是伟大的。* 孩子相差一岁半, *你这也太辛苦了。* 你这是辛苦并快乐着
I know that. But, based on the picture you sent to me, the colour of the mandibular second molars of permanent teeth is also sort of weird. Perhaps it's because of the light shadow.
Because I'm a father and I see how my wife takes care of our child each day, *I know mothers' love to their children is great and mothers all around the world have the same love to their children.* **There's one-and-half year age gap between your children, so** *it's a really tough time for you.* **But you must be happy while working hard to take care of them.**

In example 2, through self-disclosure (i.e. "Because I'm a father and I see how my wife takes care of our child each day"), the doctor positions himself

as a parent, which is exactly the same position that the e-patient takes up (see the text in bold). The construction of sameness serves as a pathway to demonstrate the doctor's understanding of the e-patient's current situation that she works hard to take care of her children. It also facilitates further expression of the doctor's empathy, which is carried out through a praising act (in italics) and the identification of the e-patient's situation (Pounds, 2010). The construction of the same role as a parent together with the doctor's manifestation of empathy softens the doctor's expert role and, as a consequence, his expert power.

Example 3

P: [The e-patient provides personal information, such as age and gender.]
班主任 对我进行无数次人格侮辱体罚，家里父亲不理解不和我沟通用殴打的手段让我听他的
The teacher in charge of my class humiliated me and physically punished me many times. At home, my father didn't understand me and didn't communicate with me. He asked me to be obedient by the way of beating me.
[The e-patient continues to describe physical and mental problems and asks whether it is depression.]

D: **妹妹**, *非常能理解你的心情*
Little sister, *I understand your feelings very well.*
[The doctor gives an explanation on the current problems of the e-patient. Then, he provides a diagnosis, gives advice, and recommends a treatment.]

Example 3 is extracted from an OMC case in which the e-patient consults the doctor about her mental health. In this example, the doctor adopts a kinship term – "little sister" – to address the e-patient. This constructs a kinship tie that connects the doctor and the e-patient in an intimate way, which makes the doctor seem more approachable and can generate closeness between the e-patient and the doctor. The employment of kinship terms to address non-kins or strangers or acquaintances is one typical characteristic of the Chinese language to establish friendship or to please someone (Wu, 1990). In addition, the kinship term here, which is followed by the doctor's empathic expression (i.e. "I understand your feelings very well"), may strengthen the effect of the empathic act, as it paves the way for further expressing the doctor's understanding. The kinship address form thus generates an affective affiliation or closeness, which may dim the doctor's expert power.

The softening of doctors' expert power may in turn empower e-patients to challenge doctors' expertise or to speak up for themselves when they have different opinions about their doctors' statements or responses. In other words, this type of power relation may facilitate the exertion of patient power through taking a more proactive role in dealing with their problems in a medical consultation. Besides, as mentioned earlier in this study, previous studies have found that online health communication activities help increase e-patients' medical knowledge and health literacy, which empowers e-patients in terms of coping with their health problems. Such empowerment can be seen in the negotiation of health expertise, which is discussed in the following section.

4.3.　*Negotiating expert power*

As is illustrated by Fage-Butler and Anesa (2016), when it comes to dealing with their health problems in online communication with health professionals, e-patients are positioned as semi-experts by themselves and their doctors. This semi-expert position may trigger the negotiation of expert power. In fact, this study finds that there is a negotiation of expert power between doctors and e-patients, as illustrated with example 4.

Example 4

1 D: 大多数都是正常来月经，个别人出现月经不规则，建议
吃完药后，顺其自然就好
Most women's period will return as usual, and few [experience] irregular period. My suggestion is that after taking the pills let nature take its [course].

2 P: **不用太过于担心？可是有些吃了会出现副作用呕吐啊头晕**
我中午担心到饭吃不下
No need to worry too much? But after taking contraceptive drugs some people experience side effects, such as vomit and dizziness.
I was too worried that I didn't have lunch this noon.

3 D: **大多数人吃完都没啥反应**
我本人吃过几次，啥反应都没有
你太紧张了，现在的紧急避孕药副作用都很小，绝大多数没事的
可能越紧张，越有反应，所以建议放松心态，不要紧张
Most people don't experience any side effects after taking the pills.
I have taken the pills several times, I experienced no side effect.

You are too anxious about it. Nowadays the emergency contraception pills have minimal side effects and most of them are safe.
Perhaps the side effects are caused by nervousness, so I suggest you relax and stop being anxious.

4 P: 就是很害怕吃了之后会没月经来斋乱什么情况都出现，
因为之前刚来广州水土不服病了一个月
The thing is, I fear so much that after taking the pills I may experience irregular menstruation. After all, back then after I came to Guangzhou, I had been sick for one month because the climate did not agree with me.

5 D: *实际上，绝大多数人服药后都没啥反应*，**你要实在担心身体可能不适应**，*就***不吃，安全期同房怀**孕**几率不大**。
Actually, most people don't have any side effects after taking the pills. **Since you are so worried that you may not be well suited to the drug, don't take it then. After all, the chance of getting pregnant is not high, since you were in the safe period.**

6 P: **几率不大可是也有百分之几的会**
来完月经一周是属于安全期吗
Although the chance of getting pregnant is not high, there's still a chance.

Is the first week after the period has finished a safe period?

Example 4 is extracted from an OMC case in which the e-patient consults the doctor regarding whether she needs to take emergency contraceptive pills. In this example, the exchange involved in turns 1 through 3 shows the negotiation of the doctor's expertise. The negotiation is initiated by the e-patient through her expression of doubt about the doctor's reassurance and of disagreement with the doctor's opinion about whether taking emergency contraceptive pills will result in negative side effects (see the text in bold in turn 3). The e-patient's dissent suggests that the e-patient to some degree delegitimises the doctor's expertise, thus initiating the negotiation process of the doctor's expert power. In turn 3, the doctor makes an effort to retain her expert position through justifying her statements by referring to the experience of the majority of women and her own experience (see the text in bold in turn 3). This justification facilitates the negotiation of expert power. Then, from turns 4 to 5, the expert power is negotiated in an implicit way. That is, in turn 4, the e-patient stops dissenting and starts to justify her concern through describing her previous health problem. That said, she does not explicitly express that she accepts the doctor's advice given in turn 1.

This shift from dissension to justification shows that the e-patient does not continue to challenge the doctor's statements presented in turn 3. In response to the e-patient's justification, the doctor makes a compromise in turn 5 by giving up the previous advice (see the text in bold in turn 5). This compromise suggests that the e-patient's justification is, to a larger or lesser extent, legitimised by the doctor, since the doctor adapts to the e-patient's concern and gives up her previous recommendation (i.e. taking emergency contraceptive pills). However, legitimising the e-patient's justification does not mean that the doctor gives up retaining her expert power. This is because in turn 5 before the doctor makes a compromise; she justifies her expertise again by reiterating her statement that "most people don't have any side effects after taking the pills", which has been presented in turn 3. In response to turn 5, although the e-patient does not express disagreement to the reiteration, as she has done in turn 2, the e-patient starts to challenge the doctor's statement – "the chance of getting pregnant is not high" (see the text in bold in turn 6), which makes the negotiation of expert power explicit again. In short, this example illustrates the negotiation of the doctor's expert power mediated through the negotiation of the doctor's expertise.

5.   Concluding discussion

The findings indicate that the power relations between doctors and e-patients in OMC platforms can be dynamic, being constructed and negotiated, rather than fixed within the idea that doctors are always the more powerful participants in medical consultations. The e-commercialised OMC platforms privilege e-patients to exercise reward/coercive power as healthcare consumers, and it also constrains doctors to adapt to the e-commerce mode for medical consultation. In addition, the OMC platforms also empower e-patients to challenge their doctors' expertise, which leads to the negotiation of expert power. Owing to the characteristics of OMC platforms – anonymity, flexible timing, and management between online and offline spaces – e-patients may feel more empowered to initiate the negotiation of expert power in the OMC interaction. By contrast, in face-to-face medical encounters, although most patients want to have some control over medical agendas during a medical consultation, they tend to feel less in control, and few would behaviourally or verbally demand this kind of power (Beisecker, 1990; Yellowlees et al., 2015). Besides, it is the doctors who have the psychological advantage of being in their own office or environment where they have more control over an on-going face-to-face medical consultation (Yellowlees et al., 2015).

In the e-commercialised medical consultation, the asymmetric power structure that has been traditionally acknowledged in clinical communication is challenged. As OMC services are comparable to selling products on social networking sites, the health consumer role of e-patients is foregrounded

by the e-commercialised mode of OMC services. While e-patients can be empowered, doctors can be disempowered. That is, the e-commercialised OMC service privileges e-patients to exercise their right as healthcare consumers; meanwhile, it constrains doctors to adapt to the feedback-surveillance-featured healthcare. The OMC platforms thus have produced new spaces of power and new forms of engagement among their users, like other social media spaces (see KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014). As to the consequences of the disruption of power asymmetry, the positive side is that the seller and buyer mode of healthcare empowers patients and their caregivers, which may remind or encourage the doctors to adopt patient- or relationship-centred healthcare. That said, the commodification of healthcare services should not be at the cost of weakening the professionalism of doctors.

Power construction and negotiation in the OMC platforms are affected by the value put on consumerism, rather than just being influenced by expertise or medical knowledge. This indicates that when it comes to studying online power relationships between doctors and patients/caregivers, power relations can be extended beyond institutional power, linking to the power of consumerism. In other words, in the e-commercialised medical consultation, the asymmetric power structure is challenged. Power construction and negotiation are likely more dependent on how much value is put on consumerism, and the traditional power relationship proposed based on studies that are situated in face-to-face medical encounters needs to be deconstructed. In short, when it comes to power relations in online healthcare communication, factors such as the value of consumerism need to be considered, rather than just focusing on the impact of medical knowledge differences and the institutional role of doctors and patients in medical consultation.

Despite the contribution of identifying power relations in the OMC context, this study is limited by a set of contextual factors pertaining to OMC activities. That is, the construction and negotiation of power may also depend on, for example, if and how much the patients may pay for the service and/or what benefit do the doctors get from the interaction. In addition, power is also about how the medical business is run: if it is privately owned, then power automatically may be more towards the patients who have become customers. But if it is publicly owned, then there is perhaps less power on the side of the patient and doctors can exercise more power. Future research can focus on such a comparison.

Notes

1. The "Internet Plus" policy encourages the application of the Internet and other information technology in conventional industries, fostering new industries and business development.
2. This example was previously published in my paper – Zhang (2021b).

References

Analysys. (2018). 中国互联网医疗年度综合分析2018 [2018 China internet medicine annual report]. www.analysys.cn/

Anesa, P., & Fage-Butler, A. (2015). Popularizing biomedical information on an online health forum. *Ibérica, Revista de la Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos*, (29), 105–128.

Baxter, J. (2016). Positioning language and identity: Poststructuralist perspectives. In *The Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 60–75). Abingdon: Routledge.

Beckman, H. B., & Frankel, R. M. (1984). The effect of physician behavior on the collection of data. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *101*(5), 692–696.

Beisecker, A. E. (1990). Patient power in doctor-patient communication: What do we know? *Health Communication*, *2*(2), 105–122.

Boix, B., & Lizarza, I. (2012). *The importance of consumerism in business schools: A comparative study of Spain and Sweden* [Master thesis, Umeå School of Business and Economics].

Byrne, P. S., & Long, B. E. (1976). *Doctors talking to patients: A study of the verbal behaviours of doctors in the consultation*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

Chen, H. Q., & Li, H. Z. (2011). 言语行为视阈下医患会话权势不对等关系探析 [Analysis of power asymmetry in doctor-patient conversation from a perspective of speech act theory]. *Journal of Ocean University of China (Social Sciences Edition)*, *4*, 89–94.

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1999). Positioning and personhood. In R. Harré & L. Van Langenhove (Eds), *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action* (pp. 32–52). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dedding, C., Van Doorn, R., Winkler, L., & Reis, R. (2011). How will e-health affect patient participation in the clinic? A review of e-health studies and the current evidence for changes in the relationship between medical professionals and patients. *Social Science & Medicine*, *72*(1), 49–53.

Fage-Butler, A., & Anesa, P. (2016). Discursive construction and negotiation of laity on an online health forum. *Pragmatics and Society*, *7*(2), 196–216.

Fox, N. J., Ward, K. J., & O'Rourke, A. J. (2005). The "expert patient": Empowerment or medical dominance? The case of weight loss, pharmaceutical drugs and the internet. *Social Science & Medicine*, *60*(6), 1299–1309.

French, J. R., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. P. Cartwright & A. Arbor (Eds.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150–167). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.

Guseva, A. (2014). Health care, consumerism in. In W. Cockerham, R. Dingwall, & S. R. Quah (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of health, illness, behavior, and society* (pp. 781–784). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hall, B. J., Xiong, P., Chang, K., Yin, M., & Sui, X. R. (2018). Prevalence of medical workplace violence and the shortage of secondary and tertiary interventions among healthcare workers in China. *Journal of Epidemiology Community Health*, *72*(6), 516–518.

Henderson, S., & Petersen, A. R. (2002). *Consuming health: The commodification of health care*. New York: Routledge.

Heritage, J., & Greatbatch, D. (1991). On the institutional character of institutional talk: The case of news interview interaction. In D. Boden & D. H. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Talk and social structure: Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis* (pp. 93–137). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Jones, R. J., Chik, A., & Hafner, C. H. (2015). *Discourse analysis and digital practices*. Abingdon: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2009). The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers during the Balkan conflict (1999) and the British general election (2005). *Discourse & Society*, *20*(4), 477–498.

KhosraviNik, M. (2014). Critical discourse analysis, power and new media discourse. In Y. Kalyango & M. Kopytowska (Eds.), *Why discourse matters: Negotiating identity in the mediatized world* (pp. 287–306). New York: Peter Lang.

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 583–596). Oxon: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M., & Unger, J. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media: Power, resistance and critique in changing media ecologies. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (pp. 206–233). London: Sage Publications.

