Discussion Paper

Narratives 2.0

A multi-dimensional approach to semi-public storytelling in WhatsApp voice messages[1]

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1 Narrating the private publicly – Practices of digital storytelling

Storytelling has become an almost indispensable part of social media communication. Users post accounts of recent events on networking platforms like Twitter or Facebook, they relate their experiences in vlogs on YouTube or they publish "stories" on Instagram and Snapchat. Linguistic practices of storytelling are both afforded and shaped by the design of these platforms, the choice of different posting formats and the variety of semiotic resources users have at their disposal. Stories constitute an important communicative genre for sharing personal experiences and disseminating them in mediatised publics (De Fina/Perrino 2017; Georgakopoulou 2017a; Page 2018). Storytellers present momentary perspectives on their lived experience to others and thus always relate aspects of themselves and identity positions they claim.

While the growing number of studies of social media storytelling reflects the prominence of narrative formats in computer-mediated discourse (De Fina/Perrino 2017; Hoffmann 2010; Georgakopoulou 2017b; Page 2018), the full range of reconstructive genres of everyday mediatised communication has not been covered, yet. First, many of these studies deal with public storytelling, that is, stories which can be accessed

27 by larger and oftentimes anonymous publics. However, there
28 are only few accounts of how users relate personal experi-
29 ences in smaller groups or dyadic constellations in which par-
30 ticipants know each other well and engage in various social
31 activities in their offline lives. Second, most studies look at
32 narrative formats which do not form part of an ongoing dia-
33 logic exchange. Although these stories can trigger comments
34 and other reactions, they are often posted on platforms or
35 sites which are not predominantly designed for continuous,
36 conversational messaging. Narratives which are embedded in
37 sequentially organised quasi-synchronous dialogues (in mes-
38 sengers like WhatsApp, WeChat, Signal and the like) still have
39 to be researched. Third, even though it is generally acknowl-
40 edged that social media narratives are multimodal in nature,
41 research has mainly focussed on "visual narratives", that is,
42 aggregates of images or videos with written or text-based
43 postings or posting components. Digital narratives in which
44 both visual and audible postings are integrated in one contin-
45 uous string of discourse have yet to be analysed.

46 The aim of the present paper is to expand the emerging field
47 of digital narratology (De Fina/Perrino 2017; Hoffmann 2010;
48 Georgakopoulou 2017b; Page 2018) by presenting a study of
49 narratives in voice messages in WhatsApp group chats. It con-
50 tributes to research on social media storytelling in that it fo-
51 cusses on stories of personal experience which are

- narrated to well-defined non-anonymous publics in
  mobile messaging,
- embedded in a communication platform which favours
  a continuous dialogic exchange,
- multimodal (comprised of visual and audible posting
  types).

58 Based on the sequential analysis of a corpus of narratives in
59 text and voice messages in German WhatsApp group chats,
60 the study will discuss how users bring about a shared per-
61 spective on the presented narratives of personal experience
62 and how they thus establish privacy and intimacy within the
63 group-public space of the mobile messaging chat. Section 2
64 reviews previous research in digital narratology, Section 3

65 outlines the parameters by which the framework for narra-
66 tives in mobile messaging differs from the affordances of
67 other social media platforms. Section 4 presents an analysis
68 of two storytelling formats utilising text and voice messages in
69 German WhatsApp group chats. It focusses on the sequential
70 design and the semiotic resources users deploy to narrate
71 personal experiences in messenger dialogues. The concluding
72 section discusses the findings in light of a controlled public-
73 ness in group chats and the implications for future research in
74 digital narratology.

2 Affording narratives in social media: dimensions and parameters

76 Storytelling is one of the central communicative practices re-
77 alised in social media. Recent studies have identified narra-
78 tive formats in different communication forms such as e-
79 mails (Georgakopoulou 2004), blogs (Eisenlauer/Hoffmann
80 2010), forums or message boards (Arendholz 2010; Bubenho-
81 fer 2018; Heyd 2016), status updates (West 2013; Page et al.
82 2013; Farina 2015), Twitter postings (Page 2015) or Wikipedia
83 entries (Gredel/Mell 2018; Page 2018). Indeed, social net-
84 works and micro-blogging platforms seem to favour or afford
85 narrative stancetaking (Georgakopoulou 2017a; De Fina/Per-
86 rino 2017): Users are often asked to share their experiences
87 with others; postings can be tagged automatically with time
88 stamps or information about the poster's location, which es-
89 tablishes a spatio-temporal frame for each posting. Moreover,
90 some platforms allow users to tag other users, which enables
91 the original posters to choose co-tellers or recipients from a
92 larger audience.
93 　　Users exploit these technical affordances to realise several
94 forms of storytelling which do not always conform with the
95 "narrative prototype": Drawing on Labov and Waletzky's
96 seminal research of recurrent narrative structures in oral nar-
97 ratives of personal experience (Labov/Waletzky 1967; Labov
98 1972), the analysis of linguistic practices of storytelling has
99 long focused on elaborated single-teller narrations which in-
100 clude an initial orientation, outline the complicating action
101 and offer a resolution before a final coda interspersed with
102 internal and external evaluations indexing the teller's stance

103 towards the reconstructed events. While conversation-ana-
104 lytic studies have helped to identify the co-constructedness
105 of storytelling activities as interactive accomplishments
106 (Becker/Quasthoff 2005; Quasthoff 2001; Selting 2017), they
107 too have mainly focused on sequentially extended "big pack-
108 ages" (Sacks 1995).
109   Although "big" stories can still be found in weblogs or
110 YouTube videos, recent studies point out that major parts of
111 narrative practice in social media will be missed if one only
112 takes those forms into account that adhere to the prototype
113 of a single teller reconstructing past events in a linear and se-
114 quentially self-contained manner. Rather, the small stories
115 research paradigm (Georgakopoulou 2017a, b; Georgalou
116 2015; Page 2010; Page et al. 2013) has identified various other
117 formats in which users take a narrative stance without neces-
118 sarily presenting a complete narrative account afterwards:

119   *Narrative stancetaking* involves posts in which conven-
120   tionalized story framing devices are used to suggest that
121   there is a story in the making, a story that can be told,
122   developed and updated later if requested. More gener-
123   ally, narrative stancetaking indicates that an activity is:
124   • being offered or taken up as a story, thereby posi-
125   tioning participants as tellers-recipients-(co)-tellers,
126   etc. and/or,
127   • consisting of events and characters in specific spati-
128   otemporal scenarios whose actions and speech are
129   assessable. (Georgakopoulou 2017b: 275)

