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Abstract

Drawing on data from a series of informal conversations about public safety and police-community relations, we distinguish between a speaker's generalized communicative intentions with respect to metaphor use and story-telling, based on what Chafe (1994, p. 145) calls "unifying ideas that persist in semiactive consciousness" and the spontaneous intentions that arise within the short-term focus or spotlight of consciousness and guide the production of actual utterances. Although speakers occasionally enter a conversation with a fixed intention to express an idea with a particular metaphor, tell a particular story in a particular style, or accomplish some other speech act such as persuading or informing, more commonly in ordinary conversations speakers begin with only a generalized intention to engage in the social interaction, sometimes but not always accompanied by generalized intentions regarding a particular topic or a particular form of expression. We argue that these "unifying ideas" interact with the contents of the short-term focus or spotlight of consciousness to generate spontaneous communicative intentions that in turn guide the production of metaphors, stories, and other language segments. Often these spontaneous communicative intentions arise interactively in response to other participants' utterances; sometimes they arise in response to unforeseen opportunities in the speaker's *own* utterances. Consequently, in ordinary casual conversations the spontaneous communicative intentions behind metaphor, story-telling and humor are often formed 'on the fly,' in response to the dynamic social interaction, and sometimes as a result of collaboration with other participants.

telling.

1. Introduction

Story-telling and metaphors are universal and common in conversation, often interwoven with each other. Previous work (Ritchie, 2010, 2011b, 2014) has shown how metaphors are often transformed into stories, stories are often transformed into metaphors, and frequently complete understanding of both metaphors and stories requires consideration of both the metaphorical and story elements of a text (Negrea-Busuioc & Ritchie, 2014). The question of intentionality in both metaphor use and story-telling has also received considerable attention recently, with some theorists arguing that it is not possible to determine from the text alone whether a particular metaphor was used deliberately (e.g., Gibbs, 2011). Others argue for a more nuanced view, in which the role of deliberate metaphor in communication may vary across texts and genres and the question of deliberateness is closely related to the linguistic form and conceptual structure of the metaphor (Semino, 2008; Steen, 2013). In Negrea-Busuioc & Ritchie (2014) we show that, in at least some instances, complete comprehension of metaphors, including story metaphors, *requires* the assumption that they were used deliberately. In this essay we extend this analysis, addressing a different but also previously neglected question about intentionality: When does intentionality in metaphor use, story-telling, humor, and other forms of figurative language use arise? In this essay we argue that intentions often arise spontaneously, and sometimes change, in response to opportunities that appear in the flow of discourse itself.

1.1 Intentionality

Gibbs (1999) argues that an important part of how we understand language involves "recognition of speakers' / writers' intentions" (1999, p. 9). This can be a complex task; as Gibbs points out, people often have multiple communicative intentions for even a simple utterance. The task is even more complex in tropes such as irony (Gibbs, 2000) or teasing (Coates, 2007), where the communicative intentions may be deliberately ambiguous. It is often difficult for other participants in a conversation to be certain about a speaker's communicative intention. All language (and more generally all signaling) is inherently ambiguous, and comprehension of communication always requires inference (Wilson & Sperber, 2004). Like non-participant researchers, interlocutors must often rely on inferences based on what they know about the context, including what has gone before in the conversation, other utterances by the same speaker, non-verbal cues, and so on.

Gibbs (1999) claims that people ordinarily distinguish between 'intention', which applies to persons, based on inferences about a speaker's beliefs and desires, and 'intentional', which applies to actions, based on inferences about intention as well as skill and awareness. It is useful to conceive of intentionality as varying from fully intended activities, which result from conscious deliberation, to activities that happen non-intentionally, by accident or as an unforeseen by-product of some other action. Gibbs argues that most activities, including communication, are best viewed as 'half-intended'; "the words mostly pop into mind automatically without any conscious deliberation" (1999, p. 32). However, for our purposes we will refer to this phenomenon as 'spontaneously intended.' A better example of a *half*-intended phrase would be a double-entendre ("I have a hard time getting up in the morning"), where only one of two or more possible meanings was intended.

Chafe (1994) argues that conscious attention involves a narrowly focused activation of a small part of the experiencer's world knowledge; each idea is active as a focus of

consciousness for a brief time, and ideas are refreshed or replaced every second or two. The 'spotlight of focused conscious attention' is a useful metaphor for this phenomenon. Referents, including participants, topics, and purposes that are more persistent and stable, Chafe calls 'semi-active consciousness.' In discourse, the discrete ideas in the focus of consciousness are expressed linguistically in brief spurts of language that Chafe calls 'intonation units', typically about four words in length, which are organized into utterances. Ideas are linked within more inclusive 'super-topics,' which persist as unifying ideas in semi-active consciousness over longer stretches of conversation. A speaker aims at verbalizing the overall current focus of consciousness as a clause, but it is necessary to distribute more complex ideas across several intonation units within an utterance or sometimes several utterances spread across multiple speaking turns. According to Chafe, disfluencies — pauses, fillers, start-overs — demonstrate that consciousness contains more than language, and demonstrate the difficulties involved in talking. It follows that disfluencies provide the analyst with clues as to a speaker's intentionality. As we speak, we listen to our own speech and compare it with what we intended to express; when the discrepancy is too large, we hesitate, correct, or start over. Sometimes a speaker may change the intentionality to match what was spoken — especially when the actual utterance offers unforeseen opportunities. This is often apparent from the conversational context.

