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"Everybody goes down": Metaphors, Stories, and Simulations in Conversations

L. David Ritchie

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[Metaphor and Symbol, 25](#), 123-143.

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Abstract

Recent work has shown that many problematic aspects of metaphor use and comprehension can be resolved through an account that includes both relevance and perceptual simulation. It has also been shown that metaphors often imply stories, and that stories are often metaphorical. Previous research on narratives has focused primarily on stories that appear either in formal literature or in structured interviews; this essay focuses on stories that occur as an integral part of conversation. It extends recent work on metaphor comprehension to show how use and comprehension of stories in natural, informal conversations can be usefully be analyzed in terms of perceptual simulations. Conversely, it extends previous work on story-telling to reveal the metaphorical element in many stories, and to emphasize the social (bonding through shared enjoyment) as well as informative and persuasive functions of story-telling.

Everybody goes down: Metaphors, Stories, and Simulations

Do you want the police officers to go and *handle* that kind of situation *with kiddie gloves*? ... *whisper poetry to them*? The momma and daddy, they *sweet talk* you they.. you know once you're *outside of their domain*, the society *lets you know*.. this is what's not gonna be tolerated... it's like someone in a boat and saying, Well look I'm just gonna *put a hole in the boat* so I can *get me some water*. No, *everybody goes down. Everybody goes down.*

Metaphors often imply stories, and idiomatic metaphors, often called “*dead*” metaphors, can readily be “*revived*” by transforming them and developing the implied story line (Cameron, 2007; Ritchie, 2008a; 2009; Ritchie & Schell, 2009). The example quoted previously appeared in a conversation among a group of four African-American men about public safety and police-community relations¹. The speaker, Willard, told this brief story in response to a previous speaker's criticism of the rough way police officers sometimes handle suspects: The story was part of an extended critique of what Willard regards as lax discipline in the community. This passage began with an openly sarcastic imaginary story about how officers *might* treat youthful offenders, followed by a brief story about the contrast between indulgent parents and the “*outside world*.” Willard then introduced an allegorical story (Gibbs, 1999) developed by transforming the familiar metaphorical idiom, “*we're all in the same boat*” to demonstrate how the attitudes he criticized endanger not just the young people involved, but the entire community.

If a metaphor is familiar to hearers it may be processed primarily by way of semantic links to other words and phrases. Willard's phrase “*sweet talk*” is a standard idiom for “utterances that include praise but not criticism,” and it is conceivable that the other participants understood his comment simply by substituting a phrase like “praise

¹ This conversation was organized and facilitated by Danny Doncan and Sheryl Peil as part of an investigation of how people construct and express views about these topics in ordinary informal talk. Methods of data gathering and analysis are discussed in detail in the next section.

you and fail to criticize you” in place of Willard’s “*sweet* talk you.” However previous work (e.g. Gibbs, 2006; Ritchie, 2008b; 2009) has shown that metaphors often activate perceptual simulations based on associated schemas. If the context does not warrant deeper processing, metaphors may be processed solely through amodal propositions and semantic links (Barsalou, 2007), but deeper processing will involve perceptual simulations, including simulations of external perceptions as well as internal physiological and cognitive states (interoception and introspection). In this essay I extend previous work on adaptation and transformation of metaphors in ordinary conversations (Cameron, 2007; Ritchie, 2008a, 2009) and show how this approach can be usefully extended to stories as well as metaphors. I will further claim that both metaphor theory and theories of story-telling are strengthened by this linkage.

Method.

The conversations from which the examples discussed herein are drawn occurred among groups of 4-6 socially homogeneous people who knew each other at least informally prior to the conversation (Gamson, 1992; Sasson, 1995), as part of a broader study of how people think and talk about issues related to public safety. Participants were recruited by students in advanced seminars or by paid research assistants, who acted as facilitators, but intervened only when necessary to keep the conversation on relevant topics. Conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis, with names changed and all potentially identifying information removed, then stories, metaphors, and potential activation of perceptual simulations were identified according to criteria discussed in the following sub-sections.

Stories. Story-telling is universal, perhaps the dominant form of discourse (Bruner, 2002; Graesser et al., 2002); we tell many stories every day (Abbott, 2008; Gerrig, 1993). Schank and Abelson (1995) claim that “virtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences” (p. 1), and “search in human memory is a search for stories” (Schank & Abelson, 1995, p. 3). Story-telling is apparently a central part of how we organize both our social interactions and our understanding of the world, and theoretical attention to *literary* story-telling dates back at least as far as Aristotle. However, until quite recently conversational story-telling has been largely ignored or discounted in the social sciences (Brock *et al*, 2002; Harris-Lacewell, 2004; Schank & Abelson, 1995). Research on story-telling, in linguistics as well as psychology, has focused primarily on artful story-telling in entertainment and instructional media (Abbott, 2008; Gerrig, 1993; Green et al., 2002) or on stories elicited from research participants through structured interviews (Gee, 1991; Riessman, 2008).

In this essay, I focus primarily on stories that occur within unstructured social interactions, conversations among peers about topics that are of interest to them. I examine story-telling as simultaneously *cognitive* and *social-interactive*, consistent with Cameron's (2007) approach to metaphor use and understanding. Story-telling is cognitive inasmuch as both the telling of the story and its comprehension are shaped by the cognitive processes of speakers and hearers. It is social-interactive inasmuch as the processes of selecting, telling, and comprehending stories both depends on and shapes the complex contexts of the conversations in which they occur (Harris-Lacewell, 2004). Story-telling is also social-interactive in the sense that it is often accomplished collaboratively; I will discuss several examples of collaborative story-telling.

Previous work (Ritchie, 2008a; 2009; Ritchie & Schell, 2009) has shown that stories often include metaphors, metaphors often imply stories, and stories frequently serve as metaphors. In this essay I develop those insights more systematically, and show how an account that merges Relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1996; Wilson & Sperber, 2004) and Perceptual Simulation (Barsalou, 2007; Gibbs, 2006) can be fruitfully applied to metaphorical stories and metaphors within stories, and more generally to the use and comprehension of stories in ordinary conversations.

What is a story? Researchers define *story* and *narrative* more or less broadly, depending on their purposes. Schank and Berman (2002, p. 288) define story as “a structured, coherent retelling of an experience or a fictional account of an experience. A satisfying story will include... themes, goals, plans, expectations, expectation failures (or obstacles), and perhaps, explanations or solutions.” Bruner (2002, p. 18) asserts that “narrative in all its forms is a dialectic between what was expected and what came to pass. For there to be a story, something unforeseen must happen.” Abbott (2008, p. 13) proposes a much simpler and more inclusive definition: “Narrative is the representation of an event or a series of events.” As Schank and Abelson (1995; see also Gerrig, 1993) point out, many individual words and phrases have the capacity to remind us of a story; depending on the context they may activate a detailed experience of the story: common examples include “9/11,” “Judas’s kiss,” “Gettysburg,” “Abu Graib,” “first date.”