130 Thus, the small story heuristic casts a wide net over semiotic
131 practices in social media and allows for identifying a larger set
132 of storytelling practices. Instead of solely focussing on com-
133 plete or "full-fledged" stories, studies of this paradigm iden-
134 tify condensed and often fragmentary narrative patterns in
135 Tweets (Page 2015) or selfie postings (Georgakopoulou 2016)
136 in which the textual basis is either restricted by the platform
137 (e.g. 280 characters on Twitter) or secondary to the picture
138 posting (as is the case with selfies). To better grasp the vari-
139 ous features which have been identified as characteristic for

140 digital narrations, the next paragraph will introduce an adap-
141 tation of Ochs and Capps' model of narrative dimensions to
142 the study of social media storytelling (Page 2012).
143   Building on their observation that many of the narratives
144 found in oral conversations actually do not conform with the
145 Labovian default narrative, Ochs and Capps (2001) developed
146 a dimensional model for the study of everyday storytelling.
147 They stipulate that a more differential account of narratives
148 can be given by examining the following five dimensions of
149 storytelling activities – tellability, tellership, embeddedness,
150 linearity and moral stance – which are organised on a contin-
151 uum rather than as binary opposites. Interlocutors treat the
152 reconstruction of an event as more or less tellable (i.e. of in-
153 terest or of significance for the recipients). Speakers can posi-
154 tion themselves as the only or primary teller, or various
155 speakers might contribute to an ongoing telling activity. Sto-
156 ries can respond to a foregoing activity and thus exhibit a
157 high degree of embeddedness, or they can be presented as
158 sequentially detached entities which do not relate to the pre-
159 ceding conversational exchange. Tellers can choose to recon-
160 struct relevant events in a linear or chronological order, or
161 they might relate them in reversed or even non-linear order.
162 Finally, the teller's evaluative or moral stance can be stable or
163 rather flexible and negotiable.
164   While Ochs and Capps' dimensional approach was in-
165 tended for oral and synchronous forms of storytelling, recent
166 studies of computer-mediated discourse argue that the model
167 can also be applied to the analysis of text-based and asyn-
168 chronous narratives in social media (Page 2012; Arendholz
169 2010). Characterising social media storytelling along the five
170 dimensions, these studies contend, helps to adequately grasp
171 and systematise the variety of narrative forms and formats in
172 social media – even though the categories for describing the
173 varying shapes of the narrative dimensions have to be re-
174 worked (Page 2012, 2015). For one thing, the semiotic means
175 tellers can deploy for narrating certain events differ as the
176 model now also encompasses text-based narration (prosodic
177 contextualisation cues vs. typographic variation or emojis).
178 Particularly, studies in the small stories paradigm have out-
179 lined further distinctive features of narratives in social media.
180 The following summary relates their main findings to the five
181 narrative dimensions:

182 • **Tellability**: Social media favour the reconstruction of
183 recent and sometimes still ongoing events or of past and
184 future events which are linked to aspects of the current
185 situation (Page 2015; Dayter/Mühleisen 2016). Moreo-
186 ver, users predominantly narrate their self: Their own
187 mundane everyday experiences are treated as relevant
188 to other users (Georgakopoulou 2017a).

189 • **Tellership**: Social media narratives are often realised
190 by multiple tellers. This occurs either within one com-
191 munication form (e.g. by inviting others to comment on
192 a selfie; Georgakopoulou 2016), through collaborative
193 writing practices on Wikipedia (Gredel/Mell 2018) or by
194 sharing and further commenting on narrative content
195 across different platforms (Page 2018).

196 • **Embeddedness**: Social media narratives are persistent
197 (boyd 2011). They can be forwarded and shared with
198 other users and on other communication platforms, i.e.
199 they are taken from their original communicative con-
200 texts and embedded or recontextualised in a different
201 sequential framework (De Fina 2016; De Fina/Gore
202 2017; Georgakopoulou 2015; Page 2018; Tienken 2013).

203 • **Linearity**: Hypertextual features (links to webpages,
204 postings or hashtags) turn social media narratives into
205 networked, non-linear polymedial configurations (West
206 2013; Eisenlauer/Hoffmann 2010). Some social media
207 platforms actually display postings in counter-chrono-
208 logical order (Page 2015), which impedes a posting-by-
209 posting development of narratives. Moreover, social
210 media narratives often do not constitute clearly delim-
211 ited or closed-off formats; they are rather emergent,
212 fragmented and potentially open-ended (Georgakopou-
213 lou 2017b).

214 • **Moral stance**:[2] In the context of emergent storytelling,
215 which often begins without a predetermined teleologi-
216 cal endpoint, users can shift their evaluative stances
217 (Deppermann 2018). Also, the multiple voices involved
218 in the collaborative storytelling activities, which are

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2 In contrast to Ochs and Capps (2001: 45), my understanding of the term "moral"
   is a rather broad one, which is not restricted to the contextualisation of "what is
   good or valuable and how one ought to live in the world" but rather captures the
   evaluative of affective stances that tellers take in their stories.

219   shared and reconfigured (or rescripted, see Geor-
220   gakopoulou 2015), often produce variable and some-
221   times conflicting moral or affective stances vis-à-vis the
222   narrative subject (De Fina/Gore 2017).

223   Whereas the aforementioned features can adequately charac-
224   terise narrative practices on platforms such as Facebook (be
225   it in status updates or in selfie postings) or Twitter, they do
226   not document the actual spectrum of storytelling in social
227   media. While the small stories paradigm has clearly helped to
228   identify the wide range of – what is often referred to as "a-
229   typical" – communicative practices in which users relate
230   event structures in web 2.0 contexts, one should not lose
231   sight of the linear, elaborate forms of narration which can
232   also be found in social media contexts. Blogs, vlogs, message
233   boards and internet forums, as well as Wikipedia entries, of-
234   fer sites for user-generated narratives which are tilted to-
235   wards the other end of the dimensional scale. These "big"
236   stories often relate non-recent and life-changing events (such
237   as childbirth, cf. Bubenhofer 2018, or a biographical crisis, cf.
238   Arendholz 2010); they are told in a coherent, linear and teleo-
239   logic fashion by a single teller with a straightforward, non-
240   flexible evaluative stance. According to De Fina it is not the
241   actual shape of the stories told in social media that distin-
242   guishes them from their familiar counterparts in oral commu-
243   nication (Herring 2013) but rather their potential to be shared
244   in a wider audience or networked public (and thus their
245   open-endedness) across different media and their multimodal
246   design:

247   [W]hat is most distinctive about storytelling in social
248   media is precisely the way narratives are shared, recon-
249   textualized, commented upon, and subject to continu-
250   ous reconfigurations and reinterpretations, how they are
251   embedded within different media, how they are often
252   recounted through multimodal resources, and how their
253   production and circulation are as much a focus of atten-
254   tion as their content. (De Fina 2016: 477–478)

