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Åbo, October 2019

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

A	abstract
ADD	attention deficit disorder
ADHD	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
b/c	because
C	coda
CA	complicating action
cl	community leader
CMC	computer-mediated communication
dd	dear daughter
dh	dear husband
EEG	electroencephalography
ER	emergency room
LOL	laughing out loud
msg	message
odd	oldest dear daughter
ods	oldest dear son
OR	orientation
POV	point of view
PPD	postpartum depression
Q&A	questions and answers
R	resolution
SVT	supraventricular tachycardia
V	verb
yds	younger dear son

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1 Introduction

Stories are pervasive in everyday life, coming in many different shapes and forms and occurring in every culture and social group in diverse communicative contexts and across various modes and media. As MacIntyre (2011: 250) aptly puts it, we are essentially storytelling animals. We use stories to articulate and organize experience, employing the narrative lens to interpret the social world around us and reflect on the meaning of our own and others' experiences. As such, narrative constitutes an important sense-making and self-making tool, enabling us to make sense of experience and construct a sense of self (Bruner, 2002). The reasons we tell and share stories are manifold: to instruct, persuade, entertain, transmit cultural knowledge and social norms, express feelings and emotions, connect with others, and construct identities (e.g. Thornborrow & Coates, 2005). Importantly, stories do not exist in a vacuum; they are anchored in particular social contexts, cultural settings, and occasions for telling (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007).

Women's experiences of pregnancy, motherhood and parenting lend themselves readily to the telling of stories. From life stories of single motherhood, birth stories, and accounts of children's health issues, to stories of school incidents and tellings of everyday parenting struggles, motherhood is rich with narrative. Such stories are all around us ready to be recalled, told and retold offline as well as online. Becoming and being a mother marks a personal journey that requires, among other things, support, encouragement and help from family and peers, especially other mothers. In this respect, the stories that mothers can share of their experiences have the potential of being powerful helping and sense-making tools.

The Internet with all its platforms of communication offers great opportunities for parents to seek information, advice and support, as well as connect and build networks with peers. Pregnancy and parenting-related advice once given by professionals or other women in one's family and social circle, or provided by magazines, books, and TV programs, can now be easily found online. Most importantly, peer interactions in online spaces where parents 'meet' to seek and give information, advice and support call for a sharing of experiences; and where experiences are shared, stories can emerge and take shape.

The present thesis is a qualitative study that examines the form and function of response stories in advice-giving in an American online message board that focuses on advice for mothers and expecting mothers. In particular, this study is situated in the context of advice exchanges among peers in online asynchronous discussions on pregnancy and parenting facilitated by an advice message board, which is profiled as a support community for mothers. The stories examined herein are stories of past personal or vicarious experience that board members share in their replies to messages posted by members requesting advice, or other members' messages in a given discussion. By participating in the advice board's discussions, mothers actively position themselves as advice-seekers or advice-givers.

Studying the form and functions of response stories in advice exchanges among mothers online is relevant and important for several reasons. First there has been very little linguistic-oriented research focusing exclusively on stories in advice discourse in online communication settings (but see e.g. Thurnherr, Rodulf von Rohr, & Locher, 2016), and especially online settings where parents seek and give advice (see, however, Furkin, 2018; Kooper, 2010). Second, scholars concerned with the study of narrative have emphasized the importance of scrutinizing stories produced in interactions in different online communication venues to examine how the constraints and affordances of computer-mediated communication (henceforth CMC) influence their production (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2004, 2013; Page, 2010). Third, work on the communicative practices of support groups, both offline and online, has underlined the importance of examining storytelling in different support groups to obtain a better understanding of story features and functions in support contexts (e.g. Arminen, 2004; Harrison & Barlow, 2009). Also, the study of mothers' stories in a peer advice context can offer insight to larger ideas about motherhood and parenting regarding norms, expectations, and practices.

The following sections of this introduction present the general research context within which this study is located, sketch the theoretical and methodological preliminaries, and introduce key terms and concepts framing the study. In addition, the aims and scope of the study are outlined, followed by the research questions. The final section presents the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Parents online

Recent years have seen an explosion of parenting-related professional and user-generated content online. There is ample evidence that a constantly increasing number of parents and expecting parents use the Internet as a primary source for information, advice, and support on health-related concerns and various parenting issues (Duggan, Lenhart, Lampe, & Ellison, 2015; for a detailed overview of relevant studies, see Plantin & Daneback, 2009).

Online peer-support groups for parents and expecting parents have been found to play an important role in sharing knowledge, promoting community building, and providing emotional and practical support in navigating the challenges and demands of parenthood and expectant parenthood (Brady & Guerin, 2010; Chan, 2008; Evans, Donelle, & Hume-Loveland, 2012; Gundersen, 2011; Mungham & Lazard, 2011). In their study of social capital in an online discussion board for mothers, Drentea & Moren-Cross (2005) observe that such online groups boast important advantages: they are available around the clock due to the asynchronous nature of the interactions; they connect geographically dispersed mothers who share similar situations and concerns; they give them a 'place' to discuss matters that perhaps they would not like to share with friends and family; they provide mothers with a social support network in case they lack one. Madge & O'Connor (2006) note in their study of an online community for new mothers that anonym-

ity is yet another advantage since it facilitates self-disclosure and the discussion of sensitive or potentially embarrassing topics. As a result, the convenience, accessibility, and anonymity of online peer support can be particularly appealing to mothers (Madge & O'Connor, 2006).

However, there are also certain problematic aspects regarding the socialization and communication among participants in such online groups. In her study of mothers' online discussions on *Mumsnet*, a popular UK-based website for mothers, Jensen (2013) notes that women's perceptions of what constitutes 'good' or 'bad' mothering may differ considerably, giving rise to social polarization within these online groups. In addition, Wo Song, Ellis West, Lundy, & Smith Dahmen (2012) suggest that the traditional power asymmetry between medical professional and patient can be disturbed by the emergence of the 'lay expert' in such groups. As Madge & O'Connor (2006) point out in their study, online parenting communities may facilitate mothers' resistance to traditional medical authority. As a case in point, one particularly problematic issue that has received much attention as of late is the network effects of online parent groups in questioning and resisting expert knowledge and authority regarding, for instance, child vaccination.

Further, surveys have shown that mothers outpace fathers in terms of seeking parenting information, advice and support online (see e.g. Duggan et al., 2015; Parker, Menasce Horowitz, & Rohal, 2015). Not surprisingly, scholars have remarked that participants in online peer-to-peer parent support communities are in their overwhelming majority women (Clifford, 2011; O'Connor & Madge, 2004; Sarkadi & Bremberg, 2005). O'Connor & Madge (2004) attribute this to the mother-oriented nature of these groups as a factor affecting gender participation. As a result, with the exception of a few studies on father-specific online support groups (e.g. Eriksson & Salzmann, 2013; Fletcher & StGeorge, 2011; Nicholas, McNeil, Montgomery, Stapleford, & McClure, 2004), most studies have predominantly focused on the communicative practices of online communities and support groups for mothers or expecting mothers.

In general, major analytical concerns of empirical sociological and linguistic research on online peer support groups and communities for mothers have been peer communication on health-related topics or how language, gender, and parenthood intersect. Such research has typically focused on how mothers and expecting mothers discuss their physical or mental health issues, such as pelvic pain in pregnancy (Fredriksen, Moland, & Sundby, 2008) and postpartum depression (e.g. Evans et al., 2012), or children's health, behavior, and development (e.g. Appleton, Fowler, & Brown, 2014; Clifford, 2011). Other studies have focused on how mothers construct and negotiate cultural norms of gender and motherhood and expectant motherhood in digital contexts (e.g. Jensen, 2013; Mackenzie, 2019; Pedersen, 2016). These studies connect, implicitly or explicitly, mothers' interactions to larger cultural scripts and systems of meaning, or what Gee (2007: 2-3, 155-158) refers to as "big 'D' Discourse".

1.2 Storytelling in online mother support groups

Storytelling has been shown to be central to the communicative activities of online support groups for mothers and expectant mothers. In brief, peers' stories in these groups can offer emotional relief and confirm the normalcy of one's personal experience with, for instance, everyday parenting challenges, a problematic pregnancy, or struggles with infertility (e.g. Fredriksen et al., 2008; Lowe, Powel, Griffiths, Thorogood, & Locock, 2009; Pedersen & Lupton, 2018; Wo Song et al., 2012). Also, these groups facilitate the telling and sharing of stories on sensitive medical topics (see e.g. Evans et al., 2012), and especially stories that verbalize negative or ambivalent emotions towards motherhood (see Jaworska, 2018; Pedersen & Lupton, 2018) or challenge dominant medical perspectives on pregnancy (e.g. Fredriksen et al., 2008). Sharing stories in such groups allows members to compare experiences (Pedersen, 2016), provide informational support (Furkin, 2018), and offer directions for action in an implicit manner (Kouper, 2010). The common denominator in such aforementioned studies is that they indicate the need for further research into stories and storytelling in online mother support groups and communities to obtain a more nuanced understanding of their functions. Notably, there is a lack of research addressing both the features and functions of stories in advice-giving in these online contexts.

1.3 Theoretical and methodological preliminaries

This study adopts the view of storytelling as a contextualized, social activity situated in particular discourse contexts and occasions for telling (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Ochs & Capps, 2001). Thus, stories are viewed herein as discursive social activities that are inherently connected with what is being done in their local communicative context.

The study uses a tripartite analytical model for narrative analysis, combining a structural, relational, and dimensional approach. The first approach involves looking at the structural elements of stories (Labov, 1972, 1997), as well as how stories are organized within the surrounding discourse in which they are occasioned (Locher, 2006). A relational approach focuses on the interpersonal level of interaction and is applied herein to explore how stories are used by interlocutors to do relational work: the 'work' individuals invest in constructing, maintaining, and negotiating interpersonal relationships in interaction (Locher, 2013; Locher & Watts, 2008). Next, a dimensional approach attends to characteristics of stories as variable realizations of specific narrative dimensions, namely tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Of particular interest in this study is the narrative dimension of moral stance: the perspective a narrator takes towards the narrating and the narrated events regarding "what is good or valuable and how one ought to live in the world" (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 45). The methodological toolkit used in this study is presented and explained in more

detail in Chapter 5. In what follows, I present key terms and definitions applied in this study.

1.3.1 Key terms and definitions

Storytelling is defined in this study as the communicative activity and practice of 'telling' a story. The term *narrative* is used in two senses, macro and micro: at a macro level, narrative refers herein to an overarching discourse genre (or type) that involves the reconstruction and organization of life events within a spatiotemporal and causal framework (Ochs, 2004; Ochs & Capps, 2001); at a micro level, narrative is used interchangeably with *story* to refer to instantiations of that genre in interaction. In this I follow scholars who make no technical distinction between the two terms, adopting the view that these concepts are essentially indistinguishable (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 1997, 2007; Riessman, 2008; Wikan, 2000). Still, it is important to note that *narrative* and *story* are used in narrative scholarship either interchangeably or distinctly, depending on theoretical approach and analytical purposes (for a detailed discussion, see Garro & Mattingly, 2000). Also, the terms *teller* and *narrator* are used synonymously in this study.

Following Herman (2009: 9), the definition used in the present study to identify a stretch of discourse as a story is as follows: a story is the reconstruction of past experience that features the elements of event sequencing, situatedness, world-making/world disruption, and experientiality, i.e. the "what it's like" for individuals to have experienced the narrated situations and events. These narrativity elements operate in a gradient manner creating a spectrum of narrative possibilities that accommodates from more to less prototypical stories, e.g. from more to less temporally fixed events, from climactic events to events with no peak in action, or from a clear to a diffused teleological focus (Herman, 2009: 12-17; cf. Ochs & Capps, 2001: 20). This study also draws on insights from 'small stories' research that focuses on mapping out narrative activities that lie at the less prototypical end of the aforementioned spectrum. These include, among others, condensed references to past events, allusions to previous narrative tellings, and deferrals of tellings (Bamberg, 2006; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). An added definitional criterion here is the interlocutors' narrative orientation; that is, how interlocutors themselves orient to a stretch of discourse they produce as a story (see Georgakopoulou, 2007: 148).

Next, the term *response story* has traditionally been used in studies on conversational storytelling to refer to stories that respond to an earlier story (Norrick, 2005: 107-108). Such stories, also commonly referred to as *second stories*, typically match the topic, theme, and participant roles of the first story they respond to (Sacks, 1995: 764-771). For the purposes of this thesis, the term is expanded in this study to be more inclusive. Thus, a response story is here defined as a story with close topical and thematic similarities to previous discourse it responds to, i.e. discourse in other contributors' posted messages.

Another key term used in this study is advice and its interrelated terms *advice-giving*, *advice-seeking*, and *advice reception*. Advice is broadly defined as "guidance and recommendations offered with regard to prudent future action" (Advice, n.d.). Advice discourse is defined as an interactive communicative process where one individual assumes or is given the role of the *advice-giver* and another assumes the role of the *advice-seeker* (Hudson, 1990). Throughout the analysis in this study, *advice-giver* will be used interchangeably with the terms *teller* and *narrator*. Advice discourse comprises the communicative practices of *advice-seeking*, *advice-giving*, and *advice reception*. While advice-seeking refers to a request for advice accompanied by an observation of a problem requiring a solution, advice-giving typically refers to the delivery of implicit or explicit advice as a way of responding to an indication of a problem (Locher, 2006:99-98, 211). Advice reception refers to how addressees receive given advice in terms of following it or resisting it (Heritage & Sefi, 1992).

Finally, a definition of *message board* and its related terms is in order. A message board or discussion board is a web-based site where people can start or participate in asynchronous discussions featuring a post-reply format. Message boards allow registered users to submit or *post* messages, also called *postings* or *posts*, to initiate discussions, or reply to other messages. A *discussion thread* is a series of messages in which users respond to each other.

1.4 Aim and scope

The aim of this qualitative study is to examine the form and function of mothers' response stories in advice-giving replies in an online advice message board on pregnancy and parenting. Story form is examined through a structural analysis and story functions are explored using a relational and dimensional analysis, respectively.

Regarding form, the study seeks to explore the kinds of stories that emerge in this online advice-giving context in terms of temporal organization and configuration of reported events. A related objective is to examine the ways in which response stories are 'told' in this setting and how they are shaped by properties of the online medium and the communicative activity of advice-giving.

Regarding functions, this study has the following objectives: to identify the interactional functions advice-givers' response stories fulfill in their immediately surrounding discourse co-text (i.e. in the replying advice-giving message), as well as prior discourse in a discussion, for instance, another contributors' message; to examine the interpersonal functions of response stories in terms of the relational work they do in the context of the advice exchanges; to explore advice-givers' moral perspectives on the narrated events in relation to advice-giving.

The present study adds to scholarship on narrative analysis, and in particular current and ongoing research on narrative in CMC. The work presented in this study enhances our understanding of the structural features and functions of sto-

ries in advice discourse, especially in the context of peer-to-peer interactions in online support groups and communities.

1.4.1 Research questions

The aims of this study can be conceptualized in the following research questions that guide the analysis of the advice-givers' response stories. The first cluster is related to examining narrative form, while the second one addresses narrative functions.

1. What kinds of stories are instantiated in the advice-givers' response stories?
- How do the properties of online communication on the advice message board shape the response stories?
- In what way or ways does the communicative activity at hand, i.e. advice-giving, shape the response stories?

2. What are the functions of advice-givers' response stories?
- What are the interactional functions of advice-givers' response stories in the advice exchanges?
- What are the interpersonal functions of these stories in terms of relational work?
- What kinds of moral stances emerge from the response stories?

1.5 Thesis outline

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 present the theoretical background that positions this study in the larger body of literature concerning advice discourse and narrative analysis, respectively. Chapter 2 gives an overview of relevant studies of advice discourse with a focus on advice in online settings and stories in advice discourse. Chapter 3 first presents the key elements that partake in defining narrative and then offers an overview of various analytical frameworks and perspectives to narrative analysis. Next, it presents previous research on stories in online contexts. Chapter 4 is concerned with a description of the mother support group and the context of the advice message board. Chapter 5 offers a description of the data and methods used for the analysis. Next, Chapter 6 accounts for the thematic types and different narrative genres found in the response stories. In Chapter 7, I turn to the functions of response stories in relation to the co-text of the replies and the context of preceding messages. Chapter 8 addresses the response stories from a relational work perspective, and Chapter 9 focuses on the dimension of moral stance in these stories. The thesis rounds off with a discussion chapter that summarizes and interprets the results (Chapter 10), followed by concluding remarks (Chapter 11).

2 Advice Discourse

This chapter presents the fundamental notions pertaining to the concept of advice. The chapter offers an overview of previous studies on advice discourse in different offline and online interactional contexts and a report on key findings regarding the practices of advice-seeking, advice-giving, and advice reception in interaction. The last part of the chapter focuses on insights from previous research concerning the function of stories in advice discourse, both in offline and online contexts.

2.1 Defining advice

As mentioned in Chapter 1, advice is generally defined as suggestions and recommendations with regard to future action. When individuals indicate to others that they face a problematic and challenging situation, addressees typically tend to respond with advice on what to do to resolve or cope with the problem at hand (Feng & MacGeorge, 2010). Thus, giving advice is typically described as a problem-solving endeavor in which the advice giver assists the advice-seeker in finding a solution to a perceived problem (see Vehviläinen, 2012).

From a speech-act theoretical perspective, advice has been traditionally classified as a type of directive that communicates the speaker's belief that it is in the hearer's best interest to follow a certain course of action (Bach & Harnish, 1979: 40-41; see also Searle, 1975).[1] From this approach, the speech act of advice is realized by the following verbs: *advise*, *counsel*, *recommend*, *suggest*, *urge*, *propose*, *admonish*, *warn*, and *caution* (Bach & Harnish, 1979: 47-49). Another view regards advice as a distinct speech act classifying it together with requests and directives under the umbrella category of *control act* that is defined as "an attempt to get someone to do something" (see Vine, 2004: 26-27).[2]

However, isolating the speech act of advice in interaction is a problematic matter since advice can be realized in numerous ways, both direct and indirect, that go beyond the use of verbs such as *advise* and *counsel* (Locher, 2006; Locher & Limberg, 2012: 3-7). For instance, direct ways typically include the use of the imperative mood, modal verbs of obligation, and conditionals, while knowledge presentation and factual generalizations are ways of giving advice in an indirect manner (DeCapua & Dunham, 2007; Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Hudson, 1990). In addition, Locher & Limberg (2012) underline the importance of the communicative context itself that influences how individuals interpret a speech event or a piece of text as advice, as, for instance, in the context of medical encounters and advice

1 In Bach & Harnish's original classification system there are four categories of communicative speech acts: *directives*, *constatives*, *commissives*, and *acknowledgements*. The category of directives includes the subcategories of *requestives*, *questions*, *requirements*, *prohibitives*, *permissives*, and *advisories*.

2 There is a notable lack of scholarly agreement regarding the definition parameters of the speech act of advice (for a detailed discussion, see Vine, 2004: 15-37).

columns in magazines. For example, Zayts & Schnurr (2012) found that patients who explicitly solicit advice in a medical context interpret information given by medical providers as advice.

Other scholars have based their definition of advice on emic criteria; that is, how interlocutors themselves describe and characterize what advice is in a given context. Briggs, Burford, De Angeli, & Lynch (2002) report that participants in their study on the trustworthiness of online advice arrived at a three-fold definition of advice as: a) a way to determine a course of action through other people's experiences, b) information that helps people make a decision, and c) information based on personal or professional experience and knowledge.

2.2 Solicited and unsolicited advice

Advice may be *solicited* or *unsolicited*, a distinction that is important with respect to the interplay of power dynamics between advice-seeker and advice-giver (DeCapua & Huber, 1995). Specifically, asking for advice implies that the advice-seeker acknowledges the prospective advice-giver's (presumed) expertise and knowledge; in contrast, when an advice-giver offers unsolicited advice, she asserts her expertise, possibly implying lack of or insufficient knowledge or competence on the part of the advice-seeker.

It is important to note that the concept of expertise encompasses both officially established (professional) credentials as well as knowledge from life experience, education, or sociocultural background (see DeCapua & Dunham, 2012). DeCapua & Dunham (1993: 519) incorporate the aspect of the power dynamics of seeking and giving advice into their definition of advice that reads as follows: "Opinions or counsel given by people who perceive themselves as knowledgeable, and/or who the advice seeker may think are credible, trustworthy and reliable".

Due to the intricate power relationship between advisor and advice-seeker, both solicited and unsolicited advice carry important implications for the interlocutors' *face*, that is, an individual's public image that is mutually constructed and negotiated by participants in a communicative event (Scollon & Scollon, 2001; see also Goffman, 1967). The section that follows addresses this topic.

2.3 Advice and facework

Whether solicited or not, advice-giving in both everyday and institutional interaction creates an imbalance between interlocutors with respect to an advice-giver's presumed or alleged expertise and the right to advise (Silverman, 1997). Hutchby's (1995: 221) definition of advice-giving reflects this very issue: "advice-giving involves a speaker assuming some deficit in the knowledge state of a recipient, advice-giving is an activity which assumes or establishes an asymmetry between the participants".

Due to the power asymmetry between advice-giver and advice-seeker, advice

is intrinsically linked to the concept of face. In this respect, giving advice is a potentially face-threatening act in terms of politeness: advising someone what to do or not do may impose on the advice-seeker's freedom of action and autonomy or *negative face* (see Brown & Levinson, 1987: 65-70). The face implications of advice have an influence on how individuals seek and give advice as well as how they receive it in a given communicative situation (Bayraktaroglou, 2001; Goldsmith, 2004). Regarding advice-giving in particular, advice-givers may employ addressee face-enhancing strategies such as praising, humor, bonding, and empathizing to reduce the potential face-threatening effect of advice (e.g. Locher, 2006: 125-146). Such strategies attend to advice-seekers' wants and needs to be liked and appreciated or *positive face* (see Brown & Levinson, 1987: 65-70).

It is important to note that research has amply documented that there is considerable sociocultural variability in whether or not interlocutors perceive solicited and unsolicited advice, or unmitigated advice as face threatening (e.g. Morrow, 2012). This variability is attributed to cultural differences in values and attitudes regarding social distance and power among interlocutors, as well as the role of advice-giving in a specific interactional context (see Chentsova-Dutton, 2011).

2.4 The practices of advice-seeking, advice-giving, and advice reception

The main loci of analysis in advice discourse research, whether in institutional or everyday offline or online settings, have been how individuals seek, give, and receive advice. This section focuses on the discursive practices of advice-seeking, giving, and receiving, and surveys key findings and observations in the relevant literature.

Advice-seeking

When individuals seek advice, they typically accompany their advice request by an observation or a statement of a problem that requires a solution (Locher, 2006: 211). At this point it is essential to define the concept of *problem*. Buttny (2004: 2-3) notes that we discursively construct a problem by explicitly or implicitly identifying and evaluating events, actions, and states of affairs as difficult and challenging. Interlocutors formulate and communicate problems through a range of different communicative devices such as descriptions, complaints, accusations, and even narratives (Buttny, 2004: 3; DeCapua & Dunham, 1993). Based on her study on patient counseling by pharmacists, Pilnick (1999) observes that it is the personal implication of facing a problem that distinguishes advice-seeking from information seeking.

Advice-seeking is realized linguistically in a variety of ways such as direct questions, e.g., "Do you know of any medicine that would help me?", statements of uncertainty and appeals for help, e.g., "Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated", "I'm hoping that you can help!", "I do not know what to do" (Locher, 2006: 211-212,

examples 9.10, 9.12, 9.13, 9.15). In addition, the statement of a problem alone can be an implicit request for advice (Locher, 2006: 233). Thus, even in the absence of an advice request, when an interlocutor frames a situation as problematic, addressees may interpret it as indirect advice-seeking. For instance, Heritage & Sefi (1992) found in their study of health-visitors' interactions with first-time mothers that when mothers described a state of affairs as challenging, the health-visitors interpreted these descriptions as implicit advice requests and proceeded with providing advice.

Drawing on their study on troubles telling in everyday interaction, Jefferson & Lee (1992) note that talking about personal troubles sets up the scene for advice-giving. However, when individuals talk about and share their personal troubles, they do not necessarily make an indirect advice request but rather expect the recipients of troubles telling to express support and understanding (Jefferson & Lee, 1992).

Also, studies have shown that advice-seekers may accompany a problem statement and an advice request with an account of actions taken to address the problem at hand or a suggested course of action to be followed in the future (Leppänen, 1998). As mentioned above, requesting advice implies the advice-seeker's uncertainty or incomplete or lack of knowledge to resolve a problem. Goldsmith (2004: 58) notes that advice-seekers may attempt to uphold and project an image of competence despite a problematic situation they are in. In this light, stating the actions taken to resolve a problem or proposing a course of action can be interpreted as face-saving strategies that advice-seekers employ to manage the advisor-advice-seeker power asymmetry.

Advice-giving

Referring back to the previous subsection, advice requests or even the mere indication of a problem can trigger an advice-giving response in a communicative event. As mentioned above, advice-giving can take many forms, both direct and indirect. Specifically, the realization of direct advice includes the use of imperatives, e.g., "Take a deserved day off" (Locher, 2006: 98-99, example 5.28), modal verbs of obligation and necessity, e.g., "You must use boiled water", "You should involve your husband", as well as overt recommendations, e.g. "My advice to you is that", "I recommend" (Heritage & Sefi, 1992: 368-369). These constitute direct, "strongly prescriptive" advice forms that orient to future action (Eggins & Slade, 1997: 88; Heritage & Sefi, 1992: 368).

Other less direct ways of encoding advice involve the use of interrogatives, e.g., "Can you identify the causes of your angst, stress, and irritability?" and declaratives, e.g., "You can, however, make good food choices" that invite future action or introspection (Locher, 2006: 91-103, examples, 5.24, 5.45). De-emphasized agency is yet another strategy for giving advice in an indirect way. This is accomplished, for instance, through the use of *I would* projections that shift the focus from the hearer/advice-seeker as agent to the speaker/advisor (e.g. Hudson, 1990), and

'non-agentive' sentences that do not explicitly feature the addressee as the acting subject, e.g., "These can be constructive issues to discuss with the therapist", "It's important to consume as much fluid as possible" (Locher, 2006: 90, 95, examples 5.42, 5.59). Also, knowledge statements and factual generalizations, e.g., "Dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, provide most of the calcium in the adult diet" in an advice-oriented context such as counseling or online advice columns can be interpreted as indirect advice-giving (Locher, 2006: 96, example 5.62; see also Kinell & Maynard, 1996).

In relation to the above, less direct ways of delivering advice are linked to the complexities of face management. As a result, advice-givers employ a host of different strategies to mitigate the face-threatening force of advice-giving. These include combinations of imperatives with lexical hedges, e.g., "maybe/perhaps do x", modal auxiliaries, e.g., "you could/might do x", conditionals, e.g., "If I were you", "If you do x", pseudo-cleft constructions, e.g. "what I would do is x", as well as the agency de-emphasizing strategies mentioned above (Hudson, 1990; Locher, 2006; see also Vásquez, 2004). In addition, Morrow (2006) observes that advice-givers mitigate their advice by 'devaluing' it; that is, advice-givers express their concern on whether their advice is suitable or not, e.g. "Hope some of this blurb helps" (Morrow, 2006, example 12b).

At the same time, the advice-giver's professional knowledge and authority or social status influence the mitigation or not of advice. Professionals tend to give advice in a direct way or with little mitigation (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Leppänen, 1998), and individuals with superior social status in certain cultures and societies have the social warrant to provide direct, unmitigated advice (see Kasper & Zhang, 1995). However, professionals may provide more indirect and/or mitigated advice in particular contexts such as counseling (see Kinnell & Maynard, 1996; Sarangi & Clarke, 2002). Research suggests that the mitigation of advice through various strategies does not only serve face-saving purposes but also aims at ensuring advice reception and minimizing the risk of loss of rapport between advisor and advice-seeker (Vine, 2004; Kinnell & Maynard, 1996).

In general, research has documented that advice-giving is a complex interactional process that involves several strategies used by advice-givers to prepare for and facilitate the giving of advice. For instance, in a study of a phone-in advice radio program, DeCapua & Dunham (1993) found that the hosts/advice-givers used strategies such as problem clarification and restatement to focus their advice. Asking questions that preface advice is yet another strategy advice-givers employ to identify problematic issues so as to tailor the advice to the advice-seeker's situation, as Vehviläinen (2012) notes in her analysis of advice-giving in academic supervision sessions. Pilnick (2001) reports from her study of patient counseling by pharmacists that pharmacists use advice offers in the form of questions and announcements of their intent to proceed with giving advice. These strategies pave the way for advice delivery and establish relevance so as to secure positive advice reception.

What is more, advice-givers may use a range of different strategies to establish positive rapport with the advice-seekers. Specifically, advice-givers may frame their advice with expressions of empathy, support, humor, and praise that serve to establish solidarity and create closeness between advisor and advice-seeker (DeCapua & Huber, 1995; Morrow, 2012; Placencia, 2012).

Another strategy that advice-givers employ is that of establishing their competence and expertise for giving advice (see DeCapua & Dunham, 2012). Locher & Hoffman (2006) analyzed the advice given by a fictional expert advisor in an online health advice column.[3] Their study showed that the fictional advisor's professional expertise in that particular context is discursively constructed through strategies such as self-reference, choice of vocabulary, information-giving based on established knowledge, offering options, and inviting retrospection (see also Locher, 2006). DeCapua & Dunham (2012) note that, apart from official professional credentials, advice-givers may refer to their life experience and background in order to demonstrate their expertise, and by extension, their suitability as advice-givers.

Advice reception

The face implications of advice-giving and the relevance of the offered advice are immediately related to how advice is received by the addressees. For instance, unsolicited advice may be resisted and even rejected by the advice recipient because of the imposition on the advice recipient's negative face (Bayraktaroglou, 2001; Heritage & Sefi, 1992). Goldsmith (2004: 58) notes that the risk of advice rejection due to face implications is present even when advice is solicited; advice-givers may offer self-evident advice or provide it in a patronizing tone, thus risking advice rejection.

Advice recipients may also resist and ultimately reject the offered advice when they have not given any indication of a problem (Heritage & Sefi, 1992), or when the advice does not address their issues due to the advice-giver's incorrect perception of the problem (Pudlinski, 2012). Also, Jefferson & Lee (1992) observe that in ordinary conversation troubles tellers may reject the advice they are given by their recipients, the reason behind it being that they seek understanding and support rather than advice.

Heritage & Sefi (1992: 391) identified three types of advice reception in their study: a) *marked acknowledgement*, in which mothers acknowledged and accepted the health-visitors' information as advice, b) *unmarked acknowledgement*, where mothers avoided accepting the information as constituting advice, and c) *assertion of knowledge or competence* as a response to the health-visitors' advice. According to Heritage & Sefi, marked acknowledgements indicate advice uptake, while unmarked acknowledgements and assertions of competence or knowledge can be interpreted as resistance to the health-visitors' advice.

As mentioned above, the mitigation of advice aims at ensuring positive advice

3 A team of health care providers and health educators are behind the fictional female advisor 'Lucy answers' in Locher & Hoffman's study (see Locher, 2006).

reception. However, this strategy is not always successful. For example, Kinnell & Maynard's (1996) counseling study showed that despite the counselors' mitigation strategies, the advice-seekers were predominantly unresponsive to the counselors' recommendations.

2.5 Previous studies on advice

Advice discourse has been the object of study in a wide variety of contexts with the focus mainly on face-to-face interaction in institutional settings. Locher (2006: 21) attributes this imbalance to the need to understand and improve communication in settings where it is essential that advice is followed as, for instance, in medical settings. As a result, a plethora of studies has focused heavily on advice in medical and health-related settings such as health care visits and medical counseling (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Pilnick, 2001; Kiuru, Poskiparta, Kettunen, Saltevo, & Liimatainen, 2004; Sarangi & Clarke, 2002) as well as in other counseling contexts such as family and marital therapy (Couture & Sutherland, 2006).

The practice of advice-seeking and giving has also been addressed in academic and educational settings with a focus on mentoring and supervising (e.g. Vásquez, 2004; Vehviläinen, 2009), second language learning and teaching (e.g. DeCapua & Dunham, 2007; Hyland & Hyland, 2012), and student-teacher talk (e.g. Rymes, 1996). Organizational science is yet another domain where giving and receiving advice has been studied in relation to decision-making processes in organizations (e.g. Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006).

Compared to institutional settings, advice discourse in everyday face-to-face contexts has received little attention. Existing research has predominantly focused on advice-giving in parent-child interaction (e.g. McDowell, Parke, & Wang, 2003) while other studies have addressed peer-to-peer advice among university students (Angouri, 2012), and in the context of ritual practices in rural communities (Sidnell, 2005). In addition, there are comparative studies that have examined advice both in institutional settings and everyday, ordinary interaction (Jefferson & Lee, 1992; DeCapua & Huber, 1995).

While face-to-face settings have been dominant in the study of advice discourse, advice has also been examined in other modes of communication such as phone-in radio programs (e.g. DeCapua & Dunham, 1993), telephone advisory lines (e.g. Brown & Crawford, 2009; Pudlinski, 2002, 2012), TV shows (e.g. White, 1992), advice columns and self-help/advice literature in the printed media (e.g. Currie, 2001; Zimmerman, Holm, & Haddock, 2001), and online environments in recent years, as we shall see in what follows.

2.5.1 Advice online

Previous studies of advice in online environments have focused on issues of trust and quality of online advice (Briggs et al., 2002), patients' advice and information

needs (Rozmovits & Ziebland, 2004), ethical implications of advice given online by professionals (Yamamura & Grupe, 2005), social support (Cummings, Sproull & Kiesler, 2002), as well as the discursive strategies of online expert-to-lay advice (Bromme, Jucks, & Wagner, 2005; Locher, 2006) and peer-to-peer advice (Eisenchlas, 2012; Morrow, 2006, 2012).

Specifically, Sillence & Briggs (2007) point out that online advice may take different forms, from expert advice-givers to static pages and query forms that provide automated advice. However, Sillence & Briggs underline that "the truest approximation of online advice provision necessitates the involvement of humans", which, for instance, involves an advice-seeker emailing an expert who in turn replies via email or a posting on a website.

Research has shown that soliciting advice online rather than in offline settings can be more appealing due to source availability, accessibility, and possibility of expanding one's social support network. For instance, in a study of online discussion groups on health and finance, Sillence & Briggs (2007) reported that participants considered online advice as more up-to-date, quicker and easier to access than offline advice. Rozmovits & Ziebland (2004) investigated cancer patients' advice and information needs and found that patients seek advice online to be better informed and prepared before a doctor's appointment, and/or to look for support, reassurance, and alternative answers to their health problems and concerns.

At the same time, one issue that emerges is that of self-disclosure since seeking advice for a problem may involve revealing a great deal of personal information. Sillence, Briggs, Harris, & Fishwick (2006) conducted a survey on Internet usage for health advice and trust practices of online advice and found that respondents were willing to divulge more personal information online in return for more personalized advice.

Furthermore, research in online advice discourse has focused on a variety of topics including the discourse structure and content of advice-seeking and advice-giving messages in online advice columns and fora (Kouper, 2010; Locher, 2006; Morrow 2006, 2012), gendered discursive practices (Eisenchlas, 2012), politeness strategies (Harrison & Barlow, 2009; Placencia, 2012), and expert identity construction (Locher & Hoffman, 2006).

With respect to online peer-to-peer advice fora, the typical structure of a discussion thread involves three elements: 1) a discussion initiating message that presents a problem and/or requests advice, 2) one or more reply messages to the problem message that offer advice and support, and 3) one or more messages written by the advice-seekers that thank for the advice and/or offer an update on their situation (Morrow, 2006, 2012).[4] The difference with expert-to-lay online advice columns is that they follow a dyadic interactional structure that follows a question-answer format, i.e., one problem message and one advice reply (see Locher, 2006). In both expert-lay online advice columns and peer-to-peer advice fora, the content

4 Advice-givers may also respond to each other's replies (e.g. Morrow, 2006).

structure of the messages is typically as follows: advice-seeking messages feature a problem statement and a request for advice, while advice-giving messages feature assessments of the advice-seeker's problem, advice, expressions of empathy and support, as well as the advice-giver's own experience (Locher, 2006; Morrow, 2012). Also, message headers play an important role in terms of advice-seeking and advice-giving. For instance, in her study of message board interactions among students, Arendholz (2013: 137) shows that headers of thread-initiating messages can include advice solicitations, alerting addressees to the purpose of the message and foreshadowing its content. Arendholz (2013: 138) also notes the use of message headers for announcing upcoming advice in thread-initiating messages that address an entire group.

Regarding gender and advice-giving online, Eisenchlas (2012) examined whether gender has an effect on the directness of advice and display of affect in peer-to-peer relationship advice on public discussion fora. Eisenchlas found no significant differences between female and male participants. However, an investigation of gender participation in a professional development website for teachers suggests that female participants tend to offer more advice than their male counterparts (Herring, Martinson, & Scheckler, 2002).

Further, studies that have addressed politeness in relation to advice-giving online have shown that advice-givers orient towards direct advice or more indirect advice-giving depending on the context. For instance, in a study of politeness strategies in an online self-management program for people with arthritis, Harrison & Barlow (2009) reported that participants avoided giving direct advice and used advice-mitigating strategies such as indirect suggestions in the form of declaratives and rhetorical questions. In a similar vein, research of expert-to-public online health advice columns has shown that the expert advisor opts for indirect advice-giving; that is, avoiding an overtly prescriptive style (Locher, 2006; Locher & Hoffman, 2006). As Locher & Hoffman (2006) note, this echoes the findings of studies in other (offline) expert-lay advisory settings, especially medical encounters (see Sarangi & Clarke, 2002).

However, other studies on peer-to-peer online advice have shown that advice-givers favor giving direct, unmitigated advice (Eisenchlas, 2012; Placencia, 2012). According to Eisenchlas (2012) and Morrow (2006), this result can be attributed to the anonymity of the participants, the informal context, and the one-off character of the interactions in the online discussion fora under analysis. Placencia (2012) points out that another explanation may be cultural differences that can determine the directness of advice-giving.

2.5.2 Stories in advice discourse

This section presents key observations from previous research on the role of stories in offline and online advice. Although there is a relative lack of studies that have solely addressed stories and storytelling in the context of offline or online

advice, studies of advice discourse have yielded important insights into the use of stories in connection with the communicative practices of advice-seeking and advice-giving.

As mentioned previously, interlocutors may articulate and communicate problems in narrative form. Researchers have shown that in both offline and online contexts advice-seekers tend to use stories to present and describe a problem (Baker, Emmison & Firth, 2005; DeCapua & Huber, 1995; Locher, 2006: 241-242; Morrow, 2006). For instance, in their respective studies of peer advice in an online motherhood community and an online support group for breastfeeding, Kouper (2010) and Furkin (2018) found that advice solicitations typically took the form of elaborate stories. What their studies suggest is that personal experience stories provide details about a problem, thereby justifying and situating advice requests. In this sense, stories constitute a particular 'problem-description format' that interlocutors make use of when they seek advice (see Leppänen, 2005).

In addition, Thurnherr et al. (2016) examined the functions of personal narratives in three online health contexts focusing on smoking cessation advice and found that narratives fulfill a range of different functions. They show that advice-seekers use narratives not only to seek advice, but also to show compliance with previously given advice, report on success or progress, indicate agreement with previous contributors, support a previous claim related to the function of seeking advice, and reinforce their identity as advice-seekers. What their study illustrates is that story functions are contingent on the particularities of specific advice contexts.

With respect to advice-giving, studies on online advisory settings have shown that stories perform several different functions. For instance, Harrison & Barlow's (2009) study of politeness strategies in an online self-management program for people with arthritis suggests that the participants' narratives of personal experience may be interpreted as indirect advice to other sufferers on how to manage their ailment (see also Kouper, 2010). In her study, Furkin (2018) notes that advice-givers' stories are a type of informational support, the others being advice and referrals to links and resources. A further function of narratives in online advice-giving is that of supporting the advice-giver's suggestions and recommendations to the advice-seeker based on own or others' experience (Placencia, 2012). Thurnherr et al. (2016) report similar findings to Harrison & Barlow (2009) and Placencia (2012), adding that advice-givers use narratives to indicate agreement or disagreement with previous contributors, and give reassurance to advice-seekers that their experiences and problems are normal. Relatedly, advice-givers recount personal and others' experiences to demonstrate that they are qualified to offer advice on a given matter (Eisenchlas, 2012; Morrow, 2012; Placencia, 2012; Thurnherr et al., 2016). In this light, stories are used to establish credentials and justify the right to advise.

In general, stories in online advice-giving contexts are used to establish solidarity with the advice-seekers by way of identifying with their situation and normal-

izing a problem (Eisenchlas, 2012; Thurnherr et al., 2016; cf. Locher, 2006). These studies suggest that the advice-givers' stories that showcase similar experiences to those of the advice-seekers create a sense of closeness and promote rapport among interlocutors, positioning them as community members. Based on his study on peer-to-peer online advice, Morrow (2006) observes that the advice-givers' stories of personal experience are in fact 'interpretations' of advice-seekers' experiences.

The above observations mirror the findings of other studies conducted in offline settings, whether advisory or not (e.g. Bird, 2007; He, 1998; Norrick, 2000; Riessman, 1993). Regarding online interaction, Eisenchlas (2012) maintains that establishing competence for offering advice and 'aligning' to the advice-seekers' situation on the basis of similar experiences are particularly important strategies in an online advice context, where interlocutors are strangers to each other.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has focused on advice discourse, providing an overview of studies of advice in a wide range of offline and online contexts, and outlining the intricate communicative practices of seeking, giving, and receiving advice. Research has provided ample evidence that advice discourse is a complex communicative process that involves an array of different strategies to seek, give, and receive advice. The chapter also highlighted the importance of facework and expertise in the construction and negotiation of advice. In general, advice-giving is a delicate communicative endeavor due to its face-threatening force, thus potentially affecting the delivery and reception of advice.

With respect to online settings, seeking advice online can be a matter of convenience and accessibility for those looking for advice and support. In online contexts, the anonymity of the participants and the potentially ephemeral character of online interactions may account for the frequent use of direct advice-giving; however, the set goal of interactions in certain online contexts, such as online support groups, may explain the preference for indirect advice-giving. Finally, the chapter addressed the use of narratives in advice discourse and underlined the range of functions they perform as shown in relevant literature and previous research. Most notably, previous research has found stories to be important rapport tools, strategies for agreement or disagreement, indirect devices for advice, as well as warranting strategies for suggestions and recommendations.

3 Narrative

This chapter provides the theoretical background for this study, presenting previous literature regarding narrative analysis. The chapter begins with tracing key features and properties of narrative that have guided scholars' definitions of the term, outlining the central elements that underline the definition of narrative used in this study. The chapter continues with an overview of different analytical frameworks and perspectives to narrative analysis, giving special attention to approaches that concern stories in conversational contexts. Following this, the focus turns to the functions of stories and storytelling occasioned in online environments, particularly with reference to online support contexts. The chapter concludes with insights from existing research on how stories are shaped, told, and shared in online contexts.

3.1 Defining narrative: key elements

Definitions of what narrative is abound, as there are diverse understandings and conceptualizations of the term depending on scholars' disciplines, methodological approaches, and analytical agendas, as well as the communicative media in which stories are produced and shared. As Georgakopoulou notes (2007: 1-4), the concept of narrative has been used to refer to an epistemology, a supra-genre, a text-type, a particular communication mode, an activity in talk-in-interaction, or a general way of making sense of the world, typically associated with time, human experience, and even life itself. What is clear is that the lack of a general consensus on the conceptualization and definition of narrative is testament to how complex and multifaceted it is as a concept. In what follows, I present an overview of essential and interrelated elements of narrative that have been widely discussed in the relevant literature as conditions for narrativity, or, in other words, what makes a story a story.

3.1.1 Temporality, causality, and emplotment

Temporality is inextricably linked to human life and experience as we perceive and interpret the world around us in terms of temporal relations (Bluedorn, 2002). Narrative, as a medium of human experience, has always been regarded as inherently temporal in that it involves events organized along a temporal axis (e.g. Bruner, 1990; Chatman, 1990). Ricoeur (1984: 3) underscores the close reciprocal relationship between narrative and temporality asserting "the world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world". He further explains that our experiences have an inherent pre-narrative structure that is externalized and articulated through the temporal organization of events in the telling of a story. As a result, the temporal dimension is a 'vehicle' that allows us to impose order on past experiences that are otherwise disconnected (Ochs & Capps, 1996).

Regarding temporal organization, *event* is a central concept in the encoding of experiences into narrative form (see Labov, 2007). In general terms, an event refers to something that happened, an occurrence, or action(s) located at some specific point in time (for a discussion of the term, see Herman, 2002: 27-51). Abbott (2002: 13) states that in its simplest definition narrative is "the representation of an event or a series of events".[5] The archetypal view of narrative, which can be traced back to Aristotle's (1997) *Poetics*, is that it involves a *state-event-state change* sequence: an event occurs and changes a state of affairs. Prince's (1973: 21) classic example of such a sequence is as follows: *a man was unhappy, then he fell in love, then, as a result, he was happy*. Drawing upon Aristotelian poetics, scholars have long underlined that narrative prototypically comprises not only a change or transformation but also an inversion of an imbalance caused by an event or series of events: an unusual or unexpected event disrupts a given or assumed state of equilibrium that sets in motion an attempt to correct the imbalance and reinstate the initial equilibrium (e.g. Prince, 1973: 28; cf. Labov, 1972).[6]

Insofar, the common underlying elements of these aforementioned views on narrative are the emphasis on a series of events that occurred at some point in time, and the effect of these events on a state of affairs as experienced by characters in the story world. These elements bring us to the most widely agreed-upon criteria for defining narratives: *sequentiality* (or temporal succession) and *causality*. Since Aristotle's (1997: 77) definition of a plot as comprising a beginning, middle, and end, and hence implying a temporal sequence, the sequential organization of events has been traditionally acknowledged as the defining characteristic of narrative in narratological scholarship (see e.g. Abbott, 2002: 15-16; Bruner, 1990: 43; Rimmon-Kenan, 2002: 2-3).

Temporal sequentiality is also the defining criterion of narrative in Labov & Waletzky's (1967) seminal sociolinguistic work on interview-elicited oral narratives of personal experience. Labov (1972: 360-361) offers a definition of a minimal narrative as "a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered". According to Labov (1972: 370), such temporally ordered clauses are the structural backbone of a story and realize the *complicating action* and the *resolution* sections that answer the questions of "then what happened?" and "what happened in the end?", respectively. Labov's definition was based on a view of the sequence of the narrated events as iconic to the order in which the events actually occurred (Labov, 1972: 359-360).[7] It is not an understatement to say that this definition has had a tremendous influence on the social sciences regarding traditional understandings of what a prototypical narrative of personal experience is.