I will use the term *story* broadly, as a reference to *any* “representation of an event or a series of events,” whether or not it satisfies Bruner’s criterion that “something unforeseen must happen.” I will use *narrative* or *extended narrative* to refer to a story that has been intentionally (or artfully) constructed, and satisfies the criteria of a minimal

plot, including a problem, expected resolution, difficulty or surprise, and actual resolution. I will use *brief story* or *simple story* to refer to a representation of an event or sequence of events with no rhetorical or narrative embellishment. An example of a brief story from one of the public safety conversations: “My family, in the house they use to live in, we got robbed like two or three times” (Manuela, Latino Group). I will refer to a word or phrase that identifies or activates a story as a *story index*. An example of a story index from another of the public safety conversations (among four African-American males) is “*Kendra*,” which refers to an incident in which a young African-American woman by that name was shot and killed by police officers during a routine traffic stop, an incident that was well-known to all participants in the conversation. Consistent with this broad definition, I identify any utterance that describes or references a readily-identified sequence of events as a *story*, and any utterance that apparently functions to remind hearers of a known story (sequence of events), whether fictional or actual, as a *story index*.

Metaphors. Semino (2008, p. 1) defines “metaphor” as “the phenomenon whereby we talk and, potentially, think about something in terms of something else.” Thus, when using an idiom like “icy stare,” we think of an unfriendly expression in terms of “frozen water.” Consistent with this definition, I followed a procedure for identifying utterances as metaphorical based on the procedures outlined by the Pragglejaz Group (2007; Cameron, 2006; Semino, 2008). In brief, determine the meaning of the lexical unit in context, and if the lexical unit has a more basic contemporary meaning that can be clearly distinguished from and understood in comparison with the meaning in context, the word or phrase is identified as metaphorical.

Perceptual simulation. Barsalou (2007) claims that perceptual simulation is the primary mode of cognition. As we process language we experience simulated perceptions of internal physiological states (interoception) and cognitive states (introspection) as well as simulations of emotional responses and external perceptions such as vision, hearing, touch, etc. Consistent with this view, Oatley (2002, p. 41) states that “Fiction is a kind of simulation... that runs on minds rather than on computers...(its) purpose is to understand complex matters, in this case people, their actions, and their interactions.”

Metaphors can be processed either by way of semantic or propositional connections, as when they are treated as semantic units, or by way of perceptual simulations, when the context justifies greater processing effort (Ritchie, 2006; 2008b). Stories are often metaphorical and, conversely, metaphors often imply a narrative (Ritchie, 2008a; Ritchie & Schell, 2008). Although the view that metaphor processing involves perceptual simulations is supported by extensive research findings (for reviews see Gibbs, 1994; 2006; 2009), it is difficult if not impossible to determine what simulations a hearer or reader actually experiences in a particular interaction during actual discourse. Similarly, it is often difficult or impossible to determine whether any individual processes a phrase as metaphorical, or recognizes a sequence of utterances as a story; in each case, evidence can be obtained by other evidence in the transcript itself, as well as from evidence in other research, but the analysis of metaphors and story-telling in naturally-occurring communication has an unavoidably interpretive quality that can never be fully overcome.

The analytic approach used here was to identify stories and metaphors, based on the criteria discussed above, then to identify the perceptual simulations that are likely to be activated in a typical hearer based on evidence in the transcript itself, including preceding and subsequent interactions among participants. These interpretations were then subjected to critical examination for potential disconfirming evidence, for example evidence that a participant may not have processed an utterance sufficiently to recognize potential metaphors and stories or to form perceptual simulations from these metaphors and stories. In all cases, the metaphors, stories, and associated perceptual simulations are analyzed and discussed within the broader context of the conversation in which they appear and the other metaphors and stories that appear in the same conversation (Cameron, 2007; Harris-Lacewell, 2004). Finally, the entire analysis is guided and constrained by the findings of experimental research (Gibbs, 2006; 2009; Ritchie, 2006).

In the following sections, I will discuss eight stories, representing a range of story types and communicative intentions, drawn from three very different types of conversation. Two of the conversations have strong political overtones: The first conversation, among a group of four middle-aged African-American men, is the most "serious" and disputatious; the third conversation, among a group of four white "new left" political activists, is also strongly political, but the participants share a common ideological viewpoint and the tone is light and humorous throughout. The second conversation, among a group of four Latino college students, focuses more on shared cultural and social concerns, and includes both serious and humorous passages, with no apparent disputation or disagreement among participants. In all three conversations, participants knew each other in advance and were on friendly terms, and in all three

conversations participants are culturally and socially homogeneous, so a high level of common ground can be assumed. Stories were selected from these three conversations to illustrate a wide range of story types, including extended narratives, collaboratively produced narratives, brief stories, and stories that are merely indexed by reference to a name or event; some are based on actual events, some are totally fictitious, and some blend actual events experienced separately by multiple speakers into a single generic story.

Results.

"Put a hole in the boat so as to get me some water."

The metaphorical story quoted at the beginning of this essay appeared in the context of a conversation with powerful emotional as well as political implications, so listeners were likely to be motivated to process the speaker's language at a deep level. Two of the participants, Jasper and George, tend toward what Harris-Lacewell (2004) describes as a "nationalist" ideology, marked by strong ethnic identity, a negative attitude toward whites, belief in black self-reliance, and a rejection of individualized boot-strap philosophy. Willard tends toward a "conservative" ideology, marked by a less negative view of whites and a strong belief in individual responsibility and a boot-strap approach to self-improvement. The fourth participant, Bob, seems to waver between these extremes. Just before Willard told the "*hole in the boat*" story, Jasper and George had expressed strong anger about police use of force against young black men who were merely suspected of a possible crime; Willard's story is presented as a refutation or at least qualification of this position.

“*Sweet talk*” is associated with other contexts in which the idiom is used (sexual seduction and other persuasion attempts) as well as with simulations of the taste of sweetened foods; this is an example of a “*layered metaphor*,” in which the metaphor vehicle is itself metaphorical. Both sets of perceptual simulations contrast with the sarcasm conveyed by Willard’s vocal tone and by two other metaphors he used immediately before “*sweet talk*,” when he asked, “Do you want the police officers to go and *handle* that kind of situation *with kiddie gloves*? ... *whisper poetry to them*?”

