‘On MSN with buff boys’: Self- and other-identity claims in the context of small stories

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This is a study of self- and other-identity claims such as ascriptions, assessments and categorizations in the classroom interactional data of female adolescent students of a London comprehensive school. The study follows an identities-in-interaction approach and attends to the occurrence of identity claims in stories of recent mediated interactions (e.g. on MSN, by text) between tellers and male suitors, which I collectively call small stories. In a narrative-interactional analysis of such claims in two small stories, I postulate a distinction between taleworld and telling identity claims that allows me to show how the sequential context of the claims has implications for their interactional uptake. I specifically focus on the relational organization of the identity claims in contrastive pairs of positive and negative attributes and on their contribution to the stories’ tellership rights and tellability. My main aim is to show how identity claims can be intimately linked with and discursively invoke solidified roles (cf. known, habitual) that hold above and beyond the local context. I argue that the three interactional features of iterativity, narrativity and stylization hold the key to uncovering the links between identity claims with solidified roles.

KEYWORDS: Identity claims, taleworld-telling, small stories, breaking news, solidified roles

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of talk and interaction as a prime site for identity analysis is widely recognized in socially minded linguistic approaches. This goes hand in hand with a constructionist view of identities as not existing independently of communication but instead as emerging in specific communicative events. There, they are jointly (re)fashioned by interactants and are contextually bound: intimately linked, among others, with the local activity and the participants’ roles and relations. From this point of view, the aim of identities-in-interaction research (e.g. see chapters in Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003; Antaki and Widdicombe 1998) is not to get to the essence of who people are but to explore what they do being in specific interactions for specific purposes.
and through specific language choices. In other words, how identities become locally occasioned discursive projects that interrelate with language forms in indirect and mediated ways as opposed to one-to-one correspondences. This emphasis on the constitutive role of language in social identities, coupled with the recognition that identities can be multiple, fleeting, and irreducibly contingent, has precipitated a shift of interest from category-bound research with a demographic basis, to practice-based research.

In the light of the above, numerous studies have set out to document the ways in which semiotic resources and details in the conversational management more or less subtly index larger social roles (cf. transportable identities, Zimmerman 1998). As a