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‘Everywhere I go, you’re going with me’: time and space deixis as affective positioning resources in shared moments of digital mourning

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Keywords: sharing, entextualization, time and space deixis, affective positioning, digital mourning, identity performance, mutable self.

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1. Introduction

The present article analyses sharing practices on a Facebook memorial group site and brings to the fore key aspects of patterned semiotic and discursive activity shaping and shaped by the representation of death and mourning online. Special attention is drawn to the role of time and space deixis in organizing the personal and social experience of mourning in local and situational contexts. The article offers insights relevant to the study of public mourning and the digital performance of self and contributes to the empirical study of time and space deixis and discourse and participation online.

The article is organized as follows: section 2 outlines the analytical framework and the key concepts that have informed the theoretical conceptualization of the study. Section 2.1 presents the empirical framework for the analysis of *sharing online* proposed by Androutsopoulos (2014) and the related concepts of *entextualization* and *significant moments* as they relate to the uses of social networking sites for remembering the dead. Section 2.2 presents the understanding of deixis as communicative practice and interactional resource that has informed the empirical approach to time and space in the present study. Section 2.3 overviews the data and research methods for the present study. Section 3 moves on to the analysis and presentation of key findings. Section 3.1 provides an overview of sharing practices of mourning in the memorial site under focus. Section 3.2 zooms in on a single user's selection, styling and negotiations of shared moments, drawing attention to the different types of spatial and temporal deictic references mobilized by the sharer in the context of her self-presentations as mourner. Section 3.3 discusses the temporal and spatial framings construed by the sharer in her discursive trajectory of moments and points to shifts in the sharer's stances and alignments to the event of death, the dead, the networked mourners, and her digital performance of self as mourner. Section 4 presents the main conclusions of the article.

2. Background

2.1 Sharing online: digitally entextualizing life and death

Sharing has been acknowledged as the constitutive semiotic activity in social media (John, 2013) and hence as worthy of empirical study (Androutsopoulos, 2014). The empirical framework for the study of sharing practices proposed by Androutsopoulos (ibid, 2014) takes into account the participatory character of social media that involves the user's representation of self, while addressing a knowing audience made up of diverse people existing on an online domain of sociability. Based on an understanding of the representation of self in social media as performance, sharing online involves the digital *entextualization* of social activities, in other words the semiotic representation of events judged to be significant by means of digital technologies and interactive negotiations with the networked audience. By entextualization, reference is made to the process of rendering stretches of discourse into texts that are coherent, memorable and circulatable (Bauman & Briggs, 1990). In the context of social media, entextualization further involves the use of visual, and audio resources that can result in assemblages of texts, pictures, videos, comments and likes that become an integral part of the sharing and are termed *vernacular spectacles* (Androutsopoulos, 2010).

The empirical framework of sharing online involves three interrelated stages: *selecting* that concerns what the sharer chooses to broadcast to their networked audience, *styling*, that relates to how the sharer entextualizes their selected significant moments and *negotiating*, that refers to the way the audience engages with what is being shared. Moments are understood as single communicative acts which entextualize an event that is of importance to a participant and their network of 'friends' taking into account the background knowledge and the linguistic resources that members of the networked audience have in common with the sharer (Androutsopoulos, 2014, p.15). Sharing a moment with and for a networked audience then does not involve simply the reporting of a significant event or the unambiguous expression of feelings, but rather involves acts of social and affective positioning (cf. Bamberg, 1997), that is semiotic and discursive practices whereby selves are located as participants in an interaction and as social beings producing one another in terms of roles. In this article, the empirical framework of sharing has been applied to the analysis of entextualizations of social activities on Facebook related to public mourning and memorialisation purposes (see section 3).

The increasing popularity of uses of digital media for mourning and remembrance under focus in the present paper needs to be understood in the context of digital affordances of social networking sites. As Boyd (2010) points out *persistence*, *replicability*, *scalability*, and *searchability* constitute the key affordances of social networking sites and their publics. In other words, despite the widespread sense of the ephemeral nature of online content, what is shared in online social platforms can be easily saved or archived, replicated and shared with others, accessed by mass audiences, both known and unknown, and can be easily searched and retrieved. The aforementioned affordances result in a higher level of self-reflection, self-awareness

and self-monitoring on the part of users giving rise to the *mutable* self, that is a shift from the stability of self or *self as object* to change of the self or *self as process* (Papacharissi, 2012, p.5). The high degree of incorporation of digital media in the everyday lives of users, especially in technologically and economically advanced societies where access to the Web is fast and affordable, has meant that digital performances of self have become part of routine ways of being and relating to others.

In light the afore-described digital affordances social networking sites feature as apt spaces for remembering and memorialising the dead. Following the death of a public figure or of a loved one it is now common to share with known and unknown audiences expressions of condolences, mourning, and grieving. On social network sites, and most notably on Facebook, users often continue to post on the profiles of deceased users or create new group sites (also known as Rest in Peace or R.I.P. sites). Sharing tributes in memory of the dead builds up an archive of memories and public statements accessible and searchable any time and provides mourners with possibilities for engaging with mourning practices anytime and anywhere, e.g. via mobile phone, hence increasing opportunities for online support. In addition, the reach of digitized memorials makes possible the circulation of news relating to memorial events and the reinforcement of a sense of the continued impact of the dead on the living. Furthermore, new possibilities for interactivity in social media make it possible for users to sustain a sense of interaction with the dead via direct messages on the deceased's personal profile page or on sites specially created for memorialisation purposes.