“*Handle with kiddie gloves*” is an interesting variation on the standard “*handle with kid gloves*.” The standard form of the idiomatic metaphor refers to gloves made of a fine, soft leather and implies handling an extremely fragile object, hence dealing with a “*delicate*” situation. By changing “*kid*” to “*kiddie*,” Willard blended this standard metaphor with an idiom implying childishness, thereby exaggerating and implicitly mocking the implied claim that young people who run afoul of the police are “*fragile*.” The schemas and simulations activated by this blend were reinforced by Willard’s second mocking metaphor, “*whisper poetry to them*.” Again, by transforming the more idiomatic “*read poetry to them*” and combining it with “*whisper*,” which figures in other familiar idioms such as ““*whisper sweet nothings*,” echoing the sarcastically transformed “*sweet talk*,” Willard created a blend that activates vivid sensory and emotional simulations, simulations that contrast strongly with his characterization (immediately following the quoted passage) of the essence of law enforcement as “break things and kill people.” (For detailed discussion of creative transformation of language see Carter, 2004; Langlotz, 2006; Ritchie & Dyhouse, 2008).

Willard then developed the idiomatic metaphor “*we’re all in the same boat*” as an allegorical story about failing to discipline children and allowing them to engage in anti-social acts. This story, although quite brief, was told in a fresh and novel way that has a strong potential to activate action sequences, along with visual and emotional simulations that reinforced his claim that criminal behavior endangers the entire community. By quoting the hypothetical anti-social adolescent as saying, “Well look I’m just gonna *put a hole in the boat* so I can *get me some water*,” Willard presented anti-social behavior in a powerful set of visual and emotional simulations that underscored his conclusion, still expressed within the metaphorical frame and repeated for emphasis, “No, *everybody goes down. Everybody goes down.*” In addition to its reference to a sinking boat, “*go down*” is a common street idiom for being killed or seriously wounded, also used in the form “*take down*” for being arrested. It is likely that these associations were also activated for the listeners, along with simulations of sinking beneath the surface of water, and intended by Willard to be activated. Willard then drew all of these strands together with a strong rejection of much of what had gone before, asserting that “any type of *blanket* condemnation of the police, or *blanket* condemnation of society.. I don’t think is uh.. is justifiable... it’s not even rational.”

In her research on former adversaries, Cameron (2007) has shown how transformation of familiar metaphorical idioms can provide a vehicle for overcoming alterity and creating a community of understanding between two people representing very different perspectives. Willard's transformation of a familiar idiom and blending it with other idioms (“*go down*” as part of “*in the same boat*” blended with “*be arrested or killed*”) serves a different purpose; by establishing a forceful ironic contrast to an

alternative view in which criminal behavior is excused or justified, he indirectly contradicted previous statements by the other men, but by using street idioms familiar to all he simultaneously asserted and reinforced their common identity as African-American males (Harris-Lacewell, 2004).

Similarly, Gibbs (1999) has shown that allegory is often used to neutralize implied social criticism and minimize potential conflict. In contrast, Willard's allegorical use of a transformed metaphor here seems to emphasize and strengthen his disagreement with the exculpatory attitude of previous speakers toward young males' anti-social behavior, by emphasizing the way that behavior negatively impacts the entire community. This is an apparent expression of "moral conservatism," one of the primary ideological positions in African American political talk discussed by Harris-Lacewell, 2004).

Simulations in non-metaphorical stories.

Oatley (2002, p. 41) argues that "Fiction is a kind of simulation... that runs on minds rather than on computers...(its) purpose is to understand complex matters, in this case people, their actions, and their interactions." Sometimes stories are told merely to illustrate a propositional claim, but they are often told in a way that enables and stimulates listeners to *experience*, i.e., to simulate, the sequence of events with its attendant perceptions and emotions. Oatley referred to *fiction*, but his point applies to stories that are based on and presented as factual just as well. In this section I will discuss two stories of this type, both from the same conversation from which Willard's metaphorical (and fictional) story was taken.

Tony Stevens and Kendra James. Early in the conversation among the African-American men, described in the preceding, another participant, George, told a story that would qualify as a complete narrative under most definitions (see, e.g., Bruner, 2002, p. 18; Schank & Berman, 2002, p. 288): It has characters, location, and a plot that begins with a problem or challenge, proceeds to an attempted resolution, followed by a reversal, final resolution, and a coda explaining the significance of the story.

“Tony Stevens was ex-Marine, Vietnam era. He had a guy came in. Robbed a gas station. Tony grabbed the guy and held him down. The police came in. In spite of what everybody in the surrounding area was telling them, the police *jumped on* Tony, and choked him to death. Why? The perpetrator was white and Tony was black. And this was a detective that did it. This was when Potter was chief of police. There are certain *patterns* that happen.”

The Tony Stevens narrative can be broken down into a series of shorter stories, each of which has the potential to activate a more or less detailed action sequence simulation, accompanied by simulations of muscular activation and visceral sensations, so that the narrative unfolds as a sequence of action sequences: a guy came in after robbing a gas station. / Tony grabbed the guy and held him down. / The police came in. / everybody present told the police that the white guy was the perpetrator, not Tony / the police *jumped on* Tony / [the police] choked Tony to death.

When George began the story, several schemas were active in the mutual cognitive environment (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) of the participants. They all were aware that they were engaged in a conversation about police-community relationships, and that the immediately preceding sequence of utterances had included mention of police violence and “*institutional racism*.” The simulations activated by the brief stories that comprise the longer narrative were relevant in these contexts, and part of their meaning in the context was the way they contributed to the development of that common

understanding. But other contexts were also very likely activated in the mutual cognitive environment, and these also contributed to the meaning.

The initial statement, “Tony Stevens was ex-Marine, Vietnam era,” is not part of the story as such, but it activates two schemas that are important to the meaning. First, “*ex-Marine*” activates the *Marine* schema with its associations (many of which are likely to have been experienced as perceptual simulations) of physical hardiness, strength, discipline, and fighting spirit. But additionally, this opening phrase also activates emotion simulations associated with a *service to country* schema, which became part of the person schema associated with Tony Stevens, set up expectations for how the story would turn out, and thereby increased the surprise created by the actual outcome, exactly the opposite of how police officers would be expected to treat a veteran, possibly a war hero. (The *service to country* schema is an expression of another of the ideological themes discussed by Harris-Lacewell, moral appeals to the American promise.)