Combining Gibbs's insight about the semi-intentional nature of word-production with Chafe's concept of 'focused conscious attention' and Barsalou's (2008) perceptual simulation theory of cognition (for a detailed discussion see also Gibbs & Matlock, 2008; Ritchie, 2009a, 2010), we get a picture of thought — Chafe's super-topics in semi-active consciousness — as a dynamic background of weak simulations of perceptions and motor activities (partial activation of neural systems that would be engaged in actual perception or actual muscular action) representing current attention and generalized purposes. Simulations

are associated with language units, and as discrete ideas become active, associated words and clauses also become activated or, in Gibbs's previously quoted phrase, "pop into mind automatically without any conscious deliberation." During conversation the resulting language is monitored, often as it is spoken; mismatches between perceived effects and intended meaning result in disfluencies. Thus, what Gibbs describes as 'half-intended' utterances and we describe as 'spontaneously-intended utterances' can be construed as evidence for more complex underlying intentions, which are ordinarily *not* present as language until they are expressed (aloud, or in mentally rehearsed speech).

The question of intentionality poses some particularly interesting issues for analysis of playful (paratelic) communication as well as metaphor use and conversational story-telling. Metaphors are often introduced into a conversation by a single speaker, then repeated and transformed by subsequent speakers (Cameron, 2007). Stories in conversations may have one teller or many, may be spread over several speaking turns, interspersed with other communicative acts (even with other stories), may involve actual events, imagined events, or a mixture of actual and imagined events. Given the potential for stories to 'transport' listeners into a 'story-world' that may be quite alien to the actual world they inhabit, stories have the potential to activate complex simulations and achieve cognitive effects in especially subtle ways (Brock *et al.,* 2002; Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2002), often outside interlocutors' active consciousness.

Conversations often have a relaxed and playful character in service of social bonding, play (Apter, 1985), and what Dunbar (1996) calls 'social grooming', an extension of the physical grooming that is central to social interactions among chimpanzees and many other primates. People converse for the sheer pleasure of sociability, in which case competition is likely to be down-played or suppressed altogether (Norrick, 1993), in the interest of conviviality. In such a paratelic conversation group members are likely to be less demanding

of relevance and tellability and more tolerant of whimsy and language play (Everts, 2003; Ritchie, 2011a, 2011c; Ritchie & Dyhouse, 2008) such as whimsical metaphors and stories.

Gibbs (1999) distinguishes four distinct approaches to meaning. In the encoding / decoding approach, meaning is an inherent property of utterances. In the intentionalist approach, meaning is a property of the speaker's intentions. In the perspective-taking approach, meaning is determined by how the hearer understands an utterance. In the dialogic approach, meaning emerges from the participants' joint activity (see also Clark, 1996). This study draws on a socio-interactional approach to communication, consistent with what Gibbs (1999) describes as the dialogic paradigm, which conceptualizes meaning as "doubly-dynamic" (Haugh, 2008). In this sense, meaning is achieved in the interaction between speaker and hearer. Individuals do not necessarily approach an interaction with prior intentions, and when they do these are likely to change and new intentions emerge in the process of the interaction. All participants in a conversation contribute to constructing the understanding of what is communicated, so that their cognitive processes are, often to a large extent, interdependent or dyadic rather than autonomous (Arundale, 2008). According to the interactional view, communication is often characterized by an emergent intentionality (Arundale, 2008; Clark, 1996; Gibbs, 1999; Haugh, 2008, 2009). Intentionality in conversation is fluid and co-constructed rather than the sum of pre-existing individual intentions and it is generated by interlocutors' simultaneous engagement in "anticipatory and retroactive inferencing" (Haugh, 2009, p. 98) in the process of producing and grasping meaning.

In this essay, we examine a variety of metaphors, stories, and story-metaphors from natural conversations, using many of the same contextual cues interlocutors would use to draw inferences about speakers' communicative intentions. Based on the evidence gleaned from these examples we argue that the intentions underlying instances of metaphor use and

story-telling may emerge from, and in response to, the immediate social-interactive context, and that initial intentions may shift in response to the fluid context of casual social interactions. We focus primarily on unstructured conversations among peers. We discuss several examples of collaborative story-telling, in which the apparent intention of a story emerges from the inventive collaboration of multiple participants. The instances of metaphors, story-telling, and metaphorical stories described in this paper illustrate several ways in which intentionality may be collaboratively developed in response to the changing conversational context, including unexpected opportunities and changes in the salience of various elements of common ground.

