journals.sagepub.com/home/jci
ISSN 0196-8599

journal of communication inquiry

volume 42 number 3 July 2018

Volume 42 Number 3 July 2018

Journal of Communication Inquiry

Contents

Editorial
Editor's Introduction 197
Subin Paul

Articles
Making Space in Social Media: #MuslimWomensDay in Twitter 199
Rosemary Pennington

"Your English Is Suspect": Language, Communication, and the Pathologization of Nigerian Cyber Identity Through the Stylistic Imprints of Nigerian E-Mail Scams 218
Farooq A. Kperogi

"What a Loser That Guy Was": Norm Macdonald's Humorous Critique of the Romantic/Warrior Narrative 241
Nicholas T. Iannarino

The Ancestral Room of the State? Scotland and the United Kingdom on *Jamie's Great Britain* 258
Francesco Buscemi

Book Reviews
Digital, political, radical, Natalie Fenton 275
Reviewed by Cristina Mislán

TV socialism, Anikó Imre 278
Reviewed by Marina Vujnovic

Editorial
Editor's Introduction: 1968 Movements and Activism 281
Subin Paul

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

Essays

Honoring the Paradox of Education 284
Laura Meadows

U.S. Feminism, 1968 and Mediated Collective Intellectuality 290
Jack Z. Bratich

Un Naw Chwech Wyth 300
Sarah Hill

Art at the Music Festival: Blueprints and the Chronotope 306
Rebekka Kill

Check for updates

Editorial

Editor's Introduction

Journal of Communication Inquiry
2018, Vol. 42(3) 197–198
© The Author(s) 2018
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0196859918780817
journals.sagepub.com/home/jci

July's edition of the *Journal of Communication Inquiry* is divided into three parts: original articles, book reviews, and invited essays. In the opening article, Rosemary Pennington uses the #MuslimWomensDay campaign as a case study to examine online (re)constructions of Muslim women's identity. The goal of this campaign, which began at the end of Women's History Month in 2017, was to make visible the stories and experiences of Muslim women. Pennington analyzed approximately 300 tweets to illustrate how contributors in Twitter used #MuslimWomensDay to "create a space where Muslim voices could be heard," even as the stories of Muslims of color or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Muslims were largely ignored. Pennington notes that while the hashtag continues to be used, it is difficult to translate that "energy into action against Islamophobia outside social media."

In an article titled "'Your English Is Suspect': Language, Communication, and the Pathologization of Nigerian Cyber Identity Through the Stylistic Imprints of Nigerian E-Mail Scams," Farooq A. Kperogi investigates the structural, grammatical, stylistic, and idiomatic characteristics of Nigerian e-mail scam solicitations and how they shape perceptions of Nigerians in the Anglophone world. Kperogi foregrounds the interconnections between language and identity, noting that "language is inexorably constitutive and reflective of identity." Texts, such as e-mails, are a key site for the production, negotiation, and articulation of digital identities. Through a discourse analysis of 55 sample e-mails, Kperogi demonstrates how the version of English popularized by fraud e-mail solicitations, commonly known as "419," both export Nigerian English beyond Nigeria and "construct, even constrain, Nigerian identity in the Anglophone global consciousness."

In "'What a Loser That Guy Was': Norm Macdonald's Humorous Critique of the Romantic/Warrior Narrative," Nicholas T. Iannarino describes and interprets a humorous narrative about colorectal cancer shared by comedian Norm Macdonald in a stand-up special. Iannarino begins his essay by describing the importance of illness narratives—stories that focus on, or are inspired by, "life-altering experience of illness." Iannarino analyzes a story Macdonald tells about his uncle in order to demonstrate that the effective use of humor encourages audiences to reject the contemporary Western perspective that cancer

patients must "wage a battle" to survive their ailment. In the final analysis, Iannarino demonstrates that "humor narratives" can be a useful vehicle for health advocacy, public education, social activism, and policy change.

Next, in "The Ancestral Room of the State? Scotland and the United Kingdom on Jamie's Great Britain," Francesco Buscemi uses semiotic analysis to study the ways in which the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver represents Scotland vis-à-vis the United Kingdom in his food travelogue *Jamie's Great Britain*. The larger question that drives this work is how popular food television negotiates, supports, or challenges national identity. Drawing on the theories of Benedict Anderson, Pierre Bourdieu, and Homi Bhabha as well as cultural studies, Buscemi argues that "the national food travelogue *Jamie's Great Britain* stereotypes Scotland as a land of ancestral habits and people" and totally ignores the contributions of immigrants since the 1800s.

In the book review section, Cristina Mislan reviewed *Digital, Political, Radical* by Natalie Fenton. Mislan notes that the book begins not from technological affordance and promises but from the need to understand the political. The book, Mislan says, offers scholars and students of social movement media a more nuanced understanding of contemporary forms of collective action by refocusing our "critical lenses on a politics of transformation in the field of media and communication studies."

Finally, in a review of *TV Socialism*, Marina Vujnovic describes how Anikó Imre examines televised entertainment genres during and after socialism in Eastern Europe to tell a "neglected" story about socialism. The fact that socialist television did not die with the socialist system itself demonstrates, as Vujnovic mentions, the enduring cultural power of television as an institution to continue to promote cultural, social, and even political values of systems beyond their expiration date.

Subin Paul
University of Iowa, IA, USA

Check for updates

Article

Making Space in Social Media: #MuslimWomensDay in Twitter

Journal of Communication Inquiry
2018, Vol. 42(3) 199–217
© The Author(s) 2018
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0196859918768797
journals.sagepub.com/home/jci

Rosemary Pennington[1]

Abstract
At the end of Women's History Month 2017, social media sites were filled with posts using the hashtag #MuslimWomensDay. Muslim women have often been framed in media as either victims of a violent faith and its believers or enablers of that violence, rarely are they given the space to tell their own stories. The #MuslimWomensDay hashtag was designed to draw attention to the stories and experiences of Muslim women. This qualitative textual analysis of approximately 300 tweets explores how Twitter users deployed the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag in their posts in order to understand the story users told of what it means to be a Muslim woman as well as what narratives of Islam they had to fight against.

Keywords
media and society, minority, Muslim, new media, textual analysis, Twitter, women

Introduction

In a column for the *New York Times* about the potential and pitfalls of hashtag activism, journalist David Carr (2012) wrote, "... the digital causes of the day or week are all starting to blend together. Another week, another hashtag, and with

[1]Department of Media, Journalism & Film, Miami University, Oxford, OH, USA

Corresponding Author:
Rosemary Pennington, Department of Media, Journalism & Film, Miami University, 120 Williams Hall, 350 S. Oak Street, Oxford, OH 45056, USA.
Email: penninrm@miamioh.edu

it, a question about what is actually being accomplished." Carr was not the first, and is not the only, person to question the efficacy of hashtags to help promote and propel activism; however, even in the face of such critiques, new hashtag campaigns are born almost every day. Some, such as #metoo and #BlackLivesMatter, help spark movements that come to life outside social media. This research explores one campaign that hoped to do the same.

Muslim women have been framed in media as individuals who have no control over their lives and who are victimized by Islam and by Muslim men (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Zeiny & Yusof, 2016). Whether the story is one about wearing hijab, choosing whom to marry, or what to study in college, the perspective of Muslim women is often marginalized, if it appears at all. The #MuslimWomensDay hashtag campaign was meant to push back against that marginalization. Designed to coincide with the end of Women's History Month, it was meant to provide an opportunity for Muslim women to tell their own stories in social media. This article uses qualitative textual analysis to examine how contributors in Twitter used the hashtag to carve space for themselves. It also considers how others pushed into that space by sharing their own understandings of Islam. This research is situated in literatures on Islamophobia and hashtag activism in order to contextualize the way Twitter users deployed #MuslimWomensDay in their tweets.

Islamophobia—A General Overview

Muslims have long been imagined as being uncivilized, barbaric, and in need of the saving grace of Western modernity (Kumar, 2012; Said, 1978), with this framing dating back to at least the Middle Ages (Akbari, 2009; Arjana, 2015). Eco (2012) suggests that in order to understand who we are, we often look to outsiders to shape our borders—for the West, those outsiders increasingly became Islam and its believers (Akbari, 2009; Arjana, 2015; Mastnak, 2010). The representation of Islam in American media has been filled with Orientalist stereotypes and Islamophobic prejudices which follow in this tradition. From the retelling of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves in the Popeye cartoon to an episode of the rebooted *X-Files* series opening with a Muslim suicide bombing, media—entertainment and news media—have shaped a narrative of Islam that has suggested it is incompatible with Western culture and Muslims as unwelcome in the West (Arjana, 2015; Kundnani, 2015; Said, 1978, 1997). This framing has often been linked to geopolitics (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008), has shaped foreign policy as in the case of George W. Bush's presidency (Kumar, 2010), and has shaped the way we understand what's been labeled the "War on Terror" (Arjana, 2015; Kumar, 2010, 2012). This negative framing extends to Muslim women as well.

Muslim women have often been framed as oppressed by Islam and Muslim men and lacking in agency to decide the course of their lives

(Abu-Lughod, 2002; Zeiny & Yusof, 2016). Zeiny and Yusof (2016) suggest the representation of the submissive and oppressed Muslim woman developed during Europe's imperial expansion into Muslim majority countries and was often pointed to as justification for the colonial project. This narrative of who Muslim women are has also appeared in news coverage of the "War on Terror," with its deployment meant to "elicit sympathy from the Western readers" and to justify military action in Muslim majority countries (Zeiny & Yusof, 2016). However, activists have also used Muslim women as kinds of rhetorical props to further their own causes. Al-Mahadin (2015) notes that in the case of FEMEN's activism in Arab countries, "The appropriation of Muslim women's voices, the fierce attack on their belief systems, and the reductive, essentializing discursive practices of FEMEN . . . alienated both conservative and liberal Muslim women" (p. 391).

This issue of representation is not an abstract one—the prejudices such stereotyped representations help perpetuate have real-world consequences. Such representations can make Muslims feel marginalized in the communities in which they live as well as contribute to the institutionalization of social exclusion (Morgan & Polynting, 2012; ter Wal, 2002). In her study of the relationship between media coverage of Muslims in Britain and race hate, Frost (2008) suggested a government media campaign directed against Muslims precipitated a rise in anti-Muslim speech and attacks in that country. In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's crime statistics show a marked increase in hate crimes targeting Muslims in 2016 (Berman, 2017), with the Southern Poverty Law Center (2017) also noting a rise in the number of anti-Muslim hate groups. A study from the Pew Research Center (2017) suggests that American attitudes toward Muslims are improving; however, Muslims remain the least favorably viewed religious group in the country. Muslims are increasingly turning to the Internet in order to challenge Islamophobia and the stereotypes media circulate of who they are.

Hashtag #Activism

The experience of Muslims online is a diverse one, with Varisco (2010) pointing out that "there is no pure Islamic presence, separated from other relevant forms of identity, in cyberspace any more than there is in what still might nostalgically be called the real world" (p. 176). For some Muslim women, going online is a way to counter mainstream media narratives of who they are (Eckert & Chadha, 2013), while other Muslims go online to connect to a global community of believers (Varisco, 2010) or to explore new types of Muslim identity (Bunt, 2005). These experiences are often shaped by interactions in social media.

Social media rely upon networks of interaction, engagement, and trust to develop between users in order to exist (Baym, 2010; Van Dijck, 2013). Hashtags help facilitate interaction, as they can organize attention around an

issue. Stache (2015) points out that when it comes to social media activism, "Hashtags in particular continue the conversation beyond the originating dialogue by creating an identifier or tag for fellow activists, as well as a way to track multiple uses of the same phrase" (p. 162). Hashtags can facilitate connection in social media spaces, allowing like-minded users to connect to one another. For Khoja-Moolji (2015), hashtags can help create "intimate publics" in social media, while Bonilla and Rosa (2015) note that

> The types of publics created by Twitter emerge from the hashtag's capacity to serve not just as an indexing system but also as a filter that allows social media users to reduce the noise of Twitter by cutting into one small slice. (p. 4)

Even as hashtags allow social media users to connect to others who share their "worldviews and orientations towards the objects of concern" (Khoja-Moolji, 2015, p. 348), activists have little control over who can contribute to the "one small slice" of community created by a hashtag (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Hashtags can be co-opted by individuals wanting to trade on the visibility of the hashtag, but who do not care about the cause it may be associated with.

Some have questioned the usefulness of hashtag activism, Hooge, Marien, and Oser (2015) reminding us that, in the case of Twitter, "the things we read- . . . are mainly the opinions of highly educated and well-off citizens." Even so, Vie (2014) thinks the awareness digital activism—sometimes pejoratively referred to as "slacktivism"—can create around an issue can lead to action and potentially social change, suggesting that "in a world where micro-aggressions of all kinds are very real, the virtual support shown in one's community through sharing images of goodwill and support can in fact make a difference" (p. 8). In her discussion of the #SupportJada hashtag which developed in the aftermath of the rape of a Black teenager and the digital documentation of that rape, Williams (2015) suggests that Black feminists used the hashtag to counteract the "symbolic annihilation, the complete absence or trivialization in the media, of assaults against black women and girls" (p. 342).

Sexual assault and harassment was the focus of another hashtag campaign as the latter half of 2017 saw social media filled with the hashtag #metoo. The Me Too movement was launched in 2007 by Tarana Burke to help victims of sexual assault and harassment (Garcia, 2017), but it would take the exposure of years of sexual harassment and abuse by powerful men for the #metoo hashtag to gain visibility. In the aftermath of reporting focused on allegations against Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano took to Twitter to encourage women to share their experiences with sexual harassment, abuse, and assault using the #metoo hashtag (Schmidt, 2017). Countless women (and men) participated in the campaign, leading *TIME* to name the individuals involved its Person of the Year (Zacherek, Dockterman, & Edwards, 2017). In addition, a group of powerful

women have banded together to launch Time's Up (2017), a campaign and legal defense fund to fight sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace. The #metoo campaign is one example of how a movement can gain traction in social media and lead to action outside it.

Prior to the #metoo movement, perhaps the highest profile case of hashtag activism has been the movement that emerged around the #BlackLivesMatter tag. The hashtag developed in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the 2013 shooting death of Black teenager Trayvon Martin (Ross, 2015). The social media users who first deployed #BlackLivesMatter did so to protest the verdict, but it eventually morphed into a space where users could narrate the experience of being Black in the United States (Yang, 2016), while also advocating for racial justice (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016). The hashtag's creators became hypervisible for a time, and they, and their hashtag, helped spark a public conversation about the Black experience with inequality. The woman behind #MuslimWomensDay was hoping for that kind of visibility to erupt around that hashtag (Figure 1).

The #MuslimWomensDay hashtag was the creation of Amani Al-Khatahtbeh, better known in social media as "The Muslim Girl." Al-Khatahtbeh's moniker comes from the name of her successful blog, The Muslim Girl, which chronicled her experiences as a young Muslim woman

Figure 1. Tweet explaining how anyone can participate in #MuslimWomensDay.

growing up in the United States. Since the blog's launch in 2014, Al-Khatahtbeh has published a booked based on it and has become a visible commentator on Islam and Muslim life in America, writing columns for such publications as *Teen Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* and appearing as a panelist on a number of news programs. In a Muslim Girl video produced to promote the hashtag, Al-Khatahtbeh told viewers "This is a day where everyone can stand in solidarity with Muslim women, so let's make it a special one" (muslimgirl, 2017). This article explores how, and if, that solidarity emerged in the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag as well as how it was challenged.

Methodology

Although the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag was promoted in other social media sites, most activity around the hashtag took place in Twitter, and so this analysis is focused on that space. The researcher also chose to focus their work in Twitter because of the open and public nature of the space. Social media users of spaces like Facebook and Tumblr often have an expectation of privacy; both spaces allow for various privacy controls that restrict who can see your content. Twitter carries with it less of this expectation of privacy. Unless a user has made their account private or has blocked an individual, their tweets exist for all the world to see. Hashtags are designed to make issues and the people who care about them visible. Because of the more public nature of Twitter and the fact that people contributing to a hashtag are often doing so because they want to be seen and heard, the researcher felt examining the #MuslimWomensDay tweets was appropriate for this project.

Tweets were collected for analysis in two ways on the day the hashtag was launched, March 27, 2017. First, #MuslimWomensDay was followed in real time on the Twitter website, the researcher noting what trends emerged in the conversation over the course of the day. Second, the researcher created a column in Tweetdeck (an application which allows a user to track the flow of particular issues or hashtags in Twitter) for the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag that collected and archived tweets as they went out. In both spaces, the researcher took screenshots of tweets or exchanges that seemed to exemplify the behaviors, stories, and conflicts that emerged in the hashtag. The hashtag was trending in the United States by about noon Eastern Standard Time. Thousands of tweets were sent out using the #MuslimWomensDay tag, with the majority of those tweets authored in English.[1] When a hashtag or topic trends in Twitter, it means that a critical mass of users are contributing to the hashtag. To be listed as a Twitter trend provides a campaign or conversation wider visibility than it might otherwise receive in the space. Trending is not a perfect measure of visibility as, according to Twitter, what a user sees as a trending topic is determined by whom they follow, what their interests are, their physical location, as well as by what is popular in Twitter at that particular moment.[2] This article represents

an analysis of approximately 300 tweets that were either authored or shared from the time the hashtag was trending on Twitter until 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time that afternoon.

Adopting a grounded theory approach and using the constant comparative technique of textual analysis, the researcher examined their notes and the screenshots they gathered in order to explore the ways Muslim users worked to create space for themselves in Twitter, making special note of how images were used in the tweets as well as to whom Twitter users seemed to be attempting to speak. The researcher also examined the ways non-Muslims attempted to takeover or co-opt the hashtag in order to make their interpretations of Islam visible. (The researcher attempted to determine the Muslim/non-Muslim identity of Twitter users by visiting a user's Twitter profile page, examining any images of the user present as well as the biographical information provided.) What follows is a discussion of three specific ways individuals used the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag: to center Muslim perspectives, to communicate the "real" Muslim experience, and to express cross-cultural solidarity with Muslims.

Centering Muslim Perspectives

The point of Muslim Women's Day, Amani Al-Khatahtbeh told a number of interviewers leading up to the event, was to center Muslim perspectives and to honor the experiences of real Muslim women. In an interview with *CBS News* ("Activists Push for an Official," 2017), the day before the hashtag campaign was launched, Al-Khatahtbeh said, "For a long time, people have been making assumptions and speaking on our behalf and making assumptions about what Islam is about and it's never been Muslim women doing the talking; Muslim women representing themselves, speaking for themselves." On March 27, Twitter was filled with Muslim women using the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag to share their stories and their understandings of Islam, many of them relying on visual imagery to help them do so, including selfies (Figure 2).

Like @Taaliah76 in the tweet above, many of the Muslim women who participated in #MuslimWomensDay held out hope that their experiences would no longer be ignored by the public or mainstream media. Those who shared photos of themselves often did so with text explaining their background or their particular Muslim identity—as with the #TraditionallyUnsubmissive tag in the above tweet—in an attempt to not only become visible but to also be heard. One woman shared a photo of her in a hijab, writing, "Happy first annual #MuslimWomensDay! ! Here's to all our mothers, sisters, and daughters who affirm that Islam only makes us stronger women!" (eemanabbasi, 2017b). In addition to the hijab, she wears a broad smile in the photo, with a hand held to her side as though presenting her hijab, seemingly challenging the viewer to not see her as a strong woman. A few tweets later she wrote, "Being a Muslim woman means dealing with selective 'feminists' who support all of women's

Figure 2. Muslim women often shared selfies with their stories.

choices until it comes to hijab" (eemanabbasi, 2017a) in acknowledgment of the fraught debate the hijab can conjure.

The decision of whether to wear a headscarf, or another type of covering, can be an incredibly difficult and personal one for a Muslim woman—to wear a covering of some kind is to mark oneself as visibly Muslim (El Hamel, 2010). It can be a religious as well as a political act (Gökarıksel, 2011). It is also an act that media outlets have become obsessed with as this fixation on what is referred to frequently as "the veil" often appears in media that suggest Muslim women have no agency or choice in the matter (Macdonald, 2006). The sharing of selfies by Muslim women in hijab seemed designed to push back at the idea that they had no agency; these were women who had decided to wear the headscarf to become closer to Allah or to themselves or to simply mark themselves, more forcefully, as Muslim.

Other Muslim contributors to #MuslimWomensDay used the visibility created by the hashtag to ensure that the diversity of the Muslim community was on display. Activist Linda Sarsour wrote, "Muslim women come in all shades, shapes and sizes. Some wear hijab, some don't - all r Muslim. Sending love to all of us. #MuslimWomensDay" (lsarsour, 2017a) and Hind Makki, known for her work on creating more inclusive spaces for women in mosques, tweeted, "Shoutout to the hijabis, no-jabis, glamjabis, half-jabis and all Muslim girls. It's a tough world. I see you and I love you #MuslimWomensDay"

Figure 3. A twitter user highlights the Black Muslim experience.

(HindMakki, 2017). But the issue of diversity was not only centered on who wears a headscarf and who does not; a number of tweets pointed out the racial diversity within the American Muslim community (Figure 3).

In the United States, Black Americans make up the largest subgroup within the American Muslim community (Gallup, 2009); however, Muslims are most frequently imagined as being of Middle Eastern descent (Love, 2017; Said, 1997). Because of this, the experiences of Black Muslim women are often overlooked in media coverage of Muslims in the United States (Wyche, 2004). The selfies featuring Black Muslim women, or the art that was created featuring Black Muslims, was a pushback against this erasure. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) Muslims are also often invisible in mainstream media, one trans Muslim woman tweeting, "So much love to my trans & gnc sisters this #MuslimWomensDay - still thriving & living out th word when so often pushed out, erased & abused" (MahdiaLynn, 2017a) and then "It's not lost on me what I risk by being public about my trans history. Also not lost how my white skin & cisnormative image protect me" (MahdiaLynn, 2017b). So, the tweets were not simply to say "I am here," but more to say "I am here, this is who I am, I will not allow you to ignore me any longer."

