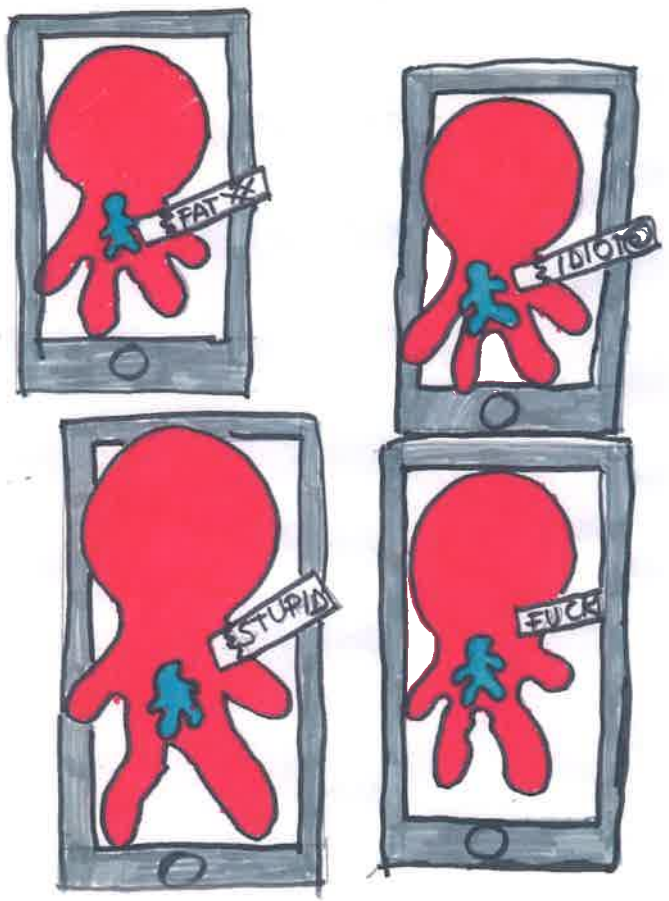
Homing in on HATE: Critical Discourse Studies of Hate Speech, Discrimination and Inequality in the Digital Age

Giuseppe Balirano & Bronwen Hughes (eds)



PAOLO LOFFREDO

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Il presente volume ha adottato un sistema di valutazione dei testi basato sulla revisione paritaria e *anonima* (double blind *peer review*).

In copertina: *Hate speech*, di Matteo Cosentino

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CONTENTS

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

In what now seems to be a far-removed moment in the distant past, the advent of the internet and attendant digital technologies was initially celebrated with immense optimism as an opportunity for novel and highly versatile forms of online communicative practices. The digital ecosphere was destined to challenge the traditional role of mainstream information outlets while fostering the development of unprecedented democratic forms of global citizenship.

The fluid process of digital emancipation has indeed opened up new terrains for participatory culture, offering significant opportunities in the fields of education, business, and socialization. Moreover, in recent years we have witnessed a proliferation of social media hashtags designed to counter forms of political and social inequality. Amongst others, the #MeToo and #Blacklivesmatter movements have respectively challenged the *status quo* by calling out sexual misconduct and racism.

It was also initially believed that social networking sites would offer a level playing field where, should one so wish, issues of race, religion, sex, gender, age, physical ability or appearance, could be circumvented and rendered irrelevant. A myth of digital democracy for the more gullible cybernauts.

Sadly, we are all aware that today that field is far from level, the digital revolution has paved the way for language aggression, violence, and unrivalled displays of hatred. The double-edged sword of anonymity allows online haters, trolls and keyboard warriors to take their cause seriously and devote time and energy to the task of choosing and targeting their designated victims while rounding up others who share in their convictions.

Thus, the advent of new technologies has not simply enabled discriminatory practices to move *tout court* into a new environment, it has honed the very nature of hate speech through specific forms of harassment such as doxxing, trolling, cyberstalking, revenge porn, swatting, and others, each of which possesses its own set of ever-evolving rules and codes.

When dealing with the issue of hate speech, be it online or offline, there appear to be two conflicting principles at stake: freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination. Both values are held in high esteem in liberal, Western democratic societies, though the term 'freedom' often resonates louder

than the word hate, and the idea of restricting free speech stands as a threat to an open exchange of thoughts, opinions and views. Less attention is granted to the fact that hate speech often forces the discriminated against individuals or categories to retire from public debate thus effectively curtailing their democratic rights. While accepting that the value of free speech and expression is undeniable, the unbridled, uncontrolled manifestations of those who use the cyberspace as a vehicle to engage in hateful, discriminatory acts cannot be tolerated in civil society.

However, while national and supranational legislation, together with the dominant social media regulators, have attempted to take steps to tackle hateful content, they have mostly been unsuccessful. Many forms of online abuse are not recognised as harmful or are not classified as hate crimes across laws and legislation and, of course, what qualifies as hate speech *per se* also varies across countries and continents.

The definition of hate speech online and the laws curtailing such forms of speech are in a constant flux due to the supranational character of the internet, the slippery nature of online harassment, and the porous relationship between actual violence and discriminatory speech. Besides the hateful messages propagated across social networking platforms and micro-blogging sites, the recent rise of live-streamed hate has also captured public attention forcing governments and internet providers to contend with the issue of how to prevent and punish such online activity.

As many of the contributors highlight throughout this volume, the term 'hate' itself is extremely difficult to define, stemming as it does from the extremes of socio-psychopathic impulses, an inability to regulate emotion adequately, or merely from a lack of empathy. In some cases, the denigrators do not even hate their victims, they are merely pliable individuals who feel the need to emulate the sentiments of a strong cohort of denigrators in order to gain 'insider' status. Such individuals, however, are no less to blame than the hate mongers themselves, since they actively contribute to an echo chamber which serves to amplify and reinforce the hatred deployed. Whether they truly detest their targets or merely emulate the apparently dominant group, the aim of haters, be they online or offline, is to relegate the victims to a generic category of 'others', and in hate speech the other is always the enemy. The concept of 'Othering' is linked to a number of analogous dichotomous segregational categorizations such as inclusion/exclusion,

superiority/inferiority and dominance/subordination. The differences between the 'us' belonging to the dominant grouping, and the 'them' banished to the out-group are magnified in hate speech: the insiders are safe, legitimate, normal and rational, the outsiders are dangerous, different, threatening and antagonistic. As Lister states: othering is a "process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between "us" and "them" – between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained" (2004: 101).

Although the focus of this volume concerns, in the main, the digital environment, the editors and contributors are all well aware that hate speech online does not occur in a virtual vacuum, its effects are dramatically real for those individuals who are on the receiving end. Cyberbullying and hate speech impinge upon the lives of individuals from social, economic, professional and psychological standpoints (see, amongst others, Van Dijk 1987; Delgado 1982; Graumann 1998; Tsesis 2002; Klein 2010; Herz & Molnar 2012; Sindoni 2017, 2018; Fruttaldo 2020), and increase the sense of fear and vulnerability of entire communities.

The ever-encroaching discourse of online hate has, to date, only been partially mapped, and available studies have mostly focused on forms of misogynous attacks in the male-dominated online tech and gamer communities or against feminist activists (Potts 2015; Hardaker and McGlashan 2016). Additionally, there seems to be a tendency to forget that ongoing, low-level hate speech is far more common than the dramatically violent hate crimes that capture public imagination.

Whether by investigating the ripple effect triggered by a single controversial tweet, the manipulation of gender ideologies in ethnic radio discourse, or the re-semiotization of the 'city' as a nurturing space for Jihadist hate narratives, this book intends to address, from a wide and comprehensive multimodal perspective, the prevailing gaps in research literature and the dire need to contend with rampant vitriolic discourses today.

Chapters overview

The chapters in the 'Homing in on Hate' volume are presented in two strongly inter-related sections examining hate speech in a media context (1. *Hate speech in the media)*, and from a legal and institutional point of view (2.

Hate speech, institutions, and the law). Although each chapter focuses on one main instantiation of discriminatory discourse, a number of intersectional themes are also dealt with within the chapters and across the volume. The authors draw on examples from multifarious discourses of hate, spanning 'old style' media such as radio talk and newer, more technological, social media platforms. The aim of the volume is to showcase original, ground-breaking research that serves to frame the current scenario while, hopefully, shaping future perspectives.

In the first chapter of the 'media' section of the volume, "Fat Chance! Digital Critical Discourse Studies on Discrimination against Fat People", Balirano and Hughes examine the manner in which online twitter prosumers (Ritzer/Jurgenson 2010) discursively assemble and unite around the theme of 'fat female bodies' and, by exploiting the affiliation devices available on social networking systems (Zappavigna 2014a; Zappavigna/Martin 2018), either shame or praise those who are considered (or who consider themselves to be) overweight.

Over a five-year timespan, the authors investigate a number of discursive instantiations reflecting highly critical attitudes towards 'fat' individuals/bodies in two geographically adjacent contexts, specifically the UK and France. As Balirano and Hughes illustrate, negative fat-shaming discourses are inevitably linked to other significant facets present in both Anglo and Francophone contemporary cultures such as hatred expressed against minority groups and in particular against women and race. The interconnection of lesser represented social identities becomes a common discursive tool through which hate is propagated, drawing its strength from previously well-trodden hate-based tropes in order to easily reach and broaden the catchment area of online fat shaming.

In Chapter two, entitled "Discriminatory Speech in Ethnic Radio Talk Shows: The Case of the Spanish-Language Radio Station WKKB FM Latina 100.3", the author Angela Pitassi investigates gender ideologies with respect to heteronormative and prejudicial discourses instantiated by hosts and callers in a Spanish language radio program. To this end, the interventions of hosts and callers are contrasted across two different periods: the first preceding February 2019, when the radio show was hosted by DJ Gato, a Latino male in his 50s; the second, running from March 2019 to the present day, with a younger team of radio hosts made up of two male and two female co-hosts. The study

compares and contrasts the top-down strategies (employed by DJ Gato and the other hosts) and the bottom-up strategies (used by the callers) to delineate identity-building strategies. Throughout the interactions, special attention is paid to gender identity performance and to the reproduction of hegemonic gender roles and ideologies, in order to ascertain whether or not such exchanges constitute hate speech.

In Chapter three "Online Abuse and Disability Hate Speech: A Discursive Analysis of Newspaper Comment Boards on Harvey's Law' written by Maria Cristina Nisco, we move into the field of hate speech online addressed at people with disabilities. This chapter focuses on a recent event that drew extensive media coverage: the Katie Price petition to make online abuse a specific criminal offence, which ensued from vitriolic online attacks against Price's disabled son Harvey. The study concentrates on the online comment boards of some of the main British tabloid newspapers and seeks out instances of hate speech against Harvey and/or disabled people in the online posts. As the author states, such comments can offer a lens to frame public attitudes towards hate speech, located as they are at the intersection between a discourse dimension and a social dimension. Indeed, such reactions may offer interesting insight into people's beliefs and views, reflective as they are of some attitudes and values present within British society towards disability hate speech.

Chapter four written by Angela Zottola and entitled "When Freedom of Speech Turns into Freedom to Hate. Hateful Speech and 'Othering' in Conservative Political Propaganda in the USA" leads us to a terrain that has become sadly familiar in recent years, that of right-wing hate speech. By focusing on the live-streamed lecture-videos of the conservative political commentator Ben Shapiro, the author illustrates how othering tactics and hate speech are linguistically and discursively constructed to disseminate Shapiro's unprogressive views, while masquerading as free speech. An in-depth investigation of the commentator's non-verbal and rhetorical cues allows the author to illustrate how, although Shapiro never endorses physical violence explicitly, by demonizing and dehumanizing leftist people and by publicly making fun of others, he validates a type of behavior that is aggressive and brutal.

With chapter five "Hate Speech and Covid-19 Risk Communication: A Critical Corpus-based Analysis of Risk and Xenophobia in Twitter" written by Katherine E. Russo, we return to the ambit of micro-blogging sites though

with a wholly different focus. Building on the premise that epidemics are not just an incidental but a predictable trigger of fear, hate, mistrust, and or/ solidarity, the study investigates epidemics as possible sites of intolerance and/ or encounter, connectivity and conviviality. As the author states, in order to communicate covid-19 related risks, online news media coverage of the outbreak often resorts to feelings related to eco-social insecurity such as fear and anxiety. Such feelings arguably engender the promotion of a set of common values which result in hate speech directed at the affected populations. The study therefore investigates whether hate speech has emerged during the pandemic in correlation to fear appeals in risk communication discourse. Russo's chapter provides a thorough analysis of the remediation of covid-19 risk communication discourse in a specialized twitter corpus, and aims to draw some conclusions on how transnational/local news media channel information on epidemics and increase/decrease fear, hate and distrust and or solidarity.

Chapter six "'To the Streets'. Deploying the City as the Object of Hate Crimes in Terrorist Discourse" written by Margaret Rasulo, combines the field of visual imagery and multimodal analysis with the highly conceptual theory of metaphor. Rasulo examines the connection between hate crime, specifically terrorism and terrorist attacks, and the metaphor of the city which, in terrorist online products, is resemiotized as a nurturing space for Jihadist hate narratives. By analyzing a collection of 300 images of city settings extracted from 264 articles taken from *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* online magazines, the study provides evidence that the violence-ridden narratives embedded in verbal and visual resources depict cities as the custodians of the Jihad hate seed, and as unconstrained signature spaces to conquer and destroy.

In Chapter seven "'The war is over". Militarising the Language and Framing the Nation in Post-Brexit Discourse", the authors Massimiliano Demata and Marianna Zummo select Nigel Farage's 24th of December 2020 "The war is over" tweet to illustrate the militarization of political language in digital contexts in the post-Brexit discourse. The authors illustrate how such militarization, which is often constitutive of hate speech, contributes to framing an 'exclusive' concept of the nation whose meaning is reproduced and circulated (as well as challenged) throughout society. The chapter analyses the ideological value of Farage's claim which, in the week following its publication, attracted a growing thread of comments by people who embraced or rejected its ideological value. Demata and Zummo interrogate the corpus of users'

comments, addressing the performative quality of digital political discourse, which takes into account the personalization of politics and the contestation, gamification and derision of/in antagonistic (polarized) exchanges.

Chapter eight opens up the second part of the volume entitled 'Hate speech, Institutions and the Law'. In her contribution "BOOM HATE SPEEEEEEEEEECH": Languaging anti hate speech legislation in Ireland" Mariavita Cambria investigates the impact of anti hate legislation in the comments-on-the-article section of a number of Irish online newspapers and newsites. The consultation document "Legislating for hate speech and hate crime in Ireland" was launched on the 17th of December 2020 by the Irish Minister for Justice Helen McEntee in an attempt to create a basis for hate crime legislation in the Republic. In order to ascertain whether consensus about countering hate speech effectively circulated among the population in online environments, Cambria's study investigates the attitudes towards the drafting and publication of the Irish report by analysing the lexicogrammatical features and semiotic resources of a corpus of texts comprising the comments to online articles and newsites.

In Chapter nine "When Hate Reaches its Peak. The Italian Case: Hate Comments Against the Anti-discrimination "Zan" Draft Law", Raffaele Pizzo investigates the linguistic patterns reproduced by Italian Facebook users when commenting upon a new anti-discrimination draft law, also known as the Zan law. In his two separate sub-corpora, the author examines the comments to posts published by both right-wing and left-wing politicians. By paying close attention to the way ideas are expressed and deployed within each of the left/right groupings Pizzo provides an insight into these divergent ideologies and the way they can constitute fertile breeding ground for hatred. Two further objectives of Pizzo's study are, on the one hand, to illustrate the need for app developers to improve the moderation procedure applied to user-generated content, and on the other, to exemplify a useful research path for social media data retrieval.

Chapter 10 "Resisting Hate Speech: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the *Stop Funding Hate* Boycott Campaign in UK" by Maria Grazia Sindoni investigates the Stop Funding Hate boycott platform launched in the UK in 2016. The aim of this initiative was to counter the discourses of hatred and discrimination that some British media outlets include in their publications in order to increase their sales. By examining the visual, verbal, aural and

overall design strategies adopted by the Stop Funding Hate organization to convince advertisers to pull their support from British media outlets, Sindoni illustrates how the website succeeds in "making hate unprofitable". In her chapter, the author also highlights the possible pedagogical implications of campaigns that set out to deconstruct hate and fear speech by means of boycotting, and suggests that further research should address the question as to whether and to what extent other resistance strategies can feasibly be put in place in the context of fully functioning and profit-driven hate and fear powerhouses.

With chapter eleven "The Migrant *Invasion*: Love Speech Against Hate Speech and the Violation of Language Rights", Stefania Taviano brings the volume to a close. By examining the denigratory labelling practices enacted by Italian and British politicians in a selection of online newspaper articles, the author illustrates the performative function of mainstream discourses regarding displaced people, and the extent to which they affect the representation of their identities and language rights. In the second part of her chapter, Taviano argues that there is currently a crucial need for 'love speech' as new words and a new language of/about migration are of paramount importance when addressing hate speech. By putting forward alternative ways of conceiving citizenship, they can contribute to the safeguard of displaced people's human rights.

Prosaic though it may seem, as editors we felt it was important to close the volume on a hopeful if not positive note. Stefania Taviano's investigation of a love speech campaign that promulgates new terminology and sensitizes us all to the social and political significance of words and language struck the right chord.

We sincerely thank all those who have contributed to this volume. Despite the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused numerous setbacks and difficulties in personal and professional lives across the board, our contributors were all willing to participate in this project. All have produced original, groundbreaking studies that serve to frame the current scenario and shape future perspectives on hate speech, discrimination and inequality in the digital age.

The Editors

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SECTION I
HATE SPEECH AND THE MEDIA

Giuseppe Balirano and Bronwen Hughes

FAT CHANCE! DIGITAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FAT PEOPLE[1]

"Just put her down like a bad animal" / "Abats la grosse bête!"
(Twitter)

1. Introduction

The exergue located above was selected for its impact value and for the fact that it rapidly introduces readers to the vitriolic phrasing that they will encounter throughout this study. Indeed, a prospective reader could be excused for thinking that these exhortations, quoted from our corpus, were addressed to big game hunters or advocates of humane euthanasia, individuals whose task (or pleasure) consists in slaughtering animals or releasing them from suffering. The noun 'animal' and its French equivalent 'bête' serve to reinforce this initial impression, whereas the adverbial 'just' at the beginning of the English quote emphatically points to the simplicity of the gesture, and, were it not for the fact that the feminine object pronoun 'her' and the prepositional phrase 'like a bad animal' indicate that the category of reference is indeed human, our subject matter would be of a wholly different nature.

The metaphor of big game hunting used in the title may not be as farfetched as it might initially appear seeing as both quotes also establish a dyadic relationship between a perpetrator and a victim, and in both excerpts the act of killing is justified by the negative appraisal of the prey: 'bad' in the English version, 'grosse' in the French.

In an attempt to gauge the virulence of the 'put her down like' comment in the English tweet, we carried out a rapid search using the Twitter search box to see whether this expression appeared in any other streams; we found it twice and in both cases it served as a condemnation of individuals who had

[1] Although both authors worked on the paper collaboratively, Giuseppe Balirano is responsible for sections 3 and 5.1, and the final remarks (section 6); Bronwen Hughes is responsible for sections 1, 2, 4 and 5.2.

committed violent crimes. In the first tweet, it was used with reference to a woman accused of paedophilia who "should be put down like a sick animal"; in the second, to an armed gunman who had attempted to rob a young woman and, once more "should be put down like a rabid animal".

The two excerpts employed in our heading not only represent particularly virulent examples of the fat-shaming streams and tweets which make up our English/French corpora, they also recall the bestial connotations often associated with large-bodied individuals. The fact that similar expressions are employed with reference both to people accused of heinous crimes and people whose weight is considered excessive, highlights the considerable degree of animosity directed at the 'fat' category.[2]

It is also worth noticing that the offenders mentioned in the condemnatory 'crime' tweets – the female paedophile and the armed gunman – are seen as deserving to be euthanized like 'sick' or 'rabid' animals. However harsh it may seem, putting down a sick, old or rabid animal is often considered a necessary, humane measure. Conversely, the female target in the English fat-shaming tweet needs to be put down like a 'bad' animal. Thus, besides the correlation between large bodies and an animal-like appearance, the fat woman mentioned in the tweet is additionally guilty of behavioural impropriety or moral failings. In the French tweet, the object of hate is the 'bête': a mere animal, a stupid person, or, in combination with the adjective 'grosse', a fat and monstrous being, as Margrit Shildrick states: "Monsters of course show themselves in many different and culturally specific ways, but what is monstrous about them

[2] When discussing body weight, size and bulk, it is crucial to be aware of the terms which are open to selection: disregarding the minor terms such as 'plump', 'hefty', 'rotund' or 'chubby', whose connotations are friendlier and less offensive, in an era of fat activism, the choice between using the words 'fat', 'overweight' or 'obese' has become increasingly political and contentious. Whereas the word 'fat' has been reclaimed by a number of activists, the term 'obese' has a pathologizing effect and appears to indicate that fat people are in need of medical intervention, much as previously occurred with homosexuality and hysteria. In turn, the term overweight – just like underweight or normoweight – suggests that there is a normative/ideal weight to which each of us should aspire. In line with Marilyn Wann (2009: xii), we believe that "The 'O-words' are neither neutral nor benign" (Wann 2009: xii), and have therefore opted to use the term 'fat' rather than any other adjective belonging to the vast repertoire of descriptive terms, in the belief that it is more objective and devoid of the connotations which characterize the other options.

is most often the form of their embodiment. They are, in an important sense, what Donna Haraway (1992a) calls 'inappropriate/d others' in that they challenge and resist normative human being, in the first instance, by their aberrant corporeality" (Shildrick 2002: 12). Though it is claimed that weapons will wreak more havoc than words, the devastating effect of these discriminatory tweets should not be underestimated.

This connection between physical lapsing and moral deficiencies is a common theme throughout our corpus, it is as though the lack of rigour which characterizes the structure of fat bodies osmotically seeps into the mind depriving it of the necessary discipline and will power and causing it to be weak, lazy and stupid. As Deborah Lupton aptly maintains: "In popular and expert representations, fat people are portrayed as having 'let themselves go' – not only literally but also symbolically. Their bodies are viewed as grotesque, uncontained, physical evidence of their inability to control their desires and greed. Their flesh bulges, burgeons forth, takes up more space than other bodies, provoking negative attention in its excessiveness" (Lupton 2018: 2).

Let us briefly go back to our initial image of big game hunting, whereas in such a context the blood lust triggered by the activity itself may justify the homicidal sentiment, when addressed to fat people, we are clearly in the presence of what is known as 'hate speech', and in the online micro-blogging context to which Twitter pertains, 'online hate speech', object of this study.

As one of the primordial human sentiments, hate is an umbrella term whose elusiveness lies in the fact that it can stem from a myriad of different negative feelings from intense dislike, superiority, disgust, recrimination, inadequacy, to shame or fear. These sentiments can all trigger violent actions/reactions with dire consequences. Hate can be directed outwards in a process of 'othering' raising an insurmountable divide between ourselves and that execrable other being or category, or inwards towards a despicable trait we possess yet abhor. Whatever the source, it is, and has always been, an intrinsic part of human nature and, as William Hazlett affirmed way back in 1826 in his 'Pleasure of Hating': "Without something to hate, we should lose the very spring of thought and action. Life would turn to a stagnant pool, were it not ruffled by the jarring interests, the unruly passions of men. The white streak in our own fortunes is brightened (or just rendered visible) by making all around it as dark as possible; so the rainbow paints its form upon the cloud. Is it pride? Is it envy? Is it the force of contrast? Is it weakness or malice? But so it is, that

there is a secret affinity, a hankering after evil in the human mind, and that it takes a perverse, but a fortunate delight in mischief, since it is a never-failing source of satisfaction" (Hazlett 1998 (1826): 102/103).

The verbal discrimination or hate speech directed against fat people, differs slightly from other types of minority discrimination. The forms of intolerance directed at stigmatised or marginalised groups, canonically in terms of race, religion, sex, gender, disability, or age stem from the perpetrators belief systems which feel the need to create an 'us' and 'them' divide where 'us' is inevitably, for reasons best known to the perpetrator, better than 'them'; fat-shaming not only "attempts to re-create simultaneously the threatened (real or imagined) hegemony of the perpetrator's group and the 'appropriate' subordinate identity of the victim's group" (Perry 2001: 10), it also allows the fat hater to claim moral high ground as, under the guise of providing weight loss help and advice, s/he can express damning judgements while enjoying feelings of equanimity and altruism. As Lupton clarifies: "The stigma and social ostracism and discrimination incurred by fat embodiment is similar in many ways to that of having the 'wrong' sexual performance, ethnicity or race, skin colour or religion, or having a disability. One major difference between these attributes and that of fatness, however, is that fatness is viewed in normative culture as self-incurred, as a bodily feature that can be altered if only the fat person had enough self-control and self-discipline. It is often assumed, therefore, that fat people are deserving of the discrimination they suffer because they brought it upon themselves by allowing their bodies to become fat" (Lupton 2018: 72).

Should this not suffice, the discriminated individuals are often vulnerable to the point of feeling responsible for their condition and turning their perpetrators' abhorrence against themselves, as Goffman states: "The stigmatized individual tends to hold the same beliefs about identity that we do; this is a pivotal fact [...] Further, the standards he has incorporated from the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought to be. Shame becomes a central possibility, arising from the individual's perception of one of his own attributes as being a defiling thing to possess, and one he can readily see himself as not possessing" (Goffman 1990 (1963): 17).

Thus, fat people stand both as victims of outward-facing violence and perpetrators when the violence is directed inwards. This double-edged sword

epitomizes what Bourdieu refers to as "symbolic violence" which "is instituted through the adherence that the dominated cannot fail to grant to the dominant (and therefore to the domination)" (Bourdieu 1990 (1977): 35). He further states "When the dominated apply to what dominates them schemes that are the product of domination, or, to put it another way, when their thoughts and perceptions are structured in accordance with the very structures of the relation of domination that is imposed on them, their acts of cognition are, inevitably, acts of recognition, submission" (Bourdieu 1990 (1977): 13).

The theme of self-deprecatory versus other-deprecatory fat-shaming stands as the macro-discourse which, in our analysis of online fat-shaming tweets, encapsulates a number of other micro-categories of discrimination. After outlining the factors underlying the so-called 'obesity epidemic', the more technical features of micro-blogging sites, and the methodological framework we have chosen to employ, we will turn to the analysis of the cross-cultural corpus.

2. 'Globesity' Discourse

The so-called 'obesity epidemic' first hit media headlines in the 1990s, turning weight gain into a pathologised discourse accompanied by pedagogical public health messages around fitness, nutrition and body size. This was due, at least in part, to the advent of bariatric surgery and to a lowering of the cut off lines for weight categorization within the Body Mass Index (BMI) classification which catapulted many overweight people into the obese grouping. The very label 'obese' is bestowed upon individuals on the basis of their BMI measurement, a mathematical formula which produces a figure considered arbitrarily 'acceptable' depending on whether it is situated above or below a cut off point. Raising or lowering the cut off point clearly designates a larger or smaller proportion of a given population as obese, irrespective of cultural, social or lifestyle variables, or indeed the fact that some populations are taller, shorter, heavier-boned etc. Obesity is classified as a chronic disease by the WHO. If an individual's BMI classifies him/her as obese, he or she is then automatically considered to be ill, irrespective of his or her actual state of health. As is often the case, the economic benefits that can be reaped from large bodies in the medical, dietary and retail businesses both feed and are nurtured by considerable media exposure and, subsequently, thanks also to the

expansion of Social Networking Systems (SNSs), they have progressively generated discriminatory discourses and the consequent validation of fat-phobic practices. As Lupton affirms: "Social media allow the vilification and stigmatizing of fat people to intensify and be more easily distributed to ever-larger audiences" (Lupton 2018: vii).

Running parallel to the media hype on 'Globesity', it is also throughout the late 20th and early 21st century that a growing body of research progressively emerged to provide alternative perspectives on obesity and fat; within this literature scholars underline the contentious political discourses surrounding fat and invariably allowing for a single biased reading of the term. With the emergence of critical obesity studies and critical weight studies at the turn of the century, the issue of weight acquired a small but significant niche in the fields of sociology, critical pedagogical studies (Cameron 2015; Gard and Pluim 2014), women's studies and, to a lesser degree, linguistics. Although the methodologies differ, the scholars contributing to these fields are "united in their refusal to simply reproduce/legitimate/endorse biomedical narratives that would have us 'tackle' this putative problem" (Monaghan et al. 2013: 253). Progressively, research aiming to disrupt the dominant weight-based oppression has begun to enter mainstream literature in the field of social studies. In the first decade of the 21st century, the field of Fat Studies emerged with the radical intent of loosening the noose of fat oppression, the aim being to "[d]o something daring and bold" (Rothblum and Solovay 2009: 2). The majority of scholars working in the field, both at its inception and today, are influenced by feminist and queer studies due to the fact that fat, besides still being a feminist issue, is highly intersectional and strongly confutes the arbitrary, yet pervasive, young, white, male, thin, Eurocentric and hetero diktat.

The dominant female beauty ideal emphasises slenderness, and as women are typically judged more by their appearances than men, the social pressure to be thin is especially high for women (Chapkis 1988; Wolf 1991; Bordo 1993). It could be argued that obese women are stigmatised on at least two fronts: first, because of their sheer size, and second because they fail to comply with the canonical ideal of thinness established for the female body. Social pressure regarding physical appearance and body shape/weight impinges to a greater extent on women compared to men, and it has been demonstrated that women are discriminated against at far lower BMI levels than their male counterparts, as Fikkan and Rothblum state: "Across numerous settings, fat women fare

worse than thinner women and worse than men, whether the men are fat or thin. Women experience multiple deleterious outcomes as a result of weight bias that have a significant impact on health, quality of life, and socioeconomic outcomes" (Fikkan and Rothblum 2012: 577) and as the leading French anti-fat-shaming activists Daria Marx and Eva Perez-Bello state: "Fat men are statistically as numerous as fat women in France, but they only represent 15% of the candidates for bariatric surgery. How can this gap be explained? It would seem that men are subjected to fat-shaming to a lesser degree than women. If an overweight man does suffer when exposed to the gaze of others, he does not seem to undergo systemic discrimination. He is not less likely to be hired or to receive good medical care because of his excess weight. The image of an overweight (male) CEO does not raise any problems; on the other hand, an obese (female) sales manager still seems to evoke an idea of neglect or lack of will power" (Marx and Perez-Bello, 2018: 134 – my translation)[3]. Although it is surprising that the CEO role mentioned in the quote is automatically allocated to a man, whereas the hierarchically inferior sales manager is a woman, the two authors then convincingly add: "Being a fat woman means standing at the crossroads of several oppressions. Sexism and fat-shaming happily hold hands when it comes to dictums regarding the body and beauty. But equally the role of a woman in society. An acceptable woman must be appropriately sexual. Neither too much of a bitch nor too much of a prude, a good mother, but also a slightly independent woman who goes out to work"[4] (Marx and Perez-Bello 2018: 135 - my translation).

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[3] Original French text: "Les hommes gros sont statistiquement aussi nombreux que les femmes grosses en France, mais ne représentent que 15% des candidats à la chirurgie de l'obésité. Comment expliquer cet écart ? il semble que les hommes soient moins sujets à la grossophobie que les femmes. Si un homme en surpoids peut souffrir du regard des autres, il ne semble pas endurer de discrimination systémique. Il ne sera pas moins embauché ou moins bien soigné à cause de son surpoids. L'image d'un PDG en surpoids ne pose pas trop de problème; en revanche, une directrice commerciale obèse semble encore renvoyer l'image d'un laisser-aller ou d'un manque de volonté".

[4] Original French text: "Etre une femme grosse, c'est être au carrefour de plusieurs oppressions. Le sexisme et la grossophobie se tiennent allègrement la main lorsqu'il s'agit des injonctions sur le corps et la beauté. Mais également sur le rôle d'une femme dans la société. Une femme acceptable doit être correctement sexuelle. Ni trop salope ni trop prude, une bonne mère, mais une femme un peu indépendante qui travaille".

Being fat therefore exposes a woman to multiple forms of discrimination: besides sizeism and sexism, she is also victimized in the home and in the workplace, and even her ability to be a good mother is under observation. It is no wonder that such zealous external scrutiny turns inwards, forcing fat people to observe themselves through the critical eyes of others only to find themselves lacking in every single aspect of their lives. Such self-deprecatory criticism necessarily undermines any confidence a fat individual may have in herself and progressively brings them to the point of espousing the sentiments of fat-haters: "Although it is not acceptable for a girl to speak highly of herself, it is acceptable for her to say self-deprecating things and have others correct her. Consider for a moment the ramifications of this practice. If one of the only appropriate avenues for a girl to gain praise from her peers is to criticize herself (specifically, to comment on how fat she is or how she hates her hair or thighs), what effect might this linguistic strategy have on an already fragile sense of self? Putting oneself down reinforces, rather than corrects, what one already feels is wrong with oneself. In effect, it makes it worse. It is important to consider that "I'm so fat", a seemingly innocuous phrase, has potentially far-reaching implications" (Nichter 2000: 55/56).

Whether the shaming activity is directed towards the other or towards the self, the rapid rise in SNSs which on the one hand has led to new, fruitful opportunities for the presentation of self, online learning, and new relationships, has also, as will be illustrated in the following section, given rise to an ever-increasing loss of privacy, cyber bullying, and online hate speech.

3. Online fat shaming discourse

Contemporary digital media have considerable potential to empower minority or stigmatised groups by granting them access to public, political, and institutional dynamics. They provide the unrepresented or underrepresented parts of society with a voice through which a degree of visibility can be achieved. New forms of online communication, in fact, now challenge the traditional role of mass media and information outlets. "One of the results of the rise of sites such as Facebook is that they have transformed the ways in which people can interact. They do not simply offer an alternative way of engaging in the same forms of communicative interaction that were available prior to their emergence; they also provide a number of notably different

communicative dynamics and structures" (Seargeant and Tagg 2014: 4). Unfortunately, this 'digital revolution' has also led to prejudicial attacks against lesser represented groups trying to make their way into public spheres traditionally associated with power and authority. While new challenges and opportunities are arising for intercultural dialogue vis-à-vis the evolving global communication and SNSs, novel phenomena that disrupt such a vital exchange have simultaneously emerged, encouraged by the anonymity afforded by online platforms where ideas, feelings or thoughts hard to voice out loud, can be freely externalised. Thus, the affordances of digital media technologies also serve to replicate and perpetuate the social discrimination and inequalities that people already experience in 'real' life, with the added factor that the cloak of invisibility and the power of ambient affiliation serve to rally others with similar convictions and create a no-holds barred environment.

Hence, while the collapsing of the very notion of context in the contemporary digital environment brings about an unrestrained flux of information, a dynamic exchange of opinions, and a relatively unlimited interaction among users, specific communities are increasingly becoming the target of hate, made possible by the reproduction of hegemonic discourse on online platforms. Cyberbullying tweets are fuelling online hate and generalised feelings of intolerance towards ethnic minorities, women, LGBTI people, and lately fat people too.

Numerous studies in the social and economic sciences have found that hate speech can have a severe social and economic impact on the victims, the groups they belong to, and society at large (Van Dijk 1987; Delgado 1993; Calvert 2006; Graumann 1998; Leets 2002; Tsesis 2002; Dharmapala and McAdams 2005; Klein 2017; Herz and Molnar 2012). Hate speech and cyberbullying represent a threat to the life of individuals and increase the sense of fear and vulnerability of entire communities. Yet, definitions of what constitutes hate speech towards certain more general groups, namely fat people, differ from country to country, and consequently there is a significant under-reporting of the phenomenon. The communication of hate is far from linear and unproblematic as it is often difficult to distinguish hate speech from general profanity. Indeed, the definition of hate speech is broad and vaguely includes expressions that are 'hurtful', 'harmful' or that will 'incite harm' or 'promote or propagate hatred' (Brown 2017a, 2017b).

Of course, it could be argued that defining this particular category of crime

is especially problematic due to the subjectivity associated with conceptualising hate and the inconsistencies inherent to legal, institutional, and academic definitions. As previously mentioned, compared to traditional media, the internet not only possesses an unprecedented potential for multi-directional communication; it also presents far lower entry barriers. While this may be of great benefit for free, public discourse and the ensuing democratic processes, it also encourages the growth of what Jacob Rowbottom refers to as "low level digital speech" (Rowbottom 2012).

From a legal point of view, it is only in recent years that, across Europe, codes of conduct and normative rulings have begun to be adopted to stem the vitriolic flow of online offence, known as online hate speech. In May 2016, the European Union established a non-binding Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online together with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube. The four digital platforms agreed to evaluate the majority of users' notifications within a 24-hour time frame and remove, when necessary, those messages considered unlawful due to their hateful content. Between 2018 and early 2019 Instagram, Google+, Snapchat, Dailymotion and jeuxvideo.com also agreed to the conditions laid down by the Code of Conduct.

Germany is considered the trailblazer in terms of online anti-hate legislation, the Network Enforcement Act, known as NetzDG was enforced as of January 2018. The law applies to 'social media companies', though the term is used very broadly, to also include all profit-making internet platforms that are intended to allow users to share online content with other users or make it publicly available. Again, hateful or manifestly unlawful content has to be removed within 24 hours of receiving a complaint.

As for the two countries directly concerned by this study, it is interesting to note that both the UK and France are currently in the throes of implementing their online hate speech legislation. In France, the 'Loi Avia contre la cyberhaine' should again oblige online platform operators and search engines to remove illicit content (incitement to hatred on the basis of race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender or disability) within 24 hours of notification by one or several users pending a heavy fine. The law was adopted by the National Assembly on the 13th May 2020 and should have been integrally enforced as of July 2020. To date however, the French Constitutional Council has declared that a number of provisions infringe upon freedom of speech and communication and the bill now has to undergo considerable revision. In the

UK, The Online Harms Reduction Regulator Bill is awaiting its second reading in the House of Lords. The Bill establishes that any company which facilitates the sharing of user generated content or user interaction will have a statutory duty of care to protect its patrons from the harm incurred by hate speech.

The above-mentioned pieces of legislation all safeguard a number of protected categories, yet hate directed at fat people is never mentioned although, as our corpus will illustrate, it is particularly virulent in the two nations being investigated. Policies and regulations still suffer from gaps and inconsistencies in the general understanding of hate speech due to the absence of a standardised linguistic mapping of such forms.

Delineating the fine line between sarcasm/humour/irony and offence and curtailing the freedom of speech of online prosumers (Toffler 1980), may smack of censorship and prohibition, but it is clear that without some form of legislative or social contouring, internet haters will not desist. The systematic lack of hate speech analysis in linguistic studies may stem from the failure to detect it in news and social media and, consequently, to take action.

As regards the dearth of published materials on the specific topic of 'fat-shaming' and 'grossophobie' from a linguistic point of view, a heuristic Google scholar (GS) investigation carried out by the authors revealed the following results: when inserting the search item 'fat shaming' into the GS search box, with the advanced settings on 'English language', 'term mentioned anywhere in the article' and timeline 'from 2019', the first five pages (ten articles per page) revealed that 70% (35 articles) of these texts concerned fat and medical issues, approx 15% (8 articles) touched upon fat from a sociological point of view, and a further 15% (7 articles) were connected to a feminist/activist discourse. We then carried out a parallel search on Google scholar modifying the language in the advanced settings to French and inserting the search term 'grossophobie'. A very different picture emerged: only 4 pages contained the term and of the 40 articles, 27 touched upon feminist/activist discourse mainly linked to social media, 4 on a mixture of geographical/sociological themes, and the rest on medical issues linked to obesity. This reversed image, albeit superficial, provides an initial insight into results of the cross-cultural tweet analysis.

Against this backdrop, this paper intends to investigate online hate speech and cyberbullying across languages and culture, in both English and French-speaking contexts. Hate speech leading to the harassment and discrimination

of fat people will be analytically targeted and scrutinised with the purpose of unveiling recurring discursive strategies that are co-deployed to disseminate and perpetuate intolerance.

4. Methodology and corpus design

In order to analyse the online fat-shaming discourse under investigation, we felt the need to employ a hybrid methodology by integrating tools pertaining to Corpus-based Discourse Analysis with SFL and the Appraisal framework applied to the analysis of the communicative language adopted in Twitter. To this end, two cross-cultural corpora were created consisting of 18 hashtag streams extrapolated from the Twitter micro-blogging site. Specifically, FAT (no. of tokens: 130,691), an English language corpus comprising 9 hashtag streams (i.e. #fatbitch, #fatisgross, #fatpeoplesuck, #fatpieceofshit, #fatty, #fuckfat, #ihatefat, #ihatefatpeople, #stopeating); and GROSSE (no. of tokens: 71,835), a French language corpus made up of 9 hashtag streams (i.e. #grossevache, #grossemoche, #grossebaleine, #grostas, #grossac, #lagrosse, #tasdegraisse, #tasdegras, #fautfaireunregime). The two corpora were then uploaded to Sketch Engine after metadata were preserved through XML encoding so as to allow a comprehensive analysis of the context of occurrence of given linguistic patterns.

The reason for selecting the specific tags, in the respective languages, was that they were at the time of writing, the 'trending' hashtags connected to the seed terms 'fat-shaming' in English and 'grossophobie' in French.

We will now briefly provide an overview of the affordances and limitations of hashtags and the Twitter network within which they are located.

Developed in 2006, Twitter is an internet micro-blogging service which enables users to publish posts for the benefit of internet-mediated audiences, "a form of length limited service (hence 'micro') communication using a social networking service" (Zappavigna 2012: 27).

Twitter enables active social interaction, or 'networking', between users by means of short messages known as 'tweets', originally limited to only 140 characters, but expanded to 280 in 2017 and presented to users in reverse chronological order as a 'stream' or flux of content.

These tweets allow users to show interest, express their opinions, seek alliances, spread information and news, or engage in discussions about political

topics "[b]ecause of the interactive features of social media, which, at least ostensibly, lack 'gatekeepers' in charge of managing the flux of information produced by, and exchanged between, users" (Demata 2018: 70). The language used in the microposts by online prosumers is often steeped in intense feelings and emotions which can have a significant effect on public opinion, confirming the fact that "emotion and affect do not simply belong to the individuals and are not just a private matter, rather emotions are collective and socially constructed" (Lee and Chau 2018: 23).

Throughout our examination of online fat-shaming discourse, we investigate micro-blogging as a social practice within a metafunctional framework. This approach developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics, takes into account the three key functions that language construes in any communicative performance: the experiential function of enacting experience, the interpersonal function of negotiating relationships, and the textual function of organizing information" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

In terms of metafunctions, hashtags always fulfil the textual function by organizing a tweet as a communicative, aggregative unit of discourse; the ideational function indicates the topic or 'aboutness' of the tag; as for the interpersonal function, this occurs when the # construes and enacts relationships, affiliations and alignments, and allows the user to adopt a stance, as Zappavigna asserts: "the function of these interpersonally orientated tags has little to do with aggregating posts into searchable sets, and much more to do with adopting particular attitudinal dispositions, involved in enacting different kinds of identities"(Zappavigna 2018: 49).

Far from being mere discourse markers, hashtags allow Twitter users to embed metadata in social media posts and thus serve as ideological tools to facilitate group inclusion or exclusion and to emphasize a polarization of point of views. In an ongoing struggle for control in discourse, hashtags "enable users to connect similar topics, interests, and like-minded people", consequently, this leads to "a new form of online conversations that is more dynamic and searchable" (Lee 2018: 2). When interpersonal meaning co-patterns or 'couples' (Zappavigna 2012) with ideational meaning in microposts, hashtags become evaluative and serve to ideologically express identity and beliefs. Patterns of coupling align people into communities and create "affective publics: public formations that are textually rendered into being through emotive expressions that spread virally through networked crowds"

(Papacharissi 2015: 14). Tweets therefore create a complex of interpersonal bonds able to traverse multiple discursive regions creating communities and sub-communities; this form of ambient affiliation involves communing around, rather than necessarily directly negotiating particular couplings, it therefore contrasts with commonplace dialogic affiliation in which interlocutors interact directly with each other.

In order to analyse the FAT and GROSSE corpora, and the types of coupling emerging from the hashtag streams encapsulated therein, we proceeded towards a systematic categorisation of online fat-shaming discursive strategies. In particular, we identified 7 micro-categories within our analytical 'self-deprecatory' and/or 'other-deprecatory' macro-categories, intersectionally located at the crossroads of gender, ethnicity, and social class. The 7 micro-categories are valid for both corpora since they can be equally found in the French and English tweets.

For the sake of linear analysis, we elected to entitle the 7 categories as follows:

1. The need to shame
2. Moral failings
3. Stigma/Misfits
4. The Neoliberal body
5. Place and Space
6. The pathologizing discourse
7. Pride and Self-acceptance

The authors are well aware of the fact that each of the categories listed above might vary across other cultures and, of course, according to the context of linguistic investigation. The following section will analyze the tweets contained in each individual stream in both corpora. We will then carry out a cross-cultural comparison between the corpora.

5. Analysing the corpora

A simple concordance analysis of the words related to and representative of each one of the seven micro-categories – on the basis of a frequency list analysis carried out on both corpora – seems to suggest that the tweets in the two

languages adopt comparable, though far from identical, linguistic and discursive strategies in the construal of hate speech against fat people. This consideration led us to formulate the following research questions:

(1) How do users create and negotiate discourses around fat and discrimination? How do they align and/or dis-align around certain values? What kind of appraisal do they exploit?
(2) What is the role of hashtags in propagating ideologies, constructing meanings, and creating affiliation systems?
(3) How are these discourses connected to broader social identities in the Anglophone and Francophone contexts?

In an attempt to respond to these research questions, the following subsections provide some illustrative examples from each corpus with the aim of highlighting the way hate towards fat people is semantically and grammatically expressed. The 7 micro-categories are therefore explored across both corpora in relation to the 2 'encapsulating' macro-categories: self-deprecatory hate and other-deprecatory hate.

5.1 The EN corpus: FAT[5]

1. *The need to shame*

The Internet has long been of pivotal importance for people and communities who believe they are doing the right thing by virtually offending those considered to be doing something 'wrong' or inappropriate. Shaming the other is an effective weapon wielded by the intolerant against those who are in some way different in order to bully and savage their victims' sense of self-worth. One of the causes for shaming the other is fat.

[1] My #shame is #killing me. I should have been thinking of him and not my needs. He has #autism and #languagedelay but my #addiction got the better of me and now he gets to see his DAD 4 hours a year. How sad. I am a #selfish #fatbitch and I must #die

[5] Please note that any inaccurate spelling/syntax/verb forms or generally unconventional language features contained in the quoted English or French tweets are all authentic. The authors have not modified the excerpts in any way.

As can be observed in example [1], an affiliative environment is created with the accumulation of different hashtags expressing an aggregate discursive effect. These hashtags are employed to further provide visibility to the message that is being conveyed and which tables the user's personal negative identity representation within a given ambient community. "Ambient affiliation involves communing around rather than directly negotiating particular couplings" (Zappavigna 2011: 801).

The social function of enacting ambient community in [1] is realized via self-deprecatory hate which, thanks to the user's adoption of the typical specialized language used on Twitter, allows her to express her shame (i.e. "My #shame"). In terms of experiential meaning, the hashtags employed here take up all the experiential roles in the several clauses through which the user self-projects her 'need to shame' by evoking her own death (i.e. "#killing me"; "I must #die"). These verbs contextually invite others to commune or sympathize with the user's self-hatred ("I am a #selfish #fatbitch"). Interpersonal meaning is also realized by 'colouring' other meanings via evaluative language.

[2] These obeasts aren't human, no shame at all. #IhateFatPeople

Other-deprecatory 'need to shame' is construed in [2] via an offensive use of lexical blending (i.e. "obeast" = obese + beast) a recurring linguistic strategy on Twitter and other SNSs; moreover, the use of the initial deictic plural reference (i.e. "these") in the tweet suggests a categorization of the others (i.e. fat people) as if they were anaphorically referenced to in underlying discourses where such individuals are already negatively connoted. This linguistic strategy is widely adopted to create polarized discourses whereby out-groups are rhetorically created in opposition to the user's in-group. In tweet [2], interpersonal meaning, which is prosodically realized mainly via evaluative language (e.g.: "obeasts" vs. "human"), co-patterns with ideational meaning to create a negative, other-deprecatory evaluative epistemic stance: #IhateFatPeople.

2. *The Neoliberal body*

Throughout FAT, the concept of health is conflated with that of slimness, physical attractiveness, and often personal accomplishments. This category collects all the tweets in the English corpus dealing, on the one hand, with the

neoliberal representation of the fat body and, on the other hand, with the way fat people are depicted in their continuous need to be 'taken in hand' and redressed. In the vast majority of tweets belonging to the English corpus, this category falls under the macro-category of self-deprecatory hate since fat people themselves contribute to portraying the disciplinary action of 'getting fit' as a necessary duty.

As entrepreneurial citizens in a neoliberal society, we are duty bound to make 'wise choices' to safeguard our health, well-being and appearance thereby strengthening our sense of individualism. Going to the gym and working out physically are recurring themes in this category. Specifically, the word 'gym' occurs 209 times (n.f.: 1,599.19 per million words) in FAT, followed by 'workout' (r.f.: 111 times; n.f.: 849.33 per million words) and 'exercise' (r.f.: 38 times; n.f.: 290.76 per million words). These words very often collocate with a negation particle ('not going to the gym') or with verbs such as 'leave' and 'hate' which point to the failure of the fat body to comply with the neoliberal request of being productive and efficient.

[3] I've been to the gym every day this week and I'm eating more than I did before. Send in the troops, I need serious help! #needhelp #cantdiet #fatbitch

[4] I was SUPPOSED TO workout today. But instead, I'm at an all you can eat chinese buffett #FATPIECEOFSHIT

As can be noticed in [3] and [4], since the neoliberal policy urges people to keep in shape, going to the gym is an aspired-to activity against which the self-shamers measure their worth. From the analysis of the concordance lines in which the term appears, 'gym' co-occurs with verbs such as 'join', 'wish', 'start', 'know', 'go', 'hit' but also 'hate'.[6] Hashtags such as #needhelp and #cantdiet but also #dontbeapig and #stopeating work to reinforce the constituent

[6] The collocates of the lemma 'gym' have also been computed in order to test the strength of the association with specific verbs. Among the ones that display a significant tendency to co-occur with this noun, the following ones deserve a mention: 'go' (no. of co-occurrences: 27; frequency in the corpus: 403; LogDice: 10.50); 'start' (no. of co-occurrences: 3; frequency in the corpus: 111; LogDice: 8.26); 'leave'(no. of co-occurrences: 3; frequency in the corpus: 61; LogDice: 8.51); 'know' (no. of co-occurrences: 3; frequency in the corpus: 160; LogDice: 8.06); 'get' (no. of co-occurrences: 4; frequency in the corpus: 629; LogDice: 7.29); 'eat' (no. of co-occurrences: 3; frequency in the corpus: 545; LogDice: 7.03). As can be noticed, the verbs collocating with 'gym' confirm some of the observations that are provided in the case of

structure of the tweet stream insinuating the impossibility of pursuing a Neoliberal body without external help (gym, diet, etc.). In addition, as can be noted in [5] and [6], the neo-liberalist body, "a process that accommodates manufacturers' desires to maintain high profit margins by producing goods quickly and cheaply, assumes that the consumer's body is mutable and will alter to fit into pre-constructed spaces, such as off-the-rack, rather than tailor-made, clothing" (Huff 2009: 176). A recurring *topos* in the Neoliberal body category, to be found exclusively in the self-deprecatory hate category, is in fact the user's inability to find the right size when it comes to clothing:

[5] Fell in love with a dress but they only had size 12's left. WHY?!?! #FatPeopleSuck #SizeSixPlease #Fat #Cake #StopEating
[6] Once again, breaking down in the dressing rooms because it's so hard to find clothes and jeans that fit. #sadlife #fuckfat

Therefore, hashtags such as #SizeSixPlease, #plussizefashion, #plus, #fashionproblems, #Slim work as meaning-making resources, 'colouring' the primary meaning expressing the impossibility for fat people to find the right size, and as bonding icons which bring about ambient affiliation, especially through appraisal (#Slim, #Fat, #sadlife, #getskinny, etc.).

Hannele Harjunen in her *Neoliberal Bodies and the Gendered Fat Body*, aptly asserts that neoliberal economic policy highly engages with patriarchal understandings of the female body in contemporary western culture. She investigates the connections among fatness, health, and neoliberal discourse maintaining that in neoliberal culture the female fat body is not merely the unhealthy body we find in medical discourse, but it is above all the body that is deemed non-cost-effective and hence inefficient, contrasting the fundamental task of neo-liberal self-management. As a matter of fact, Neoliberal discourses mainly exploit patriarchal [7; 8; 11; 12] and biomedical [10; 13] interpretations of the female body as we can easily infer from the following tweets:

[7] That woman is a pig.
[8] To the fat woman that ordered an extra doughnut for her lunch...put the doughnut down and lose some weight baby girl #fatpeoplesuck

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the ones listed as co-occurring with the noun from the concordance lines (i.e. verbs indicating personal shame or failure at not being able to conform to the neoliberal demands).