5 Scholars have argued that *reconstruction* or *reconstitution* of events are more appropriate terms on the grounds that a narrative cannot 'represent' events in the strict sense of the term because narratives are always constructed from specific vantage points, within particular contexts, and for certain purposes (see Brockmeier & Harré, 1997; Georgakopoulou, 1997: 3).

6 By 'equilibrium' is meant an initial, canonical state of affairs in a given situational context.

7 Cf. Enkvist (1981) on the concept of *experiential iconicism*.

Yet, the sequential ordering of past events alone is not sufficient for characterizing a piece of text or stretch of talk as narrative (see Irmer, 2011: 131-132). The main argument is that events arranged in a sequence must be linked to each other non-randomly; they must be connected in a motivated and meaningful way so as to count as narrative (Chatman, 1980: 21; Toolan, 1988: 7). Central in this view of connectedness is the notion of *emplotment*; that is, the temporal configuration of actions and events into a coherent and meaningful whole (see Ricoeur, 1984). As Polkinghorne (1991) explains, emplotment can be understood as a process through which individuals assign meaning to real or imaginary events and establish meaningful connections between them to form stories. In this light, it is the causal relationship, be it implicit or explicit, between events that provides this connectedness and gives a narrative coherence (Linde, 1993; Nair, 2001: 361).

The temporal sequence of punctual past events has been, to a large extent, generally agreed upon as a constitutive element of narrative and even a minimal requirement in conventional narrative analysis. However, post-Labovian research in stories and storytelling in a range of different communicative contexts and communities of practice has illustrated the frequency and salience of other temporal configurations. Based on such research, scholars have argued that we can expand the criterion of temporal organization beyond the focus on 'pastness' to include stories with events unfolding in approximate real time with the act of narration, projections of events in the near future, and even hypothetical events (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Patterson, 2002; Riessman, 1993). For example, in her study on narration and coping with trauma, Patterson (2002) found that hypothetical stories were a salient narrative type that allowed tellers to imagine better or different outcomes regarding traumatic events. Also, the focus on a sequence of punctual events as a key definitional criterion has been challenged in favor of the inclusion of narratives of habitual events in the past (e.g. Carranza, 1998; Chesire & Ziebland, 2005; Hackert, 2004). For instance, Carranza's (1998) study on the civil war experiences of Salvadoran immigrants to the United States showed that habitual narratives were common in her material and a powerful tool for presenting the brutal actions of the Salvadoran militia as repeated and usual.

In light of the above, the mobilization of diverse temporal configurations in how we narrativize experience implies that narrative is not a single genre in terms of temporal organization, but rather a multiplicity of story types.

3.1.2 Experience, worldmaking, and world disruption

As Tilly (2006:155) demonstrates in a comparison between stories and technical accounts that feature causally linked event sequences, temporal sequence and causality are not adequate criteria for identifying narratives. What is fundamentally important is the relevance and meaningfulness of temporal sequence and causality in relation to human life and experience (see Ochs & Capps, 2001). Researchers, in fact, underline that it is first and foremost human experience itself that is the quin-

tessential property of narrative (Fludernik, 2009: 6; Labov, 1997; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Patterson, 2008: 36).

It is important to note that the concept of experience as a fundamental property of narrative has been argued to include a) the experience of human participants who perform actions and/or are affected by events, actions, states, and processes (e.g. Langellier & Peterson, 2004: 7; van Dijk, 1993), or b) at least the experience of human-like (anthropomorphic) participants that are attributed some kind or level of consciousness (Fludernik, 2009: 6-7).

Narrativizing our experiences involves what Herman (2009: 105) refers to as narrative worldmaking; that is, the construction of a story world that features characters, events, and situations, and shows how all these are ordered in space and time. Worldmaking goes beyond reconstructing experiences in terms of what happened or what was happening and when, who did what and to whom, and what the outcomes were. It also involves conveying story characters' feelings, emotional states, and attitudes towards what they experienced (Herman, 2009: 137-160). In addition, Herman (2009: 135-136) suggests that when we engage in narrative worldmaking, we typically locate ourselves in relation to particular "canonical scripts" as to what the normal order of things is.

As noted in the previous subsection, the path from an initial equilibrium to events that disrupt it and then to action(s) taken to restore it are the core elements of what has been considered a typical narrative trajectory. In consequence, Herman (2009: 136) points out that world disruption (i.e. events that disrupt what tellers establish in the story world as the normal order of things) is a basic element of prototypical narratives (see also Bruner, 1991). As Herman (2009: 136, italics in the original) puts it, narrative is at its core "the felt, lived *experience* of disruptive events – their impact on real or imagined consciousnesses affected by a story world-in-flux". Relatedly, disruption, or 'complication' in Labovian terms, has been considered important for the tellability of a story, or in other words, what makes an event or a sequence of events worth narrating (Labov, 1972).

Yet, Herman (2009: 20) and other narrative scholars observe that not all stories follow the narrative trajectory outlined above. For instance, the actions for restoring an initial equilibrium may not be actualized in a story at all (Kefalenos, 2006: 4-9). Also, studies on conversational narrative have shown that the narration of mundane, everyday events with no complication may be more important than world disruption in specific contexts. For example, Georgakopoulou (2013b: 207-208) found in her study of a peer groups' communicative practices that worldmaking was more frequent and salient in their breaking news stories than world disruption. In such cases, the tellability of a story not featuring any disruptive events and their related consequences is tied to the particulars of a communicative context and purpose of interaction.

3.1.3 Evaluation

Evaluation is held to be a key constitutive element and function of narrative, as it shows the point of a story and indicates its tellability, showing why it is worth telling in a specific communicative context (Labov, 1972: 370-375; Linde, 1993: 72). As Labov (1972: 370) explains in his classic analysis of oral narratives of personal experience, evaluation undertakes the task of answering the implicit question "So what?" and persuading an audience that a story is tellable.

In general terms, evaluation involves the linguistic and paralinguistic means tellers use to implicitly or explicitly express their judgments and views towards events, characters, and circumstances in a story. Importantly, the evaluative positions tellers take towards the narrated events reveal, or at least hint at, attitudes, beliefs, and values on how they view the world (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 45). By taking such positions, tellers convey particular images of their self, evoking and constructing specific identities (De Fina, 2013, 2014). Thus, evaluation is vital to how we engage in sense-making and self-making with narratives.

Evaluation can appear anywhere in a story and can be realized by any level of linguistic structure, e.g. phonological, lexical, syntactic, or discursive, as well as by paralinguistic means such as gestures and expressive phonology (Cortazzi & Jin, 2000; Labov, 1997). Tellers may suspend the narration to comment on the events, or their feelings and reactions towards the events. Labov (1972: 371-372) labels this kind of evaluation as 'external' because tellers step out of the narrative, turn to addressees, and evaluate the events, delivering the point of the story. He illustrates with an example taken from a story about a plane trip in which the plane almost did not make it over the mountains: "…and it was the strangest feeling because you couldn't tell if they were really gonna make it" (1972: 371, example 19).

Labov (1972: 370-387; 1997) notes that evaluation can also be internal; that is, it can be embedded into a story and be realized by various evaluative devices distributed throughout the whole story. Such devices include, for example, lexical choices, e.g. nouns, adjectives, and adverbs with negative or positive value, and reported speech (direct or indirect quotation) that reports dialogue during the narrated events for dramatization purposes, conveying characters' reactions to events and situations inside the story world.

Labov (1972: 378) classified a range of internal evaluative devices under four major categories: a) *intensifiers*, b) *comparators*, c) *correlatives*, and d) *explicatives*. Intensifiers strengthen or emphasize a point by means of expressive phonology (e.g. onomatopoeia, vowel lengthening, raised pitch), repetition, gestures, and quantifiers (e.g. *all*, *a lot*, *many*), and ritual utterances. Comparators offer a way of evaluating narrated events by considering unrealized possibilities, comparing them with events that did actually happen (Labov, 1972: 381). This category includes negation, futurity, modality (e.g. irrealis modals such as *could*, *would*, *might*), questions, imperatives, similes, metaphors, comparatives and superlatives. Correlatives involve durative or continuous events, or events occurring simultane-

ously, as well as particular descriptions of events, characters, settings, and objects. The devices in this category include the progressive (be + V-*ing*), appended particles (adjacent verbs in non-finite *-ing* form), as well as double attributives (e.g. *a great big guy*) and double appositives (e.g. *they gave him a knife, a long one, a dagger*) that are used "to heighten or deepen the effect of a particular description" (Labov, 1972: 388-389, Labov's examples). Explicatives involve subordinate clauses introduced by *since*, *because*, *while*, or *though* that specify why or how an event happened. In addition to the evaluative devices presented above, characters' actions in the narrated events can carry implicit evaluative meaning depending on the context (Labov, 1972: 373-374).

Post-Labovian research on narrative in diverse communication settings has explored further the use of evaluative devices, underlining that they fulfill a range of important functions. For instance, raised pitch in conversational storytelling has been shown to coincide with particular structural junctures in stories (Wennerstrom, 2001). The repetition of words, phrases, sounds, and gesturing in collaborative narration of shared stories has a structuring function, but also functions as a performance device and a marker of in-group identity (Leung, 2009). Regarding temporality, the narration of durative or repeated past events has an implicit argumentative function in that it makes experience of such events harder to challenge (Carranza, 1998; Gounder, 2011: 87, 302).

In addition, studies have shown that reported speech is a key evaluative device that offers 'access' to tellers' and story characters' view of events (Stokoe & Edwards, 2007). Direct reported speech, in particular, "adds a tone of authenticity, veracity, and animation" to narration (Schiffrin, 2002). Scholars have also shown that reported speech is an important resource for identity work in narrative (De Fina, 2003; Günther, 2007). Tellers use direct or indirect reported speech to position themselves in relation to others, claiming or resisting identities (e.g. De Fina, 2014), and displaying solidarity or interpersonal distance between themselves and story characters (e.g. De Fina, 2006; Schiffrin, 2002).

Furthermore, Cortazzi & Jin (2000, 2006) underline that contextual and sociocultural factors influence how we use, recognize, and interpret evaluation when telling or listening to stories. This has implications for how tellers design their stories for a particular context, and how an audience receives a story and interprets its point.

3.1.4 Situatedness

Another important element of narratives is their situatedness in particular discourse contexts or occasions for telling. Research in conversational stories in a variety of settings such as social club gatherings (e.g. De Fina, 2008), workplace meetings (e.g. Holmes, 2006), adolescents' interactions in and outside the classroom (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007, 2013b), and casual meetings among friends (e.g. Karatsu, 2012) has shown that conversational occasions and local contexts

influence how tellers orient to a discursive activity as a story, and how they design and deliver their narratives to addressees. These studies highlight the importance of situatedness as a key element in shaping stories and our interpretation of them. As De Fina (2008) and Georgakopoulou (2007, 2013b) suggest in their studies, an awareness of how communicative environments and interactional goals influence narrative structure and function opens up for more inclusive and nuanced understandings of narrative. Such awareness is particularly important in examining stories that emerge and circulate in online contexts in different digital communication platforms (stories in online environments are addressed below in Section 3.4).

Further, narratives are socioculturally situated activities. Numerous studies have shown that the narrative organization of experience is first and foremost the product of socialization and enculturation processes within a particular community (see e.g. Holmes, 1997; Klapproth, 2004; Tannen, 1982). Each culture has, in Klapproth's (2004: 166) words, its own "culture-specific narrative aesthetics" that influence how we narrativize experience. Such aesthetics have a profound influence on narrative structure (e.g. Holmes, 1997), rhetorical style (e.g. Hyon & Sulzby, 1994), use of evaluation devices (e.g. Labov, 1972: 374; Nair, 2001: 217), and degree of audience involvement (e.g. Okpewho, 1992: 57-62). For instance, Holmes's (1997) study on the storytelling practices of Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and Pākehā, New Zealanders of European descent, shows that, in contrast to Pākehā stories, Māori stories often lack a resolution, and do not display clear evaluation, thereby assessed as incomplete and unclear by Western narrative conventions. As Holmes (1997) notes, in Māori culture interactants rely heavily on assumptions of shared background and contextual information for constructing and interpreting stories. For a discussion on sociocultural variability in narrative, the reader is referred to De Fina & Georgakopoulou (2012: 52-83).

3.2 Approaches to narrative analysis

This section provides a cursory overview of various views and lines of linguistic research focusing on narrative as: 1) a cognitive construct, 2) a text and discourse type, and 3) a conversational resource and interactional activity. This overview is not exhaustive but illustrates the diversity of approaches to narrative analysis.

3.2.1 Narrative as cognitive construct

From a cognitive perspective, one view of narrative has been an internalized schema of expectations of how stories are structured that is based on previous knowledge from cultural and linguistic exposure to oral storytelling (see Klapproth, 2004). In this regard, cognitively and psychologically oriented approaches to narrative have traditionally focused on how individuals comprehend and recall stories through a *story schema*, the mental representation of a prototypical, underlying story structure (Mandler, 1984). As a result, the formal description of the rules that

govern the structure of stories is referred to as *story grammar* (Mandler, 1984).[8]

In story grammar, the prototypical narrative consists of a set of basic, interrelated components: a *setting*, which introduces the protagonists and establishes the spatiotemporal context of the story; an *initiating event* that brings about some significant change in the protagonist's world; a cognitive or emotional *response* to the event; an *attempt*, an intentional action to achieve a goal; a *consequence of the attempt* (success or failure of the attempt); the protagonist's *reaction to the consequence of the attempt*; and an *ending* (see Graesser et al., 1996; also cf. Longacre, 1999). According to that theoretical view, narratives are designed and understood as goal-based and/or non-goal-based responses to unanticipated, problematic events (cf. Hoey, 1983).

Another cognitive approach to narratives is in terms of constructing *mental models* (see Emmott, 1997; van Dijk & Kintch, 1983;). The premise behind this approach is that we comprehend a narrative by constructing a mental model of the 'world' reconstructed in a story: the people, circumstances, settings, events and the spatiotemporal, causal relations among these elements. As Herman (2002: 9) explains, we construe a story world of "who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which interpreters relocate or make a deictic shift as they work to comprehend a narrative".

3.2.2 Narrative as text and discourse type

Another approach to narrative that has cognitive underpinnings involves narrative as a text and discourse type. In text typology, which is concerned with identifying formal criteria for the classification of texts, narrative figures as a basic text type among exposition, description, instruction, and argumentation (e.g. Chatman, 1990; Werlich, 1976; Longacre, 1983). For instance, Werlich (1976) outlines five idealized text types, *descriptive*, *narrative*, *expository*, *argumentative*, and *instructive*. In Werlich's model, the narrative as text type focuses on 'factual' and/or 'conceptual' phenomena that are expressed linguistically through past tense forms, first and third-person pronouns, subjects marked as agents or experiencers, and time and place adverbials. Along similar lines, Longacre (1983) identifies four discourse types, *narrative*, *procedural*, *hortatory* (or *behavioral*), and *expository*, that can be distinguished from one another by a plus/minus combination of two parameters, namely contingent temporal succession and participant reference or *agent orientation*. Based on these parameters and in comparison with the other text types, narrative texts prototypically display both chronological linkage and participant reference (Longacre, 1983).

In general, a discourse type can be defined as the overall discourse function of a text at a high, abstract level, whereas text type can be regarded as the actual, linguistic instantiation of a discourse type (Virtanen, 1992, 2010). Virtanen (1992)

8 In this approach, what constitutes a typical story structure is influenced by narratological studies focusing on the structural analysis of fables, myths, and folktales (see e.g. Propp, 1968).

points out that narrative is a 'strong', flexible text type, in the sense that it can actualize any functional discourse type. For instance, the discourse function of a narrative can be expository, argumentative or instructive; however, no other text type, except narrative, can actualize the narrative discourse type.

3.2.3 Conversational narratives

Stories in everyday conversational contexts have been approached from a variety of perspectives, such as structural, interactional, and performative perspectives.

Labov's structural framework

Most notably, Labov's (1972, 1997; also Labov & Waletzky, 1967) influential analysis of oral narratives of personal experience focused on identifying the formal structural properties of natural narrative.[9] As mentioned previously in 3.3.1, Labov's model focuses on the chronological sequence of events as the basis of the structural organization of narrative. Drawing on interview-elicited oral narratives, Labov (1972) found that narratives exhibited a recurring episodic structural pattern and identified six structural components into which a 'fully-formed', complete narrative is organized: a) *abstract*, b) *orientation*, c) *complication* or *complicating action*, d) *evaluation*, e) *resolution* or *result*, and f) *coda*. In this approach, a narrative can be broken down into clauses which, depending on their semantic function, are assigned to the above-mentioned components. As Labov explains, the first five components can be understood in terms of specific underlying questions that relate to their function:

a. Abstract: what was this about?
b. Orientation: who, when, what, where?
c. Complicating action: then what happened?
d. Evaluation: so what?
e. Result: what finally happened?
f. Coda: seals off the narrative

(Adapted from Labov: 1972: 370)

The abstract is an optional component that serves to introduce a story and, depending on the interactional context, to make a bid for the floor. Abstracts are often summaries of the events presented in a narrative, usually featuring the most reportable event and delivering the point of the story (Labov, 1972: 363-364). The orientation component identifies the story participants and provides information about the time, place, and circumstances under which the events took place. Ori-

9 Labov uses the term *natural narrative* in his work to refer to oral narratives of personal experience that emerge in conversational situations. However, Labov's data were technically interview-elicited narratives.

entation clauses typically occur at the beginning of a story to set the stage before the telling of the main event or series of events. However, as Labov & Waletzky (1967) noted, orientation elements can be dispersed throughout the narrative, and even appear late in the story so as to achieve certain effects such as surprise.

Next, the complicating action involves the temporal ordering of events as they transpired and which lead up to a high climactic point or crisis.[10] In the Labovian model, the complicating action is the only obligatory component of a narrative, and hence its fundamental definitional criterion (Labov, 1972: 370). Labov (1972: 360-361) specifies that a minimal narrative is "a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered". The following example from Labov (1972: 361, my underlining) illustrates a minimal narrative: *I know a boy named Harry. Another boy threw a bottle at him right in the head, and he had to get seven stiches.*

The resolution is that part of a narrative that closes off the events by addressing the question of what happened in the end; that is, the crisis or climactic point is resolved, providing closure to the complicating action. The coda signals the end of the narrative by summarizing the point of the story and bringing both narrator and audience back to the present time (Labov, 1972: 365-366). Codas may include general observations relevant to the story or underline the effects of the narrated events on the narrator or other participants in the story. Similar to abstracts, codas are not always present in narratives. Labov (1972: 370) notes that there is no underlying question assigned to the coda because its role is to seal off the narrative, making the previous questions no longer relevant.

As explained in 3.1.3, evaluation in the Labovian model is both a separate structural component that suspends narration at the high point of a story, and a set of functional devices (both external and internal) that can be distributed throughout the whole narrative. Labov (1972: 370-371) points out that evaluation is audience-oriented and, most importantly, tied to why the narrated events are reportable, and thus tellable.

Labov's work on oral narratives of personal experience has had a tremendous influence and enduring appeal in the analysis of narrative data from various contexts (see contributions to Bamberg, 1997). One important contribution of Labov's work is the systematic structural analysis of past personal experiences that addresses the functions of individual clauses in a narrative. Another significant contribution of the Labovian model is that it put evaluation in focus as a vehicle of narrators' attitudes, values, and point of view, and as a fundamental device for communicating the point of a story (for a discussion, see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). In general, Labov's approach has exercised great influence on narrative research in that it has traditionally privileged a specific kind of narrative data: researcher-elicited, past personal experience stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end (for a discussion, see Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008).

Building on Labov's theory of personal experience narrative and its formal

10 The use of Labov's model is often referred to as 'high-point analysis' (e.g. Klapproth, 2004: 93).

structural elements, researchers in genre theory within systemic functional linguistics have proposed five distinct story genres, namely, *narrative*, *anecdote*, *recount*, *observation*, and *exemplum* (Martin & Plum, 1997; Martin & Rose, 2008: 52). Narratives focus on some kind of complication or crisis that is evaluated and eventually resolved, while anecdotes are stories about an unresolved disruption that produces an emotional reaction in the story characters or the narrator. Recounts involve the telling of unproblematic events accompanied by evaluative comments, while observations focus on disruptive events that are told to show their effect on the narrator. Finally, exempla feature disruptive events that are told to make a moral point.

One of the major criticisms of the Labovian approach is that it is based on monological narratives elicited in a structured interview context, thus neglecting the role of interactional processes and conversational contexts in which stories emerge (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012: 35). For instance, narratives in conversational contexts are often collaboratively constructed. Story recipients may have an active role as co-tellers by providing the introduction to a story and its evaluation (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007: 78; Linde, 1993: 72), and negotiating plot and characters in tellings of shared experiences (e.g. Norrick, 2000: 126). As a result, the Labovian model does not take into account the dynamic nature of narratives as embedded in interaction, jointly constructed, and directly related to the communicative context at hand.

Also, Patterson (2008: 36) notes that Labov's approach is rigidly event-centric, rather than taking into account the narrator's experience as a whole. Additionally, research has shown that the strict focus on the sequential ordering of punctual past events and Labov's premise of what a prototypical 'fully-formed' narrative is leave out a considerable range of narratives found to be salient in everyday conversational contexts. Such narratives challenge prototypical views of tellership, narrative structure, and temporality. They include: diffuse stories that interlocutors can piece together from fragments produced by one or more speakers in surrounding talk (Norrick, 2000: 163-167); collaboratively told or retold stories (Leung, 2009; Norrick, 2000: 154-163); non-linear narratives that organize personal experience in terms of diverse, open paths (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 41-45, 141); narratives focusing on habitual or hypothetical events (Carranza, 1998; Patterson, 2002); and stories of unfolding or near-future events (Georgakopoulou, 2003; 2007: 40-46).

Another point of criticism involves tellability. For Labov (1972: 370-371) a story is tellable when the reported events feature "a violation of an expected role of behavior" revolving around unusual and unexpected experiences such as life-threatening situations (see also Bruner, 1990: 95). However, as also noted in 3.1.2, research in conversational narrative has shown that the extraordinariness of events is too restrictive a criterion for characterizing a story as tellable. As Bamberg (2006) convincingly argues, personal experience stories do not tend to focus on unusual and extraordinary events, but rather on "very mundane things and everyday occurrences". Also, Klapproth (2004: 98) suggests that tellability, or what she calls

narratability, is not fixed but open to negotiation between teller and addressee(s). Tellability is essentially context-sensitive and recipient-designed: events that are newsworthy, relevant, and significant to recipients in a given communicative situation are those that make a story tellable (see Carranza, 1998; Norrick, 2005; Ochs & Capps, 2001).

Stanza analysis

Going beyond Labov, another structural approach to oral narratives involves verse or stanza analysis that aims to uncover the poetic design of oral narrative discourse (e.g. Gee, 1986; Hymes, 1996). In this approach, narratives are segmented into lines that are then grouped hierarchically, in an ascending order, into verses, stanzas, scenes, and acts. This approach adopts a view of narratives as a) verbal art and b) a form of performance closely linked to the sociocultural context that occasions them (see Hymes, 1996). Stanza analysis has been combined with the Labovian structural model to capture potential hidden aspects of story structure in a detailed manner (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 1997; Minami, 2002).

Relatedly, narrative as performance in social interaction refers to the enactment of the narrated events (Langellier, 2001). In particular, tellers re-enact events and animate characters by using diverse performance devices or *contextualization cues* (Gumperz, 1982: 131-152). These include, for instance, reported speech, appeals to the audience, prosody, repetition, and gestures and gaze that are used to engage the audience and obtain responses to a narrative telling (see e.g. Bauman, 1986; Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Sidnell, 2006).

Interactional and conversational perspectives

From an interactional perspective, narratives are viewed as sequentially embedded in turn-by-turn talk, and the activity of storytelling figures as a dynamic, interactional achievement (see Sacks, 1992). Studies informed by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis have focused on how interactants introduce and close off stories in conversation, and especially how stories are linked to what is being talked about and how they shape upcoming talk (Sacks, 1992). For instance, interlocutors may use an abstract (or *story preface*) to announce their intention to launch a story and claim the conversational floor, e.g., "You want to hear a joke?", "Something really wonderful happened today", "I have something terrible to tell you" (examples in Sacks, 1992: 227-228).

Research in conversational storytelling has well documented that stories are often joint projects of collaboration and negotiation involving all participants (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007; Koike, 2010; Monzoni, 2005). Interlocutors may request a story from a potential teller and/or assist in the launch of one (e.g. Lerner, 1992), provide the interpretation and evaluation to a story during or after the telling (e.g. Goodwin, 1997; Linde, 1993), or engage in extensive collaborative narration (e.g. Coates, 2005; Norrick, 2000: 154-163).

In addition, scholars have illustrated the salience of a wide range of narrative

tellings in everyday interaction that stand in stark contrast to prototypical understandings of narrative. These narrative tellings include typically brief, minimally developed stories about recent or still unfolding events, condensed references to stories, projections of events, as well as discourse activities that orient to narrative such as allusions to stories, deferrals of narrative tellings, bids for stories, and refusals to tell (e.g. Bamberg, 2006; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007; cf. Trinch & Berk-Seligson, 2002, for *kernel narratives*). Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008) use the umbrella term 'small stories' to capture and group together such atypical, non-canonical narrative instances, noting that the term 'small story' has both a literal and a metaphorical meaning: literally, non-canonical narrative tellings tend to be brief and elliptical; metaphorically, the term reflects the "smallness of talk" these stories emerge from and the "fleeting aspects of experience" they focus on. As Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008) note, small stories can be viewed as both an analytical tool and framework to further our understanding of such kinds of narrative activities and their interactional relevance in different contexts. Importantly, small stories research emphasizes the need to pay attention to interlocutors' emic understandings of what a story is, i.e. how tellers orient to a discourse activity as a 'story' (Georgakopoulou, 2007: 148).

A dimensional approach to narratives

Another perspective to narrative analysis is Ochs & Capps' (2001) non-structural, dimensional approach that identifies five narrative dimensions, namely, tellership, tellability, embeddedness, moral stance, and linearity, which can be thought of as continua of different narrative possibilities. These dimensions apply to both "narrating as activity and to narrative as text" (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 19). One pole of the dimensional model represents the so-called 'prototypical' narrative characterized by "one active teller, highly tellable account, relatively detached from surrounding talk and activity, linear, temporal and causal organization, and certain, constant moral stance" (2001: 20); the other pole represents narrative tellings that feature "multiple, active co-tellers, moderately tellable account, relatively embedded in surrounding discourse and activity, nonlinear temporal and causal organization, and uncertain, fluid moral stance" (2001: 23). According to Ochs & Capps (2001: 20-23), a narrative may display these dimensions to different degrees and in a variety of ways. Table 1 presents Ochs & Capps's model of narrative dimensions and possibilities.

More specifically, the dimension of tellership involves whether and to what degree there is audience involvement in the telling of a story, or only one primary teller. Narratives that involve one teller and a relatively passive audience are characterized by low involvement; high involvement characterizes narrative interactions in which interlocutors make "substantial narrative contributions" to the telling of a story, even if there is only one primary teller (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 26-27). Tellership also involves incorporating others' voices by means of reported speech in the telling of a story.

Table 1. Narrative dimensions and their possibilities (adapted from Ochs & Capps, 2001: 20)

Dimensions	**Possibilities**	
Tellership	One active teller	Multiple active co-tellers
Tellability	High	Low
Embeddedness	Detached	Embedded
Linearity	Closed temporal and causal order	Open temporal and causal order
Moral stance	Certain, constant	Uncertain, fluid

Tellability refers to what makes a narrative worth telling and listening to in a given context. As mentioned above, accounts of unusual and unexpected events that have a disruptive effect on an individual's life are typically regarded as highly tellable, as opposed to accounts of ordinary and mundane events (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 76). Ochs & Capps note that the tellability of a narrative is intrinsically linked to the narrative's personal relevance to the teller, and especially to the audience; that is, the recounted events may be of particular significance for the lives of the interlocutors. Also, whether story recipients assign low or high tellability to a story may be linked to the dimension of tellership. Highly tellable narratives of personal experience are those that feature important and notable events often told by a single teller to a fairly passive audience.

Next, the dimension of embeddedness captures the degree and kind of integration of a narrative in the surrounding discourse and social activity (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 36-40). Narratives may be detached from prior and ongoing discourse, or be wholly integrated, in other words embedded, in the surrounding discourse context. The embeddedness of a narrative depends upon how the narrative is integrated into the topic of the interaction at hand and whether it is relevant to the social activity that occasions the telling of events.

Linearity refers to the range of possibilities concerning the causal-temporal organization of events within a narrative. Narratives can be organized along a single, linear temporal and causal path, or be ordered in a nonlinear, fragmentary fashion. Ochs & Capps (2001: 83) argue that narratives of personal experiences usually oscillate between linearity and nonlinearity. Nonlinearity may indicate a creative style for the telling of events, or a process of "back-and-forth reasoning" in an attempt to make sense of our experiences.

Finally, the dimension of moral stance concerns the perspective of the teller on the narrated events and experiences. Ochs & Capps (2001: 50-51) underline that moral stance in narratives can range from constant and certain to fluid and indeterminate. In addition, narratives may begin with a relatively fixed moral stance that gradually shifts and becomes uncertain as the telling of a story progresses or

begin with uncertainty and arrive progressively at a particular moral perspective.

Ochs & Capps's dimensional approach allows for the categorization and analysis of a wide range of narrative formats and storytelling practices (for a detailed discussion, see Brockmeier, 2012). Their approach can be seen as an antidote to the general applicability issues of Labov's influential structural model: narrative tellings that do not fit the Labovian narrative mold, and therefore would be categorically excluded from a Labovian analysis, can be explored and accounted for through the dimensional approach (see e.g. Pomerantz & Kearney, 2012; Solomon, 2004). At the same time, there are several studies that have productively combined elements of the Labovian model with Ochs & Capps's dimensional approach (see e.g. contributions to Hoffman, 2010). However, the main criticism of Ochs & Capps's dimensional approach to narrative is that, compared to a structural approach, their model advocates a too broad a definition of narrative, lacking clear criteria for identifying narrative discourse (Shenhav, 2005).

In the following section, we turn our focus to stories that are told and shared in online contexts.

3.3 Telling stories online

Online communication environments have, in recent years, attracted increasing scholarly interest with respect to their role and potential as venues for telling and sharing personal stories, and their technological influence on stories and storytelling processes (Alexander, 2011; Hoffmann, 2010; Page, 2012; Page & Thomas, 2011). This section addresses online stories and surveys previous research into the role and properties of stories told online.

3.3.1 Stories in online support environments

Online environments provide a unique and convenient platform for relating, reflecting upon, and exchanging stories of personal or others' experiences. The anonymity (albeit relative) of the medium facilitates self-disclosure and, in turn, the sharing of experiences and telling of personal stories, as has been amply illustrated by studies of online narratives in the context of illness (e.g. Boynton & Auerbach, 2004; Mahato, 2011; Orgad, 2005), and traditionally marginalized groups such as sexual minorities (e.g. Thomas, Ross, & Harris, 2007; Still, 2008: 48-51).

The availability of an online 'space' to share one's story with a potentially large audience of like-minded individuals, or those who share the same concerns and problems, has profound effects on how individuals experience online storytelling. For instance, Morris (2008: 141) reports that participants in a forum for parents of premature infants regard story sharing and telling as a cathartic and liberating experience. Orgad (2005: 4) discusses how breast cancer patients' engagement in sharing their illness stories with each other online enables them to "maintain and develop agency" in their attempt to regain control over the life disruptions caused

by the illness. Scholars have shown that storytelling (whether offline or online), is in many respects a way of connecting with others in the same situation, instilling the feeling of not being alone and creating solidarity (see e.g. Armstrong, Koteyko, & Powell, 2012; Morris, 2008: 108-109; Stommel, 2009: 21). This last point brings us to the link between narrative and online community formation.

Similarly to offline communities, stories play a fundamental role in community building and identity construction in online environments. For instance, participants in online support groups on health matters use narratives of personal experience to legitimize their claim to group membership (Galegher, Sproull, & Kiesler, 1998; Page, 2012: 31-32; Stommel, 2009: 175-176). Hearne & Nielsen (2004) showed that accounts of personal and others' experiences in an online distributed learning community were pivotal in affirming community membership and values, strengthening community ties, constructing a common identity, and eventually creating a distinct, online community lore.

Response stories, in particular, fulfill important interpersonal functions in online support groups and communities. They project shared experiences, emphasizing shared identities and normalizing a problem (Harrison & Barlow, 2009; Veen, te Molder, Gremmen, & Woerkum, 2010). In her study of response stories in a bodybuilding discussion forum, Page (2012: 39) notes that such stories do not just focus on similar experiences, but also offer additional contexts from which to interpret the original poster's problem. However, Page (2012: 39-42) shows that response stories can also serve to deny common ground by not matching the experience of the original poster, and adopting instead an opposing stance. Similarly, Veen et al.'s (2010) study of a celiac disease support forum, found that response stories were used to indicate subtle disagreement with other posters' experiences, showing recipients "how to put these experiences into the 'proper' context".

In general, stories are of instrumental value for online communities, or, what Sack (2003: 306) calls the "lifeblood" of such communities. Sack (2003: 305) ultimately argues that online communities are essentially built on "net-mediated, story-based relations" of online social networks.[11] What all aforementioned studies suggest is that stories are especially important as the 'social glue' in online environments.

In what follows, we turn to how the distinctive characteristics of online communication systems influence storytelling practices and shape narratives produced and shared online.

3.3.2 Properties of online stories

The interactivity and content distribution possibilities enabled by digital communication make online storytelling a dialogic, collaborative enterprise: stories are co-constructed and "collaboratively mediated", inviting open participation and in-

11 Sack uses the term *social network* to refer to the social relations established among individuals through electronic communication (Sack, 2003: 305).

volvement (Langellier & Peterson, 2004: 181). The co-constructed nature of stories has been shown, for instance, in the context of interactions in blogs (e.g. De Fina, 2016; Eisenlauer & Hoffmann, 2010; Mahato, 2011), discussion fora (e.g. Arendholz, 2010, 2013; Page, 2012), and social networking sites and microblogging services such as Facebook and Twitter (e.g. Dayter, 2015; De Fina & Toscano Gore, 2017; Page, 2010, 2018; West, 2013). In particular, the audience engages in the shaping of the continuation and development of a story through the comment-posting function available in these modes. Readers make clarification requests or requests for updates to the narrator, offer evaluative remarks, and even respond with their own stories.

Page (2012: 113-114) notes that another format of audience involvement in the co-construction of stories is the practice of retweeting; Twitter users' stories are reposted by other users who append their own comments to the original Twitter posts or *tweets*.[12] In Eisenlauer & Hoffmann's (2010: 80) terms, the narrative collaboration between teller and audience in online communication is actually a "dispersion of narrative responsibility". In sum, and as Georgakopoulou (2013a) points out, the affordances of the medium, i.e., interactivity and connectedness, open up novel and distinct avenues for the co-tellership of stories and the co-construction of storytelling practices online.

Additionally, the immense content distribution capabilities of CMC systems and the interoperability of social media facilitate the recontextualization of stories across different online environments. An example is breaking news stories in celebrities' tweets, which are retweeted by other Twitter users and/or are 're-published' in online news sites, reaching new audiences (see Georgakopoulou, 2013a). Twitter users may comment on the retweeted story and share it with their followers. Also, such tweet stories can be embedded into online news articles in which their authors offer their evaluation of the stories. At the same time, these tweet stories are further recontextualized in the case these online new sites offer a comment-posting function to readers, hence allowing them to provide their own interpretive and evaluative viewpoints. As Georgakopoulou (2013a) points out, the recontextualization of online stories in different online media and communication networks invites new interpretations and generates new meanings (see also De Fina & Toscano Gore, 2017).

Scholars have also noted that stories in online communication environments tend to be told in parts or episodes; that is, stories span over several blog entries, forum posts, or tweets. Tellers produce online stories in installments when they recount events as they unfold over time (Page, 2012: 107), or when audience involvement prompts the continuation of a story, as Arendholz (2010: 135) shows in her analysis of narratives in message board discussions on personal topics. In her study of a ballet community's narrative practices on Twitter, Dayter (2015)

12 Retweeting refers to reposting someone else's tweet on your Twitter account by using the abbreviation RT and the original author's username. These retweets are made available (forwarded) to those who *follow*, that is, subscribe to one's Twitter updates.

found that one salient narrative type was multi-tweet stories with each tweet corresponding to a Labovian narrative component. Regarding blogs, Hoffmann (2012: 69) characterizes such stories as "serial narratives". Such stories produced and arranged online in interconnected chunks are fragmented, a feature that in turn reflects the fragmentary nature of hypertext (Eisenlauer & Hoffmann, 2010: 88-90). In any case, blog users need to activate hyperlinks so as to piece together a given story, whether it is complete or in-development. What is more, Eisenlauer & Hoffmann (2010: 87-88) observe that in blogs there is not one, but several pre-established paths for accessing and reading bloggers' stories; readers browse through readers' comments, and access related topics (and stories) in previous entries via hyperlinks.

Furthermore, stories are found to vary across different CMC modes with respect to narrative form. For instance, stories in message boards display variation in length and mostly follow a Labovian high-point structure (see Arendholz, 2010). Conversely, scholars have noted the occurrence of non-canonical story types in email (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2004), and tweets and Facebook status updates (e.g. Dayter, 2015; Georgakopoulou, 2013a; Page, 2010, 2012). As studies have shown, atypical, non-canonical stories are common in everyday (offline) conversational exchanges (see e.g. Bamberg, 2004; Georgakopoulou, 2007). Thus, the presence of such stories in online environments is not surprising. However, another explanation for these findings is that each CMC mode is subject to different spatial and temporal constraints. In asynchronous CMC modes such as blogs and discussion fora, the message size allowed by the system is commonly fairly large, thus facilitating lengthier responses. Also, users have the time to reflect on their contributions and compose them at their own pace. Facebook status updates, on the other hand, are conditioned by the focus on recency, and tweets are conditioned by both the structural requirement for brevity and the emphasis on the present moment (see Dayter, 2015; Page, 2010, 2012: 100).[13]

Apart from medium constraints, there are also sociocontextual factors at play that influence the emergence of non-canonical story types online in terms of form and content. For instance, in a study of storytelling in email exchanges among peers, Georgakopoulou (2004) found that the occurrence of elliptical and fragmentary stories was linked to the participants' close familiarity with each other, their shared background knowledge from previous online and offline interactions, and the deferral of the full telling of such stories to future face-to-face encounters. In her analysis of stories in Facebook status updates, Page (2012: 69-72) reports that such stories are shaped by the social connection between participants and the generic context of Facebook.[14] As Page (2012: 72) notes, the tellability of such stories is a balancing act between the need to show relational closeness with intimate

13 Twitter has a 280-character limit on tweets.

14 Facebook is primarily built around the concept of 'friendship' (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011).

friends and, at the same time, the need to avoid unwanted self-disclosure to simple acquaintances.

Moreover, the functional elements of narrative are realized in specific ways, given the technical characteristics of online communication systems and their interactive, multilinear, and multimodal properties. For example, the message headings usually in form of a hyperlink that precede posts in blogs and discussion fora can play the functional role of a story abstract prefacing a story in a given post (e.g. Eisenlauer & Hoffmann, 2010: 94; also, cf. Galegher et al., 1998). In contrast, tweets and Facebook updates have no placeholder for a title that would potentially function as an abstract. However, Page (2012: 110) points out that tweets can be story abstracts; they can present the main event of a story and direct the reader through hyperlinks to content outside Twitter for the complete story. Arendholz (2013) makes similar observations in a study of message board interactions among students. Discussion participants include a hyperlink to a story and provide a summary of its main points (Arendholz, 2013: 155). Arendholz's examples suggest that such constructions can function as story abstracts, leaving it up to the reader to get the full story.

Regarding orientation, Eisenlauer & Hoffmann (2010: 96) note that the orientation of stories in blog entries can be dispersed across several posts and be "hidden" in *tags* that lead to content within or even outside the blog.[15] In this way, the blog author implicitly encourages readers to actively browse further to access background information to a given story. Likewise, tweets that feature seemingly incomplete stories may contain hyperlinks that point to relevant spatiotemporal information elsewhere on the web (Page, 2012: 110-111). Georgakopoulou (2004) notes that previous emails embedded in forwarded email messages that contain elliptical stories provide the orientation for such stories and/or further support the evaluation provided by the narrator. Again, the intended addressee needs to read through the previous emails for a coherent and complete understanding of these stories.

Next, there are particular ways in which evaluation can manifest itself in stories told in online environments. It was noted above that retweeting and the comment-posting function in social media enable readers to offer and share their evaluative reflections and interpretations of stories posted online. In this respect, readers provide their own external evaluation to these stories. The readers' comments can also prompt the narrator to elaborate further on a story in the comment section, or in subsequent posts in a blog or a message board (Arendholz, 2010: 117). As a result, the teller's elaboration adds new interpretive layers of meaning to a given story. As for microblogging, Page (2012: 111) observes that a tweet can be in itself an evaluative comment that prefaces a hyperlink leading to the actual story.

Further, the different multimodal resources that are available in online com-

15 A tag is a keyword, often in form of a hyperlink, which is assigned to a piece of information content, i.e. text, graphics, video, audio, to identify and describe its subject matter. Tags link together related information content and are searchable within the search engine of a given system.

munication systems play an important role in how stories are shaped online. In Alexander & Levine's (2008) words, online stories are "open-ended, branching, hyperlinked, cross-media, participatory, exploratory, and unpredictable. And they are told in new ways". In travel blogs, for instance, the incorporation of photos in the story text visually repeats and affirms the story's temporal sequence of events (Eisenlauer & Hoffmann, 2010: 97). In addition, the use of hyperlinks and, depending on the CMC mode, the use of different semiotic resources such as images, video, and audio embedded in a story text carry evaluative meanings (De Fina & Toscano Gore, 2017; Page, 2012: 111-112). These insights suggest that such resources can potentially add to and affirm the orientation elements presented in the story text. Yet, such combination of semiotic modes to 'tell' a story is of course not unique to online media and digital communication environments but is also present in printed media such as newspapers, magazines, and books. The difference, however, is that photos and other graphics online are typically hyperlinked allowing users to have immediate access to information that is relevant to the story elsewhere on the web.

In light of the above, there are five distinctive properties of stories that emerge in relation to their emergence and production in digital communication environments: 1) the potential for joint authorship/co-tellership, 2) the recontextualization possibilities across online spaces, 3) the fragmentary presentation of the narrated content, 4) the multilinear possibilities of accessing and reading stories, and 5) the potential for multimodal composition. These properties reflect what Walker (2004) refers to as *distributed narratives*. He explains that distributed narratives, as fostered by networked communication online, are not self-contained, complete stories, and cannot be experienced in "a single session or in a single space". As Walker puts it:

> Distributed narratives demand more from their readers than reading or suspension of disbelief. They ask to be taken up, passed on, distributed. They seek to be viral, the memes of narrative, looking for readers who will be carriers as well as interpreters. (Walker, 2004)

3.3 Summary

This chapter offered a theoretical background on narrative. The first part of the chapter presented and discussed the central definitional elements of narrative by surveying relevant literature. These elements include spatiotemporal organization, causality, experience and evaluation, world making/world disruption, and situatedness. The second part offered a brief overview of diverse approaches to narrative analysis, including narrative as a cognitive construct, a text and discourse type, and a conversational activity. Following this, the chapter also focused on the role and characteristics of online stories that existing and current research has mapped out. In general, online stories have the potential to be collaboratively constructed

and mediated, recontextualized across different online contexts, multimodally constructed, and accessed through different paths. Finally, current research has shown that stories told online fulfill particular functions in their context of occurrence: they serve, among others, to establish solidarity between users, claim group membership in online communities, and contribute to online community formation. However, how narratives, advice discourse, and the technical features of the online medium intersect remains largely unexplored.

4 The mother support community

This chapter presents the context of the online community from which the stories were drawn. I begin with a description of the pregnancy and parenting website where the mother support community emerged, providing information about the website, its goals and content, and its overall user design. I continue with a description of the technical and contextual characteristics of the pregnancy and parenting message boards, and especially the advice message board that is the source of the story corpus for this study. I then address the concept of community and how participants in the pregnancy and parenting message board discussions orient to being a community. The background and contextual information presented in this chapter is necessary for interpreting the discourse in the collected data and thus gaining a deeper understanding of story functions in this particular online context.

4.1 The pregnancy and parenting website

The pregnancy and parenting website used for this study was a subdomain of an American website targeting primarily women. The domain website focused on content about entertainment, food, beauty and style, health and wellness, and pregnancy and parenting. Each of these topic categories was a subdomain, i.e. a 'second' website under the main domain with its own unique content organized by subject matter. These subdomain websites offered resources and information relevant to a given topic category and provided a platform for peer discussions in the form of chat and publicly available message boards.

The pregnancy and parenting site was launched as a support community aiming to provide an online venue with practical information, peer support, and tools and resources for parents and parents-to-be. With this aim in mind, the site offered news and articles on a variety of topics from pregnancy and childbirth, fertility, child development and milestones, to health, school and education (Figure 4.1). Apart from professional writers specializing in covering pregnancy and parenting-related topics, a team of experts such as pediatricians, psychologists, nutritionists, and lactation consultants contributed expert content in the form of articles. These experts also hosted weekly or monthly Q&A sessions with registered users on live chat or designated message boards. Registered users could participate in message board discussions or chat, subscribe to newsletters, and use tools on the site such as a fertility planner, a due date calculator and a and pregnancy calendar, a family time calendar, as well as photo and video journaling tools. Visitors, i.e. unregistered users, could read all content on the site, but could not participate in any discussions or use the site's tools.

Most importantly, the message boards and weekly chat sessions were an integral part of the site giving registered users the opportunity to connect with peers and discuss pregnancy and parenting-related matters. The site's motto "Live It, Talk About It" in a speech bubble was displayed across the website's pages and on the

main page of the pregnancy and parenting message boards (see Figures 1 and 2). This motto is indicative of the website's focus on giving parents a platform to share and talk about their experiences. In sum, the pregnancy and parenting website relied on a combination of both professionally generated content and user-generated content with emphasis on the latter.