KhosraviNik, M., & Zia, M. (2014). Persian nationalism, identity and anti-Arab sentiments in Iranian Facebook discourses: Critical discourse analysis and social media communication. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *13*(4), 755–780.

Locher, M. A. (2006). *Advice online: Advice-giving in an American Internet health column* (Vol. 149). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.

Locher, M. A. (2010). Health Internet sites: A linguistic perspective on health advice columns. *Social Semiotics*, *20*(1), 43–59.

Locher, M. A., & Hoffman, S. (2006). The emergence of the identity of a fictional expert advice-giver in an American Internet advice column. *Text & Talk*, *26*(1), 69–106.

Lynch, M., & Bogen, D. (1994). Harvey Sacks's primitive natural science. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *11*(4), 65–104.

Mao, Y., & Zhao, X. (2019a). By the mitigation one knows the doctor: Mitigation strategies by Chinese doctors in online medical consultation. *Health Communication*, 1–8.

Mao, Y., & Zhao, X. (2019b). I am a doctor, and here is my proof: Chinese doctors' identity constructed on the online medical consultation websites. *Health Communication*, *34*(13), 1645–1652.

Mazanderani, F., O'Neill, B., & Powell, J. (2013). "People power" or "pester power"? YouTube as a forum for the generation of evidence and patient advocacy. *Patient Education and Counseling*, *93*(3), 420–425.

Milcent, C. (2018). *Healthcare reform in China: From violence to digital healthcare*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Munro, R. (2010). Identity: Culture and technology. In M. Wetherell & C. T. Mohanty (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of identities* (pp. 201–216). London: Sage Publications.

National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China. (2017). *The average outpatient consultation fee was 245.5 yuan in the year 2016*. www.nhc.gov.cn/

Niu, L., Luo, Y. H., & Gao, X. C. (2014). The study of question design of doctors of history-taking stage in medicine. *Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies*, *3*, 105–112.

Perrault, E. K., & Smreker, K. C. (2013). What can we learn from physicians' online biographies to help in choosing a doctor? Not much: A content analysis of primary care physician biographies. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare*, *6*(2), 122–127.

Pounds, G. (2010). Empathy as "appraisal": A new language-based approach to the exploration of clinical empathy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics & Professional Practice*, 7(2), 139–162.

Pounds, G. (2018). Patient-centred communication in Ask-the-Expert healthcare websites. *Applied Linguistics*, *39*(2), 117–134.

Pounds, G., & Pablos-Ortega, D. (2015). Patient-centred communication in British, Italian and Spanish Ask-the-Expert healthcare websites. *Communication and Medicine*, *12*(2–3), 225–241.

Tonkens, E., Bröer, C., Van Sambeek, N., & Van Hassel, D. (2013). Pretenders and performers: Professional responses to the commodification of health care. *Social Theory & Health*, *11*(4), 368–387.

Wu, Q., Zhao, L., & Ye, X. C. (2016). Shortage of healthcare professionals in China. *British Medical Journal*, *22*, 1–2.

Wu, Y. (1990). The usages of kinship address forms amongst non-kin in mandarin Chinese: The extension of family solidarity. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, *10*(1), 61–88.

Xie, X., Zhou, W., Lin, L., Fan, S., Lin, F., Wang, L., . . . Chen, Y. (2017). Internet hospitals in China: Cross-sectional survey. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, *19*, e239. DOI: 10.2196/jmir.7854

Yellowlees, P., Richard Chan, S., & Burke Parish, M. (2015). The hybrid doctor-patient relationship in the age of technology: Telepsychiatry consultations and the use of virtual space. *International Review of Psychiatry*, *27*(6), 476–489.

Zhang, Y. (2021a). How doctors do things with empathy in online medical consultations in China: A discourse-analytic approach. *Health Communication*, *36*(7), 816–825.

Zhang, Y. (2021b). Dynamic power relations in online medical consultation in China: Disrupting the traditional roles through discursive positioning. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, *14*(4), 369–385.

Zhang, Y. (Forthcoming). Discursive positioning of doctors and e-patients in online medical consultations in China: An orientation toward affective affiliation. *Pragmatics and Society*.

Zhao, X., & Mao, Y. (2019). Trust me, I am a doctor: Discourse of trustworthiness by Chinese doctors in online medical consultation. *Health Communication*, 1–9.

11 Legitimising change

Digital journalism discourse and social media communication

Philippa Smith and Helen Sissons

1. Introduction

The disruption to journalism in response to evolving communication technologies is evidenced throughout history from the telegraph, typewriter, printing press, and camera, to the telephone, fax, and radio, and to the introduction of the television and satellite broadcasting platforms. Each development accelerated the production and dissemination of news as demonstrated by Bell's (1996) comparison of three historical expeditions to the South Pole stretching across nine decades. News of the demise of British explorer Captain Robert Scott and his team in 1912 took a year to break, finally being relayed by telegraph from New Zealand to London; Sir Edmund Hillary's arrival at the South Pole in 1958 was announced within hours thanks to radio, while son Peter Hillary gave live daily reports to the media via satellite phone as his team trekked their way to the South Pole in 1999. The Internet, Smith and Bell (2008) signalled over a decade ago, would be the next stage of technological advancement that warranted careful observation when it came to changes in news flow, accessibility to wider publics and its impact on media discourse.

In this chapter, we explore how Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) as a framework can be applied to fully understand changes to journalism in the age of digital technologies. To date, SM-CDS has focused on topics such as misogyny, national identity, social activism, and terrorism in social media contexts. But given the interdisciplinarity of Critical Discourse Studies (Unger, 2016), we believe SM-CDS offers opportunities for analysis of the complexity of workplace practices such as digital journalism – especially the techno-discursive features so inherent in newsmaking today. We position our research using the theoretical lens of journalism as a "field" (Bourdieu, 2005), on the understanding that the profession, immersed as it is in the era of Web 2.0, is constrained and bounded by expectations of what it means to be a digital journalist (Eldridge, 2018) in a highly pressurised environment. The question underpinning our inquiry

is: How are digital technologies legitimised as part of journalists' work-place practices?

To answer this question, first, we outline the underlying principles of an SM-CDS approach to digital journalism, noting the need to "account for *discursive content* as well as *digital practices*" (KhosraviNik & Amer, 2020, p. 133). We then present a case study based on more than 300 hours of video ethnographic data gathered from shadowing New Zealand journalists in the newsroom and in the field and recording their interactions both offline and online (Sissons, 2016, 2020). Our point of difference compared with more recent SM-CDS research is that our discursive analysis focuses on data gathered in two interactive and inter-related spaces: 1) the physical space of the newsroom and 2) the digital discourse of journalists located "within" their digital communication texts (i.e. digital content such as emails, messaging, and collaborative story production on social media platforms). After laying out the complexity of the news landscape in response to the digital age and its participatory affordances (Peters & Broersma, 2013), we then present our findings from an analysis of discourse in the two datasets concerning legitimation of the adoption of digital technologies. We apply van Leeuwen's (2007) four legitimation strategies (see Section 5) in an effort to understand the impact of technological advances that have intensified journalistic practice, placing further pressure on the acceleration of news production and dissemination (Atkinson, 2018). We conclude that taking an SM-CDS approach responds effectively to calls for greater flexibility in the study of journalism in the digital age (Raetzsch, 2017), enabling us to highlight the epistemological and technical challenges that arise in the investigation of the "field" of journalism (Bourdieu, 2005), as it constantly changes and adapts to technological and institutional pressures.

2.   Disrupting journalism practice

The integration of digital tools into journalistic practice has become a tour de force for news organisations struggling to maintain a competitive edge. Daily news deadlines are no longer static, and media platforms converge with broadcasters publishing online text-based news stories and print media incorporating videos on their websites (Neilson, 2021; Paterson et al., 2015). Today's journalists engage with a range of technologies, whether social network platforms such as Facebook or microblogging sites such as Twitter, to source information, engage with the public, and promote their own journalistic identity (Bruns, 2018). But social media communication (SMC as per KhosraviNik, 2020) has also become commonplace in newsroom communication on private or closed networks, with online collaborative software, such as Slack, being used to co-ordinate and construct stories

in a virtual newsroom. The adaptation of journalism routines to include SMC as well as email and a range of apps (e.g. Google Maps, Google Docs, Trello) has greatly affected editorial daily practices, requiring a reassertion of the boundaries of journalism through the normalisation and inclusion of non-traditional newswork into traditional journalism (Eldridge, 2018).

Such has been the challenge for scholars trying to follow the disruption to journalism practice that in 2013 the journal *Digital Journalism* was established as a forum for discussion around the implication of new technologies. Some scholars have criticised research into the effect of technology on journalism, saying it is too interested in new tools and trends and doesn't take account of broader journalistic practices and routines (Carlson & Lewis, 2019). Bruns (2018, p. 3) described this approach as taking a "very pointillistic" perspective, as much of it focussed on a particular innovation. Recent examples have examined topics such as journalists' use of WhatsApp in two newsrooms (Dodds, 2019); algorithms and automated reports in sports journalism (Galily, 2018); Slack as a collaboration tool for journalists (Bunce et al., 2018); the use and effect of analytics in newsrooms (Petre, 2018); and audience comment sections (Karlsson et al., 2015; Santana, 2013; Sissons & Smith, 2017). In a review of news production scholarship, Ryfe (2018, p. 255) found only 6 out of 80 articles used ethnographic observation to look at "journalists doing journalism". This is concerning at a time of significant change at the "field level" of journalism practice where the "taken-for-grantedness" (Ryfe, 2018, p. 227) of much that has gone before is challenged.

The study of language use in journalism is established in sociolinguistics and discourse studies (Bednarek & Capel, 2012; Bell, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Matheson, 2005; Richardson, 2007); however, a focus on digital journalism lags behind. Steensen and Westlund's (2020) examination of abstracts of articles published in *Digital Journalism* between 2013 and 2019 found that only 6% approached the study from a language perspective. Clearly, an approach that bridges the gap between journalism practice and discourse is warranted. Our research, which takes an SM-CDS approach, answers both the call for a broader ethnographic lens and an up-to-date examination of language in journalism practice to provide insights into the "societal role and relevance of journalism" as it exists today (Broersma & Peters, 2016, p. 4).

3. SM-CDS for journalism studies

Traditional "news" formats have long been a focus of CDS researchers interested in discourses of prejudice and discrimination (e.g. van Dijk, 1988; Fairclough, 1995, 2001). However, while Unger et al. (2016, p. 281) refer to the "inherent non-linearity of text production and consumption

processes" when it comes to the move from mass communication to SMC, our ambition is to show how the concept of non-linearity can be mapped specifically onto news organisations, which traditionally were regarded as monolithic and closed in terms of textual production. The complexity of today's online news production, which incorporates SMC between editorial staff as well as with their sources, whether elite or non-elite groups or individuals, demands new research approaches that can benefit from a Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) approach.

In acknowledging the digital disruption to journalism practice, SM-CDS, we believe, provides opportunities to widen the scope of journalism studies to offer a critical analysis of the "multilayered and dynamic networks of communication" in which news production is now nestled (Waisbord, 2017, p. 207). The workings of SM-CDS bring together the principles of CDS (e.g. a critical focus on ideology and power) and SMC, in particular the horizontal and vertical contexts that are crucial to research, as detailed in the introduction to this volume. Taking account of the "'macro' issues of institutional context and media ecologies, and the 'micro' dynamics of communicative affordances", we can answer CDS questions such as "who is communicating with whom, under what conditions, how and to what end?" (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 231). Thus, it appears that SM-CDS is an ideal fit when it comes to the study of news production and social media. This approach allows us to combine discursive analysis of journalists, their professional practice and the hierarchical relationships within newsrooms, along with the wider societal attitudes and expectations of journalism's role to provide fast and accurate information at a time when disinformation is fast colonising the participatory web.

Journalism studies is an extensive field of research covering the news stories themselves, the actions and interactions of the journalists who compile them, the news organisations that publish and own them and the audience that consumes them. Critical discourse analysis has traditionally captured these processes for discussion and analysed news stories through a three-dimensional framework of text (content), discourse practice (production, distribution and consumption) and socio-cultural practice (ideologically shaped interpretations) (see Fairclough, 1995). However, a challenge for journalism studies is to "widen the scope of theoretical perspective and approaches" (Steensen & Ahva, 2015, p. 13) and to respond to the "radically pluralised . . . social media and other online platforms" (Raetzsch, 2017, p. 1277). To date we are not aware of any journalism research that has positioned itself under an SM-CDS umbrella. Therefore, our case study explores new territory as we seek to gain insights into journalism practice. We consider the techno-discursive architecture of newsmaking and the technological affordances available to journalists while maintaining discourse (language in use) as central to our analysis of their responses to change.

KhosraviNik and Amer (2020, p. 133) note that in SM-CDS "analysis should go beyond mere description of practices and get into the dynamic of sense-making in the relevant discourse community", and they highlight the need for ethnographic observation of digital texts. However, our ethnographic work, as indicated earlier, includes not only analysis of journalists' discourse in the newsroom and in their digital content but also in the observation of their use of digital communication tools. Our observations show journalism practice requires fluidity and movement between platforms, sometimes communicating one-to-one or one-to-few on private networks or in closed groups on social networks, or many-to-many on organisational websites or social networks. This broadening of the research of online interactions to account for their location in "material, behavioural contexts" reinforces the suggestion of scholars that the online and offline should no longer be regarded as separate worlds, but rather that the embedding of online practices and language interactions in "everyday lives" enables incorporation of an "insider's view" (Page et al., 2014, p. 108).

In exploring an SM-CDS approach to journalism, we demonstrate how such research can lead to greater transparency of the newsmaking processes and associated discourses in the "immediate and wider context levels" of the trends and themes identified. This includes the "social media spaces, the network and connectivity afforded by the digital technology, the application of the new affordances, the functionality of the platform(s) etc." (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018, p. 62).