The coda included several elements which, although also separated from the story itself, activated or rather strengthened the activation of other elements of common ground in a way that connected them to previously activated schemas and builds meaning. First, identifying the race of Tony and the perpetrator provided a topic-relevant explanation for the outcome of the story (and justification for telling the story here). It also strengthened the activation of the participants’ awareness of their common identity as African-American, an identity they share with Tony Stevens, and thereby implicated them in the outcome of the story, as possible future victims. (This implication was developed later in the conversation by Bob, in a long narrative about feeling vulnerable whenever he sees a police car drive past.) Adding the fact that Tony was killed by a detective (not by a

patrolman) implicated police bureau leadership in the tragic events, a topic that was discussed at length in several other passages. The final sentence, “there are certain *patterns* that happen,” activated a visual metaphor suggesting both that the connection among these facts and events is self-evident and that it is similar to other events that have happened and will happen in the future.

In contrast to this fully-developed (if brief) narrative, a thematically similar story was merely referenced by Bob, another participant in the same conversation: “Well it has happened here too. Kendra who got shot over there on.. on the bridge by a police officer.” A few years prior to this conversation, Kendra James, an unarmed young black woman suspected of narcotics possession was shot and killed by police officers during a routine traffic stop. The incident was in the news for several months, and led to both a public inquest and a quasi-informal meeting between police and city officials and members of the community. Thus, mere mention of “Kendra” would suffice to activate the full story, well-known to all of the participants, including detailed simulations not merely of the action sequence that led to her death but also of the subsequent community meetings, along with simulations of the sights, sounds, and emotions the participants experienced at the time.

As participants in this conversation pointed out in another passage, the African-American community in Portland is not large; it is very likely that the story of Tony Stevens was known to all of the participants in as much detail as the story of the Kendra James shooting. This raises another question: Why did George feel justified in providing details that were already well-known to all the hearers? Telling a well-known story at

this level of detail is itself an ostensive act², which carries the implication that it is of sufficient importance to merit listeners' attention. The final statement about "*patterns that happen*" provides at least part of the explanation: The details George supplied were precisely the details needed to describe and demonstrate a *pattern* of recurrent events, as his coda made clear. Other aspects of the story, which may also have been well-known to all participants, were not relevant to this purpose, even if (as is likely), the participants experienced simulations of these aspects. The simulations activated by the story, both action-sequence and emotion simulations, supplement and strengthen previously-activated narratives and increase the salience or level of activation of common knowledge about the violent actions of police officers as well as the shared awareness of their identities as African-Americans, common with each other and with Tony Stevens and Kendra James. The Tony Stevens story stands as a metonymic reference to a recurrent pattern that is offered as an example relevant to the broader topic of the conversation, as well as to the participants' shared ethnic identity. The story is not intended to contribute new information or even to introduce a new perspective on known information. Rather, it raises the salience to all participants of information that is fully known to all, and by doing so implies relevance connections of this previously well-known information to the current topic of conversation. By reiterating the most emotionally charged aspects of the Tony Stevens story, George also activated strong shared emotions that were relevant both to the topic of the conversation and to their shared identity as African-American men.

Given the presence of two college student research assistants, a black male and a white female, it is also likely that to some extent these stories were produced and related for the benefit of the outsiders, what Harris-Lacewell calls "conjured conversations, ... a

² An act that calls attention to itself and thus justifies further processing (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

direct artifact of the research presence." However, the manner in which both stories are woven into the stream of on-going talk, and the brevity of the allusion to "Kendra," support the claim that they represent the forms of authentic informal talk that these men produce in their ordinary social interactions. This claim is also supported by the thematic similarity of these stories to stories reported by Harris-Lacewell (2004, previously cited).

The Pepper Spray Mugging: Story-telling with back-channel support.

A different example of extended narration occurred early in another conversation in this series, among four Latino college students:

Manuela: When I was living in the uh Northwest³ near umm Emanuel hospital umm, like it was like two summers ago actually umm... one time I was going to school in the morning and taking the streetcar and I was walking minding my own business and there was this umm.. this woman who was just.. crossed the street to where I was walking and she pepper-sprayed me and tried to steal my wallet.

Eduardo: "What!?"

Pena: "Wow!"

Manuela: Yeah and of course I *freaked out*. Um thankfully I got some help and the woman didn't take my purse. The hospital was just like the next block away, there was this man who helped me, who took me to the emergency room. I remember a cop came and later and asked me, how tall is she? What was her race? What she looked liked? And I gave him the details and um and I never *heard* anything, if they caught her, or if this had happened before in that area. Cuz I never really think because it was a *nice* neighborhood. Umm and heard never anything bad or people get assaulted or cars being broken in.

This narrative, like the Tony Stevens narrative, combined several briefer stories into a single complex narration: "I was walking... I was living" anchored the story in time and space. The pepper spraying, being taken to the hospital, and being interviewed by the police linked together to constitute the main narrative. "I never *heard* anything" provided a transition back to a theme that occurred repeatedly in this conversation, the perception that police often fail to take adequate action to solve crimes. This passage also provides a

³ Portland is divided into five sectors, North, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest; each sector has a particular character, and each sector is in turn composed of several relatively self-contained neighborhoods, most of them centered around unique neighborhood shopping districts.

good example of the use of back-channel vocalizations to confirm that listeners are experiencing the relevant simulations, in particular the appropriate emotional simulations.

The immediate relevance was provided by the facilitator's opening question, whether any of the participants had any recent experience with the police, and two other participants' less detailed stories about burglaries that were not solved by the police: A general (and culturally shared) "crime victim" schema was already salient and connected with the overall topic of the conversation. The opening narrative segment ("I was living in the Northwest... walking, minding my own business") activated a general simulation of *a normal morning*; most of the hearers were familiar with the neighborhood to which she referred, in the close-in section of Northwest Portland, and would readily "see" Manuela walking along the sidewalk; they might even have experienced simulations of themselves in the action sequence. This action sequence included expectations of normality that were contradicted by the phrase "she pepper-sprayed me and tried to steal my wallet," which activated detailed action, emotion, and probably visceral perceptions. The back-channel exclamations assured Manuela that her listeners had experienced these simulations, they were "*with her*" in the story, having been "*transported into the story world*" (Gerrig, 1993; Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000; 2002).

The second phase of the story, about Manuela's interview with the police officer and the fact that she never heard anything more, also contradicted expectations set up by the violent emotions activated by the initial phase of the story (and strengthened by the idiomatic "*I freaked out*"). This contradiction was itself relevant to other stories that had just been discussed, about police failure to catch burglars and car thieves, and contributed to a characterization, in the mutual cognitive space (common ground), of police as

disengaged and incompetent. The coda, “it was a *nice* neighborhood,” separated the powerful emotional and action-sequence simulations from the context of the Northwest Portland neighborhood as a community, and thus serves to restrict the meaning of the story⁴. However, the story remained connected, not merely to the topic of this segment of the conversation (the role of police and their frequent inability to fulfill the expectations of this role) but also to the identity of Manuela within the group.