Figure 1. Partial screenshot of the homepage of the pregnancy and parenting site

In February 2011 the pregnancy and parenting site became inactive, i.e. there were no content updates or new information available, following a merger between the media company that owned the domain website, and another company. The message boards on the site and, for that matter, the boards on the other subdomain websites were disabled and the discussions were marked as archived, yet kept publicly available for browsing, searching, and reading. The main domain website

and its subdomain sites eventually closed down when the owner company ceased operations in 2014, after its acquisition by an American media conglomerate. As a result, all message board archives became instantly unavailable. Although the original domain website is no longer available, the pregnancy and parenting website exists in archived form on Internet Archive, a digital library of Internet sites and other artifacts in digital form.[16]

4.2 The pregnancy and parenting message boards: description and technical characteristics

The message boards on the pregnancy and parenting site had the goal of bringing parents and expecting parents together to exchange ideas, offer each other support and advice, share experiences, and build networks. The site framed itself as a "community" and different message boards focusing on a particular topic, e.g. attachment parenting, were referred to and described as "communities" within the larger parenting community on the site. This is reflected, for instance, in the "About Boards" section on the site that underlines the community quality of the boards:

> "We're very proud of our award-winning community. [Name of domain website]'s message boards are a storehouse of wisdom, humor, support and information. If you have a question, you'll find answers. If you have a problem, you'll get good advice, and if you have a tip or a funny story to share, you'll find an appreciative audience".

All message board discussions on the parenting site were publicly available, requiring registration only for participating in the discussions, i.e. posting a message to initiate a discussion or reply to a message. As a result, the boards were available to visitors who could browse through and read posted messages without the need for registration. The message boards were organized around different topic categories covering a wide range of pregnancy and parenting-related topics, from family planning, teen moms, and vaccination debates to special needs, children's health, childrearing styles, and adoption, to name a few (Figure 2). Each topic category was organized into a number of message boards. For instance, the topic category "Moms Like You" featured message boards such as "First Time Moms", "Single Parenting", "Military Families", "Biracial Child", and "Gay and Lesbian Parents". By clicking on a message board of interest, visitors and users were taken to its main page where discussions were listed under topic headings. Readers could browse through those and click on a heading of interest to read the full discussion.

16 Founded in 1996, the Internet Archive (archive.org) is a non-profit initiative that archives online content such as web pages, audio, video, images, and software.

Figure 2. Partial screenshot of the Pregnancy and Parenting message boards

Communication on the boards was asynchronous; that is, board users did not need to be logged in simultaneously to participate in discussions. The message boards followed a post-and-reply format that allowed registered users to submit or post a message, also called a *posting* or *post*, to initiate a discussion or reply to a message in a discussion. The basic unit of the asynchronous communicative exchanges was therefore the message that can be seen as a conversational turn (see Antaki, Ardévol, Núñez, & Vayreda, 2006).

Next, the layout format of these message boards offered an outline view option of the message contributions in a discussion, allowing for quick navigation and ease of reading. Messages appeared graphically indented under the message they reply to, forming a discussion thread, as illustrated in Figure 3.

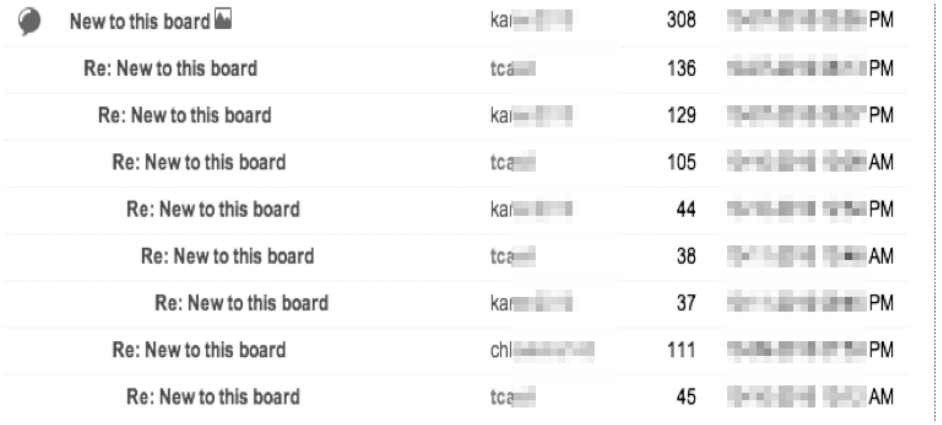

Figure 3. Screenshot of the outline view of a discussion thread

Readers could see at a glance which message is a response to which and who contributed it. Each post had a timestamp, the contributor's username or *nickname*, and the number of views; that is, the number of unregistered readers or registered users who opened and read the posted message. Once readers clicked on a message heading in the thread, they could see the full text version of the message.

A flat view of the discussions was also available when readers clicked on a discussion title. In such a layout view there was no indentation between the responses; instead, messages were displayed chronologically in the order they were received by the system, regardless of which message they respond to. Readers had to scroll down the page to read each message contribution, or if the messages were too many, each message appeared on its own page and readers had to click on the next page to read the next message (Figure 4).

Regarding the distribution format, the message boards used a combination of *pull* and *push* formats: registered users needed to visit the boards to post and read messages (pull), but they also had the option of subscribing to discussion threads of interest to receive notifications of latest updates via email (push). In addition,

registered users could share board content on social networking sites.

Figure 4. Screenshot of a posted message in a discussion

When viewing a message in a discussion, a set of user actions enabled registered board users to manage and filter messages and discussions. These actions included, among others, the following: "ignore posts" for blocking users; "report a violation" for reporting messages that violated the boards' etiquette rules; "post your reply" for responding to a given message; "add to friends" for adding a board user in a friends list; "bookmark" for saving messages of interest (Figure 4).

To complement their written text, users had the option of using emoticons, graphics (static or animated), and photos in their posted messages. Board users could add a profile picture and an emoticon in the profile section on the left of the message and include elaborate digital signatures in their messages. According to the site, the emoticons were meant to "symbolize the message's content or tone (for example, "question", "important", "happy" etc.)".

Site administrators were responsible for the technical aspects of the boards, e.g. maintenance, creation or deletion of boards, as well as the monitoring of the ongoing discussions and individual messages regarding appropriateness. The site's community guidelines established the boundaries of communication for member users and set the overall tone for peer discussions. As the community guidelines specify, "[t]he real objective of community is to understand each other, not to attack others and convince them that you're right…..Agree to disagree respectfully". A set of specific online etiquette rules, also generally known as *netiquette*, was in

place to regulate users' online conduct. For instance, spam messages, i.e. unsolicited commercial messages, off-topic messages, or messages containing offensive, harassing, or obscene content were in violation of board etiquette. Depending on the violation, administrators enforced the rules by warning members, deleting their messages, or even banning them from the boards by deleting their profiles.

4.3 The advice message board

Based on my observation of users' interactions on various boards on the parenting site, seeking and giving advice, whether solicited or unsolicited, were common activities in discussions on different topics. This is not surprising, as the core purpose of the pregnancy and parenting message boards was peer advice and support. However, there was an explicitly designated parent-to-parent advice message board for solely requesting and giving advice. In this respect, advice-seeking and giving were the default activities on that particular board, and by participating in the advice board's discussions, parents actively positioned themselves as advice-seekers or advice-givers. Because advice was solicited in the exchanges on this board, advice-seekers granted authority to others to advise them.

The advice board was titled "Real Advice: Parent-to-Parent" and featured two sub-boards titled "What Would You Do?" and "Resources, Tips & Chit Chat" respectively, hosting thousands of posted messages.[17] Figure 5 shows a screenshot of the interface of the advice message board. Since users referred to sub-boards as "boards" in their discussions, I henceforth use the same term. What is noteworthy is how the titles of the advice board and its "What Would You Do?" board are formulated. 'Real advice' can be interpreted in this context as tried and tested advice given by parents who have faced similar problems as the advice-seekers. The title of the "What Would You Do?" board is formulated as an open question inviting parents to advise by framing the advice to be given in terms of what they themselves would do.

In the advice board's "About" message, the board is referred to as a "community" where parents were invited to participate and ask parenting-related questions from their peers: "Get answers to your parenting questions from the real experts…other parents -- as we cover everything from toddlers to teenagers!" (Figure 5). Thus, site administrators explicitly positioned parents as "real experts" who give "real advice" on this board, thereby reducing the status difference between the professional experts on the site and the parents participating in the advice board discussions. A disclaimer in the "About" message warned visitors and board users against relying on the advice given as a substitute for medical attention or diagnosis:

17 For instance, on November 9, 2009 at 16:57 (GMT+2) the two sub-boards contained altogether 20139 posted messages.

"You should not rely on this information shared on this board as a substitute for personal medical attention, diagnosis or hands-on treatment. If you are concerned about your child's health, please consult your family's health care provider immediately."

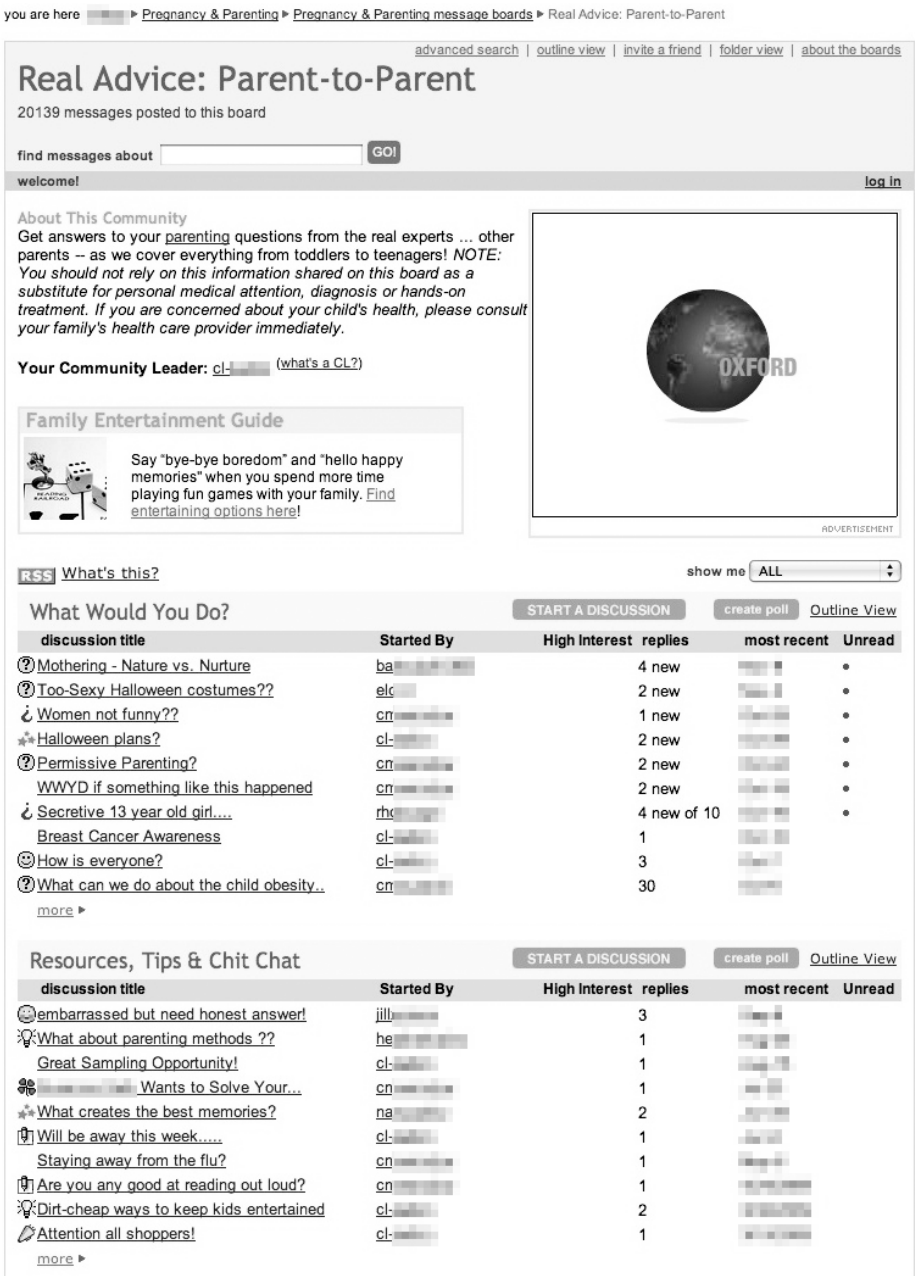

Figure 5. Screenshot of the advice message board interface

When in the board's main page view, registered users had several actions at their disposal such as "start a discussion" and "create poll" to get fellow users' opinions on a particular topic, and "find messages about" to do a board wide search (see Figure 5). When starting a new discussion thread, registered users had the option of adding an emoticon to their discussion title to indicate the tone of their posted message and contextualize their discussion topic. Each topic category on the board's interface featured the discussion titles of the ten most recent discussions. Readers could browse the titles and decide if they were interested in a specific discussion based on its title.

The board had a *community leader* (cl), a volunteer registered user whose task was to lead the board. Community leaders were expected to welcome and help new members, "keep the conversation lively", and encourage engagement and participation in the discussions. The abbreviation cl- followed by a dash was added in front of a community leader's nickname to indicate their role. In addition, an icon of a yellow sports cap was attached to their nickname as a symbol of their role.

The exchanges on the advice board typically followed a question-answer pattern: an advice-seeker posted a message about a problem and asked for advice. Other registered users replied to the advice-seeker's problem message by taking up the problem and offering advice. Figure 6 illustrates a typical advisory exchange on the "What Would you Do?" board. Not all replies in a discussion thread were directed at the thread-initiating advice-seeking message; advice-givers also replied to other advice-givers' messages, agreeing or disagreeing with the proposed advice, or elaborating on a point.

Advice-seeking message

Out of control 10 year old..HELP!!!!
emoticon: 
message #: 2626.1
from: <username> 
date: <date/time>
replies: 6

The situation I am in right now is that I am a single parent, finances are extremely tight and I have a 10 year old that is just out of control and she is making my life miserable. I am so stressed out over my daughter, I almost feel as though I will prob wind up in the hospital. There is rarely a day that goes by where she doesnt tell me she hates me..or to shut up...she does nothing I ask..doesnt clean up... no chores... she complains about baths.. wont brush her teeth or put deodorant on.. shes mean to her friends...something has to be done and I dont know what. I just dont know what to do anymore. Anyone have any suggestions ???

<signature>

Reply message
Out of control 10 year old..HELP!!!! emoticon: message #: 2626.3 in response to message #: 2626.1 from: cl-<username>  to:<username>  date: <date/time> replies: 6 Take everything away and have her earn it all back slowly. No after school activities until she learns how to behave like a 10 year old.

Figure 6. Example of an advisory exchange from the "What Would you Do?" board

4.4 The mother support group as a community

As mentioned above, the site framed itself as a 'community' and site administrators used the terms 'community' when referring collectively to the support group of parents using the site and its message boards, and 'communities' when referring to a specific group of users in a particular board. Even though the site offers no explicit explanation of what 'community' is, the use of the term in this online setting suggests that community was broadly defined as a group of online users who share a common interest and engage in social interaction using the site's chat and message boards. In this sense, it appears that the site used the term based on an a priori definition and conceptualization of online community.

A number of typologies and conceptual approaches exist that attempt to define what online community is (for a discussion, see Angouri, 2016). In this study, I approach the concept of online community as constructed and negotiated in message board interactions among users, and as emergent in practices produced by board users' activities (c.f. Stommel, 2009: 27-34). To complement this approach, I take into consideration Herring's (2004) criteria that outline online community characteristics. Based on her analysis of two discussion fora and a synthesis of previous literature, Herring (2004) operationalizes the concept of online community by identifying six sets of observable criteria: a) active participation and a core of regular participants; b) a shared history, purpose, culture, norms and values; c) solidarity, support, and reciprocity; d) criticism, conflict, and means of conflict resolution; e) self-awareness of a group as a distinct entity; f) emergence of roles, hierarchy, governance, and rituals. Despite these seemingly concrete criteria, the question whether, or to which extent, an online environment can be considered a community always poses interpretive challenges (see Herring, 2004).

In brief, my empirical observations of interactions and activities on the advice board over an extended period of time yielded the following insights. First,

board users engaged in discussions on shared memories of past board activities and offered personal accounts of their trajectories of participation in the advice and other boards, all of which reflect a sense of shared board history. However, participation, i.e. board users' posting frequency and rate of response to posted messages, was not measured in this study.

Second, there was a broadly accepted set of common public goals, i.e., sharing experiences, exchanging knowledge, seeking and offering advice and support, which emerged from the interactions on the advice board. Most importantly, these interpersonal interactions revolved around a shared interest: pregnancy and parenting. Apart from seeking and giving advice and support, board users also engaged in other online or offline activities that have solidarity-building potential. These include playing text-based and image-based games on other boards, showcasing digital art, i.e., digital scrapbooking and digital signature art in designated message boards, and organizing social events and meet-ups in various cities across the country.

Third, the socialization of the board users on a regular basis had given rise to a distinct linguistic repertoire, practices, norms, and online rituals.[18] For instance, board users used group-specific abbreviations, such as dpo (days past ovulation), bf (breastfeeding), sahm (stay-at-home mum), wahm (work-at-home-mom), cs (co-sleeping), and ap (attachment parenting). In addition to official netiquette guidelines, particular social norms of communication had emerged through the board users' interactions. These included, for example, group-determined norms of participation on other message boards focusing on highly sensitive topics such as miscarriage or failed in vitro fertilization treatments. For example, a common practice for board users participating in discussions on the miscarriage support board was to change their nickname, if it expressed their parental identity. Mothers who had suffered a miscarriage in the past and wanted to offer support on this particular board created a second nickname that did not index parental identity.

In-group social norms also dictated whether or not community leaders could promote their own message boards on other boards to increase participation, or participate in discussions on message boards that are managed by other community leaders. For instance, promoting a formula feeding board on a breastfeeding board and vice versa was considered a tactless act due to the polarizing nature of these topics. In addition, it was common practice for community leaders to log in without their credentials attached to their username when they wanted to post messages on other community leaders' boards. When community leaders failed to do so, they typically offered both an apology and an explanation.

Also, board users typically used their online nicknames to index their parental identity and claim in-group membership. The nicknames were to a large extent related to the parenting theme of the discussions and featured group-specific abbreviations that could be cryptic to newcomers (see Lindholm, 2013). Aside from

18 The term *ritual* is used here to refer to a symbolic act that had a specific meaning in the pregnancy and parenting boards and was carried out systematically by board users.

nicknames, board users employed a rich ensemble of identity markers to construct their parental identity and claim in-group membership such as static or animated icons, emoticons, avatars, customized banners, pregnancy tickers, and animated digital signatures.

As for rituals, one example is the use of the pregnancy ticker, a graphic (animated or not) timer that counts down the days and weeks until the due date. When a board user announced her pregnancy to the group, the ticker functioned as a public declaration of pregnancy, thus making it official in the group and at the same time indexing a specific identity status, that of an expecting mother. Other board users reacted with congratulation messages that included static or animated graphics of, for example, flowers or teddy bears.

Next, message board users exhibited group self-awareness by using deictic first-person plural pronouns (*we*, *us*, and *our*) to refer collectively to themselves as a group of mothers and online peers that share similar concerns and want to achieve common communicative goals. Self-awareness also manifested in negotiations of group-determined norms and values (e.g. nickname changes) that implied board users' awareness that other online groups may do things differently.

Regarding roles, board users assumed roles and responsibilities fostered by the online group itself or facilitated by the administrators. For instance, board users took on informal roles such as advisor, expert, monitor of netiquette, and mediator, all of which emerged through group interaction. In addition, any active and regular board user could apply to administrators for becoming an official community leader or co-leader.

The netiquette guidelines and the proclaimed purpose of the mother support group and the advice board set up a very specific frame of explicit and implicit expectations with respect to the interpersonal aspect of communication on the boards: the expected behavior of board users was to be supportive, cooperative, helpful and respectful, and abide by forum and in-group rules. Thus, the purpose and scope of the community oriented board users towards supportive, rapport-building communicative behavior.

Finally, as will be illustrated in the following chapters, board users engaged in their interactions in support and solidarity-enhancing practices such as giving advice, sharing experiences, exchanging knowledge, engaging in reciprocal self-disclosure, and offering emotional support.

The empirical observations presented above on the in-group norms, practices, and interactions of board users indicate that this online group exhibited key characteristics of an online community as proposed and discussed by Herring (2004), i.e. negotiation of shared history, usage of group-specific language, emergence of roles and rituals, reciprocity, self-awareness, expression of solidarity and support, and negotiation of shared norms, values and purposes.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the background and contextual information about the mother support community and advice board that serves as the source of data for this thesis. Key technical and organizational characteristics of the message boards were presented here to facilitate an understanding of the online setting where board users interacted. Special attention was given to the status of the parent support group as a community as was defined by the site versus as emerging and negotiated in board users' interactions and activities online. This elaborate description of the community and the advice board is particularly important for an understanding of various contextual aspects that may be relevant for the analysis and interpretation of the collected stories.

5 Methods and materials

This chapter presents the data and methodological approach and tools used in this study. The chapter begins by describing the material used for analysis and outlining collection procedures. It then proceeds to present the analytical tools and frameworks applied for analyzing the stories that are the focus of this study. Throughout the sections, the chapter addresses methodological considerations including data selection, analysis and interpretation of the data, reliability concerns, as well as ethical issues pertaining to the study of online discourse.

5.1 Material for the study

The data for this study were drawn from the American peer-to-peer online advice board on pregnancy and parenting that was presented in detail in Chapter 4. The key criteria for selecting this particular mother support community as a source of data for analyzing stories were the following. First of all, the community featured a designated message board for seeking and giving advice where board participants encouraged one another to share experiences. This provided an opportunity to explore the emergence and function of stories in the specific context of the discursive activity of advice-giving. Secondly, the message boards were publicly available and did not require registration on the site to access. Thirdly, all message board discussions were archived on the site and made available to both online visitors and registered users for searching and viewing. Finally, I was familiar with this parenting community prior to embarking on this study. For the purposes of a different project, I had engaged in non-participant observation of interactions within the community for a period of ten months in 2005-2006. My goal at that time was to explore the community's linguistic practices and norms, as well as members' use of modal resources such as photos, animations, static graphics, and color schemes in their profiles and interactions with each other. My non-participant observation involved following discussions in a variety of message boards on the site and taking notes of users' interactions and activities, including my reflections.

For this study I used a sample of fifty randomly selected discussions from the "What Would You Do?" message board in the main advice board (for a list, see Appendix A). Each discussion thread was bookmarked in the browser and saved as a web archive for reference purposes and as an MS-Word text file for analysis. The total number of messages (n=346) of the 50 discussions includes a) the advice-seekers' thread-initiating messages that describe a problem and request advice (n=50), b) the advice-givers' reply messages to advice-seekers or other advice-givers (n=241), and c) the advice-seekers' replies to advice-givers' messages (n=55). The total number of message contributors is 130, including 43 advice-seekers and 87 advice-givers. In the sample, some of the contributors alternate roles as advice-seekers and advice-givers from discussion to discussion.

Since the goal of this study is to examine the form and functions of stories

in the context of advice-giving, I focused on the advice-givers' reply messages in order to identify stories for analysis. I used the definitional criteria outlined in Chapter 1 and presented in detail in Chapter 3 to identify a stretch of discourse as narrative within the replies. In brief, a story features the temporal organization of bounded or unbounded past events, involves worldmaking or world disruption, and includes evaluation of the narrated events. Regarding temporality, such an approach to the definition of narrative allows for the inclusion of prototypical stories that focus on a sequence of discrete, punctual events, as well as more atypical stories that revolve around repeated or habitual events. In addition, I drew from small story research to capture instances and types of small stories in the advice-givers' replies. Using the aforementioned criteria, I identified a total of 121 stories in 83 advice-givers' reply messages. These replies that include stories are contributions by 47 advice-givers.

All examples used in this study are verbatim and have not been corrected for grammar or spelling errors. Bold is used to emphasize specific linguistic features and structures in examples. Italics are used to indicate terms and concepts, as well as highlight stories or particular story segments in the examples.

5.2 Methods of data analysis

The present study uses a combination of analytical tools to explore and analyze the form and function of stories in the context of online advice-giving exchanges among peers. Specifically, the study combines a structural, relational, and dimensional approach to analyze the advice-givers' stories. In what follows, I present my methodological toolkit and address certain methodological considerations and issues related to data analysis and interpretation.

5.2.1 Structural analysis

The approach used in this study concerns the structural elements of advice-givers' response stories as well as the content structure of the replies in which these stories are located.

Narrative structure

Although this study does not employ the Labovian definition of narrative, it does adopt Labov's (1972, 1997) descriptive and analytical vocabulary of narrative structure. The reason is twofold: firstly, the Labovian terminological apparatus of narrative components (e.g. abstract, orientation, resolution) is well-recognized, well-established and has been used extensively in narrative analysis scholarship, even though Labov's formal clausal analysis has been heavily criticized; secondly, Labov's conceptualization of narrative structure provides both a backdrop and a starting point for examining the structural components of different narrative types and in different contexts, and not just stories that fit the Labovian prototype (see Georgakopoulou, 2007). As Georgakopoulou (2007: 65-75) notes, such an ap-

proach allows us to expand the scope of Labov's structural components and even reconceptualizing them to account for the structure of various narrative types that occur in different contexts. Attention to narrative structure is important because it is shaped by the surrounding discourse activity and context of occurrence (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008).

The content structure of the advice-giving messages

To examine the local function of the stories in their immediate context, i.e. in the reply message a story appears, I use Locher's (2006) content analysis framework to examine how replies that contain stories are structured and sequenced. This framework is based on the concept of *discursive move* defined as a rhetorical unit that contributes to the ongoing interaction and serves a particular local function in the context it occurs (Locher, 2006: 51; see also Miller and Gergen, 1998: 192). Based on coding categories from Miller and Gergen's (1998) study of the therapeutic potential of electronic bulletin board exchanges, Locher (2006) developed a coding scheme of discursive move categories to analyze the content of posted messages in an online advice column. The basic coding unit for move identification and analysis is the sentence; however, a sequence of sentences can also realize a single discursive move (Locher, 2006: 61).

I applied Locher's coding scheme of discursive move categories to the reply messages and thereafter refined it through several rounds of coding and recoding. Categories were collapsed and modified, while new categories were added to more accurately describe the present data and achieve a final coding scheme. The categories identified are illustrated in Table 2 with examples from my data.

Specifically, I added the moves *advice uptake*, *contact*, and *clarification request* to the coding scheme of discursive move categories.[19] These moves reflect the dynamic nature of threaded discussions that allow and invite more than one posted message. Such moves are absent from Locher's (2006) coding scheme since her data comprised of question-answer exchanges that adhered to the agony aunt advice column format of two messages, i.e. one message posted by the advice-seeker and one reply posted by the advisor persona.

Although Locher (2006: 62) makes a distinction between the moves *advice* and *referral*, with the latter designating a special kind of advice, I collapsed these two move categories into one, namely *advice*. Thus, referring someone to a professional, or giving links and information about resources such as books and websites is subsumed here under advice. Finally, I added the move category *story* that refers to a stretch of discourse identified as a story according to the definitional criteria used in this study. This is a modification of Locher's (2006: 62, 67) *own experience* discursive move category that she broadly defines as a 'personal' anecdote of present or past experiences offered by the advice-giver. In my coding scheme, the advice-givers' self-description or reporting of experiences anchored in the present,

19 Discursive moves are marked in italics in this chapter.

e.g. reference to a current state of affairs, or habitual behavior in the present, were coded as the discursive move category *background*.

Table 2. List of discursive move categories in the advice-givers' replies that include stories (adapted from Locher 2006: 62, 209)

Moves	**Explanation**	**Examples**
Advice	A suggestion or recommendation for future action; an invitation for introspection and consideration (advice is realized through, e.g. imperatives, interrogatives, I would-constructions, or impersonalized formulations)	"Spend time with her and talk", "How about a sleeping bag on your floor for him?", "I would be switching day cares." "What might help, is a pre talk",
Advice uptake	The advice-giver states that she will follow another contributor's suggested advice herself	"I'm going to try some of your suggestions, things we can do given my physical limitations"
Apology	Apologizing and expressing regret	"Sorry about the spelling :)", "I'm sorry I don't have a way with words like a lot of other [Name of Online Community] members"
Assessment	An assessment and/or evaluation of a situation, or a point made in a previous post (i.e. agreeing or disagreeing with someone); support of the addressee	"What he is going through is the phase called object perminance", "I think you are doing a great job!", "I agree with [Laura]", "I'm going to go against the majority here", "My heart goes out for you!"
Background	Giving background information about oneself (self-disclosure) or someone else	"My dd is 9, and I don't allow her to go to her friend's house, down the street"
Clarification request	A request for clarification	"Is your son doing this only when he gets home to his mother or does it continue throughout the week?"
Contact	A reference to further (future) communication between advice-giver and advice-seeker	"I will contact you through your profile info here on [Name of Online Community]. I will give you my email and we can communicate some more"
Explanation	An explanation or further elaboration of a point just made in a previous move within the message or a previous post in the thread	"<advice>Also give older sibling and younger sibling space. </advice> <explanation> each girl needs a place the other child cannot go to…. </explanation>

Moves	Explanation	Examples
Farewell	Closing move, saying good-bye and wishing well	"Good luck!", "Best wishes for better days ahead!", "Hope you find some answers."
General information	Reporting facts and delivering information	"Birthing flat on your back with your legs in stirrups is more likely to cause you to tear or get an episiotomy."
Greeting	Opening move, greeting	"Hey there!", "Hi [Tom]"
Metacomment	A text-structuring comment that points to preceding or subsequent discourse	"Just a suggestion…", "Ok what I do with my boys...(and man do they hate it)", "Will any of those ideas work for you?"
Story	A story of personal or vicarious past experience	"My best friend got a step dad when she was two and she called him [Robert] until the newlywed had another child, they discussed it with her and she decided on PaPa for her step dad"

Regarding methodological issues of move identification in connection with story entry and exit points, a story abstract that has a text-structuring function (i.e. it announces an upcoming story) or states a problem is not labeled here as a separate discursive move (e.g. *metacomment* or *background*), but is regarded as a structural component of the story it prefaces. In a similar fashion, codas that deliver advice and/or provide an assessment are not labeled and counted as separate *advice* or *assessment* discursive moves but are regarded as integral story components that incorporate advice or assessments.

Nevertheless, the segmentation of discourse into moves is a challenging enterprise. Moves may overlap or their communicative purpose may not always be clear, thus complicating the identification of the function of such units in a stretch of discourse (see Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007: 32; Kankaanranta, 2005: 272). To address this issue, I engaged in iterative close reading of the replies containing stories, looking at the context of the discussions, how the replies are composed, and how sentence units within these replies interact with each other (see Locher, 2006: 59). This procedure is qualitative and inevitably involves a degree of subjectivity on the part of the researcher.

The author was the only coder; therefore, no intercoder reliability was established. To counter this limitation, the coding procedure applying the final coding scheme was repeated twice at different points in time to ensure the consistency and reliability of the results. Following Locher (2006: 119), the assigned discursive moves in the coded reply corpus are marked with tags in angle brackets that indicate the starting and end point of a move, e.g. <advice>…</advice> in a stretch of

discourse.[20] For an example of the coding process, see Appendix B.

Further, in undertaking a content analysis of the reply messages including stories, I also paid attention to the discourse context of the discussion threads that these replies are part of. A close reading of the discussion threads is essential since replies with stories (or not) are not produced in a vacuum – they are reactive responses to other messages, for instance, the advice-seeker's problem message or other advice-givers' replies. In particular, the replies are linked directly to a previous message (i.e. respondents use the reply feature of the system to respond to a specific message), and in their content they refer to, paraphrase, and/or quote others' messages. Thus, the replies exhibit strong intertextual ties to previous messages that need to be taken into account in the analysis of story functions in this context of occurrence.

Locher's (2006) analytical framework is particularly suitable for the purposes of this study. First, it was developed for the analysis of online advice discourse in asynchronous exchanges; and second, it allows us to examine how stories are organized within the advice-givers' replies in terms of preceding and subsequent discourse.

5.2.2 Relational work

Next, to address the interpersonal function of stories in this specific advice-giving context, I draw on the notion of *relational work* defined as the process of defining and negotiating relationships in interaction (Locher & Watts, 2008; Locher, 2006). Relational work is important in this advice setting because, on one hand, advice-giving (solicited or not) is in general potentially face-threatening. On the other hand, the overall goal of the parent support community and the advice board in particular is to create an environment of support and build rapport and solidarity among participants.

Relational work is inherent and ubiquitous in all communication, comprising "the entire spectrum of the interpersonal side of social practice" (Locher & Watts, 2008). Locher & Watts (2008: 78) explain that relational work "refers to all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice". Relational work constitutes an integrative approach in interpersonal communication covering the entire spectrum of verbal behavior "from direct, impolite, rude or aggressive interaction through to polite interaction, encompassing both appropriate and inappropriate forms of social behavior" (Locher & Watts, 2008; cf. Spencer-Oatey, 2005). Key to relational work is the Goffmanian concept of *face* that is defined as "an image of self delineated in terms of approved

20 This method of annotating textual data with bracketing is based on a common feature of XML (Extensible Markup Language) and other hypertext languages in which elements appear in angle brackets as a way of delimiting them as tags and differentiating them from other content (Locher, 2006: 119).

social attributes", and more specifically as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for [her/himself] by the line others assume [she/he] has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman, 1967: 5).

There are three aspects of relational work in terms of face orientation; namely, a) face-enhancing, b) face-maintaining, and c) face-threatening that are realized linguistically by various strategies (Locher, 2006: 114-116). For instance, praising, agreeing, or expressing empathy are kinds of face-enhancing relational work that promotes and increases involvement with addressees. Face-maintaining relational work includes mitigation strategies such as hedging, joking, or apologizing to soften or reduce a potential threat to the addressee's face. Face-threatening relational work involves communicative behavior, e.g. disagreeing, criticizing, or advising, that intends to damage the addressee's face, or is perceived and assessed as such. As Locher (2006: 115) points out, assessments and interpretations of what kind of relational work individuals engage in depend on the context of a given interactional situation and communicative activity at hand (see also Locher & Watts, 2008).

Based on Locher's relational work (2006) approach, I examine the advice-givers' stories through the analytical lens of relational work types that she developed based on facework literature and qualitative close reading of the posted messages in her study. Locher's (2006: 113-125) analysis focuses on the kind of relational work discursive moves realize in her data, and she identifies the following relational work types: *bonding*, *boosting*, *empathizing*, *criticizing*, *hedging*, and *praising* (Table 3).

Table 3. Relational work types in alphabetical order (adapted from Locher, 2006: 118)

Relational work	**Explanation**
Bonding	Establishing a connection with the addressee
Boosting	Emphasizing a certain aspect of advice; giving a point more weight
Empathizing	Displaying an understanding of an addressee's situation
Criticizing	Criticizing an addressee's attitudes and actions
Hedging	Mitigating the content of an imposition
Praising	Highlighting an addressee's attitudes and actions as positive

Since Locher's study deals with an online advice setting that promotes help and support, I consider these relational work types relevant and useful as a starting point to explore the relational work advice-givers accomplish with their stories in my dataset. I examine the advice-givers' stories bearing in mind the following methodological considerations that Locher points out (2006: 115-117). First, relational work is pervasive and complex; it can manifest in syntactic and/or lexical

choices in a move, or, in absence of these, the relational work a given discursive move expresses can be derived from its adjacent moves. Second, the overall tone and composition of a message can indicate the type or types of relational work present. Third, a single discursive move can realize more than one relational work function at the same time, for instance, empathizing and praising, or criticizing and hedging.

5.2.3 The narrative dimension of moral stance

In this study, I employ Ochs & Capps's (2001) notion of moral stance as an analytical framework to examine the advice-givers' perspective in their stories. As noted earlier, moral stance is the perspective a narrator takes "towards what is good or valuable and how one ought to live in the world" with respect to the recounted events (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 45). Following Ochs & Capps, I examine moral stance in the stories by looking at how the advice-givers as narrators evaluate and interpret past events and their own and others' actions, feelings and thoughts on the basis of what they discursively construct as "local notions of goodness" (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 47). This involves paying close attention to linguistic strategies the advice-givers use to encode moral positions in their stories.

In particular, the analysis focuses on a central aspect of moral stance that Ochs & Capps (2001: 47) refer to as the *looking good principle*: the tendency narrators have to present themselves in stories as morally superior in comparison to others (see also Labov, 1997, 2013). A core component of this presumed tendency is the assignment of praise and blame in a narrative telling; that is, praising or holding someone responsible or accountable for their actions and comportment with regard to their involvement in the narrated events. Responsibility refers to the duties and obligations attached to a specific social role or position, while accountability refers to being answerable for one's actions (Solin & Östman, 2016: 4-7; see also Lakoff, 2016: 19-36).

In Ochs & Capps's (2001) approach, moral stance figures as a dimension conceptualized as a continuum between a set of poles. At one pole there are stories that exhibit a certain, constant moral stance: tellers recount a story that establishes and presents a stable worldview throughout. At the other end there are stories that exhibit uncertain, fluid moral stance: tellers question, revise or dissolve their worldview in the course of their narrative telling (see Table 1 in Subsection 3.3.3, Chapter 3). Following this view, I examine the advice-givers' stories to map out the range of possibilities on the moral stance continuum.

Ochs & Capps's (2001) approach is useful for the purposes of the present study for three reasons: firstly, it considers moral stance as a dimension relevant to all narratives, even if it does not explicitly manifest itself; secondly, it brings attention to the close relationship between moral stance and the tellability of a story; thirdly, it sharpens the focus on evaluation in terms of articulating moral meanings. Paying attention to moral stance in the advice-givers' stories is important because of

the nature of the discursive activity in which these stories emerge: giving advice for or against a course of action typically involves advice-givers taking a position in terms of what they believe is good, normal, or appropriate to do, and what is not, in a specific context. Thus, examining the advice-givers' moral positions and dispositions in their stories is essential in order to understand their link to the advice-giving activity at hand, especially with regard to parenting practices that form the context of these online discussions.

5.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues around the study of online communication have been debated within and outside the research community over the years (e.g. Hine, 2005; Piper & Simons, 2005: 56; Whiteman, 2012). The multitude of online interactions and their sheer availability make them an attractive source of data for a variety of research purposes, from small-scale qualitative research to 'big data' research projects. Transcending time, space and geographical boundaries, researchers are presented with the possibility of gaining access to otherwise hard-to-reach groups, collecting easily accessible material and observing online social practices.

However, there is no consensus within the research community as to the ethical considerations that should govern the collection, handling and analysis of such data as well as the reporting of results (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Scholars attribute this lack of consensus to the following factors, among others: the often-blurred boundaries of what is public and private interaction in online environments; the ephemerality of conversations and communities; the continually changing technologies; the issues of verifiability and authenticity of data (see Bromseth, 2003; Herring, 1996).

Overall, researchers who use data from online communities advocate for a localized, case based approach to ethical considerations for online research (see e.g. Hine, 2005; Whiteman, 2012). Such an approach is informed by the particularities of the research context (e.g. a public vs. a private online community, non-sensitive vs. sensitive topics), the research objectives and methods used, institutional research policies, as well as previous scholarship on ethical issues concerning research conducted in online contexts.

For this thesis, I consulted with the legal counsel at Åbo Akademi University for an evaluation of my research objectives, data collection and usage for linguistic research.[21] In line with the counsel I received, I consider messages posted on publicly available message boards public CMC discourse. This is based on three reasons. First, at the time of data collection, the message board discussions that form the material for this thesis were publicly available for anyone to browse through, save and copy, while registration was required only in case online visitors wished to initiate or participate in a discussion. Second, a statement on the site's main message board page notified online visitors and board participants that the site is

21 Jari Vuorijoki, October 2007, personal communication.

public and that any information they disclose on the boards becomes immediately publicly accessible.[22] Third, the focus of this study is textual interaction, rather than the site users themselves.

Even though message board content is considered in this study as public CMC discourse, any names and locations appearing in the cited examples have been altered and the name of the parenting community is substituted by [Name of Online Community]. Message headings and message signatures that contain identifying personal information are removed whenever a posted message is cited in its entirety.

5.4 Summary

This chapter presented the data and methodology used to carry out the present study. The chapter offered a description of the data and data collection procedures, and outlined the methodological tools used to analyze response stories in the context of online advice-giving exchanges among peers.

22 However, the issue of the discussion participants' perceptions and expectations of privacy remains open.

6 Narrative types

This chapter presents the narrative types of advice-givers' response stories and outlines their thematic patterns. The chapter begins by presenting and illustrating the different narrative types found in the response story corpus, examining their form and link to the discursive activity of advice-giving in the discussion threads. Next, the focus is on the overarching thematic patterns that emerge from the response stories' plot structure.

6.1 Overview of narrative types

The response stories identified in the advice-givers' replies cover a wide range of different narrative types in terms of form and past temporal framing. These include: 1) complication stories (n=70), which conform to a Labovian description of personal experience narratives, 2) habitual stories (n=23) that focus on recurring and habitual past events with typically no action peak, and 3) small stories (n=28) that cover a variety of different kinds of narrative activities including snapshots of past experience, story references, refusals to tell, deferrals, and one allusion. These different narrative types of response stories are presented and illustrated in the subsections that follow.

6.1.1 Complication stories

The most prevalent narrative type of response stories in the data was complication stories. These contain a sequence of punctual and completed past events that produce one or more complicating actions. These response stories typically mirror similar incidents and parallel experiences as those described in the problem messages or other advice-givers' messages. In structural terms, these instances generally conform to Labov's definitional criteria of narrative and range from brief stories that include only a complicating action to fully-fledged accounts exhibiting all narrative components, i.e., abstract [A], orientation [OR], complication [CA], resolution [R], and coda [C]. As noted in Chapter 3, evaluation is essentially not a separate narrative component as such, but rather a set of different internal and external devices spread throughout a story, imbuing it with evaluative meaning. What follows is an example of a brief complication story from an excerpt of a reply to illustrate this narrative type:

(1)

> The odd went through the same thing. When she got pregnant and had a baby at 19, she turned around.
>
> (Discussion:" Help with teen/family", msg#3)

In (1), an abstract introduces the story, indicating what it is about (*The odd went through the same thing*). In this particular case, the abstract points to previous discourse (*the same thing*), namely, the advice-seeker's problem message where she describes her troubled daughter's behavior. In this regard, the story abstract also provides the orientation of the response story by linking back to the information in the advice-seeker's problem message about the circumstances surrounding the troubled teen's rebellious behavior. The complication of the story is found in the causal sequence of events that are represented here as follows: the daughter got pregnant$_{event1}$, she had a baby$_{event2}$, she turned around$_{event3}$. Having the baby is the event that marks the turning point for the daughter's change of behavior, leading to the resolution. The evaluation is embedded in the meaning of the situation and the events. For instance, the abstract refers to a situation that has already been established and evaluated as a problem, i.e., the troubled teen's behavior, thus carrying negative evaluation. The events carry implicit evaluation, which lies in the construal of the events as positive: having a baby led to a positive result (*she turned around*).

Example (2) below illustrates a more complex and detailed instance of a complication story that corresponds to the Labovian 'high peak' narrative, featuring all narrative components outlined above. The story has been segmented to illustrate its structure more clearly. In the example the teller uses an abstract to announce the story, underlining that it is a personal experience story and directing the addressee on how to interpret what follows. As we can see, the orientation section sets the stage, providing information about the characters, the time frame of the events, and the situation.

The complication includes the event sequence that recounts the father's reaction, marking the peak of the story with quoted direct speech to suspend the narrative action: "*that woman may be your mother, but by God she's also my wife! And NO ONE speaks to my wife that way!*". The resolution arises from the complicating action, releasing the tension and resolving the crisis (*My brother, who a minute ago had been so full of himself, became as meek as a lamb and very apologetic*). Next, the advice-giver uses a coda to seal off the story and return to the present time of the interaction, delivering the evaluative point of the story from her perspective as a parent (*I am now the mother of three teenagers, and I am of the opinion that our children must fear us…*), echoing her assessment that precedes the story. As shown, the evaluative frame of the story is already set in the assessment preceding the story, and implied in the story abstract. It is finally restated and explicated in the story coda.

Other evaluative devices that convey the teller's attitude towards the narrated events include the choice of lexis regarding the brother's behavior and actions, e.g., "*was verbally disrespectful*", "*He made the huge mistake*", "*so full of himself*", the expression of personal opinion "*I am of the opinion*", and the use of direct speech that marks the climactic event.

(2)

Your husband should have clobbered that kid the first time he sassed you...THE FIRST TIME	story-preceding move: assessment	
If I may relate an incident I witnessed from my childhood to illustrate.	Abstract	E
My older brother, who was also about 16 at the time was verbally disrespectful to our mother. He made the huge mistake of doing it within earshot of our father.	Orientation	V A L
Within 2 seconds my father was in the room, grabbed my brother by the shirt, slammed him up against the wall and spoke - "that woman may be your mother, but by God she's also my wife! And NO ONE speaks to my wife that way!"	Complicating action	U A T
My brother, who a minute ago had been so full of himself, became as meek as a lamb and very apologetic. It was the first and last time he was ever rude to our mother.	Resolution	I O
I am now the mother of three teenagers, and I am of the opinion that our children must fear us...not in the sense of terror, but in the sense of respect and awe.	Coda	N

(Discussion: "my 16 yr old son..", msg#4)

Complication response stories that feature a demarcated climactic point, as the example shown above, typically focus on an incident such as an illness crisis, a dog attack, a confrontation, a moment of personal self-awareness, or a childbirth experience. In general, tellers signal the telling of a particular incident by announcing it in the story abstract (Example 3., a-c), in the orientation section (d-f), or in the beginning of the complicating action (g, h, i).

(3)

a. *We had a similar incident in our home*
b. *If I may relate an incident*
c. *Oh, except for one time- when it was her birthday!*

d. *Like tonight, she and her sister were leaving for a church retreat*
e. *Like this morning he didn't want to get ready*
f. *Another time he was acting like he didnt want to go to school*

g. *I remember the day it began to work*
h. *And then one day I asked myself why?*
i. *10:35 I had my first contraction I can best describe it as a delivery truck parking on my stomach*

As the examples (a-h) show, advice-givers indicate the telling of a temporally bound incident by employing various devices such as an explicit reference, e.g., incident, and temporal expressions and signals that mark off the discrete temporal frame of the events that follow, e.g., "*And then one day*", "*Like tonight*", "*Another time*", "*Oh, except for one time*", "*10:35 I had my first contraction*".

6.1.2 Habitual stories

Another narrative type of response stories identified in the data is habitual stories. Unlike complication stories that focus on temporally bounded sequenced events, habitual stories are instances of narrative tellings that revolve around habitual or repeated experience, focusing on what tellers or other story characters used to do or how things were during some time in the past. Specifically, they feature habitual states of affairs or repeated activities that were experienced or performed by story characters on a regular basis, and over an extended period of time. The habitual stories identified in the advice-givers' replies focus on the following topic areas: a) children's, adolescents', and young adults' behavior during a period in time, or children's abilities in literacy, motor skills, or social communicative skills during a specific stage in their development, b) habitual routines of everyday mothering practices, and c) recurring self-harming, bullying, or other kinds of emotional or physical abuse.