In the growing field of death online research, memorial digital sites are said to facilitate the sharing of memories and the direct interaction with the deceased (Brubaker et al., 2013; Dobler, 2009) and remediate (Bolter and Grusin, 1999) offline death-related practices. Such sites arguably bring back the sense of a community of bereaved (Walter et al., 2011) and expand mourning and grieving socially, temporally and spatially (Brubaker et al., 2013). Furthermore, social networking sites used as technologies of death (Varis and Spotti, 2011) afford opportunities for increased social visibility, in particular for mourners whose experience is not validated or legitimised - also known as *disenfranchised mourners* (Marwick and Ellison, 2012). Most importantly, the fact that social media allow individuals to manage their self-presentations more strategically allows them to address tensions between their individual expression of sorrow and the expected conventional and socially recognisable forms of communication in contexts of public mourning (Berthomé and Houseman, 2010).

In sum, the increasing use of social media for death-related practices is linked to the increased opportunities that social media afford users for sharing significant moments in order to build and maintain social relationships with groups of mourners and the dead as well as for creating a sense of co-presence with imagined and networked publics as will be shown in the analysis (see section 3). The next section presents the understanding of deixis as communicative practice that informs the present study.

2.2 Deixis as communicative practice

Time and space deixis is integral to communicative practice and it occupies a central place in the study of discourse in society. By deixis reference is made to the use of linguistic expressions that establish the speaker in relation to other aspects of context, namely in relation to the hearer(s) (person deixis), space (spatial deixis) and time (temporal deixis). In English, for example, there is a set of indexical expressions, such as 'I', 'here', 'today', 'tomorrow' whose reference shifts depending on the context in which they are uttered. Tellers have been found to use deixis strategically in order to create positions for themselves and others as speakers and addressees, as close or distant from centred locations and also to orient to events as past, present or future (Toolan, 1999). The three dimensions of person, space and time are referred to as the deictic center of linguistic events that are crucial in interpreting any utterance and constitute the most commonly discussed deictic domains.

Space, time and person deixis can be seen as either static or dynamic. Static deictics point at an entity, e.g. English *here* (space), *then* (time) and *we* (person). Dynamic deictics, on the other hand, point at a movement in space (*hither*), developments in the course of time (*from now on*) or events that take place between persons (*'I-him'*) (Zuniga, 1998 cited in Zuniga, 2006, pp.30-31).

Furthermore, local deixis can be based on binary distinctions that separate the 'I' from the 'you' in person deixis or the 'here' and 'not-here', the 'near' and 'far' in place deixis (van Peer and Graff 2002). In addition to local deixis, there is also social and discourse deixis where spatial parameters like *proximal* or *distal* are used to structure their respective (deictic) space. Some analyses of deixis draw special attention to the bodily centred notions of 'proximal' and 'distal' and sub-categorisations of (linguistic) space between static and dynamic space, i.e. the location of entities in space and the movement or change of location of entities.

Discourse approaches to the study of time and space can be broadly divided into two types: approaches that use the constructs of time and space as points of entry to the denotational level of discourse that draws on theories of direct reference and secondly, approaches that view time and space as points of entry to the indexical level of discourse concerned with the aspects of context pointed at by the deictic referent. The latter line of examination is more effective in extending analyses beyond the referential field of deixis to the social embedding of the deictic field across interactional contexts (Hanks, 1990; 2005).

For Hanks (2005), deictic referring is a linguistic and social practice that is to be studied empirically across the languages, social fields and discourse genres in which it becomes embedded. The deictic field, then, can be summarized as 'an articulation of several logically ordered layers' (Hanks, 2005, p. 210) that involves the taking up of stances via which interactants linguistically construct their social life-worlds and index socially determined frames and roles. In other words, as Hanks notes (*ibid*, p. 193) 'to perform an act of deictic reference is to take up a position in the deictic field'. Extending this claim to the field of discourse and narrative studies, it has been

shown that time and place is not just background material used to anchor tellings, but rather emplotted by tellers (and co-tellers) as interactional resources allowing positionings at multiple levels (Georgakopoulou 2003, 2007).

The present article takes an indexical approach to the study of time and space framings in posts shared on Facebook. More specifically it explores the use of temporal and spatial framings as affective positioning resources of and for projecting affective stances and selves variously aligned to the reported events, characters and audiences.

2.3 Data and research methods

This section presents that data and research methods before moving in to the analysis. Previous studies of death and mourning online have contributed to a better understanding of the type of activity of post-mortem profile pages and their usefulness for the bereaved (see section 2.1). Less attention has been paid to sharing activity on memorial group sites on social networking sites, with the exception of the study of pages created in memory of celebrities or public figures that give rise to mediated spectacles of disaster and affect (Klastrup, 2014). This article provides an analysis of a Facebook Rest In Peace (R.I.P.) public group site that produces vernacular spectacles of affect and post-mortem sociality.