255   Thus, to apply the dimensional model of narratives to social
256   media storytelling requires more than just a reworking of the
257   parameters (Page 2012): It must recognise the different modes

258 of contribution and participation which have developed (sin-
259 gle teller and multiple voices); it must also recognise that cer-
260 tain platforms (Twitter and Facebook) and postings types
261 (selfies) favour recency while others afford retrospection
262 (blogs, forums). Due to their mediated and networked nature,
263 I argue that further dimensions have to be added to the di-
264 mensional model, which was originally developed to capture
265 the specificities of ephemeral and synchronous oral storytell-
266 ing. With the production, retention and distribution of stories
267 via different media and platforms, other affordances and re-
268 sources are available to users for taking a narrative stance.
269 Rather than subsuming them under the five dimensions de-
270 veloped by Ochs and Capps, I suggest expanding the model
271 by adding the following three dimensions:

272 • **Publicness:** In addition to having multiple tellers, the
273 publics can be quite dispersed in social media storytell-
274 ing. Users can select particular recipients to receive
275 their stories or post them on platforms accessible to a
276 wider, often anonymous networked public (De Fina
277 2016; De Fina/Gore 2017). Mediated story postings are
278 also persistent; they can be shared with a wider audi-
279 ence for which the original story was not designed in
280 the first place (alluded to as "context collapse" by
281 Baym/boyd 2012). In a communicative framework char-
282 acterised by polymedia (Madianou 2014; Androutso-
283 poulos/Staehr 2018) users can navigate and control (at
284 least to a certain extent) publicness by choosing particu-
285 lar platforms, communication forms (such as group
286 chats) or privacy settings (Georgalou 2016).
287 • **Multimodality**: Even though many studies in digital
288 narratology take text-based material as their starting
289 point, they also always stress the fact that social media
290 storytelling is essentially multimodal in nature (Eisen-
291 lauer/Hoffmann 2010; Farina 2015). Different platforms
292 afford different semiotic resources to users for telling a
293 story. They can choose to relate their experiences in a
294 text-based manner, exploiting typographic or other
295 structuring resources afforded by the platforms (story
296 abstracts might be given in headers so that the actual
297 posting can start with the complicating action; see Ar-
298 endholz 2010) or combinations of text and images can

299   be used as multimodal aggregates of narration (Eisen-
300   lauer/Hoffmann 2010). Also, different posting types
301   might be used for different story components (image
302   postings might be used as invitations for others to re-
303   quest more elaborate narrations in the form of text mes-
304   sages; Georgakopoulou 2016) which brings about a
305   "transmodal interaction" (Androutsopoulos/Staehr 2018:
306   124). As users can often choose to design their stories as
307   more or less multimodal, this aspect should be added to
308   the dimensional model of social media storytelling.

309   • **Sequencing**: In addition to the dimension of embed-
310   dedness, which captures the relation of the story to the
311   current communicative context, the dimension of se-
312   quencing helps to differentiate variation in the sequen-
313   tial design of stories in social media. Stories can be
314   made up of one single posting or of multiple postings
315   which chunk the telling of the story into several larger
316   or smaller units (what Page 2012: 193 refers to as "narra-
317   tive sequencing").

318   Naturally, digital narratology has acknowledged the varying
319   groups of recipients and audiences and differences in the se-
320   quential and multimodal design of stories in social media for
321   some time. Yet, explicitly anchoring them as additional di-
322   mensions helps to highlight and systematise the particularities
323   of social media storytelling. The analyses in Section 4 will
324   outline how the expanded dimensional model (see Table 1)
325   can be applied to the study of multimodal storytelling in mo-
326   bile messenger chats (more specific: storytelling with text and
327   voice messages in WhatsApp group chats). The next section
328   will give a brief outline of the affordances of WhatsApp com-
329   munication in general and of storytelling in group chats in
330   particular.

331   **3 Affording narratives in WhatsApp group chats**

332   Similar to internet-based communication platforms, which al-
333   low users to connect and share different forms of user-gener-
334   ated content with each other, messengers like Signal, Tele-
335   gram, WeChat or WhatsApp form part of the ever-growing

336 social media infrastructure (Marx/Weidacher 2014; Androut-
337 sopoulos 2010). These messengers, typically used on mobile
338 devices, often consist of several communication modules
339 (such as status information, stories, chats etc.). The following
340 analyses will focus on WhatsApp, which is the most popular
341 messenger app in Germany. Its chat interface enables dyadic
342 chats (one-to-one), broadcast lists (one-to-many) and group
343 chats (many-to-many). Despite its increasing popularity, lin-
344 guistic research of user practices in these different set-ups is
345 still scarce.

346 WhatsApp communication is dialogical and multimodal in
347 nature. Studies indicate that text messaging is used in a chat-
348 like manner especially when users are oriented to the device
349 at the same time (Dürscheid/Frick 2016). Like in computer-
350 based chats, chunking is applied as one method to manage
351 the rapid or quasi-synchronous exchange of messages (Imo
352 2015; König 2015, forthc.; Wyss/Hug 2016). In addition to
353 emoticons, emojis are used widely e.g. as contextualisation
354 cues or economic forms of communication (Dürscheid/Siever
355 2017; Pappert 2017). While these features all work in the vis-
356 ual modality, with voice messages user-generated auditory
357 postings can also be integrated into the continuous thread of
358 messages. These audio postings, which can be easily recorded
359 on the surface of the chat interface, do not replace text mes-
360 sages but rather complement the existing practices of mobile
361 messaging by providing additional semiotic resources that us-
362 ers can exploit for their communicative purposes. Users often
363 stage "dramas to an audience" (Goffman 1974: 508) in voice
364 messages by relating particular prosodic stylisations or by re-
365 cording elements of the poster's soundscape (König/Hector
366 2017). They display different degrees of embeddedness as
367 they are designed as "monologic" contributions, which do not
368 relate to the foregoing discourse, or as "dialogic" postings,
369 which respond to a foregoing posting and hence make an-
370 other user's response relevant (König/Hector 2019). Because
371 most of previous studies of WhatsApp deal with dyadic chats,
372 little is known about the dynamics of WhatsApp group chats
373 (but see König 2019) let alone the practices of storytelling that