Regarding their narrative structure, advice-givers' habitual stories feature a series of events that occurred regularly and repeatedly over an extended period of time, and include descriptions of durative states. These stories can feature a story abstract that establishes similar experiences between advice-giver and advice-seeker, and a coda that summarizes the story's point. They can also include a result/outcome in their coda, showing how the habitual and repeated events have affected and continue to affect story characters in the present.

An example of a habitual story is shown in an excerpt from an advice-giver's reply in (4). The advice-giver replies to a mother who is worried about her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter's speech delay and does not know how to help her. In brief, the mother explains in her advice-seeking message that her daughter lags behind her peers in speech development, resulting in socialization difficulties. Before deploying her story, the advice-giver offers the advice-seeker lengthy advice (the post is not shown here in its entirety) on how to handle the situation (e.g. "*Spend time with her and talk*", "*Don't "force" her to repeat what you said*", "*pick up a good book on sign language*", "*Do you read to her?*", "*Have you consulted her doctor about your concerns?*", "*Dont compair her to other kids*"). She proceeds with making

a general assessment about mothers who boast about their children's abilities, and offers a personal experience story.

(4)

> […] by the way..the mother that boasts her child can do this and that etc.....is omitting that the child cant do that or this, and exactly how perfect is the child in the tasks mom is bragging about? the 4 yr old who can write.....how legible, and does she write real words? *my dd at age 2 was writing...she would fill out those magazine cards that are in all the magazines you see,....she would collect them from the store floor, bring them home and fill them out.....the rest of the story...she drew tiny circles on the lines just as if she was filling them out.....so when a mom is boasting and bragging, remember there is the rest of the story that she is not about to tell you.*
>
> (Discussion: "My daughter is not conversing", msg#4)

The story in the excerpt in (4) features a habitually occurring event sequence that focuses on the writing skills of the teller's daughter when she was two years old. The teller sets the scene by orienting to information about the story character and the activity (*my dd at age 2 was writing*), and continues with recounting the habitual events that form the backbone of this telling. The habitual interpretation of these events in the past is realized through the use of the past progressive, e.g., "*was writing*" and the use and repetition of the auxiliary would, e.g., "*would fill*", "*would collect*", to express a repeated occurrence of an action. Additionally, the preterite (*she drew tiny circles*) carries an imperfective interpretation; that is, the event of drawing is not a discrete event as it does not take place at a specific point in time, but rather belongs to the habitual past reconstructed in the story. The teller returns to the present with an evaluative coda, addressing the advice-seeker and pointing out the point of the story. In addition, and most importantly, the teller uses a metadiscursive signal to indicate that this telling is a story (*the rest of the story*). In this example, the story implicitly advises the addressee not to compare her daughter with other children, alerting her to the possibility that other mothers may present a skewed account of their children's abilities.

The habitual aspect in such stories is also encoded with the use of the semi-auxiliary *used to* and the adverbials *usually* and *always*, as shown in the following examples extracted from different response stories of habitual events:

(5)

a. […] *She used to yell at me to dress up like a girl* […]
b. […] *When she would wake at night my husband would go in her room since I was usually nursing the baby* […]
c. […] *I always drew a house, with trees and a swing set* […]

Notably, certain habitual stories illustrate for advice-giving purposes how life was routinely organized around daily activities to address specific issues and meet the everyday demands of motherhood, as shown in an excerpt of a reply in (6). The advice-giver from example (4) returns with another post that offers the advice-seeker additional advice and another story of habitual events:

(6)

> […] try to discourage her from spending home time in front of the TV...I agree easier said than done, but with some creative genius, you will come up with lots of things to occupy her that doesnt involve the TV. My kids for a bit had to earn tokens to pay for TV or computer time....they earned them by helping me with my chores...then each token had a time value on it....so if they wanted to buy media time, they had to use their tokens...I added up the time value and set the timer....i would short it by 5 minutes, so when the timer went off, they knew they had 5 minutes to finish up.....at the end of the 5 minutes, I would tell them, and they were pretty good about obeying....only once did I have to go outside and pull the breaker switch to turn things off.....after that, they knew 5 minutes was it, not "just a minute"…
>
> (Discussion: "My daughter is not conversing", msg#7)

In (6), after suggesting to the advice-seeker to limit her daughter's time in front of the TV, the advice-giver offers a habitual story of personal experience as an example on how to manage and regulate children's media consumption. The story focuses on the teller's established routine during some time in the past that involved making her children earn tokens to pay for "*media time*". She recounts the different steps of this set routine in the past, explaining the details, e.g., "*they earned them by helping me with my chores*", "*i would short it by 5 minutes*", "*they knew they had 5 minutes*". The teller mentions a one-off occurrence of disobedience that she had to address (*only once did I have to go outside and pull the breaker switch to turn things off*), and points out the positive result, suggesting a return to the established routine (*after that, they knew 5 minutes was it*). Interestingly, the reported one-off incident is temporally ordered as a discrete event. However, the story does not fit the mold of a canonical, complication story since it centers on the importance of established, repeated routines.

Such narrative instances that revolve around repeated, routine activities echo what Trunk & Abrams (2009) refer to in their study on autobiographical memories

as *procedural narratives*, which they define as speaker-experienced narratives of "a daily routine" that contain an event sequence that occurred numerous times. In the advice-giving context examined herein, such habitual stories constitute roadmaps for advice in the routinization of events.

Next, habitual stories in the data highlight how tellers were affected by a recurring state of affairs and the repeated events in the past and present. Specifically, in these instances tellers 'exit' the habitual past of the story world and return to the present with a coda that indicates how the experience of such states and events has affected their life, and especially their parenting practices in the present day. The story presented in (7) revolves around an advice-giver's past personal experience of sibling fights. The story is a reply to an advice-seeker whose daughters fight constantly and refuse to play with each other.

(7)

> When I was growing up I had an older sister and we fought, too. We had the same age gap as your two daughters, 3 years. There's a few things I know that went wrong: my mom as a child had always wanted to have this special affirmation from her own mom that her mom loved her more than anyone else.. And so what my mom did is that she told each one of us (there were three of us) that she loved us more than the other. Not the best setting... If I asked my mom who was skinnier, me or my sister, my mom would say I was..And if my sister asked, my mom would say she was. She had this weird mind-set that we'd feel more loved that way if we had that personal affirmation that we were the best of the best....But she compared us and allowed for comparison to be present. Now I have three kids and I might say things like you're my favorite [Phillip] in the world but I'm careful to not make it sound like I love one less than the other.
>
> (Discussion: "daughters fighting nonstop HELP!!!", msg#9)

The advice-giver begins by establishing similarity of experience with the advice-seeker's daughters (*When I was growing up I had an older sister and we fought, too*). She uses the habitual past to detail her mother's approach to parenting, attributing the cause of the fights to her mother's parenting style of how she expressed affirmation to her children. This serves to highlight the repeated and habitual nature of the teller's experience during that time. The teller returns to the present time with a coda (*Now I have three kids and I might say things* […]), evaluating the events related in the story by shifting from the perspective of the daughter-child to that of the mother-adult, underlining the profound effect her mother's behavior has had on her own parenting style in the present. This habitual story serves to illustrate the pervasive impact of sibling comparison, suggesting that this could be a reason why the advice-seeker's daughters are constantly fighting. Thus, the teller uses this story to deliver implicit advice on what not to do.

Traditionally, habitual stories have not sat well with prescriptive concepts of narrative since they do not fit the definitional criteria of the Labovian 'canonical' narrative. As a result, they have been considered as narrative-like, yet non-narrative structures since they comprise "general events which have occurred an indefinite number of times" (Labov, 1972: 361; Linde & Labov, 1975). Yet, such stories are a salient narrative type in advice-givers' repertoire of response stories in this particular advice context. Their use is instrumental in underlining the impact of repeated events, showcasing the normalcy or abnormality of events and states of affairs, and conveying routineness as advice.

The salience of habitual stories in this data concurs with previous studies of narrative that illustrate the importance of habitual stories in reconstructing past experiences, especially negative ones. For instance, habitual stories are salient in the context of illness accounts (e.g. Chesire & & Ziebland, 2005; Harvey & Koteyko, 2013: 82-84), divorce talk (Riessman, 1991), immigrants' accounts of traumatic experiences (Carranza, 1998), and accounts focusing on the harsh daily routine of plantation workers (Gounder, 2011: 85-86). All of these studies show that tellers opt to present their troubles over and through time rather than putting them into a strict temporal order. By doing so, they emphasize the impact of repeated events, make particular points about what they experienced, or indicate what the norm was during a particular period in the past.

6.1.3 'Small' response stories

The analysis of the advice-givers' replies revealed narrative instances that fall under the category of small stories, a blanket term for 'atypical', 'non-canonical' narrative activities (see Section 3.2.3, Chapter 3). The small story types identified in the data include snapshots, refusals to tell, deferrals, story references, and one allusion (Table 4).

Table 4. Types of small stories in advice-givers' replies

Types	**Instances**
Snapshots	18
Refusals to tell	5
Deferrals	2
Story references	2
Allusions	1
Total	**28**

At minimum, the structural components of such stories include a very brief mention or allusion to a plotline and minimal evaluation. At maximum, they include a snapshot of past experience that includes a summarized statement of a remarkable event, evaluation, and a result/outcome that links the past to the present.

Snapshots

The most prevalent small story type found in the data is what I call here snapshots. These are elliptical, condensed accounts of past events that focus on a single, remarkable past event and its outcome, or make a cursory mention of habitual events and durative states-of-affairs in the past, as illustrated in (8), (9), and (10):

(8)

A similar thing happened to my DD when she was a year old. She was/is scared to death of dogs too. The only advice I can give is, ease him into it. […]

(Discussion: "6 yr old is scared to death of dogs", msg#3)

(9)

Not to scare you or anything but since you don't have a visitation agreement in place, there is nothing there stating that he can't just take him and keep him! *It happened to a good friend of mine and she is still 5+ yrs later trying to get custody back! Remember possession is 9/10 of the law*. Contact a lawyer ASAP - your state should have some sort of legal aid […]

(Discussion: "Don't know what to do anymore", msg#4)

(10)

[…] I do understand her frustration, tho. *I have a bossy big sister (she's not anymore, lol!)and remember how frustrating it was when she bossed us little ones around.* […]

(Discussion: "Bossy big sister!", msg#4)

The snapshots in the data are generally brief and typically encapsulate a sequence of past events mirroring another contributor's story, as shown in (8), or point back to story-preceding discourse (e.g. assessment or advice moves) within the same reply, indicating that what is being talked about has actually happened, as shown in (9). In addition, tellers use metapragmatic references to storytelling such as *I remember* to frame their snapshots, as illustrated in (10).

There are several instances of snapshots in the data that include deictic markers in the form of personal and demonstrative pronouns in combination with the

verbs *happen* and *do* in the past tense to summarize an occurrence of an event or a sequence of events (e.g. "*it happened to me*", "*we did this with one of our teens-daughter* "). In instances with *this*, the deictic signaling refers back to an assessment or advice that suggests a specific course of action to the advice-seeker. As a result, these devices enable tellers to create condensed stories of past experience without deploying their full telling. Thus, in (9), *it happened* refers to an incident that, based on the teller's assessment of the advice-seeker's situation, can be fleshed out as follows: a father took his child, presumably for a visit, and kept him/her because there was no visitation agreement in place between the parents, resulting in a custody battle that is still going on at the time of the interaction.

Refusals to tell

Refusals to tell are brief mentions of a remarkable event or state of affairs to which advice-givers orient to metadiscursively as separate stories but do not deploy them due to local concerns of relevance and brevity. Examples (11) and (12) illustrate this type of small story (highlighted in bold):

(11)

> […] Now he lost his wife (she ran off), lost his kids to the state **(long story)**, and is now taking care of our dad who is dying of cancer, and they are about to be foreclosed upon because neither will pay bills. […]
>
> (Discussion: "college and 20 yr old son", msg#9)

(12)

> My ydd is still doing all of the garbage. Free college tuition and transportation paid for, **long story about that**, for one year, but available this year only. She is bombing out. Dropped out last quarter.
>
> (Discussion: "Help with teen/family", msg#3)

In particular, refusals can be presented as asides in parentheses that intervene in the flow of the story to express the teller's view on the event or events, as shown in (11). Also, refusals to tell were found to be embedded or 'nested' within other stories, as illustrated in (11) (for the full story, see Chapter 8, Subsection 8.1.4). Another example of is given in (13):

(13)

> I am an Airforce Brat, and I know alot what your ds is feeling. My first move was in the middle of first grade too. I didnt like it. Then we ended up moving every year, in the middle if each school year, so I was the new kid. *I quit making friends because of the disruptions,* ***but that is another story***. I remember moving from one school system to another, and being so far behind it was not funny. And back then, it was not the school's

responsibility to help the kids learn or catch up. Then to another school that was behind where I was, and being bored out of my mind.. […]

(Discussion: "Son with learning problem", msg#2)

In (13), the advice-giver shares a habitual story of her experience as a child of a military family. In her telling, she mentions a pivotal event that she orients to as a separate story that she decides not to deploy (*I quit making friends because of the disruptions, but that is another story*).

Story references

There are two instances in the data in which advice-givers orient to stories metadiscursively by making a brief reference to them without proceeding with the actual telling. Such story references mention or tease a story topic and provide an overall evaluation, as shown in (14) and (15):

(14)

[…] **The stories i can tell you of his bad parenting would make you cringe, yet i still did let him keep them overnight.** […]

(Discussion: "Don't know what to do anymore", msg#11)

(15)

[…] My son is doing sooo much better now - but WE had to take action -. **I've just heard too many horror stories about waiting for the school to take action!**

(Discussion: "bullied son", msg#6)

To provide context, the advice-giver in (14) replies to a mother who has decided to deny her ex-partner overnight visitation with their son because she thinks his behavior as a parent is irresponsible. The excerpt in (15) is part of a reply to a mother whose son is bullied at school and she does not know how to handle it. The advice-giver emphasizes the need for taking action in bullying incidents rather than wait for the school to handle bullying. In both instances, advice-givers orient to an undefined number of stories that they can share, but do not. Metadiscursive evaluation is evident in how the advice-givers describe and frame the referenced stories, e.g., "*I've just heard too many **horror stories***", and "*the stories i can tell you of his **bad parenting** would make you **cringe***". In both cases, the story references establish relevance to what is being discussed, resonating the problems the advice-seeker is facing.

Deferrals

This type of small story involves offers or bids for stories to be told later. In particular, deferrals offer a glimpse of stories of which the full telling is explicitly deferred at a later time and through a different communication medium. The instances shown in (16) feature mentions of stories in both the opening and closing of the same advice-giving reply:

(16)

-Reply opening

> *Your story touched me because I have had many "bully" experiences with my 3 older children. Each situation and bully had to be handled differently! It would take 4 post to tell you all the stories I have. If you want to email me I will be more than happy to share my stories with you.* […]

- Reply closing

> […] *if you want to share your story about what is going on I could probably tell you a story and how it was handled here or with our school.*

(Discussion: "bullied son", msg#4)

In the opening of the reply message in (16), the advice-giver makes a story mention by referring to her "*many "bully" experiences*" and commenting that each case had to be handled in a different manner. However, she defers the telling of the stories at a later occasion through a different mode of communication, in this case email, and at the discretion of the addressee (*If you want to email me I will be more than happy to share my stories with you*). In this particular example, she attributes the deferral of her many stories at a later time to the space (and possibly time) constraints of the interaction (*It would take 4 post to tell you all the stories I have*). In the closing of her reply message, the advice-giver repeats her story bid and couples it with a story elicitation, openly inviting the advice-seeker to share her story (*If you want to share your story about what is going on I could probably tell you a story*).

It is important to note that the advice-giver deploys three stories in her lengthy reply (one of these stories is shown in Example 54 in Chapter 9, Subsection 9.1.3). The three stories that she does share in the main body of her message are illustrative examples of her experiences, while the rest of the bullying stories that she *could* share remain latent as indicative story references which can be realized into full tellings, if the addressee so wishes. The fact that the advice-giver shows awareness of the space limitations of the interaction at hand also indicates an understanding of general netiquette rules, which suggest, among other things, avoiding disproportionate long messages.

Allusions

Only one allusion to a story was identified in the story corpus. The advice-giver alludes to an incident that has already been recounted at an earlier time and in a different discussion thread. The allusion includes a minimal mention to an incident that also incorporates evaluation (the allusion is highlighted in bold in Example 17):

(17)

> […] She [daughter, LL] used to yell at me to dress up like a girl, but I think that was more from the influence of grandma....my mom hates I wear jeans "girls have no place wearing jeans, they just dont look right".....**After the vacation fiasco**, she doesnt hang around my mom as much. so she doesnt get the programming from her...so dd's pressures have backed off....and now she is joining me in the jeans world too.... […]
>
> (Discussion: "Daughter wears only boy clothes", msg#2)

The incident alluded in (17) involves a disagreement between the advice-giver's mother and her daughter on 'appropriate' girls' clothes that took place when the girl spent her vacation with her grandmother. At the same time, this minimal reference includes evaluation in the use of the word "*fiasco*" that carries negative evaluative connotations. What follows the allusion (*she doesnt hang around my mom as much*) can be interpreted as the outcome of the events. In general, the allusion here serves to avoid retelling a story already familiar and shared with the discussion participants. This shows that intertextual links influence a small story's structure and dictate which parts will be realized. Essentially, the allusion is recontextualized in a new discussion to evoke associations and mark the discussion participants' interactional history.

As shown above, small stories are organically embedded within the storytelling activity at hand, either within other stories or within the storytelling frame of a given reply. The qualitative analysis also showed that small stories demonstrate the tellers' awareness of the norms of communication in this particular interactional context; that is, which stories are appropriate to tell in terms of length and scope and which can remain as mentions.

The small story types identified in advice-givers' replies would traditionally qualify for what Labov calls an abstract. Labov (2010) points out that "most narratives are focused on a *most reportable event*. Yet reporting this event alone does not make a narrative: it only forms the abstract of a narrative" (italics in the original). However, these mini narrative tellings found in advice-givers' replies echo Genette's (1988: 19) remark that even one single action or event can be a story because "there is a transformation, a transition from an earlier state to later and resultant state". In particular, the instances found in the advice-givers' replies resonate with what Georgakopoulou (2017) refers to as "miniaturized story talk", the smallest

of small stories. In sum, the 'small' response stories presented above reflect the findings of other studies that map out similar instances in both offline (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007, 2017) and online communicative contexts (e.g. Dayter, 2015; Page, 2018).

6.2 Thematic patterns

This section deals with the overarching thematic patterns that emerge from response stories' plot structure. The identification of a story's theme is not a straightforward enterprise; stories may contain and evoke more than one theme and even have several subthemes (see Lee, 2008). *Story theme* is used here in a broad sense to refer to the core, underlying idea or ideas of a story as they emerge from its overall content. The close reading analysis of the response stories revealed two major thematic axes into which the response stories fall: *problem stories* (n= 47) and *solution stories* (n= 74). The first revolve around unresolved issues and their consequences for the advice-giver and others. Themes underlying problem stories include temporary or lasting life disruption, emotional suffering, psychological and physical repercussions, and, in general, losses. Solution stories focus on how a problem was successfully resolved or at least successfully managed. Key underlying themes in these stories include restoration of balance, removal of obstacles, recovery, and, in general, gains. The following subsections present and illustrate the two thematic patterns of problem and solution stories, respectively.

6.2.1 Problem stories

Problem stories revolve around continuing and unresolved challenging situations, which affected and continue to affect story participants in a negative way. A problem is defined here as a set of circumstances which discussion participants construct discursively, be it implicitly or explicitly, as a difficulty and an adverse situation that affects an individual in an undesirable way. More specifically, problem stories accommodate two kinds of narrative tellings: a) stories that focus on a problematic situation and its consequences for story participants, and b) stories that feature a problematic situation and its consequences for story participants including their failed or ongoing attempts to resolve the problem of concern. Also, problem stories span all types of narrative types identified in the story corpus, namely, complication, habitual, and small story instances.

To illustrate, consider example (18). This features a habitual story in which a problematic issue remains unresolved, despite any efforts made to remedy it. The story is featured in a reply to an advice-seeker whose two daughters fight constantly, exhibiting jealousy towards each other and other children in the immediate family environment who draw their mother's attention. The advice-seeker further explains in her message that she is pregnant and expresses her worries about the daughters' future behavior towards the new baby. She offers a story of personal

experience relating events that occurred regularly and formulates the problem of concern as "*jealousy issues*" caused by a new addition to the family:

(18)

> […] When my second arrived, i would get up and have him fed and ready for morning nap before my oldest woke up for the day.....I would put him down for his nap, cook my oldes't breakfast, and sit at the table with him and eat breakfast together....we would talk about plans for the day and all. Then when it was time for the baby to wake up, it was not as big an issue for him to sit and watch a few videos (was a Thomas the tank engine fan) while I tended the baby's needs. I always took the first several minutes of the baby being down for a nap to be one on one with my oldest.....and yet he still has jealousy issues....so there is something there....but I can feel good I did the best I could.... He to this day remember how I spent all my time with the baby, and doesnt remember the breakfasts we did every day, or the story time or playing in the sand box....all that stuff, he cant remember at all....but I know I did it. […]
>
> (Discussion: "Daughters fighting nonstop", msg#3)

The advice-giver recounts her routine efforts as a parent to address the problematic situation (e.g [I would] *cook my oldes't breakfast, and sit at the table with him and eat breakfast together.…we would talk about plans for the day and all*), albeit unsuccessfully: the son is still jealous and his perception regarding his mother's time and attention to the baby remain unchanged ("*and yet he still has jealousy issues*", "*He to this day remember how I spent all my time with the baby, and doesnt remember the breakfasts we did every day*"). In spite of the fact that her actions failed to resolve her son's jealousy issues, the advice-giver evaluates her efforts in a positive manner, suggesting that she tried to fulfill her parental duty the best way she could (*but I can feel good I did the best I could*).

Problem stories can be interpreted as projections of problematic situations of what can happen to the advice-seekers in the future, e.g. the lingering jealousy issues towards a sibling despite the parent's efforts in (18). However, other stories that concentrate on the theme of 'facing a problem' do not necessarily project a possible scenario of a problematic situation, but rather focus solely on a problem as a token of similar experience to illustrate the issue at hand, as shown in (19):

(19)

> Our family situation sounds pretty much identical except in the reverse. DH is her bio-dad. She still talks to him but only barely (and as he's coming to realize – only when she needs a mechanic!). *Oh, except for one time – when it was her birthday! She stopped by, he said, happy*

birthday, she realized she wasn't geting a present and left. He is absolutely devestated by his two daughters.

(Discussion: "Help with teen/family", msg#6)

The reply in (19) is addressed to an advice-seeker who is struggling with her teen daughter's antagonistic and rebellious behavior. The advice-giver establishes similarity to the situation of the advice-seeker (*Our family situation sounds pretty much identical*), providing background information to demonstrate her stepdaughter's self-centered behavior (e.g. *She still talks to him but only barely* […] *only when she needs a mechanic!*). The advice-giver recalls an incident introduced by a story abstract "*Oh, except for one time – when it was her birthday!*" which she relates to exemplify her stepdaughter's selfish behavior ("*she realized she wasn't geting a present and left*"). The advice-giver summarizes the story with an evaluative comment that underlines how the father is deeply affected by this behavior (*He is absolutely devestated by his two daughters*). As with the previous story example discussed above, there is no mention of a solution to the problem.

To summarize, as the examples above show, problem stories feature unresolved problematic situations reflecting to one or other extent advice-seekers' problems. These stories showcase a problem that mirrors the advice-seeker's current situation or focus on different aspects of the problem that the advice-seeker has not encountered yet. In this regard, the latter are to be interpreted as possibilities that may be actualized in the advice-seeker's situation, hence allowing the interpretation of such response stories as warnings.

6.2.2 Solution (or success) stories

Solution stories are accounts of events in which story participants encounter a problematic situation that is eventually resolved or at least partially resolved. In particular, these stories present a situation that is implicitly or explicitly identified as problematic and recount the course of action taken to resolve it, or the events that led to its resolution. These stories vary from brief to lengthy, detailed accounts that specify a problem and how the story participant or participants overcame it. The following examples illustrate response stories that fall under this thematic category. The story presented in (20) is part of a reply to a mother who struggles with anger issues towards her child, expressing her fear that the situation may escalate from verbal abuse to physical injury:

(20)

[…] I had some anger management issues as a new parent and fortunately I got help with it early on. Did a couple of regretful tantrums here and there and thank God got over it.

(Discussion: "Am I a horrible Mother?", msg:#9)

The advice-giver recounts a brief story of personal experience as a parent that focuses on the problem of "*anger management issues*". The problem presented in the story is resolved by taking action, in this case seeking help for anger issues: "*fortunately I got help with it early on*". The advice-giver mentions the occurrence of outbursts (*a couple of regretful tantrums*) that eventually stopped, underlining the successful outcome "*thank God got over it*". The advice-giver also implies that timely reaction is essential, which opens up the interpretation of what could have happened if she had not taken the appropriate course of action to resolve the issue at an early stage. Thus, this story allows to be interpreted as a recommendation to the advice-seeker to seek help for her anger issues in order to resolve the problem.

Other instances of solution stories involve lengthy accounts that detail the course of action taken to remedy a problematic situation, as in (21). In this example, the advice-giver shares a habitual story of personal experience to illustrate how she solved the problem of her son not staying in his own bed:

(21)

> With my little night owl, this is what worked for him. We put on some music, just loud enough that if everything is quiet, he can hear it....it was the same music I played while I nursed him at night, so it was familiar, but if you use it during the day for "quiet time", he will grow familiar with it.....we used Sleep sound in Jesus by Michael Card.....then bath time, but not for too long....the water play seemed to stir him up he loved playing in the water....Then we went to his room, and on the floor sat and played quietly....this was mom or dad too.....we played leggos..... then moved on to coloring, then curled up on the bed while the parent red what seemed 4,000 books for the 1,000,000th time.....Then it was time to lay still.....we left the light on for him, then after 15 minutes the hall light went on and his bedroom light went off.....he had to stay in his bed unless there was fire, blood or broken.....any other reason, it cost him a quarter.....each night we put 3 quarters on his headboard....any quarters left in the morning, he could put in his bank which was something he loved to do.....each time he got up, either because he couldnt sleep, needed a drink, etc...the zillion reasons children get up, mostly to keep from falling alseep, he had to give us a quarter.....if he didnt have any more quarters he couldnt get up....It usually took what seemed forever to fall asleep, but fortunately for me my dh is also a night owl and would stay up waiting for him to be asleep....
>
> (Discussion: "My 6 yr old won't stay in his own bed", msg#4)

The story focuses on an established bedtime routine in the past that comprises a sequence of actions or steps that led to the solution of the indicated problem. Specifically, the advice-giver recounts in detail the steps of the pre-sleep routine for her son which are summarized as follows: a) playing peaceful music to set a calm

atmosphere, b) bathing the child, c) playing and coloring quietly on the floor, and finally d) curling up on the bed reading a book to him. The next part of the telling of the bedtime routine involves the steps to the "*time to lay still*", which the advice-giver relates in detail, focusing on the rule they followed to keep the boy in his bed: "*he had to stay in his bed unless there was fire, blood or broken.....any other reason, it cost him a quarter*". The story in this example is offered to the advice-seeker as a suggestion for establishing a bedtime routine for her son in order to solve the problem. More precisely, the step sequence of the bedtime routine constitutes a script for the advice-seeker to follow, the success of which is already announced in the abstract of the story.

Next, certain solution stories feature a problematic situation that is resolved not by taking a course of action per se, but merely by refraining from action, as illustrated in (22):

(22)

> Reading this story I was reminded of me when I was a kid! lol I was the boss of my two little sisters, just as your daughter is. Same story line actually, one would do what I said, the other acted out. I was shy, just like her, sounds really similar actually. I grew out of it and everything was fine. My parents never interfered and let us work everything out, which I am grateful for. I have no suggestions really, just let it pass.
>
> (Discussion: "Bossy big sister!",msg #:3)

In (22), the response is addressed to an advice-seeker whose oldest daughter exhibits a domineering, "*bossy*" behavior towards her younger brothers. The advice-giver relates a story of personal experience from the perspective of a child who was bossy to her siblings, establishing common experience between herself and the advice-seeker's daughter: "*I was the boss of my two little sisters, just as your daughter is*", "*Same story line actually*". The problem of concern was resolved by itself over time, as the advice-giver points out: "*I grew out of it and everything was fine*". At the same time, the advice-giver underlines her parents' non-action in the form of non-interference as a key component to the solution of the problem: "*My parents never interfered and let us work everything out*". She expresses her positive evaluation of the outcome, e.g., "*everything was fine*", as well as her parents' approach to the problem, e.g., "*which I am grateful for*". The story in this example is used to showcase the positive result of non-interference, thus recommending to the advice-giver to adopt the same approach. This interpretation is further reinforced by the advice given in the coda to seal off the reply: "*I have no suggestions really, just let it pass*", in which "*just let it pass*" encapsulates the point of the story.

In sum, solution stories present how advice-givers resolved problematic situations, essentially serving as recommendations for how advice-seekers' problems can be dealt with. These narrative tellings are essentially success stories and their

common denominator is that they showcase a positive result; that is, a problematic situation is remedied, and balance is restored.

6.3 Summary

This chapter focused on the narrative types of advice-givers response stories and their overarching thematic structure. The variability of different narrative types in the data shows that advice-givers configure past personal experience in narrative format in a variety of ways, from complication stories to habitual stories and small story types. Complication stories emphasized incidents and occurrences of temporally ordered discrete events that were typically organized around some kind of disruption. Response stories of habitual experience were temporally grounded in the habitual past, highlighting recurring states of affairs and customary or routine events. As illustrated, tellers employ specific devices to reconstruct habitual past and mark the repeated actualizations of events and ongoing states of affairs in the past. Importantly, advice-giving is yet another communicative context where stories of habitual events emerge. The analysis also showed a wide range of narrative activities that fall under the scope of small stories, namely, snapshots, refusals to tell, story references, deferrals, and one allusion. As shown, these 'small' response stories are intimately connected to local exigencies and contextual factors.

Regarding thematic patterns that emerge from the stories' plotline, advice-givers' response stories were either problem or solution stories. Problem response stories focus on losses, while solution response stories focus on gains. Also, by contributing replies with topically and thematically relevant stories to problems described in advice-seeking messages, advice-givers demonstrate their understanding of these messages. Thus, problem stories and solution stories constitute relevant contributions to what is being talked about in the problem messages. They are a form of acknowledgement and understanding of advice-seekers' problems in virtue of resemblance of experience.

7 Local and global functions of advice-givers response stories

This chapter addresses the functions of advice-givers' response stories in relation to their immediate co-text and context of their discussion thread. First, the focus is on the co-text of the response stories, outlining the different discursive moves that precede or follow the stories. Next, the chapter addresses the functions of response stories in relation to the identified discursive moves that precede and follow them, and previous discourse in the messages they reply to. Then, the chapter brings into focus the effects of advice-giving on narrative structure, especially closer attention to abstracts and codas. This is followed by a closer examination of the global functions of response stories in the advice exchanges.

7.1 Content structure of advice-giving messages with stories

This section presents the results of the analysis of the content structure of the advice-givers' replies regarding their response stories in these messages. The aim is to examine how the response stories are embedded in the immediate local context in which they occur. First, the section reports on the number and type of discursive moves that immediately precede and follow the advice-givers' stories in order to examine which moves typically occur prior to and following a story. Then, the section addresses the story preceding and following moves in connection with the function of the stories. For the convenience of the reader, the list of the identified discursive move categories and their explanation is repeated in Table 5 in an abridged form.

As stated in Chapter 5 regarding methodological issues of move analysis, a story abstract that has a text-structuring function is not labeled and counted here as a separate move, i.e., metacomment, but is regarded as a structural component of the story it prefaces. Similarly, codas that deliver advice are not labeled and counted as separate advice moves, but they are considered components of the stories they seal off.

Table 5. Discursive move categories in the reply corpus (adapted from Locher 2006: 62, 209)

Discursive moves	**Explanation**
Advice	A suggestion or recommendation for future action; an invitation for introspection and consideration
Advice uptake	The advice-giver states that she will follow the suggested advice
Apology	An expression of regret
Assessment	An assessment of the advice-seeker's or the advice-giver's own situation
Background	Background information
Clarification request	A request for clarification on the advice-seeker's problem
Contact request	A request for the advice-seeker's contact details
Explanation	An explanation or further elaboration of a point just made in a previous move or post
Farewell	Good-bye, closing
General information	General information
Greeting	Greeting, opening
Metacomment	A text-structuring comment
Story	A response story of personal or vicarious past experience

Number and type of discursive moves that precede and follow stories

The analysis of the content structure of the reply messages that feature response stories reveals the following: There are 84 stories in the corpus that display both an immediately preceding and a following move (Table 6). In addition, 16 stories in the corpus feature no preceding move in the reply message they appear; that is, the story is the opening move of the reply. Similarly, there are 16 instances of stories that are not followed by another move, closing off the advice-giver's reply. Also, five stories in the corpus of 121 advice-givers' stories feature neither a preceding nor a following move. In these instances, a story solely constitutes the advice-giver's reply.

It is necessary to clarify at this point that story references which are embedded within other stories are considered herein to share any preceding and/or following move with the stories they are part of. This means that a single discursive move can precede and/or follow more than one story.

Table 6. Stories with and without preceding and following discursive moves

Discursive moves	**Stories (N=121)**
Preceding and following moves	84
No preceding move	16
No following move	16
No preceding or following moves	5
Total	**121**

In total, there are 200 discursive moves that occur directly before and/or after 116 out of the 121 advice-givers' stories in the corpus. The identified discursive moves are equally distributed concerning the overall number of moves preceding stories (100 instances) and moves following stories (100 instances), respectively. Table 7 presents the overall frequency of the discursive moves that immediately precede and follow the stories according to move category.

As Table 7 shows, the most frequent discursive moves that precede and follow stories in the reply corpus are *assessment* (n=61), *advice* (n=50), and *story* (n=25). Specifically, *assessment* is the most preferred move right before a narrative telling (n=33), while *advice* is the most preferred move that follows (n=35). As regards discursive moves preceding stories, *advice* and *explanation* are equally the second most preferred move, while *story* comes in third position. *Explanation*, however, is a special case since it involves an explanation or further elaboration of a point made in a previous discursive move. Hence, in these instances, the move pair *advice-explanation* precedes a given story. Table 7 also illustrates that the second most preferred move that follows a story is *assessment* (n=28), and the third is *story* (n=12).

Table 7. The distribution of the 200 discursive moves that immediately precede and/or follow 116 advice-givers' stories according to move category*

Discursive move	Total	As preceding move	As following move
Greeting	5	5	0
Farewell	7	0	7
Assessment	**61**	**33**	**28**
Advice	**50**	**15**	**35**
Problem statement	11	8	3
Explanation	17	**15**	2
Story	**25**	**13**	**12**
Background	13	7	6
General information	4	3	1
Clarification request	3	1	2
Apology	1	0	1
Metacomment	1	0	1
Contact request	1	0	1
Advice uptake	1	0	1
Total	**200**	**100**	**100**

*The most frequent moves preceding and following stories in total and separately by category are highlighted in black

7.2 Local discourse functions

Response stories fulfill the following functions in no order of importance: 1) giving advice, 2) legitimizing advice-givers' assessments, advice, or general information, 3) showing and supporting dis/agreement with other contributors' assessments or advice, and 4) delivering a diagnostic opinion. It is important to note at this point that these functions can be overlapping and be simultaneously realized by the response stories. For instance, a story can deliver a diagnostic opinion, while, at the same time, indicate disagreement and deliver advice, as we shall see in the subsections that follow. Yet, it is essential to treat and account for these functions separately to show how they operate. When necessary for context, problem messages also appear in the examples in full, or in an abridged form for brevity.

7.2.1 Giving advice

In their replies, advice-givers typically offer suggestions and recommendations for future action by using imperatives (e.g. *Spend time with her and talk*), declaratives that express necessity and obligation (e.g. *You must stop this behavior now*), and interrogatives that invite consideration (e.g. *Have you requested he be transferred to a different classroom?*). Using stories is yet another way of delivering advice to addressees in an implicit or explicit manner. Response stories that deliver advice implicitly do so by showcasing positive outcomes. Explicit advice is typically located in the coda of response stories in the form of suggestions and recommendation, or it can also be present in evaluation segments interspersed in a story.

(23)

> Hi and I wanted to give you a hug!!!!! I was raised the same way by my father and then throw in some alchol and evil step parents... I too vowed that I would NEVER treat my children like that... As the years we by and I dealt with infertility, I decided that *I* was being punished because I would treat my child like that.... At the time, I could not bring myself to deal with it...the infertility was bad enough. After 10 yrs I was blessed with a son...who NEVER slept and cried all day for no good reason. I was LUCKY that I broke my foot at 9wks PPD, so I could get the meds that I needed for my depression and the sleep I was so short on. I also found the Positive Parenting boards here on [Name of Online Community]. So much support and knowledge...and complete ideas and methods on the parent I wanted to be.
>
> (Discussion: "Am I a horrible Mother?", msg#7)

In (23), the advice-giver establishes common ground with the addressee by underscoring shared experiences. Her display of support is followed by an orientation that establishes common ground with the addressee by highlighting shared experiences and attitudes. She continues with describing her own emotional struggle with self-blame that echoes that of the addressee, demonstrating understanding of her emotional state. The challenges of new parenthood mark the complicating action, followed by the turning point of the story that features the most reportable event (*I was **LUCKY** that I broke my foot at 9wks PPD*). Using capital letters for intensity, she evaluates this event as a positive catalyst, seemingly indicating that it prompted a diagnosis of postpartum depression. She then shows the successful outcome that focuses on her receiving the appropriate medication and finding support online.

This example indicates that the resolution of the story can be understood and interpreted as indirect advice for courses of action both offline and online. In this instance, the advice-giver implicitly advises the addressee to seek treatment for her depression and refers her to other sources of support within the online communi-

ty. Notably, she engages in extensive rapport building with the addressee through the story before giving indirect advice. She positions herself as a peer and a mother with a similar background of emotional struggles and experience with depression. What this accomplishes is presenting her implicit advice as credible and relevant to the problem at hand. Also, the positive outcome serves to support the implicit recommendations and suggestions.

Given the face-threatening potential of direct advice, especially on sensitive issues such as mental health, showing how to solve a problem through stories of personal experience is a less direct advice-giving strategy. This finding echoes similar observations in previous research regarding advice-giving in online health contexts (e.g. Harrison and Barlow, 2009; Kouper, 2010). At the same time, by using solution stories to advise, advice-givers position themselves as experts based on their first-hand experience of dealing successfully with an issue. Further, these advice-giving problem-solution stories serve an argumentative function as they convey and frame advice implicitly in terms of gains. With gain framing, advice-givers focus on the positive outcome or outcomes in the stories, thus showing to addressees what they can gain by following the advice (see van Poppel, 2014:105).

7.2.2 Legitimizing assessments, advice, or general information

One function of response stories is to support preceding or upcoming advice, assessment, or general information discursive moves in the immediate, local co-text of the reply message. When advice-givers offer advice, make assessments of an addressee's problematic situation, or report general information relevant to a problem, they make specific claims. The response stories are used to legitimize the claims advice-givers put forward, illustrating why advice-givers give a particular piece of advice and engage in particular evaluations of a given problem. As a result, advice-givers use these stories for argumentative purposes in a direct manner so as to strengthen the persuasive force of their claims.

To illustrate, example (24) shows a response story of vicarious experience that is deployed in support of its preceding advice move that also includes an explanation. This is a reply to a mother who details in her problem message her frequent verbal confrontations with her ex-partner over visitation and child support issues. Explaining that they have not reached a custody agreement, she describes her ex's increasingly belligerent and threatening behavior in detail and expresses her concern over her son's safety and wellbeing. Before deploying the story, the advice-giver offers direct advice, urging the advice-seeker to take legal action (*You do need to get legal doccuments going*). She further explains her reasoning behind her claim in the accompanying explanation move and then proceeds with a story.

(24)

[…] <advice>You do need to get legal doccuments going....</advice> <explanation[advice]>for your safety as well as the best interest of the child....bringing the courts into it is not a negitive thing unless it is being used to shut the other parent out...</explanation[advice]>
I had a friend who was being abused by her husband....he beat her so badly that she ended up in the hospital.....while she was in the hospital, he went to the courts and filed a restraining order on her, telling the courts she had beat him up, and gained 100% full custody of the baby. Since she was in the hospital, she was unable to defend herself, and was totally unaware of this going on in the first place
When he went to the hospital, picked her up, brought her home, then called the police and had her thrown in jail for violation of the restraining order.....the one she had no clue about.
So when she got out, she went to see about getting her dd out of the hands of the abuser, and found she had no parental rights, the courts dissolved her rights while she was in the hospital. I am telling you this, because you never know what someone can do behind your back. And if they use the court system you have not a leg to stand on. So the two of you need to sit down, maybe have a mediator present to keep things unemotional.

(Discussion: "Dont know what to do anymore", msg#12)

In (24), the advice-giver relates a problem story about her friend who, while being treated at the hospital for domestic violence injuries, lost custody of her daughter. She relates how the friend's abusive husband used the court system to his advantage to gain custody and have his wife arrested for violating a restraining order. The story culminates with the mother finding out that her parental rights were terminated when she tried to take her daughter away. The advice-giver exits the story world with a coda that delivers the point of the story, stating explicitly the reason for sharing it: *I am telling you this, because you never know what someone can do behind your back*. She elaborates further by restating one key plotline point as a conditional: *And if they use the court system you have not a leg to stand on*. The coda serves both as an assessment of the advice-seeker's situation and as a direct and explicit warning of a future problem with severe consequences. It also incorporates explicit advice, recommending that the advice-seeker should engage in dialogue with her ex-partner to resolve their issues (*So the two of you need to sit down, maybe have a mediator present to keep things unemotional*). Thus, this response story serves as evidence to support the story-preceding advice and its accompanying explanation. The friend's ordeal stands testimony to the importance of taking legal action to avoid the worst possible scenario presented in the story.

Further, one particular strategy that advice-givers use to strengthen the persuasiveness of their advice or an assessment of a problem is to use a string of thematically linked stories to prove and support their claims. This strategy is labeled here

narrative stacking, an example of which is given in (25):

(25)

> My son is also 8 years old, in the third grade and the smallest child in his class and he has ADD and he is on medication. To make things worse he was new at the beginning of this school year! He had to leave the school that he loved and had gone to since Kindergarten. He would call home all of the time at the beginning this year and say that he wanted to come home that he did not feel good. Eventually after I would sit and look him in the eyes and talk to him – he would say that kids said he looked to small to be in the third grade and that even the first graders were teasing him! I knew that the teacher and the principal could or would only do so much. So I nicely talked to the teacher and explained the situation - she was awesome she arranged for school counseling, (now my son goes to a counseling group once a week with other kids) and she also talked to the class about calling other children names (which helped). I also began sitting in during class time so that I could walk out and watch him during recess. Now I only have to volunteer once a week (I help the teacher with the homework every Friday.)
>
> <advice> Keep your friends close but keep your enemies even closer. </advice> Once at the beginning a child who just happened to be in his counseling group was harassing my son so I made a call to the counselor. Once a little girl was harassing my son so I walked my son to class so he could point her out - I went straight to her teacher. Not too long ago a bigger boy who is in my sons class was trying to push my child- I told him to keep his hands off of my son and that I was going to tell his teacher – (did not tell the teacher – since I know that I scared him).
> […]
>
> (Discussion: "bullied son", msg#6)

The advice-giver in (25) offers four solution stories of personal experience to deliver and support her advice on how to deal with bullies (*Keep your friends close but keep your enemies even closer*). The first story is a fully-fledged account that details the problem and how the advice-giver took action and, together with the teacher, handled the bully situation at school. The three smaller narrative tellings act as support to the 'larger' telling. As a result, this narrative stacking serves to bolster the advice-giver's overall claim that emerges from her experience that the parent needs to act.

In sum, by giving advice or making an assessment, discussion participants make claims as to what should be done to address and resolve a problem. Problem stories and solution stories serve to support and reinforce claims in previous or upcoming discourse within the replies. This finding is in accordance with other

studies that have shown discussion participants use stories as a warrant for giving advice (e.g. Morrow, 2006; Page, 2012). The examples also illustrate the important role of story codas in terms of restating and reformulating preceding advice, as well as providing assessments of a given problematic situation to prepare the ground for upcoming advice.

7.2.3 Showing and supporting dis/agreement with others' assessments or advice

Advice-givers may use assessments that express overt or indirect agreement or disagreement with other contributors' assessments and advice, and follow up with a response story as supporting evidence. These stories have an argumentative function and elaborate on a position advice-givers take when they express their agreement or disagreement with others. At the same time, by using stories to express and support agreement or disagreement, advice-givers align or disalign with addressees' positions.

To illustrate, consider (26). In this example the advice-giver addresses an advice-seeker directly, agreeing with her assessment that she needs counseling for her depression. Her agreement is also in concert with other contributors' advice, urging the advice-seeker to get help (e.g. *I'd suggest that perhaps you might want to get counselling for yourself*). She then proceeds with a solution story that details her own experience with depression.

(26)

Problem message (msg#1)

> […]The truth is, I am a little depressed. I see my life as a hole with pain stuffed into it. I know that is wrong. I guess when I see my older daughters' pain, it just reminds me of mine, and I feel choked with sorrow. I am not in an abusive relationship, but a very painful one. Details may be forthcoming at a later date. […] I know I am a very good mother. It's funny, people I barely know will come over to me and comment on what a kind, patient and loving mother I am. And I know it's true. So understand that what I am feeling comes from a place of depression and unhappiness. I am seeking counseling for myself, because I know I need it now. […]

Reply (msg#4)

> <assessment[agreement]> I absolutely agree that you need some treatment for your depression. </assessment[agreement]> Growing up my mother had depression, which she treated erratically. There is no doubt that she loved my sister and I, and no doubt she wanted the best for us. Sadly there is also no doubt the profound effect her disease had upon our childhood, in ways she probably doesn't even realize to this day. I

> wouldn't have realized the effect it had upon me until I was diagnosed with depression myself and began treatment. My saving grace was medication, and I remember the day it began to work. It wasn't like something clicked and I was happy, but rather I remember having the thought "OK, wow, this is how normal people feel, this is how I'm supposed to feel Gone were feelings of dread, self depreciation and hopelessness. I'm not advocating meds, obviously that's not the answer for everyone (just ask Tom Cruise!). Just relating my own experience. Granted there is a difference between a chronically depressed person and one depressed under painful circumstances, but depression manifests itself the same way no matter the reason.
>
> <advice> Anyway, I truly believe the best thing you can do for your daughters is to get help for yourself. </advice>
>
> (Discussion: "Some advice please….")