The sampling procedure for this study included browsing and collecting US and Europe-based Facebook memorial sites, using the Search function of Facebook before selecting a site for close analysis. The criteria applied to the selection of the site related to the number of group members, their age and degree of participation on the site. The target of the selection process was the identification of a group made up of bereaved individuals mourning the loss of a loved one rather than the loss of a celebrity or public figure. In addition, the selection process targeted a medium-size group counting at least 500 members and consisting of members with evident individual or community links outside the site. The aforementioned criteria were set in line with a broader concern of the project with death online practices of young adults who tend to be disenfranchised in institutional ceremonies (Carroll and Landry, 2010). The focus on young adults was also motivated by their expertise in the use of social media for sharing significant moments of their everyday lives through their increased posting of updates and interaction on the wall (cf. Page, 2010), which would anticipate their increased willingness and readiness to extend the use of those media to sharing significant moments relating to death and mourning.

The group selected for study was created in May 2012 as a tribute to the sudden and tragic loss of a young adult (henceforth referred to as David) in a city of Georgia, US. The administrators of the group are six of the closest friends of the deceased. The medium-sized group brings together more than one thousand (1,000) members including schoolmates and acquaintances of the deceased from the local community (e.g. school, Christian Baptist community). At the time of research, the group had accumulated 525 logs of 29,136 words while posting activity is still ongoing.

Posts have been coded as *wall events*, ie. a multi-authored sequence of contributions displayed on the Facebook wall that consists of a minimum of one contribution (the initiative post, usually a so-called status update) followed by Likes and/or responsive contributions (Comments) (Androutsopoulos, 2014). Wall events are visually set off from each other and displayed in reverse chronological order, with posts that were first broadcast appearing at the bottom of the wall and more recent posts appear on top. The wall events on the Facebook Rest in Peace group site will be also referred to as *entextualized moments* shared with a networked audience or simply shared moments. The data selected for the purposes of this paper consist of the posts of a female user who has shared eight posts (henceforth *moments*) over six months from the date of the site's creation (May, 2012) to October of the same year and whose second moment has prompted the higher number of responses in the form of Comments. Two of the shared posts are pictures and will not form part of the text-based analysis.

Sharon's trajectory of significant moments shared on the group's tribute wall is marked by daily posting activity in the first couple of days immediately following the announcement of the tragic news of her friend's loss and the creation of the Facebook memorial group site (see Table A1; Appendix); she is seen to share five posts over the course of four days punctuated by the sharing of two pictures. A month after the event of death, the regularity of her posting activity decreases and the intervals between her posts range from one to three months, before ceasing altogether. This pattern broadly reflects levels of posting activity on the wall found to be at its highest in the immediate period following the event of death and then gradually decreasing with occasional spurts of activity in calendar important dates, such as celebrations, death anniversaries and the deceased's birthday (see section 3.1).

Figure 1 provides a summary of the trajectory of Sharon's shared moments, while Table A1 (see Appendix) provides a more detailed outline of the posts in terms of their word length and thematic classification categories.

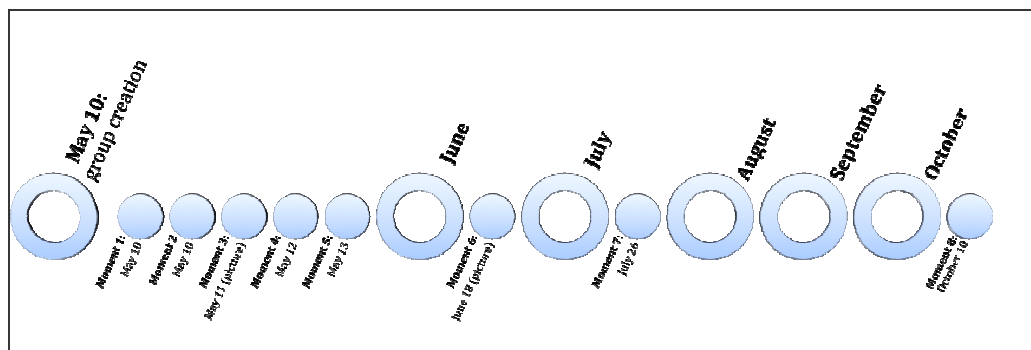


Figure 1. *Timeline of the sharer's trajectory of significant moments (May to October)*

The first three moments are shared as part of a sequence of messages posted as a direct reaction to the tragic news of David's death (Thread 1); the first two posts, in fact, are broadcast within a couple of hours from each other on May 10th. A third post, a photo of the memorial colors of orange and blue is shared the next day, on May

11th. The fourth post is shared on May 12th in the context of the topic thread unfolding around offline death ceremonies (Thread 2). The next post in the developing sequence of Sharon's moments takes the form of a photo of a typed message on a piece of paper shared on May 13th that reads: '*God will help you overcome any hardship*'. The typed message is framed by smiley emoticons at its start and endpoint. In addition, in that post, dated May 13th, Sharon uses an anchoring caption next to her profile name (ie. Sharon with David), a common function on Facebook used to indicate co-presence with networked friends. Following these posts, Sharon broadcasts three more posts across a period of five months, from June to October, which can be classified as one-off updates (see Table 1; Appendix). In terms of length, Sharon's posts range from eighteen words to one hundred and thirty-four words. The first and the last post are the longest messages (see Table 1). The rest of her posts range between fifty and seventy words, which is the average size post typical of group members' posting activity. The text-only posts that will form the basis of the analysis will be referred throughout the article as moments.