Drawing on Berlant's (2011) concept of "intimate publics"—the idea that strangers can come together as communities around emotion—Khoja-Moolji (2015) suggests that hashtags can facilitate such publics, particularly hashtags that are associated with activist movements in some way. The hashtag becomes a way to share not only information about a particular issue but also one's affective response to the issue. This sharing helps bind strangers, in this case in Twitter, into an intimate public made visible by their anger, pain, and frustration. Frustration was one emotion that appeared in a number of the tweets during #MuslimWomensDay, with many of the Twitter users complaining of people speaking for them. The hashtag was an opportunity to try to take control of the narrative and to create a kind of public space in which to share their stories, even if it meant risking their safety in some way.

The idea of risk and danger permeated some of the conversation in the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag. One male Muslim activist and academic, who writes for a number of different news outlets, reminded people following the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag that "...the primary victims of Islamophobic violence are women that wear hijab. Uplift them today" (KhaledBeydoun, 2017). In the eyes of some, #MuslimWomensDay was a campaign for support, solidarity, and safety. However, as many social media users know and as social media scholars have pointed out (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Stache, 2015), once you share something with the Internet, you can quickly lose control of it. While the Muslim Twitter users did not lose control of their hashtag, they certainly had to deal with others attempting to co-opt it to push their own agendas.

The "Real" Muslim Experience

A number of Twitter users who seemed to hold anti-Muslim feelings also contributed to the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag—ostensibly to push back at the idea that Islam could be in anyway compatible with Western ideals. This attempt to invade the hashtag was most visible after #MuslimWomensDay began trending on Twitter. The hours of 1, 2, and 3 p.m. saw a flood of Islamophobic tweets fill the hashtag—many coming from White men who seemed intent on putting the Muslim women sharing their stories in their place.

The Islamophobic tweets featured at times graphic representations of violence committed in the name of Islam (many using the same image of a woman scarred in an acid attack to frame their argument that Islam is violent) or commentary meant to convince the reader of the barbarism of Islam. "#muslimwomensday is not a real thing," wrote one Twitter user, "Those cavemen treat woman like dogshit. #muhamedwasapedophile" (griffraff3, 2017). That last hashtag is a reference to the idea circulated by some anti-Muslim groups and activists that the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was a sexually deviant monster. And it showed up in a number of the anti-Muslim tweets, including this one by a woman who lists "God, Family & Country" first in

her profile: “To tolerate Islam is 2 tolerate rape, child marriage, sex slavery, slavery, racism, & slaughter just as Muhammad modeled” (AmyMek, 2017). Arjana (2015) suggests this myth of the sexually monstrous prophet was first perpetuated in the Middle Ages by Christian leaders who wanted to convince Europeans of the monstrosity of Islam and of the monstrous nature of Muslim men. The framing of Muslim men as monsters appeared in a number of the anti-Muslim countertweets that appeared in the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag. One Twitter user suggested that “#MuslimWomensDay is a pathetic attempt by far left to glorify a religion that oppresses and murders women, gays and anyone else different” (aarcizzle08, 2017). Other individuals, many of whom claimed to be members of the “alt-right,” tweeted links to stories about the so-called honor killings as well as photographs showing women dressed in the head-to-toe coverings of the burqa or niqab, asking how anyone could not see oppression writ large in the images.

The activists in the space working the hardest to push #MuslimWomensDay saw the hate speech and other anti-Muslim content tweeted in the hashtag. Some of them chose to engage with those sharing Islamophobic tweets, while others simply noted their existence, pointing to them as evidence of the campaign’s importance.

> The vitriol, venom, and hate on the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag tells you why we need to celebrate Muslim women. Keep shining ladies. (lsarsour, 2017b)

Linda Sarsour, the author of the above tweet, was actually the target of a number of the anti-Muslim and anti-Islam tweets. Sarsour has been working as an activist advocating for Muslim issues for years but most recently gained fame as one of the organizers of the January 2017 Women’s March on Washington (Clark, 2017). Because Sarsour often takes positions on civil rights issues that seem antithetical to the idea that Islam is an oppressive and backward faith—she has been vocal in her support of LGBTQ individuals for instance—some anti-Muslim Twitter users have labeled her a “fake” Muslim. This is an attempt to call into question her authority to speak on matters related to the religion and its believers. Many of the anti-Muslim or anti-Islam tweets were attempts at undermining the authority of the more pro-Muslim or pro-Islam Twitter users. However, critics of Islam were not the only non-Muslims contributing to the #MuslimWomensDay campaign.

Cross-Cultural Solidarity

In her list of ways non-Muslims could contribute to cross-cultural solidarity on Muslim Women’s Day, the Muslim Girl Amani Al-Khatahtbeh suggested people could post messages of support for Muslim women in the hashtag. Some did so by sharing art they created celebrating the lives of

Muslim women; others shared an image, taken the day before in London, of Muslim women holding hands on the Westminster Bridge. The bridge was the site of the March 2017 terrorist attack in London, and the women were showing their support for the attack's victims while condemning the attacker (Mills, 2017). The image of the women holding hands was meant to counter the Orientalist and Islamophobic framing of "real" Muslims as violent, with one non-Muslim Twitter user writing, "If this image surprises you at all, it might be time to update your ideas about Muslim women" (JynnErso_2017, 2017). One male ally, pointing out the way anti-Muslim opinions had begun to flood the hashtag, wrote, "So much open bigotry and hate speech on this hashtag #MuslimWomensDay. Makes me want to vomit" (JonRiley7, 2017). Another man who seemed to identify himself as an ally wrote, "#MuslimWomensDay the most courageous women rn, Big respect for them. I'm a non-Muslim but that doesn't mean I shouldn't respect one" (TonyStarkBeard, 2017).

Politicians also contributed to the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag in order to show their support, including New Jersey Democratic Senator Cory Booker. The senator tweeted a pink image created by The Muslim Girl stating, "I celebrate Muslim women" (SenBooker, 2017). Booker gained fame for using Twitter in 2010 to help residents of Newark—where he was mayor at the time—during a winter blizzard (Hempel, 2015). Booker (as of this writing) has 4.02 million followers on Twitter. His sharing a message of solidarity ensured #MuslimWomensDay reached a wider audience than it might have had he not contributed to it. Visibility in social media does not necessarily lead to behavior change in a group of users, but it can raise awareness of an issue (Vie, 2014; Williams, 2015) and perhaps serve as a challenge to stereotyped understandings of the past.

The mainstream media's reporting on Islam and coverage of Muslims has been problematic—perpetuating Islamophobic and Orientalist narratives of who Muslims are which can fuel anti-Muslim sentiment (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008; Kumar, 2012; Said, 1978, 1997). During #MuslimWomensDay, a number of media outlets seemed to be working to reshape the representation of Muslims in the United States. Some outlets, like *Refinery 29*, did so in partnership with organizer Amani Al-Khatahtbeh. The outlet's Twitter account, @Refinery29, engaged in a Q&A with Al-Khatahtbeh where she worked to address misperceptions of Islam and the misrepresentation of Muslims. *Refinery 29* also hosted a Facebook panel featuring Muslim women that day—the Twitter account shared the link to the Facebook event as well as tweeted panelists' quotes.

Not every media outlet that contributed to #MuslimWomensDay was as tightly wrapped up in the campaign. Publications like *Essence* magazine or the *Huffington Post* used the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag to promote reporting they have produced about Muslim women and Islam. They also retweeted the contributions of Muslim women to the hashtag, so their Twitter feeds on

#MuslimWomensDay reflected both their own coverage of various Muslim communities and the perspectives of Muslims themselves.

Conclusion

While debates have taken place over what the contours of Muslim community online should look like or whether Muslim communities should even exist online (Bunt, 2003, 2009; El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2009; Larsson, 2011), there was little debate among Muslim contributors to the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag over whether Muslims should participate in the campaign in Twitter. It is possible such conversations happened in other social media spaces but, in the tweets examined for this article, that debate did not take place. Instead, there were a number of tweets calling out leaders of various Muslim communities for *not* taking part in the hashtag, one user writing, "shoutout to self-branded facebook, twitter, snapchat community leaders who are too good to support muslim women on #muslimwomensday" (billodeghar, 2017). That is not to suggest that the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag was embraced uncritically. Some users were concerned that, even as it attempted to create a space where Muslim voices could be heard, the campaign might exclude some perspectives. This is not the first-time activists have raised such concerns. Writing of the Mipsterz[3] video that went viral in 2013, Saeed (2013) shared her worry that Muslims might be trading one hardened representation for another.

> What we as Muslim women don't need in trying to *own* our spaces in our small and large communities is the *use of our image* for the purposes of *fixing our image*. More specifically: we don't need to use a ("positive") superficial representation of us to combat other ("negative") superficial representations ... The formula for creating stereotypes, mainstream tropes of assimilation and "good" vs "bad" should not be our formula for fighting against those very things.

Alsultany (2016) suggests that "a negative stereotype is defused not with a 'better' stereotype, but with a diverse field of images" (p. 60) There seemed to be some concern on #MuslimWomensDay that the story of the experience of Muslim women in America might become sanitized in order to make Muslims feel safer to American audiences. Some Muslim contributors expressed their concern that the image of the All-American Muslim woman that might appear in the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag would ignore Muslims of color or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Muslims. There was also worry that the experience of devout Muslims would be obscured by tweets or representations of "cool" or "hip" Muslim women that focused more on their connection to secular culture than their connection to Islam. It raises the question of whether any visibility is better than no visibility. Is it enough that a "diverse field of

images" gradually emerged in the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag, a field that people could access? Of hashtag activism, Fang (2015) suggests that "Long thrust into the margins of the mainstream, people of color have constructed out of the digital realm an alternative neighborhood of classrooms, theatres, and support groups where people of color are nurtured, not ignored" (p. 141). Is it enough that the hashtag may have allowed individuals who have been marginalized to create an intimate public where they felt seen and heard?

Hashtags are certainly not the endgame in activism. A number of the activists taking part in #MuslimWomensDay shared their wish that this would be the beginning of a much larger political movement. The issue, of course, is that the organizers of such movements in social media tend to be well-educated elite (Hooge et al., 2015) which can hamper a movement's ability to reach outside what Bonilla and Rosa (2015) call a "small slice" of social media space. Certainly, #metoo has proven that it is possible to do both—to leverage social media to facilitate a movement's creation and growth while also generating support for action outside media. Thousands of tweets were created using the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag on March 27, 2017, and tweets are still being published using the hashtag—there seems to be no lack of enthusiasm or energy around the campaign or its goals. What may be more difficult is finding a way of translating that energy into action against Islamophobia outside social media.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Metadata about the overall population of tweets was gathered using the social media analytics sites Hashtagify: http://hashtagify.me/ and Hashtracking: https://www.hashtracking.com/.
2. Information on how Twitter trends can be found in the sites FAQs on trends: https://support.twitter.com/articles/101125
3. The Mipsterz video featured hijab wearing Muslim women skate boarding in an urban environment and was held up as an example of just how normal and integrated American Muslims could be.

References

aarcizzle08. (2017, March 27). #MuslimWomensDay is a pathetic attempt by far left to glorify a religion that oppresses and murders women, gays and anyone else different. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/aarcizzle08/status/846552006105972736

Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others. *American Anthropologist*, *104*(3), 783–790.

Activists push for an official Muslim Women's Day. (2017, March 26). *CBS News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/live/video/activists-push-for-an-official-muslim-womens-day/

Akbari, S. C. (2009). *Idols in the east: European representation of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Al-Mahadin, S. (2015). Do Muslim women need saving? Making (non)sense of FEMEN's ethico-aesthetics in the Arab world. *Women's Studies in Communication*, *38*, 388–292.

Alsultany, E. (2016). The cultural politics of Islam in U.S. reality television. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, *9*(4), 595–613.

AmyMek. (2017, March 27). To tolerate Islam is 2 tolerate rape, child marriage, sex slavery, slavery, racism, & slaughter just as Muhammad modeled. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/AmyMek/status/846443169353007105

Arjana, S. R. (2015). *Muslims in the Western Imagination*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Baym, N. (2010). *Personal connections in the digital age*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Berman, M. (2017, November 13). Hate crimes in the United States increased last year, the FBI says. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/11/13/hate-crimes-in-the-united-states-increased-last-year-the-fbi-says/?utm_term = .e24973f5461b

billodeghar. (2017, March 2017). shoutout to self-branded facebook, twitter, snapchat community leaders who are too good to support muslim women on #muslimwomensday. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/billodeghar/status/846586804249747457

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

Bunt, G. (2003). *Islam in the digital age: E-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Bunt, G. (2005). Negotiating Islam and Muslims in cyberspace. In E. Borgman, S. van Erp, & H. Haker (Eds.), *Cyberspace—Cyberethics—Cybertheology* (pp. 68–77). London, England: SCM Press.

Bunt, G. (2009). iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Carr, D. (2012, March 25). Hashtag activism, and its limits. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/26/business/media/hashtag-activism-and-its-limits.html

Clark, M. (2017, February 2). Women's speech organizer Linda Sarsour: "We need to translate the emotions and frustrations of right now." *Glamour*. Retrieved from http://www.glamour.com/story/womens-march-organizer-linda-sarsour-we-need-to-translate-the-emotions-and-frustrations-of-right-now

Eckert, S., & Chadha, K. (2013). Muslim bloggers in Germany: An emerging counter-public. *Media, Culture, and Society*, *35*(8), 926–942.

Eco, U. (2012). *Inventing the enemy and other occasional writings*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

eemanabbasi. (2017a, March 27). Being a Muslim woman means dealing with selective 'feminists' who support all of women's choices until it comes to hijab. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/eemanabbasi/status/846384046464798722

eemanabbasi. (2017b, March 27). Happy first annual #MuslimWomensDay! ! Here's to all our mothers, sisters, and daughters who affirm that Islam only makes us stronger women! Retrieved from https://twitter.com/eemanabbasi/status/846374893210025985

El Hamel, C. (2010). Muslim diaspora in Western Europe: The Islamic headscarf (hijab), the media and Muslims' integration in France. *Citizenship Studies*, *6*(3), 293–308.

El-Nawawy, M., & Khamis, S. (2009). *Islam Dot Com: Contemporary Islamic discourses in cyberspace*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fang, J. (2015). In defense of hashtag activism. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, *2*(1), 137–142.

Freelon, D., McIlwain, C.D., Clark, M. (2016, February). Beyond the hashtags: #Ferguson, #BlackLivesMatter, and the online struggle for offline justice. Center for Media & Social Impact. Retrieved from http://cmsimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/beyond_the_hashtags_2016.pdf (accessed 29 February 2016)

Frost, D. (2008). Islamophobia: Examining the causal links between the media and "race hate" from "below." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *11/12*, 564–578.

Gallup. (2009, March 2). Muslim Americans exemplify diversity, potential. Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com/poll/116260/Muslim-Americans-Exemplify-Diversity-Potential.aspx

Garcia, S. E. (2017, October 20). The woman who created #metoo long before the hashtags. *New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/20/us/me-too-movement-tarana-burke.html?_r=0

Gökarıksel, B. (2011). The intimate politics of secularism and the headscarf: The mall, the neighborhood, and the public square in Istanbul. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, *19*(1), 1–20.

Gottschalk, P., & Greenberg, G. (2008). *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the enemy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

griffraff3. (2017, March 27). #muslimwomensday is not a real thing. Those cavemen treat woman like dogshit. #muhamedwasapedophile. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/griffraff33/status/846551067592720386

Hempel, J. (2015, May 26). We (now) recognize Cory Booker, the tweeting senator from NJ. *Wired*. Retrieved from https://www.wired.com/2015/05/senator-cory-booker/

HindMakki. (2017, March 27). Shoutout to the hijabis, no-jabis, glamjabis, half-jabis and all Muslim girls. It's a tough world. I see you and I love you #MuslimWomensDay. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/HindMakki/status/846375707580256256

Hooge, M., Marien, S., & Oser, J. (2015, February 28). 'Hashtag activism' is not the solution to democratic inequality [Democratic audit blog]. Retrieved from http://www.democraticaudit.com/2015/02/28/hashtag-activism-is-not-the-solution-to-democratic-inequality/

JonRiley7. (2017, March 27). So much open bigotry and hate speech on this hashtag #MuslimWomensDay. Makes me want to vomit. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/JonRiley7/status/846430815273848835

JynnErso_2017. (2017, March 27). If this image surprises you at all, it might be time to update your ideas about Muslim women. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/JynErso_2017/status/846417455303966720

KhaledBeydoun. (2017, March 27). Remember, the primary victims of Islamophobic violence are Muslim women who wear hijab. Uplift them today. #MuslimWomensDay. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/KhaledBeydoun/status/846469385749479424

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015). Become an "intimate publics": Exploring the affective intensities of hashtag feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *15*(2), 347–350.

Kumar, D. (2010). Framing Islam: The resurgence of Orientalism during the Bush II era. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *34*(3), 254–277.

Kumar, D. (2012). *Islamophobia and the politics of empire*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Kundnani, A. (2015). *The Muslims are coming: Islamophobia, extremism, and the domestic war on terror*. London, England: Verso.

Larsson, G. (2011). *Muslims and the new media*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Love, E. (2017). *Islamophobia and racism in America*. New York: New York University Press.

lsarsour. (2017a, March 27). Muslim women come in all shades, shapes and sizes. Some wear hijab, some don't - all r Muslim. Sending love to all of us. #MuslimWomensDay. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/lsarsour/status/846513426029531136

lsarsour. (2017b, March 27). The vitriol, venom, and hate on the #MuslimWomensDay hashtag tells you why we need to celebrate Muslim women. Keep shining ladies. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/lsarsour/status/846375976158318592

Macdonald, M. (2006). Muslim women and the veil: Problems of image and voice in media representations. *Feminist Media Studies*, *6*(1), 7–23.

MahdiaLynn. (2017a, March 27). So much love to my trans & gnc sisters this #MuslimWomensDay - still thriving & living out th word when so often pushed out, erased & abused. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/MahdiaLynn/status/846489874739990533

MahdiaLynn. (2017b, March 27). It's not lost on me what I risk by being public about my trans history. Also not lost how my white skin & cisnormative image protect me. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/MahdiaLynn/status/846491724776124417

Mastnak, T. (2010). Western hostility towards Muslims: A history to the present. In Shryock A. (Ed.), *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the politics of enemy and friend* (pp. 29–52). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mills, J. (2017, March 26). Muslim women gather on Westminster Bridge to condemn 'abhorrent' attack. *Metro*. Retrieved from http://metro.co.uk/2017/03/26/women-gather-on-westminster-bridge-to-condemn-abhorrent-attack-6535415/#ixzz4cWZGRidt

Morgan, G., & Poynting, S. (Eds.) (2012). *Global Islamophobia: Muslims and moral panic in the West*. Farnham, England: Ashgate.

muslimgirl. (2017, March 22). 3 ways you can be part of #MuslimWomensDay on 3/27. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/muslimgirl/status/844603155048488960

Pew Research Center. (2017, February 15). Americans express increasingly warm feelings toward religious groups. *Religion & Public Life*. Retrieved from http://www.pewforum.org/2017/02/15/americans-express-increasingly-warm-feelings-toward-religious-groups/

Ross, J. (2015, August 19). How Black Lives Matter moved from a hashtag to a political force. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/08/19/how-black-lives-matter-moved-from-a-hashtag-to-a-real-political-force/?utm_term=.49f1d455ef04

Saeed, S. (2013, December 2). Somewhere in America, Muslim women are "cool." *The Islamic Monthly*. Retrieved from http://theislamicmonthly.com/somewhere-in-america-muslim-women-are-cool/

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Said, E. W. (1997). *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world* (Rev. ed). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Schmidt, S. (2017, October 16). #metoo: Harvey Weinstein case moves thousands to tell their own stories of abuse, break silence. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/10/16/me-too-alyssa-milano-urged-assault-victims-to-tweet-in-solidarity-the-response-was-massive/?utm_term=.82786e5f5bad

SenBooker. (2017, March 27). I celebrate women. Today and everyday. #MuslimWomensDay. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/senbooker/status/846493132086808576

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2017, February 15). Hate groups increase for the second consecutive year as Trump electrifies radical right. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/news/2017/02/15/hate-groups-increase-second-consecutive-year-trump-electrifies-radical-right

Stache, L.C. (2015). Advocacy and political potential at the convergence of hashtag activism and commerce. *Feminist Media Studies*, *15*(1), 162–164.

ter Wal, J. (2002, February). *Racism and cultural diversity in mass media: An overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU member states, 1995-2000*. Vienna, Austria: European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations.

Time's Up. (2017). *Our mission*. Retrieved from https://www.timesupnow.com/#ourmission-anchor

TonyStarkBeard. (2017, March 27). #MuslimWomensDay the most courageous women rn, Big respect for them. I'm a non-Muslim but that doesn't mean I shouldn't respect one. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/TonyStarkBeard/status/846400311283646464

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

Varisco, D. M. (2010). Muslims and the media in the blogosphere. *Contemporary Islam*, *4*, 157–177.

Vie, S. (2014). In defense of "slacktivism": The Human Rights Campaign Facebook logo as digital activism. *First Monday*, *19*(4), 1–15.

Williams, S. (2015). Digital defense: Black feminists resist violence with hashtag activism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *15*(2), 341–344.

Wyche, K. F. (2004). African American Muslim women: An invisible group. *Sex Roles*, *51*(5), 319–328.

Yang, G. (2016). Narrative agency in hashtag activism: The case of #BlackLivesMatter. *Media and Communication*, *4*(4), 13–17.

Zacherek, S., Dockterman, E., & Edwards, H. S. (2017, December 18). The silence breakers. *TIME*. Retrieved from http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/

Zeiny, E., &Yusof, N. M. (2016). The said and the not-said: New grammar of visual imperialism. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, *16*(1), 125–141.