In her reply, the advice-giver traces her personal trajectory with depression from a dual perspective: as a child greatly affected by her mother's depression, and as a former depression sufferer in adulthood. These two perspectives function as legitimizing arguments for recommending treatment. By establishing a causal link between her mother's depression and her own, the advice-giver alerts the addressee to the potential negative effects of the illness on her children (*Sadly there is also no doubt the profound effect her disease had upon our childhood*).

The high point of the story is marked by the pivotal event of receiving a diagnosis and treatment. By strategically using direct reported thought at the peak of the story to dramatize her point, the advice-giver underlines the positive effects of receiving medication (*I remember having the thought* ***"OK, wow, this is how normal people feel, this is how I'm supposed to feel"***). She elaborates on this in the story's resolution, strengthening her positive evaluation (*Gone were feelings of dread, self depreciation and hopelessness*). However, her position on medication becomes more tentative in the extended story coda. She mitigates her position that medication is the solution by pointing to her subjective experience ("*I'm not advocating meds, obviously that's not the answer for everyone*", "*Just relating my own experience*"), and incorporating an alternative viewpoint in a parenthetical comment: *(just ask Tom Cruise!)*.[23] Also, the advice-giver acknowledges there are different kinds of depression (i.e. situational versus chronic depression). This response story supports a previously made claim that the advice-giver agrees with. The parallels the advice-giver draws between her own and the advice-seeker's experience, and the positive outcome of the story constitute legitimizing factors for her expression of agreement.

23 This parenthetical comment is a reference to actor Tom Cruise's highly publicized view of psychiatry as a pseudoscience and pharmacological treatments as dangerous and unnecessary (see Neil, 2005).

In general, the findings support previous scholarship showing that stories in online discussions are important in aligning or disaligning with others by express ing agreement or disagreement (e.g. Page, 2012; Thurnherr et al., 2016; Veen et al., 2010).

7.2.4 Delivering a diagnostic opinion

Another function of response stories in the discussions is to offer etiological (causal) assessments of others' health issues, thus delivering a diagnostic opinion to addressees. Specifically, these are solution stories replying to problem messages in which advice-seekers ask for help and advice on their own or their children's health-related problems. In these messages, advice-seekers typically voice their complaints over an administered treatment that is not working adequately or at all, express their concern that they may have been misdiagnosed, and request help to identify the causes of a condition. While some advice-givers may reply with assessment moves expressing a diagnostic opinion (e.g. *it may be a food allergy*), advice to seek a specialist for an expert opinion or a second opinion (e.g. "*Perhaps she needs to have a neuropsychological evaluation*", "*Try getting a second opinion*"), or referrals (e.g. *there's a terrific ADHD kids board here at* [Name of Online Community]), other advice-givers use stories of past personal experience as a diagnostic opinion tool.

A notable feature of such stories is that they invoke the voice, authority and actions of a professional expert, such as a psychologist, a speech therapist, a physician, or other health practitioner, to deliver a diagnostic opinion. This is accomplished by incorporating the voice of the expert in the telling through the use of reported speech, as illustrated in the reply message in (27). That reply addresses a problem message in which a mother relates how her ten-month-old son keeps waking up in the middle of the night in a state of panic. The mother explains that the pediatrician has ruled out any physical causes and determined it is probably bad dreams. She is, however, concerned that something else causes this, implicitly questioning the expert's assessment:

(27)
Problem message (msg#1)

> I have a beautiful 10 month old baby boy who up until lately (the past month a half or so) has always slept through the night no problem... Only about a month a half ago he woke up in the middle of the night inconsolably crying hystrically (HES NEVER DONE THAT BEFORE EVER) then he finally calmed down I called the pediatrican in the middle of the night and she asked a bunch of questions none of which was his problem (such as him pointing to anything that hurt him i checked his diaper etc,,,) she said it was probably a bad dream.. Well its happened since then twice in the middle of the night and it breaks my heart

and scares me at the same time he finally basically cries himself to sleep from exhaustion. […] I dont understand what causes this??? Does anyone have any suggestions of what it might be? He has 2 teeth but he doesnt really complain or cry during the day if it could be teething??

Reply (msg#4)

Hello! When my son was about that same age (he's 10 years old now), he used to do the same thing. He would wake up crying in the middle of the night for several nights and my husband and I did everything to try to calm him down. Finally, I took him to the doctor and told her everything that he does. She said that he is having nightterrors. She said a lot of babies go through that and they will grow out of it. My son did it for about a month or so and then it all stopped.

(Discussion: "New MOM please help with infant advice")

In her story, the advice-giver establishes similarity of experience through direct comparison (*he* **used to do** *the same thing*). She then delivers a diagnostic opinion by animating the doctor's voice, using indirect speech: *She said that he is having* ***night terrors***. *She said that a lot of babies go through that and they will grow out of it*. The doctor's diagnosis is followed by information delivery outlining night terrors as common and part of children's normal development. This serves to normalize the problem, offering the addressee reassurances that it is a temporary issue. As a case in point, the resolution of the story confirms the doctor's expert assessment (*My son did it for about a month or so* ***and then it all stopped***).

Apart from delivering a diagnostic opinion, the expert voice in the story world also indicates implicit disagreement with the pediatrician's assessment in the problem message. This is because night terrors (*pavor nocturnus*) are not bad dreams or nightmares but a sleep disorder that involves episodes of abrupt, partial awakening and extreme physiological arousal during slow-wave sleep (see Anders 2007: 628–629). Thus, the expert voice in the advice-giver's story serves to confirm the advice-seeker's concern that it is not just bad dreams, expressing disagreement with that expert assessment. Also, it is worth mentioning here that other contributors' replies in the same thread include assessments that the advice-seeker's son may be suffering from night terrors. Thus, the response story also shows agreement with other contributors' assessments.

Another strategy used in the delivery of diagnostic opinion in these stories is positioning the expert as a responsible and competent professional, indicating that such qualities contribute to a successful diagnosis or management of a health issue. This is accomplished by framing the expert's actions and approach to the problem in a positive light, painting a picture of what constitutes good, professional practice. To illustrate, consider the exchange in (28). In her problem message, a mother explains that her adolescent daughter suffers from panic attacks so severe that she believes she has a heart condition. She further explains that medical tests

have excluded any heart issues, and a clinical assessment at a later point showed no depression. Eventually, a pediatrician prescribed anxiety medication that proved to have no effect on the panic attacks.

(28)

Problem message (msg#1)

> My 13 year old daughter started having panic attacks about a month ago. The first one happened as she was going to bed on a Saturday night. She thought she was having a heart attack--her heart was racing, she was shaky and numb, her breathing was rapid, and she was scared to death. I took her to the ER and they did an EEG and a chest x-ray and found nothing. So, they gave her a Benadryl and sent us home. We went to the pediatrician the following Monday and he wanted us to just wait and see what happened for a week or so, and if it continued, to come back. Well, they have continued and are getting worse. Almost 2 weeks ago, I took her back. He gave her a written test for depression--nothing. So, he put her on Prozac for the anxiety/panic attacks. When she has one, she is convinced she is going to die. Well, the prozac hasn't done much. The attacks continue. […] I was just wondering if there are any other moms out there dealing with this. How do you do it? HELP!!!!

Reply (msg#11)

> Hi, I completely understand how frustrating this can be especially for your daughter. I had my 1st panic attack when I was 12yrs old. No doctor has ever been able to find out what was wrong with me. I've been told it's stress, nerves, depression, etc. 2yrs ago at the age of 40 I went to a doctor because of my panic attacks and he took the time to try to figure this thing out. And he did. I have SVT (supraventricular tackycardia) My heart would race all of a sudden for no reason! Sometimes it would wake me up in the night. Sometimes my heart felt like it was fluttering in my chest. Sometime it would make me feel like I was going to pass out. This would scare me so bad that I would end myself into a panic attack. (it's a very scary thing when you know your heart is not acting right) SVT is very hard to diagnose because the doc has to hear or see it to know that it is happening. Doc. put me on a 24hr heart monitor holter that I carried around for 24hrs. I had to do it 3 times before he finally could see that I was not making it up. So now I'm panic attack free! and I only have to take 1 tiny pill in the morning and 1 tiny pill at night. If your daughter thinks something is wrong with her prove to her that their is nothing wrong with her by taking her to a good doctor that will take the time to do all the necessary tests that need to be done.

(Discussion: "teens with anxiety disorders")

In her reply, the advice-giver shares her own personal experience with panic attacks, similar symptoms, and several misdiagnoses ("*My heart would race all of a sudden for no reason!*", "*I've been told it's stress, nerves, depression, etc.*"). The culminating point of the story occurs when the advice-giver is finally correctly diagnosed with supraventricular tachycardia (SVT), a kind of heart rhythm disorder. The disorder is described in the story as hard to diagnose, underlining the importance of close medical scrutiny to get a correct diagnosis ("*Doc. put me on a 24hr heart monitor holter*", "*I had to do it 3 times before he finally could see that I was not making it up*"). Essentially, the story offers a diagnostic opinion based on comparable experience with symptoms and misdiagnoses. It acknowledges and validates the adolescent's concerns that she may be suffering from a heart condition, as suggested in the problem message. It also implicitly challenges the anxiety diagnosis given to the addressee's daughter. As a result, the story is also used to simultaneously indicate agreement with the adolescent, as well as disagreement with other experts' opinion in the problem message.

Importantly, the response story highlights the expert's meticulousness of his efforts to identify the cause of the panic attacks (*he took the time to try to figure this thing out. And he did*). The success of his efforts is stated in the story coda in which the advice-giver presents the positive outcome of the diagnosis and treatment (*So now I'm panic attack free!*). The coda also delivers explicit advice, suggesting a course of action (*taking her to a good doctor that will take the time to do all the necessary tests that need to be done*). Her choice of evaluative lexis (*good doctor*), summarizes the qualities and attributes of the 'good' medical practitioner that she has been alluding to throughout the story.

As shown above, diagnostic opinion stories offer evaluations and etiological assessments, while simultaneously delivering implicit or explicit advice, and even expressing disagreement.

7.3 Advice-giving and story structure

This section presents key observations that emerged from the analysis concerning the influence of advice-giving on the structure of response stories. Specifically, the analysis brought forward stories in which advice moves are enmeshed in the telling of events, creating seemingly fragmentary accounts. Another point concerns instances of stories in which advice-givers dispense with the full telling of, for instance, the complicating action, and use instead a summarizing deictic statement that encapsulates key events. Lastly, the abstracts and codas of response stories are particularly attuned to contextual exigencies and the communicative activity at hand, as will be illustrated in the following subsections.

7.3.1 Fragmentary response stories

The analysis revealed instances of response stories in which advice-givers suspend

the narration at several points to address the advice-seeker's problem and offer advice, before resuming with the telling. In doing so, advice-givers do not use typical external evaluation sections to suspend narrative flow, but rather extend advice segments before or after key story components such as the orientation, the complication, or the resolution. This results in stories that appear to be fragmented, less linear and less neatly arranged accounts, as they are interspersed with relatively lengthy advice segments (see Table 8).

The first example in Table 8 concerns a reply to a mother whose son is having learning problems and the teacher does not offer any help. The second example is a reply to a mother who asks for advice concerning her self-harming daughter. As examples a. and b. illustrate, advice-givers go in and out of the story world, alternating between narrating and advice-giving. As a result, the typical structural pattern of such response stories involves a string of alternating story segments and advice moves. The emphasis is not on producing a 'neat' unfolding of events; it is rather on breaking the narrative flow to piece together and integrate specific events or aspects of events with specific advice. Each advice segment distills the point of a preceding or upcoming story segment into suggestions and recommendations, while each story segment supports and exemplifies the given advice. Thus, advice segments and story segments operate in a tandem fashion.

As Schiffrin (1994: 314) briefly notes, a narrative's temporal structure may be "evaluatively motivated". In light of the above, the structure of response stories such as the ones presented in this subsection is evaluatively motivated by the discursive activity of advice-giving.

7.3.2 Encapsulated events

In certain response stories, advice-givers leave out the sequence of events that corresponds to the complicating action or the resolution and use a summarizing statement in its place. Such statements point back to story-preceding advice moves that outline the steps of a course of action. Thus, these statements encapsulate the complicating action that is inferred by previous discourse outside the story world (examples 29 a. and 29 b.; see also snapshots in Chapter 6, Subsection 6.1.3).

As shown in (29), the replies contain long advice moves that outline a very detailed course of action on how to address a child's fear of dogs (Example a.), and how to deal with a self-harming teen (Example b.). In both examples, a solution story of personal experience is used to support and legitimize the preceding advice. In the first example the summative statement "*I just did what I told you with my nephew*" is a minimal, summarizing reference to the resolution. In the second example, "*Yes, we did this*" encapsulates the course of action the advice-giver deploys as advice before the story, and functions as the story abstract. As shown in the example, the rest of the story components include an orientation and a coda, but no fleshed-out complication action segment since the sequence of events is already referred to by the story abstract.

Table 8. Fragmentary stories with interspersed advice

a. Discussion: "son with learning problem", msg#2

I do feel from reading your post, there is more to this teacher than meets the eye.	assessment
She sounds too much like my son's kindergarten teacher, who originally taught a higher grade, and did not know how to gear down to the age level these kids were.	story
If that is the case, then you really need a heads up.	advice
She had the kids so traumatized and afraid of school, most ended up repeating either first or second grade because they were so afraid to learn or try anything.	story (cont.)
Dont let them brush you off. the noisy wheel is the one that gets the grease. Also you will need to be in the school almost daily, to be sure the teacher does not retaliate against your son for you making the noise.	advice
That is what happened here. I started speaking up to how she was talking to the kids, telling them she doesnt want them asking for help, and telling a child his picture was the uglest she had ever seen etc. She started being bad to my son in retaliation to my speaking up about the situation.	story (cont.)

b. Discussion: "Need help for 17 yr.old self-harmer!", msg#3

I personally have not been in your shoes, but a friend of mine had a self harmer....Just the toll it took on the family alone was rough to watch, much less the worry of the one day she would take it too far etc...	story
Some thoughts that popped into my head as I was reading your post....may or may not work for you.....take what will work and forget the rest.	metatext advice
what if you took away her privacy.....	advice
I remember my friend's dd did her harm in private....when she was alone in the basement (where her room was) or in the bath tub etc…	story (cont.)
what if you took the door off her room, and made sure her room was not tucked away somewhere...ie if she is in the basement, move her out of the basement and give her a room that has no door.....	advice
another thing, my friend had to learn to do. read her daughter better than any book....	story (cont.)
you may even need to start giving her permission to "fail" or to be happy.	advice
(my friend's dd felt she had no right to feel happy is why she would her herself most of the time.... yes she hurt herself to release sadness and pain as well but most of the time was because she wasnt worthy to be happy) […]	story (cont.)

(29)

a. <advice> Slowly reintroduce him to dogs... show him that they're not all bad. There are bad people out there and there are good people out there - same with dogs. Explain to your child that the dog was just afraid and that's how he reacted. Give him an example of his actions when he is afraid and relate it to him. Remind him also to be slow and gentle with dogs when you go to pet them... maybe his actions towards that dog were a little to quick and the dog felt attacked. Start out with very small calm old dogs that you know are well behaved. Dont force him to interact with it, but show him that its ok and play and have fun with the dog. Maybe he'll wanna join in. </advice>

   My nephew had this happen years ago when he was little. [A] We went trick or treating and my neighbor's huge german sheperd jumped on him and every since then he's been afraid. [CA] **I just did what i told you with my nephew and he's ok with dogs now** [R]. He still gets nervous around bigger dogs and needless to say, we avoid that neighbors house on halloween now.…[C]

   Discussion: "6yr old is scared to death of dogs", msg#7

b. <advice> Here is what you need to do; First, the crisis team is either misinformed or is intentionally misleading you. Your daughter is a minor child who is at risk of an early grave, and you are obligated to rescue her by any means necessary. You do NOT need your daughter's permission to send her to an RTC (residential treatment center) or a TBS (therapeutic boarding school). […] Second, hire a private detective to get your daughter home FAST. Have her admitted to an inpatient facility for evaluation. This will buy you some time. Bring her home a few hours before the next step. Once you have settled on a facility and have made all the arrangements, hire an escort service to forcibly take her to the treatment center. </advice> […]

   Yes, we did this. [A] It was 4 years ago. Our daughter, like yours, was self-destructing and the local mental health professionals and local treatment centers were ineffective. Outpatient therapy was ineffective. Her behavior was escalating despite everyone's best efforts. [OR] Now, she is a healthy, self-assured senior in high school. She is on the honor roll and was accepted to her first choice university in November. She has thanked us for saving her life on that morning in 2001. [C]

   Discussion: "Need help for 16 yr. old", msg#2

Using in-story summative statements to point to series of actions performed in the past, allows advice-givers to make a minimal reference to events without having to repeat their telling in the story world.

7.3.3 Abstracts and codas

The story abstracts and codas of response stories are important devices that have specific functions in this advice-giving context. In general, advice-givers use story abstracts to announce and give solutions, establish a link to addressees' problems and concerns, authenticate a story, and respond to and anticipate addressees' reactions, guiding their interpretation of a story. More specifically, abstracts may explicitly reveal the advice-giving intent of a response story by signposting or revealing the solution to a problem. Such abstracts include, for instance, constructions with cataphoric references such as "*this is what worked*" and "*Here is what I did*", as shown in (30). These references are essentially metacomments about the evolving discourse; that is, comments that structure the upcoming discourse in an explicit way and guide addressees on what to focus on next, in this case the upcoming solution to a problem, and hence the advice the story conveys.

(30)

a. With my little owl, this is what worked for him. […]
b. Let me share a bit with my 3 experiences...maybe that will help one way or another […]
c. Here is what I did with my kids…..and NO THEY DON'T RUN THE HOUSE […]
d. If I may relate an incident I witnessed from my childhood to illustrate. […]
e. A little story, for food for thought.....by the way this is a true story. […]
f. Reading this story I was reminded of me when I was a kid! Lol […]

Abstracts also serve to establish a connection with advice-seekers' problems, indicating that advice-givers face, or have faced, the same predicaments from different perspectives, as shown in (30): that of the child (d, f), the parent, (a-c), or the professional (e). As shown in (a), the story abstract is a metacomment that establishes the problem by alluding to a child's sleeping issues (*little owl*), mirroring the advice-seeker's problem. It also states that the problem was resolved, indicating in an explicit manner to the advice-seeker that the solution is about to follow.

Apart from announcing and stating the purpose of the telling and sharing of a story, story abstracts may include mitigation devices for the upcoming telling. For instance, the evaluative characterization of the story as "*little*" in (e) does not refer to the length of the narrative telling since the story that follows is, in fact, long and elaborate; it is rather a diminutive the teller uses as a hedge to mitigate her implicit suggestion to the advice-seeker to take the story under consideration in relation to

her problem. [24]In a similar fashion, the teller in (b) uses the hedges *Let me, a bit*, and maybe to mitigate the purpose of her telling which is to help the advice-seeker in dealing with her fear of pregnancy and childbirth. In 7.7 (d), the teller uses *If I may* to soften the effect of her previous assessment of what the advice-seeker's husband should have done to discipline their son (*should have clobbered that kid*, see example 2, Chapter 6, Section 6.1.1) and mitigate the content of the upcoming story at the same time.

Story abstracts such as *Let me share a bit with my 3 experiences* and *If I may relate an incident* also function as overt bids for the floor to launch a story in offline conversational contexts. However, in asynchronous CMC story abstracts do not aim to bid for the floor per se, since addressees cannot respond in order to accept or reject the telling of a story as, for instance, in face-to-face interaction. In fact, by simply posting a message to a discussion in an online forum, participants technically get the floor (Herring, 2010). Story abstracts, such as those in the examples above, serve to "index the dynamics of face-to-face interaction" in asynchronous CMC, simulating the negotiation of speaking rights, and engaging with addressees (Vásquez, 2012).

Advice-givers also use story abstracts to respond to and anticipate addressees' questions and criticism. An example is shown in (c) in which the advice-giver uses the abstract to project a solution story, replying to a message by a sleep-deprived mother whose infant daughter is not sleeping through the night. The abstract includes the construction and *NO THEY DON'T RUN THE HOUSE* that responds to a previous advice-giver's assessment. In her study on interactive metadiscourse in online consumer reviews, Vásquez (2015) notes that such constructions indicate "a conversational response to an imagined dialogue", anticipating follow-up questions posed by imagined readers. In the example examined here, the story abstract addresses simultaneously the advice-seeker and other advice-givers in the thread. A brief explanation of the context of the thread discussion is necessary here. In her problem message, the advice-seeker mentions that a friend gave her a book on *Babywise*, a strict sleep training method that she is planning on trying. Her mention of *Babywise* sparked a series of replies in which advice-givers made strong evaluative claims about the method, arguing for and against it. One advice-giver evaluates the method positively in her reply and urges the advice-seeker to follow it, underlying the consequences if she does not: *NIP it in the butt now, b/c I have friends with 3 year olds who run the household b/c they won't go to sleep.* Thus, the negative construction in the story abstract in (c) serves as a reply to that advice-giver, countering her claim in an emphatic manner by using capital letters to give a speech-like quality to her reply. At the same time, the abstract addresses the advice-seeker and any other contributors in the thread that support. In brief, the advice-giver illustrates with her personal experience story (not shown here) that the solution is to avoid enforcing a strict sleep schedule, and instead allow the

24 For the full story, see example (9.6) in Chapter 9, Subsection 9.2.1.

infant to establish her own sleep routines.

Also, as (e) and (f) illustrate, advice-givers use story abstracts as a strategic device to assert the authenticity of a narrative telling. In (e) the advice-giver makes an explicit claim for authenticity, orienting to the upcoming telling as a 'true' story, while in (f) the advice-giver uses *I was reminded*, signaling memory activation. In their discussion of narrative authenticity, Ochs & Capps (1997) argue that remembering is an act of authentication, in the sense that interactants make a public claim that a state, event, or condition that is recalled is true, or believed to be true. Another example of narrative authenticity claims is given in (d) in which the teller explicitly positions herself as a witness of a specific incident.

Next, there also instances of story abstracts that offer a more detailed preview of the advice that the upcoming story is about to illustrate. Apart from being an introductory device, the abstracts of such response stories function as micro versions of the stories that are to follow, introducing the problem and the solution of the actual tellings and revealing the advice, as illustrated in (31):

(31)

<assessment> some kids are self motivaters and have interests and curiosities....but other kids would never try anything unless "pushed" into trying it….. </assessment> *ie my oldest son would rather sit in front of the TV or computer than do anything else....the threat of having to walk everywhere because he wasn't getting his drivers licenses unless he learned the basics of riding a 2 wheeler was one we had to do...* [A]
he was only in 2nd grade, but was not interested in anything but riding his bike with training wheels....my neighbor had the same problem.... so we put our heads together and explained to our sons that riding a bike was the beginning of learning the rules of the road, and unless they learned the rules of a drivers license when they were 16 was not in their future.... the two of them went out, took their own training wheels off, and together in about 30 minutes learned to ride a 2 wheeler…..a little "push" was all it took.

(Discussion: "Need help for 17yr. old self-harmer!", msg#3)

In (31), the teller starts off with indicating that the story that is about to follow is a case in point "*ie*" to support her assessment and provides a condensed version of the key plot points. In particular, the extended story abstract (*my oldest son would rather sit in front of the TV (…) riding a 2 wheeler was one we had to do*) features orientation elements that establish the problem and presents the solution to the problem.

As such, abstracts of response stories provide a specific evaluative frame for the interpretation of the stories about to be told. At the same time, they orient addressees towards the authenticity and relevance of a story at hand to the problem the addressee is facing and its solution, laying the foundation for the story's tellability.

Turning to story codas of response stories, these have the following functions: summarizing the point of a response story by delivering explicit advice, as shown in (32) (a), (b), and (c); mitigating advice, as illustrated in (d); restating or rewording suggestions and recommendations alluded to in the story or given in story-preceding advice, as shown in (e) and (f).

(32)

a. […] You need to establish certain periods of her day where she is to entertain herself.....be sure she has books that interest her as well as other activities.....
b. […] Point is….you never know what you may have in store once the new baby comes...get her adjusted before baby #2 arrives.
c. […] Today they are more close than I am, and I resent that.....so try to keep them equqally responsible for the helping mom with the baby...
d. […] I'm not advocating meds, obviously that's not the answer for everyone (just ask Tom Cruise!) Just relating my own experience. Granted there is a difference between a chronically depressed person and one depressed under painful circumstances, but depression manifests itself the same way no matter the reason.
e […] …a little "push" was all it took.
f. […] Like I said... I know it sounds aweful, but for us, it worked.

As the examples in (32) illustrate, the codas typically include a summarizing statement of the events presented in a story, and an evaluation of the events, circumstances, and people featured in the telling. Importantly, the story codas establish a link between the story world and the current advice context. As shown in (b), tellers may announce the purpose of a coda in an explicit manner, emphasizing why they are telling a particular story. In that particular instance, the coda seals off a story that focuses on the smooth transition of a toddler to a new room before the arrival of a new baby. The teller underlines in her story that she did that so that her daughter would not resent the new baby for taking her room.

Advice-givers may make specific mentions to the positive or negative effects and consequences the events had upon their lives and/or the lives of others, as shown for instance in (f) and (c). Such consequences involve behavioral, emotional, and even health-related changes that stretch into the present time.

Also, codas can take the form of a generalized observation that evaluates the story or can be personalized in terms of advice-giver (d), addressee (b), or both (c). De Fina's (2003: 84-89) study on immigrant narratives reports similar findings regarding the use of codas as crucial sites for making narrated experience relevant to narrators and/or others. In this advice-giving context, making the story relevant to addressees is particularly important for the delivery of advice and assessment of a problem.

7.4 Global discourse functions: Arguing with stories - instructing and cautioning

As we have seen, advice-givers' response stories realize particular functions in the local context of the replies. Overall, what we can distill from the analysis is that the overarching function of response stories in this context is advisory. This advisory function involves making claims and providing evidence from personal or vicarious experience, thus pointing to the use of response stories as persuasive argumentation in the advice exchanges.

7.4.1 Cautionary stories

Cautionary stories belong to the broader thematic category of problem stories and their function is to warn the advice-seeker of the potential future risks and consequences of a given problem. The cautionary stories found in the data feature a plotline that traces a cause-and-effect relationship between a problematic behavior, situation, or course of action and the advice-giver's or others' resulting troubles and suffering. As a result, advice-givers deliver a warning through such stories in an implicit or explicit manner: by merely stating a negative outcome that illustrates what can happen to the advice-seeker, or by including an explicit message of caution in the story coda, as the examples that follow illustrate.

In (33), an advice-giver replies to a mother whose son is having learning difficulties. The advice-seeker explains in her problem message that her son's teacher appears unwilling to provide any help until he is deemed eligible for special education. The advice-giver relates a personal experience story after providing an assessment of the advice-seeker's situation, agreeing with the suggestions of another advice-giver, and offering advice:

(33)

> The process of starting up special education can take forever and can be very frustrating. But the teacher could do things to help him while you were waiting if she wanted to work with him and you. I agree with [Nancy's] suggestions and would be in the school first thing Monday morning to see about getting him moved. *I left my oldest dd in a calss were my concerns were being blown off and it cost her a year of school because she fell father behind.* Good luck and please keep us updated on how things are going.
>
> (Discussion: "Son with learning problem", msg #4)

The story focuses on an inferred problem (*my concerns were being blown off*) similar to the one described in the advice-seeking message and presents the consequences of the advice-giver's decision to leave her daughter in that class: *it cost her a year of school because she fell father behind*. On the basis of this negative turn of

events, this story serves as evidence to support the advice given beforehand: [*I*] *would be in the school first thing Monday morning to see about getting him moved*. In this regard, the advice-giver attributes the negative outcome in the story to her lack of appropriate response, i.e., moving her daughter to a different class, to resolve the problem. As a result, the story urges the advice-seeker to take action and have her son transferred to a different class otherwise he may face the same negative consequences described in the advice-giver's story.

In (34), the advice-giver responds to an expecting mother whose daughters fight constantly and have jealousy issues. Given these circumstances, the advice-seeker's main concern is how her daughters will react to the upcoming addition to the family. The advice-giver's reply offers advice on the matter and proceeds with a story of personal experience:

(34)

> […] Also set up "responsibilities".....it can easily be the 4 year old's responsibility to keep the diapers stocked up for mom, and the oler one can be taught to fix formula (assuming you are using it) in the bottle. maybe they both can be responsible to keep the baby's things picked up and kept nice…… simple tasks that make them feel important, and helpful, but can be overlooked if someone slacked a bit one or two days. *My baby brother came to our home when I was 7 and my sister was 9....my sister forced her way to be his "other mother"....and sort of shoved me out of the way...excluded me....sort of wouldnt share our brother…Today they are more close than I am, and I resent that.....so try to keep them equqally responsible for the helping mom with the baby...*
>
> (Discussion: "daughters fighting nonstop HELP!!!", msg #3)

The advice-giver relates how the arrival of the teller's baby brother affected family dynamics, particularly the relationship among the siblings. The teller establishes the nature of the key problem of the narrative telling, which is is sibling rivalry: the teller's elder sister assumed a caregiving role for the newborn, excluding her younger sister from the process of bonding with their baby brother from the start (e.g. *my sister forced her way to be his "other mother"....and sort of shoved me out of the way…*). The story focuses on how the teller experienced her sister's competitiveness and exclusionary behavior from the perspective of a child, with no mention of parental intervention. The coda summarizes the story by stating and evaluating the outcome of the problematic situation; that is, the teller's lack of closeness to her siblings in the present and her feelings of resentment: *Today they are more close than I am, and I resent that*. In addition, the coda couples the negative outcome with advice, summarizing the point of the narrative telling: *so try to keep them equqally responsible for the helping mom with the baby*.

The story examined above stresses the importance of parents' letting the older children be equally involved in the care of a new sibling to avoid rivalry issues.

As the story illustrates, such issues can have a lasting negative impact on sibling relationships. In this regard, the teller's personal experience story acts as a warning to the advice-seeker about the future, suggesting a particular course of action to prevent future problems. Also, as (34) shows, the story is preceded by advice that concentrates on the idea of setting up responsibilities for the older children to "*make them feel important, and helpful*". In this respect, the teller uses the story to support her advice on involvement and responsibilities.

7.4.2 Instructing with cultural stories

There are two instances of traditional cultural stories in the story corpus: *The Prodigal Son* parable and *The Little Red Hen* folk tale. Both instances are the product of the same teller who deploys these cultural stories on two different occasions. More specifically, the parable is part of her reply on the actions of a troubled teenager who left home (35), while her reply featuring the folk tale addresses the issue of a preteen's escalating tantrums and defiant behavior (36).

The Prodigal Son parable, which originally appears in the Gospel of Luke, relates the story of the repentant son and his forgiving father.[25] The core meaning of this parable, in which the father represents God and the son the sinner, is that of unconditional forgiveness, as well as repentance and reconciliation (e.g. Osborne, 2006: 294-297). In 35, the advice-giver introduces the parable after offering support and advice to the advice-seeker on how to deal with her current problem (e.g. *stay strong, and focus on your remaining two kids*):

(35)

> Good luck and may God help you through this phase…..ESPECIALLY through these holidays…..stay strong, and focus on your remaining two kids….they want you and need you too…..*Just like the prodicle son in the Bible…..he tells dad "hey I cant wait until you are dead, so give me my inheritance now" Dad did and let the son go….he prayed for his son constantly, and son went and did some pretty stupid things….in the end, he realized he needed his dad and came home….Your challenge at this point? forgiveness….not holding harbor the hurts she has bestowed up on you….* Hang in here and vent as often as you need. We will listen, and even understand.
>
> (Discussion: "Help with teen/family", msg#5)

As shown in (35), the abstract *Just like the prodicle son in the Bible* prefaces the parable, establishing a similarity between the advice-seeker's situation and the plot of the parable. The advice-giver proceeds with a condensed version of the parable that provides a basic outline of the events, focusing on the episodic parts of the son's decision to leave and his father's reaction, the son's actions while away and his

25 Luke 15: 11-24.

homecoming. The advice-giver marks the exit from the parable with a coda that summarizes the point of the cultural story by delivering direct advice: "*Your challenge at this point? forgiveness….not holding harbor the hurts she has bestowed up on you*". In this regard, the teller's advice coda functions as the epimythium, the moral of the parable, which is to forgive unconditionally. The instructional value of the parable in the present advice-giving context lies on the broad analogy established between the prodigal son and the advice-seeker's 'prodigal' daughter, but most importantly on the specific parallel drawn between the prodigal son's father and the advice-seeker/mother: he forgave his son, and so should she.

The second cultural story offered by the same teller is the folk tale *The Little Red Hen*. In brief, the tale is about a hen that refuses to share the fruits of her labor with the other farmyard animals because they refused to help her when she asked them to. As a folktale, this cultural story teaches about the benefits of hard work and the value of cooperation. In her reply in (36), the advice-giver offers practical advice on how the advice-seeker can deal with her daughter's refusal to help with any chores at home, and explains her reasoning by making the assessment that "*this is a give and take world, and we are raising a generation of kids that dont understand the give part, only the take part*":

(36)

> […] When you request her to do something, and she refuses, just simply say I will remember that answer....do it yourself....then when she wants you to do something....take her to school, cook her dinner, etc.... remember her answer, and remind her that you wanted her to do something for you and she refused.....show her the refrigerator and how to make a sandwich for dinner....etc. This is a give and take world, and we are raising a generation of kids that dont understand the give part, only the take part....do her a favor and let her learn the giving part.....[…]
>
> *The story the little red hen comes to mind? Who will help me plant this seed? Not I said the cat, not I said the dog, not I said the pig....fine I will do it myself.....etc....who will help me bake this bread? not I said the cat, not I said the dog, not I said the pig....fine I will do it myself..... Who will help me eat this bread, I will said the cat, I will said the dog, I will said the pig.....No you wont...you didnt help me plant the seed, you didnt help me tend the garden, you didnt help me gather the wheat, you didnt help me take it to the mill, you didnt help me bring it home, you didnt help me make the bread, and YOU WILL NOT help me eat the bread.*
> *YOur big thing, is not to make a big deal over what she is doing right now....keep her safe, and healthy, and use your teachable moments to teach her rather than fight with her.*
>
> (Discussion: "Out of control 10 year old..HELP!!!!", msg#2)

The abstract *The story the little red hen comes to mind?* that prefaces the cultural story invites the advice-seeker to connect previous discourse, in this case the advice and the assessment, to the folk tale about to follow. The teller proceeds with the telling of the folk tale, outlining its main plot points. In a way, this particular tale can be viewed as a reformulation and reaffirmation of the previous moves of advice and assessment. In addition, the point of the tale is already given partially in the assessment move prior to the tale, and later in the coda which emphasizes the importance of "*teachable moments*": *YOur big thing, is not to make a big deal over what she is doing right now....keep her safe, and healthy, and use your teachable moments to teach her rather than fight with her.*

In general, the abstracts of both cultural stories function as prompts aiming to activate the addressee's knowledge of the parable and the folk tale, respectively. In both instances, the abstract alone could suffice as a story reference to simply invoke the cultural stories without the teller continuing with a full telling. However, by deploying such stories, tellers have the possibility to make the point of these stories more readily understood in relation to assessments and advice to addressees. Telling the whole story can also target addressees who may not share the same background knowledge regarding these particular cultural stories.

Parables and folk tales are a traditional medium of instruction and moral reflection that appear in different cultural and religious contexts. They are illustrative stories that answer a question and/or indicate a moral (or epimythium) appended to the end of the story, taking on an allegorical dimension, i.e., drawing a parallel between actual events, situations, and characters and those in a parable or folk tale (see Harmon & Holman, 2008: 372). In light of the above, it is not surprising that such stories appear in an advice-giving context.

7.4 Summary

This chapter focused on the local and global functions of advice-givers' response stories, and paid attention to particular structural features of these stories in relation to the activity of advice-giving. As shown, response stories are multi-functional, boasting a wide range of local functions in advice exchanges on the board: they deliver implicit or explicit advice, legitimize advice, support and express dis/agreement with others' claims, and offer diagnostic opinions. As the analysis illustrated, these functions are interconnected and can overlap with each other, painting a complex picture of the role of response stories in advice-giving. Also, the chapter focused on specific structural configurations of response stories, showing the influence of the discursive activity of advice-giving on narrative structure. It was also shown that story abstracts and codas of response stories are particularly attuned to contextual demands. In addition, the chapter explored the global functions of response stories, relating their advisory function to argumentative purposes. Finally, the chapter addressed the function of cultural stories in relation to advice exchanges.

8 Response stories and relational work

This chapter addresses the kind of relational work that manifests in advice-givers' response stories. The chapter examines the types of relational work that are present in the response stories, presenting the different strategies advice-givers use in and with their stories to negotiate and establish interpersonal relationships with addressees. Before exploring the function of the response stories in terms of relational work, it is worth noting the larger contextual influences on the advisory exchanges in the advice forum. This is important as the relational aspect of any communicative exchange is inseparably linked to the context in which it occurs as well as the communicative activity at hand (see Locher, 2006: 113-151). As noted in Chapter 4, there is a proclaimed orientation within the community towards supportive relational work. As a result, this relational frame plays an important role as the background against which response stories are to be analyzed and interpreted.

8.1 Relational functions

The relational work categories introduced in Chapter 5 served as a starting point to conduct a close reading analysis of the response stories so as to determine which functions they realize in terms of relational work. The analysis revealed six types of relational work that advice-givers engage in through their stories: 1) *bonding*, 2) *boosting*, 3) *constructing identity*, 4) *criticizing*, 5) *mitigating criticism*, and 6) *praising*. These types are presented briefly presented in Table 9 and explained and illustrated in detail in the subsections that follow.

It is important to note that this chapter incorporates identity construction as part of relational work. Identity is relational in the sense that individuals construct identities in relation to others (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). It is a large and complex topic that cannot be covered in its entirety in a single chapter (see e.g. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006). What is important for the purposes of this study is to highlight identity claims that advice-givers make in and with their response stories that are particularly relevant to the communicative activity of giving advice.

In addition, it should be stressed that the advice-givers' response stories realize more than one relational function. For instance, a story can have a boosting and criticizing function simultaneously, while at the same time negotiating and constructing identities. Even though certain functions will be addressed separately for clarity, the reader should thus bear in mind the multifunctional nature of response stories with regard to relational work. Whenever necessary, the synergy and interconnectedness between different relational functions in the response stories will be addressed.

Table 9. Relational work types in response stories (ordered alphabetically; adapted from Locher, 2006: 118)

Relational work types	Function
Bonding	Establishing a connection with advice-seekers to build and enhance rapport by identifying or by empathizing with them
Boosting	Intensifying or emphasizing a story's point, or a point in previous or upcoming discourse, e.g. advice or assessment, that a response story relates to
Constructing identity	Constructing one's own and others' identity, e.g. expert identity
Criticizing	Imparting criticism on advice-seekers' actions, attitudes, behavior, or beliefs
Mitigating criticism	Softening and reducing the force of a statement in previous discourse
Praising	Highlighting something positive about the advice-seeker

8.1.1 Bonding

One important function of relational work that the response stories perform is bonding. By creating a bonding effect through using stories, advice-givers appear to establish solidarity and demonstrate positive rapport with addressees. In particular, bonding manifests in the stories through two closely related strategies, namely a) *identifying with addressees or others* (*identification*), and b) *empathizing with addressees or others* (*empathy*).[26] In studies of advice discourse that examine the relational aspect of advice-seeking and advice-giving, there is no general consensus on the use of the term *empathy* as an involvement-cum-relational strategy and what it includes. Empathy is either treated as an explicitly distinct strategy from identification, or as a strategy that implicitly includes identifying with another (see e.g. DeCapua & Dunham, 2012: 88-91; cf. Placencia, 2012: 299). For my purposes, I follow DeCapua & Dunham (2012) who make a distinction between the two and subsume them under bonding on the basis that both contribute to an emotional connection. The difference between *identifying* and *empathizing* is that the former involves a shared understanding and knowing of someone's affective state based on identical or similar personal experiences; the latter entails that individuals acknowledge and display an understanding of another's affective state without necessarily sharing or having shared the same experience that produced that state (see Davis, 1994).

26 *Other* here refers to someone else than the intended addressee(s) in a discussion, e.g. the advice-seeker's child, with whom the advice-giver may identify or empathize through a story.

Identifying with addressees or others

Identification acts as a bonding strategy by communicating to addressees that advice-givers put themselves in their place by virtue of similar experiences. In particular, response stories of personal experience realize this strategy by reflecting addressees' or others' experience. For instance, advice-givers identify with addressees as mothers of self-harming teens, depression sufferers, siblings, or community members. Advice-givers may also use response stories to show that they identify with addressees' children in sharing, for instance, the same traumatic experience.

In response stories of personal experience, advice-givers realize the strategy of identification through implicit or explicit comparison of their personal experiences to those of addressees or others. For instance, this is achieved by paraphrasing addressees' problematic situations and outcomes, and echoing shared emotions and psychological states. Specifically, the overall content and plot of these response stories draw on similarities between advice-givers' and addressees' or others' experiences. Advice-givers typically evaluate events, circumstances, and social actors' roles in the events from a shared perspective of common experience with addressees. Most importantly, such stories establish common ground by framing a given problem as a shared issue, conveying advice-givers' intimate understanding of a problem and its ramifications.

The role of story abstracts and codas is instrumental in realizing this strategy. Apart from their structural function as story opening and closing mechanisms, these serve to establish similarity by comparison, creating an immediate link to the addressees' situation. Such abstracts underline shared experiences before opening up a story by providing a summarizing statement of transpired events that establish a similar problem (see Table 10). These abstracts also refer back to previous discourse, while at the same time they anticipate succeeding discourse, i.e., the story that is to follow. Codas establish a link between advice-giver and addressee through implicit or explicit comparison.

In addition, advice-givers may frame stories that realize the strategy of identification with story-preceding moves that establish similarities with addressees implicitly or explicitly. These include assessments and problem statement moves that provide a specific evaluative frame, orienting to a comparison between advice-givers' and addressees' experiences and identities. As illustrated in Table 10, the link to addressees manifests explicitly in lexical and grammatical choices such as words that denote similarity, e.g. *same*, *similar*, and pronominal reference in combination with comparison markers, e.g. "*I too*", "*we are all*", "*we are so what alike*", or constructions that convey the advice-giver's understanding, e.g. "*I do understand her frustration, tho*".

By identifying with addressees through stories of personal experience, advice-givers also produce shared identities, indexing co-membership. They signal and ratify their membership in the same group, for instance as parents who are facing the same or a similar problem, or as children, teens, or young adults in the past that share comparable experiences with addressees.

Table 10. Identifying with addressee(s) or other(s)

	Devices and functions	Examples	Context
Story-preceding moves			
Assessments	Personal pronouns: constructing in-group membership	a. *I think we are so what alike.*	Childhood background involving abusive parents
		b. *They must have been related. LOL*	Reference to each other's husbands
		c. *I do understand her frustration, tho.*	Having a bossy big sister
Problem statements	Paraphrasing	a. *My son is rude and disrespectful on and off.*	Reference to advice-seeker's problem
		b. *I can sympathize with you because I am having some trouble with my 3 year old too …*	
Story segments			
Abstract	Evaluative lexis showing similarity; summarizing the problem	a. *The odd went through the same thing.*	Reference and comparison to advice-seeker's problem
		b. *I too was a tom boy.*	
		c. *We had a similar incident in our home.*	
Coda	Personal pronouns: constructing in-group membership	a. *we are all basically just works in progress, aren't we?*	
		b. *I'm pretty sure that is the case with your son as well.*	
		c. *Therefore, I conclude that for your son and for mine, the very real anxiety they feel is due to internal circumstances.*	
External evaluation	Reported speech	*"At least you got "have a nice life" - I got "I don't care if you die"!"*	

Taking into account the two thematic story types identified in the data, i.e. problem stories and solution stories, we can observe the following. In solution stories, advice-givers identify with addressees on two aspects: a) by sharing experiences of similar problems, and therefore identifying with addressees as problem-sufferers,

and b) by showing which actions they took to resolve a problematic situation, thus identifying with the addressees as problem solvers. In that latter case, the advice-givers frame addressees and position them as potential problem solvers in the near or distant future. In problem stories, advice-givers identify with addressees as problem-sufferers, but position them as potential problem solvers without identifying as such with them.

Empathizing with addressees or others

Response stories found to communicate empathy display an understanding of addressees' problems and acknowledge their affective states. Stories that realize this particular strategy do so by mirroring advice-seekers' problems through the narration of comparable personal or vicarious experience and acknowledging advice-seekers' feelings. In particular, such stories focus on someone else's experience that the advice-giver frames implicitly or explicitly as similar to the advice-seeker's experience. In personal experience stories that convey empathy, advice-givers are not protagonists; they rather appear as bystanders in the narrated events, displaying no or minimal agency. Consider Example (37) that is a reply to a mother who seeks advice on how to deal with her daughter's self-harming. The example presents a fragmented, non-linear account that is interspersed with metacomments and advice, alternating between glimpses of past events and bouts of suggestions and recommendations:

(37)

> I personally have not been in your shoes, but a friend of mine had a self harmer.…Just the toll it took on the family alone was rough to watch, much less the worry of the one day she would take it too far etc… Some thoughts that popped into my head as I was reading your post....may or may not work for you.....take what will work and forget the rest. what if you took away her privacy. I remember my friend's dd did her harm in private….when she was alone in the basement (where the room was) or in the bath tub etc….
>
> [/series of advice moves and explanations/]
>
> another thing, my friend had to learn to do. read her daughter better than any book....you may even need to start giving her permission to "fail" or to be happy. (my friend's dd felt she had no right to feel happy is why she would her herself most of the time....yes she hurt herself to release sadness and pain as well but most of the time was because she wasnt worthy to be happy) […]
>
> (Discussion: "Need help for 17yr. old self-harmer!", msg#3)

In (37), the advice-giver relates a story about self-harming in her reply to the advice-seeker. The advice-giver underlines the fact that she does not have first-hand experience as a parent to a self-harming teen, offering a story of her friend's experi-

ence instead (e.g. *I personally have not been in your shoes, but a friend of mine had a self harmer*). She also positions herself as a bystander, an observer who witnessed the family's ordeal, and thus has intimate knowledge of the problem ("*Just the toll it took on the family alone was rough to watch, much less the worry of the one day she would take it too far etc*). In this way, she legitimizes the telling of the story on the grounds that someone else's experience is relevant by comparison to that of the advice-seeker, and that she understands the situation.