4.   The case and context of online journalism in New Zealand

The field of journalism is described by Bourdieu (2005, p. 36) as similar to the fields of politics and social sciences, serving "to impose the legitimate vision of the social world". This is where journalists are able, through their reporting of the news and their access to audiences, to present a picture of events that becomes the accepted version. Bourdieu (2005, p. 42) also argued that journalists, as "visible agents" of the field, are subject to the structures and mechanisms that operate it. Journalism is constrained by the economics of news organisations and (if they are not state-funded) are reliant on paywalls, subscriptions, and/or advertising to ensure their continuance. Its members work within a system, a set of routines (discourse practice), when it comes to news production (e.g. sourcing, writing). With field theory underpinning our research, we are concerned with how the journalistic field has been affected by its turn towards digital communication technologies in news production.

The data in our case study derive from a larger project, where one of the authors conducted observational fieldwork over seven months at three

national news organisations in New Zealand in 2017. The fieldwork comprised filming and interviewing journalists in their daily news production practices as they sourced information, wrote stories, attended meetings, and interacted with colleagues. Our case study involves a close examination of journalists' 'talk' both offline and online involving these production technologies. We look specifically to identify discourses that legitimise or de-legitimise their use, as well as efforts from both management and peers to normalise them within the traditional journalistic routines that sit within the structures and mechanisms of mainstream news organisations.

To provide context for the digital disruption of New Zealand's news industry, it is not only important to include historical information that indicates the slow uptake of digital technologies but also the consequences. The first online newspaper site was, unsurprisingly, *InfoTech Weekly*, launched in 1995 by then Prime Minister Jim Bolger (Macmanus, 2020). It took another three years before the first mainstream news organisation, *The New Zealand Herald*, which first published in print in 1863, launched online with the domain name nzherald.co.nz. A second major newspaper publisher, *Stuff* (stuff.co.nz), and state-owned broadcaster *Television New Zealand* (tvnz.co.nz) launched a couple of years later when around half of New Zealanders had access to the Internet.

In the last decade, both *Stuff* and *NZME* (New Zealand Media and Entertainment), the current owner of *The New Zealand Herald*, have moved to digital-first publishing, which means prioritising publishing to the website and social media ahead of the hardcopy newspaper. This transition to online delivery of news has led to a reduction in advertising revenue for news organisations generally. In fact, the move towards the integration of digital tools into journalists' routines, along with the expectation that each journalist works across several platforms, and the loss of advertising revenue has resulted in mass redundancies in newsrooms worldwide. Some changes, such as the introduction of content management systems, have also standardised workflows and tightened management control (Neilson, 2021). In New Zealand, the number of journalists overall has more than halved during this time, declining from an estimated 4,000 in 2006 (Hollings et al., 2007) to just over 1,600 in 2018 (careers.govt.nz). Those remaining journalists are expected to create more content more quickly. In our observations, many are filing multiple stories a day, in line with international figures that journalists complete on average three stories a day, rising to as many as ten (Brey, 2018; Shivani-Verma, 2021). This equates to around three times as many stories as those who worked in the same newsrooms in the 1990s (Starkman, 2010; Waldman, 2011). The situation further supports the suggestion that technology is not only a contributor to the intensification of workplace practices (Atkinson 2018, Neilson, 2021) but also that these changes are legitimised by news organisations. This and

other moves have prompted media scholars to accuse New Zealand's news organisations of responding to the threat from technological change with a strategy of "redundancies, restructuring and expectations that journalists will take on an ever-expanding role" (Neilson, 2018, p. 539; Ashwell, 2016; Hope, 2017).

5. Design and approach

While SM-CDS research has been concerned mostly with ethnographic observation of digital texts – particularly those that are publicly accessible – in our case we were privy to what happens behind the scenes in newsrooms i.e. the details of production processes. We drew on relevant data from more than 300 hours of video data capturing newsroom conversations and recording relevant digital content, such as staff work emails, messaging on newsroom apps and social media platforms (e.g. Trello and Facebook) and the specific electronic "channels" of communication on the collaborative social media platform Slack. Frequently, the online and offline communication worked in tandem, i.e. staff in the newsroom conversed across the desks at the same time as corresponding within Slack to staff in the same room, in regional offices, and/or out in the field (that is, on location reporting a story). The collected data, including transcriptions of videoed interactions (both online and offline), were archived for closer reading and discourse analysis with a focus on legitimation strategies of journalists' SMC use.

When it came to the analysis of digital discourse practice and content, our focus therefore was exclusively on what Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy perspective called the "backstage" (p. 114), which posited that people are actors who use their performances to convey an impression to others. In the dramaturgy framework, the front region is where performances are given, while the back region is equivalent to backstage, where performers, lacking an audience, can behave informally and where some of the illusions and impressions of the performance can be openly contradicted. For example, during a recorded meeting a news editor explained that when posting breaking news, there was not always time to verify it at first instance, "those days of actually ringing fire and confirming with them . . . sadly seems to have gone out the door. If someone's Tweeted it, it's a fact".

Our interest, for the purposes of this chapter, was to identify the ways in which the news organisations' implementation of digital technological practices, and in particular SMC, was legitimised – either explicitly or more obliquely (van Leeuwen, 2007) – by editorial staff and the institution. That is, we aimed to show the link between discourse and the social practice of SMC use. With legitimation being "the process by which speakers accredit or license a type of social behaviour" (Reyes, 2011, p. 782), in this

case SMC use, we follow van Leeuwen's (2007, p. 93) view that expression of legitimation answers the question "Why" – "Why should we do this?" and "Why should we do this in this way?" We adopted van Leeuwen's four major categories of legitimation for our analysis: authorisation (in our case institutional authority), moral evaluation (reference to value systems as to the role of journalists), rationalisation (the public good of journalism), and mythopoesis (the use of narratives whereby legitimate actions are rewarded).

The findings that follow are divided into two parts – the first being our ethnographic observation of digital and SMC practices in the newsroom, and the second being our analysis of the discourse we encountered in both the naturally occurring talk of editorial staff uttered in offline contexts of the newsroom and in the digital content we collected from their online interactions. This dual format assists in showing the "double contextualisation thesis" of SM-CDS when it comes to the analysis of "meaning in context" (KhosraviNik & Amer, 2020, p. 130).

6. Analysis

6.1. *Digital practice*

Our fieldwork showed that the technological context in which journalists' digital practice took place reflected a legitimation of authorisation invoked by the media institutions. But rather than authorisation being explicit in terms of journalists being "told" directly what to do or how to act, the institutionalised arrangements in the structuring of the workplace set the parameters of the journalism field and the ways in which news stories needed to be digitally produced. Each of the newsrooms, for example, was laid out in large, open plan spaces, where editorial staff sat at groupings of desks organised by beat (e.g. sport, business) or platform (e.g. digital, radio). Each journalist had a computer with dual monitors enabling easier viewing and management of multiple apps and digital texts when producing stories. Landline phones still featured on desks alongside staff mobile phones and iPads. Television screens positioned on walls around the newsroom enabled monitoring of other competing news stations, both local and international, for tracking stories or breaking news. Two of the three newsrooms had implemented "digital first" routines whereby news stories appeared first online before publication in their more traditional formats of hardcopy print or broadcast. The third newsroom had a website and a digital desk, but still used its legacy platform for the breaking of stories its journalists had exclusive rights to.

Incorporation of web and social media news production was signalled in two of the three newsrooms, with physical spaces being designated for

those journalists who worked at what was known as the "digital desk". These journalists produced online stories, compiled material sent in by colleagues out in the field to put online, and looked after the organisation's social media channels. These channels included Facebook, which welcomed readers' responses to its news articles, images and videos in the form of user comments, likes/dislikes, and the sharing of stories. In contrast, in the third newsroom it was taken for granted that *all* journalists produced stories digitally for the organisation's website. One group of journalists, however, sat at a "social media desk" where they managed the social media channels.

In all three newsrooms, designated staff titles acted as nomination strategies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016), referring to editorial staff in ways that represented them as having a digital or social media role and constructing them with a certain technological expertise. This was accomplished through the simple addition of adjectives to the more traditional roles of producer/journalist. In two newsrooms, titles such as "digital producer", "digital journalist", or "online journalist" signalled the person's role. A similar set of titles existed for journalists focussed on social media in all three newsrooms – "social media editor" and "social media journalist". These titles also acted as a predication strategy because they attributed characteristics of the social actors (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) signalling their digital expertise. So, while the labelling mirrored traditional editorial roles, the addition of "digital" or "social" also signalled differences in skills.

Regardless of these specified roles, our observations confirmed that news organisations required all journalists in the newsrooms to have digital skills incorporating knowledge of various devices and platforms in the production of news stories. Of note was the online collaborative software known as Slack, which was most frequently referenced by journalists when talking about news gathering. It has also been found to be a collaboration software of choice in news organisations internationally (Bunce et al., 2018; Hazard Owen, 2015). Staff in two of the three newsrooms used Slack to communicate with their colleagues no matter where they were physically – inside or outside the newsroom. Slack operated as a closed social media network and one-to-one instant messenger combined. News organisations set up channels to organise workflow with self-explanatory names such as #breaking, #homepage-pitches, #livenews, and even #technical-issues. Editorial staff used the appropriate channel to update or discuss stories, including uploading sound files, images, or video from the field. Often, a staff member would tag a particular person they wished to alert to a post.

To illustrate the dominance of communications technologies in the newsroom, Figure 11.1 shows a screenshot from our video data of a journalist where, in producing one story, she accessed at least ten forms of technology, in addition to the traditional journalist tools of pen, paper, and landline phone, without leaving her desk.

Figure 11.1 Journalist at her desk using multiple forms of SMC

The journalist is required to work simultaneously offline (talking face-to-face and on the phone) and online through multiple apps (e.g. Slack collaborative software for messaging and writing stories, Google Maps to locate and verify locations for stories, Google Docs for personal notes and sharing of information with colleagues, online newsroom contacts list), social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), and email. Once the story is completed, she puts it into the proprietorial content management system (CMS), where stories are filed within a specific template for sub-editing and to ease uploading of a story to the website or (in broadcast news) where they are stored and organised into a bulletin. Other digital devices include her mobile phone, and recording and editing technology can be seen in front of her, including microphones and headphones. This example enables us to see the convergence of journalists' traditional offline routines with newer digital practices, adding to the complexity of news production in a competitive environment.

The digital practices in the field of journalism, briefly presented here, point to an underlying discourse of news organisations that legitimises through oblique authorisation that SMC is a requirement of staff, even though the resulting acceleration and intensification of news production bring their own issues. The evidence of the myriad devices, apps, and platforms also hint at institutional legitimation of SMC in terms of rationalisation in that the tradition of journalism, and its goal of providing news for public consumption in a fast and efficient manner, must be upheld. Consideration, however, is required of the impact that time compression

has, not just on the "legitimate vision" of events produced within the journalistic field (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36) given the limited time available for verification, but also on the journalists themselves and the pressures they are under. This SM-CDS observation phase presenting the digital practices of journalists provides the "backdrop" (KhosraviNik & Amer, p. 129) for the texts of the discourse community of journalists that we analysed to gain a greater understanding of the impact of SMC and how it is legitimised as part of journalistic practice, which we turn to next.

6.2.   *Textual analysis and discourse of legitimation of SMC*

In this section, our analysis focuses on identifying strategies of legitimation in the incorporation of SMC within journalistic practice, as evidenced in the backstage performances of editorial staff. The examples we present here from their spoken interactions and digital content are selected using critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954; Keatinge, 2002). Flanagan identified an "incident" as "any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act" (1954, p. 327). Each incident chosen for discursive analysis conformed to three criteria: it provided an interesting aspect of journalistic practice involving the use of social media; this aspect of practice was seen routinely in the data; and the entire incident was captured to ensure a full understanding of the circumstances.

6.2.1.   *Legitimising SMC in workplace interactions*

Despite the intensification of workplace practice observed, there were a number of editorial staff who demonstrated moral evaluation when it came to legitimation of the technologies in terms of the value they brought to journalism. This aligns with van Leeuwen's (2007, p. 109) comment that the "concept of legitimation can link, on the one hand, social practices, and on the other hand, discourses of value" and is also evidenced in this quote from a social media editor.

> Yeah, a lot of tabs open. Obviously, our home page [front page of the news website] is the main thing, followed by our Facebook page. I also do Instagram and Twitter, but Facebook is kinda the bread and butter, so that's always first priority.

The desktop and news dissemination workflow is described numerically by the editor in terms of the multiple "tabs" (i.e. windows), he has on his computer screen. Aside from the home page, he lists the various social media platforms in hierarchical order, evaluating which is most useful for

engaging with readers and positioning the organisation's Facebook page at the top, labelling it as a "priority". Interestingly, he uses the transitive verb of "doing" the platforms, thereby assigning himself (and other journalists indirectly) the task of performing actions simultaneously. Further to this, the "bread and butter" metaphor, inferring livelihood or a "job or activity that provides you with the money you need to live" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022), suggests the moral value of social media practice is not only in its aiding the survival of his organisation but also the survival of journalists within that organisation. This is not surprising given that social media is where around half of people get their news (Shearer, 2021) and serves to address van Leeuwen's question "Why we should do it?"

In another example, moral evaluation as a category of legitimation is hinted at through the adjective "helpful" to describe the collaborative software Slack:

> [I]t's really helpful for the whole newsroom. People post stuff in there when they have a news tip, or they're at court, that's where they post their stories, or post audio if they're sending back a voicer or anything like that.

While van Leeuwen (2007, p. 97) suggests adjectives such as "useful" (like helpful) may only "trigger a moral concept", the reporter here continues his evaluation by legitimising Slack through rationalisation. He explains the versatility of the platform in terms of allowing all editorial staff to share and access information no matter where they are. The sense that it is 'helpful' for everyone reinforces the idea that anything that enables the production of news, in sourcing stories or sending audio, for example, from outside the newsroom, is an advantage.

Equally, the reporter in the next example legitimises the use of Slack to the researcher videoing his actions by referring to the proper noun trademark form of the software as his platform of choice for sharing his story with the others within his news organisation.

> I'll immediately send this back through Slack, that means that Radio can have it for their next bulletin, Digital can have it for the next bulletin, and I actually – it doesn't matter when I have it 'cos I'm aiming for six o'clock [television news bulletin].