Author Biography

Rosemary Pennington is an assistant professor of journalism in Miami University's Department of Media, Journalism & Film and the coeditor of *On Islam: Muslims and the Media* from Indiana University Press. Her research interests include Muslims and the media, social media, and media and identity. Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *New Media & Society*, and *International Communication Gazette*.

Check for updates

Article

Journal of Communication Inquiry
0(0) 1–23
© The Author(s) 2018
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0196859918771351
journals.sagepub.com/home/jci

"Your English Is Suspect": Language, Communication, and the Pathologization of Nigerian Cyber Identity Through the Stylistic Imprints of Nigerian E-Mail Scams

Farooq A. Kperogi[1]

Abstract

Identity is embedded not just in language but in the communicative and interactional singularities of language and in the linguistic habitus that speakers bring to bear in their relational and discursive encounters. This study explores how Nigerian English speakers, through the ubiquitous 419 e-mail scams, bring with them distinctive stylistic and sociolinguistic imprints in their quotidian dialogic encounters with other English users in the world, which at once construct, constrict, and constrain not only them but also other Nigerian English speakers. I also show links between demotic articulations of Nigerian English in Nigeria and its symbolic approbation and reproduction in the Nigerian news media, and how this conspires to construct Nigerian identity online.

Keywords

communication and Africa, cyberculture, digital media, identity construction, language

[1]School of Communication and Media, Kennesaw State University, GA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Farooq A. Kperogi, School of Communication and Media, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA, USA.
Email: fkperogi@kennesaw.edu

Introduction

In a Facebook status update, a Nigerian professor at a U.S. university narrated how his choice to end an e-mail message with the sentence "I hope to read from you soon" to an American professor he had never met caused him to be thought of as a 419 e-mail scammer. He wrote:

> Was I really wrong? Was the professor at the other end of the telephone line correct? She read my email and decided to withdraw her offer of introducing me to people in environmental education because my written English "is suspect." So I asked her to give me an example of something I expressed incorrectly. The first example was "I hope to read from you soon." She said the correct expression is "I hope to hear from you soon." I cleared my throat and informed her that it was not a face-to-face communication and that I thought the word to hear did not fit into a totally text-based communication. She did not sound impressed and till date never returned my calls. Should I change my communication style and let orality creep into my text? Does anyone know the rules about such things? (O. Kole, personal communication, September 29, 2014)

Ending e-mail communication with "I hope to read from you soon" is not only unconventional among native English speakers; it is also one of the core phrases associated with 419 e-mails from Nigeria, but it is constitutive of the lexical and expressive repertoire of Nigerian English, from which most educated Nigerian English speakers draw unconsciously. The distinctiveness of Nigerian English usage both exoticizes and pathologizes its users, and this is enabled largely by the mainstreaming of algorithmic mediation of online sociality, as I will show later in this study.

Language is inexorably constitutive and reflective of identity, a fact Joseph (2004) captured persuasively when he postulated that "language and identity are ultimately inseparable" (p. 13). Identity is embedded not just in language but in the communicative and interactional singularities of language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Ochs, 1993; Schiffrin, 1996) and in the linguistic habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) that speakers bring to bear in their relational and discursive encounters.

Nigerian English speakers, who inherited the language from their British colonizers from the "late nineteenth century on" (U. Gut, 2012, p. 216), bring with them distinctive stylistic and sociolinguistic imprints in their quotidian dialogic encounters with other English users in the world that at once construct, constrict, and constrain them (Bamgbose, 1982, 1995; Banjo, 1995, 1996; Jowitt, 1991; Kperogi, 2010, 2015; Taiwo, 2001). However, while the colonially transported British English dialect (Hickey, 2004) that Nigerians inherited, adopted, indigenized, and reproduced through their mass media and demotic dialogic engagements has been systematically studied and analyzed, scholars of Nigerian English have yet to explore how the variety of English popularized

by the ubiquitous advance fee fraud e-mail solicitations, otherwise known as "419," both export Nigerian English beyond Nigeria and construct, even constrain, Nigerian identity in the Anglophone global consciousness. This study examines the structural, grammatical, stylistic, and idiomatic quiddities of typical Nigerian e-mail scam solicitations and how their ubiquity structures perceptions of Nigerians in the Anglophone world, particularly in the West.

Language, Communication, and Identity

It is customary in linguistics and in philosophy of language to ascribe to language the dual roles of communication and representation, often in binary terms. Language is conceived of as the vector of dialogic exchanges between and among disparate members of social communities. It is also theorized as the receptacle of human thoughts and the medium through which we give expression to our subjectivities and impose linguistic order on the chaos of symbolic stimuli that relentlessly surround us. With a few exceptions, since Platonic times, these communicative and representational views of language are often constructed in dichotomous, mutually exclusive categories (Joseph, 2004). In other words, scholars either assigned a communicative or a representational function to language. Only a few scholars came to terms with the inextricability of communication and representation in language. Even fewer saw the ontological and epistemological futility in erecting a binary between communication and representation.

But language, in fact, shoulders a more lumbering ontological burden than just being the vehicle for communication and representation. Bourdieu (1977) points out, for instance, that speech acts, symbolic codes, and communicative encounters are never independent and isolated, but are always embedded in and informed by a labyrinthine network of social relationships and identity formations. As Norton (2010) observes,

> Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space. Our gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, among other characteristics, are all implicated in this negotiation of identity. (p. 350)

Bourdieu (1991) characterizes this as the "performative" dimension of language:

> Regionalist discourse is a performative discourse which aims to impose as legitimate a new definition of the frontiers and to get people to know and recognize the region that is thus delimited in opposition to the dominant definition, [. . .] which does not acknowledge that new region. The act of categorization, when it manages to achieve recognition or when it is exercised by a recognized authority, exercises by itself a certain power: "ethnic" or "regional" categories, like categories of

> kinship, institute a reality by using the power of revelation and construction exercised by objectification in discourse. (p. 223)

In this passage, Bourdieu extends the disciplinary conversation about the role of language in social formations. He transcends the limited confines of communication and representation that scholars had ascribed to language, and embraces the notion that language also encapsulates and circumscribes identity. Although in this passage he calls attention only to the emergence of "regionalist discourse," his overriding concerns are the social and cultural impulses that activate deviations from the norm in the signifying practices of linguistic communities—or what Wenger (1988) calls "communities of practice"—and how this constructs and constrains identities. Thus, we might add that a third function of language—in addition to communication and representation—is the construction, reconstruction, deconstruction, and constriction of identities, especially group identities, which Edwards (2012) conceptualized as the way "we conceive ourselves as individuals or as members of groups—or, indeed, the way others perceive and categorize us" (p. 411). Since identity "inheres in actions, not in people" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 376), "the way others perceive and categorize us"—particularly in language use—is more consequential than people's self-definition of their identities because identity is constituted, for the most part, through the congelation of observable, habitual communicative and sociolinguistic practices.

Joseph (2004) notes that, "A consistent theme within studies of national identity over the last four decades has been the central importance of language in its formation" (p. 94). In other words, as Bucholtz and Hall (2004) point out, language is the core symbolic resource people deploy in the cultural constitution and reconstitution of identity. This fact is particularly intriguing when applied to postcolonial nation-states with disparate people who speak a multiplicity of mutually unintelligible native languages, but who are nonetheless ironically glued by an external language imposed by colonizers, that is, where the language of primordial affinity is not the language of global identity. The colonial languages of many formerly colonized countries (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, etc.) have emerged as the main building blocks in the linguistic construction of the national identities of formerly colonized people (Adamson, 1989; Brysk, Parsons, & Sandholtz, 2002; Simpson, 2008).

There is a symbiotic, mutually reinforcing relationship between language and identity. Language structures identity as much as identity structures language. The shibboleths, expressive repertoires, and social, cultural, and symbolic cues with which members of society appropriate, lexicalize, and semanticize social reality are not only socially constituted but work to delimit identities. Thus, although formerly colonial languages have become constitutive and reflective of the identities of formerly colonized people, the formerly colonial languages are not structurally unaffected by their encounter with the formerly colonialized

people. The languages are inflected by the cultures, historical experiences, and sociolinguistic quiddities of their new linguistic environments, and this fact, in turn, sets boundaries to and delimits the identity of its speakers. The cultural and discursive unconscious of the speakers reflect this sociolinguistic reality. This is particularly true of the English language, which has quietly emerged as the world's lingua franca. As Schneider (2007) has observed,

> [. . .]English has diversified, developed into homegrown forms and uses in many locations. It has become an indigenized language, even a mother tongue, in several countries around the globe. In some countries, the descendants of former colonists or colonizers have retained the language to the present day; in others, interestingly enough, it was the local, indigenous population who have adopted and appropriated the English language for themselves, thus contributing to its diversification. (p. 1)

As the next section shows, although Nigeria is home to a multiplicity of mutually unintelligible languages, it is linguistically agglutinated by the English language, but it is a variety of English that both reflects and inflects the native population's sociohistorical, linguistic, and cultural specificities.

A Brief History of Nigerian English

English first appeared in what later became known as Nigeria in the 16th century when British traders and slavers set foot in the region (Spencer, 1971). But it was the nascence, in 1840s southern Nigeria, of Christian missionism, which White (1996) described as the "unofficial partner" (p. 18) in the imperial project, that expanded the communicative utility of English beyond episodic trade-related contexts. The formal colonization of Nigeria, which started on January 1, 1901 (Falola, 1999), not only gave English a quasi-official status but also instituted it as the passport for upward social mobility. After independence from British colonialism in 1960, the country's postindependence leaders chose to retain English as the official language. This was hardly surprising. With more than 500 distinct, mutually unintelligible languages, an ethnically neutral language for interethnic communication became imperative, and English fit the bill (U. B. Gut, 2008). Thus, as Schneider (2007) points out, English has emerged as "the dominant language of the mass media, business transactions, politics, advertising, the courts, science and technology, and so on, and simply the language of interethnic communication among educated Nigerians" (p. 205).

Nonetheless, as famous Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe (1988) reminded us, "And let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English, for we intend to do unheard of things with it" (p. 50). In other words, the English Nigerians speak and write must carry the weight of their culture, discursive idiosyncrasies, and rhetorical self-definitions, which will, of necessity, mark it off from native

varieties. A distinct, syntactically recognizable, structurally stable variety of English with an unquestionably identifiable Nigerian flavor, with which Nigerians did "unheard-of things," emerged by the mid-1960s and caught the attention of a few linguists. In a 1967 article, for instance, N. G. Walsh wrote: "The varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians, no matter what their language, have enough features in common to mark off a general type, which may be called Nigerian English" (cited in Ogbu, 1992, p. 88).

Over the years, many scholars have explored and identified the structural, semantic, and phonological features of Nigerian English (see, e.g., Adegbija, 1989; Alabi, 2000; Alo & Mesthrie, 2004; Bamgbose, 1996; Bamiro, 1994; Banjo, 1996; Banjo, 1997; Igboanusi, 2002; Jowitt, 1991; Udofot, 2003). Nigerian English takes its distinctive form and flavor from at least five main sources: lexical improvisation to give expression to unique Nigerian sociocultural thoughts and artifacts that are not lexicalized in Standard English; British archaisms that were once contemporary when they appeared in Nigeria; grammatical infractions by the political, cultural, and intellectual elite that have been sanctioned and reproduced by the symbolic power of the mass media; innocent admixture of British and American English (such as "torchlight," which blends the British English "torch" with the American English "flashlight," or "shortknicker," which combines the American English "shorts" with the British English "knickers"); and biblical English which, for instance, predisposes Nigerian English speakers to call prostitutes "harlots" and use "doxology" in place of "praise" (Kperogi, 2015; Wilmott, 1979).

These structural features—particularly excessive lexical formality even in informal contexts, an outsized fondness for stuffy archaisms, and biblical flourishes in nonreligious contexts—manifest prominently in e-mail scams that originate from Nigeria, as the data analysis section demonstrates. While previous research has explored the rhetorical and persuasive techniques (Dyrud, 2005; Kich, 2005), grammatical features (Blommaert & Omoniyi, 2006; Cukier, Nesselroth, & Cody, 2007) and digital forensic markers (Ofulue, 2010) of Nigerian 419 e-mail scams, no research has grappled with how the distinctive stylistic and grammatical features of the e-mails function as symbolic resources for the digital construction—and potential pathologization—of Nigerian identity.

Nigerian E-Mail Scams

Nigerian e-mail scams, also known as advance fee fraud or "419" scams in reference to the southern Nigeria Criminal Code that criminalizes the impersonation of government officials for pecuniary gratification (Smith, Holmes, & Kaufmann, 1999), have been pervading cyberspace since the late 1990s (Glickman, 2005). They have become so omnipresent that trying to escape from them has now become almost as difficult as trying to hide from daylight: You can do it only

with an effort so strenuous that it reaches the point of absurdity. The e-mails inundate mailboxes of millions of e-mail account holders all over the world with such persistence and relentlessness that the U.S. Federal Trade Commission characterized their incidence as having assumed "epidemic proportions" (Catan & Peel, 2003). The U.S. Secret Service, a major government body charged with the responsibility to combat the cybercrime, also described them as "a Mount Everest of fraud" (Kaplan, 2001).

So notoriously pervasive are the Nigerian advance fee fraud e-mails that the Washington, DC–based National Consumer League described them as the second biggest consumer come-on on the Internet, outrivaled only by pitches for "herbal Viagra" (Carbonara & Manson, 2003). And, according to the 2015 report of the Internet Crime Complaint Center, 419 e-mail scams were the second most reported online fraud complaints in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). This statistic is broadly true in most Anglophone countries, ensuring that Nigerian e-mail scams have become the dianoetic prism through which most of the English world visualizes and constructs perceptions of Nigerians. In other words, e-mail scams that emanate from Nigeria have become the biggest exporters of Nigerian English to the world, and one of the core elements by which Nigerian identity is constructed in the global imaginary. Most importantly, though, because the English represented in 419 e-mail scams emanate from the expressive, lexical, and grammatical repertoire of Nigerian English, it unwittingly contributes to the pathologization and criminalization of the "English world's fastest-growing non-native variety" (Kperogi, 2015, p. x) and its users.

In what follows, I outline the methodology used for the study, identify some of the most prominent grammatical, stylistic, and structural characteristics of the English of 419 scam e-mails, and locate their provenance to the vast, expanding, and exciting repertory of Nigerian English.

Methodology

Using a combination of case study research and qualitative discourse analysis, I collected e-mail samples from the database of "The Crime of Persuasion" website (http://www.crimes-of-persuasion.com/), a "consumer-fraud awareness" site against "schemes, scams and frauds" operated by Les Henderson, a Canadian consumer-rights author and webmaster. The website has a massive archive of Nigerian scam e-mails, collected by Henderson, right from their emergence to the present. Many of the e-mail samples were user-submitted. The site also chronicles the mutations of the scams from their emergence as snail mails in the mid-1980s to the present. Using a stratified sampling method, every other e-mail in the corpus was read. The e-mails were categorized into 13 broad themes, and samples were analyzed for each theme, amounting to 55 e-mails in total. Most 419 e-mail scams fall into one of the following

13 categories: over-invoice, deposed leader, inheritance, dead foreigner, charity gifts, trade deals, asset transfer, marked currency or "Black dollar," donation plea, job offers, scholarships, check, and personal ad scams.

Because this study is interested only in examining the structural, stylistic, and grammatical articulations of Nigerian scam e-mails and how these articulations reflect and construct a Nigerian cyber identity, the unit of analysis was the content of individual e-mails. While an analysis of the perspectives of the victims of the fraudulent e-mail solicitations would be worthwhile, it is beyond the scope of this study to inquire into that. Although only a relatively small number of e-mails was selected for this study, it is broadly representative of the range of 419 scam e-mails that emanate from Nigeria. Flyvbjerg (2006) points out that qualitative researchers interested in maximizing and generating the widest possible range of information from small, single cases adopt an information-oriented selection of samples. The samples selected for this study also exemplify what Flyvbjerg calls "paradigmatic" cases, which are samples that draw attention to "exemplars," to prototypes, and to instances that throw a particular social phenomenon into bold relief. As Eisenhardt (1989) has noted, in qualitative social science research, cases are chosen "for theoretical, not statistical, reasons" (p. 537) and for their capacity to "replicate or extend theory by filling conceptual categories" (p. 533).

The study's primary object of inquiry is text, and several scholars have persuasively argued that identity is constructed, negotiated, and articulated in text (see, for instance, Anderson, 1983; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). The next section makes this point more fully.

Grammatical, Stylistic, and Structural Features of 419 English

The Nigerian scam e-mails examined for this study exhibited the following common, identifiable grammatical, stylistic, and structural features: unconventional collocations, reclassification of parts of speech, use of false titles, excessive and unaccustomed lexical formality, irreverent informality, lexical distortion of Standard English idioms, reclassification of traditionally uncountable nouns to countable nouns, obsequiousness, quaint and unidiomatic expressions, and inappropriate, exhibitionistic expressions of religiosity.

Unconventional Collocations

Crystal (1997) points out that "the notion of collocation focuses on the extent to which lexemes come together randomly or predictably" (p. 162). Native English speakers acquire the lexical chunks that occur in their language effortlessly. For instance, the lexical properties of idioms, phrasal verbs, and other frozen, formulaic expressions are often predictable and invariable. It is unlikely, for

example, that a native English speaker would say "put up on" instead of "put up with." Many Nigerian English expressions, however, deviate from the collocational rhythm of Standard British and American English, and this is reflected in the English of 419 e-mail scams. As Okoro (2013) notes, "there are notable peculiarities and errors in the patterns of both lexical and grammatical collocations in Nigerian English, and these contribute significantly to the features that set NigE apart from other varieties of English" (p. 84). A few of these collocational deviations are discussed as follows:

"Reply me." In the expression "reply me," which appeared in all the e-mail samples examined for this study, the preposition "to," which collocates with "reply," is dispensed with. See, for instance, this sentence from a 2002 e-mail: "AS SOON AS YOU RECEIVE THIS MESSAGE, PLEASE DO REPLY ME IMMEDIATELY BECAUSE MY FATHER DID PAID [sic] MONEY FOR THE SAFE KEEPING OF THE BOX FOR SHORT PERIOD OF TIME NOT KNOWING HE IS GOING TO DIE." Although "reply" always co-occurs with "to" in the standard varieties of English in Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, it is an inescapable structural characteristic of Nigerian English to never collocate "reply" and "to." This feature of Nigerian English may owe its provenance to the headline English of Nigerian newspapers, which habitually dispense with prepositions in headlines to save space. Headlines like, "You lied, Jonathan replies Obasanjo" (Aziken & Agande, 2013), "Buhari replies wife, says Aisha 'belongs to my kitchen'" (Gesinde, 2016), "Presidency replies Sanusi" (Punch, 2016), and so on, instead of "You lied, Jonathan replies to Obasanjo," "Buhari replies to wife, says Aisha 'belongs to my kitchen'," and so on, are normative in Nigerian media English and in popular Nigerian English.

"To enable me do something." E-mail scams that originate from Nigeria or from Nigerians who may be geographically located outside Nigeria typically ask their marks to send their bank account numbers, contact information, and so on "to enable me [sic] transfer the money to you"—or such other phrase. Here is an example from the archive: "Please contact me immediately through my telephone number whether or not you are interested in this deal. If you are not, it will enable me scout for another foreign partner to carry out this deal." Again, here, unlike in native English varieties, the verb "enable" does not co-occur with the preposition "to." Many scholars of Nigerian English have identified the tendency to omit the preposition "to" in the collocation "enable someone/something to do something" as one of the key features of that dialect of English (see, for instance, Blench, 2005). Where native speakers would say, "I moved back to my hometown to enable me to be closer to my parents," Nigerian English speakers would say, "I moved back to my hometown to enable me be closer to my parents."

"Request for." While Nigerian 419 e-mails dispense with the prepositional complements of collocational expressions such as "reply to" and "enable one

to," they insert lexical elements in expressions that do not normally have them. Several 419 e-mail solicitations from the samples collected for this study had the following sentence: "I request for your help to transfer the money for investment in your country." In a job-offer e-mail scam that purports to emanate from "Deltron International" in Amsterdam, the following sentence appears: "We hereby request for the following for documentation and further processing as directed by our headquarters." In native English varieties, when "request" is used as a verb, it traditionally does not admit of a preposition. But it does in Nigerian English. Instead of "request for your permission" or "request for your help," native speakers say "request your permission" or "request your help." The juxtaposition of "request" and "for" is so fossilized in Nigerian English that it even appears on the website of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, one of Nigeria's oldest and most prestigious universities. The university tells its alumni that they "can request for more than one transcript at the same time" (University of Nigeria, n.d.).

Reclassification of Parts of Speech

One of the structural trademarks of Nigerian English is a fondness for reclassifying the parts of speech of words. Adjectives and adverbs often tend to be reclassified as verbs, as the following examples illustrate.

"Opportuned." The adjective "opportune," which means suitable (as in, "that's an opportune place to rest") or timely (as in, "the opportune arrival of the police saved him from mob lynching") is often used as a verb—chiefly in the past tense—in Nigerian English to mean "have the opportunity to." That is why expressions like, "I was not opportuned to see him," "when I'm opportuned to serve my people," and so on, are common in Nigerian English. In one of the scam e-mails examined for this study, the scammer wrote: "I was opportuned during my service to lodge this huge sum of US$55million (Fifty five million United States dollars) in a bank during the illegal diamond sales three years ago when Sierra Leone was in top crisis." No other variety of English in the world uses "opportune" as a verb—a reason it stands out in the narratives of 419 e-mail scams. Presumably, "opportuned" is a back-formation from "opportunity."

"Tantamount." This is another adjective that Nigerian English speakers habitually transform into a verb. It appears in the following construction in the samples of 419 e-mails examined for this study: "It tantamounts to discrimination to deny me the inheritance from my parents." In Standard English, that sentence would be, "it is tantamount to discrimination to deny me the inheritance from my parents" because "tantamount" is not a verb.