In brief, the story mirrors the problem in the original message through key plot points (e.g. "*the toll it took on the family*", "*the worry of the one day she would take it too far etc*") that reformulate and summarize the advice-seeker's description of the problem and its consequences in the original advice-seeking message. Particularly, this reformulation also encapsulates and reflects the feelings and emotions (e.g. "*the toll*", "*the worry*") the advice-seeker expresses in her original message. The advice-giver also articulates her own emotional response by reporting on her feelings and reactions to her friend's situation from the standpoint of the observer (e.g. "*was rough to watch*"). In this regard, she acknowledges the advice-seeker's feelings and emotions by reflecting them through her friend's experience, as well as her own reaction.

In general, stories such as the one presented above serve as empathetic responses by validating advice-seekers' affective states, displaying an understanding of a problem, while at the same time they deliver advice. In addition, there are instances in which advice-givers use story-preceding and story-following moves that express empathy. Such moves serve to acknowledge advice-seekers' affective state (38 a.) and make overt statements of emotional support (38 b. and c.).

(38) Story-preceding and story-following moves expressing empathy

a.	I feel your pain	[preceding a story]
b.	Hugs to you and your little guy!	[preceding a story]
c.	We will listen, and even understand.	[following a story]

DeCapua & Dunham (2012: 90) remark that statements of empathy typically precede advice-giving because they set the stage for the delivery of advice. By the same token, it can be argued that statements of empathy before the launch of a story set the stage for the evaluation of the problem through the narrated events and the delivery of implicit or explicit advice with a story. The same can be argued to apply when advice-givers signal that they identify with advice-seekers in a story-preceding move or an abstract.

8.1.2 Boosting

Boosting essentially involves the use of, for instance, clauses, phrases, or lexical items that intensify a point to give it more weight and highlight its importance (Holmes, 1995: 77; Locher, 2006: 212). In the response stories, boosting constitutes

a way of stressing the point of a story. In particular, boosting qualifies the implicit or explicit advice that stories communicate and support as important, urgent, and necessary. It also serves to stress advice-givers' certainty and conviction in evaluating events. In addition, boosting is a way of emphasizing the bonding strategies of identifying and empathizing that stories employ.

Boosting operates both on a micro and a macro level in the advice-givers' response stories. On a micro level, boosting is realized by specific linguistic choices and devices and can occur in various segments throughout a story. Advice-givers use modals or semi-modals of necessity (e.g. *must*, *have to*, *need to*), *it*-impersonal constructions (e.g. *it is important to*), as well as imperatives that express necessity and urgency. The following examples of story codas illustrate the use of such boosters:

(39)

a. […] We now have 7 large dogs and 2 puppies. They're the best ever and sooo non-scary. But would I ever guarantee anyone that none of them would EVER bite in ANY situation? NO.
b. […] So the two of you need to sit down, maybe have a mediator present to keep things unemotional.
c. […] Contact a lawyer ASAP- your state should have some sort of legal aid

In 39 (a) the boosting effect is achieved with the phrase *best ever*, a combination of vowel reduplication (*sooo*) and single-word capitalization (*EVER*, *ANY*, *NO*) to mimic prosody, emphasizing the point that one can never really guarantee that a dog would never bite anyone in any situation. In 39 (b), the advice-giver highlights the necessity of sitting down and having a discussion amidst a custody dispute using need to. In 39 (c) the necessity and urgency of the matter is expressed by an imperative in combination with the capitalized ASAP, which means as soon as possible. In all of these examples, advice-givers highlight the point of the story and the given advice by using boosting for emphasis.

Boosters used in the response stories also include adverbs and phrases such as *obviously*, *definitely*, *really*, *of course*, *no doubt*, *pretty sure*, and *in fact* which have an emphatic function, signaling certainty and at the same time intensifying advice-givers' conviction of a point or points they are making in their stories. The following examples of story segments from different response stories illustrate the use of these boosters:

(40)

a. There is **no doubt** that she loved my sister and I, and **no doubt** she wanted the best for us. [OR]
b. **I'm pretty sure** that is the case with your son a well. [External evaluation]
c. It **really** worked out great. She had no problems adjusting to her new room. [R]

Next, boosting and bonding can be realized at the same time in response stories, emphasizing the effects of the relational strategies of identification and empathy. The following examples, a story abstract (41) and a story coda (42), respectively, illustrate how bonding and boosting occur in combination on a micro level:

(41)

I myself was attacked by dogs twice as a child. [A]

(42)

I am a HUGE fan of attachment parenting and we love having the girls in our bed. [C]

Both examples involve self-description that aims to establish similarity and rapport with addressees. In (41) the advice-giver introduces her story by identifying with the addressee's son, using *I myself* for emphasis to highlight that she shares the same experience. The coda in (42) underlines that the advice-giver shares the same parenting style with the addressee by using the intensifier *HUGE* that is capitalized for additional emphasis.

Also, there are instances where advice-givers use particular CMC contextualization cues such as emoticons and typed actions as boosters to frame their stories and emphasize the relational strategy of bonding. In (43 a), the advice-giver uses a pink bear emoticon in the message heading to set the tone of her reply. According to the board's emoticon list, this emoticon stands for 'Hugs'. Thus, in this particular example, the emoticon is used as a visual cue of rapport and solidarity, setting and emphasizing the tone of the reply to come:

(43)

a. Emoticon: 
I sympathize with you SO much on this- it is one of the hardest things you and your family will go through. Our family situation sounds pretty identical […]

b. {{{{{{{{hugs}}}}}}}} He sounds just like my brother (20), even down to the minor drug charge […]

Example (43 b.) features a structure containing the word *hugs* enclosed in multiple braces. This kind of typographically marked construction is a communication strategy specific to text-based CMC that is used to simulate an action in online environments (see Cherny, 1999; Herring, 2012; Virtanen, 2013). This strategy typically involves the use of third-person constructions enclosed in asterisks, angle brackets, or braces to indicate a user's emotional state, e.g. **is sad**, or show that the user performs an action, e.g. *smiles*, <passes tissues>. In addition to third-person constructions, bare noun phrases such as kisses and hugs enclosed in asterisks enact the respective actions of kissing and hugging symbolically in virtual settings (Werry, 1996). In (43 b), the choice of braces and their arrangement point to the symbolic representation of hugging as observed in studies of online chat (Waskul & Douglass, 1997) and text messaging (Amaghlobeli, 2012). Thus, in this instance, the advice-giver simulates or rather performs the 'physical' action of hugging the advice-seeker symbolically in a constructed virtual setting. The exaggerated use of the braces intensifies the performative action of hugging, indicating its intensity and possibly its duration.

On a macro level, an entire story can be viewed as having a boosting function when it supports a specific point made in the story, or in claims made in assessments or advice that frame a story. The stories explicate and demonstrate the importance and necessity of (re)assessing a problem a certain way or following the proposed advice by showcasing negative or positive outcomes (see Chapter 7). These negative or positive outcomes can have a boosting effect on the advice a story conveys. In this respect, we can view boosting as intrinsically linked to the argumentative function of response stories.

Relatedly, it can be argued that the expertise advice-givers construct in and through their response stories plays an important role in boosting the overall persuasive effect of a story. Experiential, and at times professional, expertise is the frame within which advice-givers' response stories operate. This means that when advice-givers present and discursively construct themselves as experts or employ the voice of other experts in their stories, they add an additional quality to boosting. In this regard, boosting can be viewed as highlighting expertise. A similar point can also be made for response stories through which advice-givers identify or empathize with advice-seekers. These can potentially create an overall boosting effect of bonding.

8.1.3 Constructing identity

It is not surprising that the most salient, overarching identity that is constructed in the stories is that of mother identity. At the same time, the response stories show that mother identity is not a single identity, but rather a kaleidoscope of different mother identities as shaped by different experiences, expectations, beliefs, and positions towards parenthood and mothering practices. The stories showcase a constellation of different mother identities including, for instance, stay-at-home

mothers, attachment-parenting mothers, single mothers, or mothers recovering from PPD. Such mother identities intersect, in turn, with other explicit or implicit identity markers in the response stories such as religion, gender roles, or professional expertise.

In the response stories, advice-givers make direct or indirect identity claims, positioning themselves within specific categories, essentially showing what kind of mothers they are, as in 8.6, above, and the story coda in (44), below.

(44)

Because I'm a Christian I teach my kids about love, gentleness, self-control, patience in the light of Jesus. [C]

Such positions indicate to addressees how advice-givers construct motherhood and through which lens or lenses they view it. Also, through the implicit or explicit juxtaposition of story world actors, advice-givers make negative evaluations of others' parenting, while at the same time they implicitly evaluate themselves in a positive manner. They take particular moral positionings as to what is good, normal, and acceptable in a given situation, constructing a motherhood identity within a moral frame. This will be further addressed in the next chapter that focuses on moral stance.

Shared identities

As noted previously, identifying with others is essentially identity work. By identifying with addressees through response stories of personal experience, advice-givers construct shared identities. Apart from focusing on similar experiences, one particular way that advice-givers rely on to index a shared parenthood identity in their stories is the use of addressee-inclusive we in the sense of *we-parents*, as shown in examples from story codas in 45.

(45)

a. So **we, as parents**, have to be tougher.

b. **None of us** do this parenting thing flawlessly...and **none of us** can make it happen all by ourselves

Response stories also indicate advice-givers' affiliation with particular mothering practices, such as attachment parenting, thus signaling to addressees potential shared identities in terms of mothering styles and practices.

Expertise

The construction of 'expert' identity is especially relevant here due to the advice-giving purpose of the discussions in which response stories emerge. Advice-givers construct their identity as experts, by referring to experiential knowledge, or

professional experience they have, or appropriating the voice of authority experts, such as health care practitioners. Stories of similar experiences serve to position advice-givers as lay experts based on first-hand experiences, showing addressees how they dealt with a particular problematic situation, or how they experienced its consequences.

Also, there are instances of response stories that are laced with identity claims of professional expertise as the story abstracts illustrate below.

(46)

a. I am in law enforcement so I knew a lot more about what was going on as far as security and what was going on over there.

b. I've worked in Labor/Delivery/Nursery for 6 years, and I can tell you what I've seen work well in the hospital.

c. After 7 years working at a daycare center, and majoring in ECE (early childhood education/development) I have seem all kinds of reactions to mommy leaving.

By framing their response stories with claims of professional expertise, advice-givers signal that the advice their stories communicate can be interpreted accordingly. Example (47) shows how an advice-giver uses her professional expertise as a daycare worker to advise an advice-seeker on how to deal with her son's separation anxiety.

(47)

[…] What I have seen/experienced is the child can have a full fledge fit until they know mommy has left the parking lot....then like a light switch flicking off, the tears stop and they are off and playing...then as soon as they see mommy or hear mommy, the tears start up right where they left off.....One mom was convienced her child cried all day regardless what we told her or logged his activities for her.....then one day, she got off work early, and showed up unannounced.....she walked into the room, her dd's back was to the door, so she didnt see mommy. I caught mommy's eye and signaled her over where she could observe without dd seeing her.....she watched her dd playing for a long time before she noticed mommy there, and sure enough like a switch, the tears started rolling and she tried to convience her momm once again she had been crying all the time she was gone.....Mom started listening to us as we told her about her dd's day....and started ignoring the tears.....after the dd realized mommy wasnt buying this act any more, it pretty much stopped.

(Discussion: "Separation anxiety for my 1 year old", msg#2)

It is important to repeat here that in a sense, advice-seekers grant advice-givers the position of expertise and authority when they ask for advice. In other words, one facet of advice-givers' identity as an expert is that it is already ascribed.

8.1.4 Criticizing and mitigating criticism

In this subsection, the relational work types of criticizing and mitigating criticism that at play in the response stories are presented together since they are closely related. As a discursive strategy, criticism involves passing unfavorable judgment upon someone's actions, thoughts, attitudes, or appearance (e.g. Bolander, 2013: 244-245). Thus, criticizing constitutes a potentially face-threatening act that challenges the addressee's authority, position, and self-identity (see Brown & Levinson, 1987: 113-117). This means that this strategy prototypically falls under the scope of non-supportive relational work. Yet, a close analysis of the response stories in the communicative context they emerge reveals a more complex picture of how advice-givers negotiate and deliver criticism through their stories when they address advice-seekers and their concerns.

Criticism found in the responses stories is typically highly implicit in terms of how advice-givers criticize advice-seekers for their attitudes and actions. In the stories, criticism can be encoded implicitly in the narrated events through a comparison of actions and attitudes between advice-seekers and advice-givers, casting a negative light on the former. Criticism can also be delivered directly or indirectly in the coda by highlighting negative aspects of the advice-seeker's attitudes and actions. Importantly, advice-givers set up specific frames for the way their response stories should be understood (48 a and b). They do so by using advice or assessment moves that deliver criticism before or after the telling of a story, but not necessarily immediately after it. Such assessments evaluate and question advice-seekers' positions and actions, delivering criticism that may also include mitigation (48 a). In addition, criticism can occur in story codas where advice-givers typically showcase the point of their story, evaluating advice-seekers and delivering advice (48 c).

(48)

a. **If we are not good examples of serving others**, demonstrating love and self-control, **there is no reason why we should expect that of our kids...** <assessment>

b. So although you may have a 'right' to be angry or worry, **it doesnt mean you have to take that 'right' and feel that way**. <assessment>

c. YOur big thing, is not to make a big deal over what she is doing right now....keep her safe, and healthy, and use your teachable moments to teach her **rather than fight with her**. [C]

In (48 a.) the advice-giver uses an assessment to make a point about the importance of parents being "*good examples*", otherwise they cannot expect children to behave accordingly. Previously in her reply, the advice-giver implicitly links a story of her mother as a bad role model to the advice-seeker's situation. Her assessment in (48 a.) delivers implicit criticism directed at the advice-seeker that is mitigated by the use of a collective/inclusive *we* and *us*. The advice-giver refers not only to herself and the advice-seeker, but also to other addressees and parents in general. In (48 b.), the criticism is more direct and personalized, as the advice-giver disagrees with the advice-seeker's explanations in the original message in which she claims she has the right to be angry at her ex for his bad parenting. Previously in her reply, the advice-giver relates a small story that mirrors the advice-giver's concern but shows a different approach to the problem. It is this approach that forms the basis of her assessment. In (48 c.) the coda is part of *The Little Red Hen* folk tale the advice-giver relates (see Example 36, Chapter 7, Subsection 7.4.2). This coda delivers advice and imparts criticism on the advice-seeker's approach to engage in arguments with her unruly daughter.

Instances of mitigation in story codas manifest in hedges such as *can*, *could*, *maybe*, *perhaps*, and *kind of* to deliver advice, as shown in (49).

(49)

Maybe after you find out from her why, you **can** make a deal with her that once a week she will agree to dress like a girl for you..... [C]

Most importantly, the face-threatening aspect of criticism and its degree is also a matter of how the recipient, the advice-seeker, reacts to it. To illustrate, consider Figure (7) that presents a partial thread of a discussion. In an exchange with the advice-seeker, an advice-giver contributes two separate replies, each containing a story. The story in the first reply delivers criticism at the advice-seeker, while the story in the second reply mitigates the given criticism. The exchange between the advice-seeker and the advice-giver is presented below. The advice-giver's replies featuring stories are in msg#6 and msg#9, and the advice-seekers' responses are in msg#8 and msg #10 (my italics):

Thread topic: college and 20 yr old son
Number of messages: 10
Discussion participants: 1 advice-seeker, 3 advice-givers

msg#3 [advice-seeker in response to advice-giver1]
wow.. you really do understand.. I have my husband to contend with tho.. that is another issue, but I am calling the professors tomorrow and see if my son could of done better in these last 3 classes..and Yes I was thinking of putting the computer in my room in which he said he will be in there all the time using it.. going thru that really smart mouth period with him at times..other times he is a great young adult. (…)

msg #6 in response to msg #3 [advice-giver3 in response to advice-seeker]
Please do not call your son's teachers. He is an ADULT for cripe's sake. Since your husband doesn't seem to care about it and won't do anything, it is on you. Have the internet service removed from his room. And the recliner. Tell him if he does not like it, he can move out and pay his own bills. About the school bill. Tell him that if he does not bring up his grades by the next grading period, he will be footing the bill for school, or at least half of it. Does he work? (if I missed that, sorry) If not, perhaps a part time job would be the ticket. *When I was his age, I worked and went to school and paid my own bills. I also lived on my own. My mother did not call my professors if I messed up on a grade. I would have been mortified if she did so. We also did not have the internet and a personal computer was just beginning to be used in the dorms. We had the telephone and the local TV channels. You are going to have to get tough. You cannot live his life for him.*

msg #8 in response to msg #6 [advice-seeker in response to advice-giver3]
You are absolutely correct about calling, but my reason for calling was for myself.. I wanted to know if my son truely applied himself this last semester.. This is his 3rd semester that he just finished. I thought if they told me he really applied himself then I would pay for the next semester..he could care less if I called because he told me so... I told him I am putting the computer in the basement and that it goes off at 11:00 pm.. and he said ..what am I 13 years old.. and of course the conversation continued... I did tell him he must get a job and pay for this semester. Thank you for your input. Wish me luck...

msg #9 in response to msg #8 [advice-giver3 in response to advice-seeker]
Good luck. I was not fussing at you. I hope you did not take it that way. *But, I have seen first hand when you do not let a child grow up, that they will end up a spoiled rotten brat like my younger brother. Mom helped and gave in to him nd coddled him. Now he lost his wife (she ran off), lost his kids to the state (long story) and is now taking care of our dad who is dying of cancer, and they are about to be foreclosed upon because neither will pay bills. Let him be a man. Let him fall. It might be just what he needs to get up and grow up.*
His grades show whether he is applying himself or not.

msg #10 in response to msg #9 [advice-seeker in response to advice-giver3]
I needed to be fussed at.. I am trying to make my husband understand and he just looks at me and said tonight at the kitchen table ... Your not paying for this semester??? why??? He just does not understand at all.. We pay for his cell phone, car insurance (not cheap) throwing him money here and there for gas and whatever.. don't mind doing that at all if he would just grow up and respect and appreciate everything being done for him.. But I truely understand where you are coming from.. My sister in law is being crapped on by all 3 of her adult kids and all she does is keeps giving, and saying that is ok and never makes them pay for anything and they are not rich.. but she feels that she is christian and that is the way to raise them.. Not always... Thank you very much.. you have enough on your hands with your father..

Figure 7. Partial discussion thread illustrating an exchange between advice-giver and advice-seeker

The problem outlined in the original message involves the advice-seeker's son who is failing college, does not pursue employment, and sleeps till noon, all of which she attributes to a probable online porn addiction. In a response to another advice-giver (msg#3), the advice-seeker announces her plan to call her son's teachers about his failing grades and remove the computer from his room. It is this response that prompts the advice-giver's reaction and criticism. The reply in msg#6 opens with an advice move that simultaneously expresses disagreement with the advice-seeker's intended course of action (*Please do not call your son's teachers*). This is followed by an explanation of why she opposes the advice-seeker's plans, using capitalization and a euphemism for emphasis (*He is an ADULT for cripe's sake*). After a series of other moves that focus mostly on assessment and advice, the advice-giver relates a habitual story of personal experience that projects the solution to the problem.

The story begins with the advice-giver establishing similarity between her and the advice-seeker's son (*When I was his age*). What follows is a habitual account of the advice-giver's personal experience as a college student in which she relates that she was financially independent, combined work and studies, and lived on her own. The advice-giver's story of her college years stands in stark contrast to how the advice-seeker's 20-year-old son handles his life, as described in the original message. The contrasting comparison serves to illustrate the way things should be, projecting the solution: the son should be responsible for his life and become independent. At the same time, the story casts the son in a negative light for his behavior and inaction.

Apart from criticizing the son, the advice-giver uses the story to express direct criticism towards the advice-seeker. This is accomplished by a direct comparison between the advice-seeker and the advice-giver's mother, juxtaposing their different parenting styles (*My mother did not call my professors if I messed up on a grade. I would have been mortified if she did so*). This comparison serves to evaluate negatively the advice-seeker's plan to call the teachers, and by extension, criticizes openly the advice-seeker's parenting style. The point of the story is summarized in the coda, which urges the advice-seeker to let her son take responsibility for his life (*You are going to have to get tough. You cannot live his life for him*).

Even though this criticism is potentially face-threatening, the advice-seeker accepts it in msg#8 and explains the reasons behind her decision, thanking the advice-giver for her input (*You are absolutely correct about calling, but my reason for calling was for myself*). In her reply in msg#9, the advice-giver mitigates her previous message with an explanation (*I was not fussing at you. I hope you did not take it that way*) and a story of personal experience which she relates from the perspective of a sibling.

This is a cautionary story that aims to show to the addressee what happens when a mother "*coddles*" her child. In brief, she attributes her brother's personal failures and problems to their over-indulging mother. The story has an argumentative function, supporting the point of the advice-giver's first reply. It also has a

relational function in that it mitigates the previous telling and advice in msg#6. Again, the advice-seeker in msg#10 accepts the criticism and acknowledges the advice-giver's position ("*I needed to be fussed at*", "*But I truely understand where you are coming from*").

This particular case of these two interrelated stories presented here corresponds to what DeCapua & Dunham (2012: 91) refer to as *seesaw criticism*, a type of criticism that is "tempered or balanced" by mitigation to promote bonding. For instance, a statement of empathy or identification can be used prior to a statement of criticism to mitigate the negativity expressed in the latter. DeCapua & Dunham (2012: 91) further note that the combination of seesaw criticism and advice is used to express the importance of the given advice. This is also the case with the two-story example presented above: the seesaw criticism employed by the advice-giver is meant to underscore as well as support her advice.

8.1.5 Praising

Praising is another relational work strategy that emerges in advice-givers' response stories. These are instances of stories that impart a positive evaluation of an advice-seeker's actions or attitude. They do so by expressing in-story praise or supporting story-framing assessments that convey praise. Notably, praise is linked to comparisons that advice-givers make through their stories between advice-seekers and themselves, or others. Two examples have been chosen for illustration purposes, (50) and (51). In (50), the advice-giver begins her message by replying to another advice-giver, complimenting her for her actions.[27] She continues with her praise in what serves as an abstract to a personal experience story.

(50)

> bravo [Helen]! i was bullied as a child and only wish my mom took the kind of actions you took. [story abstract] my mom was very big on letting "children be children and letting them work things out themselves." this may be fine if your kid is one of the strong ones, which i was not. if your child is not one of the strong ones, you need to get involved on your child's behalf. my mom also said "just ignore them and they'll leave you alone". this only made the kids work harder to break me down. i am still very scarred emotionally by the bullying, and this took place over 25 years ago. as a result, i am very involved in my kids life and always take action to ensure my kids do not have to endure the kind of life i endured. (My son is 6 and my daughter is 4).
>
> (Discussion: "bullied son", msg#7)

27 That other advice-giver shared her experience with how she dealt with several bullying situations, illustrating that she was a hands-on and proactive parent.

In her story abstract she establishes a direct comparison between the advice-giver and her mother, as well as a comparison between herself and the advice-giver's son. She then deploys a story in which she relates that she was bullied at school, but her mother had a non-reaction approach that eventually emboldened the bullies, leaving the advice-giver emotionally scarred.

The next example in (51) features a story as an empathetic response that at the same time advises the advice-seeker to get professional help. This comes as a reply to a mother who asks for help for her recurrent anger outbursts towards her son, expressing her feelings of guilt and shame. In the original message, the mother is also concerned that these outbursts may escalate in severity, explaining that she is fighting an urge to become physically violent. The advice-giver begins with an assessment that delivers praise (*the shaking and choking, I commend you for not following through with the urges*) and continues with advice (*a red flag you should not ignore*). She then launches a story that focuses on an incident that took place in her workplace.

(51)
[…] the shaking and choking, I commend you for not following through with the urges, but having the urges are a red flag you should not ignore.....
There was a child in our center at the day care, who was a problem child,caused problems all of the time....mom was a single mom, going through anasty divorce....one day he came in with a black eye....everyone asked himwhat happened, and we got the "I fell down" bit.....I pulled him asside, and told him that grown up make mistakes, and sometimes do badthings....that doesnt mean the grown up is bad, just the grown up needshelp....he asked to go to the directors office, and he told her his mom gotmad at him and punched him that morning because he wasnt eating hiscereal fast enough.....of course we called cps....they came out, interviewedhim, checked him and his sister out for more serious injuries, thenwaited.....when mom came to pick up the kids, they pulled her off to our teachers lounge, and counseled her....she confessed she did loose it and shewas truly sorry....because she confessed instead of tried to deny it, and theycould tell she was already beating herself up for it, they got her to agree tocounseling sessions.....they didnt [sic] take the kids away, and she even woncustody in court from the ex.....mostly because she was willing to admit hershortcommings, like you are doing here, and was open and willing to gainthe help she needed to become a better mom.....
YOu can too...if not for yourself, for your kids...they deserve the best mom you can be.

(Discussion: "Am I a horrible Mother?", msg#2)

This advice-giver narrates about how she discovered a case of child abuse at the day care where she was working. This complication story traces the events from discovering the abuse to confronting the mother, and finally reaching a resolution in which the mother admitted her actions and agreed to receiving counseling with positive results. A comparison emerges between the advice-seeker and the mother in the story in terms of abusive behavior. Most importantly, the advice-giver draws attention to remorsefulness as the common denominator: both the addressee in her advice-seeking message and the mother in the story admit to abusive behavior, display feelings of remorse and regret, and need help ("*she confessed she did loose it and she was truly sorry*", "*she was willing to admit her shortcommings, like you are doing here, and was open and willing to gain the help she needed to become a better mom*"). The advice-giver addresses the advice-seeker directly (*like you are doing here*) by drawing a direct comparison between her and the mother in the story. This direct comparison functions as praise; she attributes credit to the advice-seeker for admitting what she is doing and asking for help. The story ends with the coda addressing directly the advice-seeker, encouraging her to get help (e.g. "*YOu can too...if not for yourself, for your kids...they deserve the best mom you can be*"). Instead of vilifying the mother in the story and, by extension, the advice-seeker for the abuse, the advice-giver approaches the problem with sensitivity and empathetic understanding. Still, the advice-giver does not minimize or condone the abuse, as she shows through her narrative telling.

Both examples illustrate that response stories play an important role in delivering and supporting praise, realizing yet another relational work strategy. Praise is addressed further in Chapter 9 in relation to moral stance.

8.2 Response stories as relational work

According to Langer & Lietz (2015: 283), empathetic responding essentially involves "the ability to paraphrase or reflect back" what the other is communicating. Also, as DeCapua & Dunham (2012: 92) note, what makes identifying and empathizing bonding strategies is "providing advice-seekers with the sense that their problems matter to the advice-givers".

In view of these observations and based on the analysis, response stories qualify as bonding strategies since they demonstrate advice-givers' understanding of a problematic situation and show that advice-givers are attuned to the affective state of advice-seekers by reflecting back feelings and reactions. The response stories analyzed herein support Tannen's (2007: 41) observation that telling a story "can itself be an involvement strategy". The findings also support research that points out the importance of storytelling for conveying social support in different online settings (Harrison and Barlow, 2009; Page, 2012; Thurnherr et al., 2016).

Regarding criticism, we have seen that response stories can also be used to express disagreement and criticize advice-seekers' actions or attitudes. This reflects similar observations made in studies of online support fora where discussions

participants use stories to connect with others, but also to deny common ground (Veen et al., 2010; Page 2012). Yet, as shown here, the face-threatening potential of such stories is up to addressees' interpretations who may accept the criticism rather than reject it.

8.3 Summary

This chapter focused on the relational work advice-givers' response stories do in advice-giving exchanges on the online advice board. It was shown that response stories in this particular online advice-giving context typically function as involvement strategies that perform supportive relational work. As illustrated, the stories display an array of relational work types that are interconnected and interact with each other. These are bonding, boosting, constructing advice-givers' identity, criticizing and mitigating criticism, and praising. In the next chapter, the focus will shift to the narrative dimension of moral stance.

9 Moral stance

This chapter examines the advice-givers' response stories through the lens of the narrative dimension of moral stance. The chapter begins with mapping out the moral stance types identified in the response stories, showing where these types are located along the moral stance continuum, and illustrating how they are realized in the stories. Next, the focus turns to the attribution of praise and blame in the stories through which advice-givers assign responsibility and accountability to social actors in the story world for their actions and involvement in the events. The chapter also addresses the different thematic domains of responsibility and accountability that advice-givers construct or allude to in the response stories in relation to social actors' roles.

9.1 Moral stance types in advice-givers' response stories

As shown in Chapter 3, Ochs & Capps (2001) conceptualize the narrative dimension of moral stance as a continuum of possibilities: stories with a certain and constant moral stance are located at the far left end of the continuum, and those with uncertain and open moral stance lie at the other end. Following Ochs & Capps's approach, I examined the stories to see where they fall on the continuum. One methodological problem that becomes immediately apparent is identifying the moral stance types of specific subtypes of small stories in the data such as deferrals and elliptical snapshots of events. Their brevity and especially the very limited presence of evaluative elements may initially pose a challenge in identifying a particular moral stance type. Therefore, the context of a discussion and the immediate co-text in which a small story is deployed are of particular importance in determining and interpreting an advice-giver's moral stance.

All in all, three types of moral stance were identified in advice-givers' response stories: a) *constant*, b) *dynamic*, and c) *fluid*. The first and third types fall at the opposite ends of the continuum as outlined and discussed by Ochs & Capps (2001). The second type, however, labeled here as dynamic, represents another possibility on the moral stance continuum that can be located between its two conceptual poles, as shown in Figure 8. This type does not involve a relatively stable and constant moral standpoint throughout a story; nor does it start as a stable moral standpoint that becomes fluid and uncertain in the course of a narrative telling.

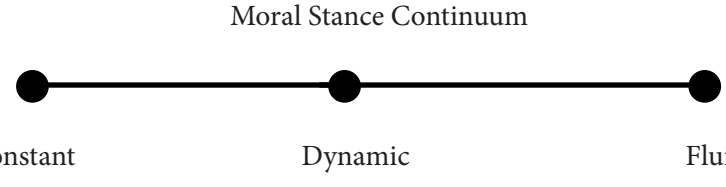

Figure 8. Moral stance types of response stories on the moral stance continuum

Dynamic moral stance involves a shift in moral position or positions in a story, marking a transition from an initial moral standpoint to a revised one in which advice-givers eventually settle. This transition, or shift, is an indication of the dynamicity of moral stance.

The identified moral stance types can be related to the thematic types of problem stories and solution stories, respectively. Table 11 presents a breakdown of the distribution of problem stories and solution story types in relation to the identified moral stance types.

Table 11. Distribution of problem and solution stories by moral stance type

Story type	**Moral stance type**			
	Constant	Dynamic	Fluid	Total
Problem	40	7		47
Solution	70	3	1	74
Total	110	10	1	121

Constant moral stance is by far the most prevalent type, with dynamic moral stance ranking far below, as second, and fluid as third with only two instances identified. Further, constant moral stance is more prevalent in solution stories rather than problem stories, as nearly two thirds of the instances are found there. Even though few in the data, instances of dynamic moral stance, again, rather appear in problem stories. As for fluid moral stance, this type was found in one solution story. The types of moral stance found in the advice-givers' response stories are described and exemplified in detail in the subsections that follow.

9.1.1Constant moral stance

Moral stance that was identified as constant in advice-givers' response stories refers to a stable and unvarying moral position or positions an advice-giver displays and maintains throughout a story. In these stories, advice-givers present stable moral positions of how things should be, what is the 'normal' and conventional way of behaving and doing things. Such moral positions in the stories are made explicit through overt evaluation or they are presented in a more implicit manner through subtle evaluative displays of moral stance. This observation is in line with Ochs & Capps's (2001: 111) remarks that stories can exhibit overt moral standpoints or encode moral stance implicitly, requiring addressees "to link grammatical and discursive displays of moral stance to other elements in a narrated situation".

An example of implicit, constant moral stance is given in (52). This features a reply to a mother who seeks advice and information regarding the onset of teen menstruation. Specifically, the mother is concerned that her 11-year-old daugh-

ter's menstruation started too early, expressing her uncertainty about what constitutes a normal menstrual pattern at that age and what to expect. In her reply, the advice-giver unfolds her own experience with her daughter:

(52)

> Hi... My DD got her period in December, less than one week after her 11th birthday. There are 2 other girls in her class that got it also, it seems like onset at a younger age is becoming more common. We just treated it as a matter of course, she was already educated enough to know what was happening. It has been haphazard since, skipping months, etc. we never know when to expect it so she just carries a Kotex in her purse and golf bag so she is always prepared. I've been told that this irregularity is common.
>
> (Discussion: "Daughter's 1st period- Questions", msg#3)

The story begins by establishing common ground with the advice-seeker, locating the start of the daughter's menstruation at the same age as the advice-seeker's daughter. Drawing on a comparison and noting that other girls in her daughter's class also started menstruating at 11, the advice-giver makes a general evaluative comment about the occurrence of menstruation in very early adolescence. The comparison serves as evidence to support her evaluation, addressing directly the advice-seeker's concern (*it seems like onset at a younger age is becoming more common*).

The story continues with how the advice-giver handled her daughter's first menstruation, pointing out that it was something they expected, and that the daughter was prepared for (*We just treated it as a matter of course, she was already educated enough to know what was happening*). It is at this point of the narrative telling that the advice-giver shows her key moral standpoint. She employs indirect evaluative displays of moral stance that signal to addressees what she considers the normative way of doing things is in this particular situation. She positions herself as an agent, or rather as a co-agent, in her response action to her daughter's first menstruation (*We just treated it as a matter of course*). "*We*", which probably refers to the advice-giver and her daughter, indicates joint involvement, underlining the idea of shared agency and involvement in dealing with the issue at hand. The advice-giver uses *just* as a softener to downplay the response action, evaluating the menstruation onset as "*a matter of course*". By using the explicative "*she was already educated enough to know what was happening*", she motivates the use of the softener and her previous evaluation. The implication is that since the daughter was educated and prepared for this, it presumably made the situation easier to deal with. This explicative thus foregrounds the importance of educating and preparing teen girls on the matter. The story coda (*It has been haphazard since, skipping months, etc.* […] *I've been told that this irregularity is common*) assesses the situation up to the present, explaining how the daughter is prepared to deal with the situation, while

restating the point of what is common.

As we see in (52), the moral stance in this story instance is constant, with no indication of modification. In other words, the advice-giver does not change or challenge her moral standpoint in the course of the narrative telling. In addition, the advice-giver accomplishes her moral positioning in an indirect manner, while at the same time she addresses the concerns of the advice-seeker by assessing the problem and delivering information. The story displays indirectly and strategically the advice-giver's orientation to norms, expectations, and roles regarding parenting in the context of menstruation in adolescents. Importantly, and given the purpose of the board, such moral orientation and positioning can be interpreted as implicit advice aimed at the advice-seeker. Also, adhering with certainty to a particular moral perspective provides advice-seekers with guiding principles from a position of stability.

Notably, the advice-giver's moral stance in this story is not one single position as such, but rather includes several positions that accrue to create and consolidate her moral stance. As shown, such stance incorporates the advice-giver's evidenced claim that early menstruation and the irregularities associated with it are common, thus normalizing the given problem from a position of knowing. Her moral stance also builds upon her orientation to joint agency and agentive involvement as a mother, invoking a parent's responsibility as an interpretative frame. Educating preadolescent girls and preparing them for menstruation emerges indirectly as a central imperative for parents.

We next turn our attention to another type of moral stance identified in the data: dynamic moral stance.

9.1.2 Dynamic moral stance

Dynamic moral stance involves personal experience stories that advice-givers launch from an explicit or implicit moral perspective that changes at some point of the narrative telling, resulting in a new, modified moral standpoint. In these stories the shift from an initial moral position to a new one is prompted by a pivotal, punctual event or sequence of events, or a series of repetitive events that have had an impact on the characters in the story world. Specifically, the occurrence of events and their consequences bring about a change in how advice-givers perceive and evaluate a state of affairs from a moral standpoint (Figure 9). Thus, there is a cause-and-effect link between events, their outcomes, and advice-givers' revised moral positions.

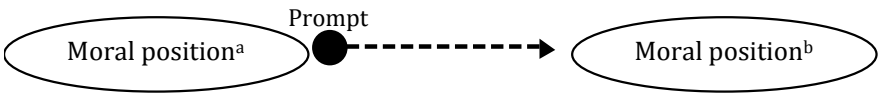

Figure 9. Dynamic moral stance in response stories, where prompt refers to an event or events (habitual or punctual) causing a moral stance shift

In response stories that display dynamic moral stance, advice-givers typically indicate a moral stance shift at the highpoint of a story, or in evaluation segments commenting on events, and/or in a story coda. In particular, advice-givers signal a moral stance shift through the use of key evaluative devices including reported thought, counterfactuals, futurity, affective commentary, as well as indirectly through temporal and causal interrelationships that imply a moral stance shift (Table 12).

Table 12. Moral stance shift cues in advice-givers' response stories

Evaluative devices	**Objectives**	**Examples**
a) Reported direct thought	Voicing one's inner thoughts; constructing an inner dialogue	*I remember having the thought "OK, wow, this is how normal people feel, this is how I'm supposed to feel"*
b) Counterfactuals	Comparing what happened to what could or should have happened; presenting alternative scenarios or paths	*I should have left when the abuse started*
c) Futurity	Comparing what happened to what will or will not happen; showing actions that will and/or will not happen in the future	*I will not let strangers or "family" hurt me again.*
d) Affective commentary	Expressing feelings of regret and guilt	*boy did I feel guilty*
e) Temporality and causality	Contrasting past and present actions or attitudes	*I used to have a really bad eating disorder and knew what I was doing to my body was not good but did not care* […] *I am now 34 and have so many health issues. I do not think that she is clearly thinking about her future.*

These evaluative devices register or announce a shift in the advice-giver's moral positioning that the advice-giver may later make explicit in the story coda, or in advice and assessment moves before or after a story.

In stories with dynamic moral stance, reported direct thought shows advice-givers' reasoning process towards a revised moral position (see (a) in Table 12). As Tannen (2007: 115) points out, reporting one's thoughts as inner speech is a way of constructing an inner dialogue with oneself in a stylized manner. Hence, by using reported thought, advice-givers allow addressees access to their inner speech and internal thought processes at the moment a moral stance shift occurred in the story world.

Next, counterfactual statements found in the stories include *should have* con-

structions that address unrealized possibilities of action advice-givers entertain based on a change in their perspective (see (b) in Table 12). Counterfactuals fall into the category of evaluative devices that Labov (1972: 381) refers to as comparators; that is, locutions that "compare the events which did occur to those which did not occur". As a result, counterfactuals evaluate the transpired events by alluding to what may or could have happened but did not.

Another type of comparator found to show a moral stance shift in response stories is futurity. Specifically, advice-givers use *will*-constructions that focus on a modified, forward-looking stance regarding their actions, attitude, or behavior (see (c) in Table 12). What futurity does in such instances is draw attention to an indirect comparison between what happened and what will happen, conveying advice-givers' intentions for the future. Next, there are instances of affective commentary that evaluate actions and events while at the same time signal a moral stance shift (see (d) in Table 12). Such commentary focuses on advice-givers' emotions and feelings of guilt, regret, or self-reproach about their actions and their consequences, alluding to a change of moral perspective.

Apart from the aforementioned devices signaling a moral stance shift, there are also response stories in which advice-givers imply a change from an initial to a revised moral position through temporal and causal connections. This is achieved through the temporal deictic shift that involves a juxtaposition of advice-givers' actions and attitudes in the there-and-then of the story world with the here-and-now of the storytelling activity. In such instances, the moral stance shift becomes specifically salient in the coda of a story (see (e) in Table 12).

Notably, a shift of moral perspective is the advice such response stories ultimately communicate to addressees. In solution stories that display dynamic moral stance, advice-givers link their moral stance shift to how a problem was resolved or managed. In such stories, the main point is that a new, modified perspective and worldview translates into actions and attitudes with positive outcomes. In problem stories with dynamic moral stance, advice-givers illustrate how negative outcomes that carry into the present led them to change their moral perspective and worldview. The common denominator in both types of stories is that a moral stance shift is necessary for resolving and preventing problems.

To illustrate dynamic moral stance at work, let us consider example (53). The response story in this example is part of a reply to an advice-seeker who is amidst a custody and visitation dispute involving child support issues and child safety concerns. In her message the advice-seeker, among other things, expresses her concern over the frequent verbal confrontations between her and her ex-boyfriend due to his being inconsistent with visitation and child support payments. As she explains, they engage in yelling and screaming on a daily basis with no sign of reaching any mutual understanding on the issues under dispute. In (53), the advice-giver shares a story of similar experience that offers a solution to the advice-seekers' problem. Importantly, the advice-giver traces the shift in her moral positioning towards the

problem. The point in the story where the advice-giver signals the moral stance shift is highlighted in italics.

(53)

> Well, I had a similiar situation last year when my boyfriend and I broke up. There was a lot of screaming and yelling in the begining. *And then one day I asked myself why? Why am I wasting this energy on someone that I have no say over. He is not my problem anymore. If he so chooses to ruin his relationship with his son then so be it*. When I went back at the situation calm and collected things got better. I didn't yell about visitation and child support anymore. When it was his day I would simply ask him if he was coming, if he said no I would reply with something like "OK great, have a nice weekend" After a couple of those he started coming and picking up his son more often. I think that when all our left over drama was dropped and the fighting stopped both are heads were a little clearer and I know that it made it easier for him to come and get him because he knew I wasn't going to start anything. I think that no matter how macho a guy thinks he is, he doesn't want to deal with the drama, and even more he doesn't want to be told what to do by his ex. It seems to make them angry and they can't think rationally.
>
> (Discussion: "Dont know what to do anymore", msg#7)

The advice-giver begins with a summarizing story abstract and an orientation section that establish similarity between her and the advice-seeker (*Well, I had a **similiar situation** last year when my boyfriend and I broke up. There was a lot of screaming and yelling in the begining*). This introductory part of the story essentially summarizes in a compact manner a similar situation with verbal confrontations the advice-seeker explains in her message. What follows is the complication and turning point of the story that signals the beginning of a shift towards a different moral perspective on the situation (***And then one day I asked myself why?** Why am I wasting this energy on someone that I have no say over…*). The cue that marks the moral stance shift is the use of reported thought, which shows a cognitive process of reasoning that the advice-giver voices in her storytelling. She uses her inner speech and thought to evaluate the problem and bring into question her initial perspective, implying that screaming and yelling is counterproductive and draining.

Continuing with reporting her thoughts, the advice-giver reassesses the problem, marking a change of moral perspective, while, at the same time, anticipating a hypothetical future situation (*He is not my problem anymore. **If he so chooses to ruin his relationship with his son then so be it***). The key turning point prompts the advice-giver to select a new course of action that eventually yielded positive results (*When I went back at the situation calm and collected **things got better***). As the story continues, she illustrates her new approach to the conflict, indicating her

changed perspective by using direct speech (*I would reply with something like* ***"OK great, have a nice weekend"***). The desired, positive result of that modification in her perspective and attitude is shown in what she recounts next (*After a couple of those* ***he started coming and picking up his son more often***).

What follows is an extended coda where the advice-giver moves from personalizing her experience to generalizing it, implicitly assessing the advice-seeker's situation and delivering indirect advice. Specifically, she evaluates her revised moral position in connection with its positive results (*I think that when all our left over drama was dropped and the fighting stopped both are heads were a little clearer* […] *he knew I wasn't going to start anything.*). Using her own experience as a starting point, she then proceeds with making a generalization about men's machismo in relation to conflict situations with exes (*I think that no matter how macho a guy thinks he is, he doesn't want to deal with the drama, and even more he doesn't want to be told what to do by his ex. It seems to make them angry and they can't think rationally*). In general, the coda harks back to her mentions of how she handled the situation after she decided to change her perspective on the situation ("*calm and collected*", "*I didn't yell*", "*drama was dropped*"). In other words, the main point of the story that doubles as implicit advice is a call to the addressee to review and change her moral standpoint. The positive results are presented by the advice-giver as a testament to the effectiveness of such change.

As illustrated above, dynamic moral stance constitutes a specific type that has a place in the moral stance continuum. The next subsection focuses on yet another type identified in the advice-givers' response stories, fluid moral stance.

9.1.3 Fluid moral stance

In contrast to the previous types, fluid moral stance involves entertaining different positions in the course of a narrative telling without necessarily settling into a final moral standpoint (Figure 10). In the instance found, the advice-giver negotiates different moral positions that she shows depend heavily on diverse situational factors surrounding the events. The result is a moral stance characterized by fluidity, as the advice-giver oscillates between opposing moral positions. Thus, this is a story that is located on the far right of the continuum of the narrative dimension of moral stance.

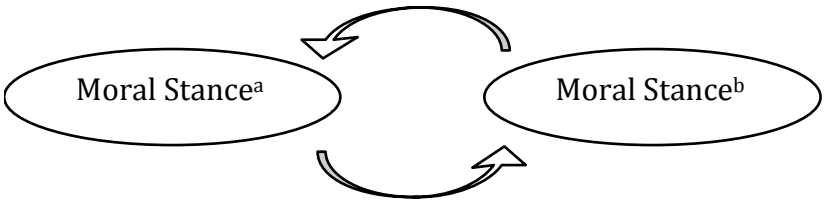

Figure 10. Fluid moral stance

Fluid moral stance is exemplified in the following solution story (Example 54) that is part of a response to a mother whose son is being bullied at school and remains passive. In this instance, the advice-giver relates how her son dealt with bullying, announcing the story with an abstract (*Here is just another experience I have had*). The formulaic expression *Long story short* used here has a summarizing function, leaving out details the advice-giver considers dispensable so as to go directly to the most reportable event (*when my now 15 year old ds was in 5th grade he resorted to hitting a bully back*).[28]

(54)

> […] Here is just another experience I have had. Long story short when my now 15 year old ds was in 5th grade he resorted to hitting a bully back. I realize that this is not the proper thing to do and I DO NOT think you should encourage your son to do it but,,,it worked in this situation. The bully didn't bother him anymore and his classmates actually respected him because he was the one to stand up to this bully. It also made the school take notice because this bully had been a huge problem. But it had fall backs too. I think you need to start figuring things out now before Junior High. Once you hit that age your son needs to be ready to handle every situation without making it worse. Trust me on that one!
>
> (Discussion: "bullied son", msg #4)

Hitting someone is essentially a violent act, and as such carries negative import. The lexical choice of the verb *resort* here serves to mitigate the negative meaning of that act, suggesting it was an act of necessity: the advice-giver's son used force to defend himself against the bully. The advice-giver then employs external evaluation to suspend the narrative telling in order to assess the event and address the advice-seeker directly (*I realize that this is not the proper thing to do and* ***I DO NOT think you should encourage your son to do it***). She explicitly evaluates her son's actions as not the proper, right thing to do, and goes on to overtly negate any interpretation of the event as a recommendation for taking such course of action, stressing her position by employing a negative evidential *I DO NOT think* with emphatic capitalization. What immediately follows is the story's resolution that is introduced by a contrastive marker (*but,,,it worked in this situation*). Here, the marker *but* serves to signal a contrast between her foregoing, negative evaluation and the positive result of her son's actions.