374 have evolved in this communication form.[3] Yet, the multi-
375 modal and semi-public character of group chats make them
376 an interesting subject for digital narratology.
377   Note, however, that their affordances do not particularly
378 favour narratives like other social media platforms (Geor-
379 gakopoulou 2017a; see also Section 2). Although WhatsApp
380 postings are also always tagged with time-stamps, there is no
381 particular prompt or invitation to reconstruct past or recent
382 events. Instead, the quasi-synchronous flow of messages ex-
383 changed between multiple chatters might even hinder the re-
384 alisation of rather complex narrative projects. Indeed, some
385 studies find that it is unlikely for users to try to convey an
386 elongated narrative in a chat-like interface (Hoffmann 2004;
387 Arendholz 2010).[4] Thus, the WhatsApp group chat interface
388 does not prioritise narratives in the same way as other social
389 media platforms or communication forms. However, with the
390 introduction of voice messages, a posting type has entered
391 the communicative realm of messenger chats which can af-
392 ford longer contributions that are easy to produce.[5] How us-
393 ers exploit this resource for storytelling in group chats will be
394 analysed in the following section.
395   Also, unlike in other forms of social media storytelling, in
396 WhatsApp group chats narrative contributions are particu-
397 larly designed for a non-anonymous semi-public audience
398 made up of the group chat members.[6] At the same time, post-
399 ers are not anonymous; they are at least identifiable by their
400 mobile phone number. Building on the extended dimensional
401 model for narratives, the analyses in Section 4 have to deter-
402 mine the methods users prototypically apply to tell stories in
403 multi-party and multimodal mobile messenger chats. Moreo-
404 ver, the analyses will also illustrate how chatters make use of,

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3 For an analysis of patterns of storytelling in dyadic WhatsApp chats see Hector (forthc.).

4 Even in e-mails, which can have a more "monologic", letter-like form, larger narrations are often postponed to face-to-face encounters, see Georgakopoulou 2004.

5 The lock-option introduced in 2018 makes longer recordings even easier.

6 Note, however, that WhatsApp chat content is persistent: it can be forwarded to others and shared on additional platforms or in face-to-face encounters. Future studies have to determine for which purposes chatters make use of this practice, in which cases it is deemed as a breach of privacy and in which cases it is deemed acceptable.

405 integrate and allude to the networked semi-public of the
406 group chat for their storytelling activities.

4 Storytelling with voice messages in WhatsApp group chats

408 The following analyses are based on a corpus of 28 German
409 WhatsApp group chats consisting of 585 text messages, 98
410 voice messages and 17 image postings which were collected in
411 the research project "Dialogicality of Voice Messages".[7] In
412 this corpus 19 dialogues containing narratives were identified
413 (consisting of 164 text messages, 46 voice messages and 7 im-
414 age postings); this collection was analysed for the current pa-
415 per. The chats took place between 2016 and 2018. They com-
416 prise dialogues between family members and groups of
417 friends (mostly students) with four to five group members on
418 average. All in all, group chats with 28 different users, aged 22
419 to 58 years, were gathered. Text messages including time
420 stamps are available as logfile data or screenshots. Voice mes-
421 sages have been transcribed using the GAT 2 conventions
422 (Selting et al. 2009). All names and place references have
423 been replaced by pseudonyms. I will present two excerpts
424 which capture the prototypical features of storytelling activi-
425 ties in the given collection.

426 4.1 Placing "big packages" in group chats

427 As was argued in Section 3, the continuous and quasi-syn-
428 chronous exchange of messages in multi-party group chats
429 does not offer ideal conditions for producing longer narrative
430 sequences. The following excerpt, taken from a group chat of
431 four female friends in their twenties, illustrates how users
432 nevertheless manage to place narrations in mobile instant
433 messaging. First of all, in the given collection narratives are
434 typically placed as a posting initiating a new dialogue, i.e. a
435 new thread of thematically-related messages.[8] Users thus
436 avoid the risk of sequentially non-related contributions by

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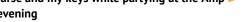7   For more information see https://www.uni-muenster.de/Germanistik/Pro-jekte/WhatsApp/index.html.

8   For narratives in dyadic chats, Hector (forthc.) finds a greater variability in the embeddedness of narratives. He also finds patterns in which users 'ask' for a ticket, in which other users elicit stories or in which they are embedded as second stories.

437 other users.[9] Characteristically, there are no 'overlapping' or
438 parallel activities. In posting 1, Beate (BE) starts a new dia-
439 logue unit at 01:47 am, a time at which group members were
440 not simultaneously oriented to the messenger. It is in such a
441 context that WhatsApp users treat their reconstruction of re-
442 cent events as tellable right away. That is, they do not elicit a
443 prompt to tell their stories, they do not ask for a 'ticket' or
444 permission to start storytelling (Sacks 1974). Second, the
445 choice to use voice messages as a posting type also enables
446 users to place extended single-teller narrations in messenger
447 chats. In the given example, Beate first takes a narrative
448 stance by posting an abstract of the event setting so far (post-
449 ing #1) before switching to an audio posting to deliver a full-
450 blown account of the following events (posting #2).

451 **Excerpt 1:** lost purse and keys

1	BE	01:47	Gerade beim feiern im Amp hab ich mein Portemonnaie und mei-nen Schlüssel verloren 🎉👯 richtig geiler Abend

Lost my purse and my keys while partying at the Amp 🎉👯 re-ally cool evening

2	BE	01:50	*Voice message duration 02:34*

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001 AN: wir ham dann HALT-
        we then
002     (0.2) geWARtet,
        waited
003     bis ähm (0.1) alle WEG waren aus dem
        lAden-
        until everyone had left the club
004     ham den ganzen <<lachend>lAden>
        durchgeSU:CHT-
        we searched the whole club
005     und halt NACHgefragt-=
        and asked around
006     =und beSCHEID gesagt-
        and told everyone
007     °hh aber es wurd natürlich !NICHTS!
        abgegEben:-
        but of course nothing was returned
[…]
024     wir ham alles durchSU:CHT-
        we looked everywhere
025     und immer NACHgefra:gt-
        and always asked around
026     und WAR halt nix-
        but to no avail
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9   Phenomena like split adjacency and phantom adjacency which are typical for text-based quasi-synchronous chats (Beißwenger 2016; Garcia/Baker Jacobs 1999) are thus averted by design.