"Suffer us." The noun "suffer" also suffers unconventional reclassification in Nigerian English. In one of the 419 e-mails collected for this study, the phrase "he is out to suffer us" stood out. The e-mail was from a person who purported

to be the wife of the late General Sani Abacha, Nigeria's brutal military Head of State who died in 1998. The writer said she wanted to invest the stupendous wealth that the late Abacha bequeathed to her outside Nigeria because President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's president between 1999 and 2007, was "out to suffer us."

In Standard English, to "suffer" somebody is to tolerate or put up with them even if one finds them unpleasant. That is why the Standard English idiom "(not) to suffer fools gladly" means (not) to tolerate or put up with the stupidity of people. However, when the 419 e-mail said the Obasanjo government was "out to suffer us," it meant that the government of the day wanted to make Abacha's children suffer for the alleged sins of their father.

"Doesn't worth it." One scam e-mail said staying in Nigeria in the face of the certain clamp-down of the government "doesn't worth it." Here, the adjective "worth" has been verbified. A native English speaker would have said "it's not worth it" since "worth" is never used to express action.

"Horn." Another example of the reclassification of the parts of speech of Standard English words can be found in such popular Nigerian English expressions as "horn before overtaking" for "honk/toot your horn before you speed past me." In Standard English, "horn" is never used as a verb when reference is to the warning sounds that the horns of automobiles make. The preferred verbs are "honk" and "toot." When "horn" is used as a verb, it usually means to stab with a horn, that is, the long, pointed outgrowth on the head of some animals.

Unconventional adverbs. Several 419 scam e-mails contain unconventional adverbial formations like "outrightly"—a redundant, nonexistent adverbial inflection of the word "outright," which is actually both an adjective and an adverb in Standard English and therefore does not need the "ly" morpheme. Another fond but unconventional adverbial formation in Nigerian English is "installmentally." It is used where native speakers would say "in installments." The sample contains many e-mails that proposed to refund money to their marks "installmentally."

Use of False Titles

One of the invariable stylistic imprints of Nigerian 419 scammers is their obsession with titles, particularly titles that are unconventional in the West. Senders often prefix to their names occupational titles that are unknown in the rest of the English-speaking world. Examples are "Barrister," "Engineer" (often abbreviated as "Engr."), "Architect" (often abbreviated as "Arc."), Pharmacist (often abbreviated to Pharm.), and so on. It is usual in Nigeria for people with an engineering degree to prefix "Engineer" to their names. People with a law degree also prefix "Barrister" to their names, architects prefix "Arc." to theirs, and so on, all in a bid to confer authority on themselves, and to call attention to their professional identity and accomplishments. The practice derives its origins,

it would seem, by analogy to medical doctors who universally prefix "Dr." to their names.

When the e-mail scammers (and other honest Nigerians) do not use unconventional occupational titles (such as Barrister, Engr., Arc., Pharm., Surveyor, etc.), they use courtesy titles like "Mr.," "Mrs.," and "Miss" in their self-introductions: "I am Miss Comfort from Nigeria and I wish to know you more," reads one of the e-mails in our sample. This excessive formality would strike native English speakers as stilted and unnatural.

Related to this is the obsession with stacking multiple courtesy, occupational, cultural, and academic titles for one individual, such as the use of "Dr. (Mrs.)," "Prof. (Mrs.)," "Dr. (Mrs.) Princess," "Alhaji (Dr.) Chief," "Barrister Dr. Chief," "Rt. Hon. Dr.," and so on, before people's names. The multiple titles are designed to bestow awe, social status, and authority on the bearers (see Chiluwa, 2010). The importance of the title "Hon." (short for "honorable") and "Dr." after the name is to indicate that the author is a member of either the state or federal legislature in addition to being a PhD or a medical doctor. And because being married while professionally successful is a culturally prized status symbol for Nigerian women, the appearance of "Mrs." in a married woman's stack of titles is indispensable. Many Nigerian English speakers have no awareness of the geographic and cultural particularity of their conventions of address and let it inflect their dialogic styles even when they communicate with non-Nigerians.

Scammers who impersonate high-ranking Nigerian traditional rulers also deploy the honorific "His Royal Highness," or HRH for short, which is unconventional by the standards of British English from where Nigerian English borrowed it. In British English, kings or monarchs are addressed as "His Royal Majesty," and only princes and princesses are addressed as "His Royal Highness." Many British citizens not familiar with Nigeria's conventions of address mistake Nigerian monarchs for princes because of the "His Royal Highness" (or HRH) honorific that precedes their names.

This convention of address is traceable to the period of colonialism when British colonizers regarded and addressed all traditional rulers in their colonies as no more than "princes," since there could only be one king or queen in the Commonwealth. Although Nigeria declared itself a republic in 1963, 3 years after independence from British colonialism, the colonial linguistic tradition that demoted Nigerian kings to mere princes endures.

Excessive Lexical Formality

One of the enduring stylistic idiosyncrasies of Nigerian English is the tendency to use turgid, formal, unusual, and archaic words in informal contexts. For instance, the word "demurrage" appears in many shipping-related 419 e-mails.

In a 2002 user-submitted e-mail solicitation, the writer who purports to be a southern African, wrote:

> Before the death of my father, he had taken me to Johannesburg to deposit . . . private security company . . . deposited in a box as gemstones to avoid much demurrage . . . for establishment of new farms in Swaziland.

This is a recondite, archaic English word, which is nonetheless commonly used in informal Nigerian English to denote a charge required as compensation for the delay of a ship or freight car or other cargo beyond its scheduled time of departure. Ubahakwe (cited in Jowitt, 2016, p. 26) calls this character of Nigerian English "bookish"—the tendency to hold on to words and expressions that have run out of fashion in, and receded to the linguistic backyard of, modern native-speaker usage, and that are exaggeratedly Latinate. Other regularly occurring "bookish English" words in informal Nigerian English, and in the English of 419 e-mails, are "imprest" (monthly or weekly petty cash for government officials to spend), "estacode" (daily travel allowance for government officials, etc., borrowed and distorted from the British English "Estacode," which is a portmanteau of Establishment Code), and "parastatal" (a wholly or partly owned government corporation, such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation that is often the subject of several 419 e-mail solicitations).

Irreverent Informality

While Nigerian scam e-mails can be exaggeratedly formal in the tone of their language and in the use of courtesy titles where they are not necessary, they often can slip into informality that borders on the irreverent. In the e-mail samples archived in the Crime of Passion site, expressions such as "he gave up the ghost" or "he kicked the bucket" to denote dying are frequent. A 419 e-mail reads:

> But before he gave up the ghost, it was as if he knew he was going to die. He my father, MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PERFECT PEACE he disclosed to me that he deposited the sum of $28,000,000,00 US Dollars (TWENTY EIGHT MILLION DOLLARS) in a security company here in Abidjan-Cote d'Ivoire.

This would strike most native English speakers as inappropriate in an e-mail communication, but such expressions are common in Nigerian English even in formal contexts.

Lexical Distortion of Standard English Idioms

Nigerian English, like many nonnative English varieties, habitually substitutes, omits, or distorts the lexical properties of fixed expressions in Standard English.

Common examples are "be at the safer side" (be on the safe side), "I appreciate" (I appreciate it), "one hell of trouble" (one hell of a lot of trouble), "he is in soup" (he is in the soup), "you can never eat your cake and have it" (you can't have your cake and eat it), "benefit of doubt" (the benefit of the doubt), "in affirmative" (in the affirmative), and "more grease to your elbow" (more power to you). The omission of articles in expressions such as "in soup," "benefit of doubt" is certainly inspired by Nigerian newspaper headline English where anxieties about space cause copyeditors to dispense with articles and conjunctions in news headlines. While this feature of headlines is not unique to Nigerian journalism (see Biber, 2004), it has influenced demotic spoken and written English in Nigeria in ways it has not elsewhere.

The most common lexical distortion that appears in the English of 419 e-mails is the expression "be rest assured." Typical 419 e-mail solicitations entreat their would-be preys to "be rest assured" of the authenticity of the scam they are proposing. "Please be rest assured and feel free to go into this transaction with us," read one of the e-mails in the sample examined for this study. This frequently used 419 scam e-mail lingo is socially prestigious, mainstream Nigerian English.

The fixed English idiom that this Nigerian English expression distorts is "rest assured," that is, to be certain. It is rare in Nigerian English for the expression to be rendered without the pointless and intrusive "be." The following sentence is an example of how the phrase regularly occurs in popular Nigerian English: "You should be rest assured that I will not disappoint you." The "be" in the phrase is superfluous and entirely absent in native English varieties.

It appears that the lexical distortion is a consequence of what grammarians call the habitual, uninflected, or unconjugated "be" (i.e., where the verb "to be" does not change form under any circumstance), which occurs in Nigerian Pidgin English (such as in the expression "I be don see am today," i.e., "I have seen him today"), in African-American Vernacular English (such as in the expression "she be mean to me," i.e., "she is mean to me"), and in many English-based pidgins and creoles (Ewers, 1996). It is reasonable to argue that the addition of "be" before the idiom "rest assured" in Nigerian English is attributable to the influence of Nigerian Pidgin English, which derives its structural characteristics from several native Nigerian languages and most of its vocabulary from English. Or, perhaps, it is inspired by a false analogy to expressions like "be careful," "be nice," and so on, but in Standard English two verbs do not usually follow each other sequentially. In the phrase "be rest assured," both "be" and "rest" are verbs. But in "be careful" and "be nice," "careful" and "nice" are adjectives, so the analogy is false. Since expressions like "be sleep well" or "be go knowing that," and so on, are absent in Nigerian English, it is hard to fathom why the expression "be rest assured" emerged and took firm roots in Nigerian English.

The Reclassification of Uncountable Nouns to Countable Nouns

There are certain nouns in English that are invariably uncountable and that do not admit of plural forms, but which Nigerian English speakers pluralize. Examples of nouns that are not pluralized and therefore are not inflected with a terminal "s" in Standard English are "information," "ammunition," "equipment," "aircraft," "cutlery," "invective," "luggage," "offspring," "advice," "personnel," "legislation," "yesteryear," "heyday," "vermin," and so on. Dyrud's (2005) exploration of 419 e-mails titled "I brought you a good news: An analysis of Nigerian 419 letters" calls attention to this feature of Nigerian English.

Because these unconventional pluralizations are unique to Nigerian English—and have been popularized to the Anglophone world by Nigerian 419 scammers—it is easy for e-mail authorship identification programs to isolate e-mail messages that contain them.

Obsequiousness

Excessive, inappropriate politeness in language is another structural characteristic of Nigerian scam e-mails. The expression "with due respect" is the favorite marker of politeness in Nigerian English. This phrase often appears in the subject lines of 419 e-mail scams—and in the subject lines of legitimate e-mails from honest Nigerians. It also regularly appears as a prefatory remark before a 419 scam proposition. Typical constructions with the phrase go something like this: "With due respect to you, I crave your indulgence for the unsolicited nature of this letter." Native English speakers find this typically Nigerian English usage of "with due respect" bewildering.

First, the usual rendering of the expression is "with all due respect." Second, native English speakers use the phrase only when they want to politely disagree with someone, as in, "with all due respect, that statement is not accurate." Whenever the phrase "with due respect" is uttered, the people to whom it is addressed always prepare themselves for a mild, tempered criticism. So when Nigerians write "with due respect" and do not follow it up with a criticism or a disagreement, native English speakers are often befuddled. In Nigerian English, "with due respect" simply means "in a respectful manner"; it denotes that the writer wishes to convey the sense that she holds the addressee in high esteem. (Indians say "respected sir" where Nigerians would say "with due respect"; both are strange to native English ears).

Quaint, Unidiomatic Expressions

The prevalence of quaint, unidiomatic, or outright ungrammatical expressions is another prototypic trail of English usage in 419 e-mails. One recurring example is, "I and my colleagues." In formal Standard English grammar, "I" often comes

last unless the writer is the absolute ruler of a kingdom. Native speakers would say, “my colleagues and I” instead of “I and my colleagues” in formal settings. Other dead stylistic giveaways of Nigerianisms in 419 e-mail scams are, “I cannot be able to” for “I can’t,” ending the subject line of an e-mail with a period, writing in all caps, and so on. “I hope to read from you soon,” a popular phrase to end letters in Nigerian English, is another example of unidiomatic English that has been popularized by Nigerian 419 e-mail scams. Native English speakers typically end correspondence with, “I hope to hear from you.” As we saw in the Introduction section, this expression invited an unwelcome criminal suspicion to a Nigerian professor.

Conclusions

Since identity inheres not in people but in their actions, their discursive shibboleths, their textual trails, and their overall communicative rituals, the English Nigerians write online, which is a product of their cultural and linguistic domestication of the language, defines them. The incorporeality of online identity and the asynchronicity and anonymity of its communicative modes particularly confer added valence to textual language. It makes linguistic artifacts such as e-mails the main instruments for the construction of cultural subjectivities and identities. In corporeal, nonymous, synchronous dialogic encounters, communicated messages have a chance to have the stamp of individuality, but this prospect diminishes in the anonymic cover of digital environments. It is precisely this fact that conduces to the construction of Nigerian identity in the global consciousness through Nigerian e-mail scams. As Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008, p. 1831) pointed out, “[online] identity is not an individual characteristic; it is not an expression of something innate in a person, it is rather a social product, the outcome of a given social environment.” The distinctive stylistic imprints of Nigerian scam e-mails are fundamentally rooted in the vast and varied corpora of Nigerian English, which is a fascinating convergence of (archaic) British English and the structural echoes of a whole host of hierarchically subordinate, “marked” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 372) Nigerian languages. This lingual convergence of British English superstrate and a substrate of a medley of Nigerian languages is reproduced and sanctified, if not cultivated, in the Nigerian news media, as I have shown in the previous sections of this article.

Several of the stereotypic Nigerian expressions identified in this article constitute the lexical core in the construction of what is called “terminology engineering in e-mail fraud detection” (Kerremans, Tang, Temmerman, & Zhao, 2005, p. 110) to track and trash fraudulent Nigerian e-mail solicitations. That means 419 scam e-mails have caused the linguistic singularities of even honest Nigerians to be pathologized and criminalized, especially because 419 e-mails have done more to popularize Nigerian English to the rest of the English-speaking world than any Nigerian cultural artifact. The stylistic imprints

of scam e-mails from Nigeria vicariously criminalize many innocent Nigerians, as the example of the Nigerian professor I mentioned in the beginning of this article shows. As many scholars have noted, identity, especially digital identity, inheres primarily in text. Since even text is a culturally contingent mode of articulation, it aids in the delimiting of incorporeal digital identities that lack marked individuality.

Concerns about authorship attribution of fraudulent e-mail communications emerged fairly early in studies of Internet fraud (Gray, Sallis, & McDonell, 1997, 1998). Computational linguists and information systems specialists have deployed strategies to perform software forensics with intent to identify the authors of fraudulent e-mails. De Vel, Anderson, Corney, and Mohay (2001), for instance, employed a Support Vector Machine learning algorithm for mining e-mail content based on its structural characteristics and linguistic patterns in order to provide authorship evidence of scam e-mails for use within a legal context. Several forensic linguistic programs have developed e-mail authorship identification markers based solely on phrases and expressions that are unique to 419 e-mail scams. The software developed from these programs helps people automatically trash "419-sounding" e-mails.

The problem is that the software also cause many legitimate e-mails from honest Nigerians to be deleted since the alarm triggers for the software are uniquely Nigerian English expressions. "Hope to read from you soon," for instance, features prominently in the repertoire of "red-flag" expressions many software programs use to identify 419 e-mails, as a search of the expression on search engines such as Google shows. As Kropko (2016) points out,

> Google and other email clients use Baye's rule to sort e-mail messages like [Nigerian 419 emails] into your spam folder by looking at particular words and combination of words. The downside is that sometimes perfectly legitimate e-mails get sorted into the spam folder because they contain these words as well. (p. 102)

It is entirely plausible that the Nigerian professor referenced in the beginning of this essay was told his English was "suspect" only because his unique Nigerian expressions triggered Nigerian 419 e-mail authorship identification red flags. It therefore will not be entirely misplaced to characterize the whole host of 419 e-mail authorship identification programs as engaging in borderline linguistic xenophobic identity mapping because they basically pathologize and criminalize the stylistic idiosyncrasies of an entire nonnative English variety. This speaks to what Beer (2017) calls the "social power" of algorithms, that is, the capacity for algorithmic computation to mediate and define the contours of online sociality and to act as a stand-in for even offline dialogic and communicative encounters. As he points out,

> It is far more common for algorithmic processes to pass us by without being noticed. Once we begin to reflect on the scale of these processes—with algorithms,

> sorting, filtering, searching, prioritising, recommending, deciding and so on—it is perhaps little wonder that a discussion of the social role of algorithms is picking up pace. (p. 2)

Algorithms derive the social basis of their power from the notion of their "objectivity," "rationality," immunity from human manipulation and, most importantly, the "way that it becomes part of a discursive understanding of desirability and efficiency in which the mention of algorithms is part of 'a code of normalization'" (p. 9). That is why the technological coding of English usage patterns by e-mail authorship programs is not only relied upon as an unerring measure of anonymic online identities but also as a dependable marker of abnormality.

Algorithmic pathologization of e-mail communication, instantiated by the experience of the Nigerian professor who was characterized as "suspect" because of his Nigerian linguistic singularities, reduces sociolinguistic complexity to essentialist, homogenizing lexical and syntactic stereotypes. It isolates deviations from established usage norms and constructs them as anomalous, "suspect," and even criminal. This sort of stigmatization feeds on visible linguistic markers of identity, but its decontextualization traps many unintended victims, such as the Nigerian professor referenced in the prefatory section of this paper.

Most Nigerians who were socialized and educated in Nigeria, irrespective of their level and quality of education, cannot escape Nigerian English inflections in their quotidian communicative encounters every once in a while. Bourdieu's (1977) point about the inescapable social and cultural embeddedness of language and its performativity (Bourdieu, 1991) is relevant here. Legendary Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, in defending his creative nativization of English idioms and conventions once said any language that is impudent enough to extend beyond its natural habitat should realize that it would be domesticated, relexicalized, and resemancitized to fit the sociocultural needs of its new location and users (Achebe, 1997; Ohaeto, 1997).

The 419 scam artists who invade e-mail users' inboxes with their grammatically quaint expressions write the way they do because they are the products of the Nigerian sociolinguistic environment. For instance, in quotidian Nigerian life, identity is performed through the exhibitionistic preening of the rituals and idioms of religiosity. In particular, the vernacular of Nigerian Pentecostal Christianity has emerged as a fundamental source of Nigerian English. The linguistic seepage of the vernaculars and registers of Nigerian Pentecostalism into popular Nigerian English occurs primarily through Nollywood movies, from where it percolates into the Nigerian news media and later to the general population. Nigerian Pentecostal Christian English codes have now become so widespread that even Nigerian Muslims and non-Pentecostal Nigerian Christians have unconsciously co-opted them in their conversational repertoires,

and this is inflected in the language of both honest and fraudulent Nigerian e-mail writers.

In other words, the stylistic markers that computational linguists, information systems specialists, and e-mail clients use to identify 419 e-mail scams are drawn from the vast repertoire of idiosyncratic Nigerian English, which draws heavily from Nigerian culture. It is similar to isolating American English expressions that appear regularly in the e-mails of American scammers and developing an authorship identification program based on these expressions so that any e-mail from any American, including even the American president, that uses any stereotyped American English expression is automatically "suspect." Lippi-Green (1997) reminds us that language is the "most salient way we have of establishing our identities" (p. 5). In our increasingly digital, often anonymic world, that language is primarily textual, making text, such as e-mails, a central site for the production, negotiation, and articulation of digital identities. In Nigeria, the language that embodies and articulates national identity, that is, the wordage that typifies Nigerian English usage, is one that 419 e-mail scammers have caused to be unwittingly pathologized by e-mail clients and digital forensic programs.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

Achebe, C. (1988). *Hopes and impediments: Selected essays*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Achebe, C. (1997). African literature: English and the African writer. *Transition*, (75/76), 342. Retrieved from Research Library database (Document ID: 39250335).

Adamson, D. (1989). *The last empire: Britain and the Commonwealth*. London, England: Tauris.

Adegbija, E. (1989). Lexico-semantic variation in Nigerian English. *World Englishes*, *8*(2), 165–177.

Alabi, V. A. (2000). Semantics of occupational lexis in Nigerian English. *World Englishes*, *19*(1), 107–112.

Alo, M. A., & Mesthrie, R. (2004). Nigerian English: Morphology and syntax. In B. Kortmann, K. R, Burridge. Mesthrie, E. Schneider, & C. Upton (Series Eds.), *A Handbook of Varieties of English: Vol 2. Morphology and syntax* (pp. 813–827). Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagine communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, England: Verso.

Aziken, E. & Agande, B. (2013, December 23). You lied, Jonathan replies Obasanjo. *Vanguard*. Retrieved from http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/lied-jonathan-replies-obasanjo/.

Bamgbose, A. (1982). Standard Nigerian English: Issues of identification. In B. B. Kachru (Ed.), *The other tongue: English across cultures* (pp. 148–161). New York, NY: Pergamon Press.

Bamgbose, A. (1995). English in the Nigerian environment. In A. Bamgbose, A. Banjo, & A. Andrews (Eds.), *New Englishes: A West African perspective*, (pp. 9–26). Ibadan, Nigeria: Mosuro Publishers & Booksellers.

Bamgbose, A. (1996). Post-imperial in Nigeria 1940–1990. In J. A. Fishman, A. W. Conrad, & A. Rubal-Lopez. *Post-imperial English: Status change in former British and American colonies, 1940–1990* (pp. 357–372). Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bamiro, E. (1994). Lexico-semantic variation in Nigerian English. *World Englishes*, *13*(1), 47–60.

Banjo, A. (1995). *Towards a definition of standard Nigerian spoken English*. Paper presented at the Actes du Congres de La Societe Lingustique de L'Afrique Occidentale, Abidjan, West Africa.