To facilitate the consideration of discourse aspects in the analysis, posts have been transcribed in lines made up of a clause (ie. a sequence containing a finite verb). Also, openings and closings are marked off as separate lines.

In terms of ethics, according to the British Association of Applied Linguists and the American Anthropological Association ethics guidelines, sites that are open access are considered to be public data available to analysis provided that due consideration is given to the authors and their privacy. However, as researchers we maintain responsibility to protect the privacy and dignity of any individual involved. The group administrators have been informed of the ongoing research on their site via Facebook messages. In addition, the user whose posts are discussed in this paper was also contacted individually via Facebook and was informed about the research project. In order to protect the anonymity and sensitivity of the users' publicly shared comments, pseudonyms are used when referring to individual users and any references to places that could make possible the identification of users have been omitted from the extracts presented in this paper.

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Sharing significant moments on a Facebook R.I.P. group site

The present section provides an overview of sharing practices on the Facebook memorial wall highlight patterned ways of selecting, styling, and regimenting moments on the site before zooming in on the set of moments shared by a single mourner.

The group site in question lacks an 'About' section, but nevertheless the first two posts shared by two of the administrators seem to fulfill its function of making explicit the purpose of the site. The two posts directly address the networked audience, inviting group members to agree to a planned memorial event on the day of graduation (Post 1) and share a memorial song (Post 2) and including evaluative comments on the importance of sharing practices.

Post 1: "... to make it like we never lost him"

Post 2: "... to push his name out and let ppl kno he's cared about deeply. Even if he's not here in person"

As the above extracts from the two posts illustrate, members of the group are encouraged to share in and participate to memorial activity online and offline as a way of continuing a sense of interaction with the dead person and spreading the word about how much he is loved, and this seems to be the motivating force behind the creation of the site.

The Facebook R.I.P. group site in question is predominantly text-centred (pictures make up just 3.2% of the wall). The pictures posted on the memorial wall do not include any selfies but rather a variety of snapshots from (i) service and memorial leaflets, including the music score played at the funeral, (ii) memorial places, e.g. a tribute on a rock, a tribute on the deceased's parking slot, (iii) memorial items, e.g. orange and blue ribbons, orange and blue colours in the sky, and (iv) on-the-spot memorial pictures often just before a sports event, e.g. the image of three friends' hands forming the deceased's initials, the image of a friend in his basketball T-shirt just before a game. Posted images tend to be accompanied by text, serving to underscore the sharer's messages about how much the dead is being missed and how, when and where his friends are engaging in acts of remembrance.

The analysis of the content of the wall for degree of interactivity suggests that wall events tend to consist of one contribution (93.5% of all logs). It is generally rare for initiative posts to be followed by responsive contributions that take the form of comments. In the rare instance when that happens, a follow-up contribution tends to consist of a single comment (3%), less often of a series of two comment posts (1.9%) and rarely of a higher number of comments.

In terms of the content of the textually weaved wall, the analysis has pointed to the organisation of the wall posts around a set of posting prompts or topics: (i) immediate or 'breaking' reactions to the news of death (ii) visitation and funeral services and (iii) calendar important dates, for instance school graduation, death anniversaries, birthday, Christmas, Thanksgiving. These thematically related and sequenced posts have been termed *thread posts*.

Example 1 below cites a series of consecutive posts by different sharers that have been extracted from the first thread of breaking reactions to the news of death and represented here in the reverse chronological order in which they appear on the wall. The posts illustrate how closely related posts tend to be in terms of their content and discourse structure and style when sharers orient to one of the thread prompts.

Example 1

(a) rip davey!♥ love you so much, and miss you like crazyy! i have no doubt in my mind you are doing it big up there!{:

17 people like this

(b) rest in peace davey ! i love you & miss you very much♥

2 people like this

(c) rest in peace sweet davey ! i love and miss you very much ! fly high and watch over us all !

3 people like this

Posts open with the short epitaph RIP or Rest in Peace followed by the name of the deceased and an expression of affect and close with an emoticon or another short epitaph, e.g. “fly high”, echoing the style of short epitaphs inscribed on the gravestone or letters of condolences. Networked mourners are, thus, seen to recontextualize conventional genres of public mourning on the digital wall, integrating them in their vernacular digital literacy practices evident in the use of low-case letters even in the case of the first person pronoun “i”, elongation of vowels, (non-exaggerated) use of exclamation marks, and use of emoticons.