027	dann haben wir (halt) quasi gewartet bis de:r scheiß laden ZU macht endlich,
	then we waited until the fucking club closed
028	°hh (0.2) ((schlucken))
	((gulping))
029	und wir halt den leeren (0.1) lAden durchsuchen KÖNnen:-
	so that we could search the empty club
030	ÄHM:-
	ehm
031	(0.6) und da haben wir dann aber leider <<h>!AUCH! nichts gefunden:->
	and unfortunately we did not find anything then either
032	dann kam irgendwann einer der da geARbeitet hat-
	after some time one of the employees approached me
033	hat meinen PERso gefunden?
	found my ID
034	°hh also mein pErso der im portmonNAIE war-
	that is my ID which had been in my purse
035	is auf <<lachend>jeden fall> AUFgetau:cht?
	has turned up
[…]	
060	(1.1) also das geld ist mir jetzt auch (.) richtig eGAL,
	I don't care about the money
061	(0.6) aber ähm (.) schlÜssel is halt SCHEIße;
	but having lost my keys sucks
062	°hhh (vielleicht) hat ja irgendwer besOffen den schlüssel eingeSTECKT;
	maybe someone took my keys drunk
063	und ähm: MERKT dann morgen früh-=
	and will realise tomorrow morning
064	=oh das is gar nicht MEIner;
	oh that's not mine
065	°hh <<gähnend, h>und gibt ihn viel!LEICHT! bei der polizEI ab;>
	and maybe returns them to the police
066	deshalb telefonIEr ich morgen nochmal mit meinen netten freunden von der poliZEI::>;
	that is why I will call my dear friends from the police tomorrow
067	hh° <<creaky>JA;>
	yeah
068	°hh <<creaky>war auf jeden fall ein schöner Abend>;=ne?
	it was a really nice evening anyway, right?
069	<<t>hat sich richtig geLOHNT;>
	it really was worth it
070	(0.6) ordentlich auf die KACke gehauen:;
	really had a blast
071	°h_ACHTzig euro-
	eighty euros
072	wat SOLLS;
	why do I care?

```
073      (0.5) SCH:LÜSsel no_hinterhErgeworfen-
```
throwing the keys away
```
074      (0.3) °hh <<verstellt>alles RAUS;>
```
everything must go
```
075      h°((schnalzen)) gute nAcht ihr süßen
         SCH:ÄTzis-
```
good night you sweet darlings
```
076      (0.1) SCHM:ATzi:s-
```
kisses
```
077      °hh gut dass ihr: ((schlucken)) brav
         zu hause SITZT-=
```
how good that you sit at home well-behaved
```
078      =und HAUSarbeiten schreibt-
```
writing your papers
```
079      und nach INdien jette:t-
```
that you are jetting to India
```
080      °h und äh morgen früh ARbeiten mü:sst-
```
and have to work tomorrow morning
```
081      und SCHLAfen geh:t-
```
and that you go to sleep
```
082      (0.3) un:d nicht FEIern geh:t-
```
and don't go partying
```
083      mItten in der WOche:-
```
in the middle of the week
```
084      das ist die <<creaky>STRAfe dafü::r;>
```
that is my rightful punishment
```
085      °hh wer geht denn auch schon dIEnstags
         FEIern;
```
who goes to a party on Tuesday anyway
```
086      (1.5)
```

3	IS	04:05	Ach fuck 😑
			Oh fuck 😑
4	IS	04:05	Hoffe du fährst mit dem Rad ohne Licht zu deinen Freunden von der Polizei 😂
			I hope you take your bike without lights to your dear friends from the police
5	IS	04:06	Wer war denn mit?
			Who was with you?
6	JA	06:56	Oh nein :/ wie blöd!
			Oh no :/ how awful
7	JA	06:57	Vor allem was wollen die mit Schlüsseln?!
			After all what do they want with the keys?
8	JA	06:58	Jaa..fuck ey. Teuerlicher Abend
			Yeah fuck ey. Expensive evening
9	BE	08:25	Ja versteh ich auch nicht
			Yeah I don't understand either
10	BE	08:35	Gut angekommen Isi?
			Are you there yet Isi?
11	NI	09:57	Ach kacke! Zum glück hast du deinen perso. Hoffentlich gibt echt noch jemand den schlüssel ab. Blööööd 🤢🤢🤢🤢
			Ah shit! Fortunately you have your ID. Hopefully someone returns the keys. Awwwwwful 🤢🤢🤢🤢

452 Beate uses a voice message to give a complete and linear nar-
453 rative account of the events which unfolded after she discov-
454 ered that she had lost her purse and her apartment keys.
455 While some narrations are first announced with a preceding
456 text message (such as in the given excerpt), users usually do
457 not chunk the narrative core,[10] which in itself is characterised
458 as a temporally emergent structure. In just one audio posting,
459 she presents the complicating actions (searching for the miss-
460 ing objects, finding her ID), a resolution (she plans to contact
461 the police) and a coda containing a lesson to be learned from
462 her experience (one should not party on a Tuesday). Alt-
463 hough it would have been technically possible to stop record-
464 ing after each of these story units to enable recipient reac-
465 tions, WhatsApp users typically present voice message narra-
466 tions in a closed-off format. The lengths of the audio postings
467 in the given collection range from 20 seconds to 2.5 minutes,
468 with a mean length of 49.5 seconds. So, the actual telling of
469 the story is a monologic act by a single teller who hinders
470 others from influencing the story's trajectory. By choosing
471 not to split the story into several postings, tellers can present
472 a complete account of the event structure and their evalua-
473 tion. The narration is interspersed with various explicit and
474 implicit evaluations exhibiting a fluctuating evaluative stance.
475 While Beate starts off by relating the events in a serious tone,
476 she later switches to a more humorous and ironic stance (in-
477 dicated by various cues like shifts in pitch and voice quality,
478 use of vulgarism).

479   In terms of tellability, we can see parallels to narrations
480 found on platforms like Twitter and Facebook: WhatsApp
481 group chats are treated as sites where personal experiences
482 (be they positive or self-deprecating) can be shared with oth-
483 ers. In this way, users present performances of themselves;
484 they position themselves in these narrative accounts and thus
485 construct personal identities. Also, all of the events related in
486 the collection can be characterised as rather recent events
487 which happened only a few days or even minutes before
488 their narrative reconstruction in the group chats and which
489 are still unfolding – like in the given excerpt in which Beate
490 has not yet determined what happened to her purse and her

---

10 This is also the case for narratives in dyadic WhatsApp chats, see Hector (forthc.).

491 keys. These breaking news stories reduce the temporal dis-
492 tance between the taleworld and the telling world (Geor-
493 gakopoulou 2013). Recipients are thus invited to take part in
494 the teller's experiences as they emerge despite being in dif-
495 ferent locations.

496   Concerning the narrative dimension of publicness, the ex-
497 cerpt exhibits two features characteristic of multimodal sto-
498 rytelling in WhatsApp group chats: First, the narration itself is
499 explicitly designed to address all members of the group.
500 While there are no forms of address at the posting's begin-
501 ning, Beate closes her story by referring to her friends as
502 "SCH:ÄTzis" (075, the diminutive plural form of *Schatz*
503 'sweetheart'), which expresses closeness and familiarity
504 (Günthner/Zhu 2015). She then enumerates activities that she
505 knows the other group members did instead of partying (writ-
506 ing a paper, going to work, flying to India) and thus connects
507 her experience with the other group members.