Banjo, A. (1996). *Making a virtue out of necessity: An overview of the English language in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Nigeria: University of Ibadan Press.

Banjo, A. (1997). Aspects of the syntax of Nigerian English. In E. Schneider (Ed.), *Englishes around the world: Vol. 2. Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australasia. Studies in honor of Manfred Gorlach* (pp. 85–95). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Beer, D. (2017). The social power of algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(1), 1–13. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1216147.

Biber, D. (2004). Compressed noun-phrase structures in newspaper discourse: The competing demands of popularization vs. economy. In J. Aitchison & D. Lewis (Eds.), *New media language* (pp. 169–181). London, England: Routledge.

Blench, R. (2005, August 7). A dictionary of Nigerian English. Retrieved from http://www.rogerblench.info/Language/English/Nigerian%20English%20Dictionary.pdf

Blommaert, J., & Omoniyi, T. (2006). E-mail fraud: Language, technology, and the indexicals of globalization. *Social Semiotics*, *16*, 573–605. doi:10.1080/10350330601019942.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of linguistic exchanges. *Social Science Information*, *16*(6), 645–668.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brysk, A., Parsons, C., & Sandholtz, W. (2002). After empire: National identity and postcolonial families of nations. *European Journal of International Relations*, *8*(2), 267–305.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 369–394). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistics approach. *Discourse Studies*, *7*(5), 585–614.

Carbonara, P., & Manson, D. (2003, July/August). The scam that will not die. *Business Credit, 105*(7). Retrieved from Academic Search Premier.

Catan, T., & Peel, M. (2003, March 3). Bogus websites, stolen corporate identities. *Financial Times*, p. 21.

Chiluwa, I. (2010). Discursive practice and the Nigerian identity in personal emails. In T. Rotimi (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse behavior and digital communication* (pp. 112–129). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Crystal, D. (1997). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambidge University Press.

Cukier, W. L., Nesselroth, E. J., & Cody, S. (2007, January). *Genre, narrative and the "Nigerian letter" in electronic mail*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 40th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Waikoloa, Big Island, Hawaii.

de Vel, O.Y., Anderson, A., Corney, M., & Mohay, G. (2001). Mining e-mail content for author identification forensics. *SIGMOD Record*, *30*(4), 55–64.

Dyrud, M. A. (2005, October). *I brought you a good news: An analysis of Nigerian 419 letters*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 2005 Association for Business Communication Annual Convention, Irvine, CA.

Edwards, J. (2012). Language and identity. In C. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, (pp. 411–420). Oxford, England: Wiley Blackwell.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *The Academy of Management Review*, *14*(4), 532–550.

Ewers, T. (1996). *The origin of American Black English: Be-forms in the HOODOO texts*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

Falola, T. (1999). *The history of Nigeria*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *12*(2), 219–245.

Gesinde, S. (2016, October 14). Buhari replies wife, says Aisha 'belongs to my kitchen.' *Nigerian Tribune*. Retrieved from http://tribuneonlineng.com/buhari-replies-wife-says-aisha-belongs-kitchen/.

Glickman, H. (2005). The Nigerian "419" advance fee scams: Prank or peril? *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, *39*(3), 460–489.

Gray, A., Sallis, P., & McDonell, S. (1997, January). Software forensics: Extending authorship analysis techniques to computer programs. In *Proceedings of the Third Biannual Conference of the International Association of Forensic Linguistics,* (pp. 1–8). Durham, NC.

Gray, A., Sallis, P., & McDonell, S. (1998, January). *IDENTIFIED: A dictionary-based system for extracting source code metrics for software forensics*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the International Conference on Software Engineering: Education & Practice, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Gut, U. (2012). Standards of English in West Africa. In R. Hickey (Ed.), *Standards of English: Codified varieties around the world* (pp. 213–228). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Gut, U. B. (2008). Nigerian English: Phonology. In R. Mesthrie (Ed.), *Varieties of English: Africa, South and Southeast Asia* (pp. 33–54). Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hickey, R. (2004). *Legacies of colonial English: Studies in transported dialects*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Igboanusi, H. (2002). *A dictionary of Nigerian English usage*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Enicrownfit.

Joseph, I. (2004). *Language and identity: National, ethnic, religious*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jowitt, D. (1991). *Nigerian English: An introduction*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Longman.

Jowitt, D. (2016). English usage in Nigerian newspapers. In D. Jowitt, G. N. Danaan, & T. C. Obateru (Eds.), *Understanding the newspaper business in Nigeria: A resource guide* (pp. 19–31). Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Kaplan, D. E. (2001, May 1). A land where con is king. *U.S. News & World Report*, pp. 28–29.

Kerremans, K., Tang, Y., Temmerman, R., & Zhao, G. (2005). Towards ontology-based e-mail fraud detection. In C. Bento, A. Cardoso, & G. Dias (Eds.), *Proceedings of EPIA 2005 BAOSW workshop 12th Portuguese conference on artificial intelligence* (pp. 106–111). Piscataway, NJ: IEEE.

Kich, M. (2005). A rhetorical analysis of fund-transfer-scam solicitations. *Cercles*, *14*, 129–142.

Kperogi, F. A. (2010). Divided by a common language: A comparison of Nigerian, American and British English. In M. O. Afolayan (Ed.), *Multiculturalism in the age of the mosaic: Essays in honor of Rudolph G. Wilson* (pp. 55–63). New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers.

Kperogi, F. A. (2015). *Glocal English: The changing face and forms of Nigerian English in a global world*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Kropko, J. (2016). *Mathematics for social scientists*. New Delhi, India: Sage.

Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *English with an accent: Language, ideology and discrimination in the United States*. London, England: Routledge.

Norton, B. (2010). Language and identity. In N. H. Hornberger & S. L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 349–369). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

Ochs, E. (1993). Constructing social identity: A language socialization perspective. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, *26*(3), 287–306.

Ofulue, C. I. (2010). A digital forensic analysis of advance fee fraud (419 scams). In T. Rotimi (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse behavior and digital communication* (pp. 296–315). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Ogbu, J. (1992). *A historical survey of English and the Nigerian situation*. Lagos, Nigeria: Krafts Books.

Ohaeto, E. (1997). *Chinua Achebe: A biography*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Okoro, O. (2013). Exploring collocations in Nigerian English usage. *California Linguistic Notes*, *XXXVIII*(1), 84–121.

Punch. (2016, December 4). Presidency replies Sanusi. *Punch*. Retrieved from http://punchng.com/presidency-replies-sanusi/.

Schiffrin, D. (1996). Narrative as self-portrait: Sociolinguistic constructions of identity. *Language in Society*, *25*, 167–203.

Schneider, E. W. (2007). *Postcolonial English: Varieties around the world*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Shotter, J., & Gergen, K.J. (1989). (Eds.). *Texts of identity*. London, England: Sage.
Simpson, A. (2008). *Language and national identity in Africa*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
Smith, R. G., Holmes, M.N., & Kaufmann, P. (1999). Nigerian advance fee fraud. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice,* No. 121. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Retrieved from http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current series/tandi/121-140/tandi121.aspx.
Spencer, J. (1971). *The English language in West Africa*. London, England: Longman.
Taiwo, R. (2001). Lexico-semantic relations errors in senior secondary school students' writing. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, *10*(3), 366–373.
Udofot, I. M. (2003). Nativization of the English language in Nigeria: A cultural and linguistic renaissance. *Journal of Nigerian English and Literature*, *4*, 42–52.
University of Nigeria. (n.d.). *How to use itranscripts*. Retrieved from https://alumni.unn.edu.ng/itranscript.
U.S. Department of Justice. (2016). *2015 Internet crime report*. Retrieved from https://pdf.ic3.gov/2015_IC3Report.pdf.
Wenger, E. (1988). *Communities of practice*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
White, B. W. (1996). Talk about school: Education and the colonial project in French and British Africa (1860–1960). *Comparative Education*, *32*(1), 9–25.
Wilmott, M. B. (1979). Variety signifiers in Nigerian English. *English Language Teaching Journal*, *33*(3), 227–233.
Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *24*, 1816–1836.

Author Biography

Farooq A. Kperogi, PhD, is an associate professor of Journalism and Emerging Media in the School of Communication and Media at Kennesaw State University, Georgia. His research primarily focuses on online sociality, citizen media, and global English varieties, especially as they are articulated in the news media. He is the author of *Glocal English: The Changing Face and Forms of Nigerian English in a Global World* (Peter Lang, 2015).

Check for updates

Article

“What a Loser That Guy Was”: Norm Macdonald’s Humorous Critique of the Romantic/ Warrior Narrative

Journal of Communication Inquiry
2018, Vol. 42(3) 241–257
© The Author(s) 2018
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0196859918771891
journals.sagepub.com/home/jci

Nicholas T. Iannarino[1]

Abstract

Illness narratives are stories that focus on, or are inspired by, the sometimes life-altering experience of illness. Most narrative constructions of these illness experiences are built upon one of three broad narrative “skeletons.” One skeletal subform, the romantic/warrior narrative, is critiqued by comedian Norm Macdonald in a humorous anecdote that mocks the expectation that cancer patients must wage an epic and heroic battle against their pernicious cancer to have a chance to survive. Macdonald explicates that such a mentality produces heroes and villains, winners and losers, and places additional burden on cancer patients. In this analysis, I argue that Macdonald’s effective use of humor and fulfillment of the five functions of health-related narration enable his story to gain narrative rationality and serve as effective rhetorical tools in encouraging the audience to accept the narrator’s critique of the romantic/warrior subform.

Keywords

illness narration, humor, narrative analysis, narrative fidelity, quest narrative

[1]Department of Language, Culture, and Communication, University of Michigan-Dearborn, Dearborn, MI, USA

Corresponding Author:

Nicholas T. Iannarino, Department of Language, Culture, and Communication, University of Michigan-Dearborn, 3036 CASL Building, 4901 Evergreen Road, Dearborn, MI 48128, USA.
Email: iannarnt@umich.edu

Approximately 117 million people in the United States have at least one chronic health condition (e.g., heart disease, cancer, stroke; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017). For many of these individuals, illness can cause dramatic and potentially lasting changes to their health status, physical appearance, bodily functions, and social life (Bury, 1982). Scholars have argued that when the lives of chronically ill people and their loved ones are disrupted, their relationships altered, and their identities modified, they often seek and construct stories about their illness (Frank, 1995). According to Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm, telling and hearing stories about one's life—with plots, conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends—is the most common form of human expression and meaning creation. He argued that selecting and recreating life events in this communicative fashion enables people to comprehend and express their views of the world and their rationale for why things happen in certain ways (Fisher, 1984). Because they give voice to and place patients and their loved ones at the center of illness experiences, narratives are an effective tool in challenging biomedicine as the primary means of understanding health and disease (Ellingson & Buzzanell, 1999). Likewise, narrative research has been essential in gaining insight into how people perceive and cope with chronic illness (Eli & Kay, 2015).

The present study follows in this narrative research tradition by analyzing a humorous narrative about colorectal cancer (CRC) shared by comedian Norm Macdonald (2011) in a recorded stand-up special. Nearly 140,000 people are diagnosed with, and over 51,000 people die from, CRC each year (CDC, 2018). Macdonald's narrative is not only unique because it is delivered by a noteworthy performer who uses humor to tell a brief story about a loved one living with CRC, but because it also subverts a larger cultural narrative that is frequently used to characterize cancer patients. Before describing, interpreting, and evaluating this narrative and its implications, I discuss the functions and forms of illness narratives in health communication research and introduce the role humor could play in their construction and dissemination.

Significance of Illness Narratives

Humans create, share, and receive narratives to "learn about and make sense of our world, reify our history, values and traditions, reveal our attitudes and emotions and create communities" (Casey et al., 2003, p. 252). Likewise, severe and chronic illness is said to "summon stories" that give value to narrators' and audiences' experiences (Harter, 2009, p. 141). For example, narrators often construct and share stories about illness to gain "equipment for living" (Burke, 1941) through five restorative functions (Arntson & Droge, 1987; Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). First, narratives can enable "wounded storytellers" (Frank, 1995) coping with loss, trauma, and impairment to reestablish their present and future identities in functional and empowering ways. Second,

constructing narratives about illness' unpredictability and disorder can help narrators reassert themselves as active agents and reestablish control over their experiences, despite suffering a whirlwind of physical and emotional changes. Third, narrative construction can highlight ill peoples' values, reasons for action, and judgments for how the world ought to function, which can help them make and justify crucial decisions. Fourth, by identifying clear beginnings and endings, establishing causal links, and recollecting events they previously dismissed as insignificant or unexplainable, narrators can make sense of the seemingly random and unexpected events of their illness by placing them into larger and more meaningful narrative structures that can be understood and shared with others (Eggly, 2002).

Narrative structures about living with chronic illness have been studied in interpersonal communication within families (Anderson & Martin, 2003) and between patients and medical providers (Eggly, 2002); in creative modes of expression like written blogs (Iannarino, 2017), descriptive essays (Defenbaugh, 2013), scrapbooks, and photography (Sharf, Harter, Yamasaki, & Haidet, 2011); through live performance in stand-up comedy (Nutter, 2014), dance (Eli & Kay, 2015), and interactive drama (Howard, 2013); in public celebrity disclosures to the media (Beck, Aubuchon, McKenna, Ruhl, & Simmons, 2014); and in entertainment education (Link, Schlütz, & Brauer, 2016). Regardless of their medium, illness narratives are often socially constructed, and they can appear as individual stories; an accumulation of individual stories that form family, group, or organizational narratives; as master narratives that are developed from and reflect predominant aspects of the larger culture; and as counternarratives that challenge the accepted master narratives (Sharf et al., 2011).

Thus, Sharf and Vanderford (2003) added a fifth narrative function, which explains that the construction and dissemination of illness narratives can help establish community and serve as a method of "co-healing" between narrators and audiences (Sunwolf, Frey, & Keranan, 2005). Not only can narratives open and extend support networks for people with common ailments, they can also shape and potentially transform healthy audiences' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding illness (Sharf et al., 2011). For example, a study of how 157 public figures (e.g., athletes, actors, musicians, politicians) publicly disclosed information about their own or a loved one's health issue (e.g., drug addiction, diabetes) found that these narratives can increase public awareness and education about prevention/detection and alleviate misconceptions and stigma about the illness; inspire others in similar situations to take action, feel hope, and seek support; and provide outlets for activism and advocacy (Beck et al., 2014). Following her husband's death from CRC, Katie Couric's *Today Show* campaign to boost CRC awareness also led to increases in colonoscopy screening rates for nearly a year (Cram et al., 2003).

Additionally, exposure to illness narratives in storylines on popular television programs like *thirtysomething* (Sharf, Freimuth, Greenspon, & Plotnick, 1996),

Sex and the City (Gray, 2007), *The Michael J. Fox Show* (Link et al., 2016), *NYPD Blue* (Arrington & Goodlier, 2004), and *Monk* (Hoffner & Cohen, 2015) can help audiences gain more awareness and knowledge of the illness, rethink stereotypes, experience personal connection with illness-stricken characters, rehearse scenarios in which they or their loved ones have the illness, and even change behaviors (e.g., by seeking more information, pursuing treatment, altering preventative health practices, and offering social support to others experiencing illness). In short, narratives can provide narrators and audiences with a guide for thinking about and living through illness. They can also help people organize, adapt to, and communicate their viewpoints related to illness (Anderson & Martin, 2003). One way to better understand a narrator's worldview is to examine the larger forms these narratives can take.

Illness Narrative Forms

Frank (1998) characterized three recognizable narrative "skeletons" upon which illness experiences are often constructed. Restitution narratives are culturally preferred in North America and contain a narrative arc that consists of reporting symptoms, suffering, receiving treatment, and experiencing health restored. Because the true "heroes" or "active players" of these narratives are often medical professionals and the biomedical model itself, "restitution stories are told by ill people who narrate from the sidelines" (pp. 200–201). Clinicians, their treatment protocol, and the secondhand medical talk the narrator verbalizes often displace the patient's subjectivity and search for the illness's meaning.

When restitution is not conceivable (e.g., when a cough turns out to be lung cancer or kidney stones point to a chronic renal disorder), illness experiences are typically recounted as quest narratives. Most characters in quest narratives are portrayed as being able to "meet suffering head on; they accept the illness and seek to *use* it" (Frank, 1995, p. 115). Thus, these characters are depicted as growing stronger from dealing with the adversity associated with their cancer experiences. Additionally, narrators who use quest narrative forms sometimes characterize their experiences as that of a battle, pitting the patient, as a determined and heroic warrior, against an insidious villain, their cancer, in an epic life-or-death struggle for survival (Anderson & Martin, 2003). Foss (2009) argued that these tropes characterize romance narrative subtypes, in which a "protagonist completes a quest against an enemy and emerges victorious and enlightened" (p. 314).

While restitution narratives depict happy endings in the narrator's experience as instances of health restored, and quest narratives indicate that the patient has gleaned new insights or qualities of self from illness, chaos narratives are constructed when narrators portray illness as a series of random events in which all seems to go uncontrollably awry, with no guarantee of getting better (Frank, 1998). Accounts are chaotic when narrators lose their autonomous voice to the

uncontrollable and irrevocable circumstances they describe (Frank, 1995). Scholars have also argued that the therapeutic potential of narration is frequently overstated in the health communication literature (Cole, 2010). As a result, illness narratives that indicate areas of unredemptive pain, suffering, and unresolved coping are rarely given significant attention when they should be used to encourage patients to discuss their experiences with medical professionals and loved ones (Sharf, 2005).

Recent narrative research has demonstrated how some young adult cancer survivors are frustrated by their inability to identify with quest narratives that are frequently positive and filled with hope (Iannarino, 2017). Instead, they prefer to evoke more frank, cynical, and darkly humorous depictions of their symptoms, prognoses, treatments, survivorship issues, feelings of isolation, and other fears and frustrations. For example, while one couple created snide slogans to subvert the prevailing standard of sentimental and earnest cancer support (e.g., “Fuck c*ncer”), other survivors provided humorous suggestions for future interactions with peers and loved ones to prevent additional overwrought responses, canned expressions of optimism, and comments about their strength (Iannarino, 2017). To some individuals, then, certain quest narrative forms could be exposed for lacking fidelity—or, a narrative’s capacity to “ring true” with hearers’ experiences, strike a responsive chord in the life of the listener, and provide “good reasons” to guide future actions and decisions in various contexts (Fisher, 1984, p. 7). Thus, even if these narratives are inspirational to the broader public, ill people can still reject them for being overly simplistic depictions of their experiences. However, if cancer patients abide by the expectations that to effectively cope with, or even survive, their ailment, they must keep a brave and optimistic warrior’s mentality, their fear of appearing weak or cowardly to others might keep them from sharing honest narratives that could reveal their need for additional support.

Comedian Norm Macdonald raises these points in a Comedy Central standup special in which he shares a short humorous narrative about his Uncle Burt, who was dying of CRC. Macdonald’s narrative should be studied because it serves as a scathing critique of the contemporary Western master narrative that cancer patients must “wage a battle” to physically survive their ailment. He argues that the delineation between “winner” and “loser” could mean something less than flattering for those “fighters” who ultimately “lose their battle” to cancer. Macdonald’s narrative is also different from many other illness narratives because it is not about his own present illness; rather, he discusses how his experience watching his Uncle Burt suffer has enabled him to learn more about himself. Analyzing Macdonald’s narrative could provide for a deeper understanding of a new area of narrative research. Next, I provide a theoretical framework to account for the presence of humor in health and illness proceedings, examine humor use and reception as a useful tool in coping with illness and

communicating health information, and briefly discuss recent research that introduces the humorous illness narrative as a narrative subform.

Humor in Illness Contexts

According to surprise-liberation theory (SLT), humor is derived from the pleasurable realization that reality is different than an individual's expectations, particularly when those preconceived notions are threatening (DuPre, 1998). Humor depends on a person's fluid commitment or orientation to an expected outcome, and their willingness to see that "expectation" violated. Not only must a person encounter a surprising deviation from their expectancies to consider the violation to be humorous, but the deviation must also be perceived as a pleasurable liberation. The amount of liberation a person might feel is influenced by how committed they are to the assumptions being challenged. Individuals also possess an ever-changing upper and lower threshold beyond which a surprise is not humorous. Thus, when a person's fears and anxiety are within a certain threshold, their relief could be particularly exhilarating. In the case of severe illness, for example, a patient might find their ability to mock their symptoms to be particularly humorous because it provides a surprising deviation from the expected solemnity of their condition and a pleasurable liberation from serious consideration of their illness's dominance over their life (DuPre, 1998).

Following stressful events, communication research has argued that producing and receiving humor could be related to increased life satisfaction and less distress (Booth-Butterfield, Wanzer, Weil, & Krezmien, 2014), greater cognitive distance and perspective from the experience, more perceived social support (DuPre, 1998), increased effectiveness in helping others cope (Johnson, 2002), and a greater likelihood that others would consider the individual to be endearing (Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield, 1996). In severe and chronic illness, humor can serve as a communicative buffer for anxiety, anger, fear, and embarrassment (DuPre, 1998). Patients have been shown to use humor as a mechanism to alleviate the loss of dignity; relay socially taboo and humiliating information; and openly express fear, complaints, and inferiority (Francis, Monahan, & Berger, 1999). In patient–provider interactions, humor can reduce alienation; increase affinity, social intimacy, sensitivity, and trust; and help patients make better treatment decisions (DuPre, 1998; Johnson, 2002). Among breast cancer support group members, humor can function to emphasize status similarity, share and normalize experiences and feelings, and reinforce group cohesion (Francis et al., 1999).