[9] Suck this woman holds the record for fattest person at 643 lbs. And she has sex 7x a day. #Vom #FatPeopleSuck
[10] Obese women to have a strong correlation with Giving birth to children with mental disorders and low IQ #FatPeopleSuck #laughAtThem
[11] Witnessing an obese woman breathing extremely heavy and talking on the phone saying "you like that baby" #fatpeoplesuck
[12] Of course the morbidly obese woman starts crying when her husband makes her try a brussels sprouts
[13] Gallbladder #cholecystitis #cholelitiasis #empyemagallbladder #lapcholecystectomy #cancer #jaundice #ercp #cholesterol #fifty #fatty # female #ssmghospital #chomu

The Neo-liberal body micro-category therefore intersects vitriolic patriarchal hate through a very negative semantic prosody expressed via offensive words and phrases ("pig", "fat", "baby girl", "fattest person", "[o]bese women", "mental disorders and low IQ", "the morbidly obese woman") and hateful hashtags ("#fattyfemale"). Such a discursive construction is almost exclusively addressed to fat female bodies and, not surprisingly, such tweets are to be found in both the 'self' and 'other' macro-categories. Medical discourse, which is generally detectable through the frequent choice of the adjective 'obese' rather than 'fat', is also highly engaging and intersectional in this group of tweets. Example [13] is a clear representation of affiliation strategy which, far from being a mere display of specialized discourse markers (Gallbladder, #cholecystitis, #cholelitiasis, #cancer, #jaundice, #ercp, #cholesterol), presents hashtags as ethical, scientific tools construing a specialized domain on fat in medical discourse. Such hashtags, while introducing a specialist-to-laypeople lexicon, tend to interconnect a polarized point of view in an ongoing struggle for power control in the typical Neoliberal fashion.

3. *Stigma or Misfits*

Numerous studies have documented harmful stereotypes about fat people defining them lazy, unsuccessful, unintelligent, with no self-discipline and poor willpower, defiant of weight-loss treatment (Puhl and Brownell 2001). Fat bodies, just like ill or disabled bodies, are non-normative 'misfits' which in the haters' cyber-world tend to inspire disgust and abjection. Prevailing societal stereotypes place blame on obese individuals for their excess weight by

considering weight stigmatization a justifiable and perhaps necessary condition since obese people are personally responsible for their weight. Offensive stigmatisation appears to be deemed a useful tool to motivate overweight persons to adopt healthier lifestyle patterns. Such a 'stigma' is in fact present in both macro-categories and is manifested by negative evaluative constructions which are frequently semanticized in FAT through words such as 'monster', 'disgusted', 'bitch', 'sick', 'sad', 'pathetic' and 'angry'. Such negative semanticization stands as a continuing process of adopting negative terms in their polysemous diversity within varying contexts to harmfully appraise fat people:

[14] There is some fat obese monster of a woman downstairs in my house, can't go down makes me feel sick and angry. #IHateFatPeople
[15] After watching myself eat McDonald's french fries while taking a snap video I am now disgusted with myself #fatpieceofshit
[16] Their are so many fat kids an adults in this movie theater it disgust me.#ihatefatpeople
[17] Fat people behave so horribly because they're sad and pathetic over being fat. #FatPeople #Obesityisadisease #FatPeopleSuck #blesstheirhearts

The FAT tweeters' recurring choice of the lemma 'bitch' (raw frequency in the corpus: 196), which is present in the stigma micro-category though spanning across both the 'self' and 'other' macrocategories, led us to compute its collocates. The noun 'bitch' clearly collocates with 'fat' co-occurring 80 times in the corpus (logDice: 11.27), this reinforces the idea of the patriarchal misogyny already introduced in the Neoliberal body category succeeding in further fostering hate against fat women who are recurrently stigmatised as we can easily infer from [14: "fat obese monster of a woman"].

4. *Moral failings*

As previously mentioned, a lack of self-discipline and will power are believed to be intrinsically linked to fat bodies. This creates polarized groupings shifting between those who are in shape, seen as 'good', and those who are obese, seen as 'bad'. By extension, bad obese people need disciplining and punishing or rewarding and praising. The bad obese body permeates online hate discourses and points to the materialisation of individual moral failings.

The most recurrent linguistic tool to emerge from the analysis of the tweets in this category is the frequent exploitation of deontic modality expressing moral alert to the problems caused by fat. The modal verb 'should' indicates the way the world ought to be according to mainstream cultural norms, social expectations or the individual tweeter's desire, it spreads across both the self and other macro-categories. In other words, the deontic modal "should" in FAT seems to state something about the desirability of the actualization of this state of affairs, as we can infer from the following examples:

[18] I should control my appetite from now.
[19] Shouldn't we be ashamed to be fat?
[20] This should also be a wake up call for all to be healthy
[21] #fatpeoplesuck fat people should be required to park in the back of all parking lots…they should not be offered handicapped pass.
[22] There should be a weight limit into clubs #fatpeoplesuck
[23] McDonalds, while still a guilty pleasure, really ought to show the truth and put the obese in their commercials. #eatfruit #fatpeoplesuck

5. *The pathologizing discourse*

The biomedical gaze and bio-medical-pedagogical practices, although based on an arbitrary calculation, draw a clear-cut distinction between what is generally deemed 'the normal' and what is instead considered 'the pathological' (hence the denomination of this micro-category). Anti-fat campaigns are so commonplace today that the underlying medical claims they promulgate are often taken to be universal truths. It is through the language of medicine that obesity acquires a condemnable value and subsequently becomes a stigmatizing practice which discursively imposes shame on fat bodies, whether individually or as a group. When the epistemic authority of medicine constantly promotes the idea that "obesity" needs to be eradicated, fat people are unavoidably subjected to the stigma of hierarchization which 'scientifically' ranks and measures bodies placing them at the latter end of an ideologically biased scale together with other discriminated against categories (colour, gender, age…).

[24] This should also be a wakeup call for all to be healthy. #health #fatbitch #type2diabetes #overweight #fatass #dumbasss #justice
[25] Fat people = drain on the health care system. #fat #fatpeoplesuck #moo #medic

[26] Amanda please worry about your own health and well being. other matters can wait. #stopeating
[27] Ladies should be screened for diabetes while at the rally! #stopeating Saturday off to bad diet start with the diet already #needmotivation #stopeating
[28] An irreverent comment, NHS funding shouldn't be used for those who can't control hand to mouth movements full of burgers #stopeating

The hashtag '#health' appears 84 times in FAT (642.74 per million) spanning both macro-categories to introduce the so-called pathologizing discourse which, in the English corpus, ties in neatly with the promotion of a neoliberal society.

6. *Place and Space*

Fat bodies do not stay in their place, they spread over into other people's space suggesting the idea of 'overflow' and lack of confines. In the FAT corpus, fat people are often accused of occupying too much space which is consequently wasted. As a matter of fact, the lemma 'space' in FAT collocates primarily with the verb 'waste' as can be seen in the following examples:

[29] I said you a FAT WASTE OF SPACE. #FatPieceOfShit#YouNotEatingMy BurgerFatAss
[30] I was a fat lazy useless sad waste of space once fuck off you absolute waste of space #fatpieceofshit @thebradyy_bunch #fatpieceofshit
[31] Stop stealing air you waste of spaces#IHateFatPeople

Again, in FAT both macro-categories contribute to the microcategory, as we can see in the following two tweets:

[32] YOU are taking up too much space! #FATTY
[34] im bigger than you so you're gonna make space for me

7. *Acceptance and pride*

The FAT corpus does not include any tweets or hashtags that promote the idea of the 'self' or 'other' acceptance of fat bodies. This confirms the Google Scholar research the authors carried out, albeit in an entirely heuristic manner, which illustrated that very few English language scholarly research papers focused on the promotion of fat pride or even approval. Only two tweets

partially introduce the idea of self-acceptance, however in both cases the underlying inference is that the tweeters are measuring themselves up against the category of non-fat people, and in both instances they find themselves lacking.

[35] I at least still thought my face was pretty, but he won't even call me beautiful anymore #fatbitch #uglyfatfuck
[36] Fat girls can be pretty too

5.2 the FR corpus: GROSSE

As outlined in section 4 above, in order to analyse the evaluative patterns which emerge from our corpus of tweets, we have turned to the theory of appraisal developed within the SFL paradigm (Martin and White 2005) to explore how the linguistic patterning of a tweet construes emotional language in the areas of Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. The language of evaluation expressed within the interpersonal metafunction serves to build and maintain power and solidarity by enabling users to adopt stances and connect with other comparable language instantiations.

In recent years SFL theory has focused on the 'coupling' of evaluation (Zappavigna, Dwyer & Martin 2008) with other kinds of linguistic meanings as a way of bringing out the values construed in the process of affiliation. In our research, the term 'coupling' refers to the manner in which interpersonal meaning co-patterns with ideational meaning in microposts to create an evaluative stance. Patterns of coupling align prosumers into like-minded communities which, we posit in the case of fat-shaming micro-blogging, commune around self-deprecatory or other-deprecatory discourse in "multiparty, temporarily fluid and highly intertextual conversations" (Zappavigna 2011: 790).

Ideation and attitude may be instantiated within a single hashtag i.e #ilovecats, or across the tag and co-text as in the case of #cats such beautiful creatures. In the latter case the # points to the 'aboutness' of the tweet, whereas the appreciation expressed in the co-text construes and enacts relationships, affiliations, and alignments, allowing the user to adopt a stance.

Within the appraisal framework, Martin & White (2005) distinguish between 'inscribed attitude' whereby explicit evaluations denote a clear, overt stance in relation to some target, and 'invoked attitude' where the evaluations

are more covert and implicit. Despite the inferred nature of 'invoked attitude', evaluations in this category are nonetheless located along a cline stretching from more explicit to less explicit or, using the appraisal terminology, from 'provoked' based on lexical metaphor, to 'flagged' which exploits the amplifying resources of graduation, and on to 'afforded' where as Monika Bednarek explains, the ideational meanings that are employed "[a]re neutral on the surface but can imply positive or negative meanings depending on the reader's position" (Bednarek 2009: 117). Being indirect, afforded evaluation is often difficult to spot, however, for those belonging to the targeted communities such evaluations will always be abundantly clear.

There is nothing innovative, or specifically 'mediatic' about the hashtags belonging to the French corpus, they merely reiterate the everyday couplings present in spoken insults.

Of the nine hashtags ((#grossac; #grossebaleine; #grossevache; #grostas; #tasdegraisse; #tasdegras, #grossemoche, #lagrosse, #fautfaireunregime), which make up the Grosse corpus of French tweets, none are purely ideational and all express some form of negative appraisal, as is customary when the purpose of communication is to erect in group/out group affiliations by shaming, criticizing and discriminating. As Wilkinson and Kitzinger state "Othering involves a construction of the self as belonging to an in-group which has/does not have characteristics of which the others, the out-group are devoid/possess, whether in terms of lack or a gain, the in-group always has 'more' than the out-group and therefore considers itself superior. Whether through a lack or a gain, the in-group always comes out stronger/better. "'We' use the 'other' to define ourselves: 'we' understand ourselves in relation to what 'we' are not" (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996: 8).

Six of the hashtags, #grossac; #grossebaleine; #grossevache; #grostas; #tasdegraisse; and #tasdegras, through the strategy of lexical metaphor pertaining to provoked evaluation, succeed in 'othering' fat people by means of a process of dehumanization and objectivization. In these tags the fat individuals are compared to large, apparently apathetic, slow-witted creatures (whale, cow) or to cumbersome, amorphous, inanimate heaps (sack, pile), thus projecting an idea of both physical and characterial ineptitude. As Goffman claims: "By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We

construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class. We use specific stigma terms such as cripple, bastard, moron in our daily discourse as a source of metaphor and imagery, typically without giving thought to the original meaning" (Goffman 1990 (1963): 14).

The #lagrosse tag, is an example of a substantivized adjective whereby one of the many physical features a girl/woman may possess – excess body fat – is metonymically employed to nullify all her other identitary traits. The #grossemoche tag, in turn, serves to create an automatic, almost natural, overlap between being fat and being ugly; interestingly our research revealed that a #grossebelle tag has not been created to confute this unpleasant juxtaposition, although we did find numerous instances of #grossemaisbelle (fat but beautiful) as though it were necessary to apologetically underline that one condition does not always necessarily exclude the other. Lastly, the #fautfaireunregime (got to go on a diet) tag would appear to be the least virulent of the French hashtags investigated as it could be seen merely as an encouraging exhortation. As an instance of afforded evaluation, however, those belonging to the fat community are likely to read it as a finger-pointing imperative.

We will now turn to the previously listed micro-categories which span both the FAT and GROSSE corpora.

1. *The need to shame*[7]

The need to shame is the primary impetus which drives fat haters. It serves as a conduit for their negative appraisal and subsumes the other micro-categories. As has previously been mentioned, the need to shame stands as a perverse mechanism since the hate initially perceived by the discriminated category is often then assimilated and channelled into guilt and shame, turning the victims into their own persecutors.

When investigating the French tweets, it progressively became evident that

[7] All translations from French into English have been carried out by the author of this section. For the sake of clarity and enhanced comprehension, the original French hashtags have also been translated.

the underlying aspects or characteristics targeted by the 'self' and 'other' shamers, and encapsulated within the micro-categories are mostly the same, though the manner in which the targeting occurs may vary considerably. Before proceeding to list each micro-category accompanied by topical excerpts from the French corpus, we will begin by looking at two shaming 'techniques' earmarked in turn by the self-shamers and the other-shamers and which do not have a parallel in the other category.

A) The comparative approach used by self-shamers

Although a form of comparison is used by both groups of shamers through the recurrent use of animal labels to depict fat people, only the self-shamers systematically compare themselves to their peers, as though to further underline the lack of normalcy in their lives.

[1] T'as les filles qui dépriment parce qu'elles n'ont pas de mecs et puis il y a moi qui déprime parce que j'ai toujours faim #grostas #jemehais
There are girls who get depressed because they don't have a boyfriend and then there's me who gets depressed because I'm always hungry #fatheap #Ihatemyself

[2] Ces jours-ci je suis atteinte de Quardite. À savoir la sensation que toutes les filles que je croise font le quart de moi. #GrosTas #jemaimepas
These days I've been struck by Quarteritis. That's to say the feeling that all the girls I come across weigh a quarter of what I do. #FatHeap #Idontlikemyself

[3] Toutes les filles se balade avec des sacs de fringues, moi c'est toujours avec mes sacs de bouffe ! #Grossevache
All the girls walk around carrying bags of clothes, for me it's always bags of food! #Fatcow

[4] Je suis en retard parce que j'ai passé trop de temps a essayer d'être belle, mais je pars tjs plus moche que les autres #EnRetardPourRien #GrosseMoche #JeMaimePas
I'm late because I spent too much time trying to be beautiful, but I always end up looking uglier than the others #Latefornoreason #FatandUgly #Idontlikemyself

[5] Tout le monde est en couple, en mode trop amoureux... puis y'a moi. #eclatetotale #yenamarre #grostas #lagrosse

Everyone is paired off, in a so-in-love mode… then there's me. #totallyshattered #hadenough #fatheap #fatty

This last excerpt [5] deserves a special mention as it exploits a mechanism referred to by Zappavigna as "intra-textual evaluative metacommentary" (Zappavigna 2018: 67/68), whereby the hashtags which follow the post serve to supply attitude, in this case negative affect, initially only invoked in the body of the post.

B) The violent nature of other-shaming tweets

An aspect we found recurrently running through the other-shaming posts, and which clearly had no parallel among the self-shamers, was the desire to hurt fat people physically for no other reason than their size. In these tweets, the violence expressed in the post is decuplicated by the tags which spread to target features other than 'just' fat.

[6] Hé la grosse crois moi si je te croise tu vas continuer ta route en boitant #lahaine #GrosseMoche #dégout #groscul
Hey fatty believe me if I cross your path you're going to go on your way limping #hatred #FatandUgly #disgust #fatarse

[7] Je me propose de trucider cette grosse truie lors de ma prochaine pause. #Salope #GrosseVache #MeursDansDatrocesSouffrances
I intend to slay this fat sow during my next break. #Bitch #FatCow #DieInHorrendousSuffering

[8] Mbah je l'ai traiter de grosse pute en pleine tronche elle a même pas réagis #grossevache
Yo I called her a fat bitch to her face and she didn't even react #fatcow

[9] Non, je ne souhaite pas ta mort. Mais pour être honnête, on aurait pu se passer de ta naissance. #lagrosse
No, I don't wish for your death. But to be honest, we could have done without your birth. #fatty

Besides the fat + female intersectionality of the majority of the tweets included in the GROSSE corpus, in these violent tweets, the other-shamers often extend the discrimination to include the category of race.

[10] C'est pas en faisant du cheval que vous allez maigrir #GrosseVache Sale pute si je vais pas te gifler ta grosse race!
It's not by going horse-riding that you're going to lose weight #FatCow Dirty bitch just see if I don't slap your fat race!

In excerpt [10], the surface mildness of the initial fat-shaming comment is subsequently compounded by the apparently gratuitous racial slur.

[11] Il est pas déjà assez obèse le gros, faut encore qu'il mange gratuit? Hé loukoum, si tu allais courir 30 minutes, tu serais moins motivé à voler! Mais c'est vrai que pour bouger un cul pareil, faut une remorque! #GrosTas #dégout
Isn't this fat guy obese enough, does he have to eat for free too? Hey loukoum (Turkish delight, metonymically used to refer to Turkish people), if you went for a 30-minute run, you'd be less inclined to steal! But it's true that to move an arse like that, you need a trailer/towing hitch! #FatHeap #disgust

This last tweet [11], quoted in order to further exemplify the unadulterated violence of some of the other-shaming posts, also serves to illustrate the ease with which fat-haters slide from one discriminated-against characteristic to another. The initial anti-fat attitude of the tweet progressively snowballs to include a racial slur (loukoum) which subsequently calls into play social sanction in terms of lack of propriety (the Turkish person is presumably believed to be 'milking the system' by eating for free), lack of tenacity (the target couldn't run for 30 minutes), and lack of veracity (being Turkish he is necessarily inclined to steal).

Having illustrated the two categories in which the 'self' and 'other' shamers employ distinct targeting foci and strategies, we will now return to the previously outlined micro-categories.

2. *Moral failings*

One of the main deficiencies called into play by the self-shamers is their lack of control and inability to put a stop to an inexorable, never-ending spiral of eating. The posts often have a confessional tone and besides the 'sin' of gluttony, a number of other transgressions are admitted to, as though being fat necessarily subsumes numerous moral failings. As Daria Marx and Eva Bello Perez state:

> Fat people, you know nothing about them, you don't know them, but their

> physical aspect serves as a justification to tap into the innumerable clichés that the media and society foster about obesity in order to judge them: they are lazy, they hate sport, they smell bad, they let themselves go, they swallow 10,000 calories every day (preferably junk food), as sexual partners they are greedy and grateful, they are kind and funny, full of complexes they hate their bodies, they lack willpower, stamina.[8]

As can be seen in the excerpts below, in the body of the tweet, the lack of control is lexically denoted by the use of adverbs such as encore (again), trop (too much), tellement (so much), by modals of obligation i.e. 'je dois arrêter' (I must stop), by verbs such as 'continuer' (to continue), 'craquer' (to give in), 'se forcer' (to force oneself) and by phrases such as 'je n'en peux plus' (I can't go on like this/I can't stand it anymore), which underline the level of desperation the tweeter has reached.

As for the additional hashtags which accompany the ones belonging to the GROSSE corpus, they serve to reinforce or 'supplement' the attitude expressed in the post, though they often touch upon slightly different emotions thus broadening the ambient catchment area earmarked by that specific post, and enabling more extensive ambient affiliation. As Zappavigna states: "[a]n evaluative hashtag may supplement evaluation already present in the post, assisting in radiating the evaluation across the post or, from the perspective of graduation, upscaling the attitude" (Zappavigna 2018: 68).

[12] Ce soir, j'ai encore tellement mangé que j'ai vomis. #Cetaitmaviepassionnante #Lagrosse #jemetrouvemoche

Tonight, I ate so much again that I threw up. #Itwasmythrillinglife; #Fatty; #Ifindmyselfugly

In [12] the use of 'encore' and 'tellement' point to the constant repetition of excessive eating, the #itwasmythrillinglife adds the connotation of sadness and regret to the post, whereas the #Ifindmyselfugly will undoubtedly extend

[8] "Les gros, vous ne savez rien d'eux, vous ne les connaissez pas, mais leur apparence physique est prétexte à puiser dans les innombrables clichés que les médias et la société entretiennent autour de l'obésité pour les juger: ils sont fainéants, ils détestent le sport, ils sentent mauvais, ils se négligent, ils avalent 10 000 calories chaque jour (de la *junk food* de préférence), ils sont des partenaires sexuels gourmands et reconnaissants, ils sont gentils et drôles, complexés ils détestent leur corps, manquent de volonté, de dynamisme" (Marx and Perez-Bello 2018: 35).

the affiliative audience to include those who do not like their physical appearance for reasons other than excess weight.

[13] Si je continue à manger comme ça, dans une semaine je rentrerai plus dans mes maillots de bain #grossevache #grostas
If I keep on eating like this, in a week's time I won't fit into my swimming costumes #fatcow #fatheap

Again, the verb 'continue' in [13] points to a lack of control and an inability to stop. The user then adopts the identity labels commonly employed by other shamers, thus yet again complying with the dominant paradigm. As Bourdieu states: "When the dominated apply to what dominates them schemes that are the product of domination, or, to put it another way, when their thoughts and perceptions are structured in accordance with the very structures of the relation of domination that is imposed on them, their acts of cognition are, inevitably, acts of recognition, submission" (Bourdieu 2001: 13).

Along similar lines we also have:

[14] Je suis trop une putain de gros sac sans volonté #morfale #grossac
I'm just too much of a bloody fat sack without any will power #glutton #fatsack

[15] J'ai encore craquée pour du putain de chocolat milka au smartis #LaGrosse
I gave in again to some bloody Smartie-flavoured chocolate milka #Fatty

[16] je dois arrêter de manger comme une #grosseVache et #bouare 4 fois dans la semaine
I've got to stop eating like a #fatCow and #drinking 4 times a week

Once again the idea that is conveyed is that of an external force which cannot be halted. The 'confessional' nature of these self-shaming tweets enables the author of [16] to confess not only to her overeating but also to her excessive drinking

[17] Planquer les papiers de Kinder Country qui jonchent le plumard avant que mon mec n'arrive. J'en suis là. #LaGrosse #jemaimepas
Hiding the Kinder Country papers strewn across the bed before my guy gets home. That's the point I'm at #Fatty #Idontlikemyself

Once more we are in the presence of evaluative metacommentary whereby the reason underlying the devious behaviour described in the body of post [17] is supplied by the appraisal expressed in the tag.

As for the moral failings expressed in the many tweets written by the other-shamers, the underlying sentiment appears to be one of disgust at the fat person's lack of will power and inability to do anything about his/her weight.

[18] Les meufs flemmardes, qui ne font pas de sport et qui font rien de leurs vies à part fumé, tizé, bédave #TasDeGraisse #dégoût
Lazy girls, who don't do any sport and who do nothing with their lives except smoke, drink and toke up #PileOfGrease #disgust

Once more, the hashtags that accompany post [18] provide the fat-shaming metacommentary, as though to emphasize the fact that someone who is lazy, inactive and possesses a number of addictions, will necessarily be fat and disgusting too.

The three tweets which follow all point to lack of will power which, according to the shamers, necessarily goes hand in hand with excess weight. Clearly these tweets all recall the stringent expectations placed upon the Neoliberal body and herald the 'pathologising discourse' micro-category where diets and exercise classes figure as necessary instruments to redress deviant behaviour.

[19] Bouge pas et tu grossis encore plus vite ! #GrosseTruie #GrosseMoche #dégoût
Don't move and you'll get fat even faster! #FatSow #FatandUgly #disgust

[20] La petite grosse elle vient faire du step mais c'est pas ça qui va la faire maigrir #GrosseVache #faisuneffort
The little fatty comes to the step class but that's not what's going to make her lose weight #FatCow #makeaneffort

[21] Essaye de rererecommencer un régime #grossevache #dégoût
Try and rererestart a diet #fatcow #disgust

3. *Stigma/misfits*

In this micro-category, the fat-shaming posts focus on physical appearance either through lexical metaphor or by targeting and denigrating specific parts of the body. Interestingly enough, whereas the 'Moral failings' micro-category included a vast amount of belittling self-shaming tweets, in the 'Stigma' micro-category, with its emphasis on the body, there are very few self-shamers compared to the numerous other-shaming posts.

[22] J'ai une morphologie de pyramide. Mon cul peut accueillir toute l'Égypte ancienne :-(#GrosTas #maimepas
I'm built like a pyramid. My arse can welcome the whole of ancient Egypt :-(#FatHeap #dontlikemyself

The above example of invoked attitude [22] initially appears to be an attempt at self-deprecating humour, often used to curry favour with those who detain hegemonic power. The sad-faced emoticon and the critical hashtags that follow, however, point to the shamer's true state of mind.

The other self-shaming posts within the 'Stigma/misfits' micro-category focus on a need to hide away and not be seen by others or indeed by ourselves. The paradox of the excessive visibility or invisibility of fat bodies is investigated by Jeannine Gailey who explains that: "Fat presents an apparent paradox because it is visible and dissected publicly; in this respect, it is hypervisible. Fat is also marginalized and erased; in this respect, it is hyperinvisible (Gailey 2014: 7).

The desire to be invisible expressed in the following two tweets does not, however, match the 'hyperinvisibility' due to erasure investigated by Gailey, rather it stems from a need to quash the excessive visibility brought about by stigmatization and hate.

[23] J'vais sortir avec une cagoule et des lunettes de soleil comme ca j'serais cachée #GrosseMoche
I'm going to go out with a hood and sunglasses so I'll be hidden #FatandUgly

[24] Même les yeuxs fermer je metrouvemoche… #grossemoche #grostas
Even with my eyes closed I find myself ugly… #fatandugly #fatheap

The other-shaming tweets pertaining to this category all employ lexical metaphor as can be seen in the excerpts which follow:

[25] Baaah si tu bronzes vite c'est pcq t'as naturellement de l'huile sur ta peau #TasDeGraisse #GrosseBaleine
Well if you tan quickly it's because you've naturally got oil on your skin #PileofGrease #FatWhale

In this case [25] the body of the post does not at first sight appear to be offensive, indeed the afforded evaluation could even be read as flattering. It is only when we reach the hashtags at the end of the post that the whale comparison becomes clear.

[26] Les sirènes ça existe – bah oui regarde toi mi femme mi thon #GrosseVache #taspashonte
Mermaids exist – well yes look at you half woman half tuna fish #FatCow #arentyouashamed

Again in [26] the initial part of the post could appear to be flattering; like a delayed punch line, the final blow is delivered in the second half of the tweet and in the hashtags which follow. The 'arentyouashamed' tag is an epitomic example of the manner in which an other-shamer attempts to transform abuse into self-persecution.

[27] beurk a la fille du Subway qui m'a même pas donné une fourchette grosse bête #abaslesgros #GrosseTruie #tupues
yuk to the girl in Subway who didn't even give me a fork fat animal #downwithfatpeople #FatSow #youstink

Even the minor irritation caused by not being served adequately by an anonymous waitress is enough to unleash the violence of hate speech [27]. Indeed, one of the main characteristics of hate speech is the group affiliation of the victim which negates any form of individually targeted 'hate'. The specific victims are almost irrelevant and immaterial in that they are interchangeable, they merely stand for the 'other' due to their membership of the despised group. The verbal violence is directed not so much towards the victim himself/herself but rather towards the wider community of which he or she is a member. The virulence of the hatred expressed in this online tweet is such that it progressively extends the negative characteristics of the defaulting waitress to include porcine features and an unpleasant smell.

Numerous other-shaming tweets target parts of the fat person's body as can be seen in the two excerpts which follow:

[28] Même qnd tu mets un Jean, rajoute une tunique jusqu'au Genoux pour cacher tes grosses Cuisses ! #LaGrosse #TESMOCHE
Even when you wear jeans, add a tunic down to your knees to hide your fat thighs! #Fatty #YOUREUGLY

In [28] the 'youreugly' hashtag is promoted or 'flagged' through typographical emphasis thus increasing the likelihood of ambient visibility and subsequent affiliation.

[29] son cul est carré qu'elle aille mettre des slips à sa taille yen a marre de voir sa graisse dépasser #GrosseVache
her arse is square she should wear knickers that are her size I've had enough of her fat sticking out #FatCow

Much as in the Subway waitress tweet quoted above [27], the apparently innocuous sight of ill-fitting knickers is enough to bring underlying hate rushing to the surface.

4. *The Neoliberal body*

It is not within the scope or interest of this study to determine whether or not the society we live in today is still governed by neoliberal principles, we are employing the term loosely to refer to a political philosophy which gives priority to individual freedom and the right to make individual choices while accepting responsibility for the risks incurred.

As Nikolas Rose states neoliberalism "does not seek to govern through 'society' but through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self actualization and fulfilment" (Rose 1996: 41).

With regard to the subject matter of this paper, the perfect subject-citizen of a neoliberal state is therefore able to exercise freedom of choice when selecting what to eat and how much to eat. Consequently, thinness is viewed as a reflection of self-control and personal responsibility, all qualities which those who are fat clearly lack.

In the GROSSE corpus, in a similar manner to the FAT corpus, the tweets included in this micro-category are all self-shaming and express, on the one hand, feelings of inadequacy at not having the 'right' body and on the other, the inability to successfully use the 'tools' which would allow them to obtain such a body.

[30] Je veux maigrir, avoir un "beau corps" pour l'été. Ce sera sûrement pour l'été 2043. #lagrosse #food #grosse #morfale #chocolat
I want to lose weight, have a "beautiful body" for the summer. It'll surely be for the summer of 2043. #fatty #food #fat #glutton #chocolate

[31] ça me fout les boules parce que j'ai pas le corps adéquat #grossebaleine
it really pisses me off because I don't have the right body #fatwhale.

The tweets above can only be described as self-shaming when we refer to the hashtags at the end of each post, in the body of the posts the sentiment is more one of doleful wistfulness. The striking feature of the first post lies in the inverted commas surrounding the phrase "beau corps" which visually point to a direct quote. Tweets are necessarily heteroglossic (Bakhtin 1986: 89) due to the fact that they incorporate the voices of other participants in the twitter stream in a condensed and often abridged manner due to format exigencies or in the case of retweets. The use of punctuation marks in tweets, including inverted commas, is relatively rare as any signs that are employed take up precious space, as Zappavigna states: "Often social media texts quote other texts without using any punctuation resources such as quotation marks, instead relying on the ambient audience's ability to resolve important cultural moments from, either their observations of what has been happening in the social stream, or from knowledge of the relevant contextual meaning" (Zappavigna 2018: 75). In tweet [30] the underlying 'relevant contextual meaning' is that of neoliberal cultural and societal norms which dictate that we should all have the freedom to choose whatever (and however much) we wish to eat, together with the ability to select wisely in order to remain thin and exhibit that epitomic 'beautiful body'. The author of the tweet is fully aware of her failure to meet the required expectations and expresses her shame by using self-offensive hashtags (#fatty, #glutton) and by naming the items which bring about her downfall. Whereas #chocolate is a common culprit in terms of weight gain, the fact that the tweeter also uses the generic tag #food is a worrying sign of the dysfunctional society in which we live.

The second tweet above [31] also points to the author's inability to conform to societal strictures, but this time her attitude is revealed by the use of the adjective 'adéquat'[9] preceded by the article 'le'. An unsuitable body is, once more, a misfit, a body which does not live up to the canonical thin/slim expectations. More interesting perhaps is the use of the definite article as in this case reference is being made not to a generic acceptable body, but to <u>the</u> proper slim body we are all expected to possess.

[9] It must be remembered that in their mainstream meanings, the French 'adéquat' and the English 'adequate' have slightly different denotations. Whereas in French the adjective means 'suitable or right', in English it generally means sufficient or satisfactory. It is for this reason that 'adéquat' has been translated with 'right' in the example above.

The second recurring thread which runs through the Neoliberal body micro-category is that of the self-shamers' inability to use canonical weight controlling 'instruments' in a fruitful and systematic manner.

In a similar manner to the FAT corpus, certain terms recur regularly and often collocate with negative particles or particularly significant verb forms. The three terms 'balance' (scales), 'salle' (gym), and 'sport' respectively occur 97, 102, and 106 times in the GROSSE corpus, 'balance' only collocates with two verbs 'éviter' (to avoid) and '(me) dire' (tells me); 'salle' massively collocates with 'ne pas aller' (not to go); whereas 'sport' mainly collocates with the verbs 'rater' (to miss/not to be present), 'louper' (to miss/not to be present), and 'reprendre' (to restart/return to). Whenever the terms occur, the underlying sentiment is one of guilt, disgust, and self-hatred.

[32] Quand j'ai vu mon poid hier sur la balance lors de la visite médicale j'avais envie de pleurer #grossac
When I saw my weight yesterday on the scales during a medical checkup I felt like crying #fatsack

[33] Ça fait 30minutes que je suis rentrée d'un repas de famille, et ça fait 30minutes que j'évite la balance …#lagrosse #fautfaireunregime
I got back from a family meal 30 minutes ago, and I've been avoiding the scales for 30 minutes… #fatty #gottogoonadiet

[34] Ça fait un mois que j'ai pas mis le pied à la salle, je me déteste tout simplement #grossevache #dégout
I haven't set foot in the gym for a month, I simply detest myself #fatcow #disgust

[35] Janvier inscription obligatoire a la salle wallah. Gros boudin que je suis la. #Deguelasse #Vomis #Burk #GrosseVache
In January compulsory enrolment at the gym I swear. I'm just such a fat lump #Disgusting #Puke #Yuk #FatCow.

[36] J'ai acheté des baskets et habits de sport. Il reste plus qu'à s'inscrire à la salle. J'espère que vous croyez en moi #GrosTas #jaihonte #jesuisnulle
I've bought trainers and gym clothes. I just need to enrol at the gym. I hope you believe in me #FatHeap #imashamed #imworthless.

[37] je mange trop et en plus j'ai raté le sport #grossevache
I eat too much and what's more I missed my sports session #fatcow

5. *Place and space*

Just like other nondiscursive characteristics such as age, gender, or race, body size is what we notice prior to an individual's verbal or gestural moves. Yet the way we react to fat bodies often depends on the spatial confines in which the encounter takes place: in wide open spaces we barely acknowledge them as they are seldom deemed 'worth looking at'; in small spaces they seem to crowd in on us and take up space we feel should legitimately be ours. The visibility/invisibility dichotomy is again aptly described by Jeannine Gailey: "Fat women are hyperinvisible in that their needs, desires, and lives are grossly overlooked, yet at the same time they are hypervisible because their bodies literally take up more physical space than other bodies and they are the target of a disproportionate amount of critical judgment" (Gailey 2014: 7/8).

The tweets which belong to this specific micro-category are all other-shaming and all seem to reflect the idea that in confined spaces (underground carriages, planes, classrooms, buses, cinemas) fat bodies are out of place. The virulence of the tweets cannot be, however, explained merely by feelings of annoyance due to lack of space. The obligation to visually acknowledge the incongruous presence of fat people progressively appears to spread to the other senses and the dominant sentiment is one of disgust, to the point that many of the tweets mention a need to vomit because of the smell of the fat bodies.

[38] Quand un 38 tonnes se pose JUSTE A COTÉ DE MOI dans le bus et me colle. Ça me donne la gerbe !!!! #grossac
When a 38 tonner places themselves RIGHT NEXT TO ME in the bus and smothers me. It makes me want to puke!!! #fatsack

In tweet [38] the fat person is stripped of any human characteristics and compared to a heavyweight vehicle which clearly does not 'sit' next to the author but rather places itself in very close proximity.

[39] À ce gros tas de merde qui m'a piquer ma place au cinéma: Évite de sauter ma grosse, mon siège tremble depuis hier.. #Grostas #tupues #teslaide
To that big pile of shit who nicked my seat at the cinema: Stop jumping up and down fatso, my seat has been shaking since yesterday…#Fatheap #youstink #youreugly

Again, the acrimony expressed in tweet [39] appears to go well beyond the

specific situation in which the author found him/herself. The comparison with a pile of excrement appears to be both visual and olfactive.

> [40] Pendant le contrôle de Maths, la prof voulait passer dans les rangées mais elle est trop grosse. Ça fait elle passe pas, il va falloir l'abattre #grossevache #AbatsLesGros
>
> During the maths test, the teacher wanted to walk up and down the rows but she's too fat. Which means she can't get through, she'll have to be put down #fatcow #PutFatPeopledown.

Although we may tend to be more lenient towards a school pupil who lacks the maturity to express well-balanced opinions, the casual equation drawn between fat people and euthanasia illustrates the extent to which fat-hating has permeated the social and cultural fabric. We will end this micro-section by quoting the words of the French fat activists Daria Marx and Eva Perez-Bello who attempt to explain just how important the concept of space and place is when dealing with fat-shaming:

> The battle against fat-shaming concerns us all. If fat people learn from a very young age not to take up any place, fat-shaming discrimination is sure to remind them of the volume they occupy. One of the first steps in the anti-fat-shaming fight is therefore to give fat people back their space, and the legitimacy to occupy it. To teach them, by giving them a voice, that they are the victims of discrimination and that the reason why they are fat is of little consequence, they have the right to demand equal opportunities and peace of mind.[10]

6. *The pathologizing discourse*

Fat people are deemed to be responsible for their own condition and the association of fat with ill health and disease means that large individuals are also often considered to be carriers of illness and consequently avoided.

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[10] "La lutte contre la grossophobie nous concerne tous. Si les personnes grosses apprennent dès leur plus jeune âge à ne pas prendre de place, les discriminations grossophobes se chargent de leur rappeler le volume qu'elles occupent. Un des premiers pas de la lutte anti-grossophobie est donc de rendre aux personnes grosses leur espace, et la légitimité de l'occuper. Leur apprendre, en leur donnant la parole, qu'elles sont victimes de discriminations et que peu importe la raison pour laquelle elles sont grosses, elles ont le droit de revendiquer une égalité des chances et une paix de l'esprit" (Marx and Perez-Bello 2018: 68).

Obesity, like smoking, drug addiction, sexually transmitted diseases, or diabetes, is often believed to stem from lifestyle choices and this enhances the moralizing discourses which both laymen and medical professionals feel entitled to address to fat people. As Hannele Harjunen states: "Discussion on obesity rarely concerns only the weight of the person, but it is laden with value judgements relating to the life-style, character or morality of the obese person. In other words, we not only want to 'cure' the obese person, we also want to make the person socially more acceptable" (Harjunen 2004: 311). It is also true that when faced with obese individuals, much like pregnant or menopausal women, medical practitioners have a tendency to trace any form of pathology back to that one root cause: excess weight, often basing their diagnosis on mere observation as opposed to in-depth consultation with the patient.

Fat activists, conversely, argue that it is not because they have large bodies that individuals become ill, it is because they are shamed, marginalized and discriminated against and consequently socially and economically at a disadvantage. They are therefore more fragile and vulnerable to illness.

Whereas in the FAT corpus, posts belonging to this micro-category were predominantly other-shaming, in the GROSSE corpus the tweet authors focus exclusively on the self, but not in terms of mortification or guilt. Indeed, the tweets differ considerably from those present in the previous sections, and herald the 'pride and acceptance' micro-category we will shortly be investigating.

The posts concerning the 'pathologizing discourse' are far longer than those in the other micro-categories and each one narrates a short anecdote about some form of interaction with a medical practitioner. The 'storytelling' character of the tweets, the channelling of criticism away from fat individuals and towards the medical category, together with the less condemnatory and more affiliative nature of the hashtags open this specific space up to solidarity as opposed to hatred and shaming.

[41] Bon, selon mon gynéco (le plus bienveillant que j'ai trouvé jusque là), mon poids c'est pas trop grave pour l'instant, mais ce serait bien que je «me reprenne en main et arrete de bouffer comme un chancre», je cite. #lagrosse #grossophobie

Well, according to my gyn (the most benevolent I've found up till now), my weight is not too serious for the moment, but it would be a good thing if I "got my act together and stopped stuffing myself like a canker", I quote. #fatty #fat-shaming

[42] Vous avez une gastro, une entorse ? C'est à cause de votre poids. C'est ce que l'on peut entendre de la bouche de son médecin quand on est gros #lagrosse #grossophobie #vousnouspesez

You've got gastro-enteritis, a sprain ? It's because of your weight. Those are the words you can hear your doctor say when you're fat #fatty #fat-shaming #youweighus

The humorous double-entendre expressed in the hashtag at the end of post [42] illustrates the change of mood and more rebellious spirit which characterizes this micro-category. Indeed, the phrase 'vous nous pesez' can mean both 'you weigh us', a common undertaking for a doctor, but also 'you weigh us down/you oppress us' a criticism expressed by the fat community.

[43] Comment vous voulez que les personnes grosses puissent être soignées & se sentir bien dans leur corps si les médecins leur refusent des examens & des soins ? comment on est sensé faire si on nous répète sans cesse que si on a un pb c'est de notre faute ? #grossevache #yenamarre

How can you expect fat people to be cared for & to feel good about themselves if doctors refuse to examine & treat them? How are we expected to manage if we are constantly told that if we have a problem it's our own fault? #fatcow #hadenough

Although inappropriate treatment at the hands of medical practitioners appears to be a recurrent theme throughout the GROSSE corpus, small steps appear to be going in the right direction. The authors were unable to find similar documents written in the countries under investigation, however, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in their 'Ethical Considerations for the Care of Patients with Obesity' published in 2019, now provide advice on how to engage with and address obese patients: "Obstetrician-gynaecologists should be mindful of the tendency to harbor implicit bias toward patients with obesity, engage in self-reflection to identify any personal implicit bias, and take steps to address any identified bias to help ensure that it does not interfere with the delivery of respectful clinical care for patients with obesity". In their 'People-first' section they further add: "The term "obese patient," which suggests that obesity defines the patient, should be avoided in favour of people-first terminology, such as "patient with obesity," which identifies a patient as having the condition of obesity. The terms "morbidly obese," "fat," and "obese" have been found to be the most stigmatizing, whereas

"weight problem," "unhealthy weight," and "high BMI" have been found to be the most motivating and least offensive language options for discussing weight with patients. However, all weight-based terminology may be associated with some level of stigma, and individual preferences may vary. Therefore, it may be helpful to ask the patient which terms are preferred when discussing body weight".

7. *Pride and self-acceptance*

This final micro-category is only present in the French GROSSE corpus and, apart from the two slightly ambiguous other-directed tweets we will shortly be examining, all the tweets express joyful self-acceptance. The authors posit that this significant difference between the two corpora may be due to the feminist and queer *Gras Politique* movement led by Daria Marx and Eva Perez-Bello which has gained considerable exposure in France in recent years. Although the activists began their anti-fat-shaming activities in 2010, it is only in the last few years that they have acquired a substantial following on SNSs thanks to the publication of articles and hard-hitting books and the broadcasting of testimonial documentaries.

The two other-directed tweets present in this micro-category are devoid of the cruelty and hate we have identified elsewhere, however, the recycling of hashtags habitually used to shame points to the fact that an underlying stigmatization is still present.

[44] Hummmm j'adore ma baleine!!! #love #lagrosse
Hmmm I love my whale!!! #love #fatty

[45] #LaGrosse ! tkt c comme ça qu'on t'aime bien
#Fatty ! don't worry that's the way we like you.

As for the self-accepting tweets which follow, they fit into two subcategories: those which exalt fat bodies, forbidden foods, and presumably the breaching of rules the authors have previously had to adhere to; and those whose self-acceptance necessarily comprises aggressive attacks against fat-shamers. We will examine each subcategory in turn.

[46] Bon le point positif de la semaine en Italie pour l'instant c'est que je vais pouvoir bouffer des pâtes tout les jours … # lagrosse #jemaime

Well the good thing about the week in Italy for now is that I'm going to be able to scoff pasta every day...#fatty #ilovemyself

[47] Je viens de m'enfilé deux mousses au chocolat vive les kilos #LaGrosse #jemaime #grossmaisbelle
I've just guzzled down two chocolate mousses long live kilos #Fatty #ilovemyself #fatbuthappy

[48] J'ai détruit un paquet de Ferrero Rocher tte seule en 2 jours. #LaGrosse je m'enfiche c tellement bon!
I demolished a packet of Ferrero Rocher all on my own in 2 days. #Fatty I don't care it's so good!

[49] Je vais mourir mais au moins je mourrais heureuse #grostas #jemaime
I'm going to die but at least I'll die happy #fatheap #ilovemyself

At first sight tweets [46], [47], and [48] may all appear to be a playful reference to the joys of (over)eating, a closer look at the language employed, however, reveals a slightly different undercurrent. In the three posts the use of the verbs 'bouffer' (to scoff rather simply to eat), 's'enfiler' (to guzzle down), and 'détruire' (to demolish), all point to an unnatural, aggressive, bulimic approach to food regardless of the hashtags that accompany each tweet and which appear to point to an effort to reclaim and re-signify fat-shaming appellatives. In post [49], the mention of death does not seem to refer to the inevitable fate which awaits us all, but rather to the death-by-obesity much flaunted in medical/pedagogical discourse. Thus, under the surface of these apparently self-accepting tweets lies the authors' awareness that their relationship with food is distorted and reprehensible.

The following tweets all belong to the second subcategory and are evidently influenced by the fat pride/fat acceptance movement which, as previously mentioned, is particularly strong in France. Much as in the previous 'joys of overeating' posts, the aggressiveness of the tweets appears to clash with the positive message expressed in the 'reclaiming' or morale-boosting tags. The fact that, unlike the FAT corpus, self-acceptance features as one of the micro-categories in the GROSSE corpus, is doubtless positive, however the lexical choices and gratuitous belligerence strike a sour note and point to the fact that a state of peaceful self-approval has not yet been reached.

[50] Je préfère avoir le cul de Beyoncé, Et les gars retourner dans vos terrier bouffé vos sacs d'os… JE SUIS RONDE ET JE VOUS EMMERDES # LAGROSSE #MissFrance2019 #MissFrance
I'd rather have Beyoncé's arse, and you guys go back into your burrows and eat your bags of bones… I AM CHUBBY AND I SAY SCREW THE LOT OF YOU #FATTY #MissFrance2019 #MissFrance

[51] Le matin je fais exprès de manger sous le nez des gens que j'aime pas trop, mais ils peuvent aller se faire foutre c'est a moi #lagrosse #grossebitch #moijemaime
In the morning I deliberately eat under the noses of people I don't like much, but they can go and screw themselves it's mine/it's for me to decide #fatty #fatbitch #ilovemyself

[52] Ces gens qui pensent qu'on leur demande une fleur en leur demandant d'arreter de nous discriminer. Vous n'aimez pas les gros ? regardez ailleurs ! Détournez vous ! reculez ! On est pas là pour vous être esthétiquement agréable ! Mais surtout, lâchez nous ! #lagrosse #grossophobie
These people who think we're asking them for a favour by asking them to stop discriminating against us. You don't like fat people? Look elsewhere! Turn around! Back off! We're not here to please you aesthetically! But most of all, get off our backs! #fatty #fat-shaming

6. Final remarks

Through the analysis of two corpora purposely extrapolated from Twitter, in the context of both the Anglo and Franco linguistic landscapes, this paper has introduced the main linguistic strategies and specific affiliative hashtags through which online haters propagate their ideologies by construing negative discourses around obesity and fat and consequently giving rise to ambient affiliation systems.

Such negative fat-shaming discourses are inevitably linked to other significant facets present in both Anglo and Francophone contemporary cultures such as hatred expressed against minority groups and in particular against women and race. The interconnection of lesser represented social identities becomes a common discursive tool through which hate is propagated, drawing its strength from previously well-trodden hate-based tropes in order to easily reach and broaden the catchment area of online fat shaming.

Online fat-haters, both self and other, seem to adopt the same linguistic strategies when it comes to fat-shaming discourse. The values around which the online fat-hating community in both the 'self' and 'other' macro-categories align, are those fashioned by the neo-liberal society in which we live. Therefore, especially when it comes to women, the primary intersection in both corpora, the neo-liberal body in need of exercise, instruments of control, rules, abnegation and will-power, is necessarily betrayed by those whose weight is excessive. The shaming linguistic strategies tend to couple around a highly 'othering' appraisal mechanism in which terms like fat, monster, bête, truie, whale, pig construe a bestiary glossary with the aim of maintaining a negative semantic prosody around fat.

As we stated in our introduction, the FAT and GROSSE corpora are comparable but far from identical, and although we were able to identify seven micro-categories present in both languages, the 'self' and 'other' macro-categories differ in their presence within each of the former. The GROSSE corpus is perhaps remarkable for the 'extremes' it presents: the physical violence the other-shamers threaten to mete out to fat people, and the apparent self-acceptance and pride wholly lacking in the Eng tweet collection. The FAT corpus is in turn remarkable for the depths of self-despair expressed in the posts.

Upon concluding this paper, the authors returned to Twitter to see whether the 'trending' streams selected for this study had continued to thrive; sadly they had and the tweets were as vituperative as ever.

We cannot but end by quoting Kulick and Machado-Borges' wise words: "Fat in any society is never just about weight or health or looks. Instead, fat is a symbol, a mirror we can gaze into to glimpse the things society tells us are the fairest of them all – and the things society tells us are the grossest, least fair of them all. Looking closely at how people think about fat tells us a lot about how they think about the world in which they live" (Kulick & Machado-Borges 2005: 121), and by upholding Margrit Shildrick's enlightened proposal:

> What I propose is a new form of ethics that answers more fully to the multiplicity of embodied difference, and as such, it is precisely my intention to undo the singular category of the monster. In place of a morality of principles and rules that speaks to a clear-cut set of binaries setting out the good and the evil, the self and the other, normal and abnormal, the permissible and the prohibited, I turn away from such normative ethics to embrace instead the

ambiguity and unpredictability of an openness towards the monstrous other. It is a move that acknowledges both vulnerability to the other, and the vulnerability of the self (Shildrick 2002: 5).

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Angela Pitassi

DISCRIMINATORY SPEECH IN ETHNIC RADIO TALK SHOWS: THE CASE OF THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE RADIO STATION WKKB FM LATINA 100.3 (USA)

1. Introduction

Numerous studies have examined new media and language (Thurlow and Mroczek 2011), but few have investigated Spanish language ethnic radio in the United States. Radio programs constitute a fertile and significant field of investigation as they can serve in the processes of nation building by shaping political and local interpretations of realities (Chignell 2009). The fact that a physical location is not required to belong to a radio community serves as an inclusive force that can contribute to establishing the identity of immigrant communities in radio programs. Said programs can also help to promote both social protest and change (Bosch 2006; Cohen / Coyle / Lewty 2009), and to bring together ethnic minorities or immigrant populations (i.e. BBC Programming Great Britain Leicester in 1970's, McCarthy 2018).

Advances due to globalization and technological progress have progressively impacted sociolinguistic frameworks shifting the concept of identity away from physically radicated speech communities with a set of shared social norms (Gumperz 1964; Labov 1972) and "linked to stable characteristics such as place, social class, and gender" (De Fina 2013). For this reason, when investigating identity construction and ideologies across virtual communities, including that of radio talk shows, mobility and technology should always be taken into account. In the case of radio discourse, neither distance nor proximity bear any significance on the linguistic representation of identity building processes. Furthermore, radio listeners can phone in, gain access to, and participate in new virtual spaces (Facebook and Twitter for example), constructing identity/ies and, therefore, ideology/ies, in much the same way as the radio show host. Additionally, the radio shows allow the host and caller(s) to react in real time, despite physical distance, a phenomenon that commonly occurs across the virtual globalized world.

In terms of positionality, previous studies (for example, Casillas 2014: 102)

have highlighted the importance of the role of radio hosts in representing the community and, in terms of both content and airtime, guiding callers and listeners towards topics that they deem acceptable and appropriate for the community at large. Moreover, ethnic radio has specific characteristics: it can serve as a site where assistance for community needs and projects is provided (De La Cruz 2017) and / or for marketing an ethnic community (Casillas 2014; De Fina 2015; Tseng 2011). Programs may be transmitted in a local/minority language or in the language shared by most of the community (McCarthy 2009). Ethnic radio in Latin American communities in the United States plays a role in shaping positionality particularly with regard to the stance adopted towards gender roles; however, as will be illustrated, the stances taken up by DJs and callers are often very different.

Such stances, often attesting to traditional gender roles in the communities in question, also vehemently oppose those who do not conform, often escalating to levels of acrimony that qualify as hate speech. Unlike some European countries, in the United States there are no laws specifically prohibiting hate speech, as such legislation is considered to be in conflict with the First Amendment and has, over time, been scrupulously examined on a case-by-case basis by the different levels of the US court system. Historically, the free speech/hate speech controversy has been a topic of great debate and has most recently been a heavily disputed theme in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.[1] Despite the lack of federal legislation against hate speech, hate crimes are a recognized offense defined by the FBI as "[...] a traditional offense like murder, arson, or vandalism with an added element of bias. For the purposes of collecting statistics, the FBI has defined a hate crime as a "criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity".[2]

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[1] For a more detailed history of this issue, please refer to: Fisch, William B. "Hate Speech in the Constitutional Law of the United States". *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 50, no. Suppl_1 (2002): 463-92; van Mill, David, "Freedom of Speech", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/freedom-speech/>; Haiman, Franklyn Saul. *Speech Acts and the First Amendment*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993.