508   Second, the recipients' reactions in this excerpt are char-
509 acteristic in their design: They are typically cast in text mes-
510 sages rather than in audio postings. Moreover, they assess or
511 evaluate the narrated events with rather conventionalised
512 and similar expressions. All group members contextualise
513 their evaluative stances with swearing interjections ("ach
514 fuck", #3, "fuck ey", #8, "Ach kacke!", #11). Responses to
515 selfie postings exhibit similar patterns; they are referred to as
516 "ritual appreciation" (Georgakopoulou 2016), i.e. generic ways
517 of displaying one's alignment with the first-poster's stance.
518 What is also striking is that the users do not react to one an-
519 other; rather, their postings are designed as responses to the
520 initial story. Even though there are postings which could have
521 been expanded upon by Beate (a humorous fictionalisation of
522 future events in #4, a follow-up question in #5), she does not
523 develop the story further. Instead, she displays her general ir-
524 ritation (her response to posting #7) before she initiates a
525 change of subject by addressing Isi with a question not re-
526 lated to her story. It is a general tendency for narrations in
527 the given collection to not develop into rather extended fol-
528 low-up sequences. This again highlights the fact that multi-
529 modal storytelling in group chats constitutes a rather con-
530 fined activity which is set off from the more chat-like or con-
531 versational to and fro of messaging.

532   Note that all group members respond to Beate's story, even
533   though they basically express the same affiliative stances,
534   even though some time has passed since Beate's original
535   postings and – as is the case of Nina's posting #11 – even
536   though Beate has already moved on to another thematic
537   strand. This points to the particular function of storytelling in
538   the controlled semi-publicness of group chats: Users do more
539   than just inform other group members about what happened
540   in their lives; they share their perspective and their interpre-
541   tation of their everyday experiences with a particular pre-set
542   group of people, thus treating them as friends and re-estab-
543   lishing the sociality of a friendship. This 'sharing' framework
544   explains why recipients post similar responses even if they
545   are repetitive in form and content. In this controlled public,
546   they reaffirm that they all hold the same views.

547   While the analysis of the group chat story in excerpt 1 can
548   make use of Ochs and Capp's (2001) narrative dimensions
549   (tellability is treated as a given, the story is not embedded in
550   an ongoing interaction but constitutes the first move, a single
551   teller reconstructs a personal experience in a linear order and
552   takes various evaluative stances towards the event), it cannot
553   fully grasp all the choices or resources that tellers in social
554   media can exploit for their communicative purposes. The
555   overall aim of the dimensional modelling of narratives was to
556   give an account of the varying parameters that conversational
557   narratives exhibit. Social media afford new "narrative possi-
558   bilities" (Ochs/Capps 2001: 20) and the dimensions of public-
559   ness, multimodality and sequencing help to capture these ad-
560   ditional possibilities of story design. In excerpt 1, Beate se-
561   quences her story into two units: She first posts a rather short
562   abstract before relating the events in more detail with a sepa-
563   rate posting. For this, she mode-switches from a text to an
564   audio posting; subsequently, the other group members re-
565   spond with text messages. The story and its subsequent re-
566   sponses thus constitute a "transmodal interaction" (Androut-
567   sopoulos/Staehr 2018). Moreover, Beate chooses a particular
568   audience by posting her messages in the semi-public chat
569   with her friends making an affiliative reaction by all of them
570   relevant. While all of the other group chat members take on
571   the role the role of recipients rather than co-tellers, the fol-
572   lowing analysis will further explore how group chat members
573   can take on different participant roles.

Discussion Paper

574 ## 4.1 Managing participation roles

575 The previous analyses have demonstrated that the prototype
576 of storytelling with voice messages in group chats is based on
577 recent personal experiences; it is related by a single teller as
578 an initial, sequentially non-embedded and linearly organised
579 "big package" story (in a single voice message sometimes in-
580 troduced by a text message containing an abstract); other
581 group members document their affiliative evaluative stances
582 in rather conventionalised text message responses in the
583 semi-public group space. The following excerpt, taken from
584 the same group chat, illustrates that other forms of participa-
585 tion are possible. In this case, the "deviation" from the proto-
586 typical structure can be explained by the story itself, which
587 identifies the group member Isi as an object of playful ridi-
588 cule.
589 　Again, Beate's narration is the initial, non-embedded post-
590 ing in a new dialogue. It specifically addresses all group mem-
591 bers (001) and relates recent events as tellable objects (she
592 has just arrived in Munich and reconstructs her activities and
593 the thoughts she had on her journey there). However, the
594 narrative's trajectory differs from the prototype particularly
595 with regard to its multimodal design and the participant roles
596 of teller, recipient and audience.

597 **Excerpt 2:** Isi is the "Sams"

```
 1   BE   15:31   Voice message duration: 00:52

                  001 BE: ello ihr SÜße:::n-
                          ello sweethearts
                  002     ich bin gerade in MUnich angekommen
                          beim prImmu:s-
                          I have just arrived in MUnich at the
                          prImmu:s-
                  003     °hh mache später ein <<h>video von der
                          UNterkun:ft->
                          I will send a video of my accommodation later
                  004     und kurz muss ich erZÄHlen,
                          I have to tell shortly
                  005     °hh auf der <<lachend>he_HINfahrt,>
                          on my way in
                  006     °h <:-)>hab ich das SAMS gehört,
                          I listened to the Sams
                  007     <<lachend>hh° he °h>
                           ((laughing))
                  008     (0.3)und musste mich m:ega
                          kaPUTTlachen die ganze zei:t,>
                          and was laughing really hard all the time
                  009     dass ich mittlerweile schon so_n
                          bisschen an mir ZWEIfle:,
```