1.2 Metaphors

We understand 'metaphor' as any use of language in which the speaker / writer talks, writes, or thinks about something in terms of a different domain of experience. We followed a procedure for identifying metaphors adapted from the Pragglejaz Group (2007; see also Cameron, 2006; Semino, 2008): determine the meaning of an expression in context, and if the unit has a more basic contemporary meaning that can be distinguished from and understood in comparison with the meaning in context, identify the word or phrase as metaphorical. This approach does not speak to the question of whether the speaker intended the phrase or any particular listener heard the phrase as a metaphor, but extensive research supports the claim that people are influenced by metaphorical mappings regardless of whether they recognize the metaphor (Gibbs; 2006, 2009).

1.3   Stories

Researchers define 'story' and 'narrative' more or less broadly, according to their purposes. Schank and Berman (2002) and Bruner (2002) give rather restrictive and highly structured definitions, but for this study we follow Abbott's (2008, p. 13) simpler and more inclusive definition: "the representation of an event or a series of events." For this study, we define 'narrative,' consistent with Bruner, as a more structured telling of a series of thematically and causally connected events that includes something that was at least potentially unforeseen. We define 'story' more broadly, as *any* "representation of an event or a series of events," whether or not it satisfies Bruner's criterion that "something unforeseen must happen." (In retold stories, which appear often in conversation data, part of the meaning in the telling is anticipation of an outcome that is well-known by all or most of the participants.)

2. Method

The examples discussed here are drawn from conversations among groups of four to six 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 and police-community relations (for detailed description of the conversations and participants see Ritchie, 2010, 2011a, 2011b). 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 topics relevant to the overall theme of police-community relations. Most of these conversations took the form of ordinary social gatherings, with participants who knew each other socially. Conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis, with names changed and all potentially identifying information removed, then metaphors and stories were

identified according to the above-cited definition.

It is not possible for a researcher to determine with any certainty the intentions of a speaker in using a metaphor or telling a story; by the same token, interlocutors also often have difficulty knowing what a speaker intended — and even speakers may not always be able to explain their intentions with certainty. Interlocutors must often rely on cues in the context, including what has preceded a particular utterance or story and how it is related to the speaker's other contributions. These same resources are available to the researcher. Accordingly, each author independently examined the metaphors and stories for internal cues as to the speaker's intention, then examined other evidence including what had gone immediately before, as well as other utterances by the same speaker, using this evidence to corroborate or qualify the initial interpretation. We then compared our interpretations and, where disagreements were apparent, re-examined the sample and the surrounding discourse together. We recognize that our interpretations and attributions in each instance represent only one among many sets of possible interpretations: in most cases, we believe similar issues of intentionality, the primary focus of our analysis, would still arise even with radically different interpretations.

3. Intentions for telling stories

In every case, participants clearly had an intention to engage socially in the interaction. Beyond that, in most if not all cases, participants entered the conversations with prior attitudes and beliefs about the topic of police-community relations that function as what Chafe (1994, p. 145) calls "unifying ideas that persist in semiactive consciousness." We argue that these "unifying ideas" interact with the contents of the short-term focus or spotlight of

consciousness to generate spontaneous communicative intentions that in turn guide the production of intonation units and their organization into utterances.

3.1 Single-teller stories with stable intentions

Although stories often seem to arise from complex and dynamic sets of intentions, sometimes they are produced with apparently clear and stable intentions. An example comes from a group composed of five middle-aged African-American men. George, who was highly critical of the Portland Police Bureau and its senior-level management throughout the conversation, told the following story with the obvious intention of supporting his view of the police which, based on other utterances in the conversation, was cynically critical. This story is an example of what Norrick (2000) calls 'retold stories'; it is likely George had told it more than once prior to this telling. It is a complete narrative under most definitions (see, e.g., Bruner, 2002; Schank & Berman, 2002): 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*[1].   (Ritchie, 2010)

Although it is a complete narrative, the Tony Stevens story was produced in a lean, terse

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[1] We will use italics to highlight metaphorically-used segments of language relevant to the interpretation of speakers' intentions in conversation. The transcriptions are simplified and do not mark intonation units.

style, with no embellishment and few details. The fact that Tony had served as a marine in Viet Nam provides information about his character that both explains his heroic response in restraining the hold-up artist and underscores the situational irony of his being the one who was attacked and killed by the police officers. The fact that Tony was killed by a police *detective* anticipates and refutes the possible conjecture that inexperience or poor training might explain the police officers' response; it also implicates police bureau leadership in the unjustified attack on Tony and thereby sustained George's criticism of the bureau. There is only one obvious metaphor, which appears as part of the coda: "There are certain *patterns* that *happen*." The primary meaning of *pattern*, a spatial design, is here mapped onto a very particular story in a way that suggests predictability and repetition, converting the entire story into a metonym for community-police relations. *Happen* would ordinarily be applied to a particular event; its use here blends with the metaphorical mapping of *pattern* to map a quality of active dynamism onto the implied repetition, so that every element of the story (Stevens's innocence, the inaccurate assumptions made by the responding officers, and the deadly outcome) are mapped onto community-police interactions in general.