[2] "Hate Crimes" FBI (FBI, May 3, 2016).

Against this backdrop, this study has two overall aims. The first is to analyze the transcripts collected from DJ Gato's show on the radio station Latina 100.3 FM, and those of the callers who tune in every morning. The specific focus is to explore his rendering of discriminatory gender ideologies and how these were modified after his departure from the show in the Spring of 2019, when the group of four co-hosts took over. The second is to explore how the host interacted with callers, and the extent to which his stance towards diverse issues was accepted or challenged. In order to carry out these aims, the discourse of both the hosts and the callers will be examined using the toolbox provided by Critical Discourse Analysis, supported by Bucholtz and Hall's *Positionality Principle* (2005: 591-2). This type of analysis aims to consider not only the role of the radio station as a proponent of discriminatory ideologies, but also the process of "othering" that occurs throughout the morning show, both on behalf of the hosts and on that of the callers. The exploration will investigate the possibility that within a radio program that relies very heavily on heteronormative discourse, there may be more progressive voices amongst the callers. More rarely, in the case of the two female members of the new group of hosts who exhibit different positionalities, these progressive voices could shed new light on different – predominantly women's – perspectives that aim to challenge a status quo in Spanish language ethnic radio discourse in the United States.

1.1 Spanish language ethnic radio and its exploration through CDA

In the 1920's "[t]he U.S. government held a tight rein on radio stations within the United States, but along the U.S.-Mexico border "powerful transmitters from Mexico boosted Mexican-regulated broadcasts across the border to a growing diaspora" (Casillas 2014: 23). After the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act was issued, the Spanish-speaking Latino sector established "a number of community driven public radio enterprises that provoked real change on the American airwaves" (De la Cruz 2017: 226). Among the most famous Latino radio hosts in the Southwest was "El Cucuy" (The Bogeyman), who was originally from Guatemala and broadcast live from LA. El Cucuy was a "leading personality of a profitable morning genre heard across the nation during the 1990s on U.S. Spanish-language radio" (Casillas 2014: 102). Casillas develops her research around this DJ's stance, subsequently imitated

in various radio stations around the country, but with a common denominator of working-class male DJ personalities with a "dialectic use of slang, occasional profanity, consistent misogynistic remarks, and homophobic innuendos" (Casillas 2014: 102). Besides investigating DJ stance, Casillas also interviewed female listeners, demonstrating that these women's responses contrasted with the dominating male opinion of both callers and the host of the radio show. One aim of the present study is to argue that women are catalysts of change in contrasting heteronormative stance. The present study further demonstrates that there is an evolution in the presence of women who contest the positionality of male dominated speech and, therefore, male dominated interlocutory space, on-air.

This study aims to fill a gap regarding heteronormative discourse and discriminatory discourse in the work related to Spanish language radio stations in the United States. Besides the work carried out by Casillas (2014), a number of authoritative studies regarding Spanish language radio in the US have been conducted in recent years by Tseng (2011) and De Fina (2015). De Fina's article examines Radio Zol in Baltimore, Maryland and focuses on the marketing strategies exploited by firms to target Latino consumers and the identity-targeting moves involving the use of bilingualism employed by the radio hosts. Findings show that large and small sized businesses advertise in Spanish and "seem to converge in downplaying differences among Latin@s and in representing them as a community united by cultural and linguistic heritage, as a minority that is not established in the USA and that maintains significant transnational ties" (De Fina 2015: 570). Additionally, "Spanish-accented English" and "code-switching, mixing, and blending in a variety of speech genres, from host talk to advertising, thus point to the diversity of the Latin American population and of their experiences in the US" (De Fina 2015: 51). Tseng's study regards 95.1 Latino Vibe, broadcast out of Phoenix, Arizona. She finds that "DJs used topic-oriented evaluative stances to position themselves and others, drawing on resources ranging from stylistic code-switching to circulating discourses of ethnicity, class, morality, and authenticity to create in-groups and engage the audience in fictive bonds of intimacy" (Tseng 2011: 65). The idea of fictive bonds of intimacy, as Tseng states, especially in the case of male radio interlocutors, may evolve through the creation of in-groups that include, as Casillas found, "immigrant men [who] sustain and perpetuate patriarchal ideals through radio programming" (Casillas

2014: 107). These three studies address different factors played out across Spanish language radio, although they all overlap in their quest to improve understandings of identity construction in Spanish language radio stations, especially in talk shows. Thus, the present study aims to contribute to this topic by exploring the idea of othering and how heteronormative discourse is produced and challenged within this type of programming.

1.2 Latina 100.3 FM

Latina 100.3 FM radio station is owned by Red Wolf Media Group (CT), and boasts 250,000 listeners, who are either Spanish speakers or individuals with some knowledge of Spanish. Red Wolf Broadcasting has an annual revenue of $1.4 million, and 25 members of staff in its headquarters in Ledyard, CT, USA. The radio station reaches the areas of Rhode Island, Connecticut (North), and Massachusetts (South). Initially, the morning talk show hosted by the middle-aged DJ Gato, ran from 8 to 9 a.m., Monday through Friday. When DJ Gato was substituted by a group of hosts consisting of two men and two women, the program, known as the "El Mañanero" show, began to run from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., Monday through Friday. The station describes itself as a tropical music station broadcasting mainly in Spanish, with a restricted use of English, mainly for advertising, and a limited amount of English/Spanish code switching. The radio station also possesses a multimodal dimension in that it has an active Facebook page, is present on Instagram, and allows callers to phone in and to use both the WhatsApp phone and messaging services. Lastly, it is broadcast through live streaming, making it available to those who are not present in the radiophonic broadcasting area.

2. Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims to understand why an utterance has taken on a specific form and how this form reproduces power relations (Johnstone 2000). The analytical framework does not focus on the text itself, but rather on the role that discourse plays in maintaining, reproducing or modifying social inequalities. By incorporating different theoretical perspectives within its critical paradigm, CDA aims to denaturalize and deconstruct the hierarchical relations that are legitimized through linguistic use (Van Dijk

1993; Reisigl and Wodak 2001). While CDA research has often focused on the discursive construction of minoritized groups in the discourse pertaining to majority groups (e.g., how the United States mass media represent Latinos), less is known about how such minoritized groups create their own discourse (Delbene 2008; Strom 2013).

Moreover, while critical discourse analysts have observed that the discourse created by majority groups often contains racist ideologies targeting minoritized groups (Van Dijk 1988, 1991), they are less aware of the kind of ideologies present in the discourse of such minoritized groups. As a consequence, there is an incomplete understanding of the discourse created by such groups and, more importantly, of its potential to challenge the negative discursive practices of majority groups (Strom 2010: 254).

Radio is said to be the most intimate of the mass media, largely due to the fact that audience members are addressed using first and second person pronouns in real time (Hendy 2007). Fairclough (1992) identifies three audience groups in texts: the "addressees", who are directly addressed, the "hearers", who are not addressed but are assumed to be part of the audience, and the "overhearers", who are not in the official audience but are known to be "de facto" consumers (Fairclough 1992: 79). "Callers" constitute a further category in that they present, together with the radio station, "the rearticulating of the relationship between the public domain of political (economic, religious) events and social agents, and the private domain, the domain of the 'lifeworld', of common experience." (Fairclough 1992: 110). Regarding the specificity of the interaction between the public and private domains in the case of radio, where interaction is non face-to-face, Fairclough notes that media discourse presents 'one-sidedness' as radio interactions are designed for a mass audience where the host has power and control over the discourse. By way of example, in the case of 100.3 FM, Facebook interactions can be ratified, contested, or ignored by the host as the hybridity of this type of discourse allows the host to engage in whichever manner he prefers. Despite the mass audience that the show addresses, the host can build up a personal idea of the "ideal subject", and consequently choose whether or not to "constrain content". This becomes even more complicated when the hosts are more than one, as is the case with the "El Mañanero" show.

In these terms, it must be noted that the rearticulations between private and public domains, as Fairclough claims, are not always without conflict with

regard to inner-group workings. In other words, while the public domain is present, this does not necessarily mean that the domain of the 'lifeworld' is lived or articulated in the same manner by all members of the same group, in this case, those who make up the Latina 100.3 radio community. Therefore, the idea of in-groups and out-groups will come to the fore when these rearticulations contrast in their telling, resulting in a mechanism of othering within the virtual community. In fact, as van Dijk notes, "[w]hereas oppositional ideologies by definition will tend to be more explicit and conscious among group members, dominant ideologies will precisely tend to be implicit and denied or felt to be 'natural' by their members. Such group members may indeed be unaware of their ideologies (typically so of male chauvinism, racism, etc.) until they are challenged by members of the other group" (1998: 98).

To best evaluate the phenomenon of challenging discriminatory ideologies within the same virtual ethnic radio community, it may be useful to consider, along with CDA, Bucholtz and Hall's positionality principle (2005: 591-592). This principle highlights a significant difference between identity on a broad scale and that of "more nuanced and flexible kinds of identity relations that arise in local contexts" (Bucholtz and Hall: 591). The authors also underline the importance of "micro details of identity as it is shaped from moment to moment in interaction" that then connect to macro-level and "local, ethnographically specific cultural positions" (Bucholtz and Hall: 592). In the case of radio discourse, we can utilize these observations to discern the specific instances in which gender ideology is expressed and that are, as the authors state, "interactionally specific", while considering their repercussions a) on a larger level and b) as emblematic or not as to the ideology/ies expressed by a specific group – in this case, those who call into the radio station. It is also interesting to note that the overhearers (those not actively participating at a given time) may be stimulated to *become* participants precisely thanks to the interactionally specific discourse they are witnessing.

When these ideologies inevitably clash and othering occurs, there is a transition from "temporary and interactionally specific stances" to a more macro-phenomenon (Pandey 2004:155). Pandey indicates that othering is to be understood as "a technical term used here to describe the manner in which social group dichotomies are represented via language [...] engag[ing] in the representation or exclusion of groups". In the case of this specific radio program, othering occurs within the virtual community itself, possibly with

the complicity of the host, creating divides within the group that can best be depicted using van Dijk's Ideological Square (Figure 1):

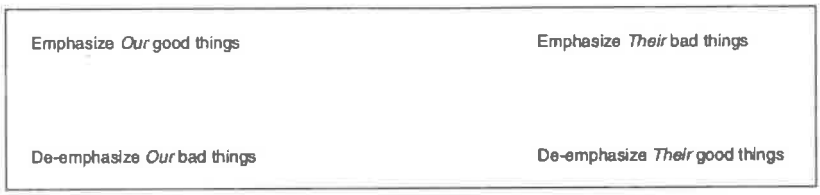

Figure 1 Van Dijk's (2011: 396) Ideological Square.

Van Dijk underlines the importance of constructing mental models in order to understand discourse; he notes that communication "is geared towards the management of such models which, from the point of view of the speaker/writer, may be called 'preferred models' since these represent what the speaker/writer wants the recipient to know or believe". In the case of radio discourse, this is not only true of the mental model proposed by the host, but also by those who intervene as the host's interlocutors. Further, van Dijk underlines the specificity of radio discourse in its vast propagation: "mass mediated or any other kind of public discourse will have more serious ideological consequences, if only because of the size of its audience, than mundane interpersonal dialogues. Both public discourse and interpersonal dialogues may, in specific contexts, be equally ideological, but ideologies expressed in public discourse convey opinions to many more in-group and out-group members" (van Dijk 1998: 264-265). To better identify the role that the four parts of the Ideological Square (Figure 1) have in the identification of strategies that construct in-group and out-group ideologies, it must be remembered that "these are not primarily focused on participants as individuals, but on participants acting as group members. This suggests a third important principle of ideological discourse analysis, namely, the fact that since ideologies are social and group-based, also the ideological opinions expressed in discourse must have implications for groups or social issues" (van Dijk 1998: 267). As for the radio show which provides the case study for this investigation, the virtual community, through the discourse of its members, manifests a number of temporary stances located along a continuum towards the construction of diverse ideologies. This has implications for social issues related to the

construction of/ challenge to heteronormative positionality, and the subsequent creation of in-groups and out-groups.

3. Data

The 'DJ Gato' corpus of audio data is made up of five one-hour episodes, for a sum total of 5 hours. The themes discussed included 1) single mothers, 2) attractive and unattractive men, 3) infidelity, 4) things that make you happy, and 5) bullying. The second corpus involving the new group of co-hosts from "El Mañanero" is made up of 5 recordings lasting a total of 3 hours. They are numerically labeled 1 to 5 because, unlike the DJ Gato recordings, they cannot be classified on the basis of different thematic areas. While the episodes that make up the 'DJ Gato' were collected from October 2018 to March February 2019, the episodes that make of the 'El Mañanero' corpus were collected from December 2020 to January 2021.

4. Analysis

4.1 Part I - The DJ Gato Corpus

The infidelity episode includes a debate about how to salvage a relationship after a member of the couple has cheated on his/her partner while involved in a presumably monogamous relationship. When a male caller decided to share his solution on air, suggesting that the couples go to a swinger's club[3], DJ Gato's response indicated a mononormative stance that did not admit this solution as part of the community's in-group ideology. This was made clear by his doubting the genuineness of the caller's sentiments, therefore gratuitously offending his moral commitment:

4.1.1 *Example 1*

DJ: Bueno, mira, que gusto, para los que no saben que es *swingers*	DJ: Ok look, how interesting, for those who don't know what swingers is

[3] Lifestyle clubs or Swingers clubs are establishments that organize sex related activities such as partner-swapping or group sex sessions. These activities take place among members of the club and not with paid sex workers.

eh, son las personas que intercambian sus parejas, ¿verdad? Literalmente en sesiones sexuales, en muchas veces, ¿verdad? **Male caller**: Sí, sí, tenemos el club, ah Habemos [sic] como 40 parejas [...] **DJ**: Pero tú no la quieres mucho a ella. **Male caller**: No, yo la amo, Es la mujer de mi vida. **DJ**: Ok, bueno, muchísimas gracias por tu comentario, hermano.	Eh, they are the people who interchange partners, right? Literally in sexual sessions, in many cases, right? **Male caller**: Yes, yes, we have a club, heh We have about 40 couples [...] **DJ**: But you don't love her very much. **Male caller**: No, I love her. She's the woman of my life. **DJ**: Ok, fine, thanks so much for your comment, brother.

Extract taken from the episode *Cheating*.

The abruptness with which the call was ended by the DJ further indicates indirect disapproval, as does his tone of voice in the recording. In terms of the micro-interaction, as mentioned previously, the DJ acts as an "evaluator"; however, his unwillingness as a public figure to engage with a different opinion takes the discourse into a wider sphere as the "overhearers" may also be more reluctant to call in if they disagree with the DJ's positionality. It is important to underline that the scope of the 'infidelity' episode was to understand how monogamous heterosexual couples overcame relationship difficulties after one of the partners had been unfaithful. Much emphasis was placed on forgiveness and the importance of not repeating such behavioral patterns. Other solutions, such as open relationships, cheating out of revenge, etc., were strongly discouraged and even denigrated, as they did not conform to mono-heteronormative behaviors. In this specific case, while the swingers club solution may have been a positive resolution for the couple itself, it did not meet with DJ Gato's approval. Here, in terms of van Dijk's ideological square, it is important to note that the in-group did carry out point 3, that is "suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about them", in that the proposed solution, while satisfactory for the couple, could not, due to Gato's ideology, and consequently that of the in-group, be deemed positive, as it violated his and its ideological norms.

It is also significant to note that the DJ offers his own definition of "swingers":

DJG: Para, para los que no saben que es swingers, es una persona que comparte su pareja con otras personas, ¿verdad?
(For, for those who don't know what swingers is, it is a person who shares their partner with other people, right?)

It is worth noting that the verb "compartir" (to share) usually refers to sharing objects, not people; in this sense, the shared partner is objectified and dehumanized. While most of the callers, when asked whether the partner who was betrayed should be allowed to cheat as well, said no, there is also one example of a woman who, in this same episode, defended women who cheat once they have been cheated upon by their male partner:

No, pues, la mujer tiene que valorarse y si tiene ganas como dijo el swinger que se eche su "swingazo" también.
(No, so, the woman has to value herself and if she feels like it, like the swinger said, she should have a "swing" herself.)

This particular example not only shows that a female voice is pushing back against the hegemonic discourse imposed by the DJ and the majority of the callers, but that these female participants are not only "overhearers", but hearers and active participants as, according to Fairclough, they feel that they are being directly addressed as a category, or singled out as being transgressors of the heteronormative stance to which DJ Gato devotes most of his air time.

4.1.2 *Example 2*

Noises can be interpreted as a substitution for acts that are considered taboo in the radio community. At the same time, they can (over)emphasize sexual acts and masculine bravado. The use of noises as opposed to verbal euphemisms (given the public nature of radio and the existing content regulations) underlines the unmentionable nature of sexual acts while casting women as objects, and men in control of how they are manipulated. Here, the underlying misogynist current highlights the notion of perversion connected to those who openly enjoy sexual activity:

DJ: Pelón, cuéntame, ¿que te hace feliz? **Pelón:** Gato, lo que te hace feliz el sexo salvaje. <ruido de caballo> **DJ:** ¿De verdad, Pelón? Pero escuchen como hable come un pervertidito. **Pelón:** Gato, lo que te hace feliz el sexo salvaje. <sonido de un juguete de apretar> **DJ:** toma toma toma jaja Ehi cada quien le hace feliz ciertas cosas, ¿verdad?	**DJ:** Pelón, tell me, what makes you happy? **Pelón:** Gato, what makes you happy is wild sex. <horse noise> **DJ:** Really, Pelón? But listen how he talks like a little pervert. **Pelón:** Gato, wild sex is what makes you happy. <sound of a squeeze toy> **DJ:** take it take it take it haha Each person can be happy with certain things, right?

Extract taken from the episode *What makes you happy?*.

In this episode, Pelón's equating happiness to purely physical appetites is significant. Pelón is often present on air and is one of the "regulars" to whom the DJ grants considerable on-air time. As shown in the transcription, Pelón's explicit noises and vocabulary are categorized by the DJ as those coming from a "little pervert"; what goes unsaid is that sex should not be described in this manner, because it lies outside what is ideologically acceptable as sexual discourse. However, the DJ's final comment seems to mitigate his comment about Pelón's perversion; it is possible to entertain the idea that, though outside acceptability, Pelón is a male interlocutor and is therefore still part of a heteronormative, often discriminatory, male-dominated in-group. This is made more evident in the following excerpt.

4.1.3 *Example 3*

Pelón: Ay Gato, pero aquí a las mujeres les encanta <sonido de silbido> **DJ:** ¿Les encanta qué? <sonido de silbido> **DJ:** Jaja pero no diga eso. No diga eso	**Pelón:** Hey Gato, but here women love <whistling noise> **DJ:** What do they love? <whistling noise> **DJ:** Haha but don't say that. Don't say that.

diga algunas mujeres, algunas mujeres, diga. No diga todas las mujeres.	Say some women, some women, say. Don't say all women.

Extract taken from the episode *Single Moms*.

When examining Example 3, it is important to note that male interlocutors tend to support DJ Gato's positionality. This includes, though it is not limited to, casting the out-group (single mothers) as promiscuous and therefore negatively connoted, fulfilling the first point of van Dijk's Ideological Square (Figure 1), "Express/emphasize information that is negative about Them." The male interlocutors further fail to offer any sort of positive information about the out-group, fulfilling the Ideological Square's second point: "Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about Them". It is significant to note that Example 3 illustrates an escalation of the language utilized when distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups that directly counterposes men and women. While the previous examples (1 and 2) referenced DJ Gato's interlocutors more directly, more akin to Bucholtz and Hall's micro-level of identity as shaped through interaction (2005: 592), in this instance, the DJ, while appearing to reprimand Pelón, is laughing and his protest is merely a matter of form. This interlocutor uses generalizations to indicate the negative attributes of single mothers, especially in terms of promiscuity, expressing a positionality that does not admit multiple partners; in terms of mono-normativity, this attitude is reminiscent of Example 1.

4.1.4 *Example 4*

Interlocutor: Si, no, ¿y sabes cuál es el chiste? Que puede ella tener hasta tres, cuatro, cinco hijos y yo soy mama y papa a la vez porque mi marido me dejó. ¿Como no te lo va a dejar el marido si con cada hijito que tiene, tiene un papá diferente?	**Interlocutor**: Yes, no, and you know what the joke is? That she can have even three, four, five kids and I am mom and dad at the same time because my husband left me. How could he not leave you if each kid you have has a different father?

Extract taken from the episode *Single Moms*.

In this excerpt, the male interlocutor speaks of a generic "she" – once again generalizing the behavior of single mothers in terms of excessive promiscuity. It is clear that the air space granted to this interlocutor serves as confirmation that he is in line with Gato's stance; in other cases, the DJ hung up abruptly when not agreeing with a caller. As in the previous examples, a woman having multiple partners is not tolerated, and she is often gratuitously offended. However, here it is possible to observe a key point in the mono-normative positionality created by the male callers and the DJ: as Tseng states, these "fictive bonds of intimacy" between the male callers and the DJ are reinforced through the creation of another out-group: the non-monogamous partnerless female parent who has had more than one previous partner and who calls herself "mom and dad at the same time", thereby challenging a status quo that is the exclusive remit of heterosexual couples.

These four examples, just a small selection of the many to be found in the five episodes recorded, were chosen to exemplify a commonality amongst male interlocutors that privileges hetero- and mono-normative, discriminatory discourse. As mentioned previously, it is only from the female interlocutors that resistance to these ideologies is proposed. One of the most emblematic cases is that of a woman who called in response to a man who had emphatically opposed the raising of male children by single females, due to the risk of these children imitating "female" behavior due to the lack of a male role model. Examples 5 and 6 portray the attitudes frequently encountered in this recording.

4.1.5 *Example 5*

Mi opinión mía es, Gato. Yo estoy de acuerdo con los otros caballeros que han llamado que en verdad ninguna madre en verdad puede ser padre. Porque ninguna madre puede oye la mujer para ir al baño se sienta el hombre se para. Si el niño va creciendo y va viendo a la mama venir y sentarte ¿que tú crees que va a hacer el niño?	My opinion is, Gato. I agree with the other men who called that really no mother can really be a father. Because no mother can A woman sits to go to the bathroom A man stands up If the boy grows up seeing the mother sit down What do you think he is going to do?

Extract taken from the episode *Single Moms*.

As is evident in the above excerpt, physicality and physical behaviors are at the root of the interlocutor's objections. Before moving into the section of the analysis that portrays female interlocutors' resistance to these claims, another example will be discussed in order to illustrate the importance of these assertions and their connection to the previous example. In this case, it is the DJ who offers his opinion regarding the theme at hand, by recounting the story of a conversation he had with a friend:

4.1.6 *Example 6*

Así me dijo, mira, tú sabes que muchas veces la mamá viene el niño con los zapatos de tacones de la mamá y le dice al hijo Jaja tan lindo mira que tiene tacones! O a veces el niño agarra el brasiercito de la mama y dice 'Ay mira el brasier de mami!' Stop it! Eso es para mujeres! En cambio las mujeres se lo celebra y ellos nacen creciendo que eso esta bien. Yo no estoy diciendo que esta mal pero no es lo mismo ver el diablo, llamar el diablo que verlo llegar.	So he told me, look, you know that many times the mother the son comes with the mom's high heels and she says to the son Haha how cute look he has heels! Or the son grabs the mom's brassiere and says 'Look, mom's bra!' Stop it! That is for women! But the women encourage him and they grow up thinking that this is ok. I'm not saying it's bad. But seeing the devil and inviting him over is not the same as just seeing him coming.

Extract taken from the episode *Single Moms*.

As can be observed in this latter example, objects such as female undergarments and high heels are relegated to the female sphere. While in adult contexts these objects would almost certainly solicit a different reaction from male interlocutors and from the DJ, they are considered unacceptable as toys for male children of single female parents. It is almost as if the objects themselves have their own power as is evident in the final lines of the DJ's monologue: the use of the Christian metaphor of the devil, here to be understood as homosexuality, seems to be something that may be "tolerated" in male children, only if it is not "encouraged" by a single female parent. It is

possible to observe that a heteronormative stance is preferred and, if the son of a single female parent is not raised as a heterosexual man in accordance with these parameters, it is the single female parent who is disrupting the norms established by the DJ and his male interlocutors.

Example 7 is spoken by a female interlocutor who, as is evident from her response, has listened to and is replying to comments made previously during the "Single Moms" episode.

4.1.7 *Example 7*

Si esta mujer, porque yo soy una de ellas, pero no te voy a agradecer que me humilles los niños que crecieron, con madres solteras, como usted dice, no mamá y papá como digo yo. ¿Esos niños hace pipí sentados o hacen pipí normal? ¿Esos niños tienen novio o tienen novia, por lo general? Pero no he terminado, son hombrecitos, y quien los ha criado si no fue la madre.	Yes, this woman, because I am one of them, but I will not thank you for humiliating the children who grow-up with single mothers, as you say, not a mom and a dad as I say. Do those boys pee sitting down or do they pee normally? Do those boys have boyfriends or have a girlfriend, in general? But I am not done, they are little men, and who has raised them, if not their mother.

Extract taken from the episode *Single Moms*.

Contrary to the heteronormative discourse practices of the DJ and the male callers, this female caller rejects being placed in an out-group. Additionally, it is possible that with her use of the phrase "single mothers", she is attempting to propose a counter narrative to what is proposed by the DJ and the male callers, creating an in-group for single mothers that challenges the positionality of the men. At the same time, it must be mentioned that some of the discourse rooted in physicality (for example, excerpt 5) that the female caller mentions, can be seen both as a re-positioning and a re-appropriation of this discourse in favor of single female parents, distancing it from the previous connotations of hegemonic masculinity. Another female caller also succinctly opposes the comments of male callers by pointing out: "Pero no es que hay que ser hombre para uno enseñarle a una persona a como ser hombre. Hay muchas otras formas." (But you do not need to be a man to be able to teach a person how to be a man. There are many ways to do it). In doing so, she talks to the

"addressees", who are directly called into play, the "hearers", who are not addressed but are assumed to be part of the audience, and the "overhearers" who are not in the official audience but are known to be "de facto" consumers. By contesting the status quo, she underlines how all participants cross these category boundaries and are all at times called to action – not necessarily on air, but in terms of their community/ies of practice.

4.2 Part II - The Hosts of "El Mañanero"

After DJ Gato left the radio station, he was replaced by four hosts: DJ Jota, La Baby Julie, Karina, and Kike. The morning show format also changed from a one hour long talk show focusing on one single theme, to a three-hour show with various themes, many of which addressed current issues rather than the more typical opinion-related "talk-show" concerns. While moving away from a single host, the radio station did not, however, completely disassociate itself from the themes previously aired during DJ Gato's time.

Apart from a number of innocuous talking points discussed by the four hosts and their callers including, for example, favorite animals and what they mean in terms of personality, under the new regime, current political events also came to the fore. These included topics such as the change in WhatsApp privacy issues, the Rhode Island governor's possible national appointment under the incoming Biden administration, the current state of the stimulus check that had not yet been delivered to all eligible recipients, and the use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards by low-income families for approved fast food restaurants. Several examples show continuity with DJ Gato's aforementioned stances as the talk show host.

4.2.1 *Example 1*

In the first example, DJ Jota, the main host of the new three-hour morning show, presents the story of the "vida sexual de una chica" (sexual life of a girl) through a "nota de voz" (a voice message, possibly through WhatsApp). The voice message left by the woman caller states that, in general, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans men are bad in bed. While many comments from callers confirm this generalization, there are others in which women call in and pejoritively call the woman who left the voice message an "experta" (expert), or state that she

has no ethics (no tiene ética), creating a situation in which women discriminate against other women. It is important to consider that this situation had only been presented, perhaps partially, by DJ Jota, who interpreted the message left without actually playing the voice recording on air. Therefore, in accordance with Bucholtz and Hall, this transformation does portray "micro details of identity as it is shaped from moment to moment in interaction" but also highlights the risks of discrimination on radio when the indirect speaker (in this case, the woman whose sexual life is being discussed), is not present to explain in first person. Her presence on the radio show is regulated by the (possibly partial) interpretation and reformulation carried out by DJ Jota. In this case, it is possible that the woman who left the voice message exemplifies how the idea of Fairclough's conception of "addressees" and "hearers", and perhaps "overhearers", can be viewed in a new manner, due to the integration of WhatsApp in this virtual community of practice. Leaving a voicemail instead of calling in directly automatically relegates her, and others who leave voice messages, to occupy the category of overhearers, "part of the de facto audience", in that there is no way to be sure that they are participating as "hearers".

4.2.2 *Example 2*

The second example discusses the following question: "Si la mujer le da mucha libertad, ¿al hombre lo puede perder?" (If a woman gives her man a lot of freedom, will she lose him?). In much the same way as with the questions formulated by DJ Gato, several underlying presuppositions appear to be evident, including the overarching dominance of a heterosexual, monogamous relationship as the norm. While many interlocutors mention freedom and mutual respect, no interlocutor questions the presuppositions behind the question itself. In this case, contrary to DJ Gato, who frequently hung up on those who challenged his opinion, a different dynamic arose, possibly due to the mixed gender host set. In this case, Kike, one of the two female hosts, challenged DJ Jota's (male host) representation of the issue at hand, stating: "Soy su pareja, no soy su mamá" (I'm his companion, I'm not his mother). It is interesting to note that the term 'pareja' literally means pair from the (assumed) Vulgar Latin *paricula*; by upholding gender equality, Kike is therefore disassociating herself from the expectations of the 'traditional' couple considered acceptable within the community of practice.

4.2.3 *Example 3*

The following example is, perhaps, the most reminiscent of the DJ Gato episode, "Madres solteras" (Single Moms). Here, the situation presented by DJ Jota is that of a man who decides to leave his family home to marry his fiancée, and whose mother delivers a list of instructions to her future daughter-in-law, including what films are acceptable to watch:

> Un joven que aparentemente decidió formalizar una relación se mudó con su novia y esta cuando pues llega a la casa donde va a vivir con el chico encuentra instrucciones dejadas por la mamá de como tiene que ser cuidado su hijo, de como ella debe de mantener su hijo, día día, incluidos que tipo de películas pueden ver.
> (A young man who apparently decided to formalize his relationship moved in with his girlfriend and when she gets to the house she has to live in with the young man, she finds instructions left by [his] mother as to how her son has to be taken care of, how she has to look after her son, day by day, including the types of films they are allowed to watch.)

DJ Jota then asked the audience: "¿Qué tú harías en este caso, una persona de afuera, mujeres sobretodo y hombres que quieren opinar, tambien?" (What would you do in this case, as someone not directly involved, as women? and if men want to give their opinion, they can too). Here, most male interlocutors did state that they were in disagreement, but the responses were relatively bland. Many of the male interlocutors stated that there were limits that should be respected, but were not adamant and were also not specific as to which ones. Only one of the two female hosts took it upon herself to challenge the discriminatory narrative regarding how the future daughter-in-law should submit to her mother-in-law: "El primer paso lo tiene que tomar el hombre. Si no lo toma o le gusta [...], yo lo devuelvo. Lo devuelvo, le digo, 'mire, tómelo'. (The man has to take the first step. If he doesn't or if he likes [that kind of treatment], I'll give him back [to his mother]. I'll say 'look, take him'.") While it may seem that this discourse reinforces a status quo of a) familial solidarity with men, even young ones, at the center, and b) the general acceptance of an extended family in which elder members have the right to intervene, the only real attempt to disrupt this status quo comes from the aforementioned female host. She attempts to challenge the discrimination against the decisional power of younger and perhaps less experienced women; the space afforded to her on

air would most likely have been significantly less within the parameters of DJ Gato's morning show. However, the same female host, speaking to the roles of single mothers and their relationships with their sons, later states that single mothers are often guilty of clinging to their male children, especially when there is only one:

> "A veces las madres solteras se aferran tanto a los hijos varones y más si es uno, si aferran tanto que no entienden el balance y el nivel donde ella puede llegar con un hijo adulto." (Sometimes single mothers cling to their male children so much, and even more so if he is an only child, they cling to they so much that they don't understand that there is a balance and a limit in terms of how far they can go with an adult male child.)

Whereas DJ Gato depicted single mothers as those who "pervert" their male children, dressing them in high heels and not teaching them to be "real men", the blame placed here is not as glaring, but still points to single mothers as somehow deficient in their parenting, as their lifestyle does not fit in with the ideologically charged status quo of the community of practice. Here, the in-group built up by both callers and hosts has more to do with the hegemonically discursive "correct" type of mother than any kind of female out-group aiming to gain its space on a traditional male stage.

5. Conclusions

DJ Gato does present similarities to El Cucuy, the Latino radio host in California studied by Casillas in her *Sounds of Belonging* (2014), since both interact with women and firmly believe in a need to maintain a status quo of hegemonic masculinity. There are isolated cases, however, in which an attempt at social change in terms of challenging heteronormative discourse makes the DJ reconsider his stance; one example of this regards his interaction with Pelón in example 3. While Pelón aims to generalize as to women's sexual preferences, it is DJ Gato who encourages him to modify his generalization to "some women" instead of "all women". One of the most conflict-laden themes, with regard to women and their place in society, was that of single mothers. The people who opposed the DJ were, many times, women who did not fit into his pre-established categories and were raising their children alone without a male partner. Another theme that came to the fore in the interaction between Gato and his callers was

that of the expected traits men should embody when involved in, clearly heterosexual, relationships. Here, too, the DJ appealed to stringent gender essentialism: men should be monogamous, and should not attempt to resolve their marital issues through 'third-party solutions' as in the case of swingers.

While it may be difficult, due to the parameters currently in force in the US regarding hate speech, to demarcate language that pertains to this sphere, discriminatory language is certainly evident in the DJ/caller interactions at the heart of this case study. DJ Gato's aggressive stance contributed to the maintenance of a model of hegemonic masculinity, and, although the radio station changed its hosting format after El Gato's departure, the same cannot be said of the ingrained normative standards it reflects which often target women *in primis*. The tendency to discriminate against female callers and their lifestyles, and the fact that despite a change in hosts the ideology incorporated by the radio station has not changed, should lead to a wider reflection in terms of the community of practice itself.

In observing these two radio talk shows, one of the issues that merits further discussion involves communities of practice and the invisible borders that delimit such shared domains of human endeavor. By diachronically tracing the interactions between DJ Gato, the other two male hosts, and the callers, one cannot help but notice a widening gap between the positions they uphold and the ever-evolving societal norms. Women increasingly challenge the DJs' stances, contesting their discriminatory, occasionally hateful discourses steeped in hegemonic masculinity. As a result, new communities of practice are born in the virtual radiophonic arena, and, although female callers are still far from creating a consolidated in-group with unlimited access to airtime, the ideologies they defend may enable them to evolve into a discourse community able to challenge the male-dominated presence and progressively modify it in a more consistent manner.

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Maria Cristina Nisco

ONLINE ABUSE AND DISABILITY HATE SPEECH: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER COMMENT BOARDS ON HARVEY'S LAW

1. Introduction

In 2017, the TV personality and former model Katie Price launched a petition on her Instagram account to make online abuse a specific criminal offence with a register of offenders. She shared screenshots of online abuse directed at her son, Harvey, 14 at the time, who was regularly targeted over the colour of his skin, his size and, above all, his disabilities – he is blind and has autism, ADHD and Prader-Willi syndrome (a genetic disorder affecting appetite and muscle development). Harvey was regularly bullied online, mocked, and became the subject of memes, TikToks and posters. Price's initiative was widely backed by MPs on the grounds that existing laws are not sufficient to address the issue and deal with an unimagined scale of online abuse – in fact, unlike religion and ethnicity, there are no specific disability-related criminal offences in the UK. Hence the request to ensure that abusive behaviour does not go unpunished. After reaching more than 220,000 signatures, the petition was then presented to the UK House of Commons and submitted to the Petitions Committee.[1]

Over the last decade, by means of consultations, reports, and strategies, the UK Parliament has been working on the issue of abuse on social media in an attempt to define a legal framework and appropriate approaches to regulation and enforcement. In 2014, the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee stated that consolidation of the law on online bullying would be welcome.[2] In 2016, the Law Commission initiated consultations as to whether the law on

[1] The Government is required to respond to all petitions which receive more than 10,000 signatures. For further details on Price's petition, see https://twitter.com/KatiePrice/status/846750333065879552. Unless otherwise specified all websites were accessed in October 2020.

[2] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmcumeds/729/72902.htm.

online communications required reform to protect victims of online abuse.[3] In 2017, the Home Affairs Select Committee expressed harsh criticism of social media companies for not doing enough to remove dangerous and illegal content, which disproportionately affected women and minority groups.[4] In the same year, the Government launched a Green Paper on an Internet Safety Strategy and, in 2018, it forwarded new proposals concerning a social media levy and a code of practice.[5]

Following Katie Price's petition, the Petitions Committee began an inquiry which took into account not only Harvey's case but also the experience of disabled people on social media in general. The inquiry revealed that online abuse was a sadly common phenomenon. The resulting Petitions Committee report, *Online Abuse and the Experience of Disabled People* (2019), tackled the issue, firstly by highlighting that 'disabled' is a complex identity to define and to be defined by (in fact disabled people make up a widely heterogeneous group and generally eschew the medical model in favour of the social model and the need to create inclusive communities), and secondly by suggesting that social media calls for a broad definition which should include newspaper website comment boards, online chat rooms, and all forms of online social interaction.

This paper specifically concentrates on newspaper comment boards to search for instances of hate speech against Harvey and/or disabled people in the comments posted online, but also to examine readers' responses to the news reports on this issue and explore how they construe and codify meanings when reacting to the news. Their comments can offer a lens to frame public attitudes towards hate speech against people with disabilities, located as they are at the intersection between a discourse dimension and a social dimension. As language users and participants in the communicative situation created in reply to the news reports, they express shared socio-cultural beliefs and ideologies pertaining to hate speech against people with disabilities.

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[3] https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/reform-of-the-criminal-law-needed-to-protect-victims-from-online-abuse-sayslaw-commission.

[4] https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/inquiry7.

[5] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708873/Government_Response_to_the_Internet_Safety_Strategy_Green_Paper-Final.pdf.

Newspaper comment boards are, indeed, one of the main tools to enhance the readers' experience, encouraging their participation and involvement with the reported stories, enabling them to express their opinion in an easy manner. They constitute the main channel for readers to respond to the content they 'consume' online, publicly debating political and social issues. Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the various media outlets began publishing on the Internet, online commenting seemed to be able to solicit audience engagement, strengthening (hopefully positive, generous of spirit, and helpful) connections between content creators and consumers.[6] Unfortunately, time has shown that most of these exchanges can be very toxic, infiltrated as they are by trolls and anonymous contributors who too often hijack comment threads with offensive and inappropriate submissions. Thus, despite the fact that public engagement is deemed to be a key part of public media organisations and online reader comments do feature as a significant form of interactivity, potentially providing a large public forum and a greater level of civic participation (Rosenberry 2011), a sharp rise in inappropriate content has been registered.[7] The potential for online interactivity has, in fact, also increased the likelihood of violent, offensive, and even inflammatory speech, which goes under the label of hate speech online (HSO).

2. Hate Speech Online (HSO) and newspaper comment boards

Hate speech is a broad and contested term with fuzzy contours, which makes it hard to find a univocal definition, although some common elements

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[6] See also https://www.kqed.org/lowdown/29720/no-comment-why-a-growing-number-of-news-sites-are-dumping-their-comment-sections.

[7] See https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hate-speech-social-media-global-comparisons. Without moderators, comment sections seem to be prone to anarchy: they too often "devolve into racist, misogynistic maelstroms where the loudest, most offensive opinions get pushed to the top and the more reasoned responses drowned out in the noise" (https://www.kqed.org/lowdown/29720/no-comment-why-a-growing-number-of-news-sites-are-dumping-their-comment-sections). The great majority of news sites continue to host comment sections, devoting, in some cases, in-house staff resources to ensuring exchanges remain civil or banning comments on articles dealing with particularly controversial issues. In 2017, for instance, the *Times* implemented a system called Moderator, a machine-learning technology developed by Google, which rates and prioritises users' comments assigning them values based on an analysis of more than 16 million previously approved comments.

have emerged over the last few years (UNESCO 2015: 8). According to the EU General Policy Recommendation no. 15, hate speech includes "denigration, hatred, vilification, harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, threat, etc. which are based on a non-exhaustive list of personal characteristics or status that includes 'race', colour, language, religion or belief, nationality or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, age, disability, sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation" (Council of Europe 2016: 16). HSO can, therefore, be defined as any form of online expression that is abusive, insulting, intimidating, harassing, and/or incites to violence, hatred, or discrimination, that perpetrators employ to wound and denigrate. HSO can be situated at the intersection of multiple tensions, involving the expression of conflicts between different groups within and across societies (UNESCO 2015: 7). It is a product of a specific historical and cultural context and, as such, the content and meanings must be related to that context (Parekh 2012). Consequently, legislators, politicians, linguists, and social actors in general need to explore the concept of hate speech from specific points of views to examine circumstances, occurrences, forms and expressions with respect to a particular context and time.

As elusive as the term may be, hate speech can be identified through the degrading or dehumanising functions that it serves. It relies on tensions, which it seeks to reproduce and amplify, moving along the axes of categories (such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, nationality, language, age, political ideologies) which allow the construction of hatred. Social scientists have observed that individuals inclined towards racism, misogyny, homophobia or any other form of discrimination, find niches to bolster their views and, in turn, inspire acts of violence through social media – where the great majority of people's communicative interaction and exchanges are currently hosted.[8] In this context, the nature of HSO and its relation to offline speech and action appear rather under-researched, while the causes underlying this phenomenon and the dynamics through which certain kinds of content emerge and lead to

[8] https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hate-speech-social-media-global-comparisons. To name just a few examples, in Germany, a correlation was found between anti-refugee Facebook posts and attacks on refugees (which followed spikes in hate-mongering posts). In the United States, white supremacist attacks are regularly publicised on social media.

actual discrimination, hostility and violence remain unexplored and poorly understood (UNESCO 2015: 9).

Numerous scholars (among them, Domingo et al. 2008; Santana 2012; Torres da Silva 2013) have highlighted that online hate speech comments have greatly increased in number. In fact, news stories are often followed by unmoderated posts, exposing in plain view the simmering anger, condescension, misogyny, xenophobia, racism, discrimination and prejudice circulating within society. With the expansion of virtual spaces and forums onto mainstream news sites more than a decade ago, disrespect and rudeness have become the dominant forces in digital conversations. The crucial point about online comment forums and social media exchanges is that they have allowed people to generate, and not only consume, news and information. This has in turn opened the floodgates to unregulated offensive behaviour, which has completely defeated political correctness and has contributed to a new, and more toxic, set of norms for online behaviour. In this context, unmoderated online comment forums act like magnets for noxious speech. In fact, according to a research on online harassment conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014, compared to the offline environment, when online, people tend to be more critical of others (92% of respondents agreed with this view) and the concurrent anonymity increases the chances of being cruel, abusive and harassing.[9]

Such a global trend, therefore, urges a reflection on the potentialities of the Internet and digital technologies in terms of opportunities and challenges, especially when it comes to the complex balance between fundamental rights (i.e., freedom of speech and the defence of human rights and dignity) and online communicative practices. Online reader comments, in particular, contain greater numbers of hate speech messages than other forms of interaction involving news texts (e.g. letters to the editor), and the mechanical nature of the automatic detection and filtering service makes it harder to identify such

[9] https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2014/10/22/part-2-the-online-environment/. The main problem emerging from reader comments is the anonymity of those who respond online, in terms of verification, accountability, and accuracy (Torres da Silva 2013). In fact, anonymity and the use of nicknames foster greater openness online because users feel freer to express their opinions, but they also remove the fear of being identified, held responsible and subsequently judged and banned – something which, in the most serious forms, can lead to explicit verbal attacks and humiliation, among the many forms of incivility (Torres da Silva 2013).

messages and prevent them from being published. Hence, the choice to analyse this specific venue (Paskin 2010).

3. Theoretical framework and corpus design: the *Harvey-law Corpus*

Broadly speaking, the last decades have witnessed some major changes in how Western societies have treated disabled people, to the point that disability has today become a key policy area and equality issue – in the same way as gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. However, despite the many legislative initiatives bringing attention to the dignity, inherent value, and equal and inalienable rights of persons with disabilities and aiming at establishing principles and actions to guide national policies, very often, societal attitudes toward disability lag far behind the law. Indeed, progress in the field of legislation and rights stands in contrast to a partial failure to transform perceptions and practices in society. Indeed, disabled people often experience a lifestyle that is characterised by poverty and dependence, facing exclusion from quality education, employment and participation in their communities (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2010; Wood and Grant 2010; Edwards 2012).[10]

The Internet and social media have had a huge impact on this context. By changing how people communicate and interact, they have acted as a facilitator of interpersonal communication and activities, favouring users' interaction

[10] The UK ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) in 2009, taking a step ahead of the disability discrimination laws developed in the 1990s – the Disability Discrimination Act came into force in 1995 and was amended and extended over the years. Bringing together a variety of laws broadly covering discrimination, the Equality Act (2010) detailed all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimization to be prevented. In fact, the Act protects anyone who has (or has had) a disability and anyone who experiences discrimination because of their association with a disabled person. Most importantly, it has broadened the meaning of 'disability', defining it as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (see https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6). While, previously, disability discrimination was only unlawful when related to the sphere of employment, the Equality Act covers all areas, from education, working life and standards of living to health care, security and participation in politics. With over 11 million disabled people (a number that increases from year to year), the Act is currently the main legislative framework to support the fight against disability discrimination in Great Britain.

and exchanges, namely socialisation, together with their need for entertainment and information seeking (Chan 2011: 69). However, while helping people with disabilities to overcome a number of obstacles within society and providing them with a variety of opportunities, the Internet and social media have also had the effect of excluding them even further, as in the case of other marginalised groups, due to varying forms of hate speech online. It is against this backdrop that Katie Price's petition on the introduction of the so-called Harvey's law to make trolling a crime should be viewed. While the Petitions Committee report (2019) found that the self-regulation of social media has failed, highlighting the fact that social media are rife with degrading and dehumanising comments about disabled people,[11] Price's petition was thoroughly covered by the British press and gave rise to debates among readers.

The focus of this research lies in the assumption that readers' comments demonstrate underlying attitudes and beliefs towards the issue of HSO against people with disabilities. Assuming that, depending on their newsworthiness, news reports are meant to provoke responses which reflect the interaction between a discourse dimension and a social dimension, the theory of Sociocognitive Discourse Studies (SCDS) proposed by van Dijk (2016) seems particularly useful. This framework establishes the discourse-cognition-society triangle, exploring the cognitively mediated relations between discourse and society that, in this case, are embedded in readers' comments. SCDS relate discourse structures and society structures through a complex sociocognitive interface which is based on "the shared social knowledge, as well as the attitudes and ideologies, of language users as current participants of the communicative situation and as members of social groups and communities" (van Dijk 2016: 3). This approach renders the fundamental role of mental models explicit, namely the subjective representations of events, situations, and persons that language users talk, write, read or hear about, and upon which the production and comprehension of meanings and discourse depend.

In order to explore the emerging threads connecting discourse, cognition and society, a corpus of comments posted by readers on the websites of some of the main British tabloid newspapers was collected, with the twofold purpose of identifying the potential presence of hate speech against people with

[11] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpetitions/759/759-easy-read.pdf.

disabilities in general and/or Harvey in particular, as well as – and most importantly – analysing the readers' reactions to the issue and event reported, which can be located at the (sociocognitive) interface between discourse and society. Indeed, such reactions may offer interesting insight into people's beliefs and views, reflective as they are of some attitudes and values present within the British society towards disability hate speech.

This study specifically takes into account readers' comments to the news reports published by *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Mirror*, which were selected for inclusion in the *Harvey-law Corpus* because they feature the highest circulation rates over the last three years.[12] This investigation privileged tabloid newspapers for the great cultural and political significance they hold in the country, for "the particularly rich vistas they offer into British politics, society and culture" (Bingham and Conboy 2015: 20). With their mixture of celebrity gossip, sensationalism, and partisan politics, all packed in an aggressive, unapologetic and swaggering style, tabloid newspapers are often described as the 'gutter press' or else 'a particularly British beast'.[13] Indeed, Britain seems defined by its tabloid press, it is probably the only country to have developed such a competitive popular press combining information and entertainment, reaching a collective audience amounting to nearly 85% of the entire population, at its height.[14] As such, it shapes the events it records (see Bingham and Conboy 2015), it sets the agenda, offering a lens on how subjects and events are to be experienced, thus impacting on those who are included in or excluded from societal hegemonic structures.

All the above-mentioned newspapers have comment sections on their websites and readers post their comments in large numbers, sharing their views, sometimes openly showing disrespect of others' opinions or the issues reported through the use of sarcasm and insults. However, following a widespread practice in online journalism, all comments available online are moderated in advance. Indeed, while welcoming readers' opinions, house rules

[12] https://www.statista.com/statistics/529939/uk-tabloid-newspaper-market-by-circulation/.

[13] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jul/30/tabloids-british-phone-hacking.

[14] https://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2015/may/18/the-tabloid-century-how-popular-papers-helped-to-define-britain.

clearly outline what is considered acceptable or unacceptable in terms of content. Comments deemed unacceptable are then removed – this applies particularly to comments that are: defamatory, false or misleading, insulting, threatening or abusive, obscene or of a sexual nature, offensive, racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory against any religions or other groups. Despite such recommendations and the removal of some comments, the resulting corpus still comprises some questionable posts in terms of HSO, as analysis will illustrate.

For corpus collection, all the reports concerning Katie Price's petition for the introduction of Harvey's law published by the three newspapers over a time-span ranging from 2017 to 2019 were accessed and the comments available were retrieved and gathered into three sub-corpora. The *Sun* sub-corpus includes 1.972 comments in response to 167 news articles, the *Daily Mail* sub-corpus features 1.683 comments in response to 112 news articles, while the *Daily Mirror* sub-corpus features 1.051 comments in response to 98 news articles.

4. Analysis and findings

Moving from the assumption that readers freely express their opinions – in the form of support, appreciation, criticism or insult – in comment sections when reacting and responding to news reports (Tanenboim and Cohen 2015), the analysis of the corpus under investigation tries to suggest that comments reflect the sociocognitive dimension embedded in discourse, and they are therefore revealing of certain attitudes across British society.

Analysis of the *Harvey-law Corpus* initially involved extensive reading of all the comments gathered, to categorise them according to their global topics and themes, following SCDS (van Dijk 2016). Since the considerable amount of data compiled from online communication can be difficult to manage, a down-sampling was carried out, before performing a detailed qualitative textual analysis (KhosraviNik and Zia 2014).[15] Subsequently, in order to

[15] Qualitative investigation was preferred to a quantitative investigation because of the difficulty to identify potential search terms for an effective analysis of HSO. Indeed, hate speech is not necessarily expressed by means of harsh and derogatory words but also through lexical items and phrases which often bear a neutral (if not positive) connotation and then take

identify and analyse discourse structures, as proposed by van Dijk (2016), some linguistic/discursive features (considered relevant in relation to HSO) were taken to constitute instances of readers' mental representations and socio-culturally shared knowledge: negative lexis, intensifiers, evaluative language, opinion words and phrases, emotion words and phrases, global topics or themes and so forth (Bednarek and Caple 2014; van Dijk 2016).

Extensive reading of comments allowed for a categorisation of the texts into three main groups:

1) comments against Katie Price;
2) comments on quitting social media;
3) comments supporting Katie Price's petition and condemning HSO against Harvey.

The first category comprises the great majority of comments, amounting to 71% of the texts included in the corpus. Surprisingly, there is hardly any mentioning of (and, therefore, response to) the topic reported in the news reports – namely, Harvey being repeatedly targeted by hateful messages or Katie Price's initiative to launch a petition to make trolling a criminal offence. Against all expectations, the core focus of the vast majority of comments is a generalised attempt to rail against Katie Price, as the instances below show, with some occasional insults to her son Harvey:

1. The woman is a hyper-tard (*Sun*)
2. Go away you horrible excuse for a woman (*Daily Mail*)
3. That sick woman is probably looking for extra publicity! (*Sun*)
4. I don't mind people trolling her, in fact I would encourage it (*Daily Mail*)
5. you are a ROTTEN MUM (*Sun*)
6. Just because his mum is an idiot, it's not his fault (*Daily Mail*)
7. Harvey's biggest disability is being related to that filth bag of a mother. What a vile creature (*Daily Mail*)
8. Katie Price and the Human Egg. (*Sun*)

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on negative value due to the context of use. Moreover, even in cases where hostile language is explicitly employed, great attention should be paid to the addressee for the sake of clarity and consistency in terms of analysis, hence the need for a qualitative reading.