			so that I now question myself
		010	(0.1) aber (0.1) ich find halt das sind auch so witze für er↑WACHsene;
			but I think the jokes are suitable for adults, too
		011	das ist gar kein kInder (0.1) BUCH;
			it is no children's book
		012	(0.3) EIgentlich;
			actually
		013	°hhh <<f>auf JEden fall,
			anyway
		014	sagen dIE: (0.1) NÄMlich,
			they say
		015	°h sagt das <<lachend>SAMS immer,>
			the Sams always says,
		016	°hh es hat aus versehen alles <<lachend>AUFgegessen,>
			that it accidentally ate everything
		017	°hh <<:-)>und dann ist mir EINgefallen,=
			and then I realised
		018	=dass die Isi das SAMS is;
			that Isi is the Sams
		019	weil die ja auch aus versehen meinen MÜSliriegel Aufisst-
			because she accidentally eats my cereal bars
		020	und anscheinend schon diverse ANdere sachen-
			and apparently many other things as well
		021	ich hoffe nicht äh: den FENstergriff-=
			I hope she did not eat the window handle
		022	=wie das SAMS-
			like the Sams
		023	oder aus versehen die anzüge oder so von (0.2) JENnybär-
			or Jennybear's suits by accident
		024	oder: (0.2) °h STEfan oder so;
			or Stefan or something like that;
		025	°h naja das wollt ich nur kurz <<:-)>MITteilen;>
			anyways I just wanted to impart that
2	IS	15:36	*Voice message duration: 00:21*
		001	IS: (0.6) JA:;
			yeah
		002	voll GEIL;
			totally cool
		003	ich hab ja AUCH-
			I also have
		004	naja ROtes haar nich,
			well I don't have red hair
		005	aber auch BLOND-
			but also blond
		006	und °h auch SOMmersprossen wie das sAms,
			and also freckles like the Sams
		007	<<creaky>das sind auch alles WUNSCHpunkte nämlich,>
			all of them also are wishing spots
		008	°h und ich pass eigentlich au_nur in_nen TAUcheranzug-
			and a diving suit is the only thing that I fit in to

```
009      und alles <<creaky>andere PLATZT bei
         mI::r;>
         and everything else I wear bursts
010      (0.3)ich hab AUCH immer das sams sehr
         gern gehört;
         I have also always liked to listen to the Sams
011      jetzt <<behaucht>weiß ich> auch waRUM;
         and now I know why
012      (0.3) ich hatte immer ne ausrede für
         meinen ähm überdrehten ↑ESsenskonsum;
         I have always had an excuse for my excessive
         food consumption
013      he he-
          ((laughter))
014      (0.4)
```

3	JA	15:37	Primmus
4	JA	15:37	Süß dass du das Sams gehört hast😻
			How sweet that you listened to the Sams😻
5	JA	15:39	Franz Sams
6	BE	15:39	Ab in den Taucheranzug
			Off into the diving suit
7	JA	15:39	Framz
8	IS	15:40	Frams😎
9	JA	15:40	Gefällt
			Like
10	NI	15:43	Das Frams 😂😂😂😂😂
			The Frams 😂😂😂😂😂
11	NI	15:43	Love it

598 In her story Beate identifies the group member Isi as the
599 Sams, a fictional character from a German children's books
600 series known to be impudent and hoggish. Framing this iden-
601 tification as humorous with smile voice and various bursts of
602 laughter, she takes a *laughing at*-stance to Isi, identifying her
603 as the butt of the other users' laughter (Glenn 2003; König
604 2019). However, Isi changes this possible trajectory before
605 the other two group members react to Beate's story posting.
606 Unlike in excerpt 1, Isi chooses the same modality or posting
607 type for her response. In her voice message she comments on
608 Beate's taleworld thoughts by accepting her joke and even
609 elaborating on it – turning it into a playful fictionalisation
610 (Kotthoff 2009) contextualised by various prosodic resources
611 (creaky voice, lengthening, pitch jumps). Taking on Beate's
612 mocking remarks, Isi keys the sequence in a *laughing-with*
613 frame. So, rather than closing off the initial narration by post-
614 ing a conventionalised text, as is prototypically the case, Isi
615 expands the storyline, treating it as potentially open-ended.
616 Jana continues Beate's and Isi's playful banter; she refers to Isi

617 by her nickname *Franz* and the character's name *Sams* (#5),
618 and later blends the names to create *Frams* (#7). This sponta-
619 neous wordplay is mirrored by Isi (#8) and Nina (#10). Their
620 verbal comments "gefällt" ('like', #9) and "Love it" (#11) con-
621 stitute conventionalised methods of "ritualised appreciation"
622 reminiscent of other forms of approval in social media such
623 as Facebook's like-button (Marx 2018). Moreover, they close
624 the fictionalisation's trajectory.
625   Beate's story clearly focusses on Isi, however, she never-
626 theless chooses to post it in the semi-public group chat
627 thereby treating the story as relevant or tellable to all group
628 members (who are addressed collectively at the beginning of
629 the posting). It would have been possible for Isi to relate her
630 response in a dyadic chat with Beate. Yet, she also chooses
631 the group chat as the site in which she comments on her like-
632 ness with the Sams with Jana and Nina as the audience of this
633 exchange. Thus, the semi-publicness of the group chat is
634 chosen as the configuration under which their story telling
635 can take place. Moreover, this excerpt documents an instance
636 in which the boundaries between teller, audience and recipi-
637 ent are blurred by the collaborative effort of all group mem-
638 bers: Isi, Jana and Nina do not simply affiliate with the initial
639 teller's stance by posting short and ritualised comments.
640 Thus, their responses do not accord with the participant roles
641 of recipient or audience. Rather, Isi and Jana assume co-tell-
642 ership by establishing and expanding a playful fictional
643 framework. Beate's comment in #6, a response to Isi's voice
644 message #2, explicitly affirms this participant status. Nina, on
645 the other hand, positions herself as a recipient of the story by
646 appreciating its humorous outcome. In contrast to her re-
647 sponse in the first excerpt, here she does not comment on the
648 initial story posting but on its following trajectory. She thus
649 takes a metareflexive stance towards the storytelling activity
650 (De Fina 2016). Even though WhatsApp group chats do not
651 afford narratives in the same way as platforms like Twitter
652 and Facebook do, this example illustrates that it is neverthe-
653 less possible to bring about storytelling collaboratively in
654 multimodal mobile messaging – even if a dialogue is com-
655 prised of only a few individual postings.
656   Just like in face-to-face encounters, the collaborative ac-
657 tivity of playful fictionalisation in WhatsApp group chats is
658 essential for reaffirming the group's identity and sociality as a

659 close-knit group of friends who share a sense of humour.
660 Even though the story in the first posting only concerns Isi,
661 Beate treats her experience as relevant and tellable to the
662 whole group. As this activity might comprise *laughing at*-
663 stances, which can be too sensitive to post on platforms like
664 Facebook, group chats with a controllable selection of mem-
665 bers can offer a more regulated audience selection. The sto-
666 ries are thus treated as intimate activities which are only
667 shared between the members of the group.

668 **5 Conclusion: Stories in a controlled publicness**

669 Mobile messenger chats like WhatsApp are said to favour ra-
670 ther short and often chunked contributions (Imo 2015; König
671 2015, forthc.; Wyss/Hug 2016). Thus, reconstructing an event
672 structure and relating one's own evaluative stance towards it
673 in the continuous flow of multi-party messaging can be a chal-
674 lenging communicative endeavour. Yet, the foregoing analyses
675 of a corpus of multimodal WhatsApp group chats illustrate that
676 digitised storytelling is indeed part of its users' communicative
677 repertoire. Voice messaging lies at the heart of this practice as
678 audio postings allow users to contribute extended but still easy
679 to produce narrations.
680   Many of the stories' features can be characterised with
681 Ochs and Capp's narrative dimensions: Prototypically, they
682 involve single tellers who choose to place their stories in con-
683 texts where there is no continuous exchange of messages be-
684 tween several users. Despite their placement in a chat inter-
685 face designed for a dialogic exchange, tellers usually do not
686 elicit story prompts or use other methods for negotiating tell-
687 ership or tellability.[11] Rather, in group chats stories are rou-
688 tinely embedded as first actions which have not been made
689 relevant by the foregoing context. Events are prototypically
690 reconstructed in a linear order but tellers can take varying
691 stances even within a single posting.
692   However, tellers have more "narrative possibilities" which
693 they can make use of in mobile messaging: Users have to
694 choose in which posting type (multimodality) and in how

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11 Note, however, that in dyadic chats, Hector (forthc.) finds grater variability con-
cerning the embeddedness of stories.