As was apparent from several utterances earlier in the conversation, George entered the conversation with an intention to make some broad points about 'institutional racism' and poor (ineffective and corrupt) leadership in the police bureau, and telling the Tony Stevens story served that communicative objective quite well. Given the nature of the story and of the audience, it is likely that the listeners knew the story as well as George did; although this would explain the sparse details, it leaves open the question of why the story was told at all, rather than merely being mentioned, as were other similar stories. By telling the story in this terse, unembellished way, George was able to raise its salience for the other participants, as well as for the two research assistants who facilitated the conversation, a young African-American male and a European-American female (Ritchie, 2010). Given the evidence of this

overarching communicative intention, it also seems quite likely that George intended the metaphorical mapping of *pattern* onto the larger topic of police procedures and police-community interactions — whether or not he consciously used the expression *as* metaphor.

It is likely that George and the other participants were also aware, throughout the conversation, of the broader audience, the social scientists and, possibly, public officials to whom the results of the research project will eventually be reported. George may have had a different intention for each of these audiences (Ritchie & Cameron, *in press*). For the immediate audience, the other participants and the two graduate students, the apparent intention was to illustrate claims about the prevalence of police violence against African-Americans and the complicity of police bureau leadership in this problem. With respect to the African-American student facilitator, the intention may also have fit within a general project of instructing younger members of the community about the continued seriousness of police racism as a problem faced by all the African-Americans. To the white female student facilitator, and the extended audience of researchers and readers of the research, the story and the metaphor are likely to draw attention to the injustices perpetrated by police officers against African-American members of the community and exemplified by the story. It is unlikely that many of these intentions were present as propositions in George's mind, although the central intention of raising the salience of the story's themes probably was.

A very different story, also apparently told with a stable intentionality, is drawn from a conversation among a group of middle-class white residents of an urban neighborhood of single-family homes. The group had been discussing the importance of casual street-centered socializing as a way of ensuring a safe environment for the children who live on the street, and the importance of children to the vitality of the neighborhood; Leanne had particularly emphasized this latter point in previous passages. Near the end of the conversation, she told the following story about a recent encounter with one of the children.

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I was walking down the street. She was sitting there she .. she jumps up and she said.. I said 'How are you?' she said 'Today was the first day of first grade! and it was just wonderful!' And she had on this .. this black leotard and white tights and little shoes and she said 'and I'm going to be going to dance class now and afterwards my dad is going to take me to the park and it's like the best day of my life!' eh heh! and she was *literally bouncing up*.. and.. *down*.. I mean she could not stay still .. she was so excited … that was just… wonderful .. you know? it was just fantastic to be able to live on a street where you can see that *every day*. (Ritchie, 2011a)

Literally is a common example of a metaphorical 'tuning device' (Cameron & Deignan, 2003) that calls attention to and intensifies the emotional excitement expressed by "*bouncing up* and *down*." The entire story is presented as a metonymic example of pleasurable interactions which happen fairly frequently. *Every day* can be analyzed as simple hyperbole but it blends with the story to create a metaphorical expression of satisfaction with the interactions of which this is offered as typical.

This story illustrated the kind of amicable inter-generational interaction that typifies the street life of the neighborhood, and also expressed the teller's personal pleasure in this inter-generational interaction. Through this and other similar narratives, all related in tones of affection and amusement, Leanne probably also intended to indicate to Todd, the one parent in the group (and through Todd, to the other parents on the block), that she sees the presence of young children in the neighborhood as adding value, both because of the social relationships they crystallize and because of their contribution to the liveliness of the street. On the surface, this and other stories about life on the block appear to have been told to instantiate a sense of security and sociability, and to imply that sociability contributes to

security. But they also appear to be part of a sustained and deliberate strategy of building and maintaining the integration of the young families in the community, and securing the continued commitment of the four sets of parents, with Todd as a surrogate, to the neighborhood (Ritchie, 2011a).

Perhaps above all, Leanne's story about the first day of school provided entertainment and enjoyment to the others, and thus contributed to the convivial atmosphere and to the social solidarity of the group through shared enjoyment of this story. By evoking memories of other, similar stories, this story would also have served to remind the other participants of the everyday occurrence of similarly pleasant encounters. It is also apparent from the manner in which she told the story that Leanne enjoyed recalling and retelling the story for its own sake. Here, the presence of disfluencies suggests that only the overall outlines of the story were present as conscious attention and neither the specific details nor the metaphors were 'deliberately' used; Leanne filled in descriptive details as the relevant simulations entered the moving spotlight of conscious awareness.

In contrast to Leanne's story, there is no enjoyment attached to the Tony Stevens story — on the contrary, it is quite distressing. However, George's story is likely to have enhanced social solidarity, in this case by emphasizing the participants' shared identity as members of the same community, and their shared sense of endangerment at the hands of what they regard as poorly trained, poorly disciplined, and possibly racist police officers. Thus, reinforcement of a certain view of salient aspects of community structure was at least implicitly part of the intention of both examples, whether or not they were present as fully-formed 'deliberate' intentions.