In addition to threaded posts, there are also a large number of posts that were found to lack any explicit thematic or stylistic relationship to immediately previous or subsequent posts. Such posts were in fact very common, making up the greatest part of the corpus. Posting of this type is discontinuous and irregular and displays the greatest degree of personalisation of grief and mourning. Example 2 illustrates two such posts:

Example 2

(i) the suns setting over the lake right now and it's turning the sky orange and blue. couldn't help but stop and think for a minute about how pretty it must be up where you are

13 people like this

(ii) MORNING ANGEL 😊 ! HAVE A GREAT DAY !

1 person likes this

The occurrence and high frequency of this type of posts can be best understood as a way of ‘stopping by’ and leaving a message akin to leaving flowers on a gravesite or lighting up a candle on a memorial site and are posted mainly by individuals who knew the deceased.

Based on the above, the key norms that are seen to shape posting activity on the site can be summarized in the following set of preferences for: (i) restricted co-constructed interactions and sharing of pictures (ii) sharing of text-based tributes, and (iii) mobilizing conventional epitaphs or expressions of condolences reworked in vernacular digital writing styles. The interplay of these norms contributes to the construction of the memorial site as a separate space within Facebook that is set apart from sharers’ personal profile pages, hence addressing potential tensions

between sharers' everyday performance of selves online and their projection of their mourning self. Furthermore, sharers' mobilization of resources from conventional genres of mourning alongside informal and vernacular writing resources can be said to differentiate peer-group memorial activity from official and formal memorialization practices, affording young adults a sense of control over the organization of their mourning experience. Peer-group memorialization online is found to rely to a continuous projection of intimacy and 'friendliness' fostered by Facebook (cf. Page, 2011). Certain temporal points, such as birthdays, celebrations, sports season and places, like the school, the church or sports centres become invested with symbolic meanings linked to remembrance and memorialisation; their re-signification as icons of friendship contributes to the emergence of normative ways for remembering and paying tribute to the dead among members of this group, while at the same also serving to signal one's membership to the group.

The next sections will zoom in the moments shared by a single user to pinpoint key aspects in the selection, styling, and negotiation of significant moments for sharing (section 3.2) and specify the sharer's discursive trajectory and shifts in affective positionings based on the analysis of shifts in time and space deixis (section 3.3).

3.2 Taking positions in significant moments for sharing

As the ensuing analysis will show each moment shared by Sharon is inter-textually related to posts previously shared by other members of the networked mourners and anticipate further entextualizations of remembrance on the wall. This section will provide an overview of selecting, styling, and negotiating practices in Sharon's discursive trajectory and point to the positions she is seen to take as mourner in a public participatory context.

Moment 1, Sharon's longest tribute post on the wall, sets the stage for her subsequent entextualizations. The sharer's selections draw up a series of evaluations of the event of death, juxtaposing the unexpected injunction to write a tribute post for her friend (l.2) to an irrealis present (l.3), before turning to the representation of her own feelings (l.5). The representation of her feelings and reflections on the unexpected event is framed in metaphors of death as a journey to a safe 'home' (l.6) and a belief in God's benevolence and wisdom (l. 11-12) that invokes Christian Baptist religious master discourses. The moment closes with the sharer bridging religious practices of praying (l.16-19) with peer-group memorial activity, namely wearing memorial items and continuing to interact with the dead, arguably reclaiming some sense of local control over mourning practice.

MOMENT 1

- 1 First of all,
- 2 I should NOT be writing this about you.
- 3 You should be here with us, making us laugh & putting huge smiles on our faces.
- 4 As selfish as that makes me sound,
- 5 I'm happy
- 6 you've finally made it home safely & pain free

7 as perfect as we thought
 8 you were on earth,
 9 you're 1,000 times more perfect now
 10 than you ever were.
 11 God had you here to show us
 12 what love really is
 13 & the true meaning of what he is.
 14 Last night at 10:18, we lost the most special angel ever given to us,
 15 & God gained one.
 16 Even though I'm a georgia girl,
 17 I'm gonna be wearin that blue & orange
 18 like its goin outa style.
 19 I'll be talking to you EVERY night in my prayers.
 20 Fly high sweet boy

In selecting the content of the post, the sharer picks out more or less conventional expressions of public mourning, such as “You should be here with us” (l.3), “I’m happy you’ve finally made it home safely & pain free” (l.5-6) or short epitaphs “Fly high sweet boy” (l.20) that are intertextually related to moments shared on the wall (see section 3.1). In her account of tribute posting as an affective situation, she offers a typical position of the *I* in tension: while she presents herself as having little control when it comes to reverting the irrevocable event of death (l. 2 “I should not be writing this about you”), she is nevertheless represented as in control over her own emotions and understandings of the significance of death (l. 4, l.5; l. 11-13) avoiding expressions of helplessness and despair.

Through personal pronoun choice shifts from first person singular (l. 2, 4, 5, 16, 17,19) to plural (l. 3, 7, 11, 14) the sharer negotiates her position alongside a group of mourners, both known and unknown. Uses of the second person personal pronoun establish the dead as the direct addressee of the post (l. 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10,11, 19), while the use of the third person pronoun *he* establishes *God* as an indirect addressee of the shared moment, negotiating the positioning of the sharer to religious master discourses on life and death.