Because both illness narratives and humor have been shown to have the capacity to provide beneficial outcomes for both users and receivers, it makes logical sense to propose their integration as a heuristic area of future health communication research. This practice could indicate the existence of a new subset of illness narratives—the humorous illness narrative. The assimilation

of humor into illness narratives could be a significant area of inquiry because humor can provide the narrator with additional sources of catharsis and assist in the creation of a compelling narrative that could potentially draw attention to and change perceptions regarding different health situations. For example, humor has been shown to make health information more approachable, persuasive, and salient (Compton, 2006; Link et al., 2016), and its inclusion in narratives about unplanned pregnancy led to more negative attitudes and fewer behavioral intentions regarding unprotected sex than nonhumorous narratives (Futerfas & Nan, 2017). Young adult cancer patients' use of humor in blog narratives about their cancer experience also helped to create "aligning moments" (Sharf et al., 2011), or experiences of shared sense-making and understanding between narrator and audience (Iannarino, 2017). Additionally, stand-up comedian Tig Notaro's use of humor when performing her illness narrative subverted the notion that cancer should be feared and not discussed (Nutter, 2014). Norm Macdonald's appraisal of the prevalent romantic/warrior mentality commonly housed in the quest narrative is significant because he places humor at the center of his narrative's proceedings. The present narrative analysis will interpret the rhetorical strategies Macdonald uses to articulate his humorous illness narrative and evaluate its effectiveness.

Analysis

Scholars engage in narrative analysis to uncover a narrative's moral and the good reasons offered to support the validity of that moral (Fisher, 1984). Especially when a narrative describes an experience that was not witnessed firsthand, audiences can discover how to "believe and behave based on the consequences" of the characters' actions (Sellnow, 2010, p. 39). When conducting a narrative analysis, Sellnow stated that critics should begin by describing the narrative's setting, flat (predictable) and round (unpredictable) characters, active and stative events, and causal and temporal relations. The critic then interprets these narrative elements in terms of the narrative's moral and evaluates the influence it could have on its intended audience.

Fisher (1984) reminded audiences that not all narratives are equally good and that anyone with common sense is capable of making a judgment about whether or not to accept a narrative's merits based on its rationality. To determine narrative rationality, critics first consider the narrative's coherence, or how probable an account sounds to its hearer. Coherence gauges whether the people and events the narrative depicts hang together as an organic, consistent whole. The most important factor in a narrative's unity and believability is often the reliable depiction of its characters. Critics are typically more suspicious of narratives that portray characters who act "uncharacteristically," rather than through a continuity of thought, motive, and action (Fisher, 1984). Second, the

narrative gains fidelity when it provides good reasons to accept its moral about how we ought to live. Good reasons are procured from the values embedded in the narrative's message. These values become salient when they overlap with or conform to what audiences believe is a relevant and ideal measure of behavior (Sellnow, 2010). Audiences tend to prefer narratives that advance what they view to be truthful and humane—things like wisdom, beauty, courage, and justice (Fisher, 1984).

An additional way to determine if Macdonald's illness narrative achieved rationality is to interpret whether the narrative demonstrates the five functions of illness narration (Arntson & Droge, 1987; Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). The process of illness narrative construction and dissemination has the capacity to enable narrators to (1) reassert their identity, (2) reestablish control, (3) perform effective decision-making, (4) make sense of traumatic experiences, and (5) establish a sense of community. Because narrative rationality is conceptualized as the provision of good reason, and because demonstrating the five functions of health-related storytelling provides good reason to accept a narrative's moral about how audiences ought to live, it follows that adherence to Arntson and Droge's (1987) and Sharf and Vanderford's (2003) criteria indicates the existence of a rational narrative.

In this narrative analysis, I describe Macdonald's humorous anecdote about his Uncle Burt and interpret the good reasons he provides to advance the moral of his story. Does the use of humor, as explained by SLT (DuPre, 1998), and the author's ability to achieve the five functions of illness narratives serve as effective rhetorical tools in encouraging Macdonald's audience to accept his critique of the romantic/warrior subform? Does this serve as a salient moral for how audiences ought to think and behave? I will then evaluate the implications of this narrative related to narrative theory and regarding cancer patients and the family members, friends, medical providers, and strangers with whom they interact.

Describing and Interpreting Uncle Burt's Plight

Macdonald is popular among primarily male middle-aged and young adults who watched him anchor "Weekend Update" on *Saturday Night Live* in the mid-1990s and appear on talk shows like *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*. His 1-hour special *Me Doing Stand-Up* first aired in the United States on Comedy Central on March 26, 2011 and was released on CD and DVD on June 14, 2011 (Amazon, n.d.). Within his 60-minute set, Macdonald shares a 2-minute anecdote about his Great Uncle Burt, who is living with, and likely dying, from CRC. Macdonald serves as the narrator and main protagonist of his story and muses that "In the old days, a man could just get sick and die . . . now they have to wage a courageous battle [against their cancer]." In Macdonald's experience, this "epic battle" actually looks a lot like Uncle Burt lying in a

hospital bed with an IV drip in his arm, watching episodes of *Matlock*. "But what is Uncle Burt supposed to do?" Macdonald asks quizzically, as he pretends to strike at his midsection with his fists, growling, "Ahh, I got you!" After all, Uncle Burt's cancer is not really some onerous and cunning villain with human characteristics, but "just a black thing in his bowel." It is clear that Macdonald views the portrayal of a malignant mass as a malicious and calculating antagonist to be as patently ridiculous as the idea of his Uncle Burt as a decorated warrior who must physically wage hand-to-hand combat against it to survive.

Macdonald jumps around in time from a present active event (a trip to Uncle Burt's hospital room), to a nostalgic view of the "old days" (where people would simply say, "Hey, that old man died," and not, "Hey, he lost his battle"), to the future (where he discusses Uncle Burt's eventual demise). Macdonald's story can be considered a narrative because it is unified, organized by time (with several static introspective moments), and contains more than two causal events (i.e., Uncle Burt has cancer so Macdonald visits him and sees him watching *Matlock*; Sellnow, 2010). Macdonald clarifies that he is not fond of the pervasive romantic narrative of the cancer experience as a fight between a brave and noble warrior (the cancer patient) and a pernicious villain (cancer). Ultimately, he believes that battle metaphors and romantic/warrior narratives are an unflattering way to depict the end of a cancer patient's life. "What a loser that guy was," Macdonald says tongue-in-cheek, mocking the logic of this perspective while discussing the hypothetical end to Uncle Burt's life:

> The last thing he did was lose. He was waging a brave battle but at the end I guess he got kind of cowardly . . . And then the bowel cancer, it got brave, you've gotta give it to the bowel cancer, you know, they were in a battle.

While Uncle Burt is not given much to do in Macdonald's story, he is not a "predictable" cancer patient, at least according to the romantic/warrior illness narrative subform. Macdonald peels back the aura of strength and pugnaciousness often attributed to cancer patients to reveal an old man with a mass in his bowel lying around watching TV. Macdonald also hyperbolizes the dominant flat personification of cancer as an evil villain into a more round and unpredictable character with additional human characteristics. After logically pointing out that cancer cannot actually be the winner because it dies the second its host dies ("So that to me . . . is a draw"), Macdonald says that the cancer is not actually brave and is not realistically going to jump out of the deceased's body and say, "Ahh, I'm fucking Uncle Burt's wife! Where is she? I won fair and square!" Macdonald's portrayal of cancer as a more unpredictable and round character serves as a satire of the dominant characterization of an insidious parasite. Macdonald also mocks the static portrayal of patients' optimistic

supporters who advocate for and adhere to the dominant romantic cancer narrative by calling the deceased Uncle Burt "cowardly" and a "loser."

Ultimately, Macdonald's story serves to critique the prevalent romantic narrative that pits cancer patients against their illness through the use of battle metaphors (Foss, 2009). Regarding the story type, Macdonald's narrative is comedic (Foss, 2009); he challenges the established authority over the labeling of the cancer experience by satirizing it. The moral of Macdonald's narrative is that society should not impose additional burdens on cancer patients by expecting them to embark on an "epic quest" to defeat their cancer. Adoption of the romantic/warrior narrative in the cancer experience could equate death, or "losing one's battle," with being "cowardly." While the romantic/warrior quest narrative is intended to give support and agency to cancer patients by instilling a willingness to fight back, Macdonald's story provides good reasons why it should be viewed as a ridiculous, illogical, and potentially harmful perspective in certain contexts.

What Makes This Narrative Humorous?

According to SLT (DuPre, 1998), Macdonald's narrative can be considered humorous because he offers surprising deviations from our preconceived notions about how the identities and actions of cancer patients and cancer itself often are and ought to be conceptualized. The audience is so used to the romantic/warrior narrative that any other narrative type is likely a deviation of their expectations. These deviations also provide a sense of pleasurable liberation from the audience's preconceived notions because Macdonald is successful in simultaneously gaining rationality for his own narrative by tearing down the existing pervasive perspective.

While Macdonald paints a portrait of the cancer experience that is less romantic and glamorous than the warrior subnarrative, it is more in keeping with the audience's actual encounters with cancer and cancer patients; as a result, it appeals to the audiences' values of truth (Fisher, 1984). To many, living with cancer could be a painful and drawn out waiting game and not an epic quest where characters are either warriors or villains, winners or losers. In short, the audience is able to laugh at Macdonald's story because the alternative he suggests to the status quo is more consistent with their experience than their previous expectations. It also does not result in undue burden being placed on an individual who is already suffering, and for that, the audience feels relief. It is possible that Macdonald's dismissal of the romantic quest narrative could offend cancer survivors who felt like warriors throughout their difficult experiences. However, those who have lost loved ones to cancer would certainly agree with Macdonald that they are not "cowards" or "losers." In that capacity, Macdonald's story maintains its rationality.

Gaining Fidelity Through the Functions of Illness Narratives

Although Macdonald's story rejects Foss's (2009) romantic/warrior subform, it is still a quest narrative because the narrator seeks to use Uncle Burt's illness as a learning experience for both himself and his audience. Macdonald's story is unique because it exemplifies the five functions of illness narration (Arntson & Droge, 1987; Sharf & Vanderford, 2003), even though it is not telling the story of the narrator's illness. Macdonald is still able to make sense of the idea that Uncle Burt's experience with CRC is inconsistent with the romantic/warrior mentality. Macdonald recognizes that things have changed since the "old days" and that cancer patients cannot simply "get sick and die" anymore. He uses this information to make sense of how the cancer experience ought to be conceptualized and how audience members ought to treat patients—not as warriors who are facing the battle of a lifetime, but as people who are no different from who they used to be, save for the existence of a "black thing in [their] bowel." Likewise, tumors do not have magical properties or unwavering agendas. Perhaps telling his story enabled Macdonald to make sense of the idea that bolstering the perspective that cancer is so incredibly onerous and unbeatable, provided the patient does not stage an epic battle, causes the patient to be more intimidated by and less optimistic about their situation.

Macdonald is also able to enjoy a greater sense of agency and stability by understanding that a romantic portrayal of cancer will not apply to his own hypothetical experience one day if he were to develop the disease. He can lie on his own bed and watch episodes of *Matlock* if it is what he desires. Additionally, Macdonald is able to preemptively maintain his identity by understanding that he does not want to be perceived as a warrior if he becomes a cancer patient. He does not have to "wage an epic battle" for fear that others will consider him a "chicken" or a "loser." Likewise, Macdonald is able to warrant his decision that he will not place an additional burden on himself (if he ever becomes a cancer patient) or other patients by feeling it necessary to engage in a battle.

Finally, Macdonald is able to build community by encouraging patients and their loved ones to reject the romantic/warrior mentality. By making observations that others share but are not often publicly articulated, Macdonald becomes a social commentator, which also fulfills his purpose as a comedian (Mintz, 1985). Similar to Tig Notaro (Nutter, 2014), Macdonald's comedic voice is uniquely situated to poking holes in the ubiquitous narratives that surround the cancer experience. Macdonald's humor provides a reexamination of shared cultural beliefs that marginalize anything less than a heroic response to cancer, which also enables him to clarify and distinguish his own and his Uncle Burt's experiences as counters to this master narrative (Meyer, 2000). By depicting a cancer patient struggling to survive rather than on a romantic quest, and family members who question whether their loved one's death makes them a loser, Macdonald is arguing that there are likely many people who do not feel

represented by the romantic/quest narrative. Thus, Macdonald fulfills his purpose as a public figure that sees a mistake in the larger narrative surrounding cancer by building community around patients who just want to watch *Matlock* in peace. Who else in society but a comedian could take people living with cancer and successfully call them nonheroes? In short, the author's ability to fulfill the five functions of illness narration indicates the inherent fidelity of the narrative.

Discussion

Jack Lemmon once said, "It's hard enough to write a good drama; it's much harder to write a good comedy, and it's hardest of all to write a drama with comedy, which is what life is" (Internet Movie Database, n.d.). The integration of humor into a narrative about a severe illness could indicate that a narrator has achieved deeper introspection in relation to their experience and has crafted a narrative that is more representative of their experience as it was lived. Norm Macdonald's narrative about his Uncle Burt's CRC hangs together as a narrative whole because it rings true with the audience's experience that cancer patients are not actually waging a battle and ought not to be asked to do so. Macdonald was effective in communicating his moral because his anecdote adhered to the five functions of illness narration (Arntson & Droge, 1987; Sharf & Vanderford, 2003).

Additionally, the integration of humor into an illness narrative reveals a new illness narrative subform—the humorous illness narrative. It is clear that Macdonald's ability to achieve narrative fidelity enabled the expectancy deviation to not exceed audience members' thresholds. As a result, audiences are able to experience a sense of pleasurable liberation from their attachment to the dominant romantic/warrior narrative that was exposed for lacking fidelity. In short, narrative fidelity is likely necessary for the achievement of pleasurable liberation when a narrator seeks to employ effective humor.

However, we could be facing a "chicken-and-the-egg" dilemma. Which comes first: narrative fidelity or pleasurable liberation? After all, it is often far easier to agree with a narrator's assessment about what we ought to do when we are laughing, particularly when it mocks and serves as a release from a scary subject, like cancer (DuPre, 1998). When expectations are particularly threatening, such as in relatively tense or stressful medical situations, the unexpected can be a profound and exhilarating relief. Macdonald's audience might be poised to have their "expectations" violated because the cancer experience is typically not viewed as a context from which humor can be derived. To find something humorous is to experience a reprieve from serious consideration of it and to enable oneself to disengage somewhat from a previous orientation. Therefore, it is unclear whether narrative fidelity allows for or encourages pleasurable liberation, or whether pleasurable liberation allows for or encourages narrative

fidelity. An analysis of Macdonald's humorous anecdote also extends narrative theory because it shows that the narrator and his audience can learn and grow from a narrative account of someone else's illness—not necessarily his own. This discovery is similar to the humorous illness narrative *God Said, "Ha!,"* a memoir by actress and comedian Julia Sweeney (1998), whose experience caring for her younger brother who was dying from lymphoma influenced how she coped with her own eventual brush with ovarian cancer.

Macdonald's anecdote also has implications for cancer patients and their social networks. An individual's identity can alter the types of narratives they tell about their illness experience (Anderson & Martin, 2003). For example, those who deem themselves to be "warriors" in a "battle" against a disease might feel that telling more people about their illness will help in their fight to conquer an ailment. Cancer patients and their families often fluctuate between a maze of different identities, such as a sick patient, a victim, a warrior, or a survivor, throughout the course of their illness. In fact, male cancer patients have been shown to use their illness as a crutch so that they no longer have to keep up a persona of invincibility (O'Hair, Scannell, & Thompson, 2005). Yet, how is this persona supposed to work if, like Macdonald's narrative asserts, our society expects cancer patients to be heroic and enter into battle? For this reason, men might find a great deal of salience in Macdonald's morals.

Narratives have also been shown to be effective in raising public awareness about specific issues inherent in the illness experience and serve as highly recognizable discourses for health advocacy, public education, social activism, and policy change (Sharf & Vanderford, 2003). Humor could serve to make this information even more salient (Compton, 2006). Macdonald's brief humorous cancer narrative calls attention to an illness narrative type he feels the world ought not to employ. While the romantic warrior narrative is intended to give support and agency to cancer patients by instilling a desire to fight, Macdonald views it as a potentially harmful perspective. The narrator's hearkening back to the "old days" indicates his desire to not impose additional burdens on individuals who have enough on their plates without being expected to wage a figurative epic battle.

Likewise, the validation or dismissal of a narrative by a narrator's audience could shape the context for future disclosure (Anderson & Martin, 2003). Because storytellers exist in a larger sociocultural context, they could feel pressure to shape their narrative according to the normative roles and expectations with which they are accustomed. As a result, narrators might not feel comfortable sharing certain thoughts and feelings with future audiences if they were previously mocked or ostracized. Macdonald's narrative could influence the ways in which cancer patients interact with family, friends, medical providers, and complete strangers. However, it might validate storytellers' desire to simply be treated as a cancer patient and not as a warrior. As a result, these individuals

could no longer fear rejection from not adhering to the tenets of the romantic/ warrior quest narrative subform.

Macdonald's narrative could communicate to cancer patients that they do not have to view themselves as warriors to feel strong or give themselves an opportunity to survive. Perhaps optimism, often attributed as the refuge of the traditional cancer support system for middle-aged adults and senior citizens (with its pink ribbons and stuffed animals), does not work for everyone. Perhaps cancer patients should possess more power in creating their own narratives instead of abiding by the preexisting labels and expectations of others. Who is to say that the use of cynicism, black humor, self-deprecation, and irony are less effective than potentially harmful battle metaphors? Instead of building cancer up to be a powerful enemy that must be vanquished, cancer patients could potentially mock the cancer to make it seem less threatening. Future researchers are also encouraged to investigate and balance the positive ramifications of storytelling with the "dark side" of illness trauma narratives (Cole, 2010). The inclusion of humor in the recounting of stressful experiences could further complicate this issue. For example, some patients might rely too heavily on jokes to avoid painful topics that should be discussed (Francis et al., 1999).

Conclusion

Norm Macdonald's short anecdote about his Uncle Burt's CRC experience introduces a new subform of illness narratives—the humorous illness narrative. The effective use of humor aids in the narrator's ability to achieve narrative fidelity when encouraging audiences that they ought to reject the contemporary Western perspective that cancer patients must "wage a battle" to survive their ailment. Audience members might feel more agency in rejecting the prevalent notion that the cancer experience produces winners and losers, heroes and villains. As a result, Macdonald's narrative could shape the landscape for future discussion about the cancer experience. Additionally, Macdonald's story extends narrative theory because it suggests that narrators and audiences alike can learn from stories about someone else's illness. Future researchers should continue to examine humorous illness narratives constructed and delivered by public figures in creative contexts (e.g., stand-up comedy, memoir, graphic novel).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Nicholas T. Iannarino http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1069-2173

References

Amazon. (n.d.). *Me doing stand-up*. Retrieved from http://www.amazon.com/Me-Doing-Standup-Explicit/dp/B0053A82ZM/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1335757710&sr=8-3.

Anderson, J. O., & Martin, P. G. (2003). Narratives and healing: Exploring one family's stories of cancer survivorship. *Health Communication*, *15*, 133–143. doi: 10.1207/S15327027HC1502_2

Arntson, P., & Droge, D. (1987). Social support in self-help groups: The role of communication in enabling perceptions of control. In T. Albrecht & M. Adelman (Eds.), *Communicating social support* (pp. 157–164). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Arrington, M. I., & Goodier, B. (2004). Prostration before the law: Representations of illness, interaction, and intimacy in the *NYPD Blue* prostate cancer narrative. *Popular Communication*, *2*, 67–84.

Beck, C. S., Aubuchon, S. M., McKenna, T. P., Ruhl, S., & Simmons, N. (2014). Blurring personal health and public priorities: An analysis of celebrity health narratives in the public sphere. *Health Communication*, *29*, 244–256. doi: 10.1080/10410236.2012.741668

Booth-Butterfield, M., Wanzer, M. B., Weil, N. E., & Krezmien, E. (2014). Communication of humor during bereavement: Intrapersonal and interpersonal emotion management strategies. *Communication Quarterly*, *62*, 436–454. doi:10.1080/01463373.2014.922487

Burke, K. (1941). *The philosophy of literary form: Studies in symbolic action*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bury, M. (1982). Chronic illness as biographical disruption. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, *4*, 167–182.

Casey, M., Allen, M., Emmers-Sommer, T., Sahlstein, E., DeGooyer, D., Winters, A., . . . Dun, T. (2003). When a celebrity contracts a disease: The example of Earvin "Magic" Johnson's announcement. *Journal of Health Communication*, *8*, 249–266. doi: 10/080/10810730390196471

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). *Chronic disease overview*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/index.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). *Colorectal cancer statistics*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/statistics/index.htm

Cole, C.E. (2010). Problematizing therapeutic assumptions about narratives: A case study of storytelling events in a post-conflict context. *Health Communication*, *25*, 1–11. doi: 10.1080/10410236.2010.521905

Compton, J. (2006). Serious as a heart attack: Health-related content of late-night comedy television. *Health Communication*, *19*, 143–151. doi: 10.1207/s15327027hc1902_6

Cram, P., Fendrick, A. M., Inadomi, J., Cowen, M., Carpenter, D., & Vijan, S. (2003). The impact of a celebrity promotional campaign on the use of colon cancer screening. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, *163*, 1601–1605. doi: 10.1001/archinte.163.13.1601

Defenbaugh, N. L. (2013). Revealing and concealing ill identity: A performance narrative of IBD disclosure. *Health Communication*, *28*, 159–169. doi: 10.1080/10410236.2012.666712

duPre, A. (1998). *Humor and the healing arts: A multimethod analysis of humor use in health care*. Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Eggly, S. (2002). Physician-patient co-construction of illness narratives in the medical interview. *Health Communication*, *14*, 339–360. doi: 10.1207/S15327027HC1403_3

Eli, K. & Kay, R. (2015). Choreographing lived experience: Dance, feelings and the storytelling body. *Medical Humanities*, *41*, 63–68. doi: 10.1136/medhum-2014-010602

Ellingson, L. L., & Buzzanell, P. M. (1999). Listening to women's narratives of breast cancer treatment: A feminist approach to patient satisfaction with physician–patient communication. *Health Communication*, *11*, 153–183. doi: 10.1207/s15327027hc1102_3

Fisher, W. R. (1984). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monographs*, *51*, 1–22.