Next, the advice-giver expands on the resolution and points out that standing up to the bully had a threefold positive effect: the bully stopped harassing her son, who earned the respect of his classmates, and made the school pay attention

28 Formulaic expressions or *routine formulae* are defined by Coulmas (1981: 2-3) as "highly conventionalized prepatterned expressions whose occurrence is tied to more or less standardized communication situations".

to the problem. Furthermore, the comment "*It also made the school take notice*" raises implications regarding the school's responsibility. She proceeds to counter the positive effects with an evaluative comment that underlines the negative consequences of that event without further elaboration (*But it had fall backs too*). The coda addresses the advice-seeker directly, offering advice (*I think you need to start figuring things out now*).

In this story, the advice-giver fashions a portrait of her son as a bully victim turned school hero. Specifically, his actions are framed within a frame of necessity, namely, self-defense that offers ground for moral justification. The advice-giver portrays herself as someone who neither condones nor advocates violence, yet she appears to acknowledge the particularity of the circumstances that led to the physical confrontation, as well as the positive and negative effects of that action. As a result, she adheres to the moral position that violence is wrong; yet she negotiates the acceptability of physical violence under certain conditions, that is, the right for self-protection. In this respect, the teller oscillates between two distinct and opposing moral positions that she entertains on the basis of given situational and contextual factors.

This type of moral stance illustrates that advice-givers can entertain conflicting and alternative moral positions as they attempt to work out and make sense of events. The fluidity that such stories exhibit shows that there can be different moral lenses through which we evaluate the meaning of events.

9.1.4 Interim summary

As illustrated in the preceding subsections, three moral stance types were identified in the advice-givers' stories, namely, 1) constant, 2) dynamic, and 3) fluid moral stance. This reaffirms Ochs & Capps's (2001) seminal observations on the varying possibilities that characterize the narrative dimension of moral stance. Specifically, the analysis showed that the dynamic type is yet another point on the continuum of this narrative dimension. Constant moral stance is the default in the data. The next section delves into the particulars of moral stance, focusing on the attribution of praise and blame as an act of moral positioning.

9.2 Praise and blame

This section focuses on how advice-givers assign praise and blame to story participants for their actions and involvement in the narrated events, and the kind of positions they take regarding how they view the social world. As noted previously, assigning praise and blame is an act of moral positioning because it indicates how we view the social world in terms of what we consider to be normal or not, good or bad, and right or wrong. The analysis shows that by attributing praise and blame advice-givers take specific positions on what constitutes 'good' or 'bad' a) parenting, and especially mothering practices, b) professional and institutional

practices (e.g. teachers, health care practitioners, school administrators), and c) social practices (e.g. encountering dog owners, socializing with peers). With their tellings, advice-givers locate specific areas of responsibility and accountability that are relevant and traceable to social actors in and out of the story world.

9.2.1 Praise

The attribution of praise in the response stories involves implicit or explicit positive evaluations targeting story participants (other-directed praise) or the advice-giver herself (self-directed praise) as actors in the story world. Explicit evaluations involve the use of lexis with positive value (e.g. adjectives such as *great*, *good*, *awesome*) that assesses social actors' actions, attitudes and beliefs in the story world. Implicit positive evaluation that conveys praise is contextually derived, emerging from what advice-givers indicate as good, right, or desirable attitudes and actions in a given situation.

Other-directed praise

Other-directed praise in the response stories manifests in direct or indirect positive evaluations of actors' attitudes, conduct, and actions for addressing a problem properly or remedying a transgression. Such evaluations revolve around the social actors' following normative rules of conduct and observing and fulfilling duties and obligations that stem from particular roles such as mother, teacher, or health care professional. The following examples are excerpts from response stories that illustrate how advice-givers attribute other-directed praise:

(55)

> […] So I nicely talked to the teacher and explained the situation - **she was awesome she arranged for school counseling**, (now my son goes to a counseling group once a week with other kids) and **she also talked to the class about calling other children names** (which helped). […]
>
> (Discussion: "Bullied son", msg#6)

(56)

> […] I had my 1st panic attack when I was 12yrs old. No doctor has ever been able to find out what was wrong with me. I've been told it's stress, nerves, depression, etc. 2yrs ago at the age of 40 I went to a doctor because of my panic attacks and **he took the time to try to figure this thing out. And he did**. I have SVT (supraventricular tackycardia) […]
>
> (Discussion: "teens with anxiety disorders", msg#11)

The advice-giver in (55) directs praise at the teacher for her actions and efforts to address a bullying situation at school involving the advice-giver's son (for the full story see (25) in Chapter 7, Subsection 7.2.2). By turning to the teacher, the advice-giver implies her expectations regarding a teacher's perceived role and duties as an educator and monitor of students' behavior in the school setting. Thus, the attribution of praise is here directly related to the fulfillment of these expectations. At the same time, the advice-giver suggests with her telling that the bully problem is a matter of shared responsibility for both parent and teacher.

In (56), other-directed praise is more indirect than in the previous case. The advice-giver assigns credit to the doctor for identifying what causes her panic attacks by casting his actions in a positive light and showcasing the positive result (for the full story see (28) in Chapter 7, Subsection 7.2.4). This is also accomplished by contrasting the doctor's persistence in finding the cause of the panic attacks to other doctors' several misdiagnoses. As a result, the advice-giver implies that other doctors did not take the time to make a proper diagnosis, implicitly sketching her position on what constitutes good medical practice in the context of diagnostic assessments by medical professionals.

Self-directed praise

No evidence of overt self-directed praise emerged in the analysis of response stories of personal experience. However, advice-givers engage in self-directed praise in a manner that is not readily evident. Self-directed praise is not articulated in such stories through explicit, positive self-evaluation (cf. Dayter 2016); it rather manifests implicitly through positive self-disclosure. In particular, advice-givers engage in positive self-disclosure that casts their agency in the story world in a positive light in terms of: a) addressing problems and locating responsibility to resolve them, and b) observing and upholding what they construct as normatively expected of their role, for instance, as mothers or professionals in a given situation. By doing so, advice-givers present themselves in a favorable light, observing the 'looking good principle', that is, the propensity of tellers of personal experience stories to construct themselves as morally superior compared to antagonists (Ochs, Smith & Taylor 1989; Ochs & Capps 2001:47). Consider the story in (57) that is a reply to a mother who expresses her concern over her daughter's impulsive and aggressive behavior. In her problem message, the mother explains that she received two incident reports from her daughter's after-school daycare that detail her aggressive behavior. The advice-giver replies with a story of her experience as a daycare employee:

(57)

> A little story, for food for thought..... by the way this is a true story. While workin at the daycare center, I was in the before and after school room....we had your typical children, the quiet shy kids, the roudy trouble makers and the in betweens. After a class in college, the lecture was

about steriotyping children and what happens and how it happens.
I was fairly new to this classroom, and had already figured out who was who and what was what.....one little boy was always being blamed for this mess or that mess....and I became quite aware that sometimes he was being sent to clean a mess he had nothing to do because the children had fingered him as the mess maker.....
So one day this little boy was not there, and while the children were plaing, I went and made a mess of the leggos....I left it....come clean up time, the lego mess was still there and when the lead teacher asked who made that mess, the children all named this one little boy.....the teacher immediately started repremanding and lecturing this boy about the mess and sending him on his way to clean it up.....it took a full 3 minutes of her lecturing and ordering him before she realized he wasnt even in the room.....then she went looking for him, assuming he was hiding in the bathroom.....
Once she realized he was not even there that day (I had to point out to her the roll sheet that indicated he was not there that day) I explained to her and the other kids that they are too quick to blame someone else, and instead of finger pointing, maybe they should just quietly clean up the mess and stop making a big deal over who made the mess.....I doubt the little boy realized why he suddenly was not the one blamed for everything any more.....
If the teachers are not "teaching" appropriate social skills either to your dd or her peers, I would say this is not the appropriate center for your dd to be involved with.... she is still young enough you can find better care, and the switch should not be too traumatic for anyone but you....

(Discussion: "Impulsive 5 year old…", msg#11)

After the orientation section, where a lecture about stereotyping children is mentioned, the advice-giver continues with relating an incident about a supposed troublemaker at the daycare center. In brief, a little boy was constantly blamed for making a mess even when it was not his fault. The advice-giver relates how her experiment of making a mess with plastic bricks revealed a systematic bias towards the boy as a blameworthy actor. She proves that the teacher not only reinforced the children's habit of blaming the boy for everything, but also participated in doing so. Her words to the teacher and the children deliver the point of the story, imparting criticism and shifting the blame to them (e.g. *they are too quick to blame someone else*).

As we can see, the advice-giver uses the story to shift the focus from the daughter's behavior in the advice-seeking message to the teachers, offering an alternative perspective of looking at the problem. In other words, the story gives the addressee "*food for thought*" as indicated in the story abstract, inviting her to consider the possibility that a similar situation may be at play in her case. This is further in-

stantiated in the coda in which the advice-giver points out the responsibility of the teachers to teach children "*appropriate social skills*" and suggests the addressee switch daycares if teachers do not fulfill this responsibility.

Importantly, the story serves as a portrait of positive self-disclosure in which the advice-giver paints herself as morally superior, as opposed to her fellow teacher. She positions herself as an educator who actively and agentively opposes stereotyping and others' attempts to marginalize students, thereby constructing herself as a positive moral agent.

Co-constructed praise

It is important to note here that the attribution of praise for fulfilling expectations of role-related duties and obligations is also tied to community values and beliefs. For instance, throughout a discussion thread titled "Bullied son", discussion participants stress the importance of parental responsibility in educating children on bullying and especially taking action to intervene in bullying situations, as opposed to relying solely on the school or the children themselves for handling such situations. As an advice-giver aptly puts it in her assessment of the advice-seeker's bully problem: "*It all starts with the parent*". Advice-givers invite the praise of the community when they engage in positive self-disclosure with their stories, displaying that they conform to community values and expectations (see example (51) in Chapter 8, Subsection 8.1.5). Thus, praise can also be co-constructed, in the sense that stories exhibit positive self-disclosure to which discussion participants respond with explicit attributions of praise, reinforcing values within the community. This also shows that moral meanings are bound to norms of social groups which determine the negotiation of a story's moral point (Linde, 2010).

9.2.2 Blame

Advice-givers attribute blame in the stories by evaluating the blameworthiness of individuals' causal and moral role as agents in the narrated events. In their stories, advice-givers locate blame within an individual's character, disposition, or personality (i.e. characterological blame), or their actions and behavior (i.e. behavioral blame). [29] Specifically, advice-givers attribute blame by assigning causal and moral responsibility to others (other-direct blame), or themselves (self-blame).

Other-directed blame

As Table 13 illustrates, there are particular evaluation devices that advice-givers use in their stories to assign blame to others. These include: a) evaluative lexis that refers to the antagonist's character and behavior in terms of normality or capacity (e.g. ***weird*** *mind-set*, ***lousy*** *caretaker*, *his* ***bad*** *parenting*); b) actions and attitudes that are conventionally ascribed negative orientation (e.g. *he beat her so badly*); c)

29 For my purposes here, I borrow the terms characterological blame and behavioral blame from social psychology (e.g. Janoff-Bulman, 1999).

reported speech that reveals attitudes, values, and beliefs not sanctioned by the advice-giver (e.g. *"just ignore them and they'll leave you alone"*); d) internal evaluation in the form of negation that shows lack of action, or an individual's disposition (e.g. "*he just did not care*"); e) external evaluation that presents the advice-givers' commentary on the narrated events and story participants (e.g. "*Can you imagine that???*). To illustrate the mechanics of other-blame strategies in response stories, consider example (58).

(58)

> […] My neighbor and I resorted to approaching a parent about a bully on the school bus when things went to far and the school did nothing. The bully actually threw gel deodorant in the neighbors girls eye on the bus! That experience did not go well. I ended up being a mediator and the parent was "ok" to me. My neighbor and the bullies mom had a very heated argumentthough. The Mom actually told me "Once my daughter gets on the school bus she is the school's problem, not mine"! Can you imagine that??? The school finally helped to handle that situation. That girl was in high school though. […]
>
> Discussion: "bullied son", Msg#4

In this story, the advice-giver establishes the bullying incident as a problem and legitimizes her and the neighbor's taking action due to the school's inaction to address the situation. The advice-giver directs the blame at the school by using negation ("*the school did nothing*"), evaluating the school's response in terms of what did not happen as opposed to what she implies should have happened. In Labov's (1972: 180-181) terms, negation as an evaluative device typically "expresses the defeat of an expectation". In this particular case, it conveys the advice-giver's failed expectations of the school as an organized institution: the school should have addressed the bullying.

Up to this point in the story, the advice-giver positions the bully and the school as the two antagonists. Both are shown to have violated social norms and expectations based on what the advice-giver establishes as socially unacceptable behavior and conduct, i.e. the bullying, and what she constructs as undesirable reaction from the school, i.e. not handling the problem. In contrast, the advice-giver positions herself and her neighbor as parents-in-action who, unlike the school, recognize the problem and try to resolve it. In this way, she presents their intervention as the right thing to do, reflecting her attitude in terms of parental responsibility. As the story progresses, another antagonist emerges: the bully's mother who had a "*very heated argument*" with the advice-giver's neighbor. Again, the advice-giver foregrounds her agency as a mediator in the argument.

Table 13. Assigning other-blame

Evaluation device	Target of evaluation	Examples	External evaluation	Internal evaluation	Behavioral other-blame	Characterological other-blame
(a) Adjectives, nouns, (+ intensifiers), with negative value	Behavior, character, or role; also, actions or products	*i) he is a **pretty lousy** caretaker* *ii) she had this **weird** mind-set* *iii) Then came Game boys..... **oh the garbage they put out for those things.....***	● ●	●	●	●
(b) Action verbs (+ intensifiers) with negative value	Actions that are conventionally ascribed negative evaluation	*i) he **beat her so badly** that she ended up in the hospital.....* *ii) Once a little girl **was harassing my son*** *iii) He **went after two of them physically**, my yds only recently.*		● ● ●	● ● ●	
(c) Evaluative action with implied negative value	Actions	*I had a class of school aged children who had no clue how to entertain themselves….**The teachers before had the day scheduled and no time for the children to discover how to entertain themselves……***		●	●	

(d) Reported speech	Values, attitudes, and beliefs not sanctioned by the advice-giver	*i) I got* ***"I don't care if you die"!*** *ii) my mom also said* ***"just ignore them and they'll leave you alone"****. this only made the kids work harder to break me down. iii) my mom hates I wear jeans "****girls have no place wearing jeans, they just dont look right****"…..*	●	● ●		● ● ●
(e) Comparators: negation	Lack of action, or negative disposition	*i) he just* ***did not care*** *ii) the school* ***did nothing*** *iii) Even when she stops to see Dad* ***she has never even once asked how I was.***	●	● ●	● ●	●
(f) Evaluative commentary	Values, attitudes, and beliefs not sanctioned by the advice-giver	*i) The Mom actually told me "Once my daughter gets on the school bus she is the school's problem, not mine"!* ***Can you imagine that???*** *ii) I went through this with one daughter who discovered a fondness for, all of things, misogynistic rap (****I always want to stick a "C" in front of that word****)*	● ●	 ●	●	

At the peak of the story, the advice-giver positions the bully's mother as someone who violates expectations associated with her role as a parent. This is made evident through the use of evaluation devices that assign responsibility and accountability to the mother. These include direct speech representation, emphatic punctuation, and external evaluation. Direct speech is used for dramatization purposes to reproduce verbatim the mother's response and is prefaced with *actually* to emphasize that what is being reported is true (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985: 621). The advice-giver uses the quoted utterance "*"Once my daughter gets on the school bus she is the school's problem, not mine"!*" to reveal the antagonist's perspective on the situation, allowing addressees to draw their own conclusions regarding the mother's attitude. In effect, the antagonist specifically designates the school bus as the locus of a transfer of responsibility. The advice-giver appends an exclamation mark to the quoted utterance to add intensity and express affect. In this way, the advice-giver shapes the dramatization of the speech event to her goal of revealing her attitude towards what was said and evaluating the antagonist (see e.g. Mayes, 1990).

What follows the quoted utterance is external evaluation that suspends the action to convey the advice-giver's point of view (*Can you imagine that???*). The advice-giver declares her judgment about the response by inviting addressees to share her evaluation (see also Vásquez, 2015). She expresses surprise and disbelief at the antagonist's attempt to avoid blame by shifting the responsibility to the school. Overall, the advice-giver's personal remark suggests that she disapproves of the mother's attitude towards the situation, criticizing her for her denial of responsibility. At the same time, the use of repeated punctuation in the comment reinforces and intensifies the advice-giver's point.

What the advice-giver accomplishes with direct speech, punctuation, and her evaluative commentary is presenting the bully's mother as uncooperative and irresponsible, suggesting that she violates the normative obligations of her role as a parent. The attempt of the bully's mother to reduce her responsibility for her daughter's bullying behavior further implies that the mother is accountable for it. In contrast, the advice-giver constructs and displays a concerned and agentive self who reacts and intervenes to resolve a problematic situation. Thus, she firmly distances herself from the antagonist's view of parental responsibility and accountability. The result is the construal of herself and the bully's mother as opposites that represent the 'good' and the 'bad' parent, respectively. The story wraps up with the resolution, e.g. "*the school finally helped to handle that situation*" that attenuates the initial attribution of blame to the school, showing that the school eventually assumed its responsibility.

Table 14. Assigning self-blame in personal experience stories

Evaluation device	Target of evaluation	Examples	External evaluation	Internal evaluation	Behavioral other-blame	Characterological other-blame
(a) Evaluative lexis (emotion terms) (+intensifiers, e.g. interjections, inversions)	General evaluation on past actions	***boy did I feel guilty***		●	●	
(b) Comparators (modality)	Unrealized past actions	***I should have left*** *when the abuse started*		●	●	
(c) Parentheticals + intensifiers (quantifiers)	Character evaluation	*(I have* ***a big mouth****)*	●			●
(d) Intensifier (expressive phonology), explicative + comparator (modality)	Hypothetical future-oriented action	*I decided that* ****I**** *was being punished* ***because I would treat my child like that....***		●	●	
(e) Evaluative lexis, evaluative action	Past actions	*I made the mistake of letting them stay with her*		●	●	
(f) Evaluative lexis (emotion term)	General evaluation on past actions	*ok fine* ***I can live with the guilt***	●		●	
(g) Evaluative action	Past action with negative results	***I left my oldest dd in a calss*** *were my concerns were being blown off and it cost her a year of school*		●	●	

Self-blame

Insofar, we have examined how advice-givers assign blame to others, i.e. the antagonists, and hold them responsible for their perceived transgressions. This subsection shifts the focus to the construction and attribution of self-blame in the advice-givers' personal experience stories.

The analysis revealed instances of problems stories of personal experience in which mothers engage in behavioral and/or characterological self-blame when they examine their causal and moral responsibility for negative outcomes. Negative self-evaluation is at the core of the construction of self-blame in these stories. Advice-givers attribute self-blame by evaluating negatively their character, role and actions, perceiving and presenting them as contributing factors to, or even the main cause of a negative outcome. Table 14 presents a list of examples of evaluation devices that illustrate how advice-givers attribute self-blame in response stories. An important point to note here is that self-blame and the acknowledgement of causal and moral responsibility in response stories is tied to dynamic moral stance.

Advice-givers construct and express self-blame through external evaluation, i.e. a general comment on aspects of the story they make outside the story world, or internal evaluation that is embedded within the story, employing a range of evaluative devices that encode self-blame explicitly or implicitly (see Table 14). These include, for example, the choice of lexis with negative evaluative meaning (e.g. *mistake*, *guilt*), grammatical choices such as explicatives that invoke causality, and comparators that express an action advice-givers think they should have taken, but did not (see (b) and (d) in Table 14). Advice-givers also encode and communicate self-blame explicitly or more implicitly by indicating they are responsible or co-responsible for a negative outcome due to their actions or omissions, that is, their failure to act (see (e) and (g) in Table 14).

More specifically, the instances of behavioral self-blame involve completed past actions (e.g. ***I made the mistake*** *of letting them stay with her*), hypothetical future-oriented actions (e.g. *because* ***I would treat my child like that****…*), and unrealized past actions (e.g. ***I should have left*** *when the abuse started*). Characterological self-blame appears as external evaluation that can appear in the form of an aside in which an advice-giver comments on her character, e.g. ***(I have a big mouth)***. The habitual story in (59) illustrates the complex construction and negotiation of self-blame in the context of domestic abuse:

(59)

> […] I guess I just have a different POV on her original post (again maybe I'm reading more into it then there is) because I went through something similiar with my ex esp in regards to the arguing every day. When I married him I never thought he'd ever raise a hand to me - he never gave me any indication that he would. Yes we argued - sometimes heatedly but we worked through things. It got to the point where we were arguing every day and he started shoving me around (I miscarried

> a baby because he shoved/pushed me across a room and into a wall). By the end of our marriage, I would cringe everytime he came home because I knew we would end up fighting and I'd either get shoved around or I'd end up putting myself inbtwn him and my son and get knocked around so he wouldn't knock around my ds. I was in college full time and couldn't wait to finish my last semester and graduate so we could leave (I wasn't working other than work study). I should have left when the abuse started but I wanted to make it work - I didn't marry him to give up less than 2 yrs later (we were married for a little over 2 yrs - together 2.5 yrs be4 marriage). I tried everything to make it work - even keeping my mouth shut (I have a big mouth) and biting my tongue and taking the verbal abuse. Ok I'm rambling now so I'll shut up - just trying to "show" you where I was coming from...
>
> (Discussion: "Dont know what to do anymore", msg #9)

In her account, the advice-giver uses a comparator, in this case a modal construction with *should have*, to encode the meaning of obligation and necessity, and compare the events that did occur to those that should have occurred, evoking an alternative counterfactual scenario (see Dancygier & Sweetser, 2005: 73-75). Hence, the evaluative statement *I should have left when the abuse started* expresses what she considers an unmet necessity and obligation from her part. The implication is that the dire effects of the abuse on her son's and her own physical and emotional well-being might have been avoided. As a result, the statement has a strong evaluative weight as it contrasts what actually happened, i.e. the escalating violent episodes, the assault and the advice-giver's miscarriage, with a potentially different turn of events – an alternative scenario with a different outcome. In this way, the advice-giver constructs self-blame, acknowledging her responsibility for not leaving her husband at the first signs of abuse.

In this example, the advice-giver engages in what Janoff-Bulman (1999: 316) defines as behavioral self-blame that typically manifests in accounts of victims and survivors of traumatic experiences. This type of self-blame involves the victim blaming her or his own behavior, i.e. actions and omissions, for a negative outcome. In their accounts, victims and survivors of traumatic experiences typically attribute blame to themselves in terms of what they should or could have done differently to avoid the negative outcome (Janoff-Bulman, 1999: 316-317).

The construction of self-blame in the story is immediately followed by remedial work. The advice-giver uses a hedging device in the form of the adversative *but* to provide an explanation for her actions and attitude towards the situation at the time of the events (***but I wanted to make it work*** *- I didn't marry him to give up less than 2 yrs later*). In this case, the adversative *but* introduces a viewpoint she held then, i.e. staying and making the marriage work, which stands in stark contrast to that she expresses in retrospect with the *should*-construction, i.e. leaving the abusive husband. She explains her decision to stay by referring to particular

mitigating circumstances. Despite the first signs of abusive behavior, the advice-giver frames the prospect of leaving her husband at the onset of their marriage as marital failure.

The advice-giver then continues to construct self-blame by focusing on a quality of her character and its implied connection to the problematic situation: "*I tried everything to make it work - even keeping my mouth shut (I have a big mouth)*". The parenthetical comment serves to deliver self-criticism that in this particular story is a signal of self-blame. In effect, the advice-giver engages in characterological self-blame in the story world: she perceived a particular personality and character attribute as a negative factor that was pivotal to the course of events, and thus necessary to control (see Janoff-Bulman, 1999: 316). In this story instance, the matter of agency in connection to behavioral and characterological self-blame is particularly complex. The advice-giver directs blame at herself for her lack of agency in the sense that she did not leave her abusive husband; yet, she asserts a different aspect of her agency in terms of her actions to protect her son ("*I'd end up putting myself inbtwn him and my son*") and make her marriage work by enduring the abuse.

In sum, self-blame emerges in response stories of personal experience through how advice-givers assess the blameworthiness of their causal and moral role as agents and participants in the narrated events. As we have seen, advice-givers draw on specific evaluation devices to construct and communicate self-blame overtly or in a more indirect manner.

9.3 Polarizing and integrative stories

As we have seen in the examples, advice-givers juxtapose story world actors that conform to values, norms, and social expectations, with those actors that violate them. This kind of juxtaposition between protagonists and antagonists corresponds to what Labov (2013: 35) refers to as polarization that leads to polarizing narratives. Labov (2013: 35-36) suggests that polarization is 'narrative work' serving to assign praise and blame to actors involved in the narrated events. Based on the analysis, polarization in response stories is inherently linked to the assignment of praise and blame; it also serves to make advice-givers' moral positions more salient through such opposition. In particular, advice-givers present themselves in a favorable light, typically as morally superior compared to an antagonist or antagonists, thus readily observing the 'looking good principle' (Ochs & Capps 2001:47).

There are also instances of response stories in which advice-givers minimize or temper blame. Such instances illustrate the opposite of polarization and fall into what Labov (2013: 35) refers to as integration, giving rise to integrative narratives in which narrators minimize or obscure blame. An example of such a story is given in (51) in Chapter 8, Subsection 8.1.5. In that story, the advice-giver recognizes the severity of a mother's abusive behavior in the story world; yet the attribution of blame is carefully tempered with displays of empathetic understanding

and acknowledgment of the mother's remorseful confession. Labov notes (2013: 41) that polarizing stories maximize the distance between protagonist and antagonist, while integrative stories reduce it. Regarding advice-givers' response stories, integration points to strategic relational work outside the story world, namely in terms of the distance between advice-giver and addressee. Advice-givers soften and minimize blame in narrative accounts that draw parallels between story protagonists and advice-seekers concerning their actions and behavior. In the example mentioned above, the advice-giver uses the story to address an advice-seeker who confesses her aggressive behavior towards her son. By using an integrative response story, the advice-giver engages in supportive relational work, reducing the distance between her and the addressee.

9.4 Spheres of responsibility and accountability

In general, the moral positions advice-givers take in the response stories reveal three thematic domains or spheres of responsibility and accountability: 1) the familial sphere, including social actors such as mother, father, siblings, children, in-laws, 2) the professional sphere, including educators, health care professionals, and school administrators as social actors, 3) and the social sphere, including peer relationships, everyday encounters, as well as the music, game, or fashion industry (See Figure 11). The spheres center on advice-givers' perceptions and understandings of role-dependent responsibilities and obligations as discursively constructed or implied in the response stories. These spheres intersect and interact with motherhood and mothering to create moral meanings. Importantly, advice-givers use response stories to construct moral versions of the 'good' mother in terms of the following themes: being emotionally available; ensuring children's wellbeing; supporting children's social contact; providing a sense of security; being a role

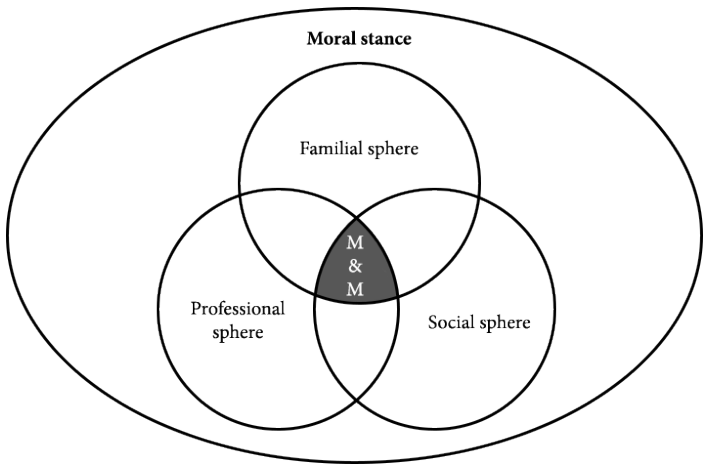

Figure 11. Spheres of responsibility and accountability in response stories (M & M stands for mothering and motherhood)

model; teaching independence; instructing discipline; monitoring children's social behavior; teaching responsibility; monitoring influences (e.g. games, music). Such themes emerge from explicit or implicit, positive or negative evaluation of social actors and their involvement in the narrated events.

Regarding the professional sphere, the attributes of the 'good' professional emerge from particular themes. For instance, the themes that construct the 'good' teacher include the following: creating a safe learning environment; being a role model; teaching social skills; instructing discipline; monitoring children's social behavior; resolving and managing conflicts in the classroom; avoiding stereotypes; helping students with learning issues; fostering creativity; collaborating and communicating with parents. Concerning medical professionals and other health practitioners the main themes that construct the image of the 'good' professional are listening to patients' experiences and concerns, taking time to provide a correct diagnosis, and providing support.

Turning to the social sphere, response stories evoke the theme of responsibility and accountability pertaining to the influences of music, electronic games, and fashion on children. These are particularly salient in response stories because of being in tension with advice-givers' responsibilities as 'good' mothers to monitor and address such influences. Specific issues that advice-givers take up are misogyny in rap music, violence in video games, and gender stereotypes in clothing. In addition, the social sphere includes peer relationships (i.e. mothers' or children's peers) and everyday encounters with, for instance, dogs and their owners. Concerning peer relationships, the 'good' peer is constructed in terms of demonstrating appropriate conduct and conforming to social rules, for instance, not bullying others. Also, advice-givers point out in their stories dog owners' responsibility and accountability for keeping their dogs under control in everyday encounters.

9.5 Summary

The focus of this chapter was to examine the advice-giver's stories through the lens of the narrative dimension of moral stance. The chapter presented and illustrated the different types of moral stance that emerge in advice-givers' response stories. These include: 1) constant, 2) dynamic, and 3) fluid moral stance, which can be located on different points on the spectrum of moral stance possibilities. Dynamic moral stance, in particular, constitutes a new type that can claim a position on the spectrum, thus contributing to and expanding Ochs & Capps's (2001) conceptualization of moral stance. Constant moral stance was found to be the predominant type in this particular story corpus.

The chapter also examined an important aspect of moral stance: the attribution of praise and blame through which advice instantiates moral positions. It was shown how advice-givers evaluate themselves and others as moral agents by praising or blaming, holding themselves and others responsible for their actions, behavior, and attitudes. By assigning praise and blame in their stories, advice-givers

outline particular spheres of responsibility and accountability regarding social actors' roles. The response stories bring into relief specific themes of moral responsibility tied to parenting, and especially motherhood and mothering. The main conclusion is that advice-givers use response stories as guides to moral action when they offer support and give advice to addressees. At the same time, moral stance can be linked to strategic relational work.

10 Discussion

The starting point of this study has been that response stories are key interactional resources in advice-giving exchanges among mothers in a peer-to-peer online support setting. The main aim of this thesis was, therefore, to explore the forms and functions of advice-givers' response stories, examining their link to the discursive activity of advice-giving. It is important to bear in mind four particular contexts when engaging in the analysis of advice-givers' response stories, and interpreting and discussing the results: a) the communicative activity of advice-giving, b) the interpersonal frame of the community, c) motherhood and mothering as role and practice, and d) the online aspect. These are contexts that can shape and influence participants' engagement in this online advice setting. The setting is, in turn, maintained by this engagement. Thus, contextualization is important for understanding and putting into perspective the stories that are the object of this analysis.

The following sections provide an interpretation and discussion of the results in light of the study's research objectives, previous scholarship, and the theoretical underpinnings of this study. The key research objectives were to: explore the kinds of response stories that emerge in this online advice-giving context in terms of temporal organization and configuration of reported events and identify their interactional and interpersonal functions.

10.1 Variability of narrative types

As shown in Chapter 6, the response stories analyzed in this study come in different forms and configurations in terms of structure and temporal organization, representing different narrative types. Even though a large number of these stories follow a typical (minimal or maximal) Labovian structure, the presence of other narrative types in the data, i.e. habitual stories and small stories, shows that there is variability in how advice-givers story their own and others' past experiences. This finding reinforces previous research in both on and offline communication settings that has emphasized the variability of narrative types in different contexts of narrative production (e.g. Arendholz, 2010; Carranza, 1998; Georgakopoulou, 2004, 2007; Harvey & Koteyko, 2013; Page, 2012, 2018; Vásquez, 2007).

One point deserving mention here is that certain complication and habitual stories in the advice-giving messages are lengthy and elaborate in detail. This can be attributed to different technosocial factors such as the affordances of asynchronous written communication in message boards, and tellers' stylistic choices and local communicative goals. The size of message buffer on message boards is typically very large, allowing discussion participants to contribute long messages. In this respect, message buffer size can be regarded as conducive to lengthy replies and, by extension, to lengthy narrative tellings. Tellers' individual narrating styles can also be a potential influencing factor in producing lengthy, elaborate stories. In addition, situational goals in this advisory context may play a role in guiding

a teller's decision to produce such stories. Tellers may consider that longer and elaborate narrative accounts are necessary, for instance, to fully illustrate and support a particular point, and aid the interpretation of the narrated events and their surrounding circumstances.

Complication stories

Complication stories constitute the prevalent narrative type in the data analyzed for this study. Featuring at minimum a temporally ordered sequence of discrete events that focus on a turning point, a crisis, or some kind of unexpected disruption that is eventually resolved or not, these are stories that fit the Labovian model of 'prototypical' narrative form (Labov, 1972, 1997).

An explanation for the prevalence of complication stories in this particular data set may lie in the content and communicative purpose of the board discussions. Discussions on problems and challenges relating to, for instance, bullying incidents, health crises, school issues, traumatic dog experiences, custody battles, and fear of childbirth may be conducive to the formulation of temporally sequenced plots of discrete and singular events featuring a high-point narrative structure. Thus, stories of specific events culminating in a high point and needing some kind of resolution appear to be in this advice-giving context the prototypical way of reconstructing and illustrating past experiences with such problems.

This narrative type lends itself to reconstructing crucial junctures in one's or others' life and creating a dramatic effect because of the blow-by-blow narrative format (e.g. De Fina, 2003). Linear temporal sequencing and devices such as direct speech or initiating the telling in medias res provide vividness and immediacy to these stories, enhancing the dramatic effect. The use of complication stories can thus also be attributed to the tellers' attempt to put emphasis on the temporal sequence of specific actions and discrete incidents so as to establish causal relations and evidence the impact of experiences.

Habitual stories

Stories of habitual or iterative past events and continuous states in the past have emerged as another salient type of narrative in the data. These are stories that highlight and instantiate repeated experience, focusing on the habitual and the quotidian. In concert with previous research, the presence of habitual stories shows that lived experience is not necessarily always reconstructed in terms of sequencing temporally discrete events (e.g. Carranza, 1998; Chesire & Ziebland, 2005; Gounder, 2011; Hackert, 2004). One general explanation for this is that individuals' life trajectories and past experiences with issues discussed on the advice board may differ and, hence, can take different narrative forms with different temporal orientations.

However, there can be additional factors that explain the emergence of these stories, including the context in which these stories are produced, and the topics being discussed (see Harvey & Koteyko, 2013). As we have seen, some habitual

stories identified in the data revolve around negative experiences such as self-harming behavior, bullying, or spousal abuse. This echoes observations in previous research on, for instance, illness narratives (e.g.Harvey & Koteyko, 2013), and traumatic experiences (e.g. Carranza, 1998). The repetitive and cyclical nature of, for instance, spousal abuse or self-harming behavior may favor the articulation of such experiences through habitual stories. Other habitual stories in the data focus on routinized mothering practices, reflecting observations in studies of autobiographical memories (e.g. Trunk & Abrams's, 2009). Discussions that focus on the everyday demands of parenthood, and especially mothering practices in the domestic sphere may be facilitative of such stories. Since mothering involves routinized practices that are performed habitually, habitual stories may be a direct discursive expression of these experiences in narrative form.

Also, advice-givers' choice of this narrative type appears to be linked to argumentative purposes to demonstrate and advance a specific point in a discussion, especially in relation to warnings. Specifically, the narration of repeated actions and events related to physical and/or psychological abuse emphasizes recurrent patterns of behavior, thus presenting them as typical and characteristic of an abuser, and not a one-time incident. This observation is in agreement with previous scholarship that has linked the usage of habitual stories with particular, local argumentative objectives (e.g. Carranza, 1998; Gounder, 2011: 90-93). Presenting the past through repeated events makes it harder to dispute as opposed to punctual, past events.

Habitual stories that revolve around intellectual, social, or physical child development can illustrate what is typical (or not) of a specific developmental phase. In other habitual story instances, the narration of repeated, habitual actions linked to mothering practices serves to underline the importance of establishing and keeping daily routines. habitual, recurring events reinforce identity aspects; emphasize identity construction; Advice-giving is yet another context for habitual stories to emerge.

Small stories

As shown, a range of small story types emerged in the data including very brief and elliptical narrative tellings, namely, snapshots, refusals to tell, story references, deferrals of stories, and one allusion to a story. Previous research has noted similar types of small stories in both offline and online communication settings (e.g. Bamberg, 2004; Dayter, 2015; Georgakopoulou, 2004, 2007; Page, 2010). In light of the analysis, an explanation for the deployment of these small story types can be attributed to an interplay of factors that drive communicative economy and efficiency, rather than to an advice-giver's terse narrative style. These factors include intertextuality, assumed familiarity with a previous story, sensitivity to presumed CMC norms, expectations, and concerns such as relevance and brevity at the local level of interaction.

As illustrated in the analysis, intertextual linkages are important in the shaping of those elliptical or extremely minimal stories that point anaphorically to previous discourse in an explicit manner (see also Georgakopoulou, 2004, 2007). We have seen that in these stories advice-givers use summarizing anaphoric statements that condense the most reportable events by referring to other's past experiences, or a suggested course of action. This kind of narrative configuration can be attributed to reasons of economy to avoid redundancy or repetition.

Notable is the case of snapshots that, teamed together in twos or threes, immediately follow a more detailed and fleshed-out story. These are condensed stories that feature a plotline of one single remarkable event and the result or resolution. It was demonstrated that such stories are topically similar to the 'larger', leading story they follow, creating an episodic narrative arc that highlights the advice-giver's point. The conclusion we can draw is that once advice-givers have deployed the first story and established its point, pragmatic considerations of economy come into play regarding subsequent narrative accounts that parallel the leading one.

With regard to story references, we have seen that these are very brief mentions of stories that advice-givers opt out from deploying into full narrative tellings. Interestingly, advice-givers only explain the non-deployment of story references nested within 'larger' stories. As noted previously, such story references are accompanied by evaluative metadiscursive commentary where advice-givers recognize them as tellable in their own right yet dismiss their telling due to local concerns of communicative economy (i.e. brevity) and efficiency regarding what is relevant to the current interaction. Nevertheless, by signaling to addressees that particular plot points in a story constitute separate narrative tellings in their own right, advice-givers offer addressees the opportunity to ask for the full telling.

The use of the story allusion is based on intertextuality and local assumptions of addressee familiarity with the full telling of the events having occurred at an earlier time and in a different discussion thread. This suggests that assumed addressee familiarity with a previously shared story motivates the use of an allusion in the interest of communicative economy and efficiency. Also, the fact that the allusion found in the data is embedded in a story, shows that story allusions can serve to establish intertextual connections between narrative tellings produced in different contexts and at different temporal points. In addition, the embedding of a story allusion into another story allows for the recontextualization of the former in the 'new' story, imbuing the latter with an additional evaluative layer and possibly evoking new associations for the discussion participants.

Next, the use of deferrals in the data is tied to how advice-givers perceive what the constraints are of the interaction at hand in this particular socio-technological mode of CMC. As we have seen in the analysis, deferrals appear to reflect advice-givers' sensitivity to presumed norms and expectations regarding local issues of economy and relevance in a given discussion. One important factor appears to be the number of tellable, storied experiences and consequently the number of reply posts that an advice-giver considers reasonable to share in a given discussion

thread. This suggests that having many stories to tell that are relevant to the discussion topic can impose selection pressure on advice-givers to share some of them but defer the telling of others.

In general, the different types of small stories identified in the data can be seen as strategic interactional maneuvering to condense a story's structure or minimally signal a narrative telling. Such story types are highly embedded in the local interactional context in which they emerge, and they are realized as a result of pragmatic concerns. The small stories in the data also point to narrative opportunities, in the sense that other discussion participants can ask advice-givers to open up and unfold them into full narrative tellings, either in the ongoing discussion in the thread or through other channels of communication such as email. Of course, it is important to note that small stories as narrative opportunities are contingent upon what is relevant and of concern to discussion participants at the time of the interaction.

10.2 Problems and solutions

One important finding of the analysis is that response stories fall into two major thematic axes regarding plotline: a) problem stories and b) solution stories. As illustrated, the former typically revolve around unresolved problems and their consequences, and the latter focus on how a problem was resolved, or at least successfully managed. What emerges from the analysis is that the response stories are contextually relevant and highly embedded within the communicative activity of advice-giving. The problems established in response stories are presented as identical or similar to those advice-seekers face at the time of the interaction or will face in the future per the predictions from advice-givers. Solutions, shown indirectly through actions in the story world, or delivered through explicit advice in the coda, are linked to advice-seekers' problems.

What we see is that plotlines of response stories are shaped and driven by contextual exigencies, illustrating the embeddedness of these stories in this particular context and occasion for telling stories (Ochs & Capps, 2001). This embeddedness is especially evident in the ways advice-givers configure the entry and exit points of these stories, that is, abstracts and codas. Whenever present, abstracts and codas are typically attuned to the specific contextual demands of advice-giving. Advice-givers use abstracts to establish a problem identical or similar to that of addressees, announce the upcoming solution and advice, or even encapsulate the entire problem-solution plotline of the actual telling. In a similar vein, codas typically deliver advice and concluding evaluations of problems and/or solutions.

The contextual relevance and embeddedness of response stories in the advice-giving context is addressed further in the next section by discussing the functions of those stories in their immediate co-text.

10.3 The repertoire of local functions

As the analysis has shown, advice-givers' response stories have a range of functions at the local level of discourse; that is, the immediate co-text of response stories in the reply message, and other contributors' messages in the discussion thread. These functions, which overlap and are closely intertwined, are 1) giving direct or indirect advice, 2) legitimizing advice or assessment, 3) indicating dis/agreement, and 4) delivering a diagnostic opinion (Chapter 7). In line with previous research (e.g. Thurnherr et al., 2016), the analysis showed that response stories can simultaneously fulfill more than one function at the local level of the interaction. As argued in Chapter 7, it is essential to treat these functions as separate issues to gain a nuanced understanding of how they operate.

Giving direct or indirect advice

Response stories that appear as the only discursive move in replies to advice-seekers have an implicit advisory function. By relating and illustrating a course of action that resolved a problem, or events and conditions that caused a problem, advice-givers offer indirect recommendations for action. Formulating advice implicitly in narrative form leaves it up to addressees to evaluate the narrated events, social actors, and outcomes so as to infer the intended advice. These findings are in line with previous research that shows the function of narratives as indirect advice-giving strategies (e.g. Harrison and Barlow, 2009; Kouper, 2010).

One explanation for using standalone response stories as an indirect advice strategy is that they allow advice-givers to offer advice, while attending to addressees' and their own face needs and wants. Thus, offering advice implicitly with a story can be seen as more respectful of addressees' autonomy, especially when sensitive topics are discussed. In addition, given the purpose of the board, advice-givers may consider that the advisory function of their stories is obvious, and hence the advice their stories communicate is evident. Still, unlike overt advice, addressees need to engage in inferential work to flesh out the suggestions and recommendations a response story conveys.

Another explanation may be that advice-givers consider telling a story more compelling than giving explicit advice. Stories offer particularized experience, establishing or implying causal relationships, and highlighting story characters' role in events, as well as exemplifying conditions and circumstances. As such, they provide a rich ground for situating the indirect advice they convey. Thus, unlike discursive advice moves, stories constitute specific instances of lived experience that exemplify situations where the recommended, albeit indirect, advice applies.

Yet, there are also standalone response stories that signal their advice-giving function in their entry and exit points, namely, the abstract and coda. This use of abstracts and codas indicates that some advice-givers make an effort to explicitly highlight the advisory function of a response story in a given discussion. By doing so, they affirm the function of the story to addressees in a direct and overt manner.

The more explicit signaling of an advice-giving story may be assumed to guide addressees in their interpretive process and reception of that story as advice.

Overall, advice-giving stories are argumentative since advice-givers illustrate with their telling what to do or not to do in a given situation. They do so by typically showcasing and evaluating the positive or negative outcomes of a course of action in the story world.

Legitimizing advice or assessment

As shown in the analysis, advice-givers use stories to legitimize their advice and assessment moves. In these instances, response stories constitute explicit argumentative devices that support claims advice-givers make and positions they take when they offer suggestions, recommendations, or assessments on a given problem. What the stories do is provide the context that explains and justifies why advice-givers offer a specific piece of advice and arrive at particular assessments.

What emerges from the analysis is that narrativized experience serves to illustrate the merit and relevance of an assessment, as well as the urgency and robustness of the proposed advice. Advice-givers create links between, on the one hand, narrated events and their positive or negative outcomes, and, on the other, a claim that advice and assessment moves make. These links are instantiated through implicit or explicit evaluation in the stories, especially in story codas that typically echo and reinforce advice and assessment moves that precede the stories.

Advice and assessment moves essentially encapsulate the advice-givers' distilled experiential knowledge that they proceed to elaborate on with a narrative telling. Advice-givers activate such knowledge and package it into those discursive moves after having established similarities between personal or vicarious experience and the advice-seeker's situation. The response stories ultimately aim to strengthen the persuasive force of advice and assessment moves.

Indicating dis/agreement

We have seen that response stories that show agreement or disagreement are connected to previous discourse in other contributors' posts. As illustrated, advice-givers use stories to support or challenge claims that other advice-givers put forward when offering general information, assess a problem, or give advice. This finding supports previous research showing that stories are used to align or disalign with others by expressing agreement or disagreement (e.g. Page, 2012; Thurnherr et al., 2016). Such stories are explicitly argumentative since they serve as evidence to justify agreement or disagreement with someone else's claim, and at the same time support the acceptability and legitimacy of one's own claim.