The sharer’s orientation to Christian Baptist discourses and beliefs is further echoed in the uses of spatial deictic reference, realized via adverbs of place such as (l.3 “here”) or designated in more concrete terms via the use of nouns denoting place, such as “on earth” (l. 8). Such images of the sharer’s spatial deictic centre are contrasted to an imagined “up there” construed as “home” (l. 16) and denoting the spiritual space of a Christian’s afterlife, that creates a sharp physical separation between the living and the dead inviting ritual expressions of separation.

Through the afore-described interplay of selections, styling, and negotiations, Sharon entextualizes herself as an *entitled mourner*, claiming her right to share moments of mourning on the memorial wall as an individual who knew David and who has been affected by his loss. At the same time, Sharon projects herself as an *expert mourner* who is seen to frame the shocking event in ways that are socially acceptable and recognizable among the different groups she is a member of (e.g. school, church),

affirming her place in these groups. Lastly, the personal and affectively loaded style of the post is akin to a confessional style with an over-emphasis on the *I*, creating a self-instructional tone that foregrounds the sharer's self-monitoring in the process of the mourning situation.

In Moment 2 the projection of the expert mourner gives place to that of a *sincere mourner*, who aligns with the networked mourners and seeks to elicit their sympathy and support.

MOMENT 2

- 1 Can I please just wake up from this nightmare now?
- 2 there's only so many tears
- 3 I can handle...

Moment 2 centers on the sharer's personal feelings in the here-and-now and projects her negative stance to the event of death as "nightmare" (l.1) that makes her cry (l.2). The encoding of time as emergent and emergency constructs the moment as a 'demand' post that calls for support and compassion from online peers. The shared moment prompts a conversation between the sharer and two of her networked friends in a total of thirteen follow-up comments where the negative stance is negotiated and sharers are re-oriented to a positive stance that involves emotional restraint in line with master discourses of public mourning in Western contexts.

In Moment 4, Sharon selects the occasion of an official ceremony to re-entextualize aspects of her first tribute, reframing the expression of personal feelings and her commitment to continued interaction with David (and God).

MOMENT 4

- 1 I ended up not being able to go tonight
- 2 & at first I was really upset
- 3 bc it woulda been my last night seeing you, besides the funeral.
- 4 But then I realized
- 5 that no matter how you looked tonight,
- 6 you're looking 10 times better up there with the big mann
- 7 I love you
- 8 & you & God will be hearing me in a few minutes,
- 9 bc I promised
- 10 I would talk to y'all every night.

The moment is framed as a public note of apology for not attending the visitation service and serves to reclaim visibility for the mourner and resituate her reflectively as part of the group of mourners despite her absence from one of the official ceremonies.

Subsequently, Moment 5 offers a reflective evaluation of the sharer's posting activity on the memorial wall that gets semiotized as a space of activity through the deictic "here" (l.3). The temporal deictic expression "it's been a while" in line 3 anchors the

post in previous tellings and serves as a prompt for publicly reaffirming the sharer's continued commitment to David's remembrance (l. 4: "I still talk to you every night"; l. 6.: "you're still on my mind everyday"). The sense of everydayness and projection of friendliness is underlined in this shared moment by the use of temporal and spatial deixis articulated via combined deictics, "every night"(l.4), "everyday" (l.6), "everywhere" (l.9) that encode repeated action in a futurate present.

MOMENT 5

1 Well Davey,
 2 its been a while
 3 that I've posted on here.
 4 But I still talk to you every night
 5 before I go to sleep.
 6 You're still on my mind everyday.
 7 I still wear my bracelet
 8 & the blue & orange ribbons are still hanging on my purse.
 9 So everywhere I go,
 10 you're going with me
 11 love youu,
 12 baby!

In Moment 5 explicit references to God are missing as Sharon styles the post in an informal conversational style with David as the sole addressee. The sharer is seen to orient away from conventional expressions of mourning lodged in Christian Baptist styles of mourning and turns instead to the emerging norms of mourning among the peer group of mourners: by invoking two of the memorial items, namely the "bracelet" and the "blue & yellow ribbons", she aligns herself more directly to the group of mourners, further emblemizing circulating memorial items as bonding icons and icons of mourning.

Finally, moments 7 and 8 are classified as 'stopping-by' posts, since they are not prompted by a key memorial event or calendar important date. Both moments feature aspects of the informal style featured in previous posts. In each of the shared moments, the focus on the self extends to include a friend (or friends) who are presented as joint participants in acts of everyday remembrance. By sharing moments of joint remembrance, the sharer positions herself as a member of a group of mourners and as witness to the impact of the dead to the lives of those left behind.

MOMENT 7

1 Hey babyyy!
 2 I was at church tonight,
 3 & a song came on
 4 & it reminded me of you.
 5 Me & XXXXXX couldn't help
 6 but smile
 7 when we heard it!