The reporter invokes the category of rationalisation, suggesting the use of Slack to be a convenient and efficient process when it comes to collaboration. In fact, collaboration between journalists in the digital age is more common than in the newsrooms of the past because of the affordances of the new technology compared to the limitations of landline phones or office conversations (Bunce et al., 2018).

Although our observations indicated that news organisations expect journalists to be digitally literate, not all appeared confident in using digital communications, with this journalist stating the negative impact on many of his colleagues of having to deal with so many technologies and thereby delegitimising their use:

> It's a lot of pressure. . . . I truly believe out of all the media organisations in New Zealand right now that we [name of organisation] [have] it the hardest because we've got the most platforms to file for. So we've got digital, radio and television.

The journalist's moral evaluation hinted at through words such as "pressure" criticises the effects of the intensification of work that digital communication and SMC have brought to journalistic practice, especially in his converged newsroom. His use of the adjective "hardest", particularly in terms of the number of news platforms his news organisation requires him and his colleagues (identified through the collective pronoun 'we') to use, downgrades the value of the technologies in terms of the pressure they experience. It also hints at a negative evaluation of his employer, suggesting that other organisations offer less demanding conditions.

We found that news organisations were aware of similar discourses of resistance to using SMC, and we observed two of the three organisations offering training opportunities to overcome this. In the following example, a senior reporter explains to attendees at a workshop how she integrates social media into her traditional news production routines. Her explanation points to the affordances of social media in terms of information gathering and time saving:

> One of the things that I do – apart from sort of old fashioned journalism stuff – is that I am keyed into so many different social media: websites, Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, because . . . I've noticed . . . a lot of the authorities, agencies, lobby groups, just any newsmaker, are actually putting out their message first on social. And so I'm not waiting for the press releases.

The advantages for journalists to be able to access multiple social media sites to obtain information straight from sources is presented as a key argument by this senior reporter, whose rationalisation legitimises this practice by presenting her own experience through mythopoesis. That is, she is conveying through her personal narrative how her legitimate actions of social media use are rewarded (van Leeuwen, 2007). She acknowledges that traditional "old fashioned" journalistic practices are still valued, hinting that not everything has changed and the fundamentals of newsmaking

still apply. However, as a person delegated by her news organisation to speak at this workshop, she is also able to legitimate through authorisation (speaking on behalf of the institution) the many benefits of social media. Arguing that the multiple social media tools she lists help speed the process in accessing many sources at once reinforces the important 'time' factor that journalists encounter every day ("I'm not waiting") as they battle to get information ahead of their competitors. Old-style information gathering, with journalists having to wait for official statements or media releases to be issued before they could write a story, could now be bypassed through social media and websites, which this reporter highlights as the go-to sources that newsmakers also seem to be prioritising. As a role model and representative of the news organisation, this senior reporter's legitimation of social media use through a combination of authorisation, rationalisation and mythopoesis infers that if she is no longer wasting time waiting for "press releases", then neither should other journalists.

A little later, this same reporter reiterated the necessity of speed to beat competitors in breaking news by stating: "we want to be in first, thank you". She legitimises the value of learning the new tools through rationalisation of the goals of journalism, whereby upgrading journalistic skills will lead to more efficient and more competitive reporting. Her final "thank you" appears to indicate an obligation or expectation of her fellow journalists (Seargeant, 2018) in achieving this, legitimised obliquely through the institutional authority she carries. Such an inference differs from the more commonplace use of *thank you* as gratitude.

6.2.2.   *Legitimising SMC in digital discourse*

The dynamics between journalists in their workplace-related digital content provide insights into their legitimation of SMC in their everyday practices. While our data included emails and other texts such as Google Docs, here we centre our discussion, because of space limitations, on the most frequently used form of SMC – the online collaborative platform Slack. This includes data of both private messaging and open channels on Slack, the former being where editorial staff could communicate through personal, private channels and the latter being the open channels that all staff could access, such as #breaking news.

A notable observation was the different ways that journalists reworked the proper noun 'Slack' in their interactions, going beyond its origins as a trademark. As shown in an earlier example, Slack was frequently used as a material verb indicating a communicative action: "Slacking you in the morning"; "he's just Slacking some stuff back"; "I've just Slacked you". This normalisation of variations on "Slack" in journalists' discourse legitimised the use of the technology in terms of the categories of moral

evaluation and rationalisation in a more implicit way. That is, "Slacking" and "have Slacked" aided journalists in achieving the objectives of journalistic practice, namely, to gather and process news stories. Their familiarity with Slack in the process led to its informal use in their discourse.

The benefits of Slack were also realised through the legitimation categories of rationalisation, mythopoesis, and moral evaluation. A political reporter uses the #politics channel on Slack to call the newsroom to action, even using an exclamation mark for emphasis. He urgently requests that the video news story he's been working on be put "up", which means uploaded, to the organisation's website. His purpose – his rationalisation – is that he would "hate for them [a competitor] to get it up before us". He also draws on mythopoesis and moral evaluation by sketching a cautionary tale that if the newsroom doesn't act, doesn't conform to the newsroom practice of publishing fast and first, "we" will lose out to a competitor.

The story the reporter is referring to involved the then new Labour Party leader, Jacinda Ardern, unveiling the party's policies (if elected) to build a light rail link between the centre of Auckland and the airport.

> Hey @xxxxx Can we get the full airport video up! [the competitor] was there too and I would hate for them to get it up before us. Especially because they don't have a LiveU and actually have to drive back to the office and ingest it.

The legitimation of Slack through this narrative is evident not only in the reporter's ability, while out on location, to use Slack to contact the newsroom with this urgent message but also the informality of his language, as he excitedly urges his story go online as soon as possible. This use of Slack will, he hopes, result in the reward of putting himself and his organisation at a significant advantage over a competitor without a live unit on site. He uses an exclaimer "Hey" and the @ notification symbol to alert a specific colleague in the newsroom to try to get action to occur. The mobile LiveU technology enables the quick transfer via Wi-Fi of video for editing and uploading of this significant event of Jacinda Ardern's first major policy announcement as leader of the opposition. His emotive comment, "I would hate for them to get it up before us", is a moral evaluation of the journalist's role to be first with the news and their dislike of being beaten by competitors. While this more obliquely reinforces the time pressure journalists are working under, it also legitimates Slack as a valuable communications tool.

With SMC on Slack being text and/or image-based, the techno-discursive features of the platform, encouraging informality and brevity with language use (as if it were spoken discourse), are evidenced in these examples. Brevity is necessary for journalists when time is of the essence, and

informality and shortened forms assist. Despite these interactions taking on a conversational style, there are differences, as Crystal (2006) notes; for example, the technological constraints of the platforms mean that comments cannot overlap, as occurs with spoken language. The informality of language, seen in the example earlier, was consistent across all the Slack interactions regardless of the status of those involved. We believe that this style offers evidence of journalists' oblique legitimisation of SMC that rationalises "why we should do this in this way".

Another way that Slack was legitimised was in its use as a fast and convenient way to notify their counterparts about issues concerning the accuracy of their reporting. Traditionally, errors made in hardcopy news items were unable to be corrected if the printing presses had rolled. Corrections had to wait to a later edition or the next day. However, the technological affordances of SMC meant that corrections could be made as soon as they were known. In this comment TVR, a reporter, was quick to send out a notification to @*** about incorrect facts.

> TVR: @*** Online police shooting yarn says shooting happened outside the Sandbar. This is incorrect. See above *

TVR's comments are brief and to the point, as accuracy is essential and an expectation of high-quality journalism indicative within legitimation through rationalisation and moral evaluation. It is common when stories break for there to be confusion over details. As stories develop, new facts become known that change previous understandings. In the past, with longer deadlines, journalists had time to check and double-check information before it was published. Nowadays, the process of journalism is more immediate, and corrections are made in real time.

7.   Discussion and conclusion

In addressing our question about the ways in which digitally mediated communication is legitimised in journalism practice to understand its impact, our analysis applying van Leeuwen's legitimation categories has indicated journalists' justifications, and in some cases reluctant acceptance, of technological change. Our investigation identified a commonly held discourse that the use of digital technologies and social media platforms offered efficient ways to gather and report news in today's competitive Web 2.0 environment. Journalists' legitimation was expressed largely through categories of rationalisation, moral evaluation, and mythopoesis, particularly relating to their self-representation as professional newsmakers whose role is to beat their rivals to be first with the news. This legitimation was further demonstrated through journalists' navigating multiple online platforms,

often simultaneously, while searching for information, contacting sources, and collaborating with colleagues to produce stories. At times, the line between journalists' online and offline work was difficult to distinguish, indicating that a dichotomy between the two is fast becoming obsolete. The presence of techno-discursive features (KhosraviNik, 2018) such as notifications and hashtags, along with informality and brevity of language, also served to legitimise more obliquely SMC as dominating their daily journalistic practice, particularly in pressurised situations when the swift conveyance of information was vital for news deadlines.

The use of digital technologies was legitimated through moral evaluation on the basis that journalists recognised the affordances they offered journalism practice. Journalists also sought to meet the expectations of news organisations to be digitally literate in their news production, though this can be argued to result as part of an intertextual chain (Fairclough, 1995) imposed through institutional legitimation of authorisation in newsroom setups and training sessions. There was some evidence of staff delegitimising change through their concern about work pressure and intensification relating to the current media landscape. Against this, our analysis demonstrated management efforts to legitimise digital practices in the newsroom, no doubt through concerns about maintaining their organisations as viable businesses. Their legitimation relied mainly on authorisation and rationalisation strategies, particularly shown in the nomination of digital roles ("social media editor") and spaces ("digital desks") and the organisation of digital training workshops to upskill staff. This discourse of normalisation of digital practice, underpinned by legitimation, is akin to the "appropriation thesis" whereby traditional journalistic authority is discursively exerted over new forms of journalism, and at the same time dissenting voices are muted – an "act of preservation, securing the boundaries of the field" (Eldridge, 2018, p. 555).

In this chapter, we responded to calls to push the boundaries of journalism research and apply new theoretical and methodological approaches that account for newsmaking in the digital age. Our exploration was prompted by recognition of the web's participatory nature and the opening of new avenues to access both top-down and bottom-up discourses discussed in SM-CDS. This approach offered us opportunities for the critical analysis of the discourse of journalism practice and the inclusion of SMC and to make transparent those backstage (Goffman, 1959) performances within the field of journalism, usually hidden from the public and to a large extent from CDS scholarship. One of the challenges with video recording of the data was that one camera was not capable of covering everything. Nevertheless, the 300 hours archived for the larger research project enabled us to gain valuable insights into incidences where newsmakers legitimised their adoption of SMC ("Why should we do this?" and "Why should we do this

in this way?") (van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 94). Future analysis of the news stories we captured in our data would certainly be enlightening when it comes to examining the impact of SMC processes on powerful texts. Finally, in exploring the boundaries of SM-CDS, we have demonstrated that ethnographic observation and critical discourse analysis can work both outside and within digital content in the dynamic of sense-making. This opens the way for further SM-CDS work to be conducted in other workplace practices beyond journalism.

References

Ashwell, D. J. (2016). The challenges of science journalism: The perspectives of scientists, science communication advisors and journalists from New Zealand. *Public Understanding of Science*, *25*(3), 379–393. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662514556144

Atkinson, W. (2018). Time for Bourdieu: Insights and oversights. *Time & Society*, *28*(3), 951–970. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X17752280

Bednarek, M., & Capel, H. (2012). *News discourse*. London: Continuum.

Bell, A. (1991). *The language of news media*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bell, A. (1996). Text, time and technology in news English. In S. Goodman & D. Graddol (Eds.), *Redesigning English: New texts, new identities (Book 4 The English language, past, present and future)* (pp. 3–26). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (2005). The political field, the social science field, and the journalistic field. In R. Benson & E. Neveu (Eds.), *Bourdieu in the journalistic field* (pp. 29–47). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brey, J. (2018, September 12). As newsrooms do more with less, can reporters keep up. *Columbia Journalism Review*. www.cjr.org/united_states_project/productivity-stories-news.php

Broersma, M., & Peters, C. (2016). Introduction. In M. Broersma & C. Peters (Eds.), *Rethinking journalism again: Societal role and public relevance in a digital age* (pp. 1–17). London: Routledge.

Bruns, A. (2018). *Gatewatching and news curation: Journalism, social media, and the public sphere*. New York: Peter Lang.

Bunce, M., Wright, K., & Scott, M. (2018). Our newsroom in the cloud: Slack, virtual newsrooms and journalism practice. *New Media and Society*, *20*(9), 3381–3399. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817748955

Cambridge Dictionary. (2022). Bread and butter. *Cambridge Dictionary*. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bread-and-butter

Carlson, M., & Lewis, S. (2019). Temporal reflexivity in journalism studies: Making sense of change in a more timely fashion. *Journalism*, *20*(5), 642–650. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918760675

Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the internet* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dodds, T. (2019). Reporting with WhatsApp: Mobile chat applications' impact on journalistic practices. *Digital Journalism*, *7*(6), 725–745. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1592693

Eldridge, S. A. (2018). Repairing a fractured field: Dynamics of collaboration, normalization and appropriation at intersections of newswork. *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies*, 7(3), 541–559. https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms.7.3.541_1

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. London: Arnold.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.

Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 51(4), 327–358. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0061470

Galily, Y. (2018). Artificial intelligence and sports journalism: Is it a sweeping change? *Technology in Society*, 54, 47–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2018.03.001

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation or self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.

Hazard Owen, L. (2015, July 30). How 7 news organizations are using Slack to work better and differently. *Nieman Lab, Nieman Foundation for Journalism*. www.niemanlab.org/2015/07/how-7-news-organizations-are-using-slack-to-work-better-and-differently/

Hollings, J., Lealand, G., Samson, A., & Tilley. E. (2007). The big NZ journalism survey: Underpaid, under-trained, under-resourced, unsure about the future – but still idealistic. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 13(2), 175–197.