More than 20 minutes later, the pepper spray story was brought up again in a light-hearted, joking way that allowed Manuela to down-play its emotional importance and decrease the strength of its connection to her personal identity. In a discussion of the difficulties faced by police officers, and some of the strategies they use to negotiate their social roles, Eduardo compared the experience of police officers to our own everyday experiences:

Eduardo: Just like us we have good days and bad days, right. Like good days, good things happens some days, sometimes you are not getting your house *broken into* (Laughs)

Manuela: Or assaulted (Laughs)

Eduardo: Or assaulted (Both Eduardo and Manuela are laughing) with the hand Mace and stuff,

Manuela: Yeah

Eduardo: But like you know. But I bet you are pretty pissed for the rest of your day (Everyone Laughs)

Manuela: Yeah I was pissed (Laughs) of course who wouldn't be?

The humor here derived from the incongruity of counting a mere absence of traumatic incidents like being victimized by crime as a *good* day. The playful way in which Eduardo recalled these two incidents also appears to have re-activated the associated schemas and simulations while suppressing the accompanying emotions, thereby enabling Manuela to laugh about them along with the others. This could be

⁴ Manuela reinforced this separation later, when Eduardo commiserated with her “bad luck,” but she pointed out that it was her only bad experience in three years of living in the city.

accomplished only in a context in which the participants have a high degree of trust based on a strong sense of group identity, and consequently acted to affirm the underlying sense of group identity. As Schank and Abelson (1995) point out, re-telling a story in a different (in this case less traumatic) way can contribute to changing what is actually recalled. This also provides an example of a *blended story*, in which several stories are merged into a single generic story and *collaborative story-telling*, in which several participants contribute to the story.

Collaborative story-telling.

Collaborative story-telling appears frequently in casual conversation, particularly among people who know each other well and feel emotionally close to one another. A second example occurred later in the Latino group described in the previous section, when the participants turned their attention to the central importance of family in disciplining children. In a discussion of “problems people have with the police enforcement,” Eduardo brought up a group-relevant stereotype, “They are called ‘*brown people*,’” and everyone laughed. ‘*Brown people*’ activated not merely visual simulations of skin color but also a complex set of emotional simulations associated with schemas of ethnic stereotyping and bigotry: This is an example of how in-group joking about otherwise objectionable stereotypes can be used to increase the salience of group identity, and thus both promote and exhibit group solidarity. The increased salience of their shared ethnic identity led immediately to a conversation about family discipline.

Manuela: Or just people in your family that do things that they are not supposed to do. (Everyone laughed)

Pena: And even, even if they don’t do it they end up having trouble.

Manuela: No, not me - my brother. (Everyone laughed)

Pena: Even.. even if they sometimes don’t do anything they still get in trouble

Manuela: That is true.

To this point, the conversation was ambiguous as to whether the reference was to parents or police – it is possible that participants intended and understood “trouble” in a general way, to include encounters with both police and parents. Manuela’s comment, “not me - my brother” may have been intended literally, as a clarification of who in her family typically misbehaved, but the laughter suggests that it was understood by the others in terms of a familiar childhood blame-shifting script. Pena’s comment, “even if they sometimes don’t do anything they still get in trouble” may also have been intended and understood as a double reference, to Latinos (“*brown people*”) generally and to children like Manuela’s brother in particular.

Eduardo: And sometimes like the harshest like punishment is usually by your family. I don’t know if you guys..” (Pena laughs) “‘*the look,*’ (Eduardo laughs) I remember like sometimes that could be enough.. (Everyone laughs)

Eduardo’s comment that “harshest punishment is usually by your family” appears to have activated an element of the participants’ shared ethnic identity, a pride in the stereotypical strong family-orientation of Latin culture, based in part on strict parental discipline.⁵ It also appears that the participants take pride in the strictness of their parents – the humor was affectionate and appears to have activated both an identification with their own families and with each other, and identification based on childhood experiences they are able to share, part of their common ground. Carmen, the Latina facilitator, then introduced another element, also part of their common ground, their parents’ habit of using their full names as a way of indicating they were in trouble and demanding immediate attention.

⁵ This part of the conversation parallels a similar conversation among the African-American participants in the group previously described.

Carmen⁶: When your whole names get writ.. *called out* (Laugh)
 Eduardo: (Laughs) Oh yeah, you get the whole name
 Carmen: First name, middle name, and then two last names (Everyone Laughs)
 Pena: Actually I have three names (Laughs)
 Adriana: Oh wow
 Eduardo: My parents were good with it. My parents were like first name the last name and you know. With parents were first name, middle name, last name and then *the belt* right afterwards (special effects) (Everyone laughs)
 Manuela: *The belt.*
 Pena: or *the shoe.*
 Manuela: *the shoe.*
 Eduardo: I was too quick for those (Everyone laughs)
 Manuela: Its alright, I could take it. The *chanclas*⁷.
 Eduardo: Catch it and throw it back. *Give me some running time.* That's funny we were *policed* kids and now we are policed adults.

In this exchange, each participant contributed personal stories, probably associated with memories of specific incidents, to constructing a generic story that readily connected with all of their individual particular stories. The entire exchange rendered parental discipline as simultaneously comically incongruous and a matter of personal (and, probably, ethnic) identity and pride. “*The belt*” and “*the shoe*” are metonymic references to corporal punishment; Manuela specifically connected this with their ethnic heritage by switching to Spanish, “the *chanclas*.” Eduardo strengthened the comic element with his mini-story of attempting to evade parental discipline: “Catch it and throw it back. *Give me some running time.*” Reminiscing about childhood, and about the strictness of parents’ or teachers’ discipline, is frequently used to enhance group solidarity, and similar exchanges occurred in many of the conversations in this series.

The co-produced story of being spanked by a belt, a shoe, and a sandal activated detailed simulations that were simultaneously relevant in several active contexts.

⁶ This is one of the few occasions on which Carmen joined in the conversation, other than by using prompts in her role as facilitator.

⁷ Sandals. This seems even more significant because it was the only time Spanish was used in the conversation.