In summary, these two stories, each told as a complete narrative by a single teller, but told in very different social and cultural contexts, both appear to have served a variety of implicit intentions. On the surface, both stories expressed factual information and thus had

the potential to bring about significant changes in the mutual cognitive environment — but it is likely that most or all of the interlocutors in both groups already knew the crucial facts. At most, these stories merely increased the salience of already known facts. However, it is likely that both stories, in the manner of their telling and by the very fact that the speaker chose to tell them, also accomplished important objectives with respect to group cohesion and reinforced its teller's identity within the group. Thus, each of these stories appears to have accomplished several communicative intentions simultaneously, even if few or none of these objectives were consciously articulated in propositional form.

3.2 Spontaneous shifting intentionality

Although many of the stories in the public safety conversations were narrated in a way that accomplished one or more pre-determined intentions, many examples also occurred in which the intentionality of a story changed part-way through, as a result of action by either the narrator or another person. In one example, from a group of left-leaning political activists, Jordan suggested an analogy which led to other comparisons of police officers with people who occupy various social roles. Tyler then picked this up and converted it spontaneously to an acted-out story:

> 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.. (pause) Well, okay I might. (general 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. (Ritchie, 2010).

Jordan's *garbage men* metaphor served to illustrate and extend a previously introduced 'public servant' view of the role of police in society and display a degree of sympathy for police officers by emphasizing some of the unpleasant aspects of police work; it may also have been intended to express a cynically disparaging image of police officers. Tyler's initial response may have been intended to limit the implied sympathy for policemen, or it may have been intended to soften the disparaging tone by extending the comparison to higher-status occupations.

Either way, Tyler's elaboration of the 'doctors' schema presented an unanticipated opportunity to branch into a grotesquely entertaining story in which he portrayed the role of a serial killer, someone who *might* want to cut someone open and look at their guts. The pause following "cut someone open and look at their guts" is consistent with the inference that Tyler only realized the comic potential of this graphic description *after* he uttered it. This metaphorical fantasy story, produced spontaneously as a jazz-like riff on the previous image, contributed to the light-hearted sociability and group solidarity by entertaining the others and sustained Tyler's social role and self-image as a jokester (Ritchie, 2010). The closing metaphor "this is *great*" is likely to have been intended, within the fantasy story, as a quoted ironic commentary, but may also have been intended as a commentary *on* the story, as a literal appraisal of the extended 'servant' metaphor and its applicability to the topic of the role of police officers. The sequence is one of several examples from this conversation in which participants disrupted the telic purpose of the conversation with a paratelic sequence, apparently spontaneously produced and usually rather grotesque.

Initial intentionality is also frequently altered when one speaker introduces a story or story theme with a particular intention and another speaker subsequently extends or references the same story, or another story on a similar theme, but toward a very different

end. An example occurred in the group of Latino students mentioned earlier. Two initial stories were told by Manuela, in part to respond to the facilitator's question whether members of the group had had recent interactions with police officers. In the first of these, she related that her family had been burgled several times, and on one of these occasions she lost a laptop computer, but the police never recovered anything. A few minutes later she told a longer and more detailed story:

> Manuela: When I was living in the uh Northwest 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 like? 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*. (Ritchie, 2010)

Although this story was apparently told partially in response to the request for examples of interactions with police officers, it also appears from the style of the narration that Manuela

was still upset about the incident: Her story was produced spontaneously, apparently with the intention of inviting sympathy (which she received). It also has the quality of a 'good story,' a contribution to the shared entertainment and conviviality. Again, the disfluencies suggest that particular phrases emerged as the flow of simulations in the spotlight of focused consciousness activated associated language, and Manuela selected phrases that best fit the story-world she intended to create. The overall intention to tell the story may have existed as a 'super-topic' in global consciousness, but the actual words, including the contrasting metaphors of normality and non-normality "popped into mind" as local intentions in response to the flow of perceptual simulations within the focused spotlight of consciousness.

Over twenty minutes later, these two stories were brought up again by Eduardo, in a light-hearted, joking way that allowed Manuela to down-play the emotional importance of the pepper-spray story 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* happen 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 (general laughter)
>
> Manuela: Yeah I was *pissed* (laughs) of course who wouldn't be? (Ritchie, 2010)

Eduardo's reference to Manuela's story, and repetition of her metaphors, was directly relevant to the topic (police officers *have bad days* just like everyone else) and that was part of Eduardo's intention. It is most likely that the intention to refer to Manuela's story emerged spontaneously from the opportunities afforded by the flow of conversation. In this case, it was another participant's remark that seems to have stimulated Eduardo's intention to compare police officers' "*good days* and *bad days*" to Manuela's particularly bad day. However, the subsequent exchange in which Manuela and Eduardo collaborated in changing the tone of the pepper spray story has no apparent relevance to the topic of police officers. It appears to have been intended primarily to help Manuela change her own feelings about the pepper spray incident by laughing about it. Again, this intention emerged spontaneously from the opportunities afforded by the flow of conversation, influenced by the overarching intention of offering emotional support to a friend. This second brief allusion to the story also afforded Manuela the opportunity to alter the implications for her social identity, by reversing the initial emotional valence of the story from one of victimhood to one of laughing at her misfortunes. This potentiality may have been part of Eduardo's intention in bringing up the stories again; this possibility is supported by the repeated metaphors and other evidence of group solidarity and mutually supportive interactions throughout the conversation (Ritchie, 2010).