By indicating and supporting dis/agreement, response stories highlight and exemplify advice-givers' diverging or converging viewpoints vis-à-vis those of other discussion contributors. These stories are used in a rhetorical effort to persuade others of the legitimacy of the advice-givers' claims, while legitimizing or delegitimizing others' claims. The conclusion we can draw is that such response stories

play an important role in aligning and disaligning with others in this advice-giving context, a point that is discussed later in this chapter in connection with relational work. Regarding advice-seekers, response stories that indicate dis/agreement give them the opportunity to evaluate different perspectives based on others' experiences. This can potentially help advice-seekers to confirm their own assessment of a problematic situation or entertain alternative views on their problem and consider alternate courses of action.

Given that the activity of offering advice is situated here in a multi-participant context, the occurrence of disagreements and, consequently, response stories indicating and supporting disagreement in the data is hardly surprising. Such a context inevitably invites competing views on how to resolve and manage problems. Different individuals can have different worldviews, value and belief systems, and even experiences influencing how they evaluate someone's problem and what advice they give. Pregnancy and parenting, in particular, are topic areas where clashing viewpoints, and ultimately ideologies, are ubiquitous in both private and public discourse.

Giving a diagnostic opinion

The analysis brought to light response stories of personal experience that offer etiological assessments of addressees' health-related concerns. In these stories, personal experience as a caregiver or a sufferer of a particular health issue serves to assess others' symptoms, conditions, and circumstances surrounding their own health concerns. As we have seen, narrativized experience becomes both a vehicle and a tool for formulating, delivering, and arguing for a diagnostic opinion. At the same time, these diagnostic opinion stories are used to confirm or dispel advice-seekers' concerns, challenge experts' opinions, signal agreement with other discussants' assessments, and advise for action.

Telling a diagnostic opinion story rather than only using an assessment or advice move is a conscious choice. As noted in Chapter 7, individuals' health issues and concerns provide particularly fertile ground for generating stories. Most importantly, narrative configuration allows advice-givers to sketch, either briefly or at length, their personal trajectory with a health issue, establishing similarities with advice-seekers' experiences. As we have seen in the analysis, stories can bring into sharp focus particularized experience with symptoms, illness events, diagnoses and misdiagnoses, as well as how a health issue can be resolved or at least successfully managed.

Such stories are advisory since they implicitly or explicitly invite advice-seekers to a) evaluate and re-evaluate their health-related concerns in light of someone else's comparable experience, and b) take action by consulting a specialist or seeking a second opinion. The analysis also showed that the reported actions and voice of the expert professional in the story world play a central role in the delivery and support of a diagnostic opinion in a story. Appealing to authority by integrating an

expert's voice in the related events serves to persuade addressees of the validity of a diagnostic opinion.

Diagnostic opinion stories raise larger issues that deserve our attention. One issue concerns the reliability and validity of diagnostic opinions in a lay online context and in absence of professional experts. An advice-givers' experiential and even factual knowledge of a health issue is limited to only one instance; that is, the advice-givers' individual case. Professional experts, on the other hand, have an official status of expert knowledge and experience with numerous cases. Even when advice-givers appeal to expert authority, the issue remains that they base their diagnostic opinion stories on a comparison between their own individual case and the advice-seeker's. In addition, there is always the caveat of misinformation and delivery of unsound advice.

Still, we cannot dismiss the value of lay expertise and knowledge sharing on health issues in online support communities. Individuals can help peers make sense of health issues and treatments, share coping strategies, provide support, give advice, and construct a bridge between lay and professional expertise. As shown, storytelling, and in particular diagnostic opinion stories, can serve such purposes.

Another broader issue that diagnostic opinion stories raise relates to perceptions and expectations of what constitutes professional responsibility and good medical practice. This is a key issue since certain diagnostic opinion stories come in response to advice-seekers who think they are in a diagnostic limbo or mistrust an expert's diagnosis. As we have seen, advice-givers highlight in their stories the importance of certain qualities that health professionals and practitioners should possess to arrive at correct diagnoses and administer appropriate treatments.

10.4 Advising with response stories: instructing, cautioning, and offering emotional support

Moving beyond the local level, what follows from the analysis is that response stories can be interpreted as advisory at a global level. This overarching advisory function is understood here as including advising, instructing, cautioning, as well as offering emotional support. In general, the intent of response stories is to provide advice-seekers with motive for action, which in turn can lead to decision-making on the part of advice-seekers. Such motive is strongly linked to the benefits and losses in terms of which stories are framed. Problem stories typically warn against pitfalls and difficulties that can arise if advice-seekers do not take action and address their problem. The goal of such stories is to make advice-seekers aware of the significance of a problematic situation and its scope, instructing them to carefully reflect on a problem and follow the suggested advice. Response stories that offer solutions, outline specific actions that could resolve a problem.

A point for discussion here involves instances of problem stories that convey emotional support and build common ground, but do not outline a course of action to resolve a problem or deliver a warning. At first glance, these do not ap-

pear to be advisory in a straightforward manner. Still, it can be argued that such response stories can have an advisory function, albeit more subtle and perhaps less prototypical. In particular, such stories can be advisory in the sense that they can help addressees put their problems into perspective, highlighting aspects of a problematic situation that is shared with advice-givers. The argument that can be put forward here is that these stories invite introspection and reflection from the part of addressees that theoretically could inform solutions to problems.

Importantly, advice-givers' response stories have a temporal mobility, in the sense that the past informs the future. We can view them as projections of future events, conveying future scenarios to addressees in terms of benefits and losses. The stories thus have a future orientation allowing addressees to visualize the immediate or distant future and take appropriate action.

10.5 Response stories as persuasive argumentation

In light of the analysis and discussion so far, we can address the function of the advice-givers' response stories as means of persuasive argumentation (see Virtanen, 1992; cf. Thurnherr et al., 2016). As shown, narrativized experience figures as both a resource and a tool for putting forth and supporting or countering claims. Advice-givers use personal or vicarious past experience as reasoned evidence to orient the advice-seekers' ways of seeing and evaluating the world and to prompt them to action. This is not surprising given the kind of activity participants engage in on the advice board: giving advice involves an individual's attempt to influence and shape someone else's attitudes, decisions and future actions through suggestions and recommendations. By doing so, an advice-giver essentially engages in persuasion since she is faced with the challenge of convincing others to follow the proposed advice and proving its credibility.

The persuasive force and value of the advice-givers' stories lie in their illustrating and supporting a point or points. Using narrativized experience as an argumentative device in the context of advice-giving is a strategic choice. First, the stories provide interpretive frames through which advice-seekers can evaluate their problem, make connections between their own and others' experiences, and possibly gain new insights. In this respect, the stories constitute bases of comparison, setting up analogies between the experience of characters in a story and that of advice-seekers. Second, the stories situate and ground implicit or explicit advice in the context of lived experience, thus offering experience-based evidence for advice-givers' claims.

More specifically, the analysis revealed that stories feature a combination and intricate interplay of different strategies that realize the stories' persuasive intent and function. As we have seen, a key strategy in this advisory context is appealing to reason by framing response stories in terms of gain or loss. Such story framing supports and rationalizes implicit or explicit advice and assessments, as informed by actual past experience, be it personal or vicarious. As van Poppel (2014)

shows in her study on health communication, gain and loss framing are strategic argumentative strategies for presenting advice as effective. The purpose of gain/loss framing is to convince addressees of the validity of a claim by highlighting positive or negative outcomes of actions and events in the stories. Advice-seekers can explore causal and conditional connections between actions, events, and circumstances in their own situation, and draw conclusions. At the same time, gain/loss framed stories also have an affective dimension, appealing to advice-seekers' feelings and emotions. This is so because the personal relevance of response stories to advice-seekers can evoke feelings and emotions, especially when it comes to potential positive or negative outcomes and their impact on their lives.

Another persuasive strategy that merits discussion is repetition in the form of what has been labeled in this study as narrative stacking, i.e. an advice-giver's use of several thematically similar narrative tellings that repeat and advance the same claim or claims. One explanation for this is that using several stories to support and prove a specific standpoint helps to create cohesion and ensure argument continuity. Each successive story adds to and expands on the point made in the first response story, providing additional experiential evidence as to the validity of a claim. Specifically, when advice-givers 'stack' together problem stories or solution stories, they reinforce their gain and loss framing effect. From an argumentative perspective, the more experiential evidence advice-givers provide on gains and losses, the more compelling the argument for taking a particular action to resolve a problem.

Also, the relational work that advice-givers engage in with their response stories can be linked to persuasive objectives relating to giving advice. Paralleling experiences, resonating emotions, and drawing on shared identities through stories create personal involvement and solidarity. When advice-givers demonstrate involvement and appeal to solidarity with stories, they show addressees that they share common interests, needs and concerns with them. This is a strategic way to persuade addressees that advice-givers understand a particular problem and their advice is well intentioned and given for the benefit of the addressees.

Still, another persuasive strategy used in response stories is appealing to expertise. As noted above, experiential knowledge emerges as lay expertise, especially in advice-givers' stories of first-hand, personal experience. From an argumentative perspective, stories highlight experiential knowledge to lend credibility and bring a kind of authority to advice-givers' claims. Essentially, the stories show that advice-givers evaluate others' problems and offer advice and support from a position of knowing. In addition, we have seen that appeals to professional expertise in the stories play an important role in formulating and advancing claims. In essence, appealing to the authority of professional expertise is a way to persuade addressees to accept the proposed advice and assessments and at the same time prevent or minimize objections.

Further, the analysis showed that we can view response stories in this advice-giving context as appeals to ethos. The moral positions that advice-givers take

through their stories are intimately linked to their specific persuasive goals. Using stories to make direct or indirect arguments of what is good, right, and appropriate is a way of persuading others into action and introspection. In that sense, advice-givers' response stories are vehicles for moral arguments, serving as guides to action and, in particular, moral action.

Another point for discussion here concerns the two instances of fictional folk stories in the data, namely *The Little Red Hen* folktale and *The Prodigal Son* parable. Similarly to advice-givers' stories of personal or vicarious experience, the use of folk stories as persuasive argumentation is conditioned by factors of the interaction at hand, i.e. the topic being discussed, the nature of the given problem, and the intent to advise. Yet, there is another factor at play with fables and parables: such stories constitute fixed interpretive and symbolic frames with a specific moral-didactic function and, by extension, advisory function. These frames and addressees' familiarity or not with the moral-didactic particulars of such stories condition the argumentative use and value of fables and parables.

Overall, it is important to note that the quality and merit of narrativized experience-as-argument is up to addressees for consideration and eventual uptake of the proposed advice or change of viewpoint. Whether or not a response story qualifies as a 'hard' persuasive argument is subject to how addressees interpret and evaluate an advice-giver's views and claims as supported by and presented in a story. Such interpretations and evaluations depend on addressees' individual situations, worldviews, values, and immediate concerns at the time of the interaction. Also, the ability of the persuasive potential of stories hinges upon the addressees accepting the comparisons drawn between their experience and the one presented in a story.

Finally, a major issue concerns whether addressees find response stories relevant, credible and reliable. This potentially raises several questions like the following: Did the advice-giver really experience what she narrates? Does the advice-giver have accurate knowledge of the events she relates in vicarious experience stories? Has the advice-giver interpreted past events, actions, and circumstances appropriately to give advice to others? Such questions and concerns could arguably impact the persuasive effect of advice-givers' stories.

10.6 Response stories as relational work

As shown in Chapter 8, response stories are an important resource for establishing and negotiating interpersonal relations in this advice-giving context. In line with previous research, the stories examined here constitute a key strategy of relational work as they establish, maintain, or even challenge shared experience and common ground among discussion participants on the board (see also Harrison and Barlow, 2009; Page, 2012; Veen et al., 2010).

By resonating and acknowledging others' experiences, feelings and emotions in a story, advice-givers demonstrate an understanding of another person's situation,

displaying support (DeCapua & Dunham, 2012). The stories illustrate that such understanding is grounded in having experienced first-hand the same or similar problems or having access to others' experiences. Essentially, the response stories serve to create bonds with peers and establish rapport, locating advice-givers and addressees in the same experiential and emotional frame, creating a sense of involvement, mutual support, and, as a result, community.

Of relevance here is also the function of response stories in disagreeing with addressees and delivering criticism (cf. Veen et al., 2010; Page 2012). As shown, advice-givers use response stories to give criticism and express or support their disagreement to claims other discussion participants make, i.e. advice-seekers or other advice-givers. From an interpersonal perspective, these stories appear to challenge and deny common ground of shared experience among advice-givers and addressees. What we see in these instances is that advice-givers use parallel experiences to call into question how addressees interpret a problematic situation.

Yet while we may initially consider these response stories as rapport-threatening rather than rapport-building, advice-givers' metadiscursive comments on their stories and addressees' reactions paint a more complex picture: indicating disagreement through stories can serve as a display of solidarity and involvement, rather than a conflictual approach. As we have seen, this is illustrated by the role of response stories in explaining and mitigating disagreement and criticism. Thus, such use of stories of expressing and supporting disagreement and criticism may actually serve as a way of showing interest in the plights of others, prompting them to put a problematic situation in the 'right' context and view it from a different perspective.

One important conclusion that we can draw from the analysis is that the advisory function of response stories cannot be severed from their relational aspect and function: creating involvement and establishing solidarity with stories is important as it can serve to mitigate any potential rapport-threatening effects of the given advice and possibly facilitate its reception. At the same time, the activity of giving advice itself in this particular context is a manifestation and enactment of relational work. Advice is solicited, expected, and even required so that board participants fulfill the community's goals, namely, to help solve problems and show support to others. Ultimately, giving advice is a relational discursive activity as much as it is task-related, and response stories were part and parcel of this activity in this online advice-giving context.

In sum, response stories are relational acts that are meant to achieve particular interpersonal goals in this peer-to-peer online advice-giving context. Importantly, we can view response stories as tokens of advice-givers' active 'listening', since they typically resonate addressees' feelings, restate and normalize their problems and concerns, and overall interpret addressees' and others' experience.

10.7 Fashioning identities

Response stories also demonstrate how identity and relational work are inherently connected and implicated in each other when narrating experiences. As noted above, identity is relational in the sense that we construct identities vis-à-vis others, not in a vacuum (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Advice-givers construct their identities in response stories by adopting positions towards characters and events in the story world, but also, and most importantly, towards addressees and the larger social world.

As illustrated in the analysis, the ways relational pairs (e.g. mother/child, husband/wife, parent/teacher, doctor/patient) are set up and invoked in response stories play a crucial role in constructing and negotiating advice-givers' identities, as well as the identities of addressees and others. Notably, the stories serve to create complex and dynamic links between the identities of advice-givers and addressees. They draw parallels on experiences, explore similar themes, and make implicit or explicit comparisons between story world characters and addressees.

A principal conclusion from the analysis is that response stories make advice-givers' identities (e.g. mother, wife, sibling, illness sufferer, professional) and various aspects of those identities relevant to the context and the purpose of the interaction at hand, ultimately resulting in the formation of advice-giver identity on the board. That identity, as constructed and displayed in response stories, emerges from implicit or explicit co-membership claims, displays of empathy and understanding, the construction and display of expertise, and, of course, advice. An important aspect of advice-giver identity that should be mentioned here is that it is also a co-constructed and allocated identity: by posting about their problems and soliciting advice, advice-seekers grant the role of advice-giver to discussion participants and assume that they have the knowledge that the advice-seekers lack. In other words, advice-seekers pre-position discussion participants as advice-givers.

Importantly, we have seen that personal experience stories typically highlight shared attributes and experiences of the advice-giver and the addressee, claiming and affirming shared membership in particular groups (e.g. Stommel, 2009). Given the advisory goal of the interactions, constructing in-group identity through narrated experience is strategic identity work to establish common ground and create trust and credibility. This is important because presenting oneself as trustworthy, credible, and like-minded can have an impact on advice reception and uptake. In addition, co-membership identity claims as displayed and made salient in response stories are also a way of showing advice-givers' personal involvement and motivation for engaging in advice-giving.

Regarding fictional stories and stories of vicarious experience, it can be argued that advice-givers construct their identities implicitly through the construction of story characters' identities. Even though those response stories do not focus on advice-givers' individual agency per se, the way events are ordered and story world characters and their actions are depicted can reveal advice-givers' points of view

and imply their identities, e.g. in terms of values and beliefs. Despite focusing on others' experiences, such stories can serve to construct advice-givers as empathetic and understanding of advice-seekers' problems. Hence, these stories can be used to establish common ground with addressees, but in a different and less direct way than personal experience stories.

Next, we have seen that personal experience response stories function as vehicles for the construction and display of advice-givers' expert identities (e.g. Armstrong & Koteyko, 2012; Harrison & Barlow, 2009). It was shown that advice-givers position themselves as experts by claiming a) expertise based on practical and experiential-based knowledge (e.g. as mothers), and b) professional, credentialed expertise (e.g. as teachers or health care professionals). As mentioned previously, since advice-givers aim to persuade addressees that their advice is valid and reliable, it is particularly important that they present themselves as knowledgeable experts. Thus, the role of response stories is crucial in this effort as these can establish, elaborate on and provide evidence for advice-givers' claims to epistemic status and authority. Storytelling enables advice-givers to offer a contextualized view of their expert identity by anchoring it in specific circumstances and events in the past, and from a specific viewpoint.

Besides recognizing the importance of response stories in negotiating and accomplishing advice-givers' expert identities, we also need to acknowledge the role of other contextual information that gives off expertise. This includes, for instance, claims to expertise elsewhere in a reply featuring a response story. In addition, advice-givers' profile information, nicknames, and message signatures can cue professional or experiential expertise claims, e.g. working as a teacher, parenting a large family, raising children with disorders. All of this contextual information could play a role in how addressees interpret and evaluate expertise claims in response stories.

Moreover, motherhood emerges as a marked identity in the preponderance of the response stories. Of course, this is not surprising given the topic and aim of the board discussions. Still, the response stories illustrate that mother identity, or rather identities, involves complex positioning towards addressees, narrated events and story characters, and the immediate context of interaction (e.g. Jaworska, 2018). Perhaps most importantly, response stories show that an advice-giver's mother identity intersects in complex ways with her other identities, e.g. wife, worker, or mental illness sufferer. Another important aspect of mother identity is displaying moral versions of mothering and motherhood, i.e. 'good' versus 'bad' mother. This is a point that will be discussed in connection with moral stance in the next section.

Finally, the advice-giving context of the discussions is fundamental for the kinds of identities advice-givers convey and present in response stories, and the ways they do identity work in them. The negotiation of identities, and especially mother identities, is very important in this context since the goal is to give advice and provide support on parenting matters. Overall, storytelling presents an oppor-

tunity for advice-givers to engage in presentations of the self so as to make sense of social reality and advance the advice-giving agenda.

10.8 Moral stance

One of the aims of this study was to explore the narrative dimension of moral stance in the advice-givers' response stories. We have seen that advice-givers take moral positions in and through their stories by affirming and negotiating local notions of what is good, normal, acceptable and right, or not. Given the topic of the board and its purpose, it is not surprising that moral stance in response stories involves implicit or explicit positions on motherhood, parenting, and especially mothering practices.

As shown, advice-givers' moral stances emerge and are situated against a backdrop of different spheres of domestic and social life as presented in the response stories. Such spheres include, among others, spousal relationships, school structures and practices, medical professionalism, music and game industry influences, family and peer norms, social or the advice-givers' own parental role expectations. Moral stances on motherhood and mothering emerge in the stories from intersections of these spheres with advice-givers' perceptions of what constitutes 'good' and 'bad'. In effect, advice-givers' response stories are crucial sites of mundane morality, where narrated experiences of everyday situations produce moral meaning and construct moral worlds.

10.8.1 Moral stance possibilities

As we have seen, moral stance in the response stories ranges from constant to dynamic to fluid. Maintaining a constant moral stance in a story implies that advice-givers have, at least at the time of the interaction, fixed positions from which they give advice. What this shows is that in such response stories, advice-givers do not explore or rework their moral position or positions, but rather assert and affirm a specific moral perspective. The implication for giving advice is that such stories entertain no alternative moral possibilities for thought, action, and behavior. Consequently, they present a view of the self as a stable set of beliefs and norms at the time of the interaction.

Response stories that exhibit dynamic moral stance trace and register shifts in moral positions that result in new moral perspectives advice-givers settle into. These stories underline that the way advice-givers see the world in terms of what is good, bad, reasonable or not in the here and now of the advice-giving activity is more of a process, that of transformation and self-reflection on their experiences, than just an outcome. Such stories show that advice-givers emerge from their experiences with newfound moral perspectives that they distill in their narrative tellings. Regarding implications for advice, it may well be that advice-givers trace these shifts to clarify the moral positions they have come to settle into and from

which they launch their advice and evaluate a problem. In addition, these stories may also convey indirectly to addressees the need for a change in their own moral positions on a given problem.

The case of fluid moral stance is particularly interesting since it indicates that moral positions can be flexible and adaptive depending on the particularities of a problematic situation. As illustrated above, an advice-giver can oscillate between what she constructs as good and bad, calling for attention to the particulars of individuals' actions, reactions and their outcomes in the story world. Fluidity of moral stance in a story can serve to challenge either/or perceptions of 'goodness' and offer alternative views, without necessarily working towards a fixed moral position or positions. As for giving advice, stories displaying moral stance in flux leave open to interpretation and reflection any implied or explicit advice.

10.8.2 Responsibility and accountability

It was shown that moral stance is instantiated when advice-givers indicate who is (causally and morally) responsible and accountable for events and their outcomes. It was also shown that negotiating and assigning praise and blame are central to how advice-givers convey moral stance in the stories.

Praise

As we have seen, self-praise in the stories is typically constructed in an indirect manner. Advice-givers do not use overt positive assessments of themselves by using, for instance, marked evaluation; they rather evoke self-praise by engaging in positive self-disclosure. They show in their personal experience stories that they are problem-solvers, endure and overcome adversities, address others' wrongdoings, and uphold social rules and expectations when others do not. One explanation for the use of positive self-disclosure as an indirect self-praise strategy in this communicative context is that it is less risky interactionally than direct self-praise. Considering the context in which the board discussions took place, this practice could be a reflection of an Anglo-Western normative view of self-praise as undesirable and potentially problematic (e.g. Dayter, 2014; Leech, 2014: 95).

Positive self-disclosure in the advice-givers' personal experience stories is constitutive of the 'looking good' principle (Ochs & Capps 2001: 47). Specifically, positive self-disclosure is intrinsically linked to moral positionings in terms of crafting a favorable self-presentation. The 'looking good' principle in the stories is important for accomplishing key self-presentation goals in the community, for instance, the 'good' mother or the 'good' professional. It can also be argued that this principle serves as a strategy for establishing a basis for giving advice. When advice-givers draw on the 'looking good' principle in their narrated experiences, they claim a moral advantage over their antagonists, thereby justifying and legitimizing their advice. Positioning oneself in a story as someone who observes socially agreed-upon rules and values imparts a certain moral quality to one's advice.

Advice-givers attribute credit implicitly to themselves for actions, attitudes and behaviors that are valued positively by their peers in the online community. As we have seen, peers respond with praise to such stories by using positive evaluative comments for the advice-givers' actions and behavior in the narrated events. Thus, it is peers who assess the narrated events to attribute direct praise, validating the advice-givers' self-disclosure in the stories as positive. Praise responses to stories also affirm and reinforce shared moral positions, constructing and shaping the identity of the members in this community of practice. At the same time, such responses convey support and encouragement.

Next, praise of others in the advice-givers' stories manifests in implicit or explicit positive evaluation of others' actions, attitudes, and behaviors in the story world. Explicit other-directed praise could be explained in terms of social norms that view the communicative activity of praising others as typically unproblematic, as opposed to self-praise. In story instances where self-praise (as positive self-disclosure) and other-directed praise co-occur, advice-givers shift the focus from themselves by sharing responsibility and credit with others (e.g. a teacher) for the successful resolution of a problem. This shows that in these instances advice-givers acknowledge others' efforts and contributions in resolving a problem. More importantly, and in terms of giving advice, such stories highlight that addressing and solving problems requires a joint effort to find solutions.

Blame

The analysis has shown that self-blame in advice-givers' personal experience response stories manifests in negative self-disclosure about omissions, perceived failures, and personal inadequacies. Advice-givers present these as contributing factors or causes of negative outcomes of events. By engaging in self-blame in their stories, advice-givers acknowledge and negotiate their responsibility or co-responsibility for problematic situations, events and negative consequences. Such stories show that directing blame at oneself involves a process of self-reflection to make sense of past events and their consequences. Self-blame functions as an explanatory tool of past experience that advice-givers use to process and reflect on their agency (or lack thereof) in relation to events with negative outcomes (e.g. Janoff-Bulman, 1999).

What is particularly noteworthy is that in certain story instances self-blame focuses on unrealized possibilities, experiences, and actions in the past or a hypothetical future that establish alternative scenarios of what may have occurred. Advice-givers utilize this counterfactual reasoning to implicitly sketch the moral implications of what they *could have* or *should have* done to avoid negative outcomes. This raises the idea of controllability emerging as a subtext of self-blame in these stories. Advice-givers evaluate their agency in hindsight regarding their perceived control over a situation in the story world. In particular, it appears that the attribution of self-blame is linked to advice-givers' perceived controllability of their actions and conduct, or their character, as evaluated at the time of the telling

of the story.

Regarding the attribution of other-directed blame in the stories, the analysis has shown that it can be implicit or explicit, focusing on others' failure to uphold values and standards, and fulfill obligations associated with specific roles. In effect, other-directed blame serves to locate moral responsibility in others in the accountability sense: holding someone accountable for failing moral expectations and violating moral obligations. It has an explanatory function because it shows through an advice-giver's perspective why events turned out the way they did, whose actions and behavior were involved, as well as why certain actions needed to be taken to remedy an imbalance and solve a problem. Also, the combination of the 'looking good' principle with other-directed blame fleshes out opposing moral positions, bringing into focus individuals' different social-moral realities, and emphasizing identities.

10.8.3 Moral stance and advice

The findings and the discussion so far lead to the following conclusions regarding the intricate link between moral stance and the advisory function of advice-givers' response stories. First, moral stance can have a role-modeling function in the context of advice-giving, especially when the 'looking good' principle is at work. Advice-givers use the narrated world to communicate particular values, expectations, and standards to addressees. This potentially encourages addressees to engage in self-reflection and imitation of behavior and actions to resolve or manage their problems.

Second, response stories explore and outline the moral implications of social actors' behaviors and actions. The stories act as a moral lens that addressees can use to identify and assess such implications in their own situation, and perhaps gain a better understanding of their problem from a moral perspective. In addition, since response stories also have a future outlook, they can help addressees anticipate future responsibility and accountability issues.

In general, moral stance in response stories is crucial for both advice-givers and addressees because it prompts reflection on their role and the role of others as moral agents in the social world. This is particularly important for advice discourse given that motherhood and mothering carry a significant moral load in our social reality.

10.9 Response stories and the big "D": Motherhood and mothering

The peer exchanges on the advice board and the advice-givers' response stories in particular can be viewed as located within a larger discourse of social meaning, or in Gee's (2007: 2-3, 155-158) words a 'Discourse' with a big 'D', that of motherhood and mothering. The analysis has shown that response stories in this online advice-

giving context provide a window into this larger discourse; a discourse that advice-givers orient to and make relevant with and through their stories by touching upon and evoking specific themes of motherhood and mothering.

It is important to note, however, that there is no single, homogeneous, or universal big 'D' of motherhood and mothering that the response stories in this particular context reflect and contribute to. Given that discourses are always historically, socioculturally, and institutionally situated, there are and have been different perspectives and ways of framing and making sense of motherhood and mothering in our social world. Hence, the stories analyzed in this study only give us a particular, situated glimpse into this larger discourse. The wider sociocultural context that underlies communication among advice board participants certainly influences how motherhood and mothering are conceptualized, discursively produced and encoded into a big 'D'.

What emerges from the analysis is that the advice-givers' response stories are tools that instantiate, (re)affirm, and create values, identities, and ideologies associated with being a mother and engaging in mothering practices. Advice-givers put in focus experiential aspects of motherhood and mothering that inevitably touch upon ideological stances regarding social expectations and personal assumptions and beliefs of what good parenting, and especially good mothering, is. Such stances are underpinned by strong moral meanings, demonstrating the moral dimension of motherhood and mothering.

The response stories throw specific motherhood and mothering themes into relief, outlining moral positionings and tapping into issues of identity. Themes such as nurturing and caring, moral guidance, discipline, family relations, educational obligation, and gender acculturation become salient in the stories as they typically arise out of conflict and tension: advice-giver versus self, advice-giver versus another person (e.g. spouse, other parents, teacher), advice-giver versus 'other' (e.g. school, legal system, gaming or music industry). Such themes interlock with issues of parental agency, responsibility and accountability, and even authority, ultimately crafting a richly textured tapestry on which a big 'D' of motherhood and mothering is woven.

Finally, the response stories analyzed in this study can be understood as part of the social process of mothers' self-making, or what we could call the 'mother project', that emerges in the context of peer-to-peer advice. The response stories illustrate that this is an interactive process since it emerges from advice-givers' engagement with the communicative situation and task at hand. They also indicate that this process is not static, but rather ongoing and dynamic. It seems only fitting here to leave the last word with a board member who states in the coda of her response story:

> "[W]e are all basically just works in progress, arent' we?"

11 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the forms and functions of response stories in peer-to-peer discussions on pregnancy and parenting in an online advice board for mothers and expecting mothers.

The analysis shows a range of various story types regarding the temporal configuration of past events. These types range from more to less prototypical stories, including Labovian complication narratives, stories of habitual events, and a variety of small story types that advice-givers employ to reconstruct past experience. It was shown that these various types highlight experience in different ways. Specifically, complication stories focus on temporally sequenced discrete events that put focus on particular incidents and occurrences. Habitual stories underscore habitual and repeated experience focusing on recurrent patterns of behavior or routinized practices. Small stories encapsulate the most reportable event or signal an opportunity for a narrative telling. Also, it was shown that small story types are conditioned by factors such as intertextuality and local concerns of relevance and brevity.

The plot structure of advice-givers' response stories revealed two major thematic patterns: 1) problem stories and 2) solution stories. The first are loss-framed, focusing on problematic events and their negative outcomes, while the second are gain-framed, focusing on problems that were resolved or at least successfully managed. The analysis illustrates that both thematic types have an overarching advisory function. Solution stories offer advice by presenting strategies and actions that resolved a problematic situation, while problem stories are cautionary tales offering implicit or explicit advice on potential pitfalls.

In addition, the analysis shows that advice-givers' response stories are multifunctional, highlighting four key functions at the local level of discourse: 1) giving direct or indirect advice, 2) legitimizing advice or assessment, 3) indicating dis/agreement, and 4) delivering a diagnostic opinion. As shown, these functions can overlap since response stories can realize more than one function simultaneously. Importantly, the stories are used to establish, support, or counter claims made in the stories and/or preceding discourse. Overall, response stories are used as evidence to bolster and reinforce particular standpoints regarding assessments and advice to assert their validity.

In particular, advice-givers employ narrativized experience as an argumentative device, using a variety of different strategies. These include gain/loss framing, comparing and paralleling experience, drawing on shared identities, resonating feelings and emotions, appealing to expertise, and highlighting moral positions regarding what is 'good' or 'bad'. It was shown, that these devices play an important role for attempting to prove the credibility and validity of the advice given directly or indirectly.

Also, advice-givers' response stories are key resources for relational work. The response stories serve to normalize problems and concerns, establish rapport and create involvement, building and negotiating common ground with addressees. These functions are directly linked to the interpersonal frame of the mother support group and are central in managing and mitigating any potential rapport-threatening effects of the advice exchanges. Response stories also make particular identities, especially mother identities, relevant to the context and the purpose of the interaction at hand. The stories serve to highlight advice-givers' shared identities with addressees, as well as construct and display advice-givers' expertise for the purposes of giving implicit or explicit suggestions and recommendations for action.

Further, the response stories span a range of moral stance possibilities, from constant and dynamic to fluid. Constant moral stance indicates fixed moral positions through which advice-givers offer implicit or explicit suggestions and recommendations for a course of action. Dynamic moral stance traces shifts in moral positions that are closely linked to the proposed advice: a shift in moral perspective is the advice. Fluid moral stance shows that the particulars of certain problems and concerns can push advice-givers to uncertain moral positions that leave open to reflection any given suggestions and recommendations on how to deal with a specific problem.

The analysis also showed that negotiating and attributing praise and blame through stories is central to how advice-givers convey their moral stance and give advice. The response stories feature praise of others for their actions and behavior, as well as positive self-disclosure that is important for establishing a basis for giving advice and affirm shared moral positions with community members. Concerning blame, advice-givers engage in self-blame through their response stories to acknowledge and negotiate their responsibility for negative outcomes of events, and even imagine alternative scenarios. Other-directed blame focuses on others' failure to uphold specific values and standards, and fulfill obligations associated with particular social roles and positions. In general, the response stories function as moral lenses for advice-givers and addressees, prompting reflection on issues of responsibility and accountability.

Overall, the analysis shows that advice-givers' response stories are structurally, thematically, and functionally attuned to communicative and contextual exigencies. The stories constitute particular problem-solving tools, whether or not they focus on unresolved problems or problems that were eventually resolved or successfully managed.

11.1 Implications

The present study holds implications for both theory and practice. For theory, it suggests that a contextualized and combined analytical approach to the study of response stories in advice exchanges allows capturing the mutual interplay of story

features and functions on different levels in relation to the communicative activity of advice-giving. Importantly, the study introduces the persuasive narrative strategy of 'narrative stacking' and expands the conceptualization of moral stance for narrative analysis. Regarding implications for practice, the study can offer insights to professionals working in parent support programs, counseling, and health information services. Professionals in these areas can gain a better understanding and increased awareness of the use of stories as experience-based information and advice tools in online mother support groups and communities. Such awareness is crucial as it can help professionals probe the dynamics of mothers' decision-making in relation to peers' experienced-based advice.

11.2 Limitations

A number of limitations of the present study need to be acknowledged. First, the data collection was limited to discussions from one online advice setting, and from one mother support group. An examination of response stories in advisory exchanges in other online mother support groups may have yielded additional observations and possibly different issues for discussion.

Secondly, the data was collected from an English-only mother support group in the US. This leaves the question of how different speech communities use stories in advisory settings, both online and offline, in discussions about parenting, motherhood and mothering. Data drawn from online mother support groups in other languages may have produced different results and brought a different perspective to the function of storytelling in such contexts. Thus, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other online mother support groups and communities.

Third, the analysis was restricted to a limited number of response stories. A larger story corpus may have emphasized different findings and come to different conclusions. Another limitation regarding the analysis is that no intercoder reliability tests were conducted since the author was the only coder of the data in this study. Thus, interpretive bias cannot be discounted.

A final limitation was the relative anonymity and disembodied nature of online written communication in this particular online advice setting. This raises issues of authenticity with regard to the discussion participants' narrated experiences in online interactions. Still, it is those central characteristics that foster and encourage self-disclosure and storytelling in online support groups.

11.3 Future directions

Future research could address a number of issues that arise from this study. First, the impact of response stories on mothers and expecting mothers who seek peer advice online can be examined. This would involve examining response stories in relation to advice-seekers' uptake of advice and their decision-making processes. Also, such research may incorporate online surveys and interviews with mothers

to obtain a nuanced picture of how and to what extent response stories in online peer discussions influence their actions and decisions and shape their attitudes on parenting issues.

Second, and relating to the first, future work can examine how persuasive gain or loss framed stories are in the context of peer advice. This inevitably points to issues pertaining to credibility and authority of stories that merit further investigation regarding parents' advice-seeking and advice-giving practices in diverse online settings. Third, the function of personal experience stories as diagnostic opinion tools warrants further investigation as it carries important implications for lay-expert health communication both online and offline, as well as parents' decision-making on health-related issues.

Next, an examination of storytelling in the context of online advice exchanges in father support groups is sorely needed. Such research, which is largely absent from current scholarship, could address story types and functions, as well as how fathers construct and produce fatherhood through narrating their experiences.

Further work should also examine the production, sharing, and function of parents' stories in online advice settings facilitated by social media platforms, such as microblogging and social networking sites. Such a line of inquiry would inform and advance our understanding of how social media affordances and constraints, storytelling, and advice discourse all intersect and influence one another.

11.4 Concluding remarks

This thesis has explored the form and functions of response stories in online advice exchanges among peers in a mother support group. Mothers in the role of the advice-giver use personal or vicarious experience stories as experience-based knowledge to guide, influence, and prompt action, but also reflection and introspection. These stories thread the past into the present and the future, constituting tools for the comparison and normalization of experiences, functioning as argumentative devices, as well as constituting templates for action, and especially moral action.

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APPENDIX A

List of discussion threads

	Discussion thread title	Total # of messages per thread
1	My 5 y/o doesn't know how to play alone	4
2	5 yr old kindergarten	6
3	bullied son	7
4	My 6 yr old won't stay in his own bed	4
5	My daughter won't sleep in her own bed	7
6	Need help for 17yr. old self-harmer!	5
7	New MOM please help with infant advice//	4
8	Some advice please….	5
9	trouble with 3yr old	4
10	When to move baby#1 to make room for #2	4
11	6 yr old is scared to death of dogs	9
12	Am I a horrible Mother?	13
13	Baby won't sleep!	8
14	My daughter is not conversing	10
15	daughters fighting nonstop HELP!!!	9
16	Dont know what to do anymore	12
17	Explicit lyrics/Tweens & Teens need help	9
18	Help with teen/family	8
19	Need help for 16yr old.	5
20	Impulsive 5 year old…	11
21	Out of control 10 yr old 10 year old..HELP!!!!	6
22	son with learning problem	8
23	Step-son is rude to me	9
24	teens with anxiety disorders	12
25	anyone with adhd kids	5

	Discussion thread title	Total # of messages per thread
26	Daughter wears only boy clothes	6
27	Daughter's 1st period- Questions	5
28	Death of a Family Cat	5
29	Seperation anxiety for my 1 year old	4
30	Is 7 to young for underarm deodarant??	9
31	What to call step dad???	12
32	my 16 yr old son..	14
33	Bossy big sister!	4
34	college and 20 yr old son	10
35	Daughter dilemma	4
36	difficult toddler son	2
37	help with my 19 year old son	18
38	looking for comfort and peace of mind	7
39	Hard to make choice….	9
40	A dad with a question to divorced moms.	8
41	Step-son is very rude to me	9
42	Need help with unusual family situation	6
43	Overbearing grandparents	4
44	Why is my two year old hitting herself	2
45	Preteen trouble	4
46	anyone with adhd kids	5
47	Birthday party	4
48	Need desperate advice on my 7 yr old	3
49	Potty Training Troubles	5
50	Need advice on my 7 yr old	3

APPENDIX B

Coding example

Discussion: 5 yr old kindergarten
Message: #4

<**metatext**^{advice}> A few ideas here. </**metatext**^{advice}>
<**advice**> first, if you take him home, then he is too sick to watch TV...too sick to play with his toys....too sick to play outside.....if he decides he is well enough, then you pack him up and take him back to school... </**advice**>
<**metatext**^{advice}> Another idea (this is the one I use) </**metatext**^{advice}>
<**advice**> No fever, no blood, no vomiting, no diahereah, no rashes.....he can go back to class.... </**advice**> <**explanation**^{advice}> There are obvious signs of a child being sick and needing to go home..... if he doesnt have those, then dont take him home. </**explanation**^{advice}>
<**story**> My sister was having stomach pains....bad enough she was crying....she would stay home from school and by the time school had officially started she was fine....My mom kept taking her to the doctors and finally they figured out what was wrong.Yes her stomach hurt....they were very real pains to her....but nothing was causing them. she was causing them on herself...what happened was she was afraid I was going to do some fun things while she was at school and so she would work herself up to a tizzy. My mom stopped responding to her "stomach aches" and clued the nurse into the fact as well. She also was given the first hour after she got home to have mom's 100% attention...I had to play by myself, while she feasted on my mom's attention. </**story**>

Svensk sammanfattning

Tidigare forskning har visat att majoriteten av dagens föräldrar och blivande föräldrar använder internet för att söka information, råd och socialt stöd (Duggan, Lenhart, Lampe, & Ellison, 2015; Plantin & Daneback, 2009). Diskussionsforum på nätet riktade till föräldrar och blivande föräldrar framkommer som viktiga informationskanaler och virtuella mötesplatser där föräldrar kan utbyta erfarenheter och kunskap och ge varandra stöd och hjälp.

Berättandets och berättelsernas centrala roll i mödrars nätdiskussioner har noterats i flera studier som har undersökt mödrars kommunikationsmönster i olika föräldrastödgrupper och gemenskaper på nätet ur olika teoretiska perspektiv och analytiska infallsvinklar (t.ex. Appleton, Fowler, & Brown, 2014; Brady & Guerin, 2010; Evans, Donelle, & Hume-Loveland, 2012; Jaworska, 2018; Pedersen & Lupton, 2018). Dessa studier understryker att mödrars berättelser fyller många olika men sammanflätade funktioner. Till exempel används berättelser för att beskriva och förklara problem, jämföra erfarenheter, ge erfarenhetsbaserad information, reproducera eller utmana normativa moderskapsideal, skapa gemenskap och ge emotionellt stöd samt forma och förmedla identiteter. Det råder dock brist på studier som specifikt fokuserar på berättelsernas uppbyggnad och funktion i deras omedelbara kontext och i samband med den kommunikativa handlingen *att ge råd*.

Denna avhandling är en kvalitativ fallstudie som undersöker mödrars berättelser i ett amerikanskt diskussionsforum på nätet där mödrar söker och ger råd till varandra om föräldraskap. Det övergripande syftet med avhandlingen är att analysera berättelser i diskussionsinlägg som riktar sig till inläggsförfattare som söker råd på forumet. Analysen fokuserar på berättelsernas form och interaktionella och interpersonella funktion i denna rådgivningskontext. Materialet för analysen består av 121 berättelser ur 50 diskussionstrådar. Diskussionsämnen fokuserar på barnavård och uppfostran, barnets fysiska och mentala hälsa, barnets utveckling och beteende, förlossningsrädsla, problem i parförhållandet och mödrars mentala hälsa.

Studiens teoretiska utgångspunkt är att berättelser utgör interaktionella handlingar som uppstår i och är beroende av den lokala kontexten. En utförlig definition av begreppen ”berättelse” och ”berättande” ges i första kapitlet. Det andra och tredje kapitlet presenterar tidigare forskning och teorier kring de diskursiva strategierna för att söka och ge råd, narrativ analys samt berättande och berättelser i digitala kontexter. I det fjärde kapitlet ges en detaljerad beskrivning av diskussionsforumet från vilket materialet för denna studie är hämtat.

Det femte kapitlet redogör för studiens urval av empiriskt material och metodologiska tillvägagångssätt. Studien kombinerar olika teoretiska och metodologiska perspektiv på narrativ analys för att undersöka olika narrativa genrer i materialet. Mer specifikt kombineras Labovs (1972, 1997, 2013) strukturella modell

med Ochs & Capps (2001) narrativa dimensioner och insyn från forskning inom ”små berättelser” (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2007). Berättelsernas interaktionella funktion i deras omedelbara kontext analyseras med utgångspunkt från Lochers (2006) modell för innehållsanalys av diskussionsinlägg. Den interpersonella funktionen analyseras med hjälp av Lochers (2006) relationella strategier och Ochs & Capps (2001) narrativa dimension av ”moral stance” som står för berättarnas moraliska positioneringar.

Analysen är indelad i fyra kapitel. I det första kartläggs de olika berättelsetyper som urskildes i materialet. De omfattar följande typer som varierar i såväl struktur som temporalitet: a) berättelser av enstaka händelser som har en komplikation och leder (eller inte) till en upplösning, b) berättelser av upprepande eller pågående händelser i det förflutna, och c) en rad olika narrativa företeelser som kan kategoriseras under ”småberättelser”. Ur en tematisk synpunkt kan mödrars berättelser kategoriseras i *problemberättelser* som fungerar som varningar och *lösningsberättelser* som ger beprövade praktiska råd för att finna en lösning till problemet.

Vidare fokuserar analysen på berättelsernas interaktionella funktioner i den lokala kontexten som kan sammanfattas i fyra punkter. 1) Mödrars berättelser ger råd på ett implicit eller explicit sätt genom att visa i händelseförloppet hur ett problem uppstod eller vilka steg som togs för att lösa ett problem. 2) Berättelserna stöder argument och påstående som berättarna lyfter fram i föregående diskurs, nämligen meningsenheter som förmedlar råd eller bedömning av ett problem. 3) Berättelserna indikerar att berättaren är av samma eller annan åsikt med andra diskussionsdeltagare, och 4) de förmedlar bedömningar om andras hälsorelaterade problem utifrån egna erfarenheter.

De tredje och fjärde analyskapitlen behandlar berättelsernas interpersonella funktion. Analysen kartlägger hur berättelserna reflekterar mottagarnas problem och används som implicita eller explicita uttryck för empati och uppmuntran på mikro- och makro-nivå. Angående moraliska positioneringar använder sig berättarna av specifika språkliga strategier för att ge uttryck för moraliska ståndpunkter angående definitionen av en ”bra” eller ”dålig” förälder.

Angående de olika narrativa genrer som urskildes i materialet har kontextuella faktorer som till exempel relevans, intertextualitet och hänsyn till inläggens längd inverkan på berättelsernas struktur. Överlag visar analysen att mödrars berättelser används som en mångfacetterad diskursiv strategi för att konstruera, förmedla och exemplifiera råd. Analysen lyfter också fram specifika strukturella komponenter inom berättelserna som har särskilda roller i hur problem och råd formas och förmedlas. Att använda berättelser är också en strategi för att inta en solidarisk ställning gentemot mottagaren för att kunna ge råd. Dessutom visar analysen att moraliska ståndpunkter kan omformas och bearbetas under själva berättandet. Resultaten visar också att diskussionsdeltagarna använder berättelser för att argumentera med och mot varandra i moraliska frågor om föräldraskapet.

Studien har implikationer för både narrativ teori och praktik. Det teoretiska bidraget består av a) en utvidgning av Ochs & Capps modell vad gäller analysen av

moraliska ståndpunkter i berättelser, och b) ett argumentationsmönster som inte tidigare undersökts i studier inom narrativ analys. Det finns också implikationer för professionella inom föräldrarådgivning. Professionella rådgivare bör vara medvetna om hur mödrars berättelser i digitala kontexter kan påverka rådgivningen.

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