8 I miss you so much.
 9 you're still
 10 & always will be impacting soo many people.
 11 I love you sooo much!
 12 ♥♥

In moment 8 the sharer recounts a moment of tension regarding the memorial bracelets, thus extending their affective value from an index of remembrance to a keepsake that brings luck to anyone who's wearing it and forging links between memorialization, remembrance and the positive impact of the dead upon the living.

MOMENT 8

1 Hey babyyy.
 2 Today, we were on the mats at cheerleading
 3 & we were talking about our competition Saturday.
 4 When you enter the competition mat,
 5 you're not allowed to wear ANY jewelry.
 6 So mrs XXXX says
 7 "I'm sorry to say it,
 8 but the Davey bracelets have to come off
 9 while you're competing"
 10 all of us got this "oh no, that aint happenin" look on our face.
 11 When we wear our davey bracelets,
 12 everything goes right.
 13 Its safe the say
 14 that the XXXX high cheerleaders have their own guardian angel.
 15 So please just keep workin your magic
 16 as we take the floor during our competition Saturday!
 17 I love
 18 & miss you more than ever

The extension of remembrance to social fields of activity (e.g. church, sports centre) in Moments 7 and 8 is realised by the linguistic encoding of space via nouns that denote specific locales of activity. The use of deictics that anchor activity to specific locales and that extends the deictic field to broader social fields was not attested in earlier posts and suggests a shift in the sharer's discursive and affective trajectory of sharing moments of mourning online. To be more specific, the sharer uses time and place deixis to anchor her telling in time and place via the construction of a short orientation section introducing the main characters, point in time and place and framing the telling of a story. This type of spatiotemporal anchoring allows the sharer to shift her footing from that of a teller reporting highly notable events, such as the tragic event of death (M1) or the visitation (M3) to that of a teller and sharer of moments from her own and her peers' personal experience.

The above discussion of sharing practices foregrounds that in each moment, the sharer picks up sections of her audience seeking to align with it in different types of moral stances for a range of purposes, e.g. to save face by demonstrating she is in control of her emotions (M1), to elicit sympathy (M2), to make excuses (M4, M5) or to increase visibility of herself among the group of mourners (M7, M8). Furthermore, each shared moment constitutes part of a careful, self-monitored and highly reflexive writing activity that results in (i) representations of the deceased as loved and worthy to be remembered, (ii) projections of the friendly relationship between the sharer and the deceased evident in the reported feelings of distress and also (iii) self-presentations of the sharer as mourner that align the sharer to religious master discourses about the significance of death as well as to peer-group norms about the significance of remembrance. By doing so, the sharer participates in the circulation of signs, texts, and discourses on the memorial wall that connects those who had known the dead in an ambient 'embrace' and gives rise to what Papacharissi (2015) terms *affective publics* that is people networked around flows of sentiment and feelings of engagement.

The next section turns to the discussion of the uses of deictic choices as affective positioning resources in the communicative practice of public mourning online.

3.3 Time and space deixis as affective positioning resources: static and dynamic framings

In the previous section, it was suggested that the entextualization of mourning in shared moments on the memorial wall is based on the mobilization of a set of resources, including deixis, whereby the sharer positions herself as mourner entering in different types of relationships with the networked audience, the dead and her mutable self. In this section, attention is directed more specifically to the role of deixis in the semiotic and discursive organization of public mourning online.

The description of deictic reference in section 3.2 indicated that the sharer draws on static and dynamic spatiotemporal deixis. Static deixis is used to point to entities, e.g. *here* (space), *today*, *tonight* (time). Dynamic deictics, on the other hand, point at developments in the course of time (*every night*, *everyday*). Such spatiotemporal construals are based on the varied selection of past, present, or future events as significant and hence entextualizable moments for sharing.

In Moments 1 & 3, in particular, the sharer's deictic choices construe the situation and the telling in static terms, encoding temporal deixis in the form of deictic punctual past or present time ("last night", "tonight") that establish pivot events as the deictic centres to which each moment can be related to meaningfully. In Moment 1 "last night at 10:18" refers back to the exact time of death, while in Moment 3 "tonight" refers back to the ceremonial event of the visitation. The use of static temporal points of reference anchors events in time and renders them reportable to an audience. At the same time, temporal anchoring to key events and traditional death-related ceremonies positions the sharer as an active participant in the community of mourners, rather than as a passive onlooker or 'grief tourist'.

Turning to spatial deixis, shared moments feature binary distinctions of space that separate the *here* and *not-here* (or “up there”). Such contrastive framings of space feature alongside static temporal framings described above and construct the sharer as (physically) separate from the dead (*I – you*) and proximal to the living (*us*). The physical separation between the sharer and the dead locates the sharer in the social role of mourner bidding farewell and prompts interaction with the dead via conventional expressions of mourning that enact separation through ritual expressions and greetings of farewell (e.g. M1: “You should be here with us”, “Fly high”).

The organization of mourning on the basis of static construals of time and space does not remain constant across the discursive trajectory of the sharer. In fact, the selection of combined temporal deictics (“every night”; “everyday”) offers a dynamic, rather than static construal of the situation, pointing to repeated (inter) action in a futurate present. Such dynamic construals are accompanied by combined deictics of space (“everywhere”). Dynamic frames of time and space prompt shifts from greetings of farewell to ordinary greetings of separation (M5: “love you baby”) and serve to locate the sharer among a group of mourners committed to continued, everyday remembrance.