3.3 Reframing a story in a shifting conversational context

In another group from the same series (Ritchie, 2010), several of the participants had attended a high school in a wealthy suburb of Portland. The school has a reputation for extensive alcohol and drug use that is more or less tacitly accepted by parents, teachers, and even the

local police. The conversation included several stories that seemed to celebrate the 'anything goes' atmosphere in the school, including casual availability and use of illegal drugs. It also included several stories about police officers being called to local schools for various reasons; most of these focused on the ineffectual nature of the police presence. The tone throughout this conversation was a light-hearted braggadocio that is somewhat typical of young adults from upper-middle class backgrounds (as celebrated by a long series of movies in the 'teen sex comedy' genre).

During one of the discussions of police officers being called into school, Elli began a story from her own high school years: "like, for once, I was threatened, and assaulted, and the police had to come in for that, and they *expelled* the guy, but…" At this point, Fred interrupted with a story about a brief fight between two girls in the suburban high school and another story about a friend in Portland where "he gets in fights all the time, and he's even been stabbed," then tried to change the subject back to drugs. Elli ignored the attempted topic change and picked up her story: "But, to be honest about that, I was trying to provoke him into doing something like, so I could *get him expelled*." (general laughter). Now Beth interrupted with the observation, "sounds like the violence might have been worse than when I was in school [….] no one ever serious… seriously got hurt, there's just, fisticuffs, but.. I always wanted to use that word, actually." (general laughter). Beth probably intended the word *fisticuffs* as a way to minimize the level of violence and support her claim that the violence when she was in school was not serious, and only after she uttered the word realized how other participants might view it, as a 'big word.' Her self-teasing admission that "I always wanted to use that word" then arose as a spontaneous intention to acknowledge the incongruity and deflect any potential critical response. The disfluency supports the inference that she did not recognize the incongruent fit between the word and the social context until after she had uttered it. Beth's self-tease also shifted the topic and tone of the conversation to

such a degree that Elli's story was no longer relevant, so Elli temporarily gave up her attempt to tell the story.

Beth's interruption was followed by a return to the 'drugs and alcohol' topic, including two stories about students showing up drunk to class and school functions. When the topic turned to a recent news story about an adolescent girl (in a different section of the U.S.) being strip-searched because she was suspected of possessing some prescription-strength pain-killers, Elli, apparently giving up for the time on her own story, joined in. She did not return to her earlier story until several minutes later, when the topic turned again to police intervention in schools, affording an opportunity to reframe the story as relevant to the topic of police intervention.

Elli: I think, it would also be good, if the *outside*.. whatever.. authorities, or what ever, also worked also with, sort of, not just that, but other crimes in the school, like the guy who assaulted me. I'll explain it. I'd been *provoking* him a lot because I didn't want him near the school, and I thought that if I *pushed* him enough that he *snapped*, then I could get him *expelled* and I did, and he threw me against the locker and *made some threats* in front of a teacher and got *expelled*. But he didn't get any other, um, *outside* punishment, it was just, "okay, you're *expelled*."

Fred: No assault charges?

Elli: No, no nothing. Grabbed me by the arm and threw me against the locker. *Turns out*, if you *bring up* the fact that he *got away with* rape, he *got* really *upset*. And also they didn't really *crack* that. He was accused of rape by another female student, and then she just *dropped* those charges and moved out of state really suddenly.

"Grabbed me by the arm and threw me against the locker" is a very brief story within Elli's

more extended story about her interaction with the male student, but it potentially activates a powerful action sequence, visual, and visceral simulations, strengthened by the violence implicit in her use of literal and metaphorical verbs, "assault," "*provoke*," "*push*," "*snap*," "*expel*," and two repetitions of "threw me against the locker." The next sentence introduced three background stories, a story of his (apparently habitually) getting upset and two stories nested within that story, his having allegedly raped someone and his having gotten away with it. She then elaborated these and connected them to another story that explained how he got away with the rape, in which passive verbs, *dropped* and *moved* contrast with the preceding active and violent verbs. All of this was nested within Elli's story about wanting to get the student expelled and suggests a motivation for wanting to get him expelled, as well as a possible motivation for telling the entire story, but she did not elaborate.

Each time she resumed this story, Elli framed it differently and her apparent intermediate-level intentions in telling the story evolved to keep pace with changes in the conversational context. It is not evident why she persisted in telling this particular story. Her overarching intention may have been a desire to counteract the casual attitude toward illegal and anti-social behavior evident in several of the other stories, and she may also have wanted to demonstrate that even if the police do nothing, people still can be pro-active, they can react to what happens in their school. In this context, she may have also acted with the intention of establishing her own courage and cleverness in at least partially righting the wrong created by the lack of police action against the alleged rapist, and thus contributing to her social identity.