9. She wants to stay in the news, she secretly enjoys the negative attention Harvey gets (*Daily Mail*)
10. What a two faced woman (*Daily Mail*)

The most recurrent discourse structures detected in the comments posted online pertain to the presence of opinion and emotion words and phrases, reflecting readers' views. Such views usually resort to evaluative language, which is mainly realised through the use of negative lexis, to insult Katie Price. In fact, she is referred to as 'an idiot', 'a filth bag of a mother' and 'a vile creature', a 'rotten mum', a 'horrible excuse for a woman', just to cite a few representative examples. These comments rely on the use of lexical items that belong to a highly negative semantic domain, invariably marking, to an extreme degree, her unethical behaviour and moral decay both as a woman and as a mother. In some cases, derogatory and overtly discriminatory language is employed to label Katie Price and Harvey. She is referred to as a 'hyper-tard' (see example 1 above) and Harvey himself is called 'a retard' (see instance 11 below), which discloses a clear reference to the term 'retarded', used as an insult and to be avoided when describing someone with mental disabilities. In its modern use, such a term appears negatively loaded and increasingly socially unacceptable for its degrading and pejorative connotation. Similarly, the phrase 'the human egg' (example 8 above) – referring to Harvey – reveals a worrying degree of disregard, contempt, hostility and even hatred.

Another emerging discursive feature within this category is the attempt to offend and abuse by employing the widespread, well-rooted habit of insulting women with sexist slurs, gender-based swear words, as well as ironic and sarcastic comments to mock and ridicule the targeted object – as is evident in one of the comments below (16) as to whether Katie Price will have her clothes on or off when facing the MPs to discuss her petition.

11. Skank and a retard (*Daily Mirror*)
12. why hasn't she done something ages ago. selfish bitch (*Daily Mirror*)
13. Dreadful woman, full of silicone! (*Daily Mail*)
14. She is a slapper..she doesn't deserve kids..she is a joke.. (*Daily Mirror*)
15. KP is furious - How can anybody tell with the extent of facial paralysis? (*Daily Mirror*)
16. When she tells the MPs, will she have her clothes on or off? (*Daily Mail*)

17. Hello, you cunt (*Daily Mirror*)
18. Dirty old slag !! (*Sun*)
19. All she is and ever will be is a legalised Prostitute (*Sun*)
20. If she was an animal she'd have been put down by now (*Daily Mail*)

Women are extensively bullied and harassed in online communication by means of sexist stereotypes and insulting terms referring to their appearance ('ugly'), intellect ('stupid'), sexual behaviour ('whore'), mental stability ('crazy'), and age ('old') (Felmlee, Rodis, Zhang 2019). This trend emerges from the selected instances relating to Katie Price (which are representative of a large number of comments in the *Harvey-law Corpus*), where lexical items and phrases such as 'selfish bitch', 'skank', 'slapper', 'cunt', 'slag', are recurrently used. Hostile language also resorts to labels relating to animals to insult her, as shown in a reader's comment equalling Price to an animal to be put down (20).

The second category of comments (gathering 22% of the texts included in the corpus) features the idea that Katie Price should avoid social media both for herself and her son, in order not to be targeted. As much as this may appear an effective way to stop online abuse, this suggestion does not tackle the issue of hate speech, which can, clearly, be delivered offline as much as online. The fact that a certain percentage of readers has posted these comments signals how the issue of hate speech is engaged with – or rather not engaged with – within the British context. Indeed, what does not seem to emerge is the awareness that such speech involves more than just harsh words; it is embedded in customs and actions intended to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred. As such, it can occur both online and offline.

1. Just switch the bloody device OFF (*Daily Mail*)
2. If you don't go online you can't be abused. (*Daily Mail*)
3. Simple cancel your internet sites and shut up (*Daily Mail*)
4. Can't handle them, simply STAY AWAY. (*Daily Mail*)
5. Try keeping your dignity and your clothes on and stay off online media then. (*Daily Mail*)
6. Keep your life private stupid woman (*Daily Mirror*)
7. She will go to any lengths to keep in the spotlight. Dont go on social media if you dont want to be abused (*Daily Mail*)

Within the second category of comments, a large number of posts also features the habitual gender-based sarcastic remarks about Katie Price trying to keep her clothes on. In terms of pragmatic effect, these posts serve not merely to mock her, but also to exercise power over the addressee, the object of such comments. As the above-mentioned instances show, it is a non-neutral, rather aggressive sarcasm in which gender (and anti-female bias) seem to play a crucial role.[16] Sarcasm depends, for its effect, on "the use of bitter, caustic and ironic language directed against an individual" (Oxford English Dictionary).[17] In other words, it must have a 'victim', the person towards whom sarcasm is directed, which in turn makes the speaker the 'victimiser', in the asymmetrical relationship that progressively develops. In the comments belonging to the *Harvey-law Corpus*, readers tend to resort to sexist and hostile sarcasm, encompassing a variety of negative attitudes ranging from antipathy and resentment to anger.

Returning now to the issue of HSO against people with disabilities, the comments included in this second category show another recurrent feature. The imperative mood is often employed to give 'advice' and convince Katie Price to stay away from social media, capital letters are employed as a common device to graphically express the intonation of messages, adding further stress to selected terms. The fact that the only suggestion explicitly voiced in the comments concerns the need for Katie Price to stay off social media implicitly reveals the lack of a critical understanding of hate speech within society. In fact, no serious responsibility is taken for HSO in terms of respect for human rights, and too often disabled people are forced off social media while their abusers face no consequences. Readers do not seem to recognise – and bring to the fore on the newspaper comment boards – the failure to make online platforms as safe for disabled people as non-disabled people, which would urge a change in existing laws to ensure lives are no longer destroyed by HSO.

The third group in which comments were categorised (amounting to barely 6% of the texts) comprises posts where readers express their support for Katie

[16] It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse whether the authors of such comments were men or women, something which affects the use and perception of humour according to an affiliation to an ingroup or outgroup and the corresponding attitudinal dispositions (Moore et al. 1987).

[17] https://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/171207.

Price's petition and condemn the episodes of hate speech against Harvey as a disabled child.[18] Quite surprisingly, despite the fact that a petition against HSO in general, and one targeting a disabled person or child in particular, might seem worthy of endorsement and support, the number of readers sharing this view and advocating Price's initiative is incredibly low (especially if compared to the number of comments included in the first category).

1. Online bullying of disabled people is disgusting and despicable, it is not Katie Price that is relevant but Harvey. (*Daily Mail*)
2. This is disgusting. That poor boy has special needs and vile humans out there are mocking him. They should all be ashamed of themselves (*Daily Mirror*)
3. I'm no fan of Katie Price, but to mock a child because of his disability is vile! (*Sun*)
4. If you don't like Katie Price that's fine many don't but what makes anybody think its ok to be cruel and nasty to any child its disgusting and vile should be ashamed. (*Sun*)
5. I feel sorry for her and her son it's disgusting how people do this to him it's not his fault. (*Daily Mirror*)
6. Disgusting vile lowlife scum, to mock a disabled child who can't defend himself. Wonder if they would be so brave without the keyboard to hide behind. Absolutely disgusting gutless Cowards (*Daily Mirror*)
7. Online trolls r vile...but bullying a disabled child is the lowest of the low (*Daily Mail*)

In the above-mentioned instances, the negative evaluative language that is employed by readers does not target Katie Price or Harvey, but rather trolls – something that could only be determined through close qualitative reading of the posts. By reiterating their opinion about what is done to Harvey – as 'disgusting', 'despicable', 'vile' – readers resort to lexical items belonging to the semantic domain of negative moral behaviour. In their (sadly few) comments, they despise and condemn acts of HSO against Harvey or any other disabled child, mostly recalling a sense of moral shame, with emotion words and phrases

[18] The remaining 2% of comments collected in the corpus was not included in the three above-mentioned categories since they do not thematically relate to them.

associated with negative evaluations and feelings of distress for what Harvey has experienced. Readers' emotional states clearly surface through their choice of words, thus responding and reacting to the news reports with a mixture of shame, blame and contempt for behaviours that heavily violate social norms and human dignity.

5. Concluding remarks

This research has moved from the assumption that readers freely express their opinions – in the form of support, appreciation, criticism or insult – in comment sections when reacting and responding to news articles (Tanenboim and Cohen 2015). Such comments can therefore reveal underlying attitudes and beliefs towards the issue of HSO against people with disabilities. The discourse-cognition-society triangle theorised by van Dijk's Sociocognitive Discourse Studies (2016) seemed extremely apt when approaching this case-study. Comments were deemed to offer a privileged lens to access and explore the cognitively mediated relations between discourse and society, which then appeared as a key element to examine how some specific events (in this case, Price's petition to make HSO a criminal offence) are framed within the British society. For this purpose, the *Harvey-law Corpus* has gathered all the online comments to the news reports concerning Price's petition as posted on the websites of some of the main British tabloid newspapers, which hold a particular cultural and political significance in the country. It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that the corpus comprises two right-wing newspapers (*Daily Mail* and *Sun*) and one left-wing newspaper (*Daily Mirror*), HSO was spread across the spectrum, as instances show.

Extensive reading and qualitative analysis of the texts included in the corpus have allowed a categorisation of comments according to their topics and themes, which showed that the prevailing attitude within the British tabloid readership was not a condemnation of HSO against a disabled child (present only in 6% of posts) but rather the expression of an abusive and hostile attitude towards Katie Price, Harvey's mother, who launched the petition. In line with the widespread phenomenon of victim blaming, readers' comments manifest their prejudice against the victims of HSO and hate crimes (construing them, to some extent, as responsible for the misdeeds of abusers). In a generalised attempt to stigmatise and discredit Katie Price as a woman and a mother,

delving into her personal life and lifestyle (something that occurs in the great majority of comments), British readers provide precious insights into the social constructs and perceptions of HSO against people with disabilities.

The findings emerging from this study uncover, firstly, a lack of recognition that hate speech is more than harsh words as it is embedded in customs and actions intended to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred, and as such, it can occur both online and offline. Secondly, they illustrate that the way disabled people are treated online is revealing of how they are treated (and abused) offline, and they further demonstrate an alarming unawareness of the fact that public attitudes online appear all the more relevant because they translate into behaviours which then turn into barriers to achieving equality.

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Angela Zottola

WHEN FREEDOM OF SPEECH TURNS INTO FREEDOM TO HATE. HATEFUL SPEECH AND 'OTHERING' IN CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL PROPAGANDA IN THE USA

1. Introduction

During the Q&A session that followed a talk given at Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, California) by Ben Shapiro, one of the members of the audience asked the following question:

> So in terms of hate speech, whether it's for or against whatever, whether it's from a politician, a student, a protester, somebody who's working in a company, what do you think, where is the line between what the government or a private industry should and should not censor, and what should and should not be prosecuted by the law, especially with what seems like an increase in resurgence in antisemitism and white supremacy or just any sort of racial tensions that are going on right now?

Ben Shapiro replied:

> I mean, to my own detriment, I'm going to say that nearly nothing should be regulated the only things that should be regulated or censored are legitimate threats of violence and the libelous material [...] I'm more willing to have a free and open political sphere even if there are more crazies out there, than to have the government sit over all of us and determine what is acceptable speech and what is not acceptable speech [...].

"Nearly nothing should be regulated" is the parameter Ben Shapiro adopts when deciding what he should and should not say in his public speeches, what is acceptable and what is not. Benjamin Shapiro is an American conservative political commentator, writer and media host. Thanks to the numerous online platforms that he manages and his frequent public appearances, Shapiro has become one of the most influential voices in advocating conservative ideals in the USA. The previously quoted declaration was made in a country where no anti-hate speech regulation exists. Indeed, the Supreme Court, the highest court in the federal judiciary system of the United States, has repeatedly ruled

against the criminalization of hate speech in order to guarantee the freedom of speech protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

While one of the biggest and most influential countries in the world hides behind a strategic terminological opposition, the United Nations not only condemns any form of hate speech, but has suggested via the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (a multilateral treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966) that all forms of discrimination or violence should be prohibited by law, subsequently drawing up a Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, signed by the United Nations Secretary-General in May 2019.

While the world has not yet agreed upon an internationally valid legal definition for hate speech, the United Nations state that hate speech can be understood as "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factor".[1]

Moreover, while the thin line separating offensive language from full blown hate speech has yet to be traced, the global nature of the cybersphere and the ensuing online communication has provided an "unlimited public sphere" (Kopytowska and Baider 2017: 135), "a new dimension by removing the boundaries of time and space, by exploiting the potential intertextuality and interdiscursivity" (Kopytowska 2017: 2) where "the expression and dissemination of a range of exclusionary, intolerant, and extremist discourses, practices and beliefs" (KhosraviNik and Esposito 2018: 47) have found fertile ground.

Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to investigate the way othering and hate speech are linguistically and discursively constructed in Ben Shapiro's speeches. The analysis highlights the manner in which this conservative political icon disseminates his rightist, traditional and unprogressive views under the semblance of free speech. Among the most recurrent strategies found in his rhetoric are a number of non-verbal communication cues that

[1] The full document can be accessed at https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Hate%20Speech%2018%20June%20SYNOPSIS.pdf

systematically occur in his speeches, the use of irony and hyperbolic language, othering practices enacted via the distinction between 'we' vs. 'them', and the periodic reference to scientific facts and statistical figures. The chapter focuses on eight of Shapiro's live-streamed lecture-videos, subsequently made available on the YouTube online platform. The data is qualitatively analyzed using the Critical Discourse Studies methodological framework (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018).

2. From othering to hate speech

People make sense of who they are, which group they belong to, what makes them their own particular self by comparing themselves to others. It is by defining what we are not, that we are able to make sense of what we are, and consequently include ourselves in a (number of) group(s). It almost seems as if othering forms an intrinsic part of our nature, enabling us to distinguish ourselves from others and recognize who we are. It can be defined as a natural cognitive process that allows a person to form ideas about their own identity (Gülerce 2014). Bearing this in mind, people put forward a number of strategies aimed at representing their identity, because "representing is a fundamental symbolic activity, a symbolic packaging of our social worlds which has important implications for social organization and social relations" (Coupland 2010: 242). When these representations are questioned, when those who do not share the beliefs and ideas of a given social group begin to distance themselves from those beliefs, we start to experience social divisions (Coupland 2010: 243). This type of distancing leads to the practice of 'Othering' defined by Coupland (2010: 244) as "the process of representing an individual or a social group to *render them* distant, alien or deviant" (emphasis in the original). As this definition suggests, and as the literature illustrates, representing the other does not serve to praise diversity but rather, has contributed "to social exclusion and minoritisation" through the use of "forms of address and reference which are discriminatory, offensive, alienating or patronising" (Coupland 2010: 247). In particular, Coupland (2010) further highlights a number of linguistic strategies that are generally employed in the production of hateful discourses, and that constitute "regularities in how language is used to relegate a group to the status of 'other'" (224). These strategies are categorized as:

- homogenization, representing the other as conforming to a pattern of predictable behaviors and characteristics, as a mass collective identity with blurred boundaries;
- pejoration, depicting the other to look worse than they actually are, this can go as far as using slurs or verbal abuse;
- displaying 'liberalism', categorizing the other as someone who is illiberal, i.e., a racist, ageist, sexist;
- subverting tolerance, by using anti-politically correct discourse, this is usually done via the use of humor and irony, in this way the audience is unsure whether what is being said is true, or even whether blame should be put on someone for making a joke;
- suppressing and silencing, in this case the other receives zero or restricted representation, othering here aims at cancelling the other.

Hate speech, as a consequence of the practice of 'othering', can be seen as the expression of dislike and distancing through the use of hateful language towards a person or a group of people perceived in opposition to the speaker's own group (Technau 2018). Hate speech has been investigated widely, and among the most popular paths followed by scholars in the field of linguistics, we can distinguish two different categories of studies. On the one hand, there are scholars who focus on the use of hate speech in relation to a specific topic. In this regard we can mention studies on racism (van Dijk 1987); populism and right-wing politics (Wodak and Richardon 2013; Breeze 2018); homophobia (Leap 2011; Love and Baker 2017); immigration (Musolff 2017; Kopytowska *et al.* 2017) and radicalism (Kopytowska 2017). On the other, we have a number of studies that concentrate on the means through which hate speech is spread, focusing mainly on mainstream and social media, addressing the cybersphere as a whole (Kopytowska and Baider 2017; KosraviNik and Esposito 2018) or focusing on specific platforms such as Twitter (Hardaker and McGlashan 2016), Facebook (Tagg *et al.* 2017) or online newspapers (Baider 2018; Ruzaite 2018).

As Kopytowska (2017: 1) suggests, contemporary public discourses, especially in the form of political speeches, in both mainstream media and social media are brimming with messages of hate and discrimination. Using hate speech has become the most common way of expressing one's opinion when this is not in line with what is being said by others. People no longer take the time to discuss different ideas, they attack, destroy, harass and insult

whoever stands in their way. With the increase of the use of online platforms, within a widely unregulated cybersphere, "the Internet has become the 'new frontier' for spreading hate" (Banks 2010: 234). The nature of online communication facilitates the proliferation of hateful discourses especially because the internet creates the ideal environment for a person to remain anonymous and hide within a group, thus shirking responsibility for their actions while staying physically separated from the group or person being attacked (KhosraviNik and Esposito 2018). In this way, people who make use of hateful language feel safe behind their screen enjoying the privileged position of not fearing a 'counter-attack'. In these cases, when hate speech is online, the type of language that scholars have been investigating is generally explicit, full of slurs, insults and easily recognizable as hateful language. This does not mean that hate speech is always so, "hate speech does not necessarily have to be explicit" (Ruzaite 2018: 97). In fact, in 2013 the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) published an explicatory document clarifying that both explicit and implicit forms of discrimination and aggressive behavior are included within the definition of hate speech (Ruzaite 2018: 97). Whether explicit or implicit, Kopytowska (2017: 3-4) posits that, regardless of the specific type of language being investigated, hateful discourses have a set of observable regularities and tendencies. She identifies these as:

1) Diversity and common ground: hate speech draws "upon a common inventory of linguistic and rhetorical tools and strategies that enable the construction of *us* vs. *them* dichotomies" (Kopytowska 2017: 3) which generally result in the negative vs. positive representation suggested by the concept of the "ideological square" (van Dijk 1998).
2) Denial and implicitness: the increasing and rightful persecution of authors of hateful messages has led these people to opt for less explicit forms of expression.
3) Performativity of hate speech: hateful messages are embedded in a well-constructed context which leads one to believe that the threat is imminent, and action needs to be undertaken. In order to achieve this the 'other' is dehumanized and even demonized.
4) Mediatized hate speech and radicalism: the threat of the distant 'other' is popularized via media platforms and used to support hate discourses and reach wider audiences.

The study of hate speech, in what was defined previously as its explicit form, has been widely investigated over the past decade and software for the automatic detection of hate speech online have been created (see among others Sanguinetti *et al.* 2018; Basile *et al.* 2019). Twitter, thanks to such software, has been able to update its rules against hateful conduct and now makes it almost impossible to find this type of language on the platform.[2] The same cannot be said for the type of hate speech previously referred to as implicit, which still easily slips through the cracks of legislation, especially in the USA where hate speech is not legally regulated. In the analysis that follows, the aim is to highlight how hate speech masquerades as free speech in the political lectures delivered by Ben Shapiro in the USA, and thus, to contribute to the existing literature regarding the discursive infrastructure of hate speech online.

3. Ben Shapiro's lecture series

Benjamin Aaron Shapiro, now 37, was born and raised in Los Angeles, in an Orthodox Jewish family of Russian and Lithuanian descent. He stood out for his acumen from a very young age, graduating from the Yeshiva University High School of Los Angeles at 16, and at 20, *summa cum laude*, from the University of California with a degree in political science which allowed him to move on to Harvard Law School, from which he graduated, again *summa cum laude*, in 2007. In 2008 he married Mor Toledano, an Israeli medical doctor of Moroccan descent, they currently have three children. The couple has recently announced they are planning on moving out of California after the family received death threats.

At age 17, Shapiro was the youngest nationally syndicated columnist in the USA, and he has, to date, written eight books. He is founder and editor emeritus of the newspaper *The Daily Wire* and hosts an online political podcast and a conservative radio show for KRLA radio, *The Morning Answer*. Since 2016 he has been touring the USA giving lectures, each followed by a Q&A session, on university campuses across the country. The lectures are organized by the Young America's Foundation (YAF), the principal youth outreach

[2] For further information on this topic see https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2019/hatefulconductupdate.html

organization of the Conservative Movement[3]. In many cases, the lectures are funded by Fred Allen, a Californian entrepreneur who together with his wife Lynda "are deeply concerned about America's future" and sponsor these lectures "to share the ideas of freedom, the value of hard work, and the reality of American exceptionalism with young people".[4]

The lectures are held on university campuses with a live audience and are always live-streamed. The day after each lecture, a recording is made available on YouTube. For the purpose of this study, eight lectures were taken into consideration. Each video has an average of more than 300000 visualizations. Table 1 below summarizes the main information related to the lectures analyzed in Section 4 (title of the lecture, university that hosted the event, date, visualizations on YouTube).

Title	*University*	*Date*	*Visualizations*
When diversity becomes a problem?	California State University, Los Angeles	25/02/2016	199,924
White Privilege, Multiculturalism, and other Leftist Myths	Yale University	21/09/2016	1,324,716
Why the Left hates the constitution	Northwestern University	24/05/2017	775,981
Why are we so split in the country?	University of Tennessee, Knoxville	18/10/2017	60,878
The rise of Campus Fascism	The University of California, Los Angeles	13/11/2017	131,307
Capitalism and the first amendment	University of Minnesota	26/02/2018	23,323
How Radical Feminism Ruins Everything	University at Buffalo	08/10/2018	816,626
The mainstream media's big lies	Loyola Marymount University	03/04/2019	338,649

Table 1 Information about lectures.

The lectures all follow a similar pattern. The guest is introduced by one of the local organizers, Shapiro comes onto the stage, speaks for about 20 to 30

[3] YAF's webpage can be found at: https://www.yaf.org/about/

[4] The quote is taken from the official YAF webpage, it can be found at: https://www.yaf.org/shapirotour/ Last accessed 6/01/2021.

minutes, the Q&A session then begins and lasts for about the same length of time. Shapiro acknowledges the fact that he is being live-streamed and refers to "the people watching from home" various times throughout his talks.

The aim of this chapter is to focus on hate speech and its online spread, and while it is true that the lectures taken into account in the analysis were recorded face-to-face, the fact that they were live-streamed and subsequently made available on YouTube, allows the data to be considered digital. The number of people that Shapiro manages to reach via the distribution of these videos online largely surpasses the number of people present in the auditoria, as the visualization figures provided in Table 1 attest. In the next section, I will outline the main linguistic and discursive strategies used by Shapiro to disguise his hateful language as free speech and the techniques used to establish a bond with his audience.

4. When hate speech is disguised as free speech

Ben Shapiro comes onto the stages of the university auditoria introduced by a worshipping, anti-leftist presentation and is always welcomed by thunderous applause. Those sitting in the audience are already fully aware of what is about to happen, Shapiro is there to provide irrefutable proof that 'the Left' is the United States' number one enemy. By the end of the talk Ben will have reminded them that by following three simple steps 1) finish high school, 2) get a job, 3) do not have babies outside of marriage, they will find everlasting happiness. As simple as that, just by following in his footsteps: "If I did it, so can you!".

The lectures have essentially the same structure, he begins by thanking the organizers and those who have invited him to give the talk, he then thanks the police for enabling the lecture to take place in a safe environment and moves on to mock the protestors who are trying to prevent him from speaking. He introduces the topic to be discussed in that specific session by providing some contextual information, in much the same way as academics do when presenting at conferences, offering something akin to a literature review, and then formulates his hypothesis. He ends the talk by providing an answer to his initial question. When reaching the conclusion, he often circles back to the same few points, the three steps to happiness and a few other issues that he has identified as causing all the problems in the United States; he ends with a catchy cliché sentence. Shapiro has a "rhetorical arsenal" (Szilágyi 2017) to

which he refers in every single talk, in this section I aim to outline the weapons that make up this arsenal.

4.1 Introducing himself and the lecture: Non-verbal cues

When appearing on stage, Shapiro always dresses in the same manner. He generally wears informal attire, trousers and a dress shirt, occasionally with a jacket or sweater on top. Never too bright, mainly in the color range of blues or grays. Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) suggest that this choice of color may symbolize calm, order and certainty. His gaze is always steady and directed straight into the camera, creating a symbolic interaction with the viewer, from whom he appears to be demanding something, mainly their attention. He always stands behind a podium, on which he generally lays his hands, with a large YAF banner as background. The viewer watching the live-streamed event or the YouTube video is therefore mainly exposed to a close up of Shapiro, in terms of size of frame we can say a medium shot, which eliminates the distance between the speaker and the audience (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996).

Lastly, but significantly, Shapiro always wears a kippah, the classic Jewish skullcap worn by men that fulfils the traditional requirement of covering the head. Kippot are generally worn during prayer but those who belong to orthodox communities wear them at all times, as in Shapiro's case. The skullcap, that has now become an intrinsic part of his attire, is a strong carrier of connotations positioning Shapiro, just by looking at him, in a specific category. Indeed, not only does he wear a kippah regularly, but he lays claim to his Jewishness at least once in each lecture. The kippah is a clear marker of both religious identity (Bouvier 2018) and of national and political identity, considering the issues that link the USA and Israel. Clothing choices are therefore instrumental in the construction of Shapiro's identity and play a pivotal role in allowing him to establish an initial bond with his audience. These non-verbal features lay the first brick in the construction of the metaphorical wall separating him and his followers from the rest of the people.

4.2 The lecture: deploying the arsenal

As mentioned earlier, Shapiro's lectures have a fairly standard structure. He generally begins by thanking the organizers and those who have made his

presence on campus possible. From the very beginning of each talk, he deploys the first weapon of his arsenal, hyperbole. This tendency for exaggeration enhances the perlocutionary effect of his statements and serves not only to present his evaluation of the events he is discussing, but also to set the ground for the ideas that he will be introducing next. In particular, when beginning his talk at California State University (henceforth CSU), he thanks the people at YAF for "risking their lives"[5] to have him there. While Shapiro is not always welcomed with open arms on the university campuses, the possibility that someone could actually be killed to prevent him from delivering a lecture seems highly unlikely. This leads us to the second group of people he thanks in all his lectures, the police. Hyperboles related to the police are not usually selected from the same semantic realm of fear, in this case he prefers to exaggerate with numbers. According to Shapiro in his talk at The University of Minnesota (henceforth, UM) "there were over 100 police officers" present. Shapiro also likes to exploit every chance he is given to be funny, and during his talk at Northwestern University (henceforth NU), in a strong ironic tone, he thanks the police for allowing him to "invade this safe space". Shapiro's opinion of the concept of safe space requires a brief explanation. During his talk at Yale University, he states that "safe space is an idiotic idea". Thus, by choosing the verb "invade" he takes up expert epistemic stance, positioning himself on a higher level of knowledge compared to those who want to stop him. The semantic exaggeration inherent to the term 'invade' also creates a pun that generates laughter and distracts the audience from the actual topic of discussion. This is one of Shapiro's regularly employed techniques as will become evident at a later point in the study.

The last group of people who are generally mentioned before the speaker focuses on the core of his lecture are the protestors, in other words those who do not agree with his ideas and with him touring university campuses as if he were a superstar or a scholar (given the context in which the lectures are held). It is when he refers to those who do not agree with him that Shapiro truly gives his best, using slurs, offensive language and all sorts of creative accusations. At CSU he defines protestors as "jackasses blocking the doors" and "spoiled brat

[5] Any words or phrases in inverted commas are directly reported from one of Shapiro's lectures.

snowflakes" (CSU). He was obviously so irritated at finding such a vast number of fervent dissenters that he describes protestors outside the room at CSU as:

> rainbow unicorn gum-dropped fascists outside who live in their little fantasy world and demand that everyone else participate in this fantasy world or they will shut down free debate. I'm talking about the pathetic cowardly wacko professors who mouth off about physically addressing about people who disagree" [...] "no matter how hard you try you can all go screw yourselves.

At Yale he defines protestors as "stupid precious snowflake losers". He proffers a set of derogatory words to describe people whose ideas differ from his own, accusing them of limiting free speech. The numerical references employed when referring to the police are also used for the protestors, but here the tendency is to mitigate the situation by insisting on low figures. At the University of California (henceforth UCLA), Shapiro asserted that there were 15 protestors, while at Loyola Marymount University (henceforth LMU) there were, in his words, a "grand total of 5 protestors outside". He even identifies and names some of the university staff, and publicly shames them one by one. Shapiro lumps the protestors into a very specific category and evaluates their action as the "idiocy of so many leftist protestors" (UM). He also attempts to appear open-minded and accepting of other people's ideas but fails to do so when he states that "you can disagree with me I'm just going to call you stupid asinoid" (NU). While continuously accusing 'the Left' of preventing him from enacting his right to free speech, he repeatedly denigrates people without giving anyone a chance to respond. When lecturing at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (henceforth UT), where there were no protesters on campus, he states: "people of the left, I appreciate it" but then adds that he will nonetheless make fun of them. He specifically focuses on a leaflet that has been handed to him by a member of one of the students' associations present on campus, the Democratic Socialists, and goes on to shred it to pieces, not physically, but by resorting to those same techniques of mockery and shaming, contradicting through a simplistic and oversimplified rhetoric everything that is written in the leaflet. This act of verbal and psychological violence towards a group of students who were simply trying to argue for their ideas appears rather contradictory for someone who delivers his lectures while the sentence "Restore America by teaching students your values, to ignite a spark in the minds of America's youth" is displayed on the screen. If students are to learn

from their teachers and follow his example, as he suggests various times throughout his lectures, the future of our younger generations appears to be somewhat compromised.

The social group that is systematically mentioned in Shapiro's lectures and that he represents as the most dangerous group in the USA, is that made up of leftist people. The vague nature of this adjective allows Shapiro to include anybody who does not agree with him; they are all, as he states during his Yale lecture, a big block of "horrible people". In line with Coupland's (2010) categorization, this type of representation can be seen as a homogenization tactic. The left is represented as a group of people without a clear definition but conforming to a pattern of similar behaviors. Shapiro strives tirelessly to create a clear separation from this group, to build a wall between 'us' and 'them'. The generic 'left' grouping is othered by unpacking each ideological stance that is socially recognized as liberal or leftist, undermining and insulting the group members in the process. In a number of utterances, he accuses the left of lying, by stating for example, that they use "self-selected statistics" (NU) or of excessive self pity by declaring "to the left: you are not the victim" (NU). As far as ideologies are concerned, he regularly focuses on three different issues: gender, race and poverty.

In terms of gender related issues, he pretty much levels indiscriminate accusations. As regards feminism, Shapiro swings between the irony of "radical feminism ruined sex", a statement made at the University of Buffalo (henceforth UB), to the more intellectually-informed "sex is not a social construct", then going on to explain that he is aware of this because "I have a frontal lobe that works" (UB) and adding that those who believe in such thinking have been "dropped on your head repeatedly as a baby" (UB). When talking about women he suggests that "women are not victimized in American society" (NU). In this case, he employs a technique that he often criticizes when exploited by others, but evidently finds very effective given the number of times he employs it himself. In his talk at NU, he presents a long list of statistics illustrating how well women fare in the USA, without providing any contextualized evidence. When asked where the statistics come from, he replies laughing: "from the census bureau". While it is true that the United States Census Bureau is responsible for conducting a number of surveys across the country, this answer does not justify the many different statistics mentioned, nor does it provide evidence as to where and when the surveys were conducted, or as to what they

actually measure in terms of the sample observed. Shapiro does not waste time on such details behaving like the grimiest of tabloids by promulgating sensationalism (Bell 1991). He reveals his ideas about sex, consent and rape, arguing that "we have proper sexual behavior" while "the left has a bizarre preoccupation with everyone's sex life" (UCLA). He tries to gain consent from women by stating that "rapists should be persecuted to the full extent of the law" (NU) though he ends his sentence with a "but", that same contrastive 'but' that van Dijk (1992) analyzed in his work on the denial of racism, in which people claimed not to be racists but. According to Shapiro, the issue of rape and consent can be resolved quite easily, since feminism has ruined everything, we now need to go through "a fifty points checklist before you have sex" or "have a lawyer inside the room" (UCLA), or "a signed notarized yes checklist". Once more mockery is the weapon Shapiro wields. He in fact affirms that "we are built to be pigs that's why we need civilization" (UB), and that there are gray areas in consent, because "what happens when you are drunk" (UB) is a moot point. If truth were told, all we need is decency, this is the only necessary requirement (UB), and women have stepped over the line by demanding to be safe. This generalization and over-simplification of the issue of consent, is clearly not only offensive but also extremely dangerous, creating as it does a precedent that allows men to make fun of women who do not base their safety on the idea of 'decency' alone, and endorsing the idea that men have the right to take advantage of women. Shapiro tries to build his argument around scientific facts, which, just like the previously mentioned statistical scores, have no contextualized reference. He affirms, for example, that "as scientists say: there is a reason why sperm is cheap, and eggs are expensive" (UB). Apart from the nonsensical aspect of the sentence, which in this case does not require further context, one may well wonder which scientist would forward such a claim, and how it could possibly strengthen Shapiro's position with regard to rape and consent. Apparently, his followers are able to grasp the connection.

Shapiro does not forget the LGBT community either, clearly stating that they are "not victimized" (NU). He is particularly aggressive towards trans people and accuses Caitlyn Jenner of being "mentally ill" (Yale). He also tells an anecdote, which he believes to be humorous, where he misgenders and insults a transgender woman, claiming that this person threatened him and scared him, thus displaying an explicit example of what Coupland (2010) defines as pejoration. By means of clever discourse reversal, Shapiro turns the

rhetoric around and manages to turn the victims into abusers, women therefore become oversensitive, and trans people both aggressive and manipulative.

Shapiro also has an interesting perspective on diversity and race. In the excerpt below he explains that the crazy ideas that the left has about diversity are a heritage of the philosopher Herbert Marcuse. Shapiro summarizes Marcuse's philosophy on diversity in the following manner:

> shut up unless you make some people uncomfortable [...] everybody has to agree in order for diversity to really bloom [...] free speech was just a demonstration that there was this patriarchal heteronormative order that crammed down freedom on people, and so freedom had to be overthrown free speech was repressive tolerance, what he wanted was liberating tolerance and the only way to have liberating tolerance was to shut down everybody who disagreed with him, so true tolerance meant that you couldn't tolerate anybody who disagreed with him, which makes completely sense if you are highly educated but makes no sense if you have a basic shred of common sense (Yale).

In this example, a number of the features that characterize Shapiro's rhetorical arsenal come to the fore: over-simplification of a complex philosophical concept, mockery, exaggeration and manipulation through the rearrangement of ideas. The issue this chapter attempts to highlight is not so much that Shapiro's talks are based on divergent ideas, but rather that these ideas are steeped in hate and are explicitly or implicitly stated throughout his lectures, from "disgusting Black Lives Matter lie" (Yale) to "black people are not victimized" (NU). Shapiro reiterates the idea that we cannot think about racial justice in terms of cosmic injustice, that the government cannot fix a historical wrong (NU), we can only focus on what is happening now, "facts are still facts, regardless of your skin color" (CSU). Shapiro turns the narrative around by displaying a form of 'liberalism' (Coupland 2010) and suggesting that "accusing a racial group of privilege without evidence sounds an awful lot like racism, that's what the left does" (Yale). Shapiro insists that it is not the color of your skin that determines your fate, each individual shapes their own destiny and this is what he refers to as "decision privilege". He then goes on to state that there are only two things people need to remember: 1) "don't have babies outside of wedlock", 2) "don't commit crimes".

Shapiro also speaks his mind about other racial groups suggesting that there is some sort of "Asian privilege" (CSU), he also, however, mentions white

privilege defining it as "a way of blaming somebody else for your problems in a purely racist fashion based on the color of their skin" (CSU). As regards intersectionality he claims that it "means we rate how victimized you are" (NU) and qualifies it as "the theory that allows you to be better just because you are part of a group", in other words "the system victimizes you" (UCLA).

In Shapiro's lectures, the question of race is strongly connected to the issue of poverty, about which he has some very specific ideas. In the first place, he states that "our poors are richer than any other country" (UM), the ill-concealed message behind this affirmation consists in blaming people for being poor. He does not really specify how this makes life easier, but he further asserts that "you are not a victim if you are poor" (NU). By returning to the idea that we are all responsible for our fate, Shapiro once more inverts the rhetoric and blames the victims.

Offensive language and mockery, as for example when he states that "Bernie Sanders is ignorant" (UCLA), appear to be two of Shapiro's favorite strategies. When reporting some of the comments that have been made about him such as an "alt-right sage without the rage" or "white supremacist", he qualifies them as a "bunch of bullshit" (LMU). He claims that he has unjustly been lumped together with other people who are completely different from him and only happen to share his ideas about the left (LMU). He then proceeds to use the exact same technique when referring to left wing exponents. Besides the many examples presented previously, Shapiro blames university professors and researchers for trying to manipulate students by imposing leftist thinking (LM). In much the same way as 'the Left' is a vague concept, 'leftist thinking' also stands as an empty signifier.

Shapiro generally closes his lectures by reiterating his oft-repeated basic points: most of the problems faced by the United States stem from people having babies outside of wedlock, and not taking responsibility for their failures; he further states that "there is no such thing as your truth, there's the truth" (Yale), and argues in favor of free speech by suggesting that "in America in 2016 you have to use the backdoor if you want to practice free speech" (CSU).

4.3 The Q&A sessions

Shapiro ends all his lectures with a Q&A session. These assemblies are always managed by the local event organizers. A line is formed, and each

person is allowed one question. Shapiro always invites people with contrasting opinions to ask their questions first. In the eight lectures analyzed in this study, this rarely happens, or at least they do not go first. He also clarifies that he "will answer anything except questions on my sex life, which is none of your business, which is awesome by the way" (UCLA). This last part of the sentence is helpful to reaffirm his masculinity, create a bond with the audience and again provoke laughter. Interestingly, although the question sessions are open to everyone, at the end of the eight lectures only nine women in total ask questions, an average of one per lecture. Additionally, when the questions do not serve to praise his endeavors, he simply does not reply. His technique consists in circumnavigating the question, interrupting the interlocutor or shutting them down. Every time the exchange takes a difficult turn, he uses humor or mockery as a conversation-stopper. A reply formulated during the Q&A session at Yale succinctly summarizes his views when addressing questions that do not align with his ideas: "Since I am the speaker, I get to make the definitions". Shapiro often contradicts himself, or better, makes rules that he consistently flouts. In the previous section, one of the quotes taken from his Yale lecture stated, "there is no such thing as your truth, there's the truth", at the end of the same lecture, during the Q&A session, he claims that he is the one who "make the definitions", it is not hard to spot the contradiction between these two statements.

A closer look at the exchanges that take place during the Q&A sessions, makes it clear that this time is not meant to be devoted to a discussion or a debate about ideas, in other words to practicing freedom of speech. Shapiro simply takes advantage of the time segment to further advocate his ideas, promote his views, and wield his rhetorical arsenal, all with the collaborative support of his audience. An additional example of the rhetorical inversion Shapiro consistently employs to lay the blame on victims, can be found with reference to homeless people when he suggests that "people don't have the right to be homeless [...] people are homeless because they want to be" (UCLA). When discussing the issue of the legalization of recreational drugs, mockery is once more used as a tool for derogation, and Shapiro bluntly states, "people have the right to be stupid" (UCLA). Derogation and pejoration are also employed in explicit evaluation; in fact, when asked to express his views on social justice, Shapiro classifies it as an evil perversion, contending that social justice implies that you only get justice if the justice system thinks your

social group deserves it and not based on the reality of the events (Yale), and when requested to air his views on education, he manages to insult the very institutions that agreed to grant him a podium by saying that "college is largely a waste of time unless you are studying engineering, medicine or math" (CSU).

Despite the generally assumed democratic nature of Q&A sessions, the demeaning rhetoric employed by Shapiro throughout the main lecture brims over into the latter part of the event, and the conservative icon succeeds in deploying his hateful arsenal across all eight of the lectures investigated in this study.

5. Conclusion

There is no doubt that Ben Shapiro is an excellent public speaker, but where do we draw the line between free speech and hate speech?

This chapter set out to unpack the dynamics of hate speech masquerading as free speech on the internet, and more specifically on YouTube, in lectures delivered by a public political figure. More precisely, it aimed to illustrate how the "Other" is construed and targeted online, and how implicit hateful language hidden behind jokes and laughter can be as toxic as explicit hateful language. The objective here is not to classify Ben Shapiro's ideals and beliefs as right or wrong, this is a personal matter that each of us can reflect upon, the aim here is to highlight the way in which this public figure employs specific rhetorical strategies to put forward his ideals to the detriment of others. The analysis shows that Shapiro's vehement support of free speech camouflages a widespread use of hateful language and despicable practices.

In the lectures delivered by Shapiro, those strategies identified in the literature as 'othering' practices from homogenization to pejoration, from displaying liberalism to subverting tolerance, have all been singled out. The rhetorical arsenal employed by Shapiro also aligns with Kopytowska's (2017) "regularities and tendencies" (p. 3) in hateful discourses. Shapiro uses a well-established inventory of linguistic and discursive tools to construct the dichotomy of 'us' vs. 'them' following the "ideological square" (van Dijk 1998) in which 'we' are good, and 'they' are bad, and the victims progressively become perpetrators. By using mockery and irony the conservative speaker is able to tone down the content of his hateful speech, rendering it implicit, though very explicit slurs and offensive language are also regularly employed. Shapiro never

endorses physical violence explicitly but by demonizing and dehumanizing leftist people or by publicly making fun of others, he validates a type of behavior that is aggressive and brutal. Lastly, by live streaming his lectures and uploading the videos onto the YouTube platform, he disseminates his hateful speech into the cybersphere allowing it to reach an uncountable number of people and to spread on unregulated.

If what is being said is insulting, if it belittles or hurts another human being, then it should not be said. This is where the line between free speech and hate speech needs to be drawn. A public figure trying to set an example for the younger generations, should not be going around the country using slurs and derogatory language when speaking about people who do not share his audiences' beliefs. Nobody should be allowed to make fun of those who are in some way different, nor to manipulate the minds of victims causing them to believe that they are to blame for their fate. In 2021, hate speech cannot proliferate unchecked, homing in on ways to identify it, contrast it, and put an end to it should be everyone's priority.

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Katherine E. Russo

HATE SPEECH AND COVID-19 RISK COMMUNICATION: A CRITICAL CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF RISK AND XENOPHOBIA IN TWITTER

1. Introduction

News-based risk communication discourse has the important function of informing the lay public about risks during health and security emergencies. As Fischoff and Kadvani note, "one test of a society may be how it ensures that its weakest members receive needed information on risk" (2011: 121). Yet, the purpose of news-based risk communication is also to persuade the lay public to adopt certain behaviours and avoid risks. Thus, news-based risk communication discourse also contributes to the evaluation of scientific discourse and to the construction of the meaning and values assigned to certain risks (Hunston and Thompson 2000; Martin and White 2005; Bednarek 2006; Bednarek and Caple 2012). As Teun van Dijk argued in his popular work on news and social cognition, people rely heavily on news accounts for their knowledge, beliefs and opinions, which in turn form socially shared knowledge (1988; 1996).

During the on-going covid-19 pandemic, news media intensified their role as a channel for the communication of risk in an attempt to bridge the gap between experts and lay readers. Yet, its recontextualisation (Bondi *et al.* 2015) often redefined the meaning assigned to risks due to the influence of news values such as negativity, personalization, impact, superlativeness, novelty, and expectation (Bednarek 2008). The remediation of such news-based risk communication discourse in distanced, offline social media conversations also nurtured a further renegotiation of the meaning assigned to risks based on the user's own evaluation and opinion (Zappavigna 2012, 2018). As Michele Zappavigna puts it, social media users "rarely present bald facts or narrate activities and events without adopting some kind of evaluative stance [...] sharing and contesting opinion and sentiment is central to social media discourse" (Zappavigna 2017).

Risk communication in online news media discourse entails the spreading

of information but also resorts to persuasion strategies such as fear appeals. Yet, in the case of the covid-19 pandemic fear appeals arguably gave way to the promotion of a set of common values which resulted in hate speech directed at the populations affected by the epidemic. Hence, the present study investigates whether hate speech emerged in Twitter discourse during the pandemic in correlation with news-based risk communication. More specifically, whether it fuelled the re-irruption of nationalist and xenophobic discourses during the outbreak.

Building on the premises that epidemics are not just an incidental but a predictable trigger of fear, hate and mistrust and or/solidarity, the study investigates social media discourse as a possible site of intolerance and/or encounter, connectivity and conviviality. It therefore provides an analysis of the remediation of covid-19 risk communication discourse in a specialized Twitter corpus. The data are analysed according to an approach which draws on findings in Critical Social Media Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Linguistics. Corpus Linguistics methodological tools such as quantitative techniques are combined with the analysis of context and discourse structural evaluation through qualitative assessments (Martin and White 2005; Baker 2006; Thomson and White 2008; Zappavigna 2012). The analysis is narrowed from bulk data retrieval to identify the lexical and grammatical resources used to express attitude oriented to affect and combines the findings on affect with the analysis of the representation of prominent social actors (Van Leeuwen 1996; Reisigl and Wodak 2001).

2. Approach and motivation: risk communication, affect and the discursive construction of online hate

As open and free platforms containing large volumes of user-generated content, social media have become an ideal data source to monitor risk-information and public opinion and sentiment. Previous studies have focused on the detection and monitoring of influenza (Culotta 2010) and the H1N1 outbreak in 2009 (Chew and Eysenbach 2010). Indeed, the probability and predictive value of how specific social systems deal with epidemics may be detected by monitoring social media data and findings may be employed in the formulation of risk-informed decisions in response to epidemics. Similarly, the covid-19 epidemic generated numerous studies tracking rapidly-evolving

public sentiment on social networking sites such as Instagram and Facebook and micro-blogging platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr.

The present study adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to social media discourse (KhosraviNik 2014, 2017). It therefore analyses social media discourse from a combined quantitative and qualitative point of view (Baker 2006; Baker *et al.* 2008). As Unger, KhosraviNik and Wodak propose, a critical discourse analysis approach must be applied to a topic-related body of social media linguistic data in relation to a given socio-political context and to a given genre-specific (institutional, media) background:

> When considering how the framework can be applied to social media, we are careful to acknowledge differences in data types and new affordances that account for the overall qualities of texts before engaging in more detailed analysis. However, the separation of the 'online world' as a strikingly different discursive arena, as advocated by early studies in computer-mediated communication (CMC), does not sit well theoretically with the socially-critical aspirations of CDS research. Thus, just as CDS scholars would not endorse an analytical approach that strictly separates the data from their immediate or broader context, they should also not treat 'offline' and 'online' as separate and independent of one another (2016: 279).

Social media platforms such as Twitter provide an ideal and immediate window into how people evaluate news-based risk communication and how they grapple with uncertainty about facts, options, beliefs and common values during epidemic crises. In recent years, evaluation has been recognized as an important feature of language and has been at the centre of research on linguistic resources such as attitude (Halliday [1994] 2004), evaluation (Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Bondi and Mauranen 2003), appraisal (Martin and White 2005), epistemic modality (Hyland 1998), stance and engagement (Biber and Finegan 1989; Hyland 2005; Bednarek 2006; Biber and Conrad 2009), metadiscourse (Crismore 1989; Hyland and Tse 2004), and hedging (Hyland 1996; Swales 2004). These approaches have focused on interpersonal meaning by analyzing the linguistic features used by writers/speakers to comment on their propositions and shape their texts according to the expectations of their readership/audiences (Hyland 2005). Evaluation, as the writer's expression of opinion or subjectivity, may involve different meaning dimensions or parameters which refer to the standards, norms and values according to which people evaluate something through language in a given

context. To be persuasive, speakers/writers need to connect with the value system of their discourse community and every instance of evaluation is an act that is socially situated in a disciplinary or institutional context (Hyland 2005).

Evaluation has been an important focus of recent studies in social media, especially in regard to the relation between users and the ways in which they construct stance and engagement (Zappavigna 2012, 2018). In the first case they express a textual 'voice' or community recognized personality. This can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways users present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments. It is the way in which users intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement. In the case of engagement, writers relate to their readers with respect to the positions advanced in the text (Martin and White 2005). This is an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations. Appraisal is dialogic and is related to the interpersonal in language, i.e., the expression and construction of communities of shared feelings and values through the linguistic mechanisms for the sharing of emotions, tastes and normative assessments (e.g., in the sentence, 'I am *naturally* scared of viruses', 'naturally' is an interactive and dialogic term that pushes the reader to align and share a particular set of values or attitudes).

In terms of structure, interpersonal meaning is of a prosodic nature and cannot be easily expressed as a configuration of discrete elements. The realisation of attitude "tends to splash across a phase of discourse, irrespective of grammatical boundaries" and can be realised across a range of grammatical categories (e.g. interesting, interested, interestingly, interest; perhaps, might; probably, would; certainly, could) (2005: 10). It is rather "strung throughout the clause as a continuous motif or colouring.... The effect is cumulative" (Halliday 1979: 66-67). More specifically, the prosodic structure of appraisal may be defined according to three fundamental types of linguistic realisation: saturation (this type of realisation is opportunistic, a modal verb may, for instance, be picked up in an adverb and so on); intensification (this type of realisation involves amplification, repetitions, exclamative structures, superlatives); domination (relevant meanings may include a longer stretch of discourse by dominating meanings in their domain) (Martin and White 2005).

Whence, the limited length of social media posts would seem to limit the possibility of analysis of evaluation since it generally extends across stretches of discourse. More specifically, tweets must be confined to 280 characters. Nevertheless, the linking and brief commenting on news-based risk communication in Twitter allows evaluation. As Zappavigna argues, evaluation can be realized in social media texts directly in the 'body' of a post, but also through semiotic resources that are more specific to social media, for example, forms of 're-posting' such as retweeting, and social tagging practices, such as hashtags. According to Zappavigna, hashtags have developed important interpersonal functions associated with the expression of attitudinal stance and increased emotive denotative power (Zappavigna 2012, 2018). Moreover, Twitter discourse may be analysed in terms of the introduction and management of voices to whom these values are attributed through categories of engagement (Martin and White 2005; Zappavigna 2012; 2018). Through hashtags and reference to other users via symbols such as @ it allows external voices to be managed within the discourse and speakers to align or dis-align themselves with these voices, endorsing or disendorsing what other people say.

Resources of evaluation are mostly used in Twitter discourse to express feelings and attitudes, negotiate relationships, and adopt stances. The attitude which has been most studied in regard to Twitter is affect, i.e. "registering positive and negative feelings: do we feel happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored?" (Martin and White 2005: 42). As Zappavigna notes, in microblogging, "it is not uncommon for users to devote an entire post to detailing their current emotional state" (2017: 441). According to Zappavigna, affect is also related to ideational content and attitudinal stances may be associated with particular targets in order to construe value positions in discourse. Evaluations 'couple' with ideation, in our case 'risk', as people share values and form ambient communities (Zappavigna 2018: 122-125). Hence, the Appraisal approach is particularly useful for this study, as the massive amount of data emanating from Twitter is informative of users' emotions towards a particular target or topic (Zappavigna 2018).

News-based risk communication is very strongly dependent on threat construction and persuasion through affect. It may be argued that the goal of news-based risk communication is to maximise the number of 'shared visions' of risk values and outcomes (i.e., the meaning assigned to risks as social constructs and the desired visions about the outcomes and future developments

of social policies). In other words, the goal of news-based risk communication is successful legitimization and social mobilization around a common goal (Chilton 2004). Therefore discourses of risk prevention often involve the strategic use of affect and more specifically of fear appeals, drawing on metaphoric construals of an enemy entity (in our case covid-19 epidemics, epidemics, contagion etc.) posing an imminent threat. Indeed, the mediatised contract with citizens, which lies at the basis of news-based risk communication, is often secured through a careful modulation of fear (Wodak 2015). Yet, the force and intensity of such fear appeals should be carefully considered in risk communication since in order to be useful, fear appeals "should present a potential threat that recipients will feel is personally relevant, and then show a relatively simple response that averts the threat" (Smith *et al.* 2008: 203). According to Witte, risk communication resorts to three types of fear appeals which are diversely appraised by people: perceived efficacy, perceived threat, and fear. In the case of perceived efficacy, threat is perceived as moderate or high, fear is evoked and the receiver is ready to appraise the efficacy of the suggested actions (Witte 1992: 338). In this case, a response that would feasibly and effectively avert the threat is proposed, hence readers may be motivated to control the danger by thinking of strategies to avert the threat (adaptive outcomes). Hence, danger control processes are dominating and individuals respond to the danger, not to their fear. In the case of perceived threat, the appraisal of the threat is low because the threat is either insignificant or irrelevant, the appraisal of the efficacy of the suggested actions simply will not take a place. In other words, the receiver will not respond to the threat message as a result of its ineffectiveness. In these cases, readers may perceive the threat as either insignificant or irrelevant. In the case of fear, the person perceives the threat as high and efficacy as low, hence fear control processes are initiated. Such appeals may make readers "feel helpless to react properly [...]. they may either alert them to a potential risk or make them deny it by helplessly trying to control their fear that might be aroused" (Witte 1992: 1033). If control processes are dominating, individuals respond to their fear, and not to the danger. In this case, the message can be described as failing in achieving its purpose; on the contrary, the effect of the message, that is, responding to fear, is unintended. Witte (1992) adds: "the fear originally evoked by the personally relevant and significant threat becomes intensified when individuals believe they are unable to effectively deter the threat. Thus, they become motivated to

cope with their fear (defensive motivation) by engaging in maladaptive responses (e.g., denial, distrust, etc.)".