Foss, S. K. (2009). *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice* (4th ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Francis, L., Monahan, K., & Berger, C. (1999). A laughing matter? The uses of humor in medical interactions. *Motivation and Emotion*, *23*, 155–174. doi: 0146-7239/99/0600-0155$16.00/0

Frank, A. W. (1995). *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness, and ethics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Frank, A. W. (1998). Just listening: Narrative and deep illness. *Families, Systems, & Health*, *16*, 197–212. doi: 10.1037/h0089849

Futerfas, M. L., & Nan, X. (2017). Role of humor in the persuasiveness of entertainment narratives on unprotected sexual behavior. *Journal of Health Communication*, *22*, 312–318. doi: 10.1080/10810730.2017.1284285

Gray, J. B. (2007). Interpersonal communication and the illness experience in the *Sex and the City* breast cancer narrative. *Communication Quarterly*, *55*, 397–414. doi: 10.1080/01463370701657889

Harter, L. M. (2009). Narratives as dialogic, contested, and aesthetic performances. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *37*, 140–150. doi: 10.1080/00909880902792255c

Hoffner, C. A., & Cohen, E. L. (2015). Portrayal of mental illness on the TV series *Monk*: Presumed influence and consequences of exposure. *Health Communication*, *30*, 1046–1054. doi: 10.1080/10410236.2014.917840

Howard, L. A. (2013). Expressions of experience and transformation: Performing illness narratives. *Text & Performance Quarterly*, *33*, 133–150. doi: 10.1080/10462937.2013.765959

Iannarino, N. T. (2017). "My insides feel like Keith Richards' face": A narrative analysis of humor and biographical disruption in young adults' cancer blogs. *Health Communication*, 1–10. doi:10.1080/10410236.2017.1350909

Internet Movie Database. (n.d.). *Biography for Jack Lemmon*. Retrieved from http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000493/bio

Johnson, P. (2002). The use of humor and its influences on spirituality and coping in breast cancer survivors. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *29*, 691–695. doi: 10.1188/02.ONF.691-695

Link, E., Schlütz, D. M., & Brauer, S. (2016). Opportunities and challenges of entertainment-education: Learning about Parkinson's disease via *The Michael J. Fox Show*. *Communication & Medicine*, *13*, 203–214. doi: 10.1558/cam.28981

Macdonald, N. (2011). *Battling cancer*. *Comedy Central Stand-Up*. Retrieved from http://www.cc.com/video-clips/8kgu68/stand-up-norm-macdonald–battling-cancer.

Meyer, J. C. (2000). Humor as a double-edged sword: Four functions of humor in communication. *Communication Theory*, *10*, 310–331.

Mintz, L. E. (1985). Standup comedy as social and cultural mediation. *American Quarterly*, *37*, 71–80. doi: 10.2307/2712763

Nutter, B. J. (2014). *The abject body, illness, and stand-up comedy: A narrative analysis of Tig Notaro's LIVE* (*Electronic Thesis*). Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/

O'Hair, D., Scannell, D., & Thompson, S. (2005). Agency through narrative: Patients managing cancer care in a challenging environment. In L. M. Harter, P. M. Japp, & C. S. Beck (Eds.), *Narratives, health, and healing: Communication theory, research, and practice* (pp. 413–432). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sellnow, D. D. (2010). *The rhetorical power of popular culture: Considering mediated texts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sharf, B. F. (2005). How I fired my surgeon and embraced an alternate narrative. In L. M. Harter, P. M. Japp, & C. S. Beck (Eds.), *Narratives, health, and healing: Communication theory, research, and practice* (pp. 325–342). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sharf, B. F., Freimuth, V. S., Greenspon, P., & Plotnick, C. (1996). Confronting cancer on thirtysomething: Audience response to health content on entertainment television. *Journal of Health Communication*, *1*, 157–172. doi: 10.1080/108107396128121

Sharf, B. F., Harter, L. M., Yamasaki, J., & Haidet, P. (2011). Narrative turns epic: Continuing developments in health narrative scholarship. In T. Thompson, R. Parrott, & J. F. Nussbaum (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of health communication* (2nd ed., pp. 36–51). New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

Sharf, B. F., & Vanderford, M. L. (2003). Illness narratives and the social construction of health. In T. Thompson, A. Dorsey, K. Miller, & R. Parrott (Eds.), *Handbook of health communication* (pp. 9–34). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sunwolf, Frey, L. R., & Keranen, L. (2005). R_x story prescriptions: Healing effects of storytelling and storylistening in the practice of medicine. In L. M. Harter, P. M. Japp, & C. S. Beck (Eds.), *Narratives, health, and healing: Communication theory, research, and practice* (pp. 237–257). Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sweeney, J. (1998). *God said, "Ha!"* New York, NY: Bantam.

Wanzer, M., Booth-Butterfield, M., & Booth-Butterfield, S. (1996). Are funny people popular? An examination of humor orientation, loneliness, and social attraction. *Communication Quarterly*, *44*, 42–52. doi: 10.1080/01463379609369999

Author Biography

Nicholas T. Iannarino (PhD, University of Kentucky; MA, University of Dayton) is an assistant professor in the Department of Language, Culture, and Communication at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. Nick specializes in health communication and is particularly interested in how people in close relationships manage the social experience of severe and chronic illness. His research considers the unique communication practices and challenges experienced by young adult cancer survivors and their close supporters. He also studies communication patterns between adult siblings who have made health decisions for aging parents and the use of humor in personal narratives about traumatic illness (e.g., in blogs, comedy performances, memoirs, and graphic novels).

Check for updates

Article

Journal of Communication Inquiry
2018, Vol. 42(3) 258–274
© The Author(s) 2018
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0196859918766880
journals.sagepub.com/home/jci

The Ancestral Room of the State? Scotland and the United Kingdom on *Jamie's Great Britain*

Francesco Buscemi[1]

Abstract

This article analyzes how Jamie Oliver's show *Jamie's Great Britain* represented Scotland in 2012, when the referendum on Scottish independence had already been announced. It follows Anderson, Bourdieu, Bhabha, cultural studies, and the idea that the nation is a hegemonic construction. Biosemiotics provides useful perspectives on the representations of Nature and Culture. Semiotic analysis interprets representations of the nation on the show. The results show that, while Oliver identifies English and Welsh food cultural origins with the Industrial Revolution and the Coal Boom, respectively, he finds Scotland's food origins in the Vikings. Scotland is a land of ancestral habits and people, where Nature is inhospitable. Oliver represents England and Wales through the *cultural* categories of indices and symbols, while crude iconic representations of Nature are used to depict Scotland. Moreover, the Vikings also originated England and Wales (and Ireland), and in the end, the Vikings are constructed as the common roots of the nation that Oliver celebrates, the United Kingdom. Thus, Scotland is only represented as a part of the state-nation, a kind of ancestral room of the big house of the United Kingdom.

Keywords

nation-building, national identity, Great Britain, food culture, semiotics, Scotland, Jamie Oliver, celebrity chefs

[1]Universita degli Studi dell'Insubria, Como, Italy

Corresponding Author:
Francesco Buscemi, Universita degli Studi dell'Insubria, via Sant'Abbondio, Como 21100, Italy.
Email: buscemifrancesco56@gmail.com

This article analyzes the ways in which the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver represents Scotland in relation to the United Kingdom in his show *Jamie's Great Britain*, a food travelogue in which Oliver goes around England, Scotland, and Wales in search of local food. The show was broadcast in 2012, when the Scottish independence referendum was already established, even though without a certain date and with the sole rule that it would be held "before the end of 2014" (House of Lords, 2014, p. 5).

In order to avoid confusion, in this article Great Britain (and its adjective *British*) relates to the island containing the countries of England, Scotland, and Wales, while the United Kingdom (the UK) refers to the state involving the three countries mentioned earlier and Northern Ireland. What is more, the nation-state is considered as the institutional and military entity which may contain more "collectivities or 'nations' subordinately incorporated" into the nation-state (Kapferer, 1994, p. 72). In fact, the nation is seen as a whole of people sharing the same culture and values and often the willingness to be independent (Davidson, McCafferty, & Miller, 2010). Thus, Scotland may be referred to as a s*tateless nation*; that is, a community unified by a shared, national culture which, however, is not recognized as an independent state. Relatedly, terms such as *nation-building*, *national culture*, and so on may refer to both the nation-state of the UK and the stateless nation of Scotland, according to the context.

Issues linked to the representation of Scotland in relation to the UK have already been highlighted in Bicket (1999), Hibberd (2007), and Sweeney (2008), and this article is part of this strand of research. The uncomfortable position of Scotland within the UK and the difficulty in representing it has also continued after Oliver's show and in relation to the referendum. Much debate arose about the BBC coverage of the event, and "Peter Mullan: BBC Showed" (2015) and Johnson (2015) highlight the bias of the BBC against the *yes campaign*. Moreover, Daisley (2015) reports on Channel 4's bias of the Scottish National Party and the potential Scottish independence. This latter bias is of great importance for this article as Channel 4 also broadcast Oliver's show. Finally, this specific case may be involved in a more general Channel 4 *anti-Scottish bias* that reflected popular culture and that was established earlier than the referendum announcement (Gibson & Neely, 2007, p. 109). This is to underline how representing Scotland within the UK has long been an issue and how the show that is analyzed here is only one ring of a long chain.

Jamie's Great Britain is a Channel 4 food travelogue in which Oliver goes around his country to celebrate the unity of the UK and its food. It is made up of six episodes. Four of them are based in England (London and Essex, Yorkshire, Leicester, and Bristol), one in Wales (Cardiff and the South), and one in Scotland (Glasgow and the West). Oliver's show may be involved in the subgenre of the *national food travelogue*, a kind of food travelogue which shows foods and places largely known by its audience. Thus, this genre does not aim to

stupefy the public with new foods and remote places, as many food travelogues do; rather, national food travelogues are broadcast in the same nation in which they are set, and aim to hold the nation together and reinforce national identity and national ideologies through food (Buscemi, 2014a). This subgenre highlights the relationships between popular food television and national identity, a field that shows many potentialities for future research.

Theoretical Framework

This article draws on Anderson's (1983) theory of the nation as a socially constructed "imagined community" (p. 7), also shaped by everyday life and the media. Importantly, once a nation has been formed, the process of nation-building does not cease but continues to reinforce national identity (Gross, 2009), and this article considers national food travelogues as an example of this. The intuition that is decisive for this analysis is that the nation and national cultures are forms of narration (Bhabha, 1990) adopting the same strategies as the media. In fact, like the media, the nation and national cultures have "textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, sub-texts and figurative stratagems" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 2). For Hall (1992), like a medium, "a nation ... produces meanings—*a system of cultural representation*" (p. 292): rather than an *imagined* community, therefore, "a nation is a symbolic community" (p. 292).

National identities are the final goal of nation building: "In defining ourselves we sometimes say we are English or Welsh ... These identities are not literally imprinted in our genes" (Hall, 1992, p. 291), because they are socially constructed and often stereotyped. Edensor (2002) finds the landscape as relevant in reinforcing national identity, and in Author Removed (2014a), it has been demonstrated that food and the nation brand each other in a mutual relationship.

This article, however, not only understands the constructive nature of the nation but also acknowledges that nation-building, when regarding nation-states, is a process purely run by power and political interest (Giddens, 1985; Williams, 1983). Bourdieu, Wacquant, and Farage (1994) see the nation-state as the holder of a meta-capital that gives the nation the power to affect the other fields. The state is a bureaucratic body, "*a field of power* ... within which the holders of capital (of different species) struggle *in particular* for power over the state" (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 5). Apart from the specific "statist capital" (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 17), cultural capital also plays its role in this field of power. Bourdieu (1998) sees the state as having two independent hands, the right one controlling the economy, the left one managing power through the creation of national culture.

Moreover, Jameson (1991) points out that postmodernism is the age marking the end of the process of modernization and sees nostalgia in postmodernity as "the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past" (p. 19). Although

Jameson finds constructed forms of nostalgia in some films (*American Graffiti* by Lucas, *Body Heat* by Kasdan, etc.), this article extends this regressive nostalgia to Oliver's TV food show.

Interestingly for this research, Schlesinger (1997) argues that the problem with communicating independent or autonomist identities is polarization, and that this issue divides the agents into the good and the bad, hampering objective analyses (Schlesinger, 2000). Moreover, Schlesinger and Benchimol (2015) sees that in both fully independent small nations and stateless nations acquiring autonomy from the central state, distinctiveness may be more easily pursued when culture and politics go together. For example, where there is a language to defend and promote, cultural items express and help "a strong interest in sustaining distinct forms of linguistic expression" (Schlesinger & Benchimol, 2015, p. 104).

Higson (1995) points out that the concept of national cinema (or TV, in this article) is more complex than we may think, as not only is it made of content aiming to build the nation, but it also involves business, industry, and, importantly for this research, genre and a particular way of framing the nation. Cultural studies see the media as fundamental in constructing stereotyped national culture. Hall (1992) finds that "three resonant concepts ... [form] a national culture as an imagined community: *memories* from the past; the *desire* to live together; the perpetuation of the *heritage*" (p. 296). The construction of national cultures has in itself the ability to reinforce national groups by constructing Otherness and difference toward other groups (Morley, 2004a). As a *bigger* home, national broadcasting can create a sense of unity and of secure boundaries around the nation (Morley, 2004b) and involves members of the audience in complex power relationships (Morley, 2004a). By doing so, "popular media reproduce dominant ideology and consumer alienation" (Spigel, 2004, p. 10).

Food plays a relevant role in the construction of national culture (Appadurai, 1988). Belasco (2002, p. 12) finds that national cuisines are an ideological invention created by those who hold the political and economic power, and that here food is fundamental to perpetrate power. This article sees the problem of Scotland in relation to the UK through this power-led conception of the nation-state in relation to its stateless nations, as explained in the next subsection.

Scotland and the UK

In Scotland, the feeling of being different and the willingness to be independent have never disappeared (Guibernau, 2007). Giordano and Roller (2002) define these entities as "subnational" (p. 101) and argue that many international institutions are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of these local claims. Engel (2007) defines political entities such as Scotland and Catalonia as

subnations and finds that "the EU is increasingly becoming a forum by which subnations gain greater autonomy from the central state" (p. 400). All of these definitions stress the concept of the nation as a *staatsnation*, an institution based on a strong central leadership and top-down discipline. Conversely, a *Kulturnation* is a whole of people sharing the same culture and willingness to be independent and stems from bottom-up dynamics (Meinecke, 1970).

Schlesinger (2000) sees the UK as disaggregated by devolution in Scotland and Wales, and the media playing a relevant role in the construction of a new national identity. Moreover, Benchimol and Schlesinger (2018) argue that the institutional changes and events, such as the birth of the Scottish Parliament or the referendum on independence, have profoundly affected and have been deeply affected by the media and culture in general. McCrone (2017) underlines the enormous importance of TV shows entirely produced in Scotland in the construction of Scottish identity. Guibernau (2007) points out that 36% of Scots identify themselves as just Scottish, therefore considering the English as *the Other*; while 17.7% of the English have the same perception of the Scots. Moreover, only 3% of Scots feel more British than Scottish, and 4% of Scots consider themselves as fully British. Independence is thus a hot issue in Scotland today and it contrasts with the undoubted English hegemony in the UK national culture (Fowler, 1997).

Biosemiotics, Nature, and Culture

Biosemiotics is a branch of semiotics that extends the theory of signs to the natural environment and to the relationships between humans and Nature. For biosemioticians, natural systems are composed of signs and codes that represent, communicate, and signify (T⊘nnesen & Tũũr, 2014). Biosemiotics is of interest for this article because it also focuses on how humans perceive and represent the relationships between Nature and Culture and has interestingly challenged traditional theories which used to see the two concepts as separate and even in conflict. First, Sebeok (1991) considered Culture not in contrast to Nature but as a part of it. Since then, semioticians have analyzed the relationships between Nature and Culture as two-way, reciprocal, in flux and ever changing. Specifically, "ecosemiotics focuses on the engagement of culture and nature through signs" (Siewers, 2014, p. 5) and clarifies the relationships between the two elements as a continuous exchange. Starting from Peirce (1960), ecosemiotics assumes that "thought semiotically manifests self environmentally" (Siewers, 2014, p. 6). Thus, ecosemiotics sees that Nature and Culture are not detached from each other, but, on the contrary, that "culture can be visualized as being produced by nature" (Chaudhary, 2012, p. 114).

Interestingly, Martinelli (2010) focuses on the dominant views which want Nature and Culture to be separate and in contrast. These views are based on "the untouchable dualism Nature–Culture. Nature allowed, Culture not"

(p. 35). For Martinelli, “it is when we divide the world in two that we are being superficial” (p. 58). On Nature and Culture, “it is unacceptable to treat them separately, because too many and too complex are the relations between the two. We *cannot* analyze any cultural phenomenon as completely untied from natural context” (Martinelli, 2010, p. 58, original emphasis).

This also implies a reference to ideology and power relationships (O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, & Fiske, 1994). In fact, semiotics tells us that the individual is “the individual/subject whose individuality is largely a product of the ideological discourses and signifying practices which s/he inhabits or encounters in social relations” (O’Sullivan et al., 1994, pp. 282–283). Finally, no sampling has been carried out, as the analysis has involved the entire series.

As a result of all of this, the research question that this article wants to answer is this: How does *Jamie’s Great Britain* represent Scotland in relation to the UK? The next section analyzes the methods adopted to answer this question.

Methods

This article applies semiotic analysis to the first five episodes of *Jamie’s Great Britain*, and more specifically to the last episode, which is set in Scotland. Semiotics is a discipline founded by Ferdinand De Saussure and Charles Peirce and based on the idea that each source of meaning is divided into a signifier and a signified. More specifically, this article applies Peirce’s semiotics, which is based on a more flexible relationship between signified and signifier. While for Saussure, in fact, each signifier statically refers to a signified (the word *horse* to the animal *horse*), Peirce underlines that the same signifier may refer to diverse meanings, even symbolically. To semioticians, each linguistic system “structures its individual parts into distinctive units of meaning. These units of meaning are referred to as signs” (Laughey, 2007, p. 54). Thus, semiotics sees the world (and also TV shows) as a series of systems of signs and knowledge as their interpretation (Nöth, 1995).

The semiotic tools that have been adopted for this analysis are Peirce’s (1960) categories of icon, index, and symbol. In fact, thanks to them, the researcher can decipher the different forms of representation of the nation on the show. Peirce (1960) explains that icon, index, and symbol are three different categories of representation: an icon, the closest representation to what is represented, physically resembles something else, like the portrait of a person; an index, instead, represents something else through causality, as in the case of the smoke standing for a fire; finally, a symbol represents something else arbitrarily, without any logic link between the two elements but through a shared convention within a group, as in the case of the color red signifying passion (Jenks, 1998). In addition, icons are perceived by humans as *natural* forms of communication, as they are based on similarity; conversely, indices and symbols are

perceived as cultural, as they need some interpretation in order to be fully understood, and are based on contiguity (Jakobson, 1987; Port, 2000). Clearly, a sign may certainly be read as a sign, an index, or a symbol. However, there is always a dominant function, as what really distinguishes them is the process of signification followed by the reader. As highlighted by Berger (2000, p. 39), icons imply that the reader can see, index that they can figure out, and symbols that they have to learn the connection between the symbolizing and the symbolized elements. This is thus the method that this article adopts in order to define whether a sign of the analyzed TV show is an icon, an index, or a symbol. Moreover, Sewell (1994) points out that a sign may be an icon, index, or symbol according to the situation. A flag may have iconic or indexical characters, but it becomes a symbol when it represents an ideal or the nation. This is truly interesting for this article when the focus is on the UK flag.

The Analysis

The First Five Episodes: England and Wales

The first five episodes of *Jamie's Great Britain* do not differ relevantly from each other. What strikes the viewer is Oliver's continuous reference to the nation-state of the UK. In looking at the show in a deeper way, it emerges that the presenter does this through what Peirce (1960) defines as symbols, signs whose sense is given by a connection between two entities not logically associated, and icons, signs where this link has a logical nature. For example, there are two interesting military symbols in these first five episodes. The first one, in Episode 1, is the RAF Wings, that Oliver places on the top of a pie that he prepares and dedicates to Prince William and Kate Middleton, who were still engaged at that time. Another interesting symbol is the dragon of the Welsh flag that Oliver shows and that gives its name to the Dragon Arctic Roll that he prepares in Wales in Episode 3. Apart from the military, another symbol is the Monarchy, which is often mentioned and also gives the name to one of the dishes cooked by the English chef. Thus, it can be said that in these episodes there are symbols that overtly refer to the nation-state and its unity, giving the viewer the idea of the UK as an entity as strong as the symbols it refers to.

However, in these first five episodes, indexes also play a relevant role in the representation of the nation-state, and this mostly happens through the lenses of history. The most illuminating examples relate to the Industrial Revolution and the Coal Boom (the rise of the mining industry in Wales in the 19th century), repeatedly considered as the events in which the English and the Welsh food culture, respectively, originated. These two events, both occurring in the 1800s (with the Coal Boom fully developing at the beginning of the 20th century), brought about the arrival of many immigrants in the two countries from all over

the world. Oliver's thesis is that these immigrants brought their foods to Great Britain, and that these foods, step by step and with some change, have also become the food of the British. On the show, many foods originally coming from abroad but considered British today are represented as indices of these two important social and historic events. Among the many examples, Oliver visits Italian families cooking risotto and making ice creams in Wales; meets a Yemeni group of women preparing their traditional dishes; celebrates the East End of London as the place to which Jewish, French, Bangladeshi, and Italian people brought their foods; and finds in Cardiff the land of Spanish, Somali, Yemeni, and Jewish dishes.

What about the dishes traditionally considered as British, then? Oliver challenges the view that they are British. He unveils that the British food par excellence, fish and chips, is not British but Jewish, and that the hamburger is a mix of the German, American, and Russian traditions. Moreover, these supposedly British foods, thus, are indices relating to other countries and other national food cultures.

Not only food but also people are represented as indices of historical events such as the immigration of precise ethnic groups to Great Britain. The Vietnamese, for example, also came to Great Britain in the 1960s and 1970s to flee the war which spread in their country in those years. Oliver meets two Vietnamese girls selling food in the East End. They are Peirce's (1960) indices relating to the fact that after the 19th Century, the British and the immigrants have undertaken a sort of social exchange: The arrival of the immigrants permitted the British to obtain better food and the immigrants to achieve better conditions of life.

This cosmopolitan sense of the British food is also underlined by the logo of the series, in which the UK flag, a powerful symbol of the nation-state, becomes a new flag composed of the flags of many other nation-states within the frame of the Union Jack. This animation is continually depicted during the series, six or seven times in each episode, before and after each break, and thus the concept of cosmopolitanism is continually underlined by the show through this symbol.

Another interesting element of *Jamie's Great Britain* is the British countryside. In all of the six episodes, very often Oliver cooks outside and visits farms and food producers who live in rural areas. As regards the first five episodes, what emerges is that the English and Welsh countryside is *civilized*, pervaded by humans. Oliver visits places in which farmers and producers have domesticated the land. This aspect may be of interest if compared to what happens in Scotland and will be better investigated in the final section of this article.

The Last Episode: Scotland

In the sixth episode, Scotland is represented as different from the beginning. A few seconds into the episode, Oliver states that Scottish people "are proud

of their independent traditions," citing the tricky word *independence* but referring it to *traditions*, that is, to the past. This difference also relates to food. Oliver never hints at the 19th century as the key moment of the formation of Scottish food culture. Instead, this origin has to be identified much earlier than the 1800s, in the Viking era. Every aspect of Scottish food, in the constructed version of Jamie Oliver, links to the Vikings.

Oliver drives his army truck along the Viking superhighway, the road opened by the Vikings, who were able to exploit Scottish produce, regardless of the *harsh life*. The Viking superhighway leads him to visiting a man smoking herrings. The technique of smoking herring, Oliver says, was created by the Vikings. Finally, when Oliver goes to the oldest restaurant in Glasgow to prepare haggis, the Scottish national dish, he says that even this Scottish symbol is a Viking dish. In conclusion, all these elements are seen as ancestral gifts coming from the Viking era. Thus, while food culture in England and Wales originated in the 1800s, the Scottish one was born about one thousand years earlier.

In semiotic terms, in the representation of Viking heritage, the show still adopts icons, as what Oliver sees and shows is logically linked to the presence of these people many years ago. However, the Peircian kind of sign most present in this episode is the icon. The visual impact of what is shown, which is the principal trait of icons (Berger, 2000), is dominant here, and what follows is a list of scenes which exemplify it.

The last part of the episode is entirely dedicated to Oliver going hunting along with a group of Scottish people and shows images which are totally different from the visual style of the rest of the series. This part, in fact, displays corpses of animals, dead game hanging in a room, and Oliver actively participating in the animal killing. Even though he never shoots, he pushes the animals toward the place where they will be shot by the hunters.

In another scene, Oliver prepares haggis in the oldest restaurant in Glasgow, but the preparation is depicted in a way which is totally different from those of the other five episodes. First, the show visualizes the whole dead animal on the kitchen table. Second, details of the techniques of pulling the inner organs out of the veil, which Oliver defines as a sort of autopsy. The crude style of these images and the great amount of blood visualized link iconically to the first form of getting food of primitive people and to a more general ancestral atmosphere that is Oliver's Scotland principal character.

Finally, even the representation of Scottish people follows this iconic, ancestral trend. In two scenes, Oliver visits a fisherman and a man smoking herring, respectively. They are both tough men, living alone and in really basic conditions. Their jobs are tiring and dangerous, and their faces strong and marked by fatigue. Furthermore, herrings are one of the kinds of food that are actually "border guards" able to "separate members of a given nation from others" (Tolz & Booth, 2005, p. 3); in fact, they symbolize the success of the

Scottish in the world, even over England, which "never developed a herring fishery quite the size of the Scottish" (Poulsen, 2008, p. 57).

By looking at all of this, it is clear that *Jamie's Great Britain* represents Scotland as a land totally different from England and Wales. In the other episodes, the Industrial Revolution and the Coal Boom serve the purpose of finding a precise historical starting point for English and Welsh food culture which Oliver identifies in the 19th century due to the arrival of many immigrants. Here, instead, Oliver represents Scotland as a premodern country, without any influence from modernity, and in which food culture originates exclusively from the Vikings. It is this ancestral heritage that forms Scottish food culture, while the ancestral visual style contributes to constructing a tough image of Scotland. Dead animals, the dangerousness of the fisherman's job, the premodernity of the fish smoker, the wild landscape, and so on are visual elements, that is, icons, that the viewer has to see to catch the real character of Scotland.

In fact, even the frequent presence of dead animals, scenes of hunting, and images of slaughter contributes to representing Scotland as an ancestral land. In Buscemi (2014b), it has already been demonstrated how modernity and postmodernity testify to the detachment between meat and the living animal. In Oliver's Scotland, this has not happened yet, and this underlines the Scottish ancestral character. Even when the celebrity chef searches for more modern Scottish roots, he never goes beyond the 1700s, the era in which the family of the man smoking fish lived and smoked fish, which is however a Viking tradition.

Related to all of this, the Scottish countryside is profoundly different from the English and the Welsh landscapes. Humans have not domesticated it yet; rather, they are fighting to do so. The scenes with the hunters, the fisherman, and the fish smoker depict this fight. While in England and Wales, humans have already taken control of the countryside, in Scotland, this has not happened yet. The Scottish landscape is iconically represented as a strong land not referring to other elements. It is only crude Nature, nothing else beyond what the viewer can see. What this means in terms of semiotic signification will be explained in the conclusive section. Before this, however, the analysis focuses on the extent to which Scotland is depicted as different from England and Wales.

The Limits of Scottish Diversity

In suggesting that Scotland is different, *Jamie's Great Britain* also puts precise limits on this difference. At the end of the hunt, Oliver says that England, Scotland, and Wales *as a whole* have the best game and wild food, not just Scotland. It is a strange statement, as the program has never shown English and Welsh game. Scotland, thus, is represented as different but never in contrast

to the other parts of the UK. Even the Vikings, in the show, do not break the unity of the UK.

In fact, Vikings certainly created smoked fish, the haggis, and the Viking super-highway to explore the land and exploit Scottish produce, and they have certainly been fundamental in the construction of Scottish food culture. However, the Vikings invaded England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland (and many other countries) from the 790s on (Wise, 1979) and "the Viking kingdom(s) in Great Britain gave way to the newly founded kingdoms of Scotland, Wales, and England" (Hughes, 2007, p. 284). Moreover, the celebrated Viking Highway arrived at York (Collingwood, 1927, p. 179), and therefore links Scotland to England. Related to all of this, Vikings are not primordial to the nation of Scotland but to Great Britain and Ireland as a whole; they are a sort of common past of the various kingdoms that would later form today's United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. The difference is that, in Oliver's representation, England and Wales have subsequently evolved thanks to the cosmopolitan events of the 1800s, while Scotland still treasures its ancestral character. As in the case of the game, Oliver manages to involve Scottish diversity into the unity of the nation. This diversity never challenges the idea of Great Britain *as a whole*. Scotland is only represented as a part of the nation. Drawing on Morley (2004a, 2004b) who underlines the affinity between nation and home, we may say that Scotland, in *Jamie's Great Britain*, is represented as a kind of ancestral room of the big house of the UK.

A cosmopolitan nation-state looks outside of itself in order to expand, in a cultural sense. While doing so, it needs to reinforce the inner boundaries of the nation-state, because they must remain intact to guarantee its strength and power. This article argues that in *Jamie's Great Britain*, British food also aims to do so. However, the unity of the UK is not represented as homogeneous. Instead, the diversity of Scotland serves the purpose of making the wider nation-state more various and strong. To sum up, in Oliver's program, Scotland participates in, elaborates, and adds elements to the existing nation-state but never creates the possibility of being another separate nation-state.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that the national food travelogue *Jamie's Great Britain* stereotypes Scotland as a land of ancestral habits and people. In Oliver's Scotland, everything is primordial. First, the celebrity chef visits the *oldest* restaurant in Glasgow; second, Oliver meets a man who lives alone by the river and smokes herrings continuing what his forefathers have done since the 18th century; and finally, Oliver participates in a crude hunt among rifles, blood, and dead animals: this while he visits multiethnic food companies and restaurants in England, and trendy Italian ice-cream shops and industrial buildings in Wales. The fact that Scotland had an Industrial Revolution and that due to this

it received a great contribution from immigrants since the 1800s (Whatley, 1997), exactly as England and Wales, is totally ignored. Simultaneously, the construction of Scotland as a different land also underlines its difference, but not its independence, from the UK. From the point of view of the program, it is represented as a stateless nation which is part of the wider nation-state of the UK (Engel, 2007; Giordano & Roller, 2002), although with specific cultural traits.

All of this is supported by two different languages. In fact, the episodes concerning England and Wales are based on Peirce's (1960) categories of index and symbol, while Scotland is mostly represented through icons. The predominance of indices and symbols in a representation suggests perceiving that representation as more artificial and relating to external elements (as indices and symbols refer to something else). Iconicity, instead, is perceived as more natural and basic, without external references.

This difference clearly helps to underline differences between Scotland and the rest of Great Britain in Oliver's show. On the one hand, in fact, indices and symbols allow the show to represent England and Wales as more civilized, connected to something else, artificial in the sense that they are affected by human intervention. On the other hand, iconicity serves the purpose of depicting Scotland in its ancestral Nature, as a tough place in which reality is not connected to external element (apart from the remote Vikings, as ancestral as the Scotland on the show). Humans, in Scotland, are alone in front of this iconic Nature and fight it. Conversely, in England and Wales, human civilization allows people to construct references to external elements through indices and shared symbols.

As prefigured by Morley (2004a, 2004b) and Spigel (2004), this is one of the cases in which the media represent the nation-state in order to reinforce its dominant ideologies. As demonstrated at the beginning of this article, the UK national media have often contrastingly represented the Scottish wish of independence, before, during, and after the Scottish referendum, and *Jamie's Great Britain* follows this trend. This strategy is pursued through the images that this article has analyzed so far; however, all of this also links to something which lies within a higher level of insight. Bourdieu et al.'s (1994) idea that the state holds two forms of capital, the statist and the cultural, is fully confirmed by this analysis. The UK media aim to hold the nation together, and food, as theorized by Appadurai (1988) and Belasco (2002), may also serve this purpose.

The results of the analysis may also be read through the biosemiotic theories on Nature and Culture that have been explained in the theoretical framework. Drawing on Sebeok (1991) and subsequently on Martinelli (2010), it can be said that the whole series provides a scenario in which Culture is considered as superior to Nature, perpetuating the misleading view stigmatized by the two biosemioticians. However, the first five episodes and the last one offer two different views of cultural superiority. In England and Wales, in fact, the human intervention, exemplified by the Industrial Revolution and the Coal Boom, is

represented as something that has improved Nature. The program totally ignores the dark sides of these historical events such as class inequality (Foster, 1974), child labor (Humphries, 2010), and health-related problems (McIvor & Johnston, 2007) and constructs these events as an opportunity for both the British and the immigrants to achieve better lives. This has allowed them to become civilized and to experience modernity.

Contrastingly, the last episode depicts a violent fight between Nature and Culture. Humans kill and slaughter animals because they are superior to them, but Nature, in Scotland, is tough and inhospitable, as the images of the fisherman and the smoker demonstrate. Thus, Scotland has not evolved culturally, and its people have not experienced modernity yet. Scottish people have neither given to the Other nor received from them in order to evolve. In conclusion, the Scotland shown by the program is on a previous stage of evolution. It is an archaic place. However, it is always seen as a part of the wider nation-state. In fact, its archaism makes the UK more complete. Now, the nation may offer the viewer both the modernity of England and Wales and the primordiality of the North. This aims to reinforce the boundaries of the UK.

Further Research

Now that the national food travelogue has been identified as a TV subgenre, it would be interesting to analyze other shows similar to *Jamie's Great Britain* in order to understand how popular food TV negotiates, supports, or challenges national identity. Moreover, stateless nations are a hot topic today, and, for example, the Spanish case of Catalonia may constitute an interesting starting point for new research. In addition, Brexit has also highlighted a new field, that is, the analysis of the relationships and fights between a supranation, such as the European Union, and its various national identities.

The analysis could certainly go beyond television and regard other forms of national media, such as magazines, newspapers, and national food guides. What is more, hot areas such as Crimea, Hong Kong, and Tibet, usually analyzed from political perspectives, may provide relevant results if investigated through food and popular cultural representations in national media.

Specifically in Scotland, other UK food programs may be analyzed to find out whether different broadcasters have different approaches to the matter or whether the majority of the national media represent Scotland like *Jamie's Great Britain*.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, England: Verso.

Appadurai, A. (1988). How to make a national cuisine: Cookbooks in contemporary India. *Contemporary Studies in Society and History*, *30*(1), 3–24.

Buscemi, F. (2014a). Jamie Oliver and the gastrodiplomacy of simulacra. *Public Diplomacy Magazine*, Winter, 46–50.

Buscemi, F (2014b). From killing cows to culturing meat. *The British Food Journal, 116* (6), 952–964.

Belasco, W. (2002). Food matters: Perspectives on an emerging field. In W. Belasco & P. Scranton (Eds.), *Food nations: Selling taste in consumer societies* (pp. 2–23). New York, NY: Routledge.

Benchimol, A., & Schlesinger, P. (2018). Introduction: 1707, 2014 and the constitutional imperative in Scotland's national press and civil society. *Scottish Affairs*, *27*(1), 1–10.

Berger, A. (2000). *Media and communication research methods: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London, England: Sage.

Bhabha, H. K. (1990). Introduction: Narrating the nation. In H. K. Bhabha (Ed.), *Nation and narration* (pp. 1–7). London, England: Routledge.

Bicket, D. (1999). Fictional Scotland: A "realm of the imagination" in film drama and literature. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *23*(1), 3–19.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). The left hand and the right hand of the state. In P. Bourdieu (Ed.), *Acts of resistance* (pp. 1–10). Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., Wacquant, L., & Farage, S. (1994). Rethinking the state: Genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field. *Sociological Theory*, *12*(1), 1–18.

Chaudhary, N. (2012). Making sense of the Bindì: Urban Indians' appraisal of a culturally valued symbol. In A. Uchoa Branco & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Cultural psychology of human values* (pp. 113–135). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Collingwood, W. G. (1927). Christian Vikings. *Antiquity*, *1*(2), 172–180.

Daisley, S. (2015, February 17). Daisley mail: Anger over Channel 4 programme "Salmond: The first 100 days". *STV News*. Retrieved from http://news.stv.tv/scotland-decides/analysis/310717-daisley-mail-stephen-daisley-on-alex-salmond-snp-and-ukip-channel-4-show/

Davidson, N., McCafferty, P., & Miller, D. (2010). *Neoliberal Scotland: Class and society in a stateless nation*. Newcastle, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Edensor, T. (2002). *National identity, popular culture and everyday life*. London, England: Berg.

Engel, L. C. (2007). Policy as journey: Tracing the steps of a reinvented Spanish state. In C. McCarthy, A. S. Durham, L. C. Engel, A. A. Filmer, M. D. Giardina, & M. A. Malagreca (Eds.), *Globalising cultural studies: Ethnographic interventions in theory, method and policy* (pp. 385–406). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Foster, J. (1974). *Class struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early industrial capitalism in three English towns*. London, England: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
Fowler, B. (1997). *Pierre Bourdieu and cultural theory: Critical investigations*. London, England: Sage.
Gibson, G., & Neely, S. (2007). Scottish television drama and parochial representation. In B. Schoene (Ed.), *The Edinburgh companion to contemporary Scottish literature* (pp. 106–113). Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.
Giddens, A. (1985). *The nation-state and violence*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
Giordano, B., & Roller, E. (2002). Catalonia and the idea of Europe: Competing strategies and discourses within Catalan Party politics. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, *9*(2), 99–113.
Gross, B. (2009). Locating Britain: Migration and shifting boundaries on TV news. In E. A, Castellò. Dhoest, & H. O'Donnell (Eds.), *The Nation on screen: Discourses of the national on global television* (pp. 139–155). Newcastle, England: Cambridge Scholars.
Guibernau, M. (2007). *The identity of nations*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
Hall, S. (1992). The question of cultural identity. In S. Hall, S. D. Held, & T. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its futures* (pp. 273–316). Cambridge, MA: Polity Press-The Open University.
Hibberd, L. (2007). Devolution in policy and practice: A study of *River City* and BBC Scotland. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, *4*(3), 107–125.
Higson, A. (1995). *Waving the flag: Constructing a national cinema in Britain*. Wotton-under-Edge, England: Clarendon Press.
House of Lords. (2014). *Scottish independence: Constitutional implications of the Referendum*. London, England: House of Lords.
Hughes, D. (2007). *The British chronicles (Vol.1)*. Westminster, MD: Heritage Books.
Humphries, J. (2010). *Childhood and child labour in the British Industrial Revolution*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Jakobson, R. (1987). *Language in literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Jenks, C. (1998). *Core sociological dichotomies*. London, England: Sage.
Johnson, S. (2015, March 29). Alex Salmond Demands BBC Control to "correct anti-SNP Bias". *The Daily Telegraph*. Retrieved from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/bbc/11502675/Alex-Salmond-demands-BBC-control-to-correct-anti-SNP-bias.html
Kapferer, B. (1994). Remythologizations of power and identity: Nationalism and violence in Sri-Lanka. In K. Rupesinghe & M. Rubio (Eds.), *The culture of violence* (pp. 59–91). New York, NY: United Nations University Press.
Laughey, D. (2007). *Key themes in media theory*. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
Martinelli, D. (2010). *A critical companion to zoosemiotics: People, paths, ideas*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
McCrone, D. (2017). *The new sociology of Scotland*. London, England: Sage.
McIvor, A., & Johnston, R. (2007). *Miners' lung: A history of dust disease in British coal mining*. Adelshot, England: Ashgate.

Meinecke, F. (1970). *Cosmopolitanism and the national state*. Translated from German by R. B. Kimber. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Morley, D. (2004a). Broadcasting and the construction of the national family. In Allen R. C. & A. Hill (Eds.), *The television studies reader* (pp. 418–441). London, England: Routledge.

Morley, D. (2004b). At home with television. In L. Spigel & J. Olsson (Eds.), *Television after TV: Essays on a medium in transition* (pp. 303–323). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Nöth, W. (1995). *Handbook of semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

O'Sullivan T., Hartley J., Saunders D., Montgomery M., & Fiske, J. (1994). *Key concepts in communication and cultural studies*. 2nd ed. London, England: Routledge.

Peirce, C. S. (1960). *Collected papers. Vol. II: Elements of logic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Peter Mullan: BBC showed "horrendus bias", in Scottish Referendum coverage. (2015, June 2). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/jun/02/peter-mullan-bbc-referendum-harry-potter

Port, R. (2000, September 4). Icon, index and symbol. *Linguistics, L103, Fall 2000*. Retrieved from http://www.cs.indiana.edu/~port/teach/103/sign.symbol.short.html

Poulsen, B. (2008). *Dutch herring: An environmental history c. 1600 – 1860*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Aksant.

Schlesinger, P. (1997). From cultural defence to political culture: Media, politics and collective identity in the European Union. *Media Culture and Society*, *19*, 369–391.

Schlesinger, P. (2000). Constitutional change, media and the public sphere: The case of Scotland. In G. Wang, J. Servaes, & A. Goonasekera (Eds.), *The new communications landscape: Demystifying media globalization* (pp. 124–143). London, England: Routledge.

Schlesinger, P., & Benchimol, A. (2015). Small nations, the press and the digital challenge. *Media, Culture and Society*, *37*(1), 101–106.

Sebeok, T. A. (1991). Communication. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *A sign is just a sign* (pp. 22–35). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Sewell, E. (1994). Visual symbols. In D. More & F. Dwyer (Eds.), *Visual literacy* (pp. 133–144). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Siewers, A. K. (2014). Introduction: Song, tree, and spring: Environmental meaning and environmental humanities. In A. K. Siewers (Ed.), *Re-imagining nature: Environmental humanities and ecosemiotics* (pp. 1–41). Lanham, MD: Bucknell University Press – Rowman and Littlefield.

Spigel, L. (2004). Introduction. In L. Spigel & J. Olsson (Eds.), *Television after TV: Essays on a medium in transition* (pp. 1–34). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sweeney, M. (2008). Broadcasting from birth to devolution . . . and beyond. In N. Blain & D. Hutchison (Eds.), *The media in Scotland* (pp. 87–103). Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Tolz, V., & Booth, S. (2005). Introduction. In V. Tolz & S. Booth (Eds.), *Nation and gender in contemporary Europe* (pp. 1–8). Manchester, England: Manchester University press.

T⊘nnesen, M., & Tũũr, K. (2014). The semiotics of animal representations: Introduction. In K. Tũũr, & M. T⊘nnesen (Eds.), *The semiotics of animal representations* (pp. 7–30). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Rodopi.

Williams, R. (1983). *The year 2000*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
Wise, T. (1979). *Saxon, Viking and Norman*. Oxford, England: Osprey Publishing.
Whatley, C. A. (1997). *The industrial revolution in Scotland.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Author Biography

Francesco Buscemi obtained a PhD on food culture and communication at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. He has taught media and cultural studies at the universities of Stirling, Bournemouth, Milan, and Como and has been awarded the Santander Grant Fund for his research on meat and Nazi propaganda. His latest book is *From Body Fuel to Universal Poison: Cultural History of Meat, 1900-The Present*, published by Springer. He is a member of the International Society for Cultural History.