Eduardo's joking quip about "*brown people*" increased the activation of their shared ethnic and cultural heritage. Manuela's "not me - my brother" activated a script, familiar to all of them, of family politics, and Pena's remark that "even if they sometimes don't do anything they still get in trouble" and Eduardo's claim that "sometimes like the harshest like punishment is usually by your family" connected it with the larger topic of public order. By collectively re-enacting and experiencing, in a comic vein, the spankings that probably seemed quite serious when they were children, the group members expanded the contrast between the public discipline associated with the police and private child-discipline associated with family life, and at the same time strengthened their individual connections to their shared Latino identity and culture. This sequence provides a nice example of how perceptual simulations build on and expand each other throughout the course of a conversation, expanding the meaning-space in the mutual cognitive environment with respect not only to the topic of conversation but also to the relationships among participants and their identification with their common identities, with Latino culture generally and with this group in particular.

Unlike the African-American men's conversation, no out-group members were present in this conversation, although the knowledge that the conversation was being recorded for subsequent scholarly analysis might still have led the participants to "conjure" parts of the conversation. As with the stories in the African-American conversation, discussed previously, the way in which this story is collaboratively produced and its consistency with the tone of the rest of the conversation supports the claim of authenticity.

Are You a Cop? Acting out the story.

In naturally-occurring conversations, participants often supplement story-telling with miming or sound effects (as when Eduardo imitated the sound of a leather belt on skin in the *chanclas* story). Sometimes a story is entirely acted out, with one or more participant in the conversation slipping into story-world roles. Several examples occurred in another conversation, among four politically radical young people. The first example came early in the conversation, as the group discussed the role of police officers in society.

JORDAN: Police are like garbage men. They deal with a lot of things we don't want to deal with. That would be like drunk and disorderly parts of society.
TYLER: Yeah. So do social workers, right? And doctors. I don't want to cut someone open and look at their guts. Well, okay I might. {Laughter}
Fuck. Now everyone knows I'm a serial killer. And not just the people in this room, but someone else I'm going to have to kill when they read this. This is great.

Jordan's comment was intended to illustrate "things we don't want to deal with" by activating aversive simulations of the smells, sights, and sounds associated with garbage trucks, then those associated with people who are "drunk and disorderly" and connecting all of them with the police officer schema. Tyler first jokingly extended this series of intense simulations by activating a surgeon schema, then exploited the connection (facilitated both by the semantic phrase and by the gory perceptual simulations it activates) to slip briefly into a script familiar to all participants from horror and crime movies. It appears that his own experience of the incongruity of the simulations he had activated alerted him to the comic possibilities, whereupon he entered into another, loosely-connected story-world role, and extended the fantasy story into a fantasy future in which his slip of the tongue would force him to kill all the witnesses. The humor grows out of the incongruity of the extension, from police officers to garbage men to surgeons,

then to autopsies, and finally to a serial murderer, strengthened by the incongruity of connecting those gruesome images to Tyler, and to the context of the present conversation. This final extension was possible only because of the ready activation of the “serial killer” schema, familiar to all from movies and television programs. This is an example of thematic chaining in which the relevance is provided by the activated perceptual simulations rather than by associated semantic meanings.

Another example occurred a couple of minutes later, when the group had been discussing the motives that might lead a person to become a police officer. Tyler turned to another participant, Celeste, noted “You’re awfully quiet, *short one*,” then asked,

TYLER: Are you a cop? Are you a cop?
CELESTE: No.
TYLER: Are you a cop?
CELESTE: No.
TYLER: That’s *three times*, okay. *We’re cool*.

The effectiveness of this enactment also depends on extensive common ground, knowledge about under-cover police officers and beliefs about related rules of evidence; the humor stems from the incongruity of applying this test near the beginning of a thoroughly innocuous conversation that is being audio-recorded as part of a school assignment.

In these passages, Tyler played with both the form of the conversation itself and with his own identity, stepping into the role of “bad boy” and “master criminal.” This identity-play continued throughout the conversation, and involved all the participants at one time or another. They apparently did take the topic seriously, but whenever the conversation threatened to become too “serious,” one of them, usually but not always Tyler, would use language play or teasing to alleviate the seriousness and restore a mood

of conviviality. Thus, the incongruous contrasts between the “outlaw” play and the conversation itself contributed to maintaining a common understanding of the conversation as a fundamentally *social* event, in spite of its proximate *academic* purpose and *political* content.

These episodes also nicely illustrate Clark’s (1996) ideas about “*levels*” in conversation. In both cases, the base level is a group of friends discussing public safety and relationships between police officers and citizens. In the first instance, Jordan took the conversation up a level to a hypothetical world in which police officers are like garbage men. Tyler first extended this hypothetical world to include surgeons, then shifted to a play frame and moved the conversation up yet one more level to a world in which his confession that he might like to cut people open is so dangerous that he must kill all the witnesses. The humor requires *crossing* levels to contrast the fictional story world with the actual world. In contrast to more formal instances of story-telling, this easy movement among levels is frequently observed when stories are told in casual conversations.

Collaboratively-produced spontaneous humor: You guys have the best soup.

In the Anarchists group, as in the African-American group, the conversation turned several times to situations in which police officers made mistakes or failed to follow procedures, leading to the fatal shooting of unarmed civilians, “and you see the police *getting let off*.” Tyler repeated and elaborated on a “*public servant*” metaphor that had been introduced early in the conversation, “cops are more like a *servant*, like a *waiter or waitress*, right? So if they *fuck up*, they say, oh, I’m really sorry. You want to talk to my boss or manager?” Deke pointed out a major difference: “if you’re a cop and you

screw up at work, like you *pepper spray a baby*, or you shot someone who didn't deserve.... it is just weird. *Stakes are a lot higher* than they are in our jobs." Tyler first joked about then denied the importance of the difference: "I'm sure. If a waitress approached you with saying, oh I'm really sorry, you said over medium, but I got you over easy. Cops just fucking *pepper sprayed your baby*, even more so, right? {Laughter}.... They *feel a sense of 'it's a tough job,'* but fuck, you know, we all some of us have tough jobs. You should be held accountable *at all levels.*"

"*Stakes are a lot higher*" is a layered metaphor; the first level activates a "*GAMBLING*" metaphor, within which the next level activates the conceptual metaphor "*IMPORTANT IS BIG*". "*High stakes*" is an idiomatic metaphor, and the underlying metaphors may not necessarily be activated, but the associations with other "*high stakes*" situations probably are activated, along with semantic links to concepts of *seriousness* and *importance*. These links are emphasized by the contrasting stories of a waitress who delivers eggs over easy instead of over medium with a police officer who uses pepper spray on a baby. The blend of humorous incongruity with the intense perceptual simulations activated by the story of a baby being doused with pepper spray connects with and fills out the "*high stakes*" schema and furnishes a strong emotional backing for the concluding claim, the implication that, if waitresses are held accountable for mixing up a breakfast order, police officers should certainly be held accountable for causing intense pain and suffering to innocent civilians ("*your baby*"). "*It's a tough job*" is another idiomatic metaphor, often used, as it is here, as a way of anticipating and undermining or negating counter-arguments based on the difficulties faced by police officers. Here, in contrast to Willard's allegorical expansion of "*we're all in the same*

boat" in the African-American conversation, the allegory does not have a conflict-reduction function within the group, since all participants are in agreement about the illustrated principles. The *"waitress"* allegory has a potential rhetorical function within an implied broader, societal-level discourse, but here it appears to have been developed primarily for its entertainment value, with the secondary function of rehearsing arguments that might potentially be used in a public debate. As with the *chanclas* story in the Latino group, this supports the claim that story-telling is frequently used as language play, in service of shared enjoyment (Carter, 2004; Ritchie & Schell, 2009).