Hope, W. (2017, December 12). New Zealand media ownership: History and obfuscation. *Scoop*. www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO1712/S00111/new-zealand-media-ownership-history-and-obfuscation.htm

Karlsson, M., Bergström, A., Clerwall, C., & Fast, K. (2015). Participatory journalism: The (r)evolution that wasn't: Content and user behavior in Sweden 2007–2013. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20(3), 295–311. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12115

Keatinge, D. (2002). Versatility and flexibility: Attributes of the critical incident technique in nursing research. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 4(1–2), 33–39. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1442-2018.2002.00099.x

KhosraviNik, M. (2018). Social media techno-discursive design, affective communication and contemporary politics. *Fudan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences 11*, 427–442. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-018-0226-y

KhosraviNik, M., & Amer, M. (2020). Social media and terrorism discourse: The Islamic State's (IS) social media discursive content and practices. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 19(2), 124–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1835684

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 14(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2018-0003

KhosraviNik, M., & Unger, J. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media: Power, resistance and critiquing in media changing media ecologies. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (pp. 205–233). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Macmanus, J. (2020, June 27). From Ernest Rutherford to Stuff: The history of New Zealand's internet. *Stuff*. www.stuff.co.nz/technology/digital-living/121862141/from-ernest-rutherford-to-stuff-the-history-of-new-zealands-internet

Matheson, D. (2005). *Media discourses: Analysing media texts*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Neilson, T. (2018). 'I don't engage': Online communication and social media use among New Zealand journalists. *Journalism*, *19*(4), 536–552.

Neilson, T. (2021). *Journalism and digital labor: Experiences of online news production*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Page, R., Barton, D., Unger, J., & Zappavigna, M. (2014). *Researching language and social media: A student guide*. London: Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315771786

Paterson, C., Lee, D., Saha, A., & Zoellner, A. (2015). Production research: Continuity and transformation. In C. Paterson, D. Lee, A. Saha, & A. Zoellner (Eds.), *Advancing media production research: Shifting sites, methods, and politics* (pp. 3–19). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137541949_1

Peters, C., & Broersma, M. (2013). *Rethinking journalism: Trust and participation in a transformed news landscape*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Petre, C. (2018). Engineering consent. *Digital Journalism*, *6*(4), 509–527. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1444998

Raetzsch, C. (2017). Journalism studies beyond journalism: A critical and appreciative dialogue with Michael Schudson. *Journalism Studies*, *18*(10), 1277–1292. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1338151

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2016). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse studies* (pp. 23–61). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Reyes, A. (2011). Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions. *Discourse & Society*, *22*(6), 781–807. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926511419927

Richardson, J. (2007). *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. New York: Palgrave.

Ryfe, D. M. (2018). A practice approach to the study of news production. *Journalism*, *19*(2), 217–233. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917699854

Santana, A. D. (2013). Virtuous or vitriolic: The effect of anonymity on civility in online newspaper reader comment boards. *Journalism Practice*, *8*(1), 18–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2013.813194

Seargeant, P. (2018, November 13). Ta, cheers, much obliged: A brief history of "thanks" in English. *History of the Arts*. Open University. www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/english-language/ta-cheers-much-obliged-brief-history-thanks-english

Shearer, L. (2021, January 12). More than eight-in-ten Americans get news from digital devices. *Pew Research Center*. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/12/more-than-eight-in-ten-americans-get-news-from-digital-devices/

Sissons, H. (2016). Negotiating the news: Interactions behind the curtain of the journalism-public relations relationship. *Journalism Studies*, *17*(2), 177–198. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2014.973147

Sissons, H. (2020). Centralised and digitally disrupted: An ethnographic view of local journalism in New Zealand. In A. Gulyas & D. Baines (Eds.), *The*

Routledge companion to local media and journalism (pp. 331–342). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Sissons, H., & Smith, P. K. (2017). Sounding off or a sounding board? Comment sections of news websites as interactive spaces. In M. Burger, J. Thornborrow & R. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Discours des réseaux sociaux: enjeux publics, politiques et médiatiques* (pp. 199–218). Bruxelles: De Boeck Superieur. https://doi.org/10.3917/dbu.thorn.2017.01.0197

Smith, P., & Bell, A. (2008). English in mass communications: News discourse and the language of journalism. In H. Momma & M. Matto (Eds.), *The history of the English language* (pp. 334–344). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444302851.ch33

Starkman, D. (2010, September-October). The hamster wheel. *Columbia Journalism Review*, 1–9. https://archives.cjr.org/cover_story/the_hamster_wheel.php

Steensen, S., & Ahva, L. (2015). Theories of journalism in a digital age: An exploration and introduction. *Journalism Practice*, *9*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.928454

Steensen, S., & Westlund, O. (2020). *What is digital journalism studies*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429259555

Unger, J. (2016). The interdisciplinarity of critical discourse studies research. *Palgrave Communications*, 2, article number 16004. https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.4

Unger, J., Wodak, R., & KhosraviNik, M. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 277–293). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

van Dijk, T. (1988). *News as discourse*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). Legitimation in discourse and communication. *Discourse and Communication*, *1*(1), 91–112. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481307071986

Verma, S. (2021, August 2). Burnout makes journalists quit jobs and the pandemic is not the only reason. *The Citizen*. www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/14/20709/Burnout-Makes-Journalists-Quit-Jobs-and-the-Pandemic-is-Not-the-Only-Reason?infinitescroll=1

Waisbord, S. (2017). Afterword: Crisis? What crisis? In C. Peters & M. Broersma, (Eds.), *Rethinking journalism again: Societal role and public relevance in a digital age*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716244

Waldman, S., & The Working Group on Information Needs of Communities, F. C. C. (2011, June 9). *The information needs of communities: The changing media landscape in a broadband age*. Washington, DC: Federal Communications Commission. www.fcc.gov/general/information-needs-communities

12 Wikipedia discourse about social media

Facebook between community and corporation

Susanne Kopf

1. Introduction

> *"If you're not paying for it, you're the product."*

Social media (SM) platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are provided by businesses that aim to generate revenue but typically provide their SM service free of charge to site users.[1] In order to make profits, SM businesses may attempt to commodify users by selling their attention to advertisers (see Smythe, 1977), by selling users' data or even their actively produced content (such as videos) (Lillqvist & Harju, 2018, p. 64). Hence, in essence, the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter holds true – SM businesses capitalise on their users in one way or another.

   This is not news. In addition to researchers who have focused on the capitalist motivations driving SM providers (e.g. Allmer, 2015; Beverungen et al., 2015; Fuchs, 2014b), the epigraph has been used in the context of SM and their role in society before (Goodson, 2012; Oremus, 2018). Still, so far there has been a lack of scholarly engagement with existing public discourses about SM, particularly on if and how active users of the participatory Internet have addressed the distinction between SM sites and the for-profit SM providers operating them. This chapter homes in on the discursive treatment of one relatively long-lived and established SM site and the – originally eponymous – business Facebook. It examines how Wikipedia editors, as a group of people highly involved in the participatory Internet, a) have grappled with Facebook in debates about Facebook on Wikipedia and b) have represented Facebook in the Wikipedia article since its inception in 2004. That is, this chapter aims to find out if Wikipedia editors have distinguished between Facebook as an SM site versus Facebook the business in Wikipedia discourse material. The chapter then aims to trace if and how the discursive treatment of Facebook, the SM site, and Facebook, the business, has changed between 2004 and 2020. Altogether, the broader aim underlying this study is to shed light on

whether and how Wikipedia editors exhibit any awareness regarding the difference between Facebook as a community-building tool and Facebook as a business organisation.

Section 2 gives an overview of the theoretical background and past research informing this study. It presents some considerations motivating this study reaching from aspects connected to 1) the research tradition of Critical Discourse Studies to 2) Wikipedia's modus operandi and 3) the particular relevance of Wikipedia discourse about SM. Section 3 introduces the data and the methods of data treatment and analysis. This is followed by a discussion of the main findings and, finally, concluding remarks.

2.   Theoretical background and rationale for the study

The participatory web has permitted the evolution of SM, such as Facebook but also Wikipedia (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 582), where anybody with access to the Internet and a minimum of digital literacy may generate content. SM communication may be described as

> electronically mediated communication across any electronic platforms, spaces, sites, and technologies in which users can: (a.) work together in producing and compiling content; (b.) perform interpersonal communication and mass communication simultaneously or separately . . . and (c.) have access to see and respond to institutionally (e.g. newspaper articles) or user-generated content.
>
> (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 582)

Thus defined by their communicative affordances, it becomes clear that SM have introduced a communication paradigm markedly different from traditional media's modus operandi and structure. To add more detail to KhosraviNik's hallmarks of SM communication, SM allow multimodal semiosis, communication may be asynchronous or synchronous and may be unidirectional, dialogical, or even "multilogical" in character. Instead of top-down production and subsequent consumption, SM lead to a conflation of content producers and consumers, and information may be produced/ shared bottom-up as well or may be taken from one site and recontextu- alised on another. In short, SM communication is complex, and SM have given rise to many new genres and communicative practices (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018, p. 46). What is more, SM are always at our fingertips – almost wherever we go, we have access to SM, the information on them and their information-sharing potential (ibid).

Unsurprisingly, SM and the SM communication paradigm have received research attention across the humanities and social sciences, e.g. in the context of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS). Here, a number of scholars

have addressed how SM can be studied and approached from a critical perspective (Bouvier, 2015; Kopf, 2019; Unger et al., 2016). In establishing the sub-field of Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS), KhosraviNik stresses the importance of examining the techno-discursive design of SM, i.e. SM's technological and connected communicative affordances (KhosraviNik, 2017, pp. 4–5, 2018). In this context, a number of researchers have examined how SM may function as vehicles for populist parties in that SM's techno-discursive design and associated affordances allow populist parties direct and immediate contact with their supporters (Gerbaudo, 2014; Higgins, 2017; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018). Other research has also homed in on various phenomena tied to SM and the new communication paradigm; for example, past research has dealt with hate speech against and ostracism of particular social subgroups on SM (Ging & Siapera, 2018; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). Yet another phenomenon that has drawn research attention is SM production, e.g. the fusion of production and consumption or SM's reliance on (predominantly) free labour (Fuchs, 2014a; Fumagalli et al., 2018; Jarrett, 2016). Finally, one venue of research has focused on tracing the discursive representation of various aspects of the world on SM. That is, in the context of these studies, the focus is not so much on SM themselves but on their being the data source (Roxburgh et al., 2019; Sun, 2018).

The brief review of past work on SM demonstrates that while various elements of SM have received research attention, there is a lack of research on discourses *about* SM.[2] That is, there is a dearth of research on how people discursively construct SM and on the different discourses – understood as different "way[s] of signifying experience from a particular perspective"[3] (Fairclough, 2010, p. 95) – about SM that might co-exist and how they might have changed since the inception of SM. One reason why such an examination is important is the relative novelty of SM – SM constitute a communication paradigm that is not only highly complex (see earlier) but has developed relatively recently and quickly over the past two decades. That is, people and societies had to adapt at a remarkable rate, and investigating their discursive treatment of SM (or a particular well-established SM such as Facebook) may shed light on this process. Here, the present research takes a relatively narrow view: it addresses if people have distinguished between Facebook as an SM site and its for-profit provider since its inception in 2004, i.e. if/how people have addressed the fact that Facebook is provided by a business that operates in accordance with the logic of profit orientation.

The narrow focus of this chapter is motivated by the fact that the discursive distinction – or lack thereof – between SM sites and SM businesses is a particularly notable issue in the context of CDS's traditional research agenda. In essence, the field CDS (and SM-CDS as a sub-discipline) aims to

expose taken-for-granted and seemingly natural assumptions (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5) and to uncover "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control" (Wodak, 2001, p. 2). Indeed, past research suggests that it may seem perfectly normal and natural that discourses about SM focus solely on their *social* affordances, not least because the term *social* in SM highlights this aspect and backgrounds SM providers' profit orientation (Fisher & Fuchs, 2015, p. 37). Thus, studying discourses about SM may shed light on whether SM are actually discursively constructed with an emphasis on their social function as an SM site and if their for-profit providers are obfuscated. Furthermore, traditionally, CDS has worked towards uncovering how capitalism and its practices have infiltrated various domains of life (Brookes & Harvey, 2016; Holloway & Keddie, 2019; Mautner, 2005). So far, CDS has not addressed SM in this regard in any depth. This chapter presents a foray into exploring the discursive practice around one SM site and its originally eponymous provider in one particular realm: Facebook and its discursive treatment on Wikipedia.

The question may arise why the distinction between the SM site and SM business matters and why an examination if people discursively distinguish between these two matters. In this regard, I would argue that, in line with viewing discourse as a means of acting on and shaping the world (Fairclough, 1992, p. 63), the potential discursive obfuscation of SM businesses would have detrimental societal implications, and it is therefore important to find out if such obfuscation is manifested and can be traced in discourse. To name an element that ties in with the central aim of CDS – such obfuscation would hide the power and control exerted by these businesses. A lack of discursive distinction between SM and their providers hides the fact that the businesses may engage in, e.g. corporate censorship, i.e. content manipulation motivated by economic considerations (Sell, 2016, p. 177). It may also lead to a general dearth of awareness that these businesses may direct/sell users' attention and their data (Lillqvist & Harju, 2018). It would also possibly cause/reinforce a lack of understanding that SM do not exist independently from capitalist logic and do not aim to contribute to a democratisation of the global media landscape, but that the power over SM actually lies with a handful of for-profit ventures, such as Google and Meta (formerly Facebook) (see more on potential issues of SM as businesses in, e.g. Fuchs, 2014a; Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Tufekci, 2013).

Wikipedia discourse about Facebook is particularly worth observing in this regard because Wikipedia enjoys a notable global reach. Specifically, Wikipedia discourse is received by a global audience of Internet users and thus has the power to shape precisely the group's views and attitudes towards Facebook that is Facebook's potential target group, i.e. people

plugged into the participatory web. What is more, the impact of Wikipedia discourse about Facebook is elevated by the fact that Wikipedia is an *encyclopaedia* – it has not only been found to be consulted frequently but, as an encyclopaedia, to inspire considerable trust (Blikstad-Balas, 2016; Flanagin & Metzger, 2011; Menchen-Trevino & Hargittai, 2011). Therefore, a study of Wikipedia's treatment of Facebook and whether the site draws attention to Facebook as a for-profit business rather than an SM only sheds light on the representation of Facebook received by – and shaping the understanding of Facebook of – a considerable global audience.