Following this line of thought fear appeals within news-based risk communication may instigate hate speech towards affected populations and as numerous studies have found these are fiercely expressed in online communication which has the advantage of enabling people to express intolerant views towards a feared subject from a protected and sometimes anonymous position (Coliver 1992; Christopherson 2007; Waldron 2012; Yamaguchi 2013; Ozarslan 2014; Ben-David and Matamoros-Fernandez 2016; White and Candrall 2017; Esposito and KhosraviNik 2018). Hate speech refers to expressions that incite harm (particularly discrimination, hostility or violence) towards a particular target on the basis of the target's identification with a certain social or demographic group. It may include speech that advocates, threatens or encourages violent acts. Hate speech can also include expressions that foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance, on the assumption that such a climate may fuel targeted discrimination, hostility and violence (UNESCO 2015).

Although Twitter forbids users to 'publish or post direct, specific threats of violence against others' (Twitter 2017), hate speech towards specific social groups who are viewed as minorities and/or vulnerable on the basis of their religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation still appears on the site either as an overt or covert hate speech (Awan and Zempi 2015). In recent years, there has been a keen interest in identifying and extracting opinions and emotions from text, in order to provide tools for information analysts in government, commercial and political domains seeking to track attitudes and feelings in the news and online forums. However, such work has mostly been limited to posts made by members of online hate groups and in radical forums at the document or sentence level (Burnap and Williams 2015), and no studies have examined how news-based risk communication is evaluated and whether it may incite hate speech against social, ethnic, or other minority groups on social media.

3. Corpus design and method

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in the city of Wuhan (China) China in December 2019 and spread globally in a very short time. The policies and

measures for the management of the epidemic differed from region to region and country to country yet the local epidemiological strategies to combat the virus impacted on collective behavioural changes on a global scale. The health crisis soon began to affect the domestic and foreign political decision-making processes of countries with heavy consequences for the economy and heavy restrictions for citizens in regard to gatherings, mobility, movement. The corpus (see Table 1) was designed by selecting tweets with the query terms covid*/corona virus + risk* during the period 1 March 2020-15 March 2020. The period was chosen as The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a pandemic in March 2020.

The data were collected through data scraping with Python, with the libraries 'twint' (https://pypi.org/project/twint/) and 'pandas' (https://pypi.org/project/pandas/). All duplicate tweets were removed (when 2 tweets were 100% equal to each other, just the first occurrence was preserved) and all files were UTF-8 encoded to avoid problems with special characters (such as emojis). In addition, metadata regarding time, user ID, number of followers, links to micromedia, small-scale multimedia and hyperlinks were collected.

Corpus	*Total*
Tweets	15441
Tokens	597531

Table 1 Size of the corpus.

Evaluation is a slippery notion for Corpus Linguistics methods because it cannot easily be allocated to a clear set of expressions. Evaluation encompasses evaluative items, which may convey unspecific evaluative meaning (e.g. *wonderful, nice, great*), and those which express specific evaluations (e.g. *successful, difficult*). Evaluative items are also often accompanied by hedges (*perhaps, sort of*) or intensifiers (*highly, extremely*), and connectors (*but, nevertheless*). Hence, evaluation involves both discourse structural evaluation and "evaluative items", which are "smaller units which confer evaluative meanings to the entities they refer to or to other linguistic elements in the context they occur in" (Mauranen 2002: 1115).

In addition, both semantic prosody and semantic preference are crucial to evaluation. The term semantic preference refers to collocations of lexical items

with (more or less specific) semantic subsets, while the term semantic prosody refers to positive/negative and complex attitudinal connotations, affecting both single words and larger units of meaning such as phrases, i.e., it concerns both 'traditional' connotation (said to relate to single words) and 'prosodic' connotation (connotation that is "distributed prosodically across a textual sequence") (Stubbs 2001: 202). It has often been argued that lexical items may be regularly associated with positive and negative values and, therefore, through polarity they may contribute to the expression of evaluation as a semantic prosody and may imbue other lexical items with values (Sinclair 1991; Louw 1993). As a consequence, a given expression may be "imbued by its collocates" (Louw 1993: 157) with "a consistent aura of meaning" (Louw 1993:157) and items with a preference for negative collocations can acquire negative connotations themselves, i.e., evaluative meaning (Stubbs 1995; Partington 1998, 2004).

Due to all these reasons, as Mauranen (2004) notes, "[i]dentifying evaluation in corpora is far from straightforward. Corpus methods are best suited for searching items that are identifiable, therefore tracking down evaluative items poses a methodological problem" (209). Bednarek (2008) similarly suggests that even if an item predominantly collocates with 'negative' items, it does not mean that it necessarily carries negative connotations. As a consequence, in Bednarek's view:

> It is extremely important for corpus linguists to distinguish between collocational patterning (semantic preference) – whether this relates to positive/negative lexical items or to items from more specific semantic subsets – and the connotations of a lexical item (including those of 'individual' words and extended units of meaning) (2008: 130).

As aforementioned evaluative expressions are co-text and context-dependent, yet from the point of view of critical discourse analysis they are also an expression of the value system, ideologies and discourses which are constructed in different texts and domains (Fairclough 1992).

Hence, Corpus Linguistics methodological tools such as quantitative techniques (lists of frequency, concordances and collocational analysis) have been combined in the present study with the analysis of context and discourse structural evaluation through qualitative assessments (Baker 2006; Baker et al. 2008). The analysis was carried out by firstly taking into consideration the

different subcorpora through the aid of AntConc, a concordancer developed by Lawrence Anthony (2011) to explore the frequency, statistical significance, context of specific lexical items and terms, phrases, lexical bundles and multiword units. The data were later analysed according to a combined approach which draws upon recent findings in the fields of Critical Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Linguistics.

The analysis took into account the following levels of analysis: frequency and statistical significance, the level of the text, the relation between different texts and discourses, the context in which texts are produced and the wider historical and political context (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). It therefore situated the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis of a wide range of linguistic discursive strategies within a wider analytical framework, which includes extra-linguistic social/sociological variables, and situational frames (Reisigl and Wodak 2001).

4. Results and discussion: affect and racial discrimination in the evaluation of news-based risk communication on Twitter

The analysis involved a preliminary step regarding word frequency and keyness. The corpus was analyzed through a log-likelihood test to ascertain the frequency and statistically significant use of lexical items in the corpus in comparison with the reference NOW corpus (2010-2020) by Mark Davies, a corpus specifically compiled to represent a comprehensive picture of online news media outlets. The investigation considered 'lexical words' in order to initially consider 'aboutness' rather than style (see Table 2).

Freq.	*Wordlist*	*Keyness*	*Keyword*
17910	covid	31.958.981	covid
12950	risk/s	19.718.517	https
9430	https	15.929.881	coronavirus
8700	coronavirus	14.818.536	risk/s
7465	threat/s	5.732.963	threat
3283	you	2.883.806	virus
2648	people	1.780.985	trump

2256	your	1.401.245	corona
1830	will	1.377.888	covid-
1484	our	1.319.244	pandemic
1379	virus	909.669	movement
1319	movement	874.513	people
1305	they	764.565	health
1231	health	744.503	spread
1125	spread	722.388	coronaoutbreak
1006	us	703.672	infection
924	other	666.938	wuhan
845	their	655.500	coronavirusupdates
825	please	618.438	please
802	trump	601.990	realdonaldtrump
772	should	584.285	our
759	reduce	565.238	we
737	know	547.414	uk
716	call	519.932	infected
710	infection	501.345	spreading
708	home	499.639	outbreak
658	country	494.970	coronaviruspandemic
653	pandemic	494.217	your
644	everyone	428.082	borisjohnson
575	disease	401.327	coronapocalypse
569	may	389.032	healthcare
477	safe	387.079	quarantine
474	group	382.364	lives
474	infect	377.108	distancing
456	government	344.198	contracting
425	would	334.371	symptoms

417	family	318.824	chinese
405	world	313.657	this
385	china	307.684	coronavirusupdate
376	elderly	305.986	elderly
375	outbreak	305.384	stay
373	chinese	303.638	flu
359	asian	298.223	safe
347	symptom	276.834	china
343	american	275.069	minimize
17910	medical	264.344	everyone
12950	social	258.887	asian
9430	protect	254.174	flattenthecurve
8700	crisis	254.174	socialdistancing
7465	self	244.383	immunocompromised
3283	quarantine	243.352	vulnerable
2648	exposure	243.035	exposure
2256	issue	240.970	gov
1830	sick	240.796	ukcoronavirus
1484	wash	227.418	coronauk
1379	die	222.648	stop
1319	italy	216.679	us
1305	serious	204.777	folks
1231	vulnerable	201.526	immune
1125	advice	201.488	lockdown
1006	concern	191.362	crisis
924	action	187.774	hoax
845	doctor	187.286	coronavirusoutbreak
825	system	181.817	disease
802	young	179.264	mobility

772	coronaoutbreak	169.878	you
759	population	168.944	global
737	wuhan	167.038	neighbors
716	hospital	163.449	italy
710	news	159.388	asians
708	coronavirusupdates	159.243	movements
658	healthcare	157.939	masks
653	fight	157.760	tweet
644	positive	151.646	sars
575	america	151.492	americans
569	fear	151.306	diabetes
477	follow	150.267	low
474	illness	149.168	panic
474	panic	148.851	eu
456	realdonaldtrump	147.846	protect
425	understand	147.153	closethepubs
417	impact	142.298	measures
405	million	141.788	safety

Table 2 Word Frequency and Keyness.

Key lexical words indicate that health risks and the spread of the virus are salient topics in the corpus. Numerous keywords point to terms related to risk communication and to the risk-prevention measures which were discussed during the period under consideration to avoid the spreading of contagion. As already found in Zappavigna (2012), the social importance of information sharing influences the content of tweets and therefore the marker identifying hyperlinks (i.e. http) was not only key, but it was the third most common lexical item in the corpus (*n.* 9430). This confirms previous studies that the sharing of information/URLs is one of the most common motivations in the use of Twitter (Zappavigna 2012).

Moreover, both the frequency and keyness measure pointed to a strong

reference to movement and mobility and to specific in-groups (e.g. American, UK, people, we, us, our) and out-groups (Asian, China, Wuhan and Italy). Deictics such as 'we', 'us', 'they', 'them', collectives such as 'people' and 'country', and toponyms used as metonymies and/or personifications such as America, U.K., China and Italy, indicate a strong preference for the representation of in-groups and out-groups, rather than individuals or the expression of personal identity (Wodak 2008).

The next stage of the analysis considered the linguistic resources used to evaluate news-based risk communication. The analysis was carried out using the UAM CorpusTool for automatic annotation (O'Donnell 2008) and AntConc, a concordancer developed by Lawrence Anthony (2005) to explore the context and collocation of terms. The analysis of the wordlist pointed to the stronger use of emotional attitude in correlation with news-based risk communication. Hence the analysis focused on the linguistic realization of affect in the corpus, which comprises the modification of participants (affect as a quality), affective mental and behavioural processes (affect as a process), modal adjuncts (affect as comment), and grammatical metaphors (e.g., nominalisations of qualities and processes). It may be related to emotional behaviour, as in the case of *restless* and *twitching*, or to the internal labelling of mental or relational processes, as in the case of *uneasy* or *happy with*. Emotions are grouped by Martin and White into three major sets:

- Un/happiness covering emotions concerned with 'affairs of the heart';
- In/security covering emotions concerning with eco-social well-being;
- Dis/satisfaction covering emotions concerned with the pursuit of goals, displeasure, curiosity, respect.

Moreover, lexico-grammatical choices for the expression of emotion must be graded according to the depth of feeling along semantic topologies encompassing both the surge of behaviour and disposition (Martin and White 2005: 50). The analysis revealed that Twitter users resort to all these major sets with a strong focus on emotions that are usually regarded as negative by society.

In order to obtain a more comprehensive rather than fragmented view of the coupling of linguistic realisations of affect and risk* the analysis focused on concordance to consider the term's co-text and extracted relevant occurrences (Calsamiglia and van Dijk 2004). It found that news-based risk communication

regarding the epidemic mainly mobilised and triggered affects related to in/security, such as "peace and anxiety in relation to our environs, including the people sharing them with us" (Martin and White, 2005: 50). Hence, the most represented set of feelings is that of in/security, with realisations regarding affects such as fear, panic and anxiety (see Table 3).

Un/happiness	*n*	*In/security*	*n*	*Dis/satisfaction*	*n*
Sad*	76	Worr*	445	Satisf*	25
Hate*	67	Concern*	347	Angr*	79
Desper*	44	Fear*	327	Unsatisf*	20
Cry	22	Surpris*	52	Caution*	5
Depress*	20	Commit*	50	Bus*	5
Gloom*	20	Secure	25	Pleas*	5
Miserabl*	8	Startl*	20		
Happ*	10	Stress*	20		
Rejoyc*	5	Anxi*	15		
Excite*	5	Confident*	10		
Cry/ed		Worr*	75		
		Alarm*	10		
		Twitch*	10		
		Reassur*	10		
		Declare*	10		
		Wary	5		
		Uneas*	5		

Table 3: Lexico-grammatical choices for the expression of emotion in *Wordlist.*

Finally the search was narrowed from bulk data retrieval to qualitative analysis to combine a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to the analysis of the evaluation of risk-communictaion and more specifically fear appeals by Twitter users (Baker 2006; Martin and White 2005). It found that fear appeals triggered negative appraisal and maladaptive responses, such as hate speech towards two specific out-groups, i.e. migrants and Chinese people, while in

the case of another relevant out-group, i.e. Italian people, fear appeals triggered neutral or positive appraisal and solidarity.

The most evident maladaptive responses to fear appeals was the delegitimization of Chinese people (Chilton 2004). Delegitimization manifested itself in hate speech, acts of negative other-presentation, blaming and criticizing the moral character and behaviour of Chinese people, as in the following examples:

> Example 1 Chinese again start selling animal's meat ..when these people start living like human..china is big threat to world. Shame on china #chineseVirus #coronavirus https://t.co/cF0XbOeIPE

> Example 2 Damn!!!I Know we shouldn't stigmatize and all but the Chinese do take a lot of risk eating all kinds of exotic animals, these whole pandemonium could have been avoided by just sticking to healthy foods..#CODVID19 #CODVID19italia #coronavirus

The ethnonym Chinese and the personification of the toponym China were described as bearers of an adversarial ideology and as a distant yet real threat to the in-group usually indicated by deictics such as 'we'. In its broadest sense, Chinese people were described as physically and culturally distant, as a 'danger' or 'threat' trespassing upon the user's territory. As Reisigl and Wodak note, social actors are linguistically inscribed with certain qualities through the use of predicational strategies (2001: 47). In the Twitter corpus, Chinese people are also depicted and associated with metaphors, such as catastrophes, natural disasters, dangers and threats, which are consistent with previous findings on racist and xenophobic discourse (Baker 2006; van Dijk 1988, 1991, 1996; Reisigl and Wodak 2001). In numerous cases, they are merged by way of cumulative associations with natural calamities of great magnitude and in need of urgent control and management by the nation (see Example 3). In other cases, the user sought legitimization for hate speech by proposing to neutralize the growing impact of the negative, 'foreign', 'alien', 'antagonistic' entities (see Example 4):

> Example 3 #Covid_19 is a #catastrophe that constitutes a bigger external #threat to mankind's survival than any foe!! #ChinaMustPay for this! #ChineseVirus #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #StayHomeStaySafe #XijinpingVirus #ChineseBioterrorism #coronavirus #pandemic https://t.co/PNEx6u7fjC:

> Example 4 @user should understand that calling #Covid_19 #WuhanVirus is NOT an issue of racism. It's a matter of FACT, especially when now Communist China is spreading fake news and propaganda to defame other countries and shift its responsibility for causing #CoronavirusPandemic. https://t.co/2WlwjHRFNC

Conversely, in the case of Italian people, appraisal was mostly neutral even in correlation with fear appeals (see Examples 5, 6). In other cases, it implicitly invoked positive appraisal upholding Italy through the endorsement of behaviour and values (see Examples 7, 8) and called for solidarity towards the Italian people (see Example 9):

> Example 5 Italian government locks down country's north and declares a decree for zero movements of over 16M people for fear of the covid-19 that so far claimed over 800 lives! Italy is the most affected country in Europe https://t.co/AoJMZmDbB0

> Example 6 Italy has an older population with a greater percentage of adults over the age of 65 putting the country at risk for more COVID-19 illness. #COVID19 #coronarvirusitalia @ABSCBNNews @ANCALERTS https://t.co/d4ahafxwcj

> Example 7 We may have to delay start of #radonc for weeks if safe to create extra capacity and reduce infection risk. May interrupt treatment if patient is (suspected for) #covid-19, keep staff healthy with backup teams at home. And learn from Italian colleagues!

> Example 8 Italy now appears to be publishing updated COVID-19 stats daily at this link. Some brief comments: This level of transparency is very helpful. The case fatality rate pattern by age is similar to China and others, older groups much more at risk. 1/4 https://t.co/o7rBZqWInn https://t.co/MJTcYstHhd

> Example 9 We stand in solidarity with Italy, with healthcare professionals doing an incredible job on the front lines, & the elderly who are particularly at risk from COVID-19. With no easy answers, this is a time for solidarity in order to halt the spread of this pandemic #stayathome https://t.co/72Kt3vZ7zS

Hashtags were also identified in terms of frequency and keyness and largely confirmed their affilitiave functions (Zappavigna 2018) as facilitators of hate

speech. They confirmed the salient topics of tweets (see Table 4) with users mostly communing on risk communication about updates and coverage on the epidemic (#coronaviruspandemic, #coronavirusoutbreak, #coronaoutbreak, #coronavirusupdates, #coronavirusupdate) and risk prevention as in the case of the spreading of information on measures to avoid the spread of the contagion (#socialdistancing, #coronalockdown, #mentalhealth, #hydroxychloroquine, #immunocompromised). Yet they were also used to align with users interested in specific 'local' virtual communities (#coronavirusuk, #ukcoronavirus, #coronavirususa) and to persuade other users through calls to follow the measures to avoid contagion (#staysafe, #stayathomeandstaysafe, #flattenthecurve, #detentionaction). In other cases they were used to invoke positive or negative evaluation and share values (#coronapocalypse, #chinesevirus, #fakenews, #unhumanrights, #wuhanvirus).

Rank	*Frequency*	*Keyness*	*Hashtag*
9	10975	10.449.564	Coronavirus
275	242	219.374	Realdonaldtrump
757	77	64.555	coronaviruspandemic
766	66	62.840	coronavirusoutbreak
783	74	61.777	Coronaoutbreak
891	64	52.544	coronavirusupdates
912	62	50.703	Socialdistancing
1045	52	41.530	coronavirusupdate
1057	51	40.617	Borisjohnson
1058	42	39.989	Coronalockdown
1346	38	28.821	coronapocalypse
1352	30	28.564	Publichealth
1525	24	22.851	Detentionaction
1567	23	21.899	Flattenthecurve
1598	30	21.670	Chinesevirus
1599	22	20.947	Dailysoundnfury
1638	29	20.785	Coronavirustruth

1685	20	19.042	Coronavirusuk
1687	20	19.042	Fakenews
1692	20	19.042	Mentalhealth
1759	26	18.143	hydroxychloroquine
1760	26	18.143	immunocompromised
1840	18	17.138	stayathomeandstaysafe
1841	18	17.138	Ukcoronavirus
1970	23	15.527	Coronavirususa
2038	15	14.282	Staysafe
2040	15	14.282	Unhumanrights
2095	21	13.800	coronaviruslockdown
2112	14	13.330	Wuhanvirus

Table 4 Hashtags in the corpus.

The analysis hence focused on the hashtags #chinesevirus and #wuhanvirus with the help of the concordance tool to consider the co-text. In the case of the hashtag #ChineseVirus (see Figure 1) it uncovered that hate speech mostly proceeded prosodically through the juxtaposition of other hashtags which served as intensifiers of hate speech (#ChinaLiedAndPeopleDied, #ChinaMustPay, #BatSoup, #WuhanVirus, #XijinpingVirus #ChineseBioterrorism). For instance in Examples 10 and 11, the tweet does not explicitly inscribe hate speech, but it implicitly invokes and amplifies it through the use of other hashtags creating a potential bond with the ambient audience:

> Example 10 #Covid_19 is a #catastrophe that constitutes a bigger external #threat to mankind's survival than any foe!! #ChinaMustPay for this! #ChineseVirus #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #StayHomeStaySafe #XijinpingVirus #ChineseBioterrorism #coronavirus #pandemic https://t.co/PNEx6u7fjC

> Example 11 #WuhanCoronaVirus #CoronaVirus #ChinaVirus #COVID19 #BatSoup #ChineseVirus #IncompetentFools Nancy Pelosi Dismissed Coronavirus Threat in February Chinatown Visit https://t.co/kyTIAFdhVK via @BreitbartNews

		ChineseVirus	File
1		man of this presidency. #ChinaLiedAndPeopleDied #ChineseVirus19 https://t.co/6A7EM6Lv8p Coronaviru	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 1
2		survival than any foe!! #ChinaMustPay for this! #ChineseVirus #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #StayHomeStaySa	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 2
3		nWorldCup #COVID2019 #COVID #CoronavirusLockdown #ChineseVirus #SportsLounge #Farmworkers and their	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 3
4		Virus #CoronaVirus #ChinaVirus #COVID19 #BatSoup #ChineseVirus #IncompetentFools Nancy Pelosi Dismi	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 4
5		$NVS $JNJ $CELG $BSX $PFE #coronavirus #Covid_19 #ChineseVirus19 $ISWH ISWH Home Healthcare Progress	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 5
6		o/CACuPpWtqb #CoronavirusOutbreak #CoronaUpdate #ChineseVirus #Covid_19 Being closed because of the	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 6
7		a global threat #COVID2019 #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #ChineseVirus19 #ChineseVirus https://t.co/H6yl9gXqIAz Chinese	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 7
8		#COVID2019 #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #ChineseVirus19 #ChineseVirus https://t.co/H6yl9gXqIAz Chinese	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 8
9		big threat to world. Shame on china #chineseVirus #coronavirus https://t.co/cF0XbOel	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 9
10		ring from the pandemic. #Coronavirus #WuhanVirus #ChineseVirus https://t.co/D5wpZp5PMr Crown	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 10
11		n Pres @realDonaldTrump for allegedly not taking #ChineseVirus "seriously"... Feb 2020: "While coro	covid_wtlink 2.txt 0 11
12		man of this presidency. #ChinaLiedAndPeopleDied #ChineseVirus19 https://t.co/6A7EM6Lv8p Coronaviru	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 1
13		survival than any foe!! #ChinaMustPay for this! #ChineseVirus #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #StayHomeStaySa	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 2
14		nWorldCup #COVID2019 #COVID #CoronavirusLockdown #ChineseVirus #SportsLounge #Farmworkers and their	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 3
15		Virus #CoronaVirus #ChinaVirus #COVID19 #BatSoup #ChineseVirus #IncompetentFools Nancy Pelosi Dismi	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 4
16		$NVS $JNJ $CELG $BSX $PFE #coronavirus #Covid_19 #ChineseVirus19 $ISWH ISWH Home Healthcare Progress	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 5
17		o/CACuPpWtqb #CoronavirusOutbreak #CoronaUpdate #ChineseVirus #Covid_19 Being closed because of the	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 6
18		a global threat #COVID2019 #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #ChineseVirus19 #ChineseVirus https://t.co/H6yl9gX	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 7
19		#COVID2019 #ChinaLiedPeopleDied #ChineseVirus19 #ChineseVirus https://t.co/H6yl9gXqIAz Chinese	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 8
20		big threat to world. Shame on china #chineseVirus #coronavirus https://t.co/cF0XbOel	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 9
21		ring from the pandemic. #Coronavirus #WuhanVirus #ChineseVirus https://t.co/D5wpZp5PMr Crown	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 10
22		n Pres @realDonaldTrump for allegedly not taking #ChineseVirus "seriously"... Feb 2020: "While coro	covid_wtlink (1).txt 2 11

Figure 1 Concordance Lines of the ChineseVirus hashtag.

The analysis further focused on the correlation between the tweets and the news sources. As shortened links are very common, shortened URLs were expanded to obtain the actual domains and source texts. It found that hate speech was unsurprisingly more frequent in connection to low-credibility news sources,[1] but also that in the tweets that shared high-credibility sources hate speech was connected to the ways in which social actors were represented in news-based risk communication. According to van Leeuwen (1996: 46), nomination strategies have a strong impact on how readers understand and judge news about a person and/or a group of people and can be classified according to the following taxonomy:

- Social actors are sometimes omitted or backgrounded to serve certain purposes.
- Social actors can be activated i.e. represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity or passivated i.e. represented as undergoing the activity, or as being the recipient of an activity. Passivated social actors can be subjected (treated as objects in the representation) or beneficialised (positively or negatively, benefitting from the action).
- Personalisation/impersonalisation can be realized through abstraction or objectivation. The former occurs when social actors are represented

[1] For a discussion of the role and classification of low- and high-credibility sources during the pandemic see Yang et al, 2020.

by means of a quality assigned to them. The latter occurs when social actors are represented by means of reference to an institution closely associated either with their person or with the activity they are represented as being engaged in.

- Functionalization occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of what they do.
- Genericization/specification occurs when social actors are represented as classes or as specific, identifiable individuals.
- Individualization occurs when social actors are referred to as individuals. Collectivization occurs when social actors are referred to as groups which are realized by plurality, by a mass noun or a noun denoting a group of people but not treated as statistics.
- Indetermination/anonymisation occurs when social actors are represented as unspecified, anonymous individuals or groups.
- Aggregation means that participants are quantified and treated as statistics.

In numerous cases, hate speech was connected to the evaluation of social actors in the news source. For instance, news about the risk of an outbreak in immigration of detention centres was diversely framed in two reports published by *The Guardian* during the period under investigation. In Example 12, we find the use of aggregation (*hundreds*) and the negative qualionym 'illegal' to refer to detainees and negative affect (fear), and the use of boosters and overlexicalization ("very real" and "uncontrolled" in the quotation). In the news report, migrants are referred to collectively and are therefore an anonymous and generic category (Machin and Mayr 2012: 81). They are characterized by quantification and statistics. As in previous findings on aggregation in the representation of migrants and refugees in media discourse (Baker 2006), numbers are utilised to give the impression of objective research and scientific credibility, where, in fact, no specific sources for the figures are mentioned. In this case, Twitter users responded with the widespread use of hate speech and positive and negative classes of concepts were built up around participants creating an overt opposition between the in-group (British people) and the out-group (migrant detainees).

In the case of the second article (see Example 13), the reporter used the pre-modifier "vulnerable" to define detainees and displayed a stronger tendency

towards the construction of an out-group placed in affected/patient positions, and a pattern of transitivity generally used in conjunction with the *topos* of victimisation and to the discursive construction of a humanitarian stance. In this case, the news report was met by Twitter users with outrage and solidarity towards the affected detainees.

Example 12 Lawyers and campaigners have called for hundreds immigration centres detainees to be released because of fears they will contract coronavirus while locked up. The call is outlined in a letter from 10 organisations that advocate for migrants and human rights. It says that "there is a very real risk of an uncontrolled outbreak of Covid-19 in immigration detention" (Coronavirus: call to release UK immigration centre detainees: Campaigners write to home secretary over risk of unchecked outbreak in centres", *The Guardian*, 14/03/2020)	@user What a great idea, release all the illegal immigrants and tell them to be back on a certain date because they will turn up….. honestly. @user release wtf they need to left there in isolation not released ffs if they have iy why release into community stupid. @user Great to know that the Coronavirus is now being used as an excuse to release illegal immigrants. @user When we are going for Isolation you want to release illegal immigrants into the community to wander around to catch the virus and ineveitable pass it on… Bloody Hel how stupid can you get? @user This would be a disaster if they were to released @user Oh reall? Lefties call for release of illegal immigrants from removal centres because of #coronaUK. Here's a better idea: expedite extraditions to their countries of origin immediately.
Example 13 Vulnerable immigration detainees at risk of dying if they contract Covid-19 are to be placed in solitary confinement for at least three months, according to a leaked letter from the Home Office contractor G4S. The detainees, who have either committed no crime or completed a prison sentence for a crime already committed, are facing the same "shielding" protocol as those serving	@user SEVEN days to show symptoms - not 3 months!!! Our cruelty knows no bounds.` @user this is inhumane and degrading treatment of people who are VULNERABLE and/or ILL. WTF. @user Actually existing barbarism in this country. Empty the detention centres @user [unbelievable! Shame!] @user Fucking hell.

a prison sentence with health conditions that put them at risk, the Guardian understands. ("Revealed: at-risk immigration detainees 'to be put in solitary confinement'" *The Guardian*, 15/03/2020)	

Table 5 Evaluation of two news reports in Twitter corpus.

In the news, out-groups are a highly productive source since stories must be compressed into a few words. Yet, as they have advocated on numerous occasions, migrants' self-representations are largely filtered out of news media accounts and they are often represented as aggressors or as helpless and powerless victims requiring salvation (Russo and Wodak 2017). These representations have been particularly contested by the very groups who are identified as migrants: they have often reclaimed their role as positive agents of change, and have stressed their concerns over the loss of agency and self-determination related to forced migration and refugee status. This is a particularly strategic call since, as Chouliaraki notes, the type of action that the sufferer plays out bears an effect on the spectator's own orientation to the sufferer. The possibility of the spectator to engage:

> depends on the humanization of the sufferer [...] humanization is a process of identity construction that endows the sufferer with the power to say or do something about her condition, even if this power is simply the power to evoke and receive the beneficiary action of others. The humane sufferer is the sufferer who acts (2006: 169).

Moreover, the representation of distant suffering and victims of epidemics through the spectacles of news media does not always result in the creation of a global public with a sense of social responsibility nor does it orient the spectator towards certain options for action on the suffering and to the connect with the spectacle of suffering (2006: 154-155). According to Chouliaraki, it largely depends on the agency of the sufferer, the semiotic choice of inactivity annihilates the sufferer, depriving her/him of "corporeal and psychological qualities and removes her from the existential order to which the spectator belongs" (2006: 170). Therefore, the right to self-representation and to one's own voice may indeed be one of the few repositories of humanity. The present

research argues that the silence and absence of self-narratives in the news-based risk communication of the covid-19 epidemic had an impact on the appraisal of Chinese people and migrants just as much as verbal and visual representations. To this end, it is important that people receive coherent and accurate information from news media sources that they trust. Within this context, the spread of false narratives in our information environment can have acutely negative repercussions on social media communication.

5. Conclusions

Newspapers have become an important outlet of risk communication as they participate in the "recontextualisation" of risk science and policies (Bondi *et al.* 2015). At the same time, they play an important role in shaping public opinion and policymaking as they inform the public about the political debate concerning risk assessments, planning and policies (Rohrmann 2004; Alharbi 2014). This chapter has specifically considered how Twitter users appraised news-based risk communication about covid-19 during the first two weeks of March 2020.

News-based risk communication often resorts to fear appeals and to the representation of groups of people since news reporters tend to focus on the social contexts and participant roles in science, such as conflicts, problems and developments, and the relevance of scientific knowledge in the everyday lives of citizens rather than on scientific information (Calsamiglia and van Dijk 2004). Through personification and strategies of involvement, news reporters express inner states, attitudes and feelings or degrees of emotional interest and engagement, which aim to engage readers both emotionally and cognitively. These are opposed to strategies of detachment, which are realized to encode distance. Denominations of people are inscribed with evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates with different degrees of intensification and according to different patterns of transitivity (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 47). As a consequence, Twitter users sharing their opinions on news-based risk communication may align alongside or against specific groups (van Djik 1993).

In the Twitter corpus, ideological squaring was frequent and was achieved through the use of deictics and referential choices which created opposites to justify maladaptive responses such as hate speech towards affected populations.

In particular, the deictical pronoun 'we' was used to establish a collective national voice and borders. Close examination uncovered hate speech based on preservation of the in-group, closure and discrimination towards two out-groups, i.e. Chinese people and migrants. It also found that hate speech occurred in conjunction with specific strategies of representation of these groups in the news source that was shared by the Twitter user. In his influential work, the sociolinguist Allan Bell (1991) maintains that the selection of news, is based on news values or newsworthiness, i.e. the attributes that make some stories more suitable for news coverage. The latter has also been defined as one of the most prominent outcomes of the emergence of 'new long journalism', i.e. the shift from the reporting of the details of events to the analysis of their importance or newsworthiness (Jaworski *et al.* 2003; Neiger 2007). News values may be defined as the journalists' assumptions about what is important. The latter influence journalistic decisions by providing or functioning as guidelines or parameters of what is 'news'. In Bell's classification, news is more likely to be covered if it is bad or negative; recent; close; fits the expectations and stereotypes of the audience; it is clear-cut and unambiguous; it is rare, unexpected and unpredictable; it is outstanding or superlative; it is relevant to the lives of the audience; can be pictured in personal terms; there are prominent social actors; sources are validated authorities; can be supported by facts and figures (Bell 1991). The selection or enhancement of news through editing of certain events and social actors depends on how they meet news values criteria: prominent social actors are selected for their identity, while non-elite news actors enter the news if something negative or unexpected happens to them (Bell 1991: 194). Pushing this line of inquiry further, certain events or narratives satisfy news values more than others. The dire consequence is that news values arguably involve an established category of human interest (e.g. craving news about prominent people in society or worrying about risks), but also an appetite for strong emotions created by news media. The semiotic devices that construct newsworthiness are conventionalised and the result of journalistic practice over decades. As a consequence, while we hope that the risk communication regarding the covid-19 pandemic will be short-lived, its demise might not mark a retreat of hate speech to the fringe.

Transnational/local news media channel information on epidemics yet they may increase/decrease fear, and generate hate or solidarity. This research hopes to have spread some awareness on the much-needed development of ethical

protocols for risk communication in the management of epidemics, which may result in lower economic and social costs for affected areas.

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Margaret Rasulo

'TO THE STREETS'. DEPLOYING THE CITY AS THE OBJECT OF HATE CRIMES IN TERRORIST DISCOURSE

1. Introduction

For hate activities to occur, they need spaces that are conducive to discrimination, hostility and violence. They also need to be widely disseminated among receptive audiences in order to leave an indelible mark, one which is embedded in speech acts and behaviors, including those that lead to hate crimes. In these contexts, hate activities threaten individual rights, human dignity and equality, reinforcing tensions between social groups, disturbing public peace and public order, and jeopardizing nonviolent coexistence.

The spatial contextualization of hate activities provides the explanation and form of this study's city-as-space metaphor scenario (Musolff 2006). According to Musolff, a metaphor scenario is defined by a broad and flexible range of conceptualizations that include subdomain structures such as interests, biases, roles, and narratives of participants (2006). It is within this city scenario that hate crimes unfold, incited by primal and strong emotional concepts such as fear, threat, horrorism and violence (Cavarero 2009). These concepts are also at the heart of organized hate crimes (Ronczkowski 2018), explored in this study in relation to the terrorist organization known as ISIS, and to its agenda *to conquer* and *to destroy* what it considers to be the root of all evil: the city. In mediatized representations of terrorist hate crimes, the city is used as a powerful geographic disseminator (Ivandic *et al.* 2019) of contempt for the stigmatized 'other' (Wodak 2015; Brown 2017) embodied by the infidel, or *kafir*,[1] who is mainly, but not exclusively, from the Western parts of the world. Most of all, hate crimes committed by ISIS are fueled by Jihadist hate, an emotional lever characterized by an intense passion that is essentially sacrificial; the terrorists who take to the city streets, do so to obtain revenge and restore their marginalized and humiliated identity as Islamic warriors (Aslam 2012; Balirano 2014; Rasulo 2017).

[1] https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/who-kafir.

The association between the city-as-space metaphor scenario and terrorist hate crimes frames the backdrop for the present research whose aim is to provide evidence that the city is resemiotized in terrorist online products as a nurturing space for hate narratives to be used for the radicalization of ISIS warriors on a global scale (Prior and Hengst 2010). To this purpose, a specialized corpus was collected comprising 300 images of city settings and 264 articles selected from two online magazines, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, freely-accessible from the *Jihadology* website,[2] and analyzed by drawing on quantitative and qualitative tools and approaches, such as Sketch Engine's Word Sketch function (Kilgariff *et al.* 2014), and the meaning-making resources of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (Kress and Van Leewuen 2001; O'Halloran, 2008; Kress 2010; Machin and Mayr, 2012; van Leeuwen 2008, 2013).

1.1 Hatred, hate crimes and terrorism

Since the 9/11 terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and other similar attacks in cities all around the world, the debate has progressively intensified around hate-induced crimes and the powerfully negative emotional phenomenon known as hatred (Ekman 1992), and its articulation in hate speech. Although it is not possible to provide precise definitions of hate and hate speech (Brown 2017), a good starting point is the home page of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) which states that hate speech encompasses "many forms of expressions which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred, violence and discrimination against a person or group of persons for a variety of reasons," specifying that if these behaviors are left unattended they can "lead to acts of violence and conflict on a wider scale."[3] Along the same lines is the definition provided by the United Nations, who defines it as "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in

[2] https://jihadology.net/.

[3] https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/hate-speech-and-violence

other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factor".[4]

The above definitions can be expanded on by arguing that hate speech is associated with high levels of despair on the part of those individuals who do not believe in resolving conflictual situations with an 'outgroup' through constructive activities, such as negotiations, positive gestures, and compromises (Leader *et al.* 2009). Under these circumstances, based on the belief that there is no merit in trying to correct or improve the outgroup's behavior, the only viable solution seems to be the elimination of the 'other' (Shaaban 2015). Behaviorally, this can lead to committing a hate crime (Sullivan *et al.*, 2016), defined as an offense that "willfully causes bodily injury to any person through the use of fire, a firearm, a dangerous weapon, or an explosive or incendiary device, because of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability".[5]

Terrorism and hate crimes are not exactly synonymous, but they do overlap; in fact, they both generate fear which psychologically and physically controls targeted victims. This siege mentality is where the real threat of ISIS resides, and where hate and its doubles, terrorism and fear, meet. Upon this reflection, terrorism is perhaps the ultimate hate crime as it involves, according to the United Nations, the use of an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by unknown individuals, groups or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons.[6] Although this is not a comprehensive or precise definition of the phenomenon,[7] it does express the notion that terrorism and hate crimes do not exist in a vacuum. As mentioned above, both erupt within city spaces and produce narratives that reflect unbridled revenge,

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[4] https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Hate%20Speech%2018%20June%20SYNOPSIS.pdf.

[5] https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:18%20section:249%20edition:prelim)%20OR%20(granuleid:USC-prelim-title18-section249)&f=treesort&edition=prelim&num=0&jumpTo=true

[6] Head of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (December 2010). Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/en/statements. Last accessed November 5, 2020.

[7] https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/german-law-journal/article/eus-definition-of-terrorism-the-council-framework-decision-on-combating-terrorism/5CF28AC8D96623E733966614AA10FD6B

devastating alienation, increasing polarization, and unconcealed hostility. In shaping this reality, terrorist organizations use the mediatized representation of the city to introduce new verbal and visual language associated with both hate and fear. More importantly, the added visibility afforded by city spaces allows ISIS to boost its radicalization messages by manipulating the powerful impact that visual modes have on audiences, with particular reference to young Muslim men and not them alone (Rasulo 2018b).

1.2 Research questions

The following research questions guide this investigation's overarching aim which is to expose one of ISIS's main ambitions: *to conquer* and *to destroy* their enemies (Rasulo 2018) in order to reinstate Jihadi honor (Juris 2005). The questions are formulated as follows:

1. How do city streets and neighborhoods, at the hands of ISIS, become impressive iconic hate environments *to conquer* and *to destroy*?
2. How are visual and verbal resources exploited by ISIS in their online magazines to augment the representation of terrorist hate crimes?
3. To what extent do these attributes contribute to the representation of the city as the metaphorical expression of destruction of all crusaders, infidels and apostates?

2. The context of study: the Islamic State and the mediatized representation of the city

Since the institution of self-proclaimed Caliphate in 2014, ISIS has embarked on an aggressive indoctrination campaign by releasing online magazines which go by the name of two cities, *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*: the former named after a small, rather nondescript town in northern Syria, but designated as the location of the final apocalypse between the Muslims and the infidels; the latter, named after the city of Rome, but symbolically representing the Christian world. Given the unprecedented media dissemination efforts of the Islamic State, research in Islamic terrorism has focused more on the ideological, religious, and brutal content of terrorist self-made media products and less on the settings of terrorist hate crimes (Rasulo 2018a). Yet, the backdrop of nearly

every attack, whether it is a bomb, a vehicle surprise attack, or a lone-wolf ambush assault, is the city.

Urban terror has always operated at both global and local levels, but in the wake of 9/11, the geography of terror has been demarcated by cultural or economic capitals located in both the Western and Eastern world, from New York to Baghdad (Cutter 2003). The globalized and highly networked quality of the city intensifies its defenselessness in the face of terrorism (Mitchell 2003) as evidenced by the aftermath of numerous attacks. Yet, they continue to absorb the impact from new and growing forms of pernicious threats, including those originating from terrorist mimicry (Schmidt and Schröder 2001; Gambetta 2005) or from lone-wolf attacks perpetrated by single individuals.[8] The ability to bounce back makes cities unique in serving as nodes for the fight against international terror, but this same resourcefulness is also one of the reasons why it is so highly exposed to networked terrorist hate crimes. Also, cities are social institutions, and the very essence of Western urbanism and lifestyle; attacking them is equal to attacking interaction taking place within these urban spaces.

This study posits that it is through the use of the Internet that cities become echo chambers of the destructive impact of terrorist hate. In truth, Internet provides their primary link to Jihadi ideology and tactical information that allows terrorist organizations to perform their hate crimes. As discussed in this context, the editors of ISIS-affiliated media hubs, such as *al Hayat* Media Center[9], have been exploiting the communication potential of online magazines to normalize their Jihadi message, allowing ISIS to:

- ensure global coverage of terrorist attacks by leaving an indelible mark on cities;

[8] Raffaello Pantucci (2011). A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists. Retrieved from: https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/1302002992ICSRPaper_ATypologyofLoneWolves_Pantucci.pdf. Last accessed December 8, 2020.

[9] *al Hayat* Media Center. Based in the Arabian Peninsula, the al Hayat Media Center is the main media outlet of the Islamic State. From here, messages in different Western languages (English, French, German) are spread through images, video and audio. Retrieved from: http://formiche.net/2015/01/15/al-hayatmedia-center-isis/. Last accessed December 8, 2020.

- instill fear, outrage and horror by attacking major networks: transport, emergency, business, entertainment;
- perpetrate urban cleansing on their own people in the name of clearing up criminal elements in the city.[10]

These affordances, on the whole, have allowed ISIS to cunningly exploit the city as a space *to conquer* and a space *to destroy*, hypothesized by this study as being two of ISIS's main hate crime motivators connected with urban settings, and therefore used in the retrieval and analysis of verbal and visual data as described in Sections 3 and 4.

3. Corpus

The study's corpus comprises 4 subsections consisting of a total of 300 images (*Dabiq*_Images + *Rumiyah*_Images) and 260 articles (*Dabiq*_Texts + *Rumiyah*_Texts). These materials are freely accessible on the website https://jihadology.net/. Below is some essential information about the magazines in their English language version in terms of: number of issues, date of issues, number of images from each magazine, total number of article tokens retrieved from Sketch Engine software (Kilgariff *et al.*, 2014).

Dabiq Magazine (English version)
Issues 1 – 15 (5 July 2014 – 31 July 31 2016) (191 images + 141 articles/443.000 tokens).
Published by *al-Hayat* Media Center.

Rumiyah Magazine (English version)
Issues 1 – 12 (5 September 2016 – 9 September 2017) (99 images + 119 articles/303.000 tokens).
Published by *al-Hayat* Media Center.

[10] Douglas Weeks (2016). Hotbeds of Extremism: the UK Experience. In Arturo Varvelli Jihadist Hotbeds Understanding Local Radicalization Processes, Edizioni Epoké – ISPI. 63-74. Retrieved from: https://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/Rapporto_Hotbeds_2016/jihadist.hotbeds_ebook.pdf. Last accessed December 1, 2020.

It is important to specify that the corpus includes all the issues of the final year of production of *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, respectively 2016 and 2017. Since then, ISIS has integrated their magazine production with other media outlets such as videos. Interestingly, the city is hardly ever the protagonist of hate crime in these short clips, but the horror of the hate crime itself is highlighted and showcased against desert-like backgrounds (Michael Krona and Rosemary Pennington 2019).

4. Methodology

The corpus-based analysis (Baker *et al.* 2008) of the *Dabiq_Texts* and *Rumiyah_Texts* was conducted by using Sketch Engine's collocational Word Sketch query.[11] The aim of this initial investigation was to reveal not only the verb processes associated with the *city* as object, along with two other synonyms, *town* and *village*, but also to detect their level of fierceness against these urban or semi-urban spaces. The second type of collocational query regarded the objects that follow the behavioral verb processes *to conquer* and *to destroy*,

As mentioned in the introduction, the qualitative analysis of the 300 images extracted from the *Dabiq_Images* and *Rumiyah_Images* subcorpora was carried out by applying the resources afforded by MCDA (Kress and Van Leewuen 2001; O'Halloran, 2008; Kress 2010; Machin and Mayr 2012; van Leeuwen 2008, 2013) to identify the hate activities instantiated by the verb processes *to conquer* and *to destroy* (Table 5.3).

Multimodal discourse analysis draws on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1985) and the Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual metafunctions. Kress and van Leeuwen aligned Halliday's metafunctions to their own representational, interactional and compositional model and applied it to the analysis of visual images.

In more detail, the representational metafunction identifies two kinds of structures, the narrative and the conceptual, both used to distinguish what happens in the images. Narrative structures make use of vector lines and are realized by reactional, speech and mental processes, while conceptual structures trigger classificational, analytical and symbolic processes.

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[11] Sketch Engine: http://www.sketchengine.co.uk.

The interactional metafunction can be examined from three aspects: contact (demand or offer achieved through gaze), social distance (intimate, social, or impersonal size of frame), attitude (involvement, detachment, viewer power, equality and representation of power perspectives), and modality (perceived truth-value of images according to eight modality scales that deal with degrees of the articulation of detail and color), which is assessed according to the naturalistic representation of the image, or what can be seen by one's naked eye (Kress & can Leeuwen 1996). Considering the nature of this context, it is important to clarify that in the West, medium to high modality is signified by the broad category of realism when it is equated with truth. Markers of this category are color saturation and differentiation, detail (especially background detail), depth, quality of material, illumination and brightness (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). In other cultures, this same concept might be equated with markers that identify all things sacred or spiritual.

The compositional metafunction deals with the layout of the aspects on a page in order to discern whether these create or represent a coherent and cohesive whole. It is realized through three interrelated systems: information value (given or new, ideal, or real), salience (achieved through size, color, tone, focus, perspective, overlap, and repetition) and framing. It is also important to specify that the Islamic State's production of online magazines in the English language follow Western conventions in terms of the reading path of articles (from left to right). This principle is also applicable to the visual resources whose representational, interactional and compositional meanings are given by the Western reading of the left-to-right / top-to-bottom disposition.

Since the publication of Kress and van Leeuwen's seminal books *Reading Images* (1990) and *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996, 2006), multimodal studies have flourished (Machin 2007; Kress 2010; O'Halloran and Smith 2011) and the interest in this research approach has progressively included other multidisciplinary approaches such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Van Dijk 2001; van Leeuwen 2008; Fairclough 2010; Machin & Mayr 2012), making it possible to move beyond the describable aspects of multimodal discourse in order to raise awareness of the relationship between verbal and visual texts (van Leeuwen 2008, 2013). Applying some of the linguistic principles pertaining to the above disciplines has led to the approach of MCDA which identifies how language, images,

photographs, diagrams and graphics work to create meaning through specific choices made by the author of the visual or verbal text.

MCDA applied to the analysis of the data presented in this study has not only exposed ISIS's savvy use of Western style communication conventions in the depiction of cities under the assault of terrorist hate crimes, but has also revealed the organization's priority to destabilize, as a form of revenge, those communities that rejected and expelled ISIS from their territories. In fact, despite their territorial defeat in March 2019, and the loss of the self-proclaimed Caliphate,[12] the group has survived and remained relevant by reverting from a large proto-state to an insurgent entity with a localized terrorist approach that is mainly deployed in city streets.

1. Findings and discussion

Dabiq_Texts city as noun 301x	*Rumiyah_Texts* city as noun 205x	*Dabiq_Texts* town as noun 63x	*Rumiyah_Texts* town as noun 25x	*Dabiq_Texts* village as noun 79x	*Rumiyah_Texts* village as noun 90x
Verbs with *city* as object	Verbs with *city* as object	Verbs with *town* as object	Verbs with *town* as object	Verbs with *village* as object	Verbs with *village* as object
liberate	overlook	overturn	liberate	demolish	assault
fortify	storm	overlook	locate	evacuate	recapture
conquer	surround	recapture	storm	recapture	pound
overtake	reach	control	take	raid	storm
overrun	take over	capture	enter	surround	capture
turn		enter		capture	attack
capture		take			
enter		liberate			
		save			

Table 5.1 Word Sketch results.

Table 5.1 presents results from Sketch Engine's Word Sketch function regarding verb processes with *city/town/village* used as objects; Table 5.2

[12] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-47678157.

contains results of objects that follow the verbs *to conquer* and to *destroy*. Results from both Tables are referenced by the name of the specialized subcorpus (magazine + text type), the type of search executed and the number of hits based on the total number of tokens in each subcorpus.

Regarding the search word *city,* there is a dual representation in *Dabiq* where this space is one to *liberate* and *fortify,* but also to *conquer, overtake, capture* and *overrun*. In *Rumiyah*, the city is unequivocally a space to *surround* and *take over.* In both cases, the behavioral nature of these verb processes is an indication that ISIS's hate crimes are organized and planned to be both psychologically and physically destructive. The results from the search word *town* are similar: in *Dabiq*, the town is to be *overturned, recaptured,* and *controlled,* but also *liberated* and *saved*; in *Rumiyah*, it is to be *liberated*, but also *taken* and *entered.* The results obtained from *village* as object are somewhat different, given the presence of more material verb processes. In fact, in both *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, ISIS is determined to *demolish, evacuate, raid, surround, storm, capture, take, assault, pound, storm and attack* villages, but no references are made to conquering or liberating these spaces. It almost seems that rural areas or environs of cities and towns are not held to the same standing in terms of demographic or strategic importance.

DABIQ	*RUMIYAH*	*DABIQ*	*RUMIYAH*
conquer as verb 52x objects of conquer	conquer as verb 23x objects of conquer	destroy as verb 52x objects of destroy	destroy as verb 23x objects of destroy
Rome	India	idol	vehicle
Constantinople	Constantinople	home	idol
city	Persia	statue	humvee
Cyprus	city	neighborhood	building
Spain	land	building	house
		nation	everything
		headquarters	facility

Table 5.2 Objects of the verb *to conquer* and *to destroy* in *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah.*

Regarding the analysis of the two underlying hate crime themes, Table 5.2 illustrates that in both magazines cities and entire nations, or hypernymic representation of cities, are the objects of the verb *to conquer.* This somewhat

reveals ISIS's long term plan to spread its influence beyond city spaces. The objects of the material verb *to destroy* are either metonymic symbols commonly found in cities such as *idols or statues*, or more earthly props such as *humvees* and *vehicles*, *homes*, *houses*, *headquarters*, and nearly *everything* else, thus confirming the sheer magnitude of ISIS's hate towards the city which symbolizes modernity and progress. However, it is important to mention that this claim against modernity is only partially true. In fact, although ISIS claims to be reviving a traditional Islamic system of government, the Jihadist group is a very modern proposition, as they have organized themselves as a highly efficient company. Initially funded by donations from wealthy supporters, they have rapidly expanded into a self-financing business through kidnapping and extortion, looting and selling antiquities, among other lucrative activities, along with their very modern communication strategies which feature different usages of media outlets (Hassan 2016).

Moving on to the qualitative component, the resources contained in Table 5.3 are also formulated and organize according to the two recurrent themes of cities *to conquer* and *to destroy*. Each theme has an overall aim broken down into manifestations of hate activities detected in the linguistic and visual resources of the images analyzed in this section.

Theme 1	*Cities to conquer: legitimizing presence and domination rights*
Manifestations of hate in multimodal resources	1. Establishing control; threatening punishment; 2. Delegitimizing and humiliating the enemy; representation of 'the other' (polarization of actors, places, behaviors).
Theme 2	*Cities to destroy: demanding the right to revenge*
Manifestations of hate in multimodal resources	Staging violence in city streets; Targeting major significant urban landmarks, service providers, businesses, entertainment facilities; Targeting citizens.

Table 5.3 Qualitative framework of image analysis.

The multimodal analysis begins with the theme of *cities to conquer* and its articulations in *establishing control.* The four images in Figure 5.1 represent ISIS's message of threat to all those who do not support the Caliphate, further developed by the number of hate crimes, and the cities and countries in which

Rumiyah Issue 2

Rumiyah Issue 2 Rumiyah Issue 5

Fig. 5.1 *Cities to conquer*: establishing control (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

they were committed. In the top left image, the reduced modality of the representation of ISIS soldiers looming in the dark background announces their arrival, ready to strike the enemy in the back. The word *operations* is written in bright orange which matches the color of what seem to be explosions taking place all around the world. From the compositional perspective, the information value position of elements is especially significant in the other three pictures. In the ideal position, which represents the desired outcome of operations, the name of the city or country to conquer or destroy is indicated; in the real position, concrete outcomes are reported, such as the number of deaths or the specific locations of the hate crimes. Also in the real position of the same three images, occupying the center spot, are symbolic attributives connected to those crimes: a tank, a knife, and an announcement of the *kafir*'s betrayal.