695   many postings (sequencing) they want to reconstruct their
696   personal experiences. In the given collection, stories can be
697   preceded by a text message containing an abstract, yet the
698   core structural components are realised in an audio posting.
699   While many social media platforms favour rather small story
700   formats, voice message stories are presented as "big pack-
701   ages" in terms of the audio posting's length. Tellers relate
702   their story in a single extended audio posting, which pre-
703   cludes others from changing the story's trajectory. What is
704   small, however, is the sequencing of responses to these sto-
705   ries: Users regularly reply with repetitive and ritualised ex-
706   pressions to contextualise an affiliative stance – often with-
707   out reacting to one another. Only in particular settings (e.g.
708   one of the group members is primarily addressed) do we find
709   a continuation of the story.[12] So rather than working in the
710   service of other actions (such as explanations, examples, ar-
711   guments etc.), it is the activity of telling a story that is the fo-
712   cus of chatters.
713   Moreover, users can choose the degree of publicness their
714   narrative accounts should have. Stories can be posted in dy-
715   adic chats or group chats to a non-anonymous audience ore
716   on other platforms like Facebook or Twitter which enable a
717   more public discourse. Practices of addressing users individu-
718   ally or collectively also play an important role in managing
719   audience participation. At the same time the fact that users
720   only share their immediate experiences in the controlled
721   semi-public of a group chat can index intimacy. Storytelling
722   in group chats thus becomes an essential a tool for building
723   and sustaining the group's sociality.
724   The linguistic forms used by WhatsApp chatters to relate
725   their personal experiences are reminiscent of oral storytelling
726   in face-to-face interactions. Users do not develop completely
727   new narrative genres in mobile messenger chats; instead, they
728   transfer preestablished linguistic patterns of storytelling and
729   reconfigure them according to the messenger's affordances
730   (Herring 2013). While various studies in the emerging field of
731   digital narratology have pointed out that social media priori-
732   tise episodic, non-linear and open-ended narrative accounts,
733   the small stories paradigm should not be the only heuristic

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12 Again, there is greater variability in dyadic chats: Here, Hector (fortc.) also found
    second stories as a possible response format.

734 net to be cast over the broad range of narrative practices in
735 computer-mediated discourse. Particularly in the case of
736 voice messages in group chats, users have adopted a posting
737 format for recounting linearly organised "big package" narra-
738 tions in mobile messaging. Rather than focussing on just one
739 default narrative format, a multidimensional perspective that
740 can capture the various facets of social media storytelling
741 should be developed. Indeed, Ochs and Capps' (2001) ac-
742 count of everyday oral storytelling, with its dimensions of
743 tellability, tellership, embeddedness, linearity and moral
744 stance, has proved to be applicable to the analysis of digitised
745 messenger dialogues. However, the analysis also shows that a
746 focus on these five dimensions does not cover all the aspects
747 which are relevant for characterising and distinguishing the
748 different narrative configurations in social media storytelling.
749 Expanding the model to include the dimensions of public-
750 ness, multimodality and sequencing can help to work out the
751 characteristics more adequately. Table 1 exemplifies the typi-
752 cal parameters on both ends of the respective continuum.

Narrative dimension	Subjects and parameters
Tellability	*How tellable or relevant do users treat the story? What is treated as more or less tellable?* • High degree of tellability – low degree of tellability • Retrospection – recency • Everyday experiences – biographical crises or turning points
Tellership	*How many tellers are involved in actively reconstructing the story's events? Do users quote or rescript the stories of other users?* • Single tellers – multiplicity of voices
Publicness	*How many people have (potential) access to the story? To what extent do users distinguish between audience and recipients? How much control do users have over the selection of recipients? Which degree of sharedness does the story accrue?*

	• Selected recipients, non-public posting – public display, larger audiences and collapsed contexts
Embedded-ness	*To what extent does the sequential context make a story relevant? Is storytelling afforded by the platform's configuration? Does the story form part of a larger communicative project? How detached is the story from its surrounding context? How are online and of-fline contexts merged?* • Stand-alone narrations – stories in the service of other actions
Sequencing	*How many postings do tellers require to relate their story? How extended is the story's trajectory?* • Fragmentary and small episodes – "full-fledged" narrations in a single posting
Linearity	*Does the telling of the story proceed linearly? Where does the storytelling take place, i.e. which platforms, sites etc.? Which/how many forms of hyptertextuality are used?* • Closed chronological order – non-linear open trajectories, hyperlinks, hashtags
Multi-modality	*Which modes are dominant in telling the story? How many different semiotic resources do users select for telling their story? Do they use particular resources for particular steps in the story?* • Making use of just one posting type – multi-modal configurations, mode switching in transmodal communication
Moral stance	*How stable is the moral or evaluative stance contextu-alised in the narration? How contested are stances taken in the dissemination and rescripting of stories?* • Coherent and stable stancetaking – contradictory and flexible construction of a moral stance

753 **Table 1:** Expanded model of narrative dimensions in social media
754 story telling (based on Ochs/Capps 2001)

755 The adjusted dimensional model enables a more comprehen-
756 sive perspective of the broad and emerging spectrum of social

757 media storytelling. By identifying which features are specific
758 to which kinds of storytelling activities, digital narratology
759 can set out to investigate the actual repertoire and configura-
760 tions of user-generated online storytelling. Only when they
761 are understood as complementary parts of a narrative reper-
762 toire can the true communicative potential of small stories as
763 compared to big stories be determined.

764 The present study has investigated social media narratives
765 in semi-public messenger chats which are available only to
766 pre-selected non-anonymous users. Of course, the group chat
767 data analysed here represent only a small fragment of the ac-
768 tual narrative repertoire of mobile messenger communica-
769 tion. Future research has yet to determine how users com-
770 bine and link text, audio, image and video postings. Moreo-
771 ver, studies of polymedial repertoires can help to shed a light
772 on how users exploit the different degrees of publicness ena-
773 bled by different social media platforms for narrating their
774 personal experiences.

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