Referring to a predictable response to the contrast Tyler had just described, Jordan commented that police officers must "*feel our hate every moment of the day, right?*" Tyler responded, "I think they *feel a sense of that.. they feel the world has turned against them* and the way to *go beyond that* is to *change your practices*. If you're a waitress and you're not getting good tips and you think people hate you, then you should *quit pissing in their soup*." Here "*world*" is a metonymic allusion to something like "the people they encounter in the community." "*Turned against them*" is an idiom, like many of the other idiomatic metaphors used by the participants, it may activate simulations of action sequences in which people literally turn and confront policemen in a violent way, but it is at least equally likely to activate connections to various other situations in which "*turn against*" has been encountered; some of these situations involve physical aggression, others involve social and emotional isolation. "*Go beyond that*" and "*change your practices*" are also idiomatic metaphors, likely to activate both perceptual simulations based on the underlying conceptual metaphors ("*MOVEMENT PAST A BARRIER*" and

“*TRANSFORMATION*”) and links to other situations in which these metaphors have been encountered.

With “*quit pissing in their soup*,” Tyler introduced a novel metaphor, extending the previous “*waitress*” instantiation of the “*public servant*” metaphor, that activates powerful perceptual simulations that contrast in a humorously incongruous way with the perceptual simulations activated by the “*waitress*” schema and reinforced by the previous story about a waitress apologizing for mixing up a breakfast order. The intention was clearly to escalate the severity of the waitress’s story-world violation and attach both the disgusting elements of the metaphor and the incongruity to the police officer schema, but the incongruity was too strong, and Celeste could not resist the opportunity to exploit the comic potential in a way that potentially undermined the speaker’s intention:

MICHAEL: Of course, the fallacy of that assumption
the waitress is doing something blatantly crazy unethical,
CELESTE: Some places you get tipped more for that.
MICHAEL: Like, I love that sauce. {Laughter}
TYLER: You guys have the best soup. {Laughter}
CELESTE: We do.
DEKE: Think about that next time you order from the *Waypost*.

This is only one of many instances in which one or more participants undermined the serious intention of another person’s story or metaphor for humorous effect. At one level, this can be viewed as uncooperative or even subversive, but at another level, by reinstating the play frame, here Celeste was preserving the conversation as a primarily *sociable*, hence never fully serious, interaction. This exchange is also an interesting illustration of the way perceptual simulations contribute to and enhance humor by strengthening the experience of incongruity, and a good example of collaboratively produced stories. This story also illustrates the manner in which a speaker’s apparent

intention can be collectively transformed by the entire group, and a new intention collaboratively generated (Gibbs, 1999; Harris-Lacewell, 2004).

More to the present point, the entire story began as an elaboration of the “*public servant*” metaphor for police officers, with inappropriate behavior and poor service from a waitress offered as a metaphor for inappropriate behavior and excessive use of force from a police officer. By literalizing the metaphor, Celeste moved the story back down a level in a way that created a hilariously incongruous contrast between the metaphorical story and the literal restaurant script on which the metaphorical story was based. This can only work if participants are able to maintain simultaneously in their active memory several simulations, the simulation of a metaphorical police officer pepper spraying a baby, a metaphorical waitress urinating in a customer’s soup, an actual waitress urinating in a customer’s soup, and an actual waitress receiving praise and higher tips as a result of extraordinary service. All of these stories are relevant to multiple contexts that are already activated in the mutual cognitive environment. The reference to the Waypost, a consumer-owned cooperative coffee shop where some of the group members occasionally work, activated yet another context, known to all of the participants; an “in joke,” it activated specific perceptual simulations of that particular restaurant for those who were familiar with it, and served to strengthen group solidarity by emphasizing their common ground.

Discussion

The stories discussed in this essay represent a range of themes and styles: Some are factual, some fictional; some are offered with serious communicative intent, some are purely playful, and some blend seriousness with playfulness. None of them introduces

new information, and only one, Willard's allegorical extension of the "*in the same boat*" metaphor, is presented with overtly argumentative intention. Many of them rely more on activated perceptual simulations than on propositional content or themes for relevance to previously activated cognitive contexts. In many cases the relevance (and meaning) is accomplished with respect to more than one cognitive context, usually including the context of shared awareness of the group identity and interpersonal bonds (Ritchie, 2006). As a group, they strongly imply the need for a more nuanced and a more complex account of story-telling in natural conversation than has previously been presented in the research literature as well as an account that connects story-telling with metaphor use.

The analyses presented in the preceding sections have several implications for both metaphor theory and our understanding of story-telling. To begin with, these two language processes appear to be strongly inter-connected. Metaphors are an important element of much of the story-telling reported in this essay, and seem to facilitate the shared experience of perceptual simulations and emotions that is important to comprehension of the stories. Metaphors often imply stories, and deep processing of metaphors is likely to include simulation of these implied stories. Although it has not been explicitly discussed, this facet of simulation is implied by previous research on metaphors such as those based on the "*JOURNEY*" conceptual metaphor and the metaphors based on "*ANGER IS HEAT*," as reviewed for example by Gibbs (2006). Stories, particularly stories with an allegorical cast to them such as Willard's "*sinking the boat*" story, are often based on transformation and elaboration of a familiar metaphor. As Willard's story illustrates, stories are often told with metaphorical intentions; another example is the "*marital spat*" story told by Tony Blair (2005), as discussed by Ritchie (2008a).