Another element motivating my choice of data for this study relates to the group of people whose discursive behaviour is subject to investigation – this study focuses on Wikipedia editors ("Wikipedians"), i.e. people actively involved in the participatory web. Wikipedia, the free online encyclopaedia, is written collaboratively by unpaid volunteers and is not limited to a particular national realm. That is, anybody with Internet access and a degree of digital literacy may add to Wikipedia articles about topics they are interested in and/or have some specialised knowledge about. Thus, examining Wikipedia discourse about Facebook allows a glimpse into the views and attitudes of people who are 1) particularly invested in Facebook (as otherwise they would not have chosen to participate in article editing and debate) and 2) not just ordinary users but highly engaged contributors to the participatory web, i.e. also likely users of SM. Moreover, this examination sheds light onto a global discourse rather than one restricted to a particular national plane (but see Wikimedia Foundation, 2011 for limitations regarding the Wikipedia community).

Wikipedia's structure and modus operandi also motivate my choice of data. On the one hand, Wikipedia presents the encyclopaedic article on Facebook – the outwardly directed front stage. Each article version on Facebook that has ever existed since the article's inception in 2004 is recorded, which allows a diachronic examination of Wikipedia's discursive treatment of Facebook. This opportunity for diachronic examination is relatively unique to Wikipedia, as other sites do not allow easy and free access to digital content produced years ago. On the other hand, since Wikipedia relies on consensus-based decision making, Wikipedians may debate article editing on the discussion page underlying Wikipedia articles – the back stage not intended for public reception. Each article is accompanied by such a discussion space (a talk page) where editors can debate the article in threaded conversations, e.g. Wikipedians have debated elements connected to Facebook since 2004. Thus, the examination of both frontstage and back stage discursive treatment of Facebook allows a comprehensive understanding of Wikipedia discourse about Facebook as either an SM site, as a business or both. What is more, Wikipedia is one of the few SM sites that is itself operated by a non-profit organisation and is therefore not

subject to the commercial logic other SM are subject to, e.g. the data taken for analysis were not moderated and curated for monetisability. Moreover, as a platform that aims to be an encyclopaedia, Wikipedia seeks to reflect neutrally aspects of the world in its encyclopaedic entries. Thus the examination of, in particular, Wikipedia articles about Facebook should yield an insight into what the Wikipedia editors consider factual and neutral about Facebook – a baseline representation of Facebook – at any given time rather than, for instance, derogatory or particularly enthusiastic views of Facebook.

Finally, the focus on Facebook is motivated by Facebook's unique global position. First founded in 2004 as a networking service but also established as a business, it is one of the oldest of its kind. Second, in contrast to, e.g. Twitter, Facebook has evolved to the degree that the publicly traded business's product portfolio has expanded beyond the original SM site to also include other services. Connected to this, Facebook has made a point of raising awareness that it is a business that owns several services, e.g. for a period of time before the business' name was changed to "Meta", the words "from Facebook" appeared on the screen whenever users opened WhatsApp on their phone. Third, Facebook, now Meta, as a business venture with Mark Zuckerberg as its (in)famous CEO has received copious public attention, e.g. in the form of movies, when it announced its decision to go public, etc. Overall, it stands to reasons that there might be some public awareness (or at least awareness among the elite Wikipedia editors) and corresponding discourse regarding Facebook's status as both SM service and, then, business. Thus, while not the only SM that should be studied in such a manner, Facebook presents a good starting point for a first study of discourses about SM as for-profit business ventures.

3. Data and method

On the one hand, this study draws on the Wikipedia article(s) entitled 'Facebook'. On the other hand, it also explores the so-called Wikipedia talk page (TP) discussions. Each Wikipedia article is accompanied by such a TP where Wikipedians may debate editing decisions about the article in question. These threaded debates are typically timestamped and allow a diachronic examination in parallel to article development. Thus, this study combines a frontstage and backstage perspective in order to achieve a holistic picture of the discourse about Facebook produced by the Wikipedians involved in article creation, discussion and editing.

Concerning the Wikipedia article about Facebook, I sampled four article versions for in-depth analysis (see Table 12.1). Two of the sampled article versions are from before Facebook launched its initial public offering (IPO) on 18 May 2012 and two from after this event. The Facebook IPO

Table 12.1 Wikipedia articles and talk page corpora

Article page corpora:	
Corpus: article version 1 (V1): 30 January 2005	498 word tokens

Rationale for selection:
Facebook registered as a business on 15 December 2004 (California Secretary of
State, 2020), i.e. the sampled version allows for a 1.5-month time period for the
Wikipedians to integrate into the article the fact that Facebook, additionally to
being a website, is also a business.

Corpus: article version 2 (V2): 31 January 2012	5,785 word tokens

Rationale:
Facebook announced its intention to go public on 1 February 2012 (Hartley,
2012). Therefore, the sampled version allows an insight into how Facebook
was represented before the announcement and the associated possibly increased
awareness regarding Facebook as a business.

Corpus: article version 3 (V3): 14 July 2013	8,212 word tokens

Rationale:
After the Facebook IPO on 18 May 2012, Wikipedia created a separate article
to discuss the company Facebook, Inc., and dedicated the article entitled
"Facebook" to the website only. This separation was reverted in April 2013,
and Wikipedia returned to discussing Facebook, the business and Facebook, the
SM site, in one article (see more in Section 4.2).

Corpus: article version 4 (V4): 1 May 2020	11,075 word tokens

This date marks the end of the data-sampling period.

Talk Page – discussion corpora:	
Corpus TP1 (2004–2012)	46,539 word tokens
Corpus TP2 (2012–2020)	30,657 word tokens

was chosen as a potentially pivotal point in the public perception of Face-
book because the IPO received considerable press attention, and thus, pub-
lic awareness of Facebook as a business versus as an SM site might have
changed/increased. In addition to examining the sampled article versions,
it is important to highlight that I also drew on article versions in between
the sample dates to trace potential changing representations of Facebook
across Wikipedia article history (see more later).

Regarding Wikipedia discussions, I sampled all TP data from 2004 to
May 2020 and tagged it for time of production. I excluded discussions
dedicated solely to article editing and, to facilitate a diachronic perspec-
tive, I created two subcorpora, each consisting of eight years of debate
material. One corpus covers all debates before the company's intention
to launch an IPO was made public and thus entered into public discourse
about Facebook, i.e. debates between 2004 and February 2012. The sec-
ond corpus covers the debates after the IPO had been announced, i.e.

discussions produced between 2012 and 2020. Table 12.1 presents an overview of the data used for this study and the rationale for selecting these data – in this context, some background information on the evolution of Facebook is given.

Both the encyclopaedic texts and the discussion material were subjected to corpus-assisted discourse analyses. That is, the sampled article versions were treated as separate minicorpora, as were the two discussion corpora. Using the concordance software AntConc (Anthony, 2020), I examined each corpus and homed in on the referential and nomination strategies employed with regard to Facebook (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 386; also see van Leeuwen, 1996). That is, the analytical focus was on how actors and entities – here Facebook – are referred to in each corpus, e.g. either as a business, SM site or both.

This was done in two ways: on the one hand, I created a word frequency ranking for each corpus and examined the concordance lines of the listed nouns that could function as reference to Facebook. To give an example of V2, since the items "site", "it", and "company" could be used to refer to Facebook, I examined the concordance lines of these in addition to the lines of "Facebook". I took a wide-angle view on these concordance lines to ensure an in-depth understanding of how the terms of reference used are embedded in co-text and e.g. to understand on what grounds the Wikipedians argue for or against creating separate Wikipedia articles for Facebook as SM and Facebook as company in TP debates.

On the other hand, I focused on uses of "Facebook" (and as it is sometimes referred to: "thefacebook") in particular in the context of intensive attributive relational processes. Generally, relational processes "serve to characterize and to identify" an entity with the subgroup of intensive attributive relational clauses serving to describe the so-called carrier, i.e. the entity described via the attribute (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 259, 266–267). Halliday and Matthiessen add that the "nominal group functioning as [a]ttribute construes a class of thing and is typically indefinite: it has either an adjective or a common noun as Head and, if appropriate, an indefinite article" (2014, p. 268), e.g. "Facebook is a website".

Another aspect of analysis pertains to my observation of non- and para-linguistic practices on Wikipedia, i.e. I examined if/when the Wikipedia community created separate articles for Facebook the SM site and Facebook the business. Here, it is important to highlight that the sampled article versions merely provide the entry point into the diachronic study. Indeed, my observations of non-/para-linguistic practices combined with the observations of changes between the four sampled article versions informed my selecting additional versions to ensure an understanding of when Wikipedia's representation of Facebook changed.

4.   Main findings

4.1.   *2004 to 2012: Facebook before the IPO*

Facebook as a social media site

From 2004 to 2005, Wikipedia focuses exclusively on representing and discussing Facebook as an SM site. In fact, the Wikipedia community completely omits any reference to Facebook as a business in the debates and in the outwardly directed article. Arguably, in 2004, this perspective on Facebook was not incorrect as such, as Facebook as the operator of the website was only registered as a business on 15 December 2004 (California Secretary of State, 2020). To give more detail on Wikipedia's early treatment of Facebook, the first entry about Facebook was created in April 2004, i.e. two months after the establishment of thefacebook.com[4] and approximately seven months before Facebook registered as a business. Thus, Wikipedia's first *article* correctly refers to Facebook as "a relatively new website" and focuses on the social function of the platform. Indeed, throughout 2004, the Wikipedia front stage as well as the backstage discussions refer to "Thefacebook" and later "Facebook" as a "website", e.g. from the article on 10 December 2004 (i.e. the last version before Facebook was founded as a company on 15 December 2004 [California Secretary of State, 2020]): "Thefacebook is a social networking website". In the *TP debates* of 2004, Wikipedians refer to "web site", "website" or "site".

  From 15 December 2004 onwards, Facebook as a business operating the site officially exists, but still the Wikipedia community only refers to Facebook as an SM site. *Article* V1 of 30 January 2005, for example, is entitled "Facebook" – at that point, the referent of "Facebook" could have been either the business or the website.[5] However, then it becomes clear that the Wikipedia article focuses on the website only: after the title, the Wikipedia article begins by referring to "Thefacebook" as the carrier in a relational process (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 266–267), and thefacebook as the then-domain of the website is identified correctly as "a social networking website". Overall, the Wikipedia article does not acknowledge the fact that thefacebook is operated by a business, nor is there a separate Wikipedia entry introducing the business. That is, the existence of Facebook as a business entity is not reflected on Wikipedia's front stage until later in 2005. The backstage *TP debates* mirror this in that a) there are no debates on anything but matters related to Facebook as an SM site and b) the Wikipedians consistently refer to it as the "site" and "website".

Social media site and business: conflating referents and increasing awareness

July 2005 marks a change in the representation of Facebook in that a business element is introduced to the *Wikipedia article*. On the one hand, in terms of referential strategies, the term "company" is used twice to refer to Facebook: "Parker introduced Zuckerberg to, [sic] Peter Thiel, founder of PayPal, who invested $500,000 in the *company*" and "the *company* also expanded" [emphases added]. On the other hand, the "history" section of the Wikipedia article states that "[Moskovitz and Zuckerberg] . . . established an office and recruited a staff of eight", i.e. for the first time, the Wikipedia article draws on business discourse in its frontstage representation of Facebook.

Still, it is worth noting that, essentially, the *article* conflates Facebook as a business enterprise and an SM site with a focus on the latter. I arrive at this conclusion as, on the one hand, there are the earlier references to Facebook as a "company" and to business aspects. Yet, on the other hand, the Wikipedia article still overwhelmingly and consistently refers to Facebook as a "(web) site", "network", and "networking website". Furthermore, the topic focus of the July 2005 article is still on Facebook as an SM website with sections on the website features and a criticism section that homes in exclusively on user friendliness, the site's addictiveness, and its penchant for hosting fake profiles. Moreover, the interpretation that Facebook-business and Facebook-SM are conflated is supported by, e.g. the Wikipedia article's reference to phenomena comparable to Facebook: "several competitor sites appeared attempting to capture [. . .]". The referent of "several competitor sites" is other SM platforms comparable[6] to Facebook; however, sites cannot actually be "competitors". Rather, employing this referential strategy suppresses the actors that engage in competition – the individuals/businesses behind the comparable SM sites (and, by proxy, Facebook).

Interestingly, the *TP debates* start to touch upon the business aspect of Facebook only in December 2005, i.e. a year after Facebook-business was established (see previously). The following posting did not yield any responses but illustrates that the posting Wikipedian is aware that Facebook is not merely an SM site but also a business:

> how exactly does facebook make money? Selling sidebar advertising and sponsored groups. If you look under "jobs" on their website, they are actually hiring salespeople right now.

The editor poses a rhetorical question and answers it immediately – even from the question alone, it becomes clear that the referent of

"facebook" is the business, not the SM site, as the editor connects "facebook" to "making money", an action a business rather than a website may engage in. Moreover, the editor then refers to "*their* website" [emphasis added]. That is, the editor acknowledges the actor that operates the website as separate from the website (here in the possessive form). The editor reinforces this awareness of the site operator as a business enterprise in the final clause "they are actually hiring [. . .]" – referring to the operators of the site again by the unspecified third-person plural pronoun, the editor casts the operator in the actor position of a material process associated with the business activity "hiring staff".

Regarding the *Wikipedia article*, the years 2006 to 2008 see an increase in references to business aspects of Facebook, but still, the conflated representation of Facebook as an SM site and Facebook as a business persists. To give an example, in December 2007, the article reads "The site is free to users and generates revenue from advertising including banner ads and sponsored groups"[7] – this sentence presents an instance of divergent referents regarding "site". On the one hand, "site" as the actor of the process "generating revenue from" may be understood as a metonymic reference to the backgrounded actor – the business entity and the people running the business – the actor(s) capable of engaging in the activity of "generating revenue from an activity or product". On the other hand and at the same time, the "site" as part of the circumstantial relational process ("is free to users") actually has Facebook, the SM website, as referent.