In Figure 5.2, the cities are spaces where soldiers are harvested and enemies

are punished. The high modality of the naturalistic backgrounds do not reveal any particular details of the cities themselves, but only a name and a slogan, such as: *the destroyers of thrones*, *punish them with an equal punishment* and *the fighting has just begun*. By numbering each one of these spaces, the

Fig. 5.2 *Cities to conquer*: threatening punishment (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

viewer is reminded of the game of dominoes, one by one, falling in the hands of ISIS.

Figure 5.3 illustrates manifestations of *enemy humiliation and delegitimization*. In Issue 7 of Dabiq, the soldiers patrolling the Eiffel Tower are given a certain level of authority as they are carrying machine guns, but their credibility as guardians seems to decrease, given the difference in size: the close-up shot of the soldier in the foreground makes him disproportionately bigger than the one in the background. Also, they seem to be disconnected from this highly dangerous activity as their non-transactional gaze, which is directed at an unknown object, conveys feelings of helplessness and ineptitude. The overshadowing Eiffel Tower, a metonymic representation of the city of Paris, is seemingly being protected by these soldiers, but this too is a useless activity as confirmed by the caption "*Crusaders deployed in the streets after the Mujahidin's assault.*" The implication is that ISIS always gets there first, and any attempt to protect Paris from Jihadist hate is useless.

Dabiq Issue 7

Rumiyah Issue 8

Rumiyah Issue 5

Fig. 5.3 *Cities to conquer*: delegitimizing the enemy (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

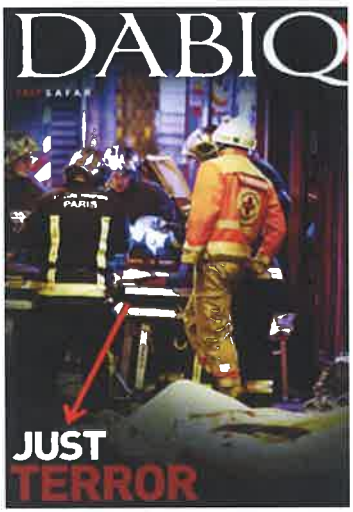
The image from Rumiyah Issue 8 is particularly humiliating as it provides a distorted perspective of a group of men who are presumably Muslim. In the background, Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, both cultural and political part-whole symbols of the city of London, are both out of focus and seem to be toppling over. Pictured in the foreground, is the affliction of the *wahn,* the Arabic word for the weak and the spiritless. These so-called apostates are lined up in what resembles a line of execution. They too are unstable like Big Ben, and therefore unable to establish a connection with the viewer. The red sunflower, which typically symbolizes unwavering faith, is a paradox as it seems that these men have lost their faith or they have given it over to Western capitalism; the sunflower is therefore a reminder that they have betrayed Islam.

In the Rumiyah Issue 5 image, the apostates, or *Taghut*, are the leaders Putin and Erdogan. It is a classificational composition in which all objects are related to one another (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). The leaders in the foreground are treated as *shallow* partners who will cause only bloodshed. Indeed, they are pictured with their handshake outside of the image frame, indicating the futility of their partnership to fight ISIS with the aid of the *Sahwat*, an anti-ISIS militia group.[13] Useless are also their soldiers in the second tier of the image; they are, in fact, underneath the top blood-tinged tier in which the ruins of a city can be seen as well as figure-like people running away.

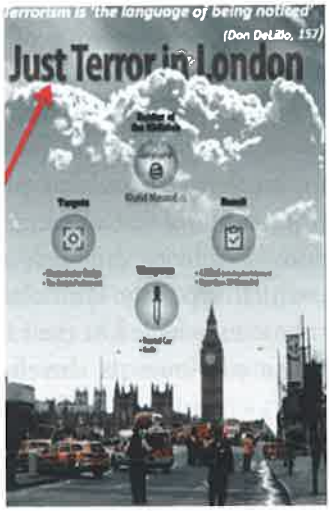
The next set of images are analyzed according to Theme 2, *Cities to destroy: demanding the right to revenge.*

The images in Figure 5.4 illustrate the staging of violence in city streets. In the two top images of Dabiq Issue 12 and Rumiyah Issue 8, slogan-like language, such as *Just Terror*, is suggestive of the *Just Do It* Nike advert. In the Paris picture (top left), the slogan is written in the real information value position so as to give salience to the hate crime, In the London picture, the slogan is in the ideal position, thus suggesting that terror is still to come. The images from Dabiq Issue 13 illustrate the frequently employed self-celebratory language to claim terrorist successes. In fact, every image caption (rewritten by the author in the margin) repeats the expression: *The*

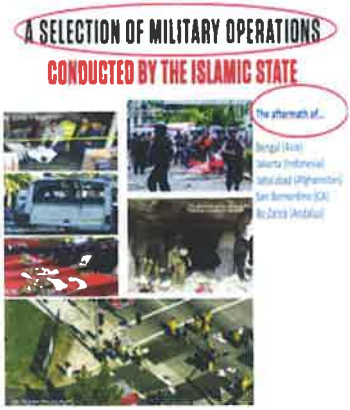
[13] Fernandez, Albert (2015). brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/IS-Propaganda_Web_English_v2.pdf



Dabiq Issue 12



Rumiyah Issue 8



Dabiq Issue 13

Dabiq Issue 9

Fig. 5.4 *Cities to destroy*: staging violence in the streets (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

aftermath of…and the city's name in order to mark the object of their hate crime. In the bottom picture from Dabiq Issue 9, terror is intensified as the *kuffar* (non-believers) try to rescue victims in Sydney's city streets or run away from the crime scene.

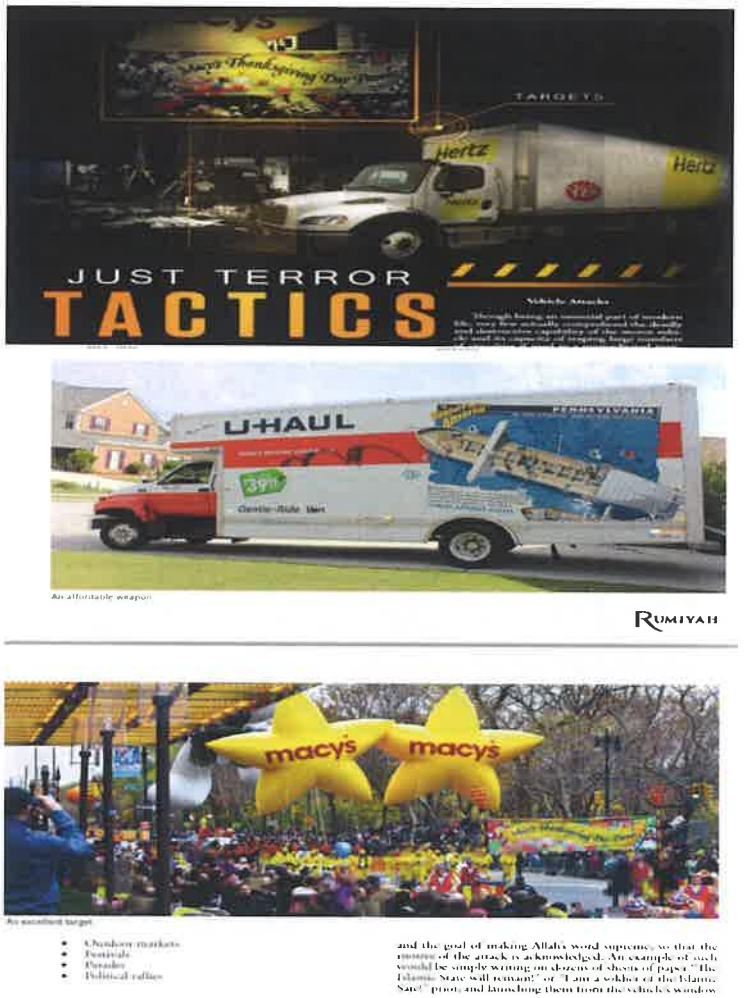


Fig. 5.5 *Cities to destroy*: targeting urban landmarks (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

In the set of pictures in Figure 5.5, civilian lifestyle is the object of ISIS's hate as there are attacks on major urban landmarks, service providers, businesses, entertainment facilities. Once again, the *Just Terror* slogan is in the real position to make room for the representation of victims in the ideal position. The text under the Macy's image explains where the attacks should

take place, such as *outdoor markets, festivals, parades* and *political rallies*, specifying that the attack can be claimed by *'simply writing on dozens of sheets of paper 'the Islamic State will remain' or 'I am the soldier of the Islamic State' and launching them from a vehicle window'*.

The attacks in Figure 5.6 are committed against the economic heart of cities located all around the world. As ISIS's most hated symbols of Western capitalism, these businesses, temples, universities and hospitals particularly illustrate the treacherous nature of terrorist hate as these locations provide religious, health and educational services for citizens, and this is why ISIS considers them as *ghanimah,* which means *whatever is obtained without difficulty: goods captured in a war with non-Muslims.*

Image 13: Rumiyah Issue 8

Fig. 5.6 *Cities to destroy*: targeting businesses and services (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

In Figure 5.7, *crusaders*, *passersby, victims* and *kafir*, are the objects of ISIS hate instead of spaces. Presumably, they are going about their business in city spaces where they live and work. Unsuspecting of what might happen to him, the man is putting on a full *merry* smile; his gaze, however, is not directed at the viewer, increasing the feeling of disconnect with other *crusader citizens.*

Indeed, he represents the kind of interactions that normally occur in modern cities but, for this same reason, he and all other crusaders will *be lured into* situations (top right) where they will be executed and their blood will be shed (top left), as indicated by the knife which is a vector that points to the phrase *the kafir's blood.*

Image 14: Rumiyah Issue 1

Fig. 5.7 Cities to destroy: *targeting citizens* (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

Every issue of *Rumiyah* ends with the same back page, which is the picture on the left in Figure 5.8. In this picture, a city on the horizon, which resembles Rome, is placed in the ideal position, revealing ISIS's ultimate plan to conquer and destroy the symbol of all crusades and crusaders. Indeed, the magazine's name is placed in the center-real position of the composition which confirms ISIS's very credible and highly probable intention of committing hate crimes against this city, along with Constantinople: the West and the East. The text underneath the title actually specifies that ISIS is targeting these two cities:

> *Which of the two cities will be captured first? Constantinople or Rumiyah? He replied. "The city of Heraclius will be conquered first" meaning Constantinople.*
> *Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir*

Image 19: Rumiyah Issue 1

Fig. 5.8 *Cities to conquer* and *Cities to destroy* (freely accessible on https://jihadology.net/).

The picture on the right is definitely more explicitly connoted with a hate message. By adopting the ISIS vantage point, which consist in controlling the situation from afar, ISIS threatens the crusaders directly from St. Peter's: *We will conquer your Rome*, thus enacting the *us vs. them* polarization that intensifies ISIS's continual hate of these cities which will not subside until they are destroyed, as also confirmed by the Word Sketch query.

By referring to the multimodal manifestations of hate pertaining to the themes *to conquer* and *to destroy* (Table 5.3), the study provides evidence that *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* are envoys of ISIS's hate messages which are deployed by means of three visual strategies: legitimation, delegitimation, and retaliation. The terrorist organization *legitimizes* its presence in metropolitan spaces as it is reclaiming domination rights lost in the War on Terror[14]. Indeed, the city is the perfect environment in which hate narratives that speak of violence and humiliation are reconstructed to reveal an intricate and impenetrable image of ISIS pitted against a weak and *delegitimized* Western alliance, proving the organization's ability to purge society of unwanted crusaders and apostates. *Retaliation* is the final goal of terrorist hate as the city is not only a living

[14] War on Terror is an international military campaign that was launched by the United States government after the September 11 attacks against the United States. Retrieved from: https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/war-on-terror-timeline. Last accessed December 1, 2020.

document of revenge schemes, but also proof of ISIS's power to instill the feeling of urban vulnerability.

With specific reference to the results obtained from the quantitative analysis, they seem to confirm the diffused animosity of the terrorist group towards all those who do not support their beliefs. This polarized stance is manifested in the hatred of the city itself and of its urban symbols. The results from the qualitative analysis expose the city as the paradigm of ISIS's organized hate crime ideology. Indeed, the city epitomizes the space in which recruits can reinvigorate the progressive weakening of Islamic identity by carrying out acts of hate resemiotized into sheer horrorism (Cavarero 2009), sentiments that also intensify self-radicalization processes (Rasulo 2018).

2. Conclusion

The magazines examined in this study contain between 50-80 high-quality glossy pages of ISIS activities, mainly packed with color illustrations of busy city streets which are the hallmark of the organization's display of hate. In support of the elaborate visuals, the verbal language relies heavily on stylistics, as the texts are artfully crafted to contain religious quotations, profiles of fighters depicted as glorious heroes, and real battlefield success stories that give the magazines and the militant group a sense of credibility and existence.

The communication strategies discussed in this study have exposed the ISIS's exploitation of the city as a space *to conquer* and a space *to destroy*, expertly shaped into narratives which contribute to the understanding of what triggers terrorist hate and how it is transformed into hate crimes. In fact, ISIS believes that:

1. cities are the custodians of ideologies; the *jihad* fervor is kept alive waiting to start burning once again;
2. cities are places where violence is performed: by destroying symbols, such as airports, businesses, entertainment spots, shopping facilities, and claiming the casualties, ISIS re-gains credibility;
3. cities have iconic stature for terrorist groups and are lethal recollections of both success and disappointment, joy and resentment;
4. cities are echo chambers of ISIS's mutant and roguish propaganda in online materials and act as signature spaces to inspire lethal attacks;

5. cities represent ISIS's long-term strategy of attrition, that of creating polarization and divisions in society (Hoffman, 2002).

This investigation has provided evidence that terrorist organizations are not only able to tap into the vulnerable personality of city spaces, but also exploit their message dissemination potential that leads to inexorable immobility; in other words, the city is a 'good place' for terrorist activity (Kolakowski 1982).[15] This is precisely the undercurrent of ISIS's magazine production, fueled by the organization's unremitting ambition to create the perfect state built on mediatized crime, thereby turning the pursuit of death into a new norm of urban hate speech.

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Massimiliano Demata & Marianna Lya Zummo

"THE WAR IS OVER". MILITARISING THE LANGUAGE AND FRAMING THE NATION IN POST-BREXIT DISCOURSE[1]

1. Introduction

As one of the most debated political changes in the political ecology in Europe, Brexit and its discourses have caught the attention of many scholars addressing political studies, sociology, economics and discourse analysis (e.g. Buckledee 2018, Koller *et al.* 2019, Charteris-Black 2019, Milizia and Spinzi 2020). One of the most frequent issues was around the socio-political effects of Brexit, specifically the term "division", both between the UK and the EU and between British internal identities (for example, Remainers versus Brexiters). Brexit in fact represented disunity around the idea of respect/disrespect of British history and society (with a diachronic shift between self-representations of a polite and tolerant country to an intolerant nation), and encouraged division with national identity shifts between two groups, which blamed and shamed each other (see the out-group derogation terms *Remoaners* and *Brextremists*). From a social point of view, Brexit also represented a surge in intolerance and hatred, which is particularly evident in social media, where opposing groups delegitimise political dissenters by using abusive language. Research on digital media has also underlined that digital interactions are characterised by aggregations, since users form and join groups that select and share information according to their system of beliefs, ignoring or refusing information that challenges that same system. This phenomenon is called echo-chambers (Quattrociocchi *et al.* 2016), and its existence depends on homophily and bias in the information collection and diffusion among like-minded users (Zummo 2018). Social media, therefore, increases the exposition to the same narratives / ideological frames and shows a decline in form of interactive negotiations when users are presented with different narratives.

[1] This chapter has been conceived and written jointly by the two authors. The individual contributions are identified as follows: Massimiliano Demata wrote Sections 2 and 5; Marianna Lya Zummo wrote sections 3 and 4; the Introduction and Conclusions are co-authored.

This chapter offers a contribution to the growing scholarship on media ecology. In particular, based on previous studies (e.g. Dewulf and Bouwen 2012), the authors aim at understanding the processes and ideological implications of framing by analysing users' interactions following Nigel Farage's famous tweet from 24 December 2020, in which he celebrated the announcement of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement by posting a video captioned by a short sentence: "The war is over". Through a combination of studies of linguistics (e.g. digital interaction; Paulus, Warren and Lester 2016) and discourse analysis (Wodak *et al.* 2009; Wodak 2015), this study aims at investigating how the militarisation of political language, which is often constitutive of hate speech, in digital contexts and in the post-Brexit discourse, contributes to framing an "exclusive" concept of the nation whose meaning is reproduced and circulated (as well as challenged) in society. It will address the role of emotions and hate in language in aggregating online communities around Farage's victorious tweet, and how this issue both evolves around and contributes to a core cultural and social concept, i.e. the nation. We will briefly discuss Farage's discourse in the antagonistic context of Brexit. We will then set out the theoretical framework to this study. Following that, we will analyse the online interaction occurring after Farage's tweet. We will finally offer a critical commentary of the meanings that this online interaction carries within political discourses. Findings show how specific linguistic aspects and certain (national) values are used to strategically sustain ideologies and support (or reject) particular messages, for example, to frame 'national' meanings.

2. Nigel Farage and the language of Brexit

Brexit is undoubtedly the most important political event in Britain's recent history. Britain's departure from the EU at the end of 2020 after 47 years of membership was triggered by the referendum which took place on 23 June 2016, when the people of Great Britain were promised that they would, as one key slogan of the Leave campaign claimed, "take back control" of their borders and their sovereignty against Brussels' interference, thus preventing the so-called "invasion" of unwanted foreigners (both EU and non-EU nationals) threatening the social and cultural integrity of Great Britain as well as its jobs and welfare. The outcome of the referendum displayed very deep divisions in

British society, with the country split in two almost equal halves along age, geographical and social lines. The two fields, Leave and Remain, fought a very acrimonious campaign or, using the title of a famous work on the subject, an "all out war" (Shipman 2017): Leave and Remain politicians and the media who supported them engaged in very polarised debates – something that was partly caused by the dichotomic nature of referendums themselves – and their arguments were often framed by both media and politicians according to a war scenario, a metaphorical construction which communicated very emotional implications. The militarisation or weaponisation of language went beyond metaphors themselves and became one of the distinctive traits of the Brexit debate. Speeches and newspaper articles of the Brexit period often indicated that the Brexit referendum was as crucial a moment in British history as the Second World War. Leave politicians such as Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage and the Eurosceptic tabloids relentlessly portrayed the relationship between the UK and Europe and that between Leave and Remain in highly conflictual terms. Indeed, the comparisons between the EU and Nazi Germany drawn by the Leave camp were so frequent that one really might have had the impression that Britain was fighting a war rather than holding a referendum. This violent language struck an emotional note among those sectors of British society which were more alert to patriotism and more prone to being intimidated by the globalised world.

The highly confrontational debate in the UK about Brexit did not stop in 2016, as it continued until the end of 2020 through two general elections (2017 and 2019), a European election (2019), and several rounds of long and complicated negotiations between the UK and the EU. During this time, the anti-European rhetoric in media and political discourse continued unabated and kept fuelling a sense of belonging and national identity in which the values of "our" group (i.e. Britain as a nation) were constructed in direct opposition to, and as a bulwark against, the external threats of the "Other", alternately characterised as migrants from third-world countries, economic migrants from the EU, refugees and EU bureaucrats, or all of them at once. Nigel Farage was undoubtedly the politician who was most fond of peddling anti-European and nationalistic feelings and who made Euroscepticism his own political brand. At the time of the Brexit referendum, Farage was leader of UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party), and after he left the party in 2018, he founded the Brexit Party, which enjoyed a degree of success at the 2019 European

Elections. Before and after the referendum, Farage constructed the EU as a growing threat and as an adversary which had to be defeated. In order to do so, he has constantly employed certain discursive strategies which emphasised the sense of threat to the UK posed by the "Other". For example, the use of Britain as a "container" metaphor allows Farage to represent the nation as a limited and "full" entity whose borders need to be protected from outside enemies, thus justifying restrictive anti-immigration policies (Cap 2019). Farage's Brexit discourse thus aimed at constructing an idea of the nation based on exclusion, and in order to do so he continually stirred fear, anger and hate which his followers then directed against the nation's supposed enemies.

3. Study design: methodology and data description

In multiparty online interactions, the number of actors involved as well as the topic being discussed favour differences in viewpoints, i.e. issue framing. Studies on framing involve different disciplines, and in the interactional approach in particular, framing is defined as "the dynamic enactment and alignment of meaning in ongoing interactions" (Dewulf and Bouwen 2012: 169) that individuals construct during their turns at talk. Participants select and leave out certain elements, thus constructing meanings that are the individual representations of reality and are formulated within interactions. Dewulf and Bouwen (2012) distinguish five ways in which interactants manage discourse with others when challenged with different representations of reality: frame incorporation (which includes a downgraded reformulation of a challenging element), frame accommodation (which involves the accommodation of one's issue framing), frame disconnection (considering a challenging element as irrelevant), frame polarisation (which offer an upgraded version of one's issue framing, thus pointing to a polarised difference), and frame reconnection (taking away the incompatibility between different frames). In this chapter, special attention is given to frame differences, which can be referred to as "related but incompatible frames" (Dewulf and Bouwen 2012: 170) that generate opposing visions and tension among interactants. In online contexts, this may lead to abusive language, which contributes to distinguish groups based on homophily. When these groups interact, the shift of personal pronouns, from *I* to *we,* indicates the writer's reference to a group to reinforce a statement that belongs to a collectivity. These groups are formed

around a belief/value or a discursively construed position that is reinforced by other like-minded commenters, or challenged by other participants (i.e. two opposing US/THEM groups) with different (i.e. polarised) values, often in aggressive turn takings that involve abusive language, denigration or sarcasm. The formation of echo-chambers, in which the interactants refuse possible alternative views in interactions, is accelerated by the use of weaponisation/militarisation of language, in which linguistic cues are used to specifically address the context of war and to frame conflict, boosting emotion and public support (Pascale 2019).

An example of this is Nigel Farage's tweet on 24 December 2020, in which he declares that "The war is over" as he celebrates PM Boris Johnson's Brexit trade deal (Farage 2020). As in other circumstances, the words of the prominent populist and nationalist politician caught the attention of many individuals who struggled to understand whether the "war" referred to the EU and the UK trade negotiations, to the EU and the UK ideological positions, or to the big European establishment and the British people. The end of the diplomatic relationship between the UK and the EU has been worded in many ways, for example, through a divorce metaphor (Đurović and Silaški 2018; Charteris-Black 2019: 233-67; Milizia and Spinzi 2020). In our case study, the (diplomatic) conflict stresses the configuration of two opposing parties as enemies, since Farage employs a common basic metaphor (war) with the goal of affecting the audiences' inner feelings, a typical communication style (i.e. populist rhetoric) that emphasises the idea of power, strength and group membership (Demata 2019). Interestingly, Farage's sentence goes beyond its actual political meaning: he declares his celebration for a battle that is over (regardless of the result), and employs a very brief (iconic) sentence to trigger an emotive impact in the reader. The extreme generalisation and reduction of complexity is peculiar to social network posts, and favours polarisation of groups accepting or challenging the conceptual value of the sentence. To understand the reception of the ideological value of the claim, we examined a corpus of users' replies to Farage's tweet. The corpus includes 58 original comments and 1375 replies, published between 24 and 26 December 2020. The dataset was first extracted from Twitter, transcribed to restore conversational path and turns in sequences, and analysed for signs of differences in issue framing. Comments were extracted manually, transcribed verbatim (any and all misspellings and errors were retained), and anonymised. Although reframing

is usually studied in sequences involving at least three turn takings (i.e. act, interact and double interact, Dewulf and Bouwen 2012), the multiparty nature of the digital exchange allows a different approach, since each participant often continues the same interactional action of the person who they are supporting. Being the study of a qualitative nature, we limited our analysis to comments (including replies and sub-replies) referring to some keywords, e.g. "war", "nation", "UK", and to those that articulated these concepts, to ensure the coverage of all possible instances of how people represented their framing of the Nation, while also offering insights into the linguistic practices that are peculiar of such debates.

4. The multi-participative exchange among Twitter users: reframing nationalism

Debates occurring on Twitter employ a sequential organisation and communication structure common to other social networks (opening post initiating the thread, reactions, shares, retweets, comments, replies to comments), and display ordinary communicative features found in other digital conversations (topic degeneration, aggressive or abusive addressing, over-simplicity of claims, multimodal cues), in line with the predictable quality of digital exchange (Zummo 2018). However, the practice of selecting particular elements of others' comments interestingly leads to framing processes, which are accepted or challenged according to the interlocutor's polarised position, with favourable or unfavourable discursive implications.

Starting from the idea that the notion of war distinguishes at least two opposing parties, in this case Great Britain and the European Union, it was hypothesised that Farage's followers would select some elements of the claim and would refer to sameness as an expression of nationalism. However, from the very first steps of data analysis, a framing and counter-framing of the idea of nationalism emerged. Of the 35 comments that were identified for analysis, there were five primary discourse topics that: (i) discuss the topic of war; (ii) challenge the view of political victory; (iii) present Brexit in terms of historical/political/economic failure; (iv) address Farage as leader; (v) promote a new conceptualisation of Nation being debated by two opposing but internal groups within the country.

Considering the exchange as the basic unit to understand the framing of

concepts that are constructed in discourse by users, data are analysed as multiparty interactions dealing with different framings of the same issue. Framing mechanisms depend on selection and salience (Entman 1993) and are reinforced by repetition of semantic items and by their symbolic, cultural or historical resonance. Data analysis shows that users employ and repeat key words ("war", "over") and terms from the same semantic field ("fight", "battle", "guerrilla action") that select and give prominence to a certain contextualisation of Brexit, together with symbolic expressions ("lay down arms") and historical references (from the Great British Empire to WW1 and WW2) which reinforce the war frame. Three groups discussing Brexit as a war have been identified:

1) those who accepted the claim as it is, addressing the importance of the leadership and framing the result within a nationalistic/patriotic value, as in:
   - Congratulations, Nigel. What an extraordinary accomplishment.
   - History will always remember you Nigel Farage as the man that delivered democracy and sovereignty back to the little people to the ordinary people [...];

2) those who did not accept the claim, debating its political value, addressing the literal meaning or downplaying it with sarcasm:
   - What a moronic statement. Where is this "war"? We are setting up new trading agreements and more beaurcracy (sic);
   - The war is over? Which war was that then? Damn! I regularly check the news in several countries and several languages and I missed that one;
   - "The war"?????????? Drama!!!! I never noticed any deployment of troops. Where were the bombs dropped then and how many casualties were there?;

3) those who challenged it by addressing the historical/social values embedded:
   - Very unfortunate choice of words. One of the reasons the EU came into being was to help avoid exactly that.
   - [...] What about the fishing quota in OUR waters?

The militarisation of the claim is thus accepted/refused on the basis of the

individual reconfiguration of the deal, which emerges in interaction and is supported or challenged by other users. Commenters write their messages and recontextualise the information they receive by incorporating others' war frame (i.e. they incorporate others' issue element as part of personal issue framing, as in "the *war* is just *beginning*"), by disconnecting from others' frame (i.e. the challenging element is dismissed as irrelevant or unimportant, as in "*a set of negotiations*"), or by adding a polarised value (i.e. users make the difference bigger by upgrading one's issue framing, e.g. "the *stupidest foreign policy decision*"), which is used to misrepresent the other's point of view, and to reaffirm one's point of view.

Different forms of nationalism emerge as connected to British history, that are used as a way to add cultural resonance with the audience and contextualise the deal as a political result, which is encouraged to be understood as the return to a glorious British past. This is expressed by recalling the British Empire, the two World Wars, or simply by addressing *la grandeur* of the Nation:

> Nigel, lad. You are a LEGEND. Thanks for all you've done to get us to this point. We're about to put the GREAT back into BRITAIN

This historical framing, however, is not always accepted and some point to other values that the end of the world conflicts brought, supporting the idea of unity, in spite of that of isolationism:

> Sad that the UK cut all connections with european civilizers [...] The EU is building together connected a better place for all civilizers with good social security and health and It's sad that UK go back to 40-45.

Other participants re-interpret the idea of nationalism in terms of concern:

> Nationalismen and these Kind of patriotism is one of the dangerous things in the world. And it often leads to war [...]

The idea of Nation/nationalism is therefore understood as having different facets, depending on the reception of the Brexit deal within the wider individual ideological background. Thus interpreted, Nation and nationalism are construed on the basis of individual interpretations but are diffused as group value and identity:

> Thank you Mr Farage you are a true Patriot, who always put the UK people wishes first, we can't thank you enough for listening to us, and your continuing

> efforts to expose these bunch of non elected bureaucrats we no longer have to answer too!! FREEDOM & SOVEREIGNTY FOR THE UK

The comment is infused with populist rhetoric, making reference to the British people, leadership, othering of elites and national identity. More importantly, it refers to a collective "we" indicating that these values are shared within a group. This is evident in the next comment, where *I* becomes, in climax, "ordinary British people" and "future generations".

> Sir Nigel Farage Back in the day the Queen would have given you a County or something for your 20 odd years of selfless sacrifice for the cause. And that cause is British sovereignty. I thank you. The ordinary British people thank you. And future generations will also thank you.

As in populist discourse, commenters very often associate the return of nationalistic values to a charming leader, who carried out a personal, yet collective, battle. Such an example of leadership is also positively evaluated by other non-British commenters, who congratulate Farage for the results and hope the same event would occur in their country, as in:

> Congratulations and respect from France Mr FARAGE! You are the greatest European politician since General De Gaulle! Now, please... HELP US for Frexit! Help.

More than validating the opening post and increasing Farage's credibility as a political leader, this reply redefines the concept of US and THEM, since US is no longer (only) the British people, but those opposing the EU. The idea of nation, and the acceptance of the war metaphor, is not discussed in terms of national cultural values (though instances are still present, as in "The war against the Islamisation of the UK has hardly begun...") but on the basis of political choices, which sees Eurocentric Remainers opposing (patriotic) Brexiters:

> If you think the war is over you are so wrong. The war hasn't really even started. You may have won this battle but you will never win the war [...]. It's just a matter of time before remainers are in the majority. This is not settled.

This statement fully represents the internal division within British society. The idea of a disrupted/disjointed country (in opposition to a "Great British Empire") is reinforced by Scottish or Irish commenters, who repeatedly state

that the "war has only just begun" (referring to a possible referendum about inclusion or exclusion of certain territories):

> Great my ass. Ye think we can create a New Great British Empire [...] Scotland will be in EU within a decade. Where is your "Great" then.

Other users reformulate the metaphor personally challenging Farage, as in "It was never a war. It was always your personal vanity project" or "That's what you think froggy. You won a battle". These comments minimise the epic statement, limiting the perception of reality to an individual perspective and reducing the strategic and operational importance of the term *war,* which refers to a large-scale event, to a small-scale combat, a *battle*. The term "froggy", which has been used in relation to Farage by the British press (for example "froggy grin", Freedland 2014), has been integrated in Remainers' vocabulary to denigrate the populist leader. Other negative nomination and attribution strategies are employed by commenters especially when addressing the EU ("*sick* men of Europe", "[...] challenging those *pesky* European MEPs", "*bunch* of non elected *bureaucrats*"). These comments show hostility and overt aggression at lexical-semantic level but also show overt hate communication practices. People in the EU are generalised and discriminated as having negative connotations, and this is applied to the elite (i.e. politicians) and to European citizens as well. Interestingly, *sick* and *pesky* may be considered as the direct opposites of *gammon*, a word that is used frequently in these exchanges to refer to Brexiters ("Lots of Gammons agreeing with Farage"). As it is clear, challenging different standpoints is particularly difficult, and often results in over-emotional addressing, and use of offensive and/or discriminatory language to denigrate, victimise, or simply target the interlocutor(s). In using the word "Gammon", the commenters refer to Brexiters in denigratory terms by referring to a person's flushed face, similar to a type of pork meat. Although it is debatable whether it can be considered a possible racist term referring to skin colour, it is certainly used as a denigratory term to refer to those who support Brexit (or the political right in general). This form of identitarian distinction aims to mystify the power Brexiters have gained with the referendum and tries to construct a vulnerability which is perpetuated and reinforced in narratives by the opposing group.

Individuals in these groups are more likely to express their ideas among people with whom they share opinions and beliefs (homophily), in closed systems provided by algorithms (filter bubbles). In some cases, these individuals

are not hesitant to share their opinion in bright tones, veering towards the most extreme positions, precisely because they know they can count on definite support. This often leads to two different phenomena, opinion polarisation and hate speech, and opinion polarisation and echo-chambers.

Due to the inability to confront ideas and opinions different from their own, when an individual within their bubble casually confronts those who have a different (i.e. opposite) vision, it is not uncommon for them to contribute to an exacerbation of the tones of public discourse and the spread of hate speech:

> A: Look at the flag shaggers. So cute. Merry Christmas you *lunatics*.
> B: Each country within the EU is sovereign you *muppets* [...].
> C: The Genie is out of the bottle and it is NEVER go back in! The UK will never rejoin *this mafia EU establishment* [...]

Users from opposing groups do not discuss their topics and the exchange results in a set of insults. Something different occurs in the following example, taken from a sub-thread where one user received 195 replies and a subset of 128 sub-replies. In this exchange, participants are exposed to different opinions, and instead of using uncertainty markers to express their ideas (which is related to politeness and the possibility of accepting alternative views), they use the verbal modal "will" as a predictor of something that is certain to happen in the future ("Little England will soon be a reality", "you will see soon enough [...]"), with epistemic certainty. When someone tries to open a debate, other users never agree to respond appropriately, limiting the possibility of debate and closing themselves in their bubble.

> A: Can you give me examples of the reasons why leaving puts the Great back into Great Britain?
> B: No, Got better things to do. You've got Google.

When this attitude occurs, it may involve different (offensive) communication behaviours:

> B: He's [Farage] a *delusional fool* who failed 7 times to get elected [...] Nothing but an *ignorant xenophobic clown*. As much of a fighter as *his draft-dodging corrupt mate* in the White House [...].
> C: You know I have my opinion *and I stand with what I wrote* [...] *but you're entitled to your opinion* [...].

The user replies in a non-confrontational mode but limiting the possibility of further exchanges. This shows how exchanges do not necessarily aim at interactive negotiations but may only be functional to expressing a narrative that reflects and reinforces the group's main perspective.

5. Nationalism and war

The above analysis shows that, taking the cue from the original post (as is typical in social media), both Farage supporters and opponents produced a chain of statements which further develop Farage's language of war. The pervasiveness of such a language plays into Farage's agenda: his message and its replies are driven by the communicative, ideological and emotional context of national belonging and bookmark the divisive basis of Farage's own brand of nationalist discourse in the context of the polarising environment of social media. Farage's argument that "The war is over" does not refer to a real war but to both the Leave/Remain debate inside the UK and the lengthy and conflictual Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU. In this sense, Farage's figurative description may be seen as part of the wider metaphorical scenario of politics as contest, argument, or indeed war, between different factions, parties or leaders (Flusberg *et al.* 2018). The "war is over" image develops into a metaphorical scenario which treats Brexit as one step in a long-drawn out "war", therefore generating a chain of signifiers associated to military language and making up a war narrative (e.g. "A battle is over, the war is not won yet. We still have many traitors trying to sabotage the country").

However, in many of the users' replies to Farage's tweet, the line between figurative language and literal language is often blurred. Indeed, given the protagonists of the "war", i.e. Leavers vs Remainers, the UK vs the EU and/or some European nations, the war metaphor lent itself very well to be interpreted literally. A metaphor is "successful" when it resonates with the cultural and social context in which it is used and, in this sense, the use of the metaphor of war was bound to frame Brexit very effectively. Indeed, some users replied to Farage's tweet by looking at the wider geopolitical context in which negotiations took place as well as at the past history of the UK and Europe, for example, by immediately referring to "the horror from WW1 and WW2". If there is a figurative war between the UK and the entity constructed in discourse as its "enemy", the EU, the "Remainers" or foreigners, it was easy to draw analogies

between Brexit and the two world wars, when there were actual enemies in Europe against whom the British fought (literally). These "slides" or alternations in meaning within discourse from metaphorical to literal and/or vice versa are what Goatly calls "literalization of vehicles" (1997: 272-78). The effect is that the semantic roots of the source of the metaphor and, in the case of war, its highly emotional load are foregrounded in discourse. Indeed, while Farage's original tweet may be considered a metaphor, it was one which deliberately used a militarised language which, given the highly emotional subject, was bound to generate strong reactions. Farage himself has always been particularly fond of the language of war. During the Summer of 2020, when many migrants were arriving in the UK on dinghies, he spoke of a "Summer invasion", and both media reports of the arrival of migrants and the intervention of the Royal Navy framed the events within the interpretation schemata of a war. This way, the metaphor immediately resonated with the literal expression of its source, thus strengthening its emotional and ideological effect.

Farage's militarisation of the nation appeals to a certain nationalist frame, evoked by military lexis, which has been deployed very often in British political and media discourse for at least three decades, especially when talking about the arrival of immigrants to the UK and the relationship between the UK and the EU. Regarding the latter, metaphors of war have dominated the Eurosceptic narrative in tabloids since the 1980s, as Britain's relationship with whatever came from the Continent was constantly defined in highly conflictual terms (Daddow 2012: 1232; Islentyeva 2019). The whole debate on Brexit was characterised by continuous references to past wars. The Remain camp often employed a war discourse as they legitimised their pro-EU stance by pointing to the benefits brought to the UK by 70 years of peace following the second world war. Even more effectively, given the outcome of the referendum, the Leave campaign often aligned its hostility to the EU to the past wars led (and won) by Great Britain against European powers such as France or Germany. References to the Battle of Waterloo or the Battle of Britain were often used in Twitter and elsewhere to rally public opinion against the EU as they were examples of the glorious war triumphs of Britain against, respectively, Napoleon's France and Hitler's Germany (Charteris-Black 2019: 119-23). In particular, it was the second world war that provided pro-Leave politicians and tabloids with a rich repertoire of motifs which were still relevant for the eldest and most conservative sectors of society and could be easily used as validating

tropes in the evaluation of Brexit (Buckledee 2018: 119-27). The Leave campaign therefore managed to mobilise a sizeable share of the electorate around the ideals of patriotism and the nation evoked by Britain's victorious wars, and such ideals were naturally constructed in confrontational terms in relation to Britain's supposed "enemies" and potential "invaders" or "enslavers" – the EU – who threatened its sovereignty.

If a nation has constantly conjured up strong feelings, nationalism may become an even more divisive and emotionally charged ideology. If, as Anderson famously claimed, "Ultimately it is this fraternity [the nation] that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 1991: 7), then it is quite obvious that when national ideals are constructed in discourse, they generate highly emotional responses. This is particularly evident on Twitter, as the populist rhetoric and communicative style employed in the context of the social media make certain emotions, especially anger and hate, surface very easily (Breeze 2020). Indeed, the exclusionary ethos at the basis of Farage's discourse of the nation is emphasised by the nature of Twitter itself. As seen in section 2, social media naturally make conversational exchanges and turns politically divided and divisive and have been the ideal instruments for populist communication in the last ten years or so. Brexit was in a sense a perfect storm in political discourse as it fostered a radicalisation of the online political space and maximised political differences particularly in social media (Bennett 2019). Nations inspire love and a sense of collective cohesion, but they also inspire strong emotions, especially anger and hate, towards those who are seen as threatening them. Indeed, even before being an institution, a nation is first of all (and mostly) a collective identity, constructed in discourse around a set of ideals and beliefs (or around, more correctly, multiple and often separate sets of beliefs, as there are always competing ideas of nations). These beliefs often evolve around opposition and enmity to the "Other", that is, to those individuals and groups who are positioned as outside the nation either as belonging to other nations or, as in the case of the Leave/Remain debate, as promoting diverging national identities. It is by framing their messages in metaphors of war and invasion that the Leave campaign, both before and after the referendum, constructed a shared sense of group identity (Charteris-Black 2019). This is hardly surprising, as war metaphors are generally known as ideal conduits to frame adversarial relationships,

whatever their target, and, conversely, to inspire a sense of cohesion and unity in the face of a threat to society (e.g. "war on crime", "war on cancer", "war on climate change"). The specific case of the politics is war metaphor, which was at the centre of the Brexit and post-Brexit debate, has long been a favourite metaphor in populist communication, as it perfectly frames the fiercely adversarial discourse construction of populism (Steinert 2003; Flusberg *et al.* 2018: 5-6).

6. Conclusion

Since framing is a paradigm based on statements embedded within a text that involve selection and salience (Entman 1993), online exchanges represent a way to study how people understand reality and discuss it by presenting some issues as more salient than others. The conversational turns thus become the basic unit of the social media text as well as a discourse that promotes a topic definition, which is interpreted and evaluated by interactants. They express emotions and intentions in conversational terms, and their utterances have salience because they fit individual and collective narratives, not because of epistemic truth. The exchange occurring on the thread that follows "The war is over" statement, offered by Farage on the occasion of the Brexit deal, cannot be considered as an instance of political communication but it definitely involves the framing of political notions, one being the concept of nation. From a 'micro' linguistic perspective, the digital turns include lexico-grammatical expressions of sameness (i.e. pronominal markers for inclusion and exclusion, modality), and discursive strategies that include continuity in history, cultural values, and differentiation from opposing groups, the EU or other British citizens. The two opposing groups seldom interact with each other, more frequently they reinforce their value systems in echo-chambers, fuelled by emotional tones.

The language of war in Farage's tweet and the answers it provokes trigger hate among both his followers and his detractors. Hate is a natural development of what the combination of metaphorical and non-metaphorical representations of war represent: war naturally implies an in-group and an out-group fighting each other without compromise, the ultimate goal being the elimination of the enemy. The "real" historical context in which "the war is over" is placed makes hate among Twitter users a tangible emotion: the emotional valence implied in

the metaphor of war itself is reinforced by the historical references to actual wars and the memories they raise in the collective imaginary of the (British) nation. Thus, the online reproduction of militarised language contributes to framing an "exclusive" concept of the nation, which is the legitimising basis of hate towards the "Other", both inside and outside the UK.

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SECTION II
HATE SPEECH, INSTITUTIONS AND THE LAW

Mariavita Cambria

"BOOM HATE SPEEEEEEEEEECH": LANGUAGING ANTI HATE SPEECH LEGISLATION IN IRELAND

1. Introduction

In recent years, response to increasing hate speech crimes has generated several "anti-hate" campaigns and public initiatives. The Council of Europe portal includes a section on hate speech where the impact of discriminatory, vilifying, and generally toxic discourses (whether online or offline) on European society is recognized as "a major cause for concern". The Council of Europe also addresses the "issues of hate speech and discrimination in the areas of education, sport, Roma rights, gender equality, sexual orientation and gender identity, the media and internet governance" (https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/coe-work-on-hate-speechhttps://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/coe-work-on-hate-speech). While the phenomenon of online hate speech is disseminated throughout the world, it takes on unique forms in European countries (Alkiviadou 2017) especially when compared to the US. This is due to a difference in the US doctrine concerning technology companies, platforms and digital startups leading to a more libertarian framework under the principles of the First Amendment to the Constitution (Waldron 2012; Herz/Molnar 2012). As argued by Ziccardi (2020: 2):

> The European legal framework on the issues of digital society, the digital single market, platforms' responsibility and regulation of hate online is still in transition, with daily reform proposals – and also official recommendations, resolutions, guidelines and ethical charts – coming from the European Union, from the Council of Europe and from specific countries. This has led to what are at present very heterogeneous – and often clashing – attitudes towards this issue among the various European States.

As a direct result of this attitude, several EU Governments are in the process of establishing hate crime legislation (Banks 2010). Particular resonance is attributed in this framework to hate speech, an area which involves several intricate issues including the definition of the term itself. The Council of Europe has adopted an official definition of hate speech:

> Hate speech [...] entails the use of one or more particular forms of expression – namely, the advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatization or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression on the ground of "race", colour, language, religion or belief, nationality or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, age, disability, sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. (ECRI 2016: 17)

The use of "race" is controversial and the document contains a note explaining that "since all human beings belong to the same species, ECRI rejects theories based on the existence of different races. However, in this Recommendation ECRI uses the term "race" in order to ensure that those persons who are generally and erroneously perceived as belonging to another race are not excluded from the protection provided for by the Recommendation" (ECRI 2016: 3). A 2015 UNESCO study on hate speech online further states that the concept also extends to expressions that foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance on the assumption that this may fuel targeted discrimination, hostility and violent attacks. The study also stresses that hate speech relies on underlying tensions which it seeks to reproduce and amplify, uniting and dividing at the same time creating an "us" and "them" divide and fostering antagonism towards people (Gagliardone *et al* 2015).

The consultation document "Legislating for hate speech and hate crime in Ireland" presented on 17 December 2020 by the Irish Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, is a case in point in the attempt to provide nations with specific legislation on the matter. But how is this attitude of greater awareness, support and sensitivity towards the discriminated categories perceived by the general public? Is consensus about countering hate speech genuinely circulating among the population especially in online environments?

The current study investigates online attitudes towards the publication of the Irish report. Adopting a combined multimodal/social media critical discourse approach (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; Machin and Mayr 2015; KhosraviNik 2017), the chapter explores how narratives on and about hate speech are articulated in the article-cum-comments genre (Cambria 2011, 2016), for example the comments-on-the-article section of some online newspapers and newsites. It will do so by analysing the main semantic fields which emerge in the

comments published in Broadsheet.ie vis-à-vis the publication of the Irish consultation document. The intrinsic multimodal nature of hate speech, whether online or offline, is considered a sort of *a priori* in this study as it is commonly accepted that such sentiments can be expressed by means of text, images, or sound and the interaction of several semiotic resources.

2. Hate speech and hate crime legislation in Ireland

Ireland currently has no specific legislation to deal with hate speech or hate crime. The only legislation in Ireland that deals with hate-based offences is the 1989 "Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act". Although criminal hate speech is recognized as an offence, there have been very few prosecutions since its introduction. This is probably due to the fact that Ireland's historic approach to hate (both in terms of hate speech and hate crime) has often been defined by a sense of Ireland as a monocultural society devoid of minority cultures, where problems of racial and religious bigotry are not an issue. Clearly, this view of Ireland has little in common with the current state of affairs. Indeed, in recent years several campaigns have been held to oppose hate crime. The INAR (Irish Network Against Racism) webpage (https://inar.ie/hate-crime-key-developments) offers a summary of key events and developments in relation to hate crime legislation in Ireland dating back to September 2000 when the Dublin Metropolitan District court convicted a bus driver under the 1989 Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act for an incident on a bus in which he racially abused a passenger and told him to go back to his own country.

Since July 2013 INAR has also been publishing reports about racism in Ireland based on data collected through the *iReport* racist incident reporting system which has, to date, collated 2841 reports of racism (Michael 2019). Ireland has also joined the "No Hate Speech Movement" campaign led by the Council of Europe Youth Department which seeks to mobilise young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online. From 2014 to 2018, the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) co-ordinated the "No Hate Speech Movement" with the support of many organisations producing a wealth of documents, manuals, activity resources, together with the previously mentioned *iReport* app (https://www.youth.ie/programmes/equality-intercultural/no-hate-speech/).

As a direct result of being involved in the movement, the NYCI, along with a number of other organizations, joined the Irish Coalition Against Hate

Crime in campaigning to pass Hate Crime legislation in Ireland; this subsequently prompted the production of the "Legislating for hate speech and hate crime in Ireland" report. The document contains the findings from the public consultation carried out in the October 2019-January 2020 period by the Department of Justice's Criminal Justice legislation division as part of its drafting of new legislation on hate speech and hate crime. As explained in the report, the findings are drawn from a set of insights gathered in partnership with civil society groups, experts, professional organisations, community groups and members of the public. A number of sources were used (Department of Justice 2020:9), specifically:

1. A five-question online survey publicly available on the department of Justice website between October 2019 and January 2020[1];
2. A question and discussion paper distributed to stakeholders, groups and publicly available on the Department website between October 2019 and January 2020;
3. A series of seven independently facilitated discussion workshops around the country;
4. A series of meetings with interested groups, organisations, academics, law enforcement and other experts.

The findings, and in particular the participant breakdown, are illuminating. The online survey received 3,526 responses, the majority from Ireland (79%) with a minority from the UK (10%) the USA (5%) and Elsewhere (4%). The

[1] The five questions were: 1. Are there other groups in society with shared identity characteristics, for example disability, gender identity, or others, who are vulnerable to having hatred stirred up against them and who should be included in the list of protected characteristics? 2. Do you think the term "hatred" is the correct term to use in the Act? If not, what should it be replaced with? Would there be implications for freedom of expression? 3. Bearing in mind that the Act is designed only to deal with hate speech which is sufficiently serious to be dealt with as a criminal matter (rather than by other measures), do you think the wording of the Act should be changed to make prosecutions for incitement to hatred online more effective? What, in your view, should those changes be? 4. In your view, does the requirement that an offence must be intended or likely to stir up hatred make the legislation less effective? 5. If so, what changes would you suggest to this part of the 1989 Act (without broadening the scope of the Act beyond incitement)?

Department received more than 182 detailed written submissions, 77 of them from civil society groups, professional and academic organisations or NGOs, the remainder (105) from individuals. A series of seven discussion workshops were held in various locations around the country with a total attendance of 177 participants. The attendees were individuals belonging to, or working with, communities targeted in hate incidents. The workshop format was designed to encourage and facilitate open discussion on a series of questions. Figure 1 provides a detailed illustration of the participants in the workshop representing the main groups identified.

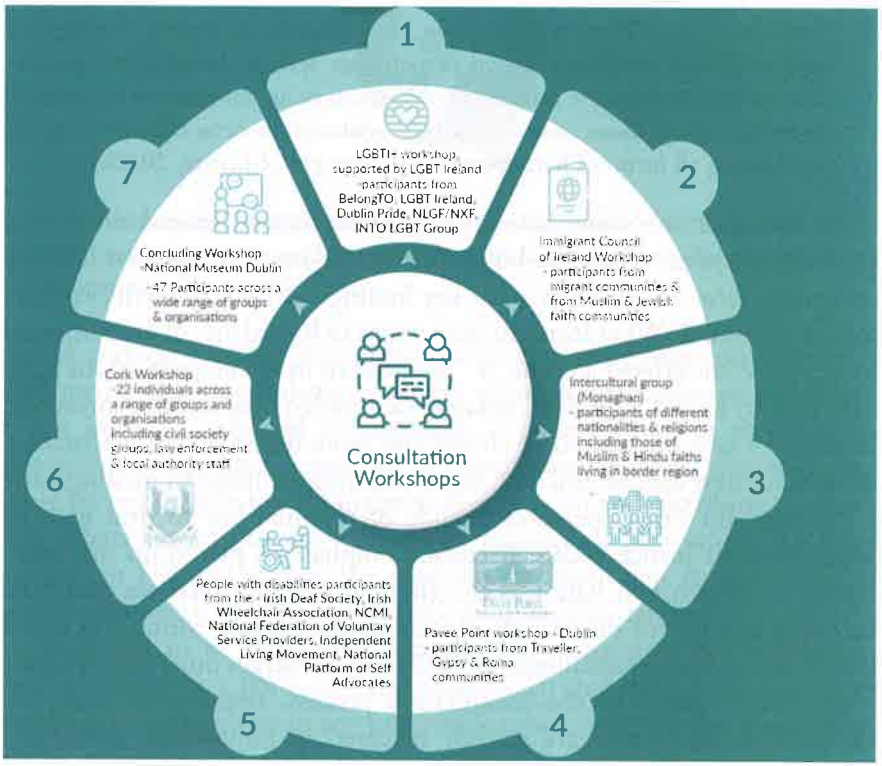

Figure 1 -Participants in the consultation workshops (Department of Justice, 2020: 14)

When presenting the consultation's findings, the Irish Minister of Justice, Helen McEntee, stressed that many of those who participated had been victims themselves, while others were concerned about the very real need to respect

the rights of everyone involved, including the right to freedom of speech, so that the new legislation was designed to be proportionate as well as effective in achieving its aims. For the purposes of this chapter, it may be noted how, when describing the drafting of the legislation, the Minister also underscored the importance of the link between hate speech and freedom of expression by emphasizing that:

> As Minister for Justice, I am determined to tackle these crimes and to ensure that those who seek to divide our communities and spread hatred and fear, including online, are dealt with effectively by our criminal justice system. I want perpetrators to know that their crimes will be reported, investigated and prosecuted. [...] There is no place for hate crime in our society. The legislation will deal with situations where perpetrators seek to incite other people to hatred from behind the protection of a screen or an anonymous account. This is an important factor in order for this legislation to be as effective as possible in tackling all forms of hate speech. (Department of Justice, 2020b)

The relevance of online hate speech is emphasized several times in the report and plays an across-the-board role in the key findings that led to the final conclusions. The six areas of the key findings cover: 1. Who the legislation needs to protect; 2. What forms of incitement to hatred are, or are not, serious enough to be considered a crime; 3. The need to integrate protections against incitement to hatred with the fundamental right to freedom of expression; 4. The need for new offences to be clearer and more realistically prosecutable; 5. The need for new laws to deal with the distribution of material inciting hatred; 6. The need for other measures outside of criminal law to deal with hate (Department of Justice 2020). Particular emphasis is placed on the issue of freedom of speech and hate speech. The concerns involved are particularly interesting and mirror the various contradictions existing within this domain (Brown 2015; Assimakapoulos *et al* 2017). This emerges quite clearly at some points in the report. In the consultation process, respondents were asked whether individuals who are actively involved in publishing, spreading or distributing hate speech should be subject to prosecution. Figure 2 shows the most prominent themes which emerged.