In any event, once Elli had initially introduced the story, it was evidently highly salient to her, so that it came readily to mind whenever it seemed relevant to other topics. She may have had separate motives for telling the two parts of the story — her successful attempt to provoke a fellow student into assaulting her in front of a teacher and thereby getting him expelled from school has the quality of a 'good story,' which connects with

common knowledge about high school politics. The underlying story about the student getting away with rape also connects with a different set of common knowledge, and connects with several other themes in the conversation, in particular a set of underlying moral themes. The frequent interruptions and topic-changes by other participants might have been reasonably taken as evidence of a lack of interest, discomfort with the topic of rape in that upper middle-class school, or outright rejection of the topic, or may be evidence that different elements of her story activated their own stories and fueled their competition for the floor.

3.4 Intentionality in collaborative story-telling

Several of the conversations in the public safety series included examples of collaborative story-telling, in which several or sometimes all members of the group co-narrated a story known to all. In several of these, the intentionality itself seems to have evolved as the story progressed. One example occurred in the Latino Group cited previously, when the participants turned their attention to the central importance of family in disciplining children (Ritchie, 2010). 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* potentially 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 intentional 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 apparent 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

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do. (general laughter)

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

Manuela: No, not me – my brother. (general laughter)

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

Manuela: That is true. (Ritchie, 2010)

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 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.. (general laughter)

Eduardo's comment that "*harshest* punishment is usually by your family" 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. It also appears that the participants take pride in the strictness of their parents — the humor was affectionate and activated both an identification with their own families and with each other, an 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

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ground, their parents' habit of using their full names as a way of indicating they were in trouble and demanding immediate attention.

Carmen: When your whole names get *writ.. called out* (laughs)

Eduardo: (Laughs) Oh yeah, you get the whole name

Carmen: First name, middle name, and then two last names (general laughter)

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) (general laughter)

Manuela: *The belt*.

Pena: or *the shoe*.

Manuela: *the shoe*.

Eduardo: I was too quick for those (general laughter)

Manuela: Its alright, *I could take it*. The *chanclas*[2].

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. (Ritchie, 2010)

In this exchange, each participant contributed metonymic references to 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

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

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 (Ritchie, 2010).

3.5   Collaborative transformation of intentionality: *Pissing in your soup*

A second and even more complex example of shifting intentionality during collaborative story-telling occurred in the New Left Group. As in several other groups, the participants in this discussion had returned several times to the topic of whether police are held adequately to account for mistakes and violations of police procedure, especially when their mistakes lead to injury or death of innocent bystanders, "and you see the police *getting let off*." Tyler brought up the 'servant' metaphor that had appeared several times earlier in the conversation, including the passage discussed in an earlier section: "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? (general 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*."

Here, the blend of humorous incongruity with the intense perceptual simulations

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activated by the story of a baby being doused with pepper spray connects with and fills out the 'high stakes' schema (based on a familiar gambling metaphor) 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 pain and suffering to innocent civilians (metonymically, *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.

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 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*." Thus far, the initial intention, to use a humorously incongruous comparison of police officers to a waitress in a diner has remained constant. However, each contribution appears to have emerged spontaneously from the interaction of the overarching intention of the 'police as waitress' metaphor with the immediately preceding utterance. The metaphorical *waitress* story was evidently introduced with the intention of making the important points that police officers are fundamentally no different from other workers and should be held accountable and the parallel intention of telling a humorously incongruous story that would continue the pleasurable tone of levity and playfulness (Ritchie, 2010). *Quit pissing in their soup* introduced an element of incongruous vulgarity, but this is consistent with, and builds on, the tone of playfully irreverent exaggeration introduced by "pepper spray your baby."

With *quit pissing in their soup*, Tyler introduced a novel metaphor, extending the previous *waitress* instantiation of the 'public servant' metaphor in a humorously incongruous

way, that reinforced the previous story about a waitress apologizing for mixing up a breakfast order. The intention was clearly to attach both the disgusting elements of the metaphor and the incongruity to the police officer schema, still entirely consistent with the initial intention, but the incongruity was too strong, and Celeste apparently could not resist the opportunity to exploit the comic potential:

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*. (general laughter)

Tyler: You guys have the best *soup*. (general 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, hostile, or even subversive, but at another level, by re-instating the play frame, here Celeste preserved the conversation as a primarily 'sociable,' hence never fully serious, interaction. The readiness with which the other participants joined in the fun and completed the re-direction of the story's initial intention from serious and critical to comic and playfully vulgar confirms that they did not interpret Celeste's re-direction of the underlying intentionality as either uncooperative or hostile, and the implicit vulgar subversiveness of the remark fit well with the group's apparent overall shared intentions (Ritchie, 2010). This type of collaborative intentionality is only possible in a situation of social harmony and cultural compatibility among participants; evidence of that level of compatibility is found throughout the conversation (see also Ritchie, 2009b).