The *TP* between 2006 and 2008 reflects the principal tendency of increased references to Facebook as a business. Interestingly, there is less conflation of Facebook as business and SM site, but rather more explicit distinction between these two referents (than in the article). To give an example, the examination of the item "company" leads to a 2006 debate about another potential co-founder of Facebook: "he co-founded the site [. . .]" to which another editor responds with: "he co-founded the site but he isn't an executive of the company". Thus, the responding editor actually alerts the initial poster to the distinction between co-founding the *site* versus being involved in the *business* operating this site. Indeed, this 2006 posting marks the beginning of a stronger focus on Facebook as a business in the TP debates – to give some quantitative evidence: the concordance view of "company" shows that between 2004 and 2006 only four uses of the item actually refer to Facebook. In the period between 2007 and 2008, 23 uses of "company" refer to Facebook as a business.

The 2008 *TP debates* show increased debate about the distinction between Facebook-business versus Facebook-SM, e.g. in January 2008 there is repeated reference to "Facebook the company and website" (three times in this thread). That is, the editors distinguish between the two referents of "Facebook" by mentioning both explicitly: the company as well as the website. Moreover, in an April 2008 thread, an editor touches on

the central issue: "[t]his article talks about the Facebook company, not just the website located at www.facebook.com". Another editor reinforces the distinction between website and business "[s]ure, the article discusses the company, but the sentence uses terminology that refers to a website's launch". These examples demonstrate Wikipedians' awareness that the Wikipedia article on Facebook contains problematic aspects in that it attempts to deal with both Facebook the business as well as the SM site but uses ambiguous phrasing in terms of when the intended referent is to be Facebook-SM or Facebook-business.

Distinguishing between the SM and the business

Around the same time, i.e. end of March and beginning of April 2008, several edits to the *Wikipedia article's* introductory paragraph redress (but do not totally resolve) the hitherto persistent conflation of Facebook as business and SM site. While the relational clause introducing Facebook at the beginning of the Wikipedia article still states that Facebook "is a social networking website", by 1 April this is immediately followed by "[t]he website is owned and operated by Facebook, Inc., the parent company of the website and a privately held company". That is, the Wikipedia article 1) clearly distinguishes between Facebook-SM and Facebook-business and 2) clarifies the relationship between the SM and the business as the site's operator. Still, while the introductory paragraph distinguishes between the two referents and implies that the subject matter of the Wikipedia article is Facebook-SM,[8] the article actually deals with elements of both, while generally privileging Facebook-SM. To give evidence of this dual treatment and prioritisation, the article uses the term "company" to refer to Facebook as a business five times throughout the article (exclusive of the introductory paragraph). By comparison, 21 uses of the term "website" unambiguously refer to Facebook as an SM site.

As already alluded to earlier, in the *TP debates* of 2008, the Wikipedia community explicitly distinguishes between Facebook-business and Facebook-SM – what is more, the community explicitly grapples with what the subject matter of the Wikipedia article should be: Facebook-SM site only or Facebook-SM and Facebook-business combined. For example, in May 2008, an editor proposes the inclusion of a picture of the company headquarters – this is debated heatedly. One editor argues against it on the basis that "this [Wikipedia] article is NOT about the company Facebook, Inc. It is about the website, Facebook.com". This is met with "The article is about Facebook, Inc. as well as the website" and

> the article is about Facebook, Inc. as well as Facebook the Web site. If it were solely about the Web site, then the article should focus solely

on the features, design, and user community. [. . .] But the article also clearly discusses the history of the founding of the Web site and the fundraising by the subsequent private corporation which has supported its operations since.

The latter posting is not contested, and the photograph of the Facebook company headquarters is included in the article.

Figure 12.1 shows that the editing activity regarding the *Wikipedia article* petered off after May 2008, and the article remained stable up to 2012, which permits my analytical focus to jump to V2 from 2012.

The examination of V2 from early 2012 confirms that Facebook is still conceptualised predominantly as an SM website but – relative to 2008 – also increasingly as a business venture. Indeed, the following excerpt shows that the introductory sentence was refined but the relational process identifying Facebook-SM remained stable. At the same time, it shows that Facebook-business has received additional prominence in the sense that information on it is inserted into this key first sentence that presents the encyclopaedic definition of Facebook: "Facebook is a social networking service and website launched in February 2004, operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc." Moreover, V2 contains a whole article section on the company, its ownership, management and related matters (see Figure 12.2). Additionally, the frequency list of V2 shows an increase in items associated with business discourse ("company" at rank 62, "advertising" at 77, "employees" at 91, "advertisement" at rank 103) compared to e.g. the article from 7 May 2008 where only "company" ranks among the top 100 items.

4.2.   *2012 to 2020: Facebook after the IPO*

Splitting articles: Facebook, Inc., the business and Facebook, the SM

On 21 February 2012, the Wikipedia community creates a separate *article* for Facebook, Inc., i.e. the business (now called Meta) that operates
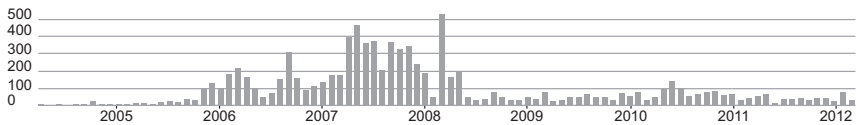
Figure 12.1 Article editing activity between 2005 and 2012

Source: Contropedia (2018)

Facebook, the website. The community also inserts a hyperlink to this new article in the introductory sentence of the original article entitled "Facebook": "Facebook is a social networking service and website launched in February 2004, operated and privately owned by *Facebook Inc.*" [emphasis added to indicate the hyperlink]. After the separation, the article entitled "Facebook" is gradually reworked to focus on the SM aspect, e.g. the whole section on the company (see Figure 12.2) is removed from the article by 3 March 2012 and integrated into the new article "Facebook, Inc." By May 2012, the Wikipedia article "Facebook" is preceded by the information: "This article is about the website. For the namesake company that owns the site, see Facebook, Inc.". This separation trend continues, e.g. by January 2013, the information box summarising the key points of any Wikipedia article which previously referred to the subject matter as a "Type of business" in the first place then refers to "Type of site" (see Figure 12.3). It is worth noting that the January 2013 box still refers to business aspects (revenue and the incorporated owner) even though the article focus is on

Figure 12.2 2008 versus 2012 article (V2) table of contents

the networking service. Thus, even the Wikipedia article dedicated to detailing information on Facebook-SM draws attention to the service' business aspect.

Regarding the *TP debates* in and after 2012, the Wikipedians discuss Facebook even more extensively as a business, which is already indicated by the sheer number of references to Facebook as a company. In contrast to 39 uses of "company" in reference to Facebook on the TP between 2004 and 2012, the TP debates between 2012 and 2020 refer to Facebook as a "company" 80 times. Moreover, the community clearly distinguishes between the business and SM site, e.g. the concordance lines of "company" show that a May 2012 debate explicitly touches upon the distinction: a poster wishes to include financial information in the article "Facebook" but is met with "Looks like there is some confusion between the two entities. This article [entitled] Facebook is [about] the actual website. Facebook,
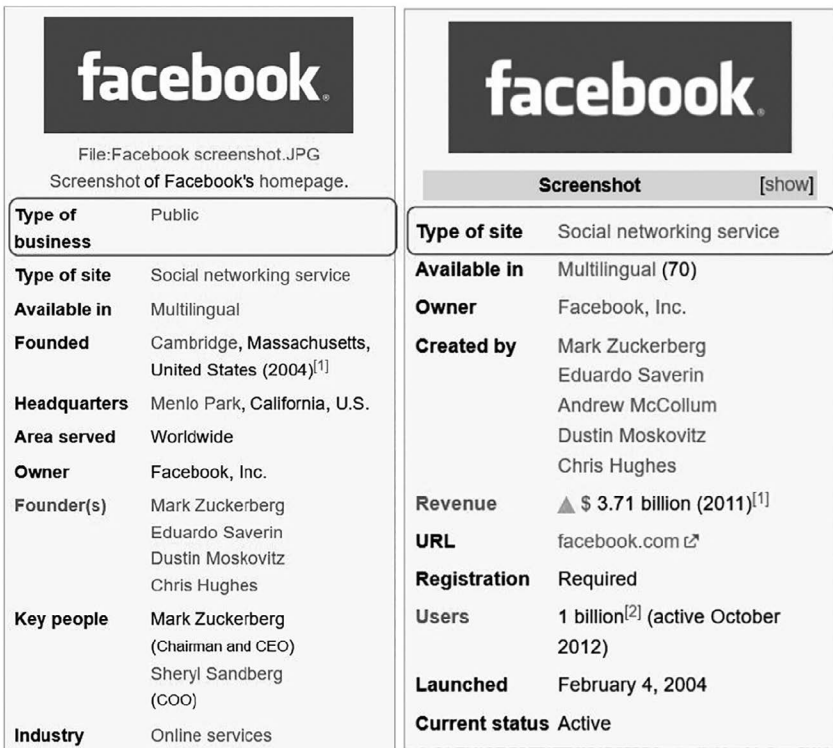
Figure 12.3 May 2012 versus January 2013 – focusing on Facebook as a website

Inc. is the company that completely owns the website". Moreover, another editor confirms that the article "Facebook" is now dedicated solely to the website: "That sounds like a better update for Facebook, Inc. (the company article) – this one's about the website".

Reintegrating Facebook, Inc., and Facebook, the social media site: the dual nature of Facebook

Focusing on the post-2012 *TP corpus*, i.e. the time after the business Facebook had gone public (see Section 3 for more background on Facebook's evolution), the concordance lines of "Facebook, Inc." and "company" show that in April 2013 the Wikipedians decide to reintegrate the articles on Facebook – website and its operator Facebook, Inc. The Wikipedians argue for merging the articles for several reasons: 1) alleged similarity of both articles ("there is quite a bit of overlap") is cited as a reason for the merger three times, 2) lack of notability of the company ("the company lacks notability without the website") is cited twice, and 3) the notion that the two entities are "indistinguishable" ("The two are for pretty much all intents and purposes indistinguishable") is also cited as a reason twice. The latter is noteworthy, as it again drives home the idea that the two referents of Facebook are so intricately connected that one can hardly differentiate between the two. Still in 2013, another editor expands on this and argues that merging the article would resolve another issue, namely:

> on the rare occasion there is content specifically related to the company (and not the web site), editors frequently and incorrectly add this information to the Facebook (webpage) article. Merging the two articles would solve this problem.

The quote indicates that, then, the conflation of company and website is a relatively widespread phenomenon among Wikipedians, i.e. according to this posting, a number of editors fall prey to this conflation, as indicated by their allegedly editing the wrong article. However, instead of representing the *inability to distinguish* as the problematic aspect, this posting identifies the *effect* thereof as problematic, i.e. wrong article editing – an issue that could be resolved by reintegrating the articles. Overall, the Wikipedia community indeed resolves to merge the articles, as there is only one objection – an objection based on the view that Facebook the business is different from Facebook the SM site: "Facebook and Facebook Inc. are totally different. Facebook Inc. is like having many products", that is, the poster refers to the fact that Facebook-business had begun to expand its product portfolio to include other Internet-based services, such as Instagram, by then. While this editor attempts to alert the community

to the difference between Facebook, Inc., and Facebook the website, they are outnumbered and, in line with this TP debate, the *articles* are merged on 15 April 2013 (V3 of the article [see Table 12.1] was published on 14 July 2013[9]).

V3 from July 2013, i.e. the merged *article*, differs from V2 (which tended to conflate Facebook-business and Facebook-SM) in that V3 is more explicit on the two-pronged subject matter it deals with. To give an example, the article body is preceded by a short but essential clarification of the two-pronged subject matter: "this article is about the website and its owner Facebook, Inc. For the photographic directory, see face book".

Additionally, while V3 still addresses Facebook as an SM,[10] the article features the business aspect of Facebook more heavily than ever before, e.g. 15 uses of "company" refer to Facebook (see the section "Distinguishing between the SM and the business" for the previous figure). Moreover, the structure of this article is notable as it reflects the two topics covered in it: the history section is now structured in accordance with the *company's* development. In addition, and not unlike V2 (see Figure 12.2), this is then followed by a whole section on the company, again followed by a section dedicated to the website and its features.

Over the next few years, the *article* is edited to highlight the dual nature of Facebook even more, e.g. in the form of the relational clause introducing the article's subject matter: "Facebook is an American for-profit corporation and an online social media and social networking service" in 2017. Even more striking in October 2018, the carrier identified in the relation clause of this first sentence reads "Facebook, Inc." instead of the previous "Facebook": "Facebook, Inc. is an American online social media and social networking service company", which adds emphasis to the business element of Facebook.

At the same time, this dual nature is a source of *debate on the TP* between 2013 and 2020. For example, in 2015, the community discusses splitting the article on the basis of the fact that, by then, Facebook, Inc., had expanded its product portfolio beyond Facebook (e.g. "While Facebook began as just a social network, I agree it has become much more than that. In addition to WhatsApp, there's also Oculus VR, Instagram of course", "The company owns many new assets including WhatsApp, and Facebook is a company with more than one service"). While the TP consensus is to split the articles again, none of the editors apparently take action: Wikipedia's article history does not indicate a division into articles on Facebook as business versus as SM back in 2015.

Splitting the articles: the ultimate separation?

Yet, in November 2019, a similar discussion takes place with the result-ing decision to mark the difference between Facebook-SM and Facebook-business by reintroducing the separation of articles. The discussants rely on the same arguments cited before, i.e. Facebook-business is identified as the owner of several products – one of which being Facebook the SM: "The Facebook company now owns a number of services" and "the social media platform is only one of the things the company Facebook does, since it also owns Instagram, Oculus". Another editor remarks that the discussion has been had before and claims that "this article should've been split long ago".