I have previously shown (Ritchie, 2009; see also Gibbs, 2006) that the processing of metaphors often involves activation of perceptual simulations, including simulations of external perceptions (vision, hearing, etc.) as well as introspective and emotional perceptions. Moreover, given that many metaphors imply a story and stories are often metaphorical, the concept of perceptual simulations involved in the language comprehension process must be expanded to include simulations of action sequences. Similarly, Cameron's (2007) observations about the social-facilitative functions of repetition and transformation of metaphors can usefully be extended both to the development of metaphor-based stories and to the kind of collaborative story-telling evident in the conversations of the Latinos and the "new left" group. Here, the social function is quite different from that discussed by Cameron, which also suggests an opportunity for expanding her account of the underlying social and cognitive processes.

Implications for our understanding of story-telling. Although it has been investigated primarily as a feature of formal literature or, more recently, through structured interviews, story-telling is a central part of ordinary language use, especially in conversations. Miller (1995) reports that detailed narratives appear in conversations at a rate of 4-12 per hour. Defining *story* more broadly, to include all representations of an event or action sequence (Abbott, 2008; Gerrig, 1993), the rate in the conversations discussed in this essay is well over one story per minute. It seems apparent that, if we are to understand the cognitive and interactive structure of conversation, we need to attend to how stories are formulated and understood. In this essay I have proposed that part of this understanding can be accomplished by extending an account based on perceptual

simulation and relevance to previously-activated cognitive contexts to embrace stories as well as metaphors.

Both metaphors and stories activate detailed simulations of perceptions, emotions, and action sequences that can contribute to listeners' involvement in the story as well as to the expansion of common ground. As the *chanclas* story discussed in the preceding demonstrates, the activation of similar memories, particularly when these are associated with shared identity, can emphasize and strengthen group solidarity. Metaphors often imply stories, and it is likely that the simulations experienced through these stories contribute to the effectiveness of metaphors. For example, Gibbs (2006) discusses the activation of various schemas associated with "JOURNEY" and other conceptual metaphors by the metaphorical expressions in an essay on grieving (Obst, 2003); each of these metaphors activates a story, and the essay employs these stories to reconstruct the story of the grieving experience, and to activate a different, more positive set of emotions in association with that experience.

Implications for conversation structure. To participate effectively in conversation, a speaker must not only sustain coherence by activating simulations (and semantic network links) that are *relevant* in an *intended way*, it is also necessary to supply sufficient rewards to sustain attention and motivate processing (Abbott, 2008). In the story-telling literature, attention-sustaining rewards are often discussed primarily in terms of *information* that improves listeners' representations of the world, but *enjoyment* is in many contexts at least as important as information (Dunbar, 1996; Ritchie & Dyhouse, 2008). As Celeste's successful digression in the "*pissing in your soup*" example illustrates, often the entertainment motivation trumps the informational or

persuasive motivation. Indeed, few of the stories told in the conversations reported in this essay contributed new information; most of the stories either presented information already well-known to all participants or invented fictional worlds based on attitudes and beliefs also well-understood by all participants. This suggests that story-telling may be more important for social functions, including bonding and display of language prowess, than for informative or persuasive functions. This is consistent with Dunbar's (1999) claim that $2/3$ of conversation is relational rather than task-oriented. Moreover, the evidence presented in the foregoing suggests that this social bonding function is served by activating a common set of perceptual simulations, and thereby strengthening group members' experience of unity and shared identity. These social functions, of mutual enjoyment and social identification, also figure strongly in the barbershop conversations reported by Harris-Lacewell (2004).

Story-telling in persuasive and political communication. Persuasion theorists have recently turned their attention to the role of “*transportation*” (into the “story world”) in the persuasive effects of stories in marketing campaigns (Green, 2005; Green & Brock, 2000; 2002). Although the concept of “*transportation*” is taken from early work by Gerrig (1993), researchers have largely ignored the equally important companion metaphor, “*construction*,” by which it appears Gerrig means something quite similar to Barsalou's (2007) and Gibbs's (2006) concept of *simulation*. It seems worth investigating how the capacity of a story to “*transport*” a reader or listener into the “story world” might be related to its capacity to activate rich perceptual simulations and thereby to “*construct*” a shared story-world; it also seems worth investigating whether the

perceptual simulations activated by a story or metaphor contribute to its retention and persuasiveness.

At a broader political level, Harris-Lacewell (2004) has challenged the more traditional top-down account of ideology and public opinion formation by showing how ideological positions are debated and challenged, modified, or reinforced in the everyday talk of African-Americans. Her research focused primarily on talk within black churches and barbershops and in black news and entertainment media. The passages from the African-American conversation discussed in this essay are consistent with Harris-Lacewell's findings. Although the pattern and styles are different and the tone less overtly argumentative, the other conversations discussed in this essay also suggest an ideological role, a possibility that merits further research. Although Harris-Lacewell does not explicitly consider either metaphors or stories, these data suggest that close analysis of metaphors and story-telling in everyday talk among African-Americans would both enrich and strengthen her overall account.

Conclusion.

In this essay I have gone beyond previous research on metaphor comprehension by showing how metaphors and stories are often intertwined with one another, and by showing how similar cognitive processes may be implicated in both forms of discourse. I have gone beyond previous research on story-telling in several respects. Previous discussions have focused on informing and persuading functions of stories in mass media. I have expanded the focus to address the complex role of story-telling as a means of mutual enjoyment and reinforcement of social identity. I have also expanded the focus to include storytelling in ordinary conversations. This focus on ordinary conversations

has been largely lacking in previous research on storytelling, and has become evident in metaphor research only relatively recently.

I have adapted an analytical approach based on relevance and perceptual simulations, previously developed to resolve certain issues in metaphor theory, and applied it to stories in casual, unstructured conversations. At least with respect to the conversations from which examples were taken, it appears that this approach can illuminate the creation of relevance with respect to multiple cognitive contexts at once (Ritchie, 2006). Although the examples discussed herein are drawn from a narrow range of conversations, I have previously shown how a similar approach can be applied to political speeches (Ritchie, 2008a; 2009; *in press a*). In yet another study (Ritchie, *in press b*) I have shown how a similar approach can be applied to humor in casual conversations; some of the examples discussed herein also involve irony and other forms of humor. These analyses are based on interpretive case study methods and still require testing through other methods, and consequently the results must still be regarded as provisional. Nonetheless, the accumulating evidence supports a role for perceptual simulation, in combination with relevance, in analyzing and understanding the use of metaphor, story-telling, and other forms of non-literal language in casual conversation as well as other forms of discourse. It also contributes to the growing case for detailed consideration of metaphor, story-telling, and other creative forms of language use in ordinary conversations and for recognition of the linguistic creativity (and possibly, consistent with Harris-Lacewell, the ideological creativity) of ordinary people in their everyday social interactions with one another.

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