At more than one point, respondents stressed how difficult it was to define hate speech precisely while indicating that its dissemination greatly increases its harm, particularly given the nature of the material distributed on the

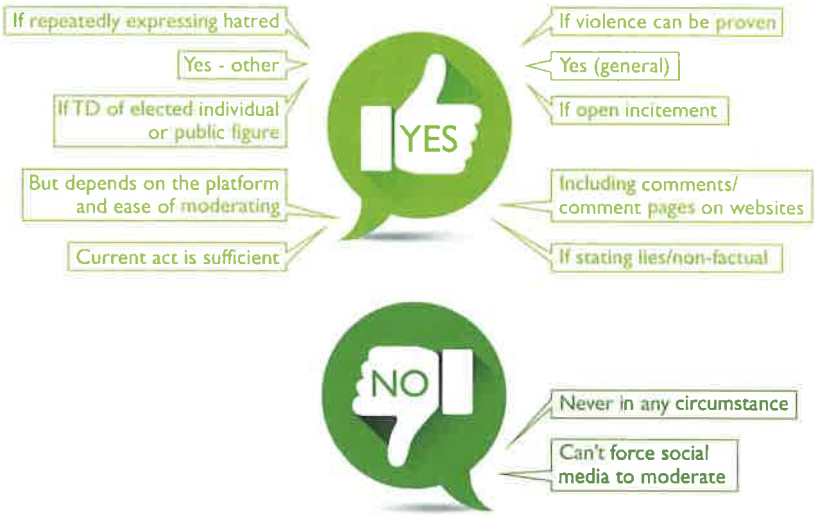

Figure 2 -Themes mentioned in relation to whether individuals who are actively involved in publishing, spreading or distributing hate speech should be subject to prosecution (Department of Justice 2020: 32)

internet and via social media. Significantly, comment pages on websites are mentioned by the respondents as subject to prosecution whereas social media are not invited or obliged to moderate. A close analysis of the individual submissions reveals that a portion of respondents believed that individuals should be responsible for the material they publish and distribute in all cases while others agreed that they should be responsible only where the caveats indicated in Figure 2 apply.[2] The platform on which hate speech occurs and the ease with which a moderator can edit it out are also deemed to be important considerations to be taken into account when ensuring that legislation is operable. However, a portion of respondents felt that this type of moderation would not be appropriate in any case, while others believed that it would be as difficult to apply any moderating processes to social media as to make any legislation. Drawing on the key findings the report proposes ten conclusions that are illustrated in Table 1.

[2] The submissions received as part of the consultation are available on the Department's website at www.justice.ie

Conclusions of the report
1. The 1989 Act is not effective in dealing with incitement to hatred and should be replaced by a single piece of legislation to deal with both incitement to hatred and hate crime;
2. The characteristics protected by the new legislation should include all those listed in the 1989 Act, and also gender, gender expression or identity and disability;
3. The definition of 'ethnicity' in the new legislation should explicitly include membership of the Travelling Community on the same footing as other ethnicities;
4. New offences of incitement to hatred are needed & should prohibit: (i) deliberately or recklessly inciting hatred against a person or group of people due to their association with a protected characteristic; (ii) displaying or distributing material inciting hatred;
5. The new legislation should contain robust safeguards for freedom of expression, such as protections for reasonable and genuine contributions to literary, artistic, political, scientific or academic discourse, and fair and accurate reporting;
6. Thresholds for criminal incitement to hatred should be high, for example incitement to harm or unlawful discrimination. However, it should not be necessary to show that anyone was actually influenced by the incitement or persuaded to act upon it;
7. A company accused of displaying or distributing hateful material should be able to defend itself by showing that it has reasonable measures in place to prevent dissemination of this type of material in general, was complying with those measures at the time and was unaware and had no reason to suspect that this particular content was inciteful;
8. To be meaningful, the new legislation must also deal effectively with hate crime. Threatening and abusive communications, criminal damage, harassment, assault and intimidation are all common forms of hate crime as described by participants in this consultation and specific, aggravated forms of existing criminal offences should be included in the legislation to deal with these and ensure that such crimes are properly categorized and recorded;
9. Additional elements may be needed to help ensure the new legislation is effective, such as allowing alternative verdicts for juries where the aggravating 'hate' element is not proven, and including a general provision (for crimes that are not specific hate offences) to say that a court will always consider whether hate should be an aggravating factor in sentence, and where it is, that this will be reflected in the record;
10. Not every hate incident is serious enough to be a crime – many incidents are better dealt with outside the criminal sphere and proper measures to ensure this happens will be needed.

Table 1 - Conclusions of the report

The conclusions contain issues that are common to similar types of consultation (Zubcevic *et al* 2018) as well as a specific reference to the situation of the Travelling community in Ireland which has been formally recognized as a separate ethnicity since 2015.[3] Despite being part of the Irish socio-cultural heritage even before Synge's *The Tinker's Wedding* (1909), Travellers are relentlessly subjected to episodes of racism including hate speech (Gmelch 1985; Helleiner 2000; Haynes 2007). The consultation also made it clear that a significant portion of such targeted hate speech is often dismissed by mainstream opinion as unintentional or defended as if it were accurate. Disinformation and prejudice emanating from public figures and official sources have been identified in the consultation as having a wide reach and significant influence on public opinion. The inclusion of Travellers in the main definition of ethnicity will be the first time in Irish statutes that the Travelling community has been defined in legislation as being on the same footing as all other ethnicities.

It should be noted that the respondents to the consultation were a self-selecting group rather than a random or representative sample. No restrictions were placed on those who could complete the survey or send in a submission; hence people with a particular interest in the subject or strong feelings about it were more likely to contribute. A close look at the answers, though, shows that some respondents strongly disagree with this type of consultation as is the case, for example, of "individual submission_104" in which the respondent opposed the entire "Can we Silence hate speech?" campaign arguing that:

> [...] the Government is making some assertions: (i) that there exists something termed "hate speech" (although no legal definition for such a term is extant in Irish law, nor is there even any widely socially accepted definition of such a term) and (ii) that it is desirable to the Government – and to the public – that it should be "silenced" whatever "it" may be.

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[3] Travellers are an indigenous minority who, historical sources confirm, have been part of Irish society for centuries. Travellers long shared history, cultural values, language, customs and traditions make them a self-defined group, and one which is recognizable and distinct. Their culture and way of life, of which nomadism is an important factor, distinguishes them from the sedentary (settled) population. There are an estimated 25,000 Travellers in Ireland, making up more than 4,485 Traveller families. This constitutes approximately 0.5% of the total national population. It is estimated that an additional 15,000 Irish Travellers live in Britain, with a further 10,000 Travellers of Irish descent living in the USA (https://itmtrav.ie/what-is-itm/irish-travellers/).

Who gets to decide what constitutes "hate speech" is a matter of grave concern.

You can see in the text that large, black, bold characters are used to emphasise the solemn finality of the word "silence", with the words "HATE SPEECH" dramatically capitalized in huge, blood-red characters. Then, at the bottom of the banner the public are directed – once more against a blood-red background – to "have your say – make a submission here."

The visual and psychological ploys which are utilised in the banner – notwithstanding the fact they are obvious, clichéd, and practically scream "PROPAGANDA" – are all specifically designed to elicit an emotional rather than a reasoned response – biased in favour of introducing the proposed legislation – from the public. (Individual submission 104)

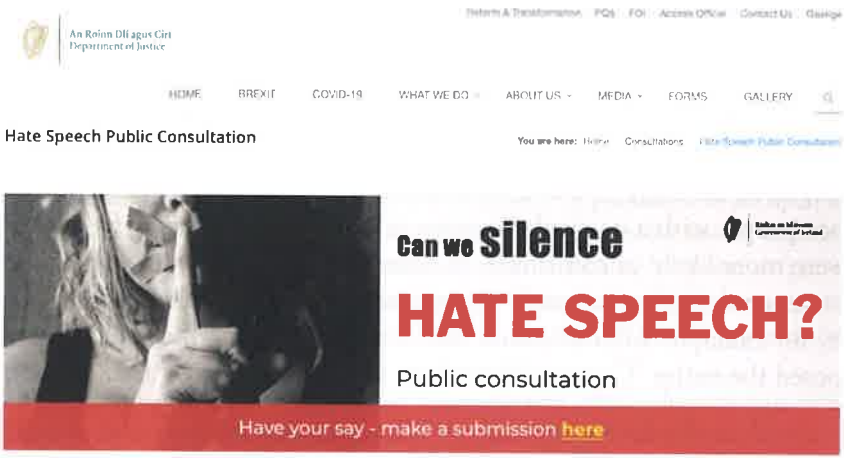

Figure 3 -Irish Department of Justice website

The submission clearly testifies to a fairly widespread tendency among public opinion not to accept hate speech as such. This trend emerges clearly in some of the comments following the publication of the report questioning the public's level of awareness of the issue.

3. The article-cum-comments in the social media paradigm

As stated in the report, the comments section of various media pages was viewed as a problematic area, where users identified a considerable amount of

hate speech in response to news article. The world of news has been deeply transformed in the process of going online. The transition from printed press to online websites and webpages has affected the entire process of producing, accessing and perceiving news and has accelerated the hybridization of the genres involved and raised many issues as regards the activities of representing, construing, experiencing and commenting news. A classic example is the possibility for readers to comment and express opinions in online articles in the comments-on-the-article sections of news sites or via links to social networks.

Recent literature has highlighted the fluidity, changeability and non-staticity of discursive power in social media and in the participatory web (KhosraviNik 2014) and underscored how social media provides for an alternative to all forms of offline communication. The article-cum-comments genre which the author has discussed elsewhere (Cambria 2011, 2016) must thus be investigated in the light of the Social Media Communication paradigm in which users work together to produce and compile content, perform interpersonal communication and mass communication simultaneously with "access to see and respond to institutionally (e.g. newspaper articles) and user-generated content/texts" (KhosraviNik 2017: 582). Hence, whereas the article-cum-comments' early beginnings and manifestations were characterized by several participants in this type of exchange (the journalist who wrote the article; people commenting on the article and subscribing to the service and readers of the articles and/or the paper whose meta-comments are restricted to recommending an article or reporting abuse), they are now fully embedded in the social media environment constantly working to increase the degree and intensity of users' engagement. To this extent, the report sheds some light on the complex attitude towards the blurred boundaries between anonymity and freedom of speech.

Comments to hot topics are often the place where common stereotypes and fundamental discursive hegemonic issues emerge together with the consolidation of specific communities of action. Viewing discourse as language-in-use has always been a defining characteristic in the development of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and this is very much the case with MCDA (Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis). It is thus crucial to operate in a context where, as argued by KhosraviNik (2017: 585), one needs to consider the "horizontal context substantiation" which deals with intertextuality among textual practices and multi-site organizations together with a "vertical context substantiation" which links the micro-features of textual analysis and horizontal context to the

socio-political context of users in society. This is very much the case of the comments investigated in this study which are linked to a discourse practice that elucidates the way in which some types of news shape and influence the social and political sphere, in particular general knowledge of, and opinion about, a specific issue. Conclusion 7 in the report is quite significant in this respect as it shows a preoccupation with the liability of companies vis-à-vis the dissemination of hate material as comment spaces must be considered public forums if a court is to rule that, for example, a person who posts something on social media while sitting in their bedroom cannot claim it is private. In this type of framework, comments are public and contribute to the construction of discourses that stretch across media industries and communication practices rather than being specific to a single space or form.

All media practices and contents need to be interpreted within the wider socio-political context of a given society postulating that there is an intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between the online and offline level of discursive practices (Unger *et al* 2016). In the case of comments, this is where the social practice of discussing issues meets up with the social media world in revealing the social, historical, cultural, political and psychological accounts of the issues under scrutiny. The participants in comments usually choose an avatar to represent themselves, typically exemplifying their alter ego in what is effectively becoming a sort of intimate chat that creates agreement or disagreement around a specific issue which the non-participating reader (for example the reader who chooses not to be an explicit comment-maker) can approve or disapprove of via *report-abuse* or *recommend* links. Participants, and their discourse, are part of the community generated but are also conditioned by other comments towards which they develop active, passive or reactive roles on the basis of cross-references in the comments. The case study presented in Section 4 is an example of this attitude and of the main areas of resistance to anti-hate-speech legislation that circulate online.

4. "Hate that": commenting hate-speech legislation

Given their multimodal, discursive nature, news comments are interesting *loci*, signaling the type of perception that some public initiatives are likely to generate among the general public. Multimodality is the daily experience of social media participants; it is so embedded in online practice that legislation on hate speech cannot fail to take the production of videos, images etc. related

to hate into account. It is also embedded in the layout of main news sites which communicate, comment and are linked up by the use of images and word-image relations (Bednarek and Caple 2012). The present case study is based on the analysis of the comments (a total of 77) attached to the publication of an article entitled "hate that" on Broadsheet.ie, a "news source for the bewildered". Shortlisted in 2015 as the "most influential Irish Site ever", Broadsheet.ie is a satirical news and pop culture website. Figure 4 illustrates how the presentation of the report was reported on the site.

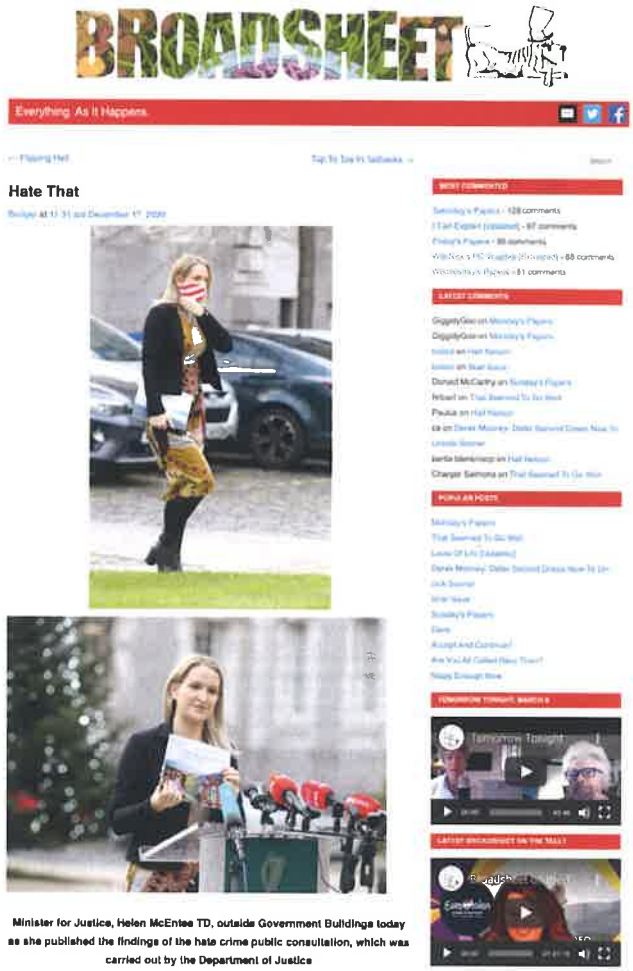

Figure 4 - Screenshot of the "Hate that" article 17 Dec. 2020 on Broadsheet.ie

The "hate that" title presents a condensed, ironic/sarcastic viewpoint on the entire matter and may, even without a full perusal of the entire news item, prompt certain types of comments as images and captions provide a precise representation of the matter at hand. In the comment section, it is the very first comment that strongly affects the discursive thread, setting the tone for subsequent responses and reactions. This is the case in our study where the first comment posted by "BS" focuses on gender identity leading to two further comments on this issue as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Screenshot of users' comments to "Hate that" 17 Dec. 2020 on Broadsheet.ie

BS sets the scene of the topic, comments and reactions to the publication of the report by focusing on gender identity and in particular on the use of the word "terf". This comment causes a debate around "terf" and the use of appropriate terminology in the field of the LGBT+ community in relation to hate speech (Teal and Conover 2016). Soon after BS's comment "Daisy Chainsaw" declares: "Terfs are such whiny snowflakes. They hate it when it's pointed out that they're blindly being led by extreme right wing religious groups who are anti choice, pro conversion therapy and when they're done exterminating the T they'll turn on the L and G to eradicate them too." This prompts a reaction by "nigel" who involves radical feminism in the issue:

> You call the term meaningless but you got called it for saying something to which it could reasonably be said to accurately apply. It's [Terf] not a term of abuse, it's just accurate. I disagree in the strongest possible terms with terfs, but too many people who aren't feminists, who are the opposite of feminists, have jumped on the transphobia bandwagon along with the radical feminists who want to exclude trans women, for it to be a useful general term so I tend to avoid using it.

The area of homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and misandry is the first to be pinpointed as the locus for hate speech (KhosraviNik and Esposito 2018). Terminology and its appropriation by some specific politicized groups, in particular radical feminism, surfaces as another thorny issue as the following comments demonstrate: "[...] it's Radical Feminists Excluding Trans. Not sure I can make it simpler without diagrams" and "[...] The 'radical' modifies the 'feminist' because that's how it started – radical feminists suddenly deciding to exclude trans women from feminism and female spaces".

The other main area of interest is legislating against hate speech as an act of censorship, an issue which emerged quite clearly in the consultation as an area of concern. The thread of comments on the risk of censorship starts with the mild statement: "Not sure how I feel about this. It [the legislation] veers very close to censorship, no?" (millie bobby brownie). It soon becomes a politically polarized issue between an "extreme right" perceived to protect free speech and a not well identified "left" on the side of fair speech as in the following comments:

> There will be people getting knocks on the door at home from the Gards [the Irish Police] for jokes deemed to be so offensive that they are hate crimes. It will lead to more innocent people losing their jobs for posting half thoughts.

> This is again **an effort by the far left to continue changing language and enforcing censorship for adults wherever they can.** These are more disciples of Critical Race theory, which is unfounded, unchallenged, fictional nonsense that has found its way into the mainstream.
>
> Their trick is to promote something like these laws that seems like the right thing to do to a lot of well meaning people, but they are really trying to force peoples hands on this, because **if you go against this, or have any doubts they will scream that you are far right, or a TERF.** It will lead to more censorship and self censorship, which is very damaging to free democratic societies where adults should be allowed to discuss anything openly and honestly. [...] I am on the side of protecting free speech and not falling into more censorship. I am on the left, not **THAT left** though." (Junkface, emphasis added)

> By creating a particular category of crime that recognises that the particular type of crime is enough of a problem to require its own category, the 'left' are trying to literally control your thoughts. [...] How have you managed to internalise so thoroughly so much **right-wing red-scaring race-baiting LGTBQ-bashing nonsense**? (Nigel, emphasis added)

The polarization between right and left goes hand in hand with general comments on the political agenda and an alleged "woke" policy:

> Look at how you push agendas that have nothing to do with you just to advance your woke policy. Colm [O'Gorman, survivor of clerical sexual abuse and founder of the association One in Four] is making a living out of it. NUp too now you wrapped it in some perverse compulsory compassion or kindness, now you have a law to enforce it. And given how subjective something like "hate" is, you will be extremely dangerous. This is McCarthyism. (Toby)

This last comment prompts a series of reactions on the subjective definition of hate crime in relation to criminal assaults and 'special' groups who are the privileged targets of hate speech:

> ALL criminal assaults are "hate" crimes. Theyre not acts of love. Creating specially protected insider groups will have the opposite effect. Why is it worse to attack him/her violently but not someone else, simply because they fall into a preference group? **Isn't the aim that we become colour blind, sex blind, ethnicity blind?** All being equal. No, we are to have special groups and society is to divide into these groups based on sex, gender, race, sexuality etc. You know, because all humans should be defined solely by their skin colour or sexuality or similar. The establishment political and media class detest their loss

> of control over day to day narratives and in a desperate attempt to regain control (labelling everything they dislike as fake news or conspiracy theory has only gotten them so far) they now want to impose on and undermine a pillar of democracy, the right to freedom of expression. If you can only express yourself in terms the fanatical and zealous virtue signalling woke crowd approve of, we're all screwed. The woke crowd can't even help attacking themselves. There is no actual logic underpinning their religious like beliefs so they twist themselves in knots trying to justify their indoctrinated insanity. (E'Matty, emphasis added)

The direct remarks on the idea of "preference group" and on the "woke crowd" openly epitomize the main issues discussed in the comments signaling the presence of at least two opposite factions. Even so, in the comments, the main point remains: "who gets to decide what hate is?". As regards this specific point, users seem to be aware of the massive power that resides in the hands of social media owners as emerges in the following comment: "Probably easier to do this [i.e. to decide what hate speech is] rather than regulate massive monopolistic tech companies and their social media platforms that will monetise anything including all sorts of hate speech and massive quantities of misinformation without regard for the consequences."

As previously stated, this type of environment possesses all the features of a close community of people who know each other well; this emerges clearly when, in replying to "Nigel", "Nobleblocks" writes: "you always leave out the AGP males Nige … why do you always leave out the HUGE Amount of these so called "trans" people who aren't really trans at all and are really AGP males?" or when Toby affirms: "You're the one who has been language policing and tone policing this site for years" recognizing the existence of a specific language policy. This type of comments reveals their strong interpersonal nature (Halliday 1994), i.e. language as interaction (speech acts, dialogic move), the expression of attitudinal and evaluative orientation (modality) and the taking-up and negotiating of particular subjective positions in discourse which prevails throughout the comments. It is expressed by field-like prosodies and is scopal in character i.e. via the use of declarative and interrogative sentences as in the case of "Nobleblocks". In the case of the comments, there is a strong interaction between some participants who become the leaders of the debate turning them into opinion-makers.

As argued by KhosraviNik (2018:585) "From the SM-CDS angle, the

main point is to note that discourse is independent of the medium although the magnitude, penetrability, and formal aspects of its realized forms may be heavily influenced by the medium". Pro and anti-hate speech legislation discourses emerge in the debate about hate crime in Ireland. The examples analysed in the comments and in the report submissions illustrate a major concern expressed in the terminology used when dealing with hate speech, in "languaging" it. A concern that can be found throughout the numerous principled arguments both for and against hate speech law. It will be interesting to see how the Irish legislative proposal will be "languaged" in the coming months, which terms, for instance, will be used to create an effective legislative infrastructure to help tackle what is deemed to be a serious form of crime which will also be evidence-based, while, in the Minister's words "respecting important rights to freedom of expression and association".

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Raffaele Pizzo

WHEN HATE REACHES ITS PEAK. THE ITALIAN CASE: HATE COMMENTS AGAINST THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION "ZAN" DRAFT LAW

1. Introduction

The history of social media can be traced back to 1997 when Andrew Weinreich created Sixdegrees, the first social media network destined to help people find the love of their lives. 24 years down the line, a multitude of networking sites have made their appearance, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and the more recent Tik Tok to mention but a few. All have become an essential resource in present-day societies changing the way people communicate, albeit not always for the best. Although on the one hand social media networks allow people from all over the globe to communicate and acquire forms of social membership, on the other, this characteristic may lead to the creation of heterotopic places, especially with the advent of virtual reality, through which online users can dissociate themselves from the surrounding reality while chatting, video-calling or playing games. According to Michel Foucault (1967: 24),

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.

Therefore, if social media were once only considered utopic, parallel places, "sites with no real place" (Foucault 1967: 24), nowadays they can at times seem more tangible than reality itself, confirming what Foucault (1967: 24) theorised more than fifty years ago: "I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint

experience, which would be the mirror." It is precisely through this "mixed, joint experience" that social media have managed to alter the way society and social connection is perceived, removing boundaries and distances. "We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed." (Foucault 1967: 22), in short, the term "omnipresent" appears suitable to describe our daily lives in this hyper-technological and ever-connected world. Today, rather than play outside with their neighbourhood friends, a much higher percentage of young children prefer to switch on their smartphones, gain access to social media, and seek out that sense of social belonging often lacking in the real world. As Zappavigna (2014: 16) underlined,

> With mobile computing and using resources such as smartphones to access social media, we can share experiences online relatively seamlessly at the same time as engaging in our daily activities. Social media renders online interaction "searchable" in a way and to an extent that has never been seen in history. It is now possible, using metadata such as hashtags, to find the values people are sharing about both daily minutia (e.g. what someone feels about their morning coffee) and about important world events. This means that we can track the kinds of communities that form as people rally around shared concerns.

Not only do social media allow people to communicate and identify the community to which they belong, they also enable competent users and scholars to trace and track these communities in order to fulfil specific research objectives, as this study will illustrate. Hashtags are not the only digital tool through which ideas and emotions can be shared, and Facebook pages may likewise be considered places where ideational and interpersonal meaning, as theorized by Michael Halliday, overlap. An affiliative theoretical model that further exemplifies this interconnection is the concept of "coupling" initially introduced by Martin (2000) and subsequently taken up by Zhao (2010; 2011) and Zappavigna et al. (2008):

> Coupling concerns the temporal relation of "with": variable x comes with variable y. To put it another way, it is the relation formed between two semantic elements at one given point in time within the logogenetic timeframe. Coupling can be formed between metafunctional variables (e.g. ideational and interpersonal), between different semiotic resources (e.g. image and verbiage) and across strata (e.g. semantics and pragmatics). (Zhao 2011: 144)

To recapitulate, Facebook pages may be considered both rallying systems that allow people who share similar values and thoughts to congregate, and tools thanks to which digital communities can be found. However, despite the constructive gregarious activities the web may foster, "the spread of mob dynamics and mob mentality, resulting in an ever-escalating competition to attack people online because of their perceived difference" (KhosraviNik and Esposito 2018: 48), cannot go unnoticed. Online hate comments have now become a daily struggle not only for famous content creators and celebrities, but also for general users (especially if they belong to already marginalized and stigmatized groups), and victims rarely benefit from the support of online moderators. Although some social media platforms, such as YouTube, offer individual users the possibility to block comments containing specific words and phrases (which however remain visible to them), most social networking and microblogging sites postpone the problem, verifying the appropriateness of comments only after being notified by a conspicuous number of users. Whether the first method is a better option to fight against online hate speech or not, the issue remains, since users should be shielded from unwanted and unsolicited comments even in their private comment section. With this in mind, this study also aims to make social media companies realise that moderation processes need to be upgraded or modified in order to fit the standard of modern heterotopias, otherwise, remaining within a Foucaultian perspective, it would be better to describe social media networks as dystopias. In order to contribute to the monitoring and possible future eradication of hate speech online, this research focuses upon the flux of negative comments that followed the Facebook posts of four Italian politicians (on both the right and the left) after the November 4, 2020 approval of the so-called Zan Law by the Chamber of Deputies.

2. The Zan law

The Zan draft law, which aims to modify the 604-bis and 604-ter articles of the Italian Penal Code with regard to acts of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, owes its name to Alessandro Zan, the Italian politician who submitted it to Parliament on May 2, 2018. The draft law reached the Judiciary Committee on October 7, 2019, before being examined and discussed by the Chamber of Deputies from October 24,

2019 to November 4, 2020, the day on which it was approved. The Italian legislative procedure requires that every bill must also be approved by the Senate of the Republic in order to be considered a fully-fledged law, therefore there is still a degree of uncertainty as to whether the draft law at the heart of this study will in fact enter into force. The rapacious online haters, however, did not wait until the end of the law-making process to manifest their dissent, and as soon as the news of its acceptance by the Chamber of Deputies appeared on Facebook, cybernauts started expressing their ideas by commenting the posts written by the major Italian politicians who had taken an interest in the case. As previously mentioned, this study takes into account a number of posts written by both right-wing and left-wing politicians in order to minimize research bias. Alessandro Zan and Monica Cirinnà have been chosen as left-wing representatives whereas Giorgia Meloni and Daniela Santanchè will represent the opposition.

3. Methodologies and Methods for data analysis

This study is underpinned by two methodologies and two research tools, all of which will be briefly described in the following section.

Firstly, with regard to methodologies, it would have been impossible to carry out this research without using a Corpus Linguistics framework; checking and collecting all the comments manually would have required a massive amount of time. Corpus Linguistics can be described as "the study of language based on example of real-life language use" (McEnery and Wilson 1996: 1), it encompasses both quantitative and qualitative techniques and, as Biber (1994: 4) stated: "Association patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features and variants are associated with contextual factors. However functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in any corpus-based analysis." Moreover, Baker (2001: 16), quoting Tognini-Bonelli (2001), made a clear distinction between corpus-based and corpus-driven investigations:

> [While] The former uses a corpus as a source of examples, to check researcher intuition or to examine the frequency and/or plausibility of the language contained within smaller data set. A corpus-driven analysis proceeds in a more inductive way – the corpus itself is the data and the patterns in it are noted as a way of expressing regularities (and exceptions) of language.

For the purposes of this study, a corpus-driven approach has been employed in order to examine the previously mentioned discourse.

Before moving on to the second methodological approach, a brief explanation of the term discourse is required, since it has been employed over the years in multiple inter-related yet different ways by researchers. It has been described by Brown and Yule (1983) as "language in use" and as "language above the sentence or above the clause" (Stubbs 1983:1), but the description that best fits the subject matter of this study is "practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49), as this clarifies the reasons for using a critical methodology.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) stems from the interconnectedness that exists between language, thought, and culture; it cannot, however, be described as a straightforward, self-contained theory, as it includes numerous approaches and methodologies. Despite this slippery conceptualization, the main goal of CDA is to

> combine a macro-analysis of social structure and relations with a micro-analysis of discourse as a social practice. Its interests lie in the investigation of the potential of discourse to socially construct reality, with the focus on the construction of knowledge and beliefs, social identities and social relations. (Fairclough 1992: 20)

More concisely, it aims to "demystify discourses by deciphering ideologies" (Wodak 2006: 10), which is also what this study partially aims to accomplish by unveiling the ideologies that support the comments left by online haters who chose their words carefully in order not to be reported for using offensive and deprecatory words.

Secondly, as regards methodological tools, the software *AntConc* was employed to facilitate and accelerate corpus interrogation. *AntConc* can best be described as a corpus analysis toolkit, which allows researchers to retrieve a vast set of data from the analyzed texts, such as: concordances, words frequencies, keyword lists, clusters and lexical bundles, and word distribution. Unlike *Sketch Engine* and *WordSmith Tools,* it is a freeware application characterized by an intuitive and easy-to-use graphical user interface, which makes it perfect for scholars new to the field of Corpus Linguistics. The use of 'machine-based' approaches to text and discourse analysis are clearly only helpful so long as the researcher is able to analyze the obtained results and draw reasoned conclusions,

no data will ever "speak for itself" and different researchers may reach divergent interpretations of the same dataset. Despite previous diktats regarding the need for absolute objectivity when carrying out research, most post-modern standpoints now accept the expression of individual perspectives since every human being perceives the world from a particular viewpoint, as Bhaskar (1989) underlined with the concept of *critical realism.* Additionally, the software *Sketch Engine* was employed to provide this research with a keyword list by using the itTenTen16 corpus as a reference corpus. As stated on the *Sketch Engine* website, itTenTen16 is "an Italian corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet". Since this research deals with data collected from the Internet and considering that *AntConc* does not provide users with pre-uploaded corpora, using *Sketch Engine* was considered a useful way to give this study additional relevant material.

Lastly, because of the lengthy and intricate procedure that manually colleting and checking all comments requires, this study could never have been carried out without the help of the *Facepager* software tool. As stated by its creators Jünger Jakob and Keyling Till (2019) *Facepager* is: "An application for automated data retrieval on the web." The official website further states: "Facepager was made for fetching public available data from YouTube, Twitter and other websites on the basis of APIs and webscraping. All data is stored in a SQLite database and may be exported to csv." In order to factually explain how data can be obtained from social media with the help of *Facepager,* the following corpus section provides a detailed description on how the material for this research was collected. Given the numerous tools that *Facepager* offers, rather than being an exhaustive guide, this section is merely a brief introduction to social media data retrieval.

4. Corpus and data collection

As previously mentioned, the corpus of this research is made up of four Facebook posts published by four different Italian politicians on November 4, 2020, the day on which the Zan law was approved by the Chamber of Deputies. The corpus under scrutiny is split into two separate sub-corpora, the "Zan I" corpus, which includes the two posts published by the two left-wing MPs, Alessandro Zan and Monica Cirinnà, and the "Zan II corpus", which contains the two posts published by the two right-wing politicians, Giorgia Meloni and

Daniela Santanchè. This partition was deemed necessary because, as previously mentioned, Facebook pages represent virtual meeting spaces in which only those who share the same opinions and values take part, and needless to say followers of the right-wing representatives and supporters of the left-wing members differ. The corpus division was also extremely useful in enabling comparisons to be made between the two sides in search of keywords and "noise". The term "noise" here refers to all the hate comments that follow the Facebook posts of the opposite political party, left by those who do not endorse the same ideas.

The corpus creation process started by downloading *Facepager* from its official website, prior to installing and launching it. An image of its homepage is provided below to visually support the explanation.

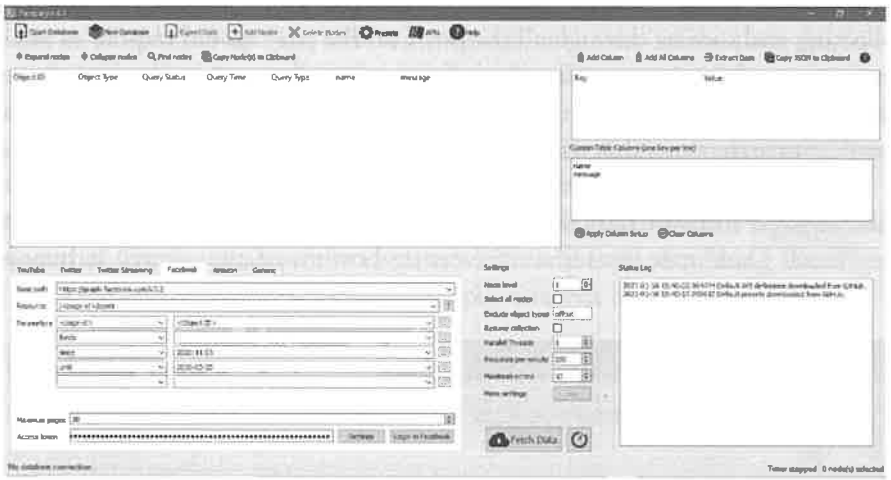

Figure 4.1 Facepager homepage.

As can be seen, the names of different social media are listed in the middle left section of the screen. Given the focus of this study, the option "Facebook" was selected, which caused the login query to appear at the bottom of the same section. No additional registration is needed for *Facepager,* users simply need to plug in their Facebook credentials in order for the system to start operating. A new database then needs to be created by clicking on the "New Database" tab located in the upper left section of the image; a name for the database must be selected and saved before users can start dealing with social media data. The

next step is to find a website that identifies personal numeric Facebook IDs. In this research the *findmyfbid* site was employed, though there are many similar sites that can carry out the same task. In order to obtain the numeric ID of the Facebook page on which the required data appear, the URL of the page must be copied and pasted into one of these websites, in this case *findmyfbid*. The ID will appear rapidly, making it possible to copy and paste it into the "Add Nodes" *Facepager* section which appears in the upper central part of the image. A new string of words will now take shape in the central part of the image confirming the successful acquisition of the page ID. The software must now be told which piece of information to retrieve. At this point, the required string of information must be inserted into the "Resource" section, in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. For this study, the "/<page-id>/posts" string was chosen to obtain the posts contained in the pre-selected Facebook page. As collecting and sorting through all the posts on the page would require as much time as consulting it manually, the software also allows researchers to choose the span of time they wish to investigate through the options "since" and "until". Since the posts that triggered this research were published on November 4, 2020, the period going from November 3 to November 5, 2020 was selected. The *Facepager* software only shows 25 results per page, therefore before clicking the "Fetch Data" tab located at the centre-bottom of the screen, it may be

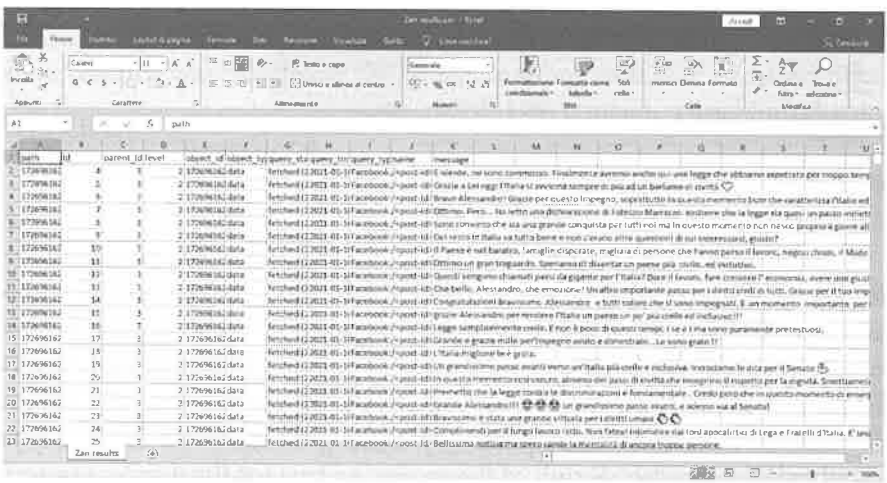

Figure 4.2 Zan results on Microsoft Excel.

useful to click on the "Maximum pages" tab and select a higher number as the required data may not appear in the first pages or a bigger dataset may be needed. Once the post that the researcher wishes to analyse has been selected, the "Resource" tab has to be clicked again and the specific piece of information required needs to be selected (in this case the string "/<post-id>/comments" has been selected so as to collect all the comments across the four pages), before clicking on the "Fetch Data" button once more. Since the present study stops at this level of analysis, although it would also have been possible to obtain further replies to the comments, the collected data now simply needs to be exported. To do so, one has to select all the obtained data, click on the "Export Data" tab at the top of the screen, and save it as a CVS file on the computer, a format that is easily accessible via Microsoft Excel as illustrated in Figure 4.2.

In order to import the data into *AntConc* and begin the analysis, the corpus needs to be cleaned up. The first ten columns at the top of the page (path, id, parent_id, level, object_id, object_type, query_status, query_time, query_type and name) need to be erased, since they do not contain any essential information. Before closing the Excel window, all the rows must be selected, copied, and subsequently pasted into a word-processing programme such as Microsoft Word or WordPad that allows files to be saved in TXT format. After this rather lengthy process, the corpus, which will look something like Figure 4.3, is ready to be analysed with any corpus analysis toolkit.

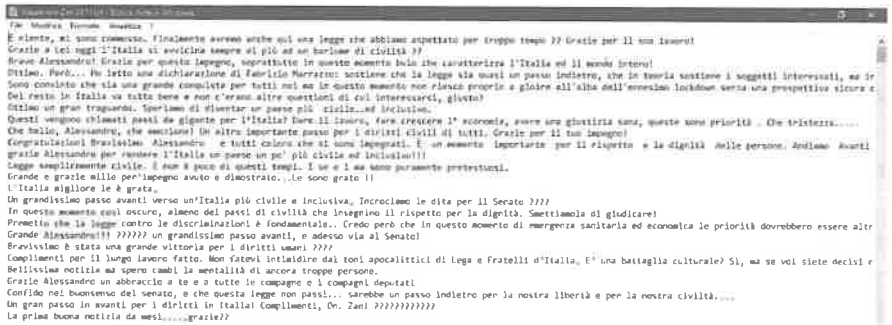

Figure 4.3 Zan results on WordPad.

5. Results

Before looking at the results of this research, it is worth mentioning the size of the two sub-corpora. Taking into account that replies to comments were not included in the data, the number of analysed comments is obviously smaller than the number of comments shown on the Facebook pages. In fact, while 1936 comments were left by Facebook users under Alessandro Zan and Monica Cirinnà's posts, only 1284 of them were taken into account, which means that 652 of them are to be considered as replies to comments. In much the same way, while 3609 comments appeared under Giorgia Meloni and Daniela Santanchè's posts, only about 2176 of them were analysed since 1433 of them are considered, once again, as replies to comments. For the sake of clarity, the approximation expressed by 'about' needs to be explained. The expression 'about 2176' was employed because the Giorgia Meloni post analysed in this study no longer appears on her Facebook page, therefore *Facepager* cannot retrieve it to count the precise number of comments left. Counting them all manually on WordPad would require a great amount of time and patience, however, give or take a couple, the estimate provided reflects the actual numbers.

While the "Zan I" sub-corpus comprises 13042 word tokens and 3297 word-types, the "Zan II" sub-corpus contains 39491 word tokens and 6806 word types. As the two corpora differ significantly in token size, it has been necessary to normalize the frequencies of words and phrases that appear in both the corpora in order to make comparisons possible. The employed formula is: raw frequency × (desired size / corpus size). Since the convention is to calculate per 10,000 words for smaller corpora and per 1,000,000 for larger ones, 10000 words has been selected as the desired size parameter in this study.

In order to obtain some initial results from the two corpora, a word list was generated. Once all the high frequency functional words had been removed from the "Zan I" corpus, including words such as: "legge" ['law'], "grazie" ['thank you'] and "Alessandro", it became clear that the medium frequency word list extended from "grande" ['big'] to "tutta" ['all']. Even though it may seem strange, what really matters in the present case are the low frequency words such as "civiltà" ['civilization'], "Dio" ['God'], "Gesù" ['Jesus'] and "libertà" ['freedom'], since all the high frequency words, were words of congratulations and thanks for the passing of the law, and this point will be

clarified shortly. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the high and medium frequency words in the "Zan II" corpus are far more relevant. The median rank in this case includes words such as "famiglia ['family'], legge ['law'], Italia ['Italy']" and the opposition between "voi" ['you'] and "loro" ['they'] which commonly occurs in this type of discourse. The high frequency rank, on the other hand, is only characterised by the presence of the word "governo" ['government'], apart from the habitual functional words. Additional frequent words in the "Zan II" corpus (made up of comments that relate to the two right-wing posts) are: "opposizione ['opposition'], gender, incapaci ['incompetent'], schifo ['gross'], indottrinamento ['indoctrination'] and italiani" ['Italians'].

To further investigate the "Zan II" corpus, the N-grams tool was employed to identify the most recurrent expressions characterised by a three to five length cluster. The most pertinent results for the purposes of this study were "difendere la famiglia" ['protect the family'], "la famiglia è" ['family is'], "la libertà di" ['the freedom of'] and "I miei figli" ['my children'], while the cluster "in questo momento" ['at the moment'] has shown a high frequency in both corpora. As previously mentioned, because of the different corpora sizes, it was necessary to normalize the frequency of this last cluster in order to obtain valid results.

By using *Sketch Engine*, it was possible to compare the two corpora with the itTenTen16 corpus in order to obtain useful keyword lists and confirm all the obtained data. The results of this final check are provided below.

	Word	
1	Zan	•••
2	ZAN	•••
3	Evviva	•••
4	Grazie	•••
5	Bravissimo	•••
6	Congratulazioni	•••
7	Biden	•••
8	Finalmente	•••
9	Cirinnà	•••
10	Lgbtqi	•••

Figure 5.1 "Zan I" Keyword list.

	Word	
1	Zan	•••
2	covid	•••
3	gender	•••
4	indottrinamento	•••
5	Meloni	•••
6	Giorgia	•••
7	AGITE	•••
8	blablabla	•••
9	omotransfobia	•••
10	MLD	•••

Figure 5.2 "Zan II" Keyword list

As can be seen in Figure 5.1 and 5.2, while the first ten keywords of the "Zan I" corpus are mainly words of congratulations and thanks, words such as "indottrinamento" ['indoctrination'], "gender" and "covid" (usually co-occurring with the frequent cluster "in questo momento" ['at the moment'], the reason for this will be provided at a later point) appear among the first ten keywords of the "Zan II" corpus.

6. Discussion of results and concluding remarks

There is, first of all, a need to explain why a kind of 'double standard' was employed to analyse the two sub-corpora, in other words, why median and high frequency words were considered more relevant in the "Zan II" corpus whereas in the "Zan I" corpus it was low frequency terms that received more attention. When discussing the rallying properties of hashtags, Zappavigna (2014: 16) states: "It is now possible, using metadata such as hashtags, to find the values people are sharing about both daily minutia (e.g. what someone feels about their morning coffee) and about important world events." With this in mind, it may be claimed that the same ideational and interpersonal properties that characterise hashtags can be considered an intrinsic feature of Facebook pages, since they also allow people who share similar ideas and mindsets to gather together, allowing them to interact, communicate and create a virtual community characterized by a genuine sense of belonging. This rallying quality can therefore explain why a great number of right-wing supporters only left comments under the right-wing politicians' posts, while the majority of left-wing advocates solely commented upon Alessandro Zan and Monica Cirinnà's posts. It is when this dichotomic behaviour is not respected that hate comments usually thrive. When haters interact with posts sustaining values they do not share, offensive and insulting comments often appear. In this specific study, only a very marginal amount of discriminatory terms emerged, and focusing exclusively on expressly formulated hate words or phrases would have yielded very little. Conversely, paying close attention to the way ideas are expressed and deployed within each of the left/right groupings has provided the study with an insight into the divergent ideologies and the way such ideologies constitute fertile breeding ground for hatred. Focusing on the "Zan I" corpus, which only contains posts in favour of the approval of the bill, it soon becomes evident that the low frequency word "Gesù" ['Jesus'] has been used as a fully-fledged

hate word to offend and criticize all those who will benefit from the implementation of the Zan law. All contexts and collocates of this word refer to a plea to Jesus to urge all members of the LGBTQ+ community to "convert" to heterosexuality to save the world from the deadly sin of homosexuality: "Convertitevi dunque ora, prima che sia troppo tardi e ritrovate me, il vostro Gesù, perché il tempo che vi resta è breve…", ['So convert now before it is too late and come to me, your Jesus, once more as you have very little time left…'] "Cercate Gesù, lui è venuto a tirarti fuori dalla fossa tu che segui il vizio dell'omosessualità, per farti uscire dalla fossa! Gesù ti ama ma se non ti pentirai non può salvarti, molti sono ingannati ma guai alla zizzania! Guai a voi figli del diavolo siamo nel tempo della fine, Gesù torna!!" ['Seek out Jesus, for he has come to save you from the pit into which you have fallen while pursuing the sin of homosexuality! Jesus loves you but you cannot be saved if you do not repent, many have been fooled but beware of the tares! Woe befall you children of the devil we have reached the end, Jesus returns']. Interestingly, in the previous excerpt reference is made to the 'parable of the wheat and tares'; indeed in the King James version of the bible the original term '*zizania*' is maintained to describe a type of ryegrass that resembles wheat in the early stages of growth; homosexuals are therefore not only considered sinners, but also usurpers, taking up the rightful place of others. It must be said that the Zan bill *per se* does not concern homosexuality directly, but rather it has been conceived as a law to support minorities by preventing and sanctioning acts of violence and discrimination against them; it can therefore be concluded that these comments stem either from a lack of knowledge of the topic at hand, or from a hatred for homosexuals that surfaces in these sanctimonious comments.

Remaining within the religious domain and the "Zan I" corpus, the word "Dio" ['God'] also appears in the following clusters: "Dio li ha abbandonati" ['God has abandoned them'], "Ira di Dio" ['Wrath of God'] and "Giustizia di Dio" ['Justice of God']. In the same low frequency ranking, the words "diritti" ['rights'] and "diritto" ['right'] also appear, both of which are employed in two contrastive manners. While the plural form "diritti" ['rights'] usually co-occurrs with the words "umani" ['human'] and "civili" ['civil'] as the most relevant collocates, the singular form "diritto" ['right'], despite a lack of specific collocates, is also used to express very different points of view. Both terms are employed either to appreciate the progress Italy is making towards more inclusive and fairer human and civil rights, or to complain about the fact that

the approval of the Zan law will violate some essential and indispensable right, namely the birthright of children to have both a mother and a father and the right to freedom of expression. The following excerpts provide an illustration of this: "Inoltre avrò sempre il diritto di dire che un bambino ha il sacro Santo diritto di crescere con un Padre e una Madre" ['I will furthermore always have the right to state that a child has the sacred and holy right to grow up with a Father and a Mother'], "Gia oggi ogni cittadino e tutelato dalla costituzione e da leggi ordinarie ed ha diritti e doveri ed e gia tutelato dalle discriminazioni e non per questo bisogna fare leggi x imbavagliare chi la pensa in maniera diversa" ['Today every citizen already benefits from the protection of the constitution and ordinary laws and has rights and duties and is protected against discrimination, but this doesn't mean that laws should be made to muzzle those who think differently']. While the first justification employed to counter the implementation of the bill is, once again, completely out of context, the second may be considered a form of hate speech in every respect. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the noun "right", the closest English equivalent of the Italian word "diritto", as "what you are morally or legally entitled to do or to have". The meaning of the expressions "diritti umani" ['human tights'] and "diritti civili" ['civil rights'] as employed in the previously illustrated excerpts, appears therefore to grant individuals the right to insult, denigrate, and physically harm others because of their sexual orientation or gender identity without being charged with a crime, all actions that are still perpetrated today. Lastly, the two terms "civiltà" ['civilisation'] and "libertà" ['freedom'] seem to have a similarly dualistic relationship, used either to praise legislative progress: "La civiltà a piccoli passi complimenti" ['Small steps towards civil behaviour, congratulations'] "or to demonise it: "UNA LEGGE MASCHERATA COME LEGGE PRO CIVILTÀ MA IN REALTÀ LEGGE CONTRO LA LIBERTÀ DI PENSIERO E PAROLA!" ['A LAW THAT MASQUERADES AS A PRO-CIVIL RIGHTS LAW BUT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A LAW AGAINST FREE THOUGHT AND SPEECH'], "Confido nel buonsenso del senato, e che questa legge non passi... sarebbe un passo indietro per la nostra libertà e per la nostra civiltà" ['I trust in the common sense of the senate and that this law will not pass... it would be a step backwards for our freedom and civil rights']. Once again, the words "libertà" ['freedom'] and "civiltà" ['civilization'] contribute to the climate of hate, which will reach its peak in the second collection of comments.

The "Zan II" corpus, based on the comments to posts written by two proponents of right-wing ideologies, obviously contains messages that disagree with the approval of the Zan draft law. Bearing in mind the rallying properties of Facebook pages, a larger amount of hate speech is therefore to be expected. In fact, in the medium and high frequency ranks of the "Zan II" corpus, the terms that emerged were "famiglia" ['family'], "Italia" ['Italy'], "Governo" ['Government'] and the opposition between "Voi" ['You'] and "Loro" ['Them'] on the basis of the collocation patterns these words entertained with adjacent terms. Among the words that frequently co-occurred with "famiglia" ['family'], the adjectives "naturale" ['natural'] and "tradizionale" ['traditional'] stand out. Clearly by insisting upon the notion of a gender essentialist binary family, rather than explaining their reasons for disputing the law, online users overtly exclude and offend one of the minority groups that would benefit from the implementation of this bill, namely the LGBTQ+ community. The most recurrent offenses consist in denigrating same-sex families while supporting "traditional" and "natural" binary couples. "No, che tristezza, la famiglia è sacrosanta, composta di, padre, madre, questo non cambierà mai, è nel ordine delle cose" ['No, it's really so sad, the family is sacred, made up of father, mother, this will never change it's in the overall scheme of things'], "Stanno distruggendo i valori, la famiglia, l'istruzione, la spensieratezza dei bambini, tutto ciò che è pace e amore per insegnamenti folli e diabolici, tutto questo che ha a che vedere con un virus?" ['They are destroying our values, the family, education, the lightheartedness of children, all that is peace and love in favour of mad, diabolical doctrines, what has all this got to do with a virus?']. The word "famiglia" ['family'] also appeared in two of the most frequent clusters: "difendere la famiglia" ['protect the family'], as in "Difendere la famiglia tradizionale è un dovere che si tramanda da sempre, dobbiamo difenderla" ['Defending the traditional family is a duty that has been handed down over time, we must defend it'] and "la famiglia è"['family is'], as in "La famiglia è composta da una Madre e da un papà, ma cosa ci state costringendo ad accettare una situazione assurda, che si dirige in una vera e propria ANORMALITÀ." ['families are made up of a mother and a dad, but what are you forcing us to accept, an absurd situation that is heading towards true abnormality']. The cluster "i miei figli" ['my children'], was similarly used to create an oppositional narrative between the good traditional family and the evil new values of a society that has strayed from the straight and narrow: "Io

assolutamente non voglio che i miei figli vengano indrottinati su ste cose che reputo assurde. E se sono retrograda mi spiace ma sono libera di crescere i miei figli a valori che reputo importanti e non a ste cagate" ['I absolutely do not want my children to be indoctrinated with these things that I consider absurd. And if I'm old-fashioned well I'm sorry but I'm free to bring up my children with values that I believe to be important and not this shit']. Lastly, when Facebook users commented the right-wing posts by using the phrase "la libertà di" ['freedom of'], it was to complain about the reduced freedom of speech that the approval of the Zan law would lead to. On the basis of the comments, it would however be more appropriate to talk about a freedom to insult, denigrate and discriminate. Quoting Banks (2010), when hate "serves to fuel and aggregate the discursive practices of nascent or consolidated online communities, it is usually directed towards already stigmatised/marginalised groups", and that is exactly what has happened in the case at hand. Religion has been used as a bonding topic against minority groups that might just gain the freedom to subvert the "natural" order of things.

Before moving on to the last collocational patterns, a further cluster needed to be analysed: "in questo momento" ['at the moment'], since it also appeared in the "Zan I" corpus. Because of this, its frequency was normalized in order to make comparisons possible. Even though the raw frequency suggested that there was a higher use in the "Zan II" corpus, the normalized frequency showed that it is actually more than twice as frequent in the "Zan I" corpus. If one considers that in both corpora the expression was used to underline the fact that with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic this was not an appropriate moment to approve such a law since there were greater concerns to worry about, its hate speech properties are clearly visible: "Solo delle ???? possono pensare in questo momento così TRAGICO ALLE MINCHIATE" ['Only ???? can think about bullshit at such a tragic time'], "con tutti i problemi che ha l Italia in questo momento il sig. Zan pensa a questa legge…come siamo rovinati amministrati da ……" ['with all the problems that Italy is facing at the moment Mr Zan is thinking of this law… we truly are ruined administered by …']. If one stops to think of all the homophobic attacks that occurred in 2020, it really is not difficult to comprehend the urgent need for this law, and even if one may, to a certain extent, agree with these statements because of the precariousness of the current situation, it must be always be remembered that when politics need to step in to legislate on essential human rights, ethics are lost.

"Italia" ['Italy'] was another of the widely employed words, whose numerous collocates hindered a straightforward understanding of its contextual uses. By focusing on the verb "rovinare" ['to ruin'], one of the most frequent collocates, expressions such as "rovinare l'Italia" ['ruining Italy'] and "rovinato l'Italia" ['having ruined Italy'] were employed to criticize all the members of Parliament who ratified the law. Even though this example has not yielded numerous results, it has been mentioned to support the line of argument that follows. The last medium frequency words "Voi" ['You'] and "Loro" ['They'] and the only high frequency content word "Governo" ['Government'], which usually co-occurred with the two aforementioned pronouns, can explain the 'hate reaching its peak' phrase in the chapter heading. While the word "Governo" ['Government'] was commonly the initial term in insulting noun phrases directed at left-wing politicians: "Governo di falliti" ['Government of losers'], "governo di imbecilli" ['Government of imbeciles'] "governo di incapaci" ['Government of misfits'], "governo di buffoni" ['Government of fools'], "governo di mascalzoni" ['Government of rascals'], "governo di sciagurati" ['Government of wretches'], "governo di incompetenti" ['Government of incompetent fools'], "governo di sprovveduti" ['Government of wasters'] and "governo di stracazzari" ['Government of bullshitters']; the opposition between "Voi" ['You'] and "Loro" ['Them'] was not only employed by Facebook users to sully the ruling left-wing political party, but also to criticise the right-wing political party that did not oppose the approval of this law, thus creating disagreements in their own group. It follows that the power of hate speech is not only able to create communities of belonging, it is also capable of bringing them down, which is exactly when hate reaches its peak.

When analysing the Italian response to the approval of the Zan bill by the Chamber of Deputies, two aspects emerged: from a linguistic point of view the power of hate speech to create (and subsequently destroy) online communities of belonging and, from a sociological perspective a rudimentary backwardness in the way fundamental rights are acknowledged and accepted by certain categories in Italy. Two further objectives of this study were, on the one hand, to illustrate the need for app developers to improve the moderation procedure applied to user-generated content, and on the other, to exemplify a useful research path for social media data retrieval. In terms of future research, it will be interesting to follow the entire legislative process of the Zan law to see

whether the online responses of the left-wing and right-wing factions change along the way.

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Maria Grazia Sindoni

RESISTING HATE SPEECH: A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE *STOP FUNDING HATE* BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN IN UK

1. Introduction

How to counter hate speech is at the core of debates that intend to contrast the upsurge of violence against targeted social groups and promote social justice in the offline and online arena (Gagliardone *et al.* 2015). As recently shown (Paz/Montero-Díaz/Moreno-Delgado 2020), research on hate speech indexed in Web of Science has been exponentially rising over the last five years. This state of affairs reflects a growing media coverage of this phenomenon and its consequent mounting presence in public social media. Studies in humanities and social sciences have explored aspects of discriminatory discourses in a wide range of domains, including international criminal law (Fino 2020), politics (Carlson 2020; Bhatia 2016), ethics (Brison 2013), communication (Calvert 1997) linguistics (Anagnostopoulos/Everett/Carey 2013; Archakisa/Lampropouloub/Tsakonac 2018), psychology (Cowan/Hodge 1996), among others.

Hate speech, in its multifarious and varied definitions, has gained momentum with the advent of digital media that have allowed an unprecedented freedom and ease of access for users (Awan 2016; Ben-David/Matamoros-Fernández 2016; Chiluwa 2018). Legislation is still scattered and many instances of linguistically, visually or multimodally expressed hatred can be found on social media – and this is so because circumscribing discourse that encourages racial, sexual and religious discrimination is extremely complex in practical terms. Direct hate speech and indirect fear speech are particularly effective when they enjoy the platform that big media outlets can guarantee. Hence, these forms of hateful expressions can be powerfully disseminated, thus reaching an audience that is larger than the one produced by single social media profiles. A case in point is the systematic co-deployment of discourse strategies put in place by major British paper and digital tabloids, such as the *Daily Mail*, *Sun* and *Daily Express*, which actively regiment and harness

sentiments of adversity, hostility and malevolence towards targeted individuals, groups, and communities.

An organised apparatus of control requires principled responses. One of the attempts at countering hate speech within these regimented powerhouses of hate is the establishment of boycott campaigns (Sindoni 2016). These may actively fight hate and fear speech by adopting strategies that run along lines other than those officially pursued by legislative bodies and governmental policies – opting for indirect tactics that impinge on the profitability and cost-effectiveness of hate speech dissemination.

This chapter selects as a case study the *Stop Funding Hate* (SFH henceforth) boycott platform (www.stopfundinghate.com), which was launched in the UK in 2016, with the aim of countering the hatred and discrimination that some British media outlets, such as those mentioned previously, propagate to increase their sales. Building on previous research (Sindoni 2016, 2017, 2018), the boycott strategy promoted by the SFH platform will be illustrated, with a view to clarifying how they succeed in "making hate unprofitable". The website's tagline presents the campaign's agenda in a nutshell: "We're making hate unprofitable by persuading advertisers to pull their support from publications that spread hate and division". We will thus address the questions about which resources are orchestrated to this end and how these persuasive strategies are put into effect to counter hate and fear speech.

To answer these questions, the chapter adopts critical multimodal discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003; Machin/Mayr 2012) to unveil how language and other meaning-making semiotic resources co-construct approaches for the active debunking of hate speech from rhetorical and pragmatic standpoints and within a discourse-based and social semiotics perspective (van Dijk 1993; van Leeuwen 1996). More in detail, the chapter will provide a multimodal transcription and annotation of the first video that launched the campaign, entitled "Stop Funding Hate", and will do so within a multimodal framework of analysis that is apt to the unpacking of the involved semiotic resources (Iedema 2001; Maier 2012).

The chapter will therefore examine the visual, verbal, aural and overall design strategies adopted by the *Stop Funding Hate* organization to convince advertisers to pull their support from British media outlets, to show how meaning making is a parallel counterpart of the powerhouses of hate. Final remarks are devoted to suggesting possible pedagogical implications in studies that set out to deconstruct hate and fear speech by means of boycott campaigns,

but with the caveat that these and similar enterprises implicitly recognize that hate discourse can be dismantled primarily by profit-driven campaigns (see Foucault 1980). This means that boycott campaigns, as shown in this case study, implicitly devalue pedagogical initiatives, as they indirectly implement the same profit-based perspective, albeit differently oriented.

In the following Section, the research literature is overviewed; the difference between hate and fear speech is drawn. In Section 3, some background on the case study is provided, research questions are presented, as well as the adopted methodology. Section 4 provides the transcription and annotation of the video selected for analysis. Section 5 discusses the data from a multimodal critical discourse analysis perspective, and draws some preliminary conclusions.

2. Hate speech vs. fear speech: an open-ended agenda

The fluidity and polymorphic nature of hate speech in digital environments makes it extremely difficult to describe, let alone effectively fight it. Hate speech is an umbrella term incorporating a wide range of discourses that promote hatred, but precise definitions are essential for effective interventions. A commonly used characterisation is provided by the Council of Europe that states that hate speech includes "all forms of expressions which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin" (1997). Cohen-Almagor (2014: 431) provides a wider definition of hate speech as "bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of their actual or perceived innate characteristics".

However, and quite strikingly, hate speech has no agreed upon definition in international human rights, even though the detection of hate and discrimination needs formal guidance to be tackled. As a starting point, the following international standards are useful to identify hate speech in three main target contexts:

1) Racial hatred is addressed in the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) that is a human right treaty against racial hate (United Nations 1965).

2) Nationality or religious hatred is condemned in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), within advocacy expressions inciting discrimination, hostility or violence (United Nations 1966).
3) Gender, sexual orientation and other forms of hatred may be limited in terms of the ICCPR, in the interests of respect of the rights or reputations of others (United Nations 1966).

However, in all three cases, any restrictions must be deemed "necessary" by law, so that any restriction is fine-tuned to context to avoid any limit to free speech. In addition to the goal of protecting the rights of individuals or groups, these standards can include national security, public morality or community health. More recently, the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (2019) has set out to tackle all forms of xenophobia, racism and intolerance with the ultimate goal to end armed conflict, atrocity crimes and terrorism.

Such complexity requires a contextualised and refined approach to identifying and limiting hate speech, especially when it comes to addressing the issue in digital scenarios (Citron/Norton 2011). With the advent of the Internet, ease of access, maximum flow and spread of information, as well as an immense possibility of unmonitored and free expression in social media, have allowed powerful circulation of hate speech and consequent need of further regulation (Banks 2010). Digital haters make ample use of social media to share ideologies and disseminate propaganda, by hyperlinking to similar websites, recruiting like-minded disciples and advocating violence (Cohen-Almagor 2011). In highly nuanced digital settings, a straightforward definition of hate speech has become even more problematic, hence some scholars have proposed narrower definitions, such as "dangerous speech" or "fear speech". While the former originally indicates speech addressed against others with the goal to harm and hurt (Benesch 2012), the latter was designed to describe those speech acts that do not directly incite crime and violence, but contribute to building a siege mentality (Buyse 2014). More recently, research has moved the debate of hate speech beyond a normative approach, further expanding the categories and including, among others, the label of "extreme speech", particularly apt to deal with online hate (Gagliardone 2019). In 2013, the United Nations produced the Rabat Plan that recognized that "legislation is only part of a larger toolbox" (2013: 12), and that argued that even though

some expressions do not incur in direct criminal, civil or administrative sanctions, they still raise concerns because they threaten civil rights. Fighting hate speech should thus involve broader initiatives that promote a culture of peace, acceptance and respect for diversity.

Since the Rabat Plan in 2013, scattered research has reflected on the need to counter hate and fear speech so that moral and social responsibility could be strengthened, mainly in the context of applied ethics (Cohen-Almagor 2011). However, few studies have examined these counter strategies from the standpoint of multimodal critical discourse studies. In the following Section, the case study selected for analysis will be presented by introducing its wider frame of context, and specifically, some coordinates will be provided to motivate why the SFH campaign was established in the first place in the UK. Subsequently, the research questions and the methodology adopted to address them will be introduced and explained.

3. The Stop Funding Hate platform in the UK: what and how we can learn from boycott campaigns

As early as 2008, a study on UK press coverage of British Muslims demonstrated that the number of news stories about Muslims had dramatically risen between 2000 and 2008 (Moore *et al.* 2008). Media representation of Muslims was subsequently mapped by research literature from different standpoints, such as media studies, philosophy, multicultural education, international affairs, linguistics, cultural studies (Ahmed/Matthes 2016; Baker 2010; Akbarzadeh/Smith 2005; Richardson 2004). An overwhelming majority of negative representations in both printed and online media emerged from these studies, so that a picture of biased representations of Muslims appeared in all its harshness (Horsti 2016; Innes 2010; Leudar *et al.* 2008; Lynch/McGoldrick/Russell 2012).

In 2012, the Leveson Inquiry into UK press standards insisted that prejudiced, inflammatory and biased news coverage about ethnic minorities, immigrants and asylum seekers was regular practice in UK journalism (Leveson 2012). As some British media outlets were fuelling anti-Muslim sentiments in 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, encouraged nations to take a firm stand against racism and xenophobia, which, he said, "under the guise of freedom of expression, are

being allowed to feed a vicious cycle of vilification, intolerance and politicization of migrants, as well as of marginalized European minorities such as the Roma" (United Nations Report 2015). The report was occasioned by migrants being likened to "cockroaches" by a columnist of *The Sun* (see Sindoni 2017). The UN's report was a wake-up call in Britain and prompted the development of the *Stop Funding Hate* campaign in 2016. In a nutshell, SFH was based on the idea that engaging with advertisers in a wide range of media outlets, including, but not limited to, tabloid newspapers, could contribute to making hate unprofitable. This can be done by convincing advertisers to pull out from media outlets that publish inflammatory, sensational and divisive news, thus reducing their revenues (SFH 2020). Since then, there has been a significant reduction of hate and fear speech in the UK, and similar campaigns have been launched worldwide. For example, the Sleeping Giants campaign, which set out "to make bigotry and sexism less profitable", as claimed in the Twitter account tagline, has succeeded in persuading over 4,000 companies to stop advertising in the controversial website Breitbart in the US to date (Johnson 2018). Similar initiatives have been introduced in Germany, France, Denmark (Wilson 2018).

The SFH struck a chord in many in Britain and beyond and the culture of ethical advertising started spreading as a strategy within a "larger toolbox" to resist hate and fear speech, which may not directly be charged, but are still controversial and divisive (SFH 2020). These movements began popularising concerns that were already the target of UK regulating bodies for advertising, such as the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Committees on Advertising Practise (CAP). Advertising is in fact controlled in the UK by means of self-regulation and co-regulation. However, if the laws regulating advertising were designed with traditional advertisements in mind, they have now turned to cover online advertisements as well, with a view to check digital activities, in websites and social media.

This chapter thus addresses the question about how the boycott campaign started gaining momentum in its early beginnings and, more specifically, which multimodal artefacts and ensembles were put in place to start a movement that today has gone global. To this end, we will provide a transcription and annotation of the first video produced for the Facebook page. The video introduces the first campaign action, which called on Virgin Media to pull their ads from the tabloid newspaper the *Sun* on August 18, 2016 (Wilson 2018).

The method used to explore this research question will be qualitative as it addresses a fine-grained area of interest, grounded on a multimodal critical discourse perspective.

3.1. Background on the theoretical framework adopted for the analysis

Multimodal critical discourse studies broadly derive from sociosemiotic and multimodal approaches to communication. The latter are informed by Halliday's theory of social semiotics, that recognized language as a meaning-making system where meanings could be understood along three different metafunctions. These are "functions of functions" of language and focus on three different components of meaning, namely 1) the ideational, including the experiential and logical metafunctions. The experiential metafunction deals with external and internal experiences, actions and events of the world and involves the field of discourse, or the topic; 2) interpersonal, dealing with relationships that are encoded in language, is about the *tenor* of discourse, or *who* is involved in interaction; 3) textual, having to do with how discourse is constructed in terms of order of discourse, and is about the *mode* of discourse, or which role language plays in the communicative events. The metafunctions are actually conflated in real language use and participants make them visible by making lexico-grammar choices and therefore drawing on the resources that language as a system renders available to them.

Socio-semiotics has prompted the development of concurrent theoretical frameworks of multimodal analysis for visual design of static and moving images, displayed art, music, etc. (see Kress/van Leeuwen 2001, 2006; O'Toole 2011; van Leeuwen 1999, 2005). A social-semiotic and multimodal approach sees communication as a co-shared and systematic deployment of resources, such as language, image, music, kinesics, and proxemics patterns. These resources are orchestrated by participants in contexts of situation in principled patterns to produce meanings (Malinowski 1923; see also Halliday 1978). Meaning making is co-constructed and can be understood by unpacking resource-specific systems of regularities – initially called "grammars" (Kress/van Leeuwen 2006). Transcription and annotation are heuristics to help unpack these patterns with the aim of understanding how each resource (responding to its own grammar) contributes to overall meaning making (Thibault 2000; Flewitt *et al.* 2009).

Multimodal analyses therefore are meant to examine patterns of regularities in the behaviour of signs (including, but not limited to, language) as produced by the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Multimodal critical discourse analysis shares the interest in the meaning making of *all* resources, but with the specific goal of unpacking both the overt and covert meanings that a text produces (Machin/Mayr 2012). Systems of regularities can be detected in texts to the point that these regularities generate "discourse", which is a central concern of critical discourse analysis (van Dijk 1993; Wodak 2001; Fairclough 2003). Broad ideas, regularly conveyed by text, assemble discourses that fabricate worldviews (Foucault 1980). The process of doing CDA involves investigating lexico-grammatical choices in texts, in line with Halliday's systemic-functional agenda.

The following Section will provide a transcription and annotation of the video that set the whole process of resistance to hate and fear speech in motion within the overall SFH agenda, with the ultimate goal of making hate unprofitable.

4. A transcription and annotation of the first SFH video

The following transcription and annotation are based on an approach adapted from Iedema (2001), Baldry and Thibault (2006), and Maier (2012) and presented in Table 1. In the grid, two-shot sequences are numbered in the first column; in the second, the two screenshots are incorporated to show the sequence in chunks of two items for reasons of space. In the third column, *representation*, a short description at the content level is provided. The term is drawn on Kress and van Leeuwen's description of the representational function of visual texts that deals with contents, in terms of narrative, analytical and other processes, as described for static images (2006). The fourth column, *interaction/orientation*, draws, respectively, on Kress and van Leeuwen's description of the interactive function, such as modality, instantiated in concepts such as coding orientation, perspective, colour (2006), and on Iedema's labelling that explains how social relationships are instantiated in dynamic texts, for example in terms of the represented social distance (2001). The last column, *organization*, is adapted from Iedema (2001) and Maier (2012) and refers to how the different visual and verbal items in the page are placed and arranged. Positioning of elements contributes to overall textual (see Halliday 1978) and compositional (see Kress/van Leeuwen 2006) meaning making. The three

different columns devoted to transcription and annotation therefore derive from the socio-semiotic theory designed by Halliday, because they apply concepts that are derivative from the three metafunctions that we have presented in Section 3.1, with the *representation* column referring to field and contents as deployed by the ideational metafunction in language; the *interaction* column devoted to tenor, or how the social relationships are visually encoded as realized by the interpersonal metafunction in language; and the organization column referring to the compositional arrangement that in the Hallidayan model is instantiated by the textual metafunction.

Shot num.	Visual frames (2 screenshots, left is A, right is B)	Representation	Interaction/ Orientation	Organization
1		Neutral black background and verbal language	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	1A superimposed text*: Drip by drip* 1B superimposed text: *Our society*
2		2A: Neutral black background and verbal language, one word highlighted in red 2B: tabloids front pages and titles in rapid succession	2A: Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness 2B: Eye-level angle, bold, no perspective, no discernible visual representation Social distance: impersonal	2A superimposed text: *is being poisoned* 2B superimposed text: no tabloids in rapid succession
3		3A: Neutral black background and verbal language, one word highlighted in red 3B: tabloids front pages and titles in rapid succession	3A: Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness 3B: Eye-level angle, bold, no perspective, clear visual representation Social distance: social	3A superimposed text: *with headlines selling hatred* 3B readable headline: *Migrants threaten to kill truckers*

4		4A: Tabloids front pages and titles in rapid succession 4B: Neutral black background and verbal language, one word highlighted in red	4A: Eye-level angle, bold, no perspective, tabloids titles 4B: Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	4A readable headlines: *4,000 foreign murderers and rapists we can't throw out* 4B superimposed text: *And hate crime on the rise*
5		Neutral green background and verbal language	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	5A superimposed text: *If you want to make it stop but you don't know how* 5B superimposed text: *There's a way*
6		6A: Neutral green background and verbal language 6B: Neutral black background and verbal language	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	6A superimposed text: *Right now, the press use fear and division* 6B superimposed text: *to sell more papers*
7		Neutral black background and verbal language, one word highlighted in red in 7B	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	7A superimposed text: *And they don't care what we think* 7B superimposed text: *because hate pays*

8		8A: Neutral dark background and verbal language in a silhouette of a building where each floor is represented by the symbol of pound. It grows. 8B: Neutral green background	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	8A superimposed text: *but to survive newspapers also need money from advertisers* 8B superimposed text: *and advertisers do care what we think of them*
9		9A: Neutral green background and verbal language 9B: Neutral light green background and verbal language in a red circle	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	9A superimposed text: *they spend a fortune promoting brand values like…* 9B superimposed text: *honesty, decency and inclusivity*
10		10A: Neutral green background and verbal language 10B: Neutral light green background and verbal language in a dark grey circle	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	10A superimposed text: *so if they pay for ads in papers that deal in…* 10B superimposed text: *hate, prejudice and lies*
11		11A: Neutral green background and a poster of the Virgin boycott campaign 11B: Neutral green background and verbal language	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	11A superimposed text: *we will call them out (please Virgin stop funding hate)* 11B superimposed text: *we need everyone to share it*
12		12A: Neutral green background and verbal language 12B: Neutral black background and verbal language	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	12A superimposed text: *because every share will make hate cost* 12B superimposed text: *and when advertisers start buying less ad-space*

13		13A: Neutral black background and verbal language, one word highlighted in red 13B: Neutral dark background and verbal language in a silhouette of a building where each floor is represented by the symbol of pound. It shrinks	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	13A superimposed text: *...printing hatred...* 13B superimposed text: *becomes bad business*
14		Neutral green background and verbal language	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	14A superimposed text: *so please like our page* 14B superimposed text: *share this video*
15		12A: Neutral green background and verbal language 12B: Neutral black background and verbal language, one word highlighted in red	Eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness Social distance: impersonal	15A superimposed text: *And let's #stop funding hate* 13B superimposed text: *stop funding hate*

Table 1 Complete transcription and annotation of the first SFH video (taken from Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/stopfundinghate/videos/310014316002572/, mins 1:54, last accessed December 26, 2020).

5. Discussion and conclusions

Even though the video appears to be basic and simple, making use of a limited number of resources, the transcription and annotation, presented in Table 1 in Section 4, allows us to identify some important insights on the strategies adopted by SFH to fight hate. From the *representation* standpoint, the video appears poor in visual terms, at least from a content-based and mimetic perspective, or, from an ideational standpoint. No action or events

are reproduced, no visible actors are embodied, with the exception of some tabloid newspapers covers that are first presented one-by-one (screenshots, s. henceforth, 2B, 3B), then in very rapid succession (s. 4A). The rest of the video is constructed with verbal messages that are presented matter-of-factly, generally positioned centre-screen and following an *interaction/orientation* rather undeveloped display, with all screenshots presenting basic visual modality markers, e.g. eye-level angle, no perspective, no contextualisation, no visual representation, no depth, no brightness. In the *organization* structure, the message is, again, mostly conveyed by verbal language that is accompanied by a low-key music, starting with a sombre tone and then turning into a livelier mood, when the proposal instantiated by the video is made explicit (i.e. *what we can do to resist hate*). Hence a basic multimodal analysis would reveal little of the powerful message that is conveyed by the video instead, as the huge and instant success of the campaign shows (SFH 2020). The implicit and subtler messages can be unveiled by adopting some CDA-based criteria of analysis, for example in terms of the classification of social actors (van Leeuwen 1996) that verbally construct the *us vs. them* oppositioning (Machin/Mayr 2012):

> *Us*
> First person plural: our (1B; 14A); we (4A; 7A; 8B; 11A; 11B); us (15A; 15B);
> Second person singular: you (5A; 14A; 14B)
> *Them*
> Third person plural: them (8B; 11A); they (7A; 9A; 10A).

The use of pronouns is subtly interlaced and establishes the two communities addressed by the video: 1) the *us* that indexically incorporates the video producers (the SFH first initiators) and the general public (the SFH supporters) and 2) the *them* that indexically enregisters the tabloid owners and the advertisers – representing the target of the campaign, i.e. those who can reduce the tabloids' profit in "selling hate".

From a critical multimodal perspective, some key visual components are used to best effects in the video: colour alternation is fully semiotic and meaning making, as well as the alternation of round and capital letters, and the use of abstract coding orientation is always motivated by the semiotic choice of shapes, such as squares and circles. Even though these abstract shapes and the basic colours used may seem devoid of meaning – or perhaps just leaving the message "speaking by itself" verbally, on closer inspection, they exhibit a

complex and motivated meaning making at work. When the message deals with the projected target of the boycott campaign, the shapes used carry specific meanings. As argued by Kress and van Leeuwen, basic geometrical shapes are considered as "pure, quasi-scientific 'atoms' of the visible world" (2006: 53) and, as such, they are automatically assigned semantic connotations. The whole video is built by means of squares and rectangles, which, if on the one hand, simply reproduce the screen where the video is played by viewers, on the other hand, and on a more abstract level, point to the "elements of the mechanical, technological order, of the world of human construction" (Kress/van Leeuwen 2006: 54). While squares and rectangles dominate the shape of buildings, roads, cities, circles represent the natural and are typically associated to organic and living entities. As is explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), angularity is associated with the inorganic, crystalline world of technology, which we, as humans, can act upon, whereas circularity stands for the organic and natural that goes beyond human control. However, as symbolism greatly varies across cultures, the values of "technology" and "mechanical order" can be differently perceived and, as such, can be evaluated both positively and negatively. In the case represented in the video, both values are visually harnessed, since the negative values of power and oppression are manifest in what the media thrust upon us and therefore "box us in", but, and at the same time, the positive values of change and agency are visible and allow us to resist the "principles" of hate and discrimination. Even though, as previously mentioned, boxes are prevalent in this visual representation, in s. 9B and 10B, two circles are used as the marked choice to convey the climatic transition from the much heralded (but fake) values of *honesty, decency and inclusivity* that media outlets pretend to advocate to the actual anti-values of *hate, prejudice and lies* that they actively contribute to disseminating by publishing hate feeding news stories.

Consistently with these views, the colour palette used to represent the *us* vs. *them* opposition is clear-cut: if black, dark grey and red symbolize the negative values advocated by prejudiced news stories, light green and white signify change that can be actively pursued. Following a multimodal critical approach to the semiosis of communication, colours are fundamental modality markers (Kress/van Leeuwen 2006: 160-163), since certain meanings to be attributed can, in turn, play epistemic or deontic roles in visual statements, for example in colour: 1) *saturation* (i.e. a scale running from full colour saturation to the

absence of colour – black and white); 2) *differentiation* (i.e. a scale running from a extremely differentiated array of colours to monochrome); 3) *modulation* (i.e. a scale running from entirely modulated colour, with, for example, the use of different shades of red, to unmodulated colour). In the context of the video, the colours used are saturated, differentiated and modulated in-between from full to zero, because the basic shapes call for basic colours, which are fully aligned with a coded and abstract visual representation of the epistemic truth spelled out by the verbal text. In other words, the truth value attached to what is being verbally said in the video is presented as fully valid (neither modalization nor modulation are used in language; every utterance is presented as acceptable and "true" and the viewer is expected to take it at face value) and this statement of truth holds parallels with the modality markers expressed by colours, which are displayed as "real" in their saturation, differentiation and modulation.

The transcription and annotation of the SFH video, which may appear scarcely multimodal at first sight, has shown that a multimodal critical analysis can reveal what may be hidden for the casual viewer. The strategies activated in the video illustrate that hate can be countered by assuming a rhetoric similar to that assumed in hate and fear speech. Such rhetoric builds a worldview that the viewers should take at face value, without the possibility of contesting or rejecting it. If hate and fear speech in tabloid headlines was disseminated by prejudiced worldviews (i.e. those that presented hatred toward migrants as a non-negotiable truth), the SFH video promotes a similar strategy, that of presenting ways of opposing hate matter-of-factly, making it non-negotiable, by means of construing a network of *us* vs. *them* – instantiated both verbally and visually.

A caveat to this approach is that the strategies that are shown as successful within this scenario are only those that set out to fight hate by making it unprofitable, thus somehow implicitly reducing the impact of other pedagogical initiatives, and therefore assuming that the only way to resist hate is to cut off the fuel supply. In other words, this line of thinking seems to assume that hate cannot be fought simply on the basis *that it is wrong*. However, considering the societal impact that this campaign has had, that is convincing Virgin to pull out its adverts from the *Sun* (SFH 2020), further research should address the question as to whether and to what extent other resistance strategies can actually be put in place in the context of fully functioning and profit-driven hate and fear powerhouses.

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Stefania Taviano

THE MIGRANT *INVASION*: LOVE SPEECH AGAINST HATE SPEECH AND THE VIOLATION OF LANGUAGE RIGHTS

As shown by a growing body of research (Lynch 2012, Waldron 2012, Sindoni 2017, 2018), hate speech aims to de-humanize targeted individuals and/or groups while building a sense of in-group solidarity for the groups under threat. In the Council of Europe's Recommendation No. R (97) of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on "hate speech", this term is "understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin." (2016: 77) According to Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), marginalizing displaced people as a homogenous yet diverse category of people is the result of socially and politically oriented discourses. As I have argued elsewhere (Taviano 2020), following on from Bucholtz and Hall (2004), such discourses construct identities by downplaying differences while inventing similarities. The Other is ideologically and socially recognizable, and thus marked, compared to the group in a position of power, as in the binary opposition between Europeans on the one hand, and displaced people on the other. The latter, like Muslims, are similarly represented in printed and online newspapers as a homogenous group and a threat to society on three different levels, as Sindoni argues (2018), following on from Innes (2010). Firstly, as a physical threat to the society of the host country and its members; secondly, as an economic threat; thirdly, as a cultural threat to social and cultural values.

In the first part of this chapter, I intend to show commonalities in hate speech against displaced people, pertaining to the previously mentioned first and second levels, in the British and Italian press, while in the second and final part, I will focus on how Western narratives, purposely created and reinforced by mainstream media, have a bearing on displaced people's language rights. More precisely, I am going to use a translation approach to illustrate the consequences of the lack of visibility of language(s) and translation practices,

particularly in contexts of inequality and injustice, such as migration laws and asylum procedures. The paradox of such invisibility lies precisely in the centrality of language(s) and translation and their impact on the lives of thousands of displaced people around the world, particularly in Europe. Scholars such as Inghilleri (2020) and Polezzi (2020), among others, have addressed the strong interrelations between migration and translation practices, particularly in terms of human rights and by challenging traditional notions of citizenships. This is the reason why new words and a new language of/about migration is paramount to address hate speech and to put an end to the violation of displaced people's rights.

While it is common knowledge that migration is a recurrent phenomenon in the history of mankind, vital for its evolution, citizenship continues to be conceived and represented in geographical terms and on the basis of national confines. Such notions of citizenship, dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth century are, however, no longer valid in the global society we inhabit today where social categories and national identities are constantly called into question by never ending migration flows. Following on from the growing body of research that seeks out new and challenging notions of citizenship, as I have argued elsewhere (Taviano 2020), I would like to underline the need for researchers to take an active role in raising awareness that "in the case of migration, everyone involved in its processes and procedures should be made aware of the role that languages, narratives and their multiple translations play in how people are seen, treated, allowed (or not allowed) to live a human life" (Inghilleri and Polezzi forthcoming). It is this awareness that can lead to new words, to love speech as a challenging tool against hate speech to find alternative ways of conceptualizing migration and the world we live in, thereby shedding new light on the interconnections between migration, on the one hand, and languages, translation and citizenship on the other.

Let us start from the fact that, due to the complexity of the term migrant, its use is not univocally defined in the media or in public usage. According to the International Federation of the Red Cross (2020):

> Migrants are persons who leave or flee their habitual residence to go to new places – usually abroad – to seek opportunities or safer and better prospects. Migration can be forced or voluntary, but in the majority of cases it is a result of a combination of choice and obligation, as well as the decision to take up residence elsewhere for a significant duration of time.

The term migrant has different connotations since it can refer to labour migrants, stateless persons and migrants considered irregular by public authorities, displaced migrants within their own country, refugees and asylum seekers. A refugee, instead, as defined by the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention (UNHCR 1951), "is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or belonging to a certain social group." Definitions such as migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are nevertheless used interchangeably in the printed and online press, as well as in social media, and various linguistic strategies, such as nominalisation, and multimodal strategies, particularly through visual semiotics, are adopted to put forward a discourse of othering, as shown by Lirola (2016) and Sindoni (2017), among others.

Media imagery and figurative language have shaped and continue to shape public opinion regarding migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and, as Hsiao-Hung Pai argues, this can be seen in the way migration into Europe has been portrayed as an "invasion" of different cultures and a "clash of civilisations" – similar to the justifications of the colonial era where the colonized were cast as racially inferior beings" (2020). Such narratives are far from being new since the use of stereotypical and negative depictions of displaced people in the British media throughout the years has been documented by a number of studies, such as van Leeuwen's detailed analysis of predominant discursive strategies (2008), Balch and Balabanova's (2016) work on the dehumanizing nature of media representations, Sindoni's multimodal analysis of hate speech in British media (2017), to name but a few.

Dehumanization reinforced by the use of statistics (Van Leeuwen 2008), the extensive use of water-related images to convey a sense of uncontrollable natural disaster (Baker *et al.* 2008), the opposition of an 'us' vs a 'them', have been and continue to be predominant discursive strategies in mainstream media. As Sindoni claims (2017), tropes are commonly found in hate speech which makes a large use of stock phrases due to their fixity and non-negotiable nature. "Invasion" is a particularly frequent trope to describe the arrival of displaced people in Europe and a powerful image of physical threat to its citizens. Moreover, it is strongly linked to the second level type of threat since such an invasion is more often than not judged in terms of its costs.

In this chapter, I am going to focus precisely on such forms of socio-political

labelling, as Stefano degli Uberti (2019) defines them, since they lead to a series of bordering practices, which go well beyond the misrepresentation of displaced people's identities to affect their rights as human beings (see also Federici 2020a). As Roy Greenslade claims in *The Guardian* (2020), the migration crisis reported in British tabloids, is "a wholly media-manufactured 'crisis'". More precisely, newspapers, such as *The Daily Express*, "incited fears of immigrants", while according to a research carried out by the Cardiff University school of journalism, British press coverage is "more polarized and aggressive" compared to newspapers in the rest of Europe. The following headlines, from *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Mail*, reported in Figure 1, testify to the depiction of displaced people as both a physical and economical threat to British citizens: the image of a migrant invasion through the water-related "flood" variant is closely linked to social costs in terms of social housing, and jobs presumably stolen from Britons.

Fig. 1. Greenslade (2020)

These narratives and forms of translation of migrant experiences not only erase their difference, but affect their language and human rights. This is the reason why, in the second part of this chapter, I am going to argue for the need

to find a new language of/about migration to pave the way for alternative ways of conceiving citizenship and of contributing to guarantee the displaced people's right to speak and to be heard. Hate speech does more than fabricate predominant narratives and misrepresentations of displaced people, it conceals bordering practices which confine them within social contexts where their language, and consequentially their legal rights, are violated. Their right to understand and be understood, to communicate, to be recognized by law, is in reality silenced, when, for instance, language services are not available or reduced to a bare minimum. However, there is hardly any trace of such data or indication of how displaced people's language rights are denied because it is precisely by silencing the value of language(s) in their plurality that Western narratives continue to prevent displaced people from acquiring agency (see also Degli Uberti 2019). This is why Bassnett's call (2020) for a general awareness of the visibility, and centrality of translation, in everyday life – during the *Translation and invisibility in the media* online conference organized by the Department of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Bologna – is particularly relevant at this moment in time and in cases of inequality and injustice.

Love speech and alternative ways of conceiving migration are the starting point to turn the rhetoric of migrant invasion and its related costs upside down and to recognize the language rights of displaced people. As Federici has shown in his study of the concept of *emergenza migranti*, "a sensationalist translation" and "a biased, conditioning and aggressive metaphor" (2020a: 234), in the online and printed versions of three Italian daily newspapers, *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*, its pervasive use "perpetuates the metaphor through an aggressive (and for some illegal) anti-migration policy." (2020a: 237). During the previously mentioned 2020 *Translation and invisibility in the media* online conference, Federici also discussed how the visibility of translators and interpreters in the UK has paradoxically led to a lack of language provision services. More precisely, the contestations of British MPs and Secretaries of State, arguing that the translation of such documents and the provision of public interpreting services encourages segregation because, as a consequence, displaced people tend not to learn English, have caused the loss of funding for those companies providing language services for displaced people.

Similarly, recurrent mainstream discourse about the costs of displaced

people for Italian tax payers, which I am going to illustrate further, conceals the lack of sufficient language services. As Di Pasquale, Stuppini and Tronchin show (2019), the overall costs for Italian language courses and intercultural mediators represent only 2.5% of the social expenses for migration. While the figure of intercultural mediators cannot be examined in detail due to the scope of the present study, suffice to briefly focus on their low professional profile, which is even more paradoxical due to the crucial nature of their function. Mediators are Italian and migrant professional, as well as non-professional figures, who support displaced people when communicating with service providers in a variety of contexts, such as hospitals and clinics, courts, police stations, public offices and schools. To this day and, more than twenty years after the legal introduction of this figure in 1990 (with the Martelli law), mediators have not yet received full professional recognition on a national level and professional training is still far from being homogenous and is often insufficient. Their responsibilities and tasks, together with hourly rates and employment conditions, tend to be generally poor and vary from one Italian region to another (see Amato and Garwood 2011, Melandri *et al.* 2014, Katan 2015, Taviano 2020, among others). Despite the lack of professional recognition and the predominant narrative undermining the centrality of language rights, intercultural mediators, like translators and interpreters in context of war (Baker 2013), can and often do choose to carry out single albeit significant initiatives of radical social change, as I have shown elsewhere (Taviano 2020). In these cases, mediators and interpreters play an activist role by creating "cross border networks of solidarity" (Taronna 2015: 173) and contribute to a translational notion of citizenship.

Radical initiatives contributing to the creation of networks of solidarity, together with love speech, represent social and political tools to turn upside down common strategies shared by British and Italian media coverage regarding migration. Sammito, an Italian human rights activist, member of *Cara Italia*, a movement of Italians and displaced people who fight against racism and all other forms of discrimination, has called into question predominant misconceptions, such as those concerning the costs of migration for Italian citizens, similar to those revealed by Greenslade for the British press. However, before focusing on similarities between British and Italian hate speech in mainstream media, it is necessary to briefly introduce the Italian reception system currently regulated by the 2018 Salvini Security Decree, which modified

Act 189 of 20 July 2002, also known as the Bossi-Fini Law, responsible for introducing the *Sistema di protezione per richiedenti di asilo e rifugiati* (System for the protection of asylum seekers and refugees), commonly referred to as SPRAR. SPRAR centres and their integration programmes are managed by municipalities and are funded by the Ministry of the Interior. *Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti di Asilo*, CARA (Reception centres for asylum seekers) are also part of SPRAR's management, together with *Centri di Accoglienza Straordinari*, CAS (Extraordinary Refuge Centres), set up and managed by local authorities to face the increasing migrant influx, and known for their dehumanizing treatment of asylum seekers. The Salvini Security Decree, undeniably informed by a right-wing and xenophobic approach, has significantly restricted applications for Italian citizenship and asylum. This is why only people with refugee status and unaccompanied minors now have access to the SPRAR system, while women with children, unaccompanied minors and psychologically vulnerable people were previously hosted in SPRAR centres (for a more detailed analysis see Marchetti 2014, Filmer and Federici 2018).

One of the most common misleading assumptions promoted by the mainstream Italian media is that displaced people cost 35 euros each per day to the Italian reception system. More precisely, as Sammito explains (2019), they are believed to directly receive 35 euros on a daily basis without working, for a total of approximately 1000 euros per month. Further misconceptions, whereby displaced people are hosted in luxury hotels, have wi-fi, and are allocated cigarettes and mobile phone credit on a daily basis exaggerate a widespread image of them living in luxury and at the expense of Italian citizens who end up envying such a life style. Such a *legend* is based on the calculation of the average costs revealed by the Italian Ministry of the Interior, which covers a broad range of expenses, including accommodation, food, legal and health expenses, out of which only 2,50 euros are given as pocket money to the displaced people themselves. However, the right-wing political party, La Lega, has purposely exploited these figures since the 2016 earthquake in central Italy to juxtapose the limited aid received by the victims of the earthquake and the supposedly luxurious accommodation offered to displaced people. The following headline appeared on the *Il Populista* website, close to the Lega, and is a clear example of propaganda encouraging misconceptions and stereotypes about displaced people in Italy:

Fig. 2. Genoviva (2016)[1]

Il Populista provided a list of luxury hotels, which was later checked by Barlassina and Sivierio (2016), who confirmed that none of the thirteen hotels belonged to the 'luxury' category. Some of them, previously 4-star hotels, had radically changed and did not resemble hotels in any way, while others had even been closed.

Italian right-wing papers, such as *Il Giornale*, continue to associate the

[1] "Luxury hotels, villas and swimming pools. Illegal immigrants' *bella vita* in Italy" (headline, this and the following translations are mine). The legend of luxury hotels with swimming pools is constantly used for propaganda purposes. This is the case of the Populista, a website close to the Lega Nord. (caption)

image of the invasion with the *business* of reception centres for displaced people and related costs for Italian tax payers, as in the following headline published in 2019:

Fig. 3 (Aldrighetti 2019)[2]

Similarly, one year later, other headlines, such as the one quoted below, appeared in the newspaper *Il Mattino*, focusing again on the increase of migration costs, despite the fact that Salvini had considerably reduced them:

Fig. 4 (Mangani 2020)[3]

This particular item of news was related to the reaction of the former Interior Minister, Salvini, as reported in *Il Mattino*: "Dopo aver riaperto i porti, il governo riapre i portafogli degli italiani – ha dichiarato – aumentando i soldi per chi accoglie richiedenti asilo e fa ripartire il business legato agli sbarchi" (After reopening the ports, the government reopens the Italians' wallets – he claimed – by raising the amount of money for those who welcome asylum seekers and allowing the business related to migrant arrivals to start up again). Interestingly enough, the fictitious nature of this news item and its related figures is this time confirmed by the journalist herself in the rest of the

[2] "Together with their invasion, migrants' business is back: each migrant costs 42 euros per day." (headline). The figures soar and the usual cooperatives win the tender.

[3] "Migrants: the Ministry of the Interior increases reimbursements from 19 to 23 euros." (headline)

article. While explaining that reimbursements to Italian companies managing SPRAR centres had been raised from 19 euro, as first determined by Salvini, to 22-23 euros, following on from a further provision, Mangani adds that such a change was not due to an increase in migrant arrivals, but because the entire reception system was about to collapse owing to a lack of offers by those same companies in response to the Italian government tenders.

The unreliability of such figures and subsequent alarming news had already been revealed by the Interior Minister Lamorgese denying Salvini's statement. As reported by *The Local*, an online Italian newspaper published in English, "'We're not facing a migrant invasion': Italy's new interior minister", further specifying in a sub headline that: "Italy's new Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese said in an interview published Friday that there was no migrant "invasion", countering statements by her anti-immigration predecessor Salvini (Anonymous 2019). Lamorgese's statement was first reported by Colaprico (2019), who interviewed her for the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* after Salvini had spoken of a "tripling" of migrant landings in Italy while calling for the "invasion" to stop.

Lamorgese's denial of Salvini's statement, in which the image of an invasion is reinforced by the use of exponential numbers, constitutes an interesting case since she reveals the fabricated nature of figures associated with migrant arrivals to Italian readers. Lamorgese divulges the perfomative role of language and Western narratives about migration. Such narratives function as a form a translation, of substitution and deletion, controlling and silencing the otherness and difference embodied by displaced people, as Inghilleri and Polezzi (2020) remind us. Lamorgese dismantles the binary opposition between Italians and displaced people, whereby the latter are exclusively represented in quantitative terms as a threat, while being deprived of their individuality and rights as human beings.

Irrespective of single instances, such as the one mentioned previously, in which the unreliability and manipulative nature of the narrative is revealed, such accounts strongly affect public opinion because of their pervasive nature and long-term excessive use by the right-wing coalition government led by Silvio Berlusconi since 2008, as shown by Federici (2020a). This is further confirmed by Lanni's report for the UNHCR (2020) documenting the relationship between the number of refugees and the total Italian population in Figure 5:

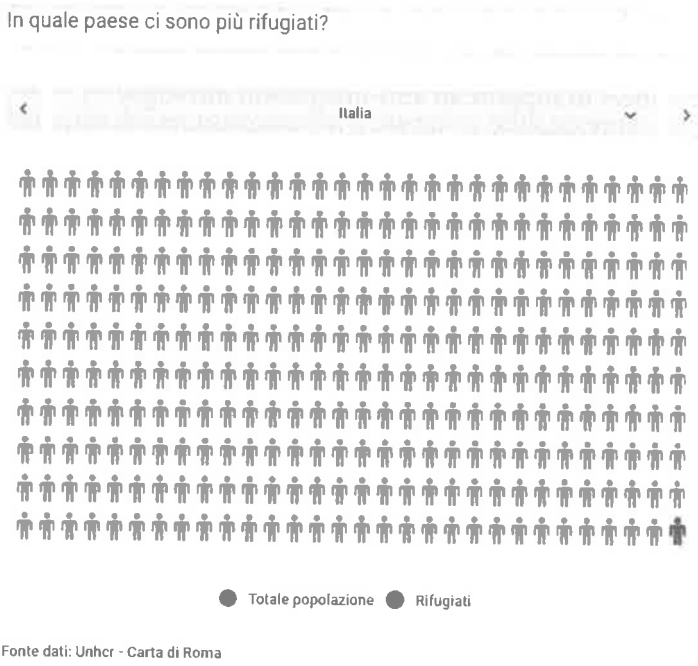

Fig. 5 (Lanni 2020)[4]

As Lanni points out, while 131,000 refugees out of 60 million Italians indicates a percentage of 2 per thousand, in 2018, at the peak of the refugee crisis, "the invasion" was one of the major concerns for Italian people and 36% of them believed that there were in fact 20 million foreigners in their country. Western narratives examined so far are primarily, but not exclusively, adopted by right-wing and neo-fascist political groups and parties, and as such play a central role in their communication strategy, as Sammito (2019) claims in relation to Salvini's propaganda, showing once again common elements shared by both British and Italian mainstream media: "il filo conduttore è sempre lo stesso: neri, clandestini, immigrati, sempre inquadrati in termini di minaccia per la tranquillità degli italiani, sempre associati alla criminalità, per suscitare paure nel lettore e motivarlo a sostenere l'ideologia anti-integrazione." (The

[4] "In which country are there more refugees?" (heading). Italy Total population/refugees. Data sources: UNHCR, Chart of Rome.

central idea is always the same: blacks, illegal migrants, migrants, always seen as a threat to Italians, always portrayed as criminals, to arouse fear and encourage readers to support an anti-integration ideology.)

As scholars and researchers, we have the responsibility to raise an awareness of the key role that language and translation have in shaping our society by identifying and carrying out actions and initiatives which can encourage such sensitivity. One of the possible ways to fight hate speech against displaced people is through the promotion and dissemination of *love speech*, through the creation and use of new words of love, of social and cultural union, and of mutual understanding, as previously argued. Words which are at the root of activist movements and research, as well as the work and commitment of all those professional figures fighting for the rights of displaced people. To this aim the International Organization for Migration launched a sensitization campaign called #ParoleNuove on its Facebook and Instagram social media channels on 29 October 2020. The neologisms created by the #ParoleNuove campaign represent a good example of love speech and a starting point for its dissemination.

The aim is to stimulate an informed debate about migration through the promotion of a less polarized and divided language. The campaign proposes 5 videos introducing 5 new words. As argued in the first video, migration is often narrated in terms of divide, of conflict and opposition with one side pitted against the other. However, the true meaning of migration should be union. If we cannot understand this, it is probably due to a lexical problem. This is why we need new words, such as *Amarsenda*, the first neologism proposed by #ParoleNuove, an anagram based on the names of displaced people whose story has inspired the campaign, which means "committing oneself to the others, working for the rights of all men and women because sharing, like freedom requires participation." The video ends with this slogan: "to understand migration we need new words." (2020a)

The #ParoleNuove campaign sensitizes all of us to the importance of words and language(s), to their social and political significance and to the fact that they are never neutral.

> Composta da 5 video che esplorano le diverse sfaccettature del fenomeno migratorio proponendo delle nuove parole per descriverlo, l'iniziativa offre quindi un'opportunità di riflessione su come viene narrato attualmente il

> fenomeno migratorio. Le cinque parole si trasformano in una provocazione, una sfida a riflettere meglio sul linguaggio che utilizziamo e sulle parole che scegliamo per parlare di migrazione. (The campaign, which includes 5 videos exploring the diverse connotations of migration while proposing new words to describe it, offers an opportunity to consider the way migration is currently narrated. The five words are provocative and become a challenge to better reflect upon the language that we use and the words we choose to talk about migration, 2020b)

It sensitizes us to the political role of translation, which is mostly and primarily an active selection of precise words through which we not only interpret reality, we create reality around us. Choosing to create news words, such as *Amarsenda*, a multilingual and translational term, embodying the names and identities of displaced people, to signify the true meaning of migration, as an act of union, rather than division, the campaign puts languages and translation at the centre of migratory experiences. These news terms and the language used in these videos create a new scenario in which the opposition between us and the Other is replaced by a challenging dialogue where migration stands as a synonym of social cohesion beyond cultural and geographical divisions.

Together with mediators and human rights activists, we can take on an active role as scholars and researchers involved in the promotion of those values upon which our studies often focus, by introducing #ParoleNuove videos, and the results of other initiatives, including those carried out by mediators themselves, as an inherent part of our students' learning and educational process, together with that of the future generations. We can also encourage them to become *activist* students and citizens by creating and stimulating the use of love speech, thus contributing to a general social awareness and intercultural dialogue.

In proposing a rethinking of translation as central in building a sustainable future, Cronin argues for "an ecological notion of translation *in situ*" so that "place not race becomes the marker of collective significance and collective emancipation." Such "a place-based, rather than ethno-based sense of identity" is inclusive and leads to "a broader ecological awareness of the connection between voice, place and belonging." (2017:16) Social awareness and love speech are necessary to rise up against what Sona Prakash (2019) defines as "fortress Europe" which "fails humanity", and to call for a new Europe to challenge the invasion metaphor and replace it with a welcoming gesture. As

Prakash states, providing a safe haven for displaced people is the only way to move forward because: "It is their fundamental human right – by which we also stand to gain. Europe is aging. We need migrants. We need refugees."

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A shared definition of '**hate speech online**' is in a constant flux due to the supranational character of the internet, the slippery nature of online harassment, and the porous relationship between actual violence and discriminatory speech. Besides the hateful messages propagated across social networking platforms and micro-blogging sites, the recent rise of live-streamed hate has also captured public attention forcing governments and internet providers to contend with the issue of how to prevent and punish such online activities.

As the contributors highlight throughout this volume, the term 'hate' itself is extremely difficult to define, stemming as it does from the extremes of socio-psychopathic impulses, an inability to regulate emotions adequately, or merely from a lack of empathy. In some cases, the denigrators do not even hate their victims, they are merely pliable individuals who feel the need to emulate the sentiments of a strong cohort of denigrators in order to gain 'insider' status. Such individuals, however, are no less to blame than the hate mongers themselves, since they actively contribute to an echo chamber which serves to amplify and reinforce the hatred deployed. Whether they truly detest their targets or merely emulate the apparently dominant group, the aim of haters, be they online or offline, is to relegate the victims to a generic category of 'others', and in hate speech the other is always the enemy. The differences between the 'us' belonging to the dominant grouping, and the 'them' banished to the out-group are magnified in hate speech: the insiders are safe, legitimate, normal and rational, the outsiders are dangerous, different, threatening, and antagonistic.

Although the focus of this volume concerns, in the main, the digital environment, the editors and contributors are all well aware that 'hate speech online' does not occur in a virtual vacuum, its effects are dramatically real for those individuals who are on the receiving end. Cyberbullying and hate speech impinge upon the lives of individuals from social, economic, professional and psychological backgrounds, and increase the sense of fear and vulnerability of entire communities. The ever-encroaching discourse of online hate has, to date, only been partially mapped, and available studies have mostly focused on forms of misogynous attacks in the male-dominated online tech and gamer communities or against feminist activists. Additionally, there seems to be a tendency to forget that ongoing, low-level hate speech is far more common than the dramatically violent hate crimes that capture public imagination.

Whether by investigating the ripple effect triggered by a single controversial tweet, the manipulation of gender ideologies in ethnic radio discourse, or the re-semiotization of the 'city' as a nurturing space for Jihadist hate narratives, this book intends to address, from a wide and comprehensive multimodal perspective, the prevailing gaps in research literature and the dire need to contend with rampant vitriolic discourses today.

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