In other words, the sharer’s stance to the event of death is marked by contrastive static frames that anchor death as fact (e.g. M1, l.8: “last night at 10:18 we lost the most special angel ever given to us”) versus more dynamic and fluid frames that construe death in terms of everyday life (e.g. M5, l.6: “So everywhere I go, you’re going with me”). Along the same lines, the dead is constructed either as distal via the spatial differentiation of the location of the sharer from that of the deceased or as proximal and ‘high focus’, even though the deceased is evidently off-scene and perceptually inaccessible.

The spatiotemporal frames identified in the memorial group under study are related to two key orientations to socially recognizable forms of mourning that shape individual mourner identities: the first one is sharers’ orientation to Christian Baptist master discourses and the seeking of a spiritual relationship to the dead mediated by God. The second type of orientation involves a concern with peer-group norms for continued interaction mediated by the mourner’s self-presentations and increased visibility online. Each sharer negotiates the two types of orientations in different ways adapting them to their projected place in the religious community and the peer group and participates in the production of routinized forms of mourning mediated by digital performances of self that afford increased opportunities for the visibility of the individual mourner in the group.

To conclude, based on the remarks in this section the following general pattern about trajectories of the discursive representation of public mourning online is suggested:

- proximity to the time of the event of death is associated with spatiotemporal frames of *distancing* from death and the dead through which the boundaries between the living and the dead are discursively articulated.

- distance from the time of the event of death is associated with spatiotemporal frames of *proximity* to the dead through which continued bonds with the dead are discursively constructed.

The above insights point to the multifaceted and mutable identity of the mourner in the context of digital public mourning. Shifts to different mourning roles helps sharers to move from relatively disempowered positions where they have no control over the irrevocable fact of death and the breaking of their bond with the dead to relatively empowered positions where they are seen to regain some sense of control over the recovery of their lost bond.

4. Conclusion

The present article analyzed significant moments shared on a Facebook memorial group site and presented key aspects of patterned semiotic and discursive activity shaping and shaped by the representation of death and mourning online.

The analysis of shared moments broadcast by a single user illustrated the highly reflexive style of writing activity typical of the memorial wall whereby sharers represent the dead as worthy to be remembered based on projections of friendliness and ongoing post-mortem sociality. (Re)entextualizations of mourning were said to be acts of alignment of the sharer to the networked audience via the projection of different types of moral stances that fulfill a range of purposes, as for instance to save face by demonstrating control over emotions, to elicit sympathy, to make excuses or to increase visibility of sharers among a group of mourners. Sharing moments of mourning online was also said to be an act of identity constructing representations of the sharer as an entitled, sincere, or expert mourner who shifts from positions of relative disempowerment and lack of control to positions of empowerment and a sense of control in the context of routinized mourning activities.

In the analysis of shared moments, time and space deixis were found to play a key role as affective positioning resources that help to organize the personal and social experience of mourning and contribute to the self-representation of the sharer as mourner. Articulating space and time deixis in shared moments of mourning was shown to involve different images of death (ie. as contrasted to life or as embedded in the everyday) and the dead (ie. as separate from the living or as integrated in everyday activities as a 'guardian angel' or 'magic agent'). Such frames index socially determined frames featuring in religious or peer-group master discourses about death and the afterlife and ground mourners in specific social roles as mourners: the sharer is seen to reaffirm her religious identity at the same time as projecting her identity as a member of a peer group of mourners. Both social roles make part of the sharer's performed identity that transforms her from a disempowered, non-agentive position to that of an empowered, active role as a member of a peer-group of mourners in (partial) control of the dead's continued presence.

To conclude, in online memorials the dead becomes an empty vessel to whom mourners pour their preoccupations whatever they may be, producing routinized

forms of mourning mediated by their self-presentation. In other words, the mourner gains centre-stage in continued projections of affect and post-mortem sociality that point to the complexity of the individual and social experience of mourning worthy of further discussion in the field of death online. Furthermore, analytic attention to time and space deixis in online environments is worthy of empirical study as it opens a window to the study of digital relationality. Further empirical research across different types of groups could shed light on different uses of deixis for the emergence of different epistemic and affective effects and trajectories that would help foreground the important role of sharing practices in constructing social and affective life worlds.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1. Summary of Sharon's trajectory shared moments

Moment No	Date of post	Post Sequence No	Thread	Total Number of Lines	Word Count	No of Likes	No of follow-up comments
1	May 10	18	Death Reactions	20 lines	135	32	0
2	May 10	26	Death Reactions	3 lines	18	20	9
3	May 11	50	Death Reactions	Picture	-	35	1
4	May 12	97	Funeral Services	10 lines	75	16	0
5	May 13	134	Funeral Services	Picture	-	40	0
6	June 18	248	N/A	12 lines	58	5	0
7	July 26	278	N/A	12 lines	50	12	0
8	October 10	348	N/A	18 lines	112	35	2