3.6 Summary

The examples discussed in the foregoing were chosen to represent a variety of different story-telling episodes in a range of different contexts. All involve some use of metaphor; several of the stories appear to have been used *as* metaphors. Some of the stories appear to have emerged from prior and somewhat fixed intentions: both George's story about Tony Stevens and the manner in which he told it reflect a well-defined set of prior intentions and probably a well-rehearsed sequence of linguistic units. Leanne's story about the neighbor's first day of school and Manuela's purse-snatching story also reflect prior intentions, although they were probably less clearly defined than George's and do not appear to have been rehearsed at all. Rather, it appears that each utterance emerged spontaneously as the simulations associated with the reconstructed event appeared in the focused spotlight of her consciousness. At the other extreme, the acted out 'serial killer' story and the collaboratively-produced 'pissing in the soup' story appear to have emerged entirely in response to unforeseen opportunities in the discourse itself.

The stories about childhood punishments (the *chanclas*) and about police accountability ("*pissing in the soup*") represent an interesting form of collaboration. Both apparently arose spontaneously in response to unforeseen opportunities and developed through the accumulating responses of participants' to the previous participants' contributions. These examples differ, however, in an interesting way. The *chanclas* story is an elaboration of a shared cultural script (itself expressive of shared cultural values), so that each person's contribution was related to previous contributions in regular if not exactly predictable ways, based on the shared cultural stories and values. *Pissing in the soup* is an elaboration of a fantasy, itself couched within an outlandish fictional and metaphorical story

expressing police-related issues in terms of the values and practices of a corner café. The contributions are less predictable and arguably more creative, although they also are firmly anchored in shared cultural scripts and values.

4. Discussion.

It seems obvious that participants in talk ordinarily have intentions for every contribution to a conversation, including the metaphors they use and the stories they tell — if they didn't, conversations would be incoherent and incomprehensible. However, it does not follow that participants necessarily begin a story, much less an entire conversation, with fully-developed intentions, that their intentions are necessarily telic or goal-oriented in any larger sense, or that they consistently pursue the intentions they begin with. All of this happens sometimes. But on other occasions, speakers' intentions develop and change, in response to the unfolding interaction, sometimes quite radically. As the preceding examples show, speakers' intentions often change in response to others' reactions or remarks, sometimes in response to unanticipated opportunities, including meanings or entailments in the speaker's own utterance that were not initially noticed or attended to. Often, speakers' metaphor use and story-telling intentions may emerge spontaneously in response to opportunities for word-play or teasing, as is evident in the New Left group discussed above, or simply as a desire to share a pleasant memory, as in Leanne's story about the neighbor girl's first day of school. These spontaneously-emergent intentions often do not develop beyond the overarching goal of maintaining sociability through shared pleasure, but sometimes listeners' responses develop into full-blown dialogue that leads in directions not anticipated by any of the participants.

Interlocutors enter a conversation with at least a generalized intention to interact socially, although the quality of that intention may of course vary (e.g., it may be hostile or friendly, telic or paratelic). Beyond that, interlocutors may or may not bring with them more particular intentions, for example to ask a favor, express an opinion, or relay information. Particular intentions of this sort may also arise, during the course of a conversation, in response to something that is said. For example, the mention of some topic may activate an intention to express an opinion on the topic, a metaphor introduced by another participant may present unanticipated expressive opportunities or stimulate memory of creation of an interesting story, or a story told by another participant in the conversation may activate a chain of associations leading to an intention to tell a different story. Thus, at least in casual social conversations even the overarching intentions associated with what Chafe (1994) has called 'super-topics' or 'unifying ideas' may remain stable only over relatively short stretches of conversation, sometimes enduring for only a handful of speaking turns. We argue that these *more or less* stable 'unifying ideas' interact with the contents of the short-term focus or spotlight of consciousness to generate spontaneous communicative intentions that in turn guide the production of utterances.

We propose that, at least in casual and unscripted social interactions, intentionality can most usefully be described as a continuum, ranging from the overarching and often rather generalized intentions associated with the initial purpose of the conversation (to be sociable, perhaps also to ask a favor, impart some information, or issue an invitation) to the spontaneous and more particular intentions that arise in response to the briefly activated units of awareness in the spotlight of focused consciousness, and activate the production of a story, a short utterance, or a metaphor or bit of word-play. The briefly activated units of awareness may stem from the utterances of other interlocutors, from unforeseen possibilities of one's *own* utterances, from other bits of awareness from current sensory experience or memory —

or, probably most commonly, from the interaction of several of these elements. In general, spontaneous intentions are more specific and more active, overarching intentions less so.

In sum, aside from rehearsed stories like George's story about Tony Stevens, most utterances in casual conversations are the product of spontaneous communicative intentions. These spontaneous communicative intentions emerge from the interaction of overarching intentions with simulations and language units in the flow of discourse. Overarching intentions may themselves be more or less stable, either present from the beginning in pursuit of a pre-conceived purpose, or emerging spontaneously from the speaker's response to elements in the ongoing stream of discourse. Intermediate-level intentions often result from the dynamic interaction between cognitive and social-interactive (discursive) processes, and may reasonably be characterized as a property of the interacting social group taken as a complex, dynamic cognitive unit (see Ritchie, 2009b for a more detailed discussion). Collaborative intentionality and the collaborative story-telling it produces is only an extreme form of this socially interactive cognition.

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