On 24 November 2019, the *articles* are split again into Facebook as an SM and its owner Facebook, Inc. Indeed, V4 deals with Facebook-SM but also identifies it as "a flagship service of the namesake company Facebook, Inc.". *TP discussions* after the split in 2019 and up to V4 in 2020 touch on the importance of expanding on the representation of Facebook as an SM and further reducing the SM article's focus on the company:

> this article needs so much of rework because it talks (or, at least, refers to) too much about (to) company. All content about company needs to be integrated into Facebook, Inc. and content about website kept and properly expanded.

While Wikipedia relies on community consensus, which could again change, the consensus as of the end of the data sampling period in May 2020 is that both articles are to be retained.

5. Conclusions

This chapter addressed if Wikipedians distinguished between Facebook-SM site and Facebook-business (now Meta) and whether there had been any change in this between 2004 and 2020. Overall, the discursive treatment of Facebook on Wikipedia moved from treating Facebook-business and Face-book-SM as identical to gradually acknowledging them as separate entities. Initially, Facebook was represented exclusively as an SM site, although it had already been established as a business in 2004, followed by a period of conflation of Facebook-business and Facebook-SM, with a focus on the latter. This is notable as Facebook, though having evolved over the years, e.g. in the form of going public, had been established as a business already in 2004 and has operated as such ever since (see more on Facebook's evo-lution in Section 3). Hence, even Wikipedians, who are not representative of the general public since they are especially active contributors to the participatory web with a particular interest in Facebook (see Section 2),

either were not aware of the business aspect of Facebook or did not consider it essential for their debates or the encyclopaedic representation. This suggests that the general public might have been even less aware of Facebook-business or might not have considered this fact particularly important. Moreover, the encyclopaedic article then did not aid in raising any awareness in this regard among Wikipedia's global audience, as the encyclopaedic representation of Facebook focused on the SM aspect for these first few years. In due course, Wikipedia's frontstage and backstage representation of Facebook started to reflect the dual nature of Facebook, which ultimately led to a split into two separate articles – one dedicated to Facebook-SM and one to Facebook, Inc., the business. Here, it is notable that the outwardly directed representation of Facebook lagged behind the TP debates, i.e. Wikipedians distinguished between the two referents of the term "Facebook" on the TP before they introduced the difference into the Wikipedia article.

This trend towards increasing discursive distinction between Facebook-SM and Facebook-business elicits some hope that, at least among Wikipedians, there is an increase in awareness regarding the fact that 1) many SM are provided by for-profit organisations and that SM are designed and operated in alignment with economic considerations (including, e.g. corporate censorship of content) and 2) this information ought to be reflected in the encyclopaedic treatment of SM in general, or at least Facebook specifically. However, counter to this optimistic view, the TP debates indicate that Wikipedians' distinction between Facebook-business and Facebook-SM is *not* actually founded on such critical considerations about SM and their operators. Rather, Wikipedians' reason for increased separation is the mundane fact that the company then called Facebook, Inc., owns several products and its existence is therefore "notable" enough to warrant a separate Wikipedia article.

Altogether, the Wikipedia community's treatment of Facebook suggests that for a long period after the establishment of Facebook as an SM site and as a business, its dual nature was backgrounded. Thus, the capitalist motivations driving site operations might have been equally backgrounded even for relatively tech-savvy and digitally engaged individuals, such as Wikipedians. The obfuscation of this dual nature used to be perpetuated via the Wikipedia article. As the distinction between Facebook-SM and Facebook-business was finally introduced, the motivations did not seem to have been based on a critical and full reflection on the importance of knowing and informing Wikipedia's audience about Facebook's capitalist motivations and the implications this may have, e.g. how Facebook may capitalise on users' digital labour or guide their gaze and affect their perception of the world. This is notable since, of all SM, arguably this critical awareness would have been most developed regarding Facebook as the corporation has received considerable public attention for its business aspects with critical movies, considerable publicity around the IPO,

and even a number of scandals associated with the company. Therefore, beyond this case study, one may speculate that other SM, whose for-profit purpose has received less public attention, possibly inspire even less critical awareness regarding their status as profit-oriented ventures and the associated numerous implications (see Section 2). This conclusion is supported by other studies on the perception of SM which found that the *social* element is at the forefront of users' perception and that respondents highlight SM's alleged potential to support democracy and help bring about social change (e.g. Aykurt & Sesen, 2017; Chan-Olmsted et al., 2013).

Still, and irrespective of the Wikipedia community's motivations, the Wikipedia articles were split at the end of the data collection period for this study, and the broader public that may have consulted Wikipedia, i.e. Internet users and possibly users of SM networking sites such as Facebook, was made aware of the fact that Facebook-SM is a separate entity that used to be run by a business enterprise of the same name (now called Meta). Therefore, at least then, Wikipedia readers may have developed some awareness of the business made with sociability from the Wikipedia article(s) on Facebook. However, this separation alone does not mean that the public was inspired to engage in in-depth reflections on the effects of SM as profit-oriented businesses – neither on the large scale (e.g. the potential tabloidisation of SM content due to commercialisation) nor on the individual, small scale (e.g. an SM operator's deriving profit from a user's free digital labour).

Finally, it is worth noting that this study only presents a first step towards assessing (digital) discourses about SM by focusing on a rather specialised group's discourse about one aspect regarding a specific SM and its operator. Further research in this regard could address the more general representation of Facebook on Wikipedia, e.g. concerning questions of data security and privacy issues. Moreover, research ought to address how other SM are treated on Wikipedia, and beyond this, research should examine discourses/discourse about SM and their providers more generally beyond the realm of Wikipedia.

Notes

1. With the exception of offering payable premium versions of the SM service.
2. But see Aykurt and Sesen, who examine the public reception of SM and find that the majority of respondents focus on SM's social element, i.e. SM's function as social networking sites that support democracy and can be used to bring about social change (2017).
3. In the context of this chapter, the focus is on language use as discourse rather than accounting for other semiotic systems.
4. The article "the" was removed in 2005.
5. Or the customary paper facebooks given to students of US high schools and colleges. Interestingly, Wikipedians touch on the polysemy on the TP and resolve this issue by creating a separate entry for the traditional facebook.

6. Since these other sites could not be competitors if they were not, to some degree, comparable to Facebook.
7. This sentence also shows that the earlier point raised on the TP was inserted into the article.
8. As indicated by the fact that the introductory sentence defining the article topic reads "Facebook is a social networking website".
9. I chose this instead of the first merged version to allow the article to achieve some stability, i.e. over the first few versions the article changed significantly with every edit. By 14 July, editing had returned to focusing on copy editing.
10. The opening sentence identifies Facebook as a "social networking service" instead of a "website" to account for the fact that by then Facebook is used as an app, as a messenger app or indeed as a website – as one editor puts it on the TP: "Facebook is more of a service than simply a website; the facebook.com website is (one of) the means by which people use the Facebook service".

References

Allmer, T. (2015). *Critical theory and social media: Between emancipation and commodification. Routledge advances in sociology: Vol. 144*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Anthony, L. (2020). *AntConc* [Computer software]. Anthony, Laurence. www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html

Aykurt, A. Y., & Sesen, E. (2017). Social media in social organization. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, *13*(20), 1. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2017.v13n20p1

Beverungen, A., Böhm, S., & Land, C. (2015). Free labour, social media, management: Challenging Marxist organization studies. *Organization Studies*, *36*(4), 473–489. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840614561568

Blikstad-Balas, M. (2016). "You get what you need": A study of students' attitudes towards using Wikipedia when doing school assignments. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *60*(6), 594–608. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2015.1066428

Bouvier, G. (2015). What is a discourse approach to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media: Connecting with other academic fields? *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *10*(2), 149–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2015.1042381

Brookes, G., & Harvey, K. (2016). Opening up the NHS to market: Using multimodal critical discourse analysis to examine the ongoing commercialisation of health care. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *15*(3), 288–303. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.15.3.04bro

California Secretary of State. (2020). *C2711108 Facebook, Inc*. California Secretary of State. https://businesssearch.sos.ca.gov/CBS/SearchResults?filing=&SearchType=CORP&SearchCriteria=facebook&SearchSubType=Keyword

Chan-Olmsted, S. M., Cho, M., & Lee, S. (2013). User perceptions of social media: A comparative study of perceived characteristics and user profiles by social media. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, *3*(4). https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcmt/2451

Contropedia. (2018). *Facebook – editing history*. Barcelone Media; DenSiti GN+; digital methods initiative; SciencePo médialab. www.contropedia.net/demo/index.

php?language=en&id=638009277&what=topicPage&title=Facebook&numberO
fElements=20&starttime=&endtime=&color_scale=capped&exclude_user=&me
asure=edit+based&doNotConsiderInserts=on&excludeVandalismReverts=on&e
xcludeWPaes=on&distributeWeightPerSentence=on&excludeSectionChanges=on

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). Harlow and New York: Longman.

Fisher, E., & Fuchs, C. (Eds.). (2015). *Dynamics of virtual work series. Reconsidering value and labour in the digital age*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Flanagin, A., & Metzger, M. (2011). From Encylopædia Britannica to Wikipedia. *Information, Communication & Society*, *14*(3), 355–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2010.542823

Fuchs, C. (2014a). Digital prosumption labour on social media in the context of the capitalist regime of time. *Time & Society*, *23*(1), 97–123. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X13502117

Fuchs, C. (2014b). *Social media: A critical introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fuchs, C., & Sevignani, S. (2013). What is digital labour? What is digital work? What's their difference? And why do these questions matter for understanding social media? *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique: Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, *11*(2), 237–293. https://doi.org/10.31269/triplec.v11i2.461

Fumagalli, A., Lucarelli, S., Musolino, E., & Rocchi, G. (2018). Digital labour in the platform economy: The case of Facebook. *Sustainability*, *10*(6), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10061757

Gerbaudo, P. (2014). Populism 2.0: Social media activism, the generic internet user and interactive direct democracy. In D. Trottier & C. Fuchs (Eds.), *Social Media, Politics and the State*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Ging, D., & Siapera, E. (Eds.). (2018). Special issue on online misogyny. *Feminist Media Studies*, *18*(4).

Goodson, S. (2012, March 5). If you're not paying for it, you become the product. *Forbes*. www.forbes.com/sites/marketshare/2012/03/05/if-youre-not-paying-for-it-you-become-the-product/#5b7a9ea5d6ee

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Hartley, M. (2012, February 1). Facebook files for US$5-billion IPO. *Financial Post*. https://financialpost.com/technology/facebook-files-for-ipo

Higgins, M. (2017). Mediated populism, culture and media form. *Palgrave Communications*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-017-0005-4

Holloway, J., & Keddie, A. (2019). "Make money, get money": How two autonomous schools have commercialised their services. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *40*(6), 889–901. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2018.1451305

Jarrett, K. (2016). *Feminism, labour and digital media: The digital housewife* (First issued in paperback). *Routledge studies in new media and cyberculture: Vol. 33*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, *53*(1), 59–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

KhosraviNik, M. (2017). Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS). In J. Flowerdew & J. Richardson (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

KhosraviNik, M. (2018). Social media techno-discursive design, affective communication and contemporary politics. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, *7*(1), 112. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-018-0226-y

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *14*(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2018-0003

Kopf, S. (2019). Content policies in social media critical discourse studies: The invisible hand of social media providers? *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines Journal*, *11*(1), 1–19. www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/journals/cadaad/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/01-Kopf.pdf

Lillqvist, E., & Harju, A. A. (2018). Discourse of enticement: How Facebook solicits users. *CADAAD Journal*, *10*(1), 63–80.

Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mautner, G. (2005). The entrepreneurial university: A discursive profile of a higher education buzzword. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *2*(2), 95–120. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900500283540

Mazzoleni, G., & Bracciale, R. (2018). Socially mediated populism: The communicative strategies of political leaders on Facebook. *Palgrave Communications*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0104-x

Menchen-Trevino, E., & Hargittai, E. (2011). Young adults' credibility assessment of Wikipedia. *Information, Communication & Society*, *14*(1), 24–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691181003695173

Oremus, W. (2018, April 27). Are you really the product? The history of a dangerous idea. *Slate*. https://slate.com/technology/2018/04/are-you-really-facebooks-product-the-history-of-a-dangerous-idea.html

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). Discourse and racism. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *Blackwell handbooks in linguistics: The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 372–397). Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Roxburgh, N., Guan, D., Shin, K. J., Rand, W., Managi, S., Lovelace, R., & Meng, J. (2019). Characterising climate change discourse on social media during extreme weather events. *Global Environmental Change*, *54*, 50–60. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.11.004

Sell, S. (2016). *Kommunikationsfreiheit: Emanzipatorische Diskurse im Kontext medientechnologischer Entwicklungsprozesse. Research*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-18277-9

Smythe, D. (1977). Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Politics and Social Theory*, *1*(3), 1–27.

Sun, W. (2018). A critical discourse analysis of "Minority women for Trump" campaigns on social media. In N. Bilge & M. I. Marino (Eds.), *Advances in linguistics and communication studies (ALCS) book series: Reconceptualizing new media and intercultural communication in a networked society* (pp. 303–327). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Törnberg, A., & Törnberg, P. (2016). Muslims in social media discourse: Combining topic modeling and critical discourse analysis. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *13*, 132–142. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2016.04.003

Tufekci, Z. (2013). "Not this one": Social movements, the attention economy, and microcelebrity networked activism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *57*(7), 848–870. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479369

Unger, J., Wodak, R., & KhosraviNik, M. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 276–291). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

van Leeuwen, T. (1996). The representation of social actors. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis* (pp. 32–70). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Wikimedia Foundation. (2011). *Wikipedia editors study: Results from the editor survey, April 2011*. Wikimedia Foundation. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/76/Editor_Survey_Report_-_April_2011.pdf

Wodak, R. (2001). What CDA is about: A summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 1–14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Index

Note: Numbers in **bold** indicate a table. Numbers in *italics* indicate a figure on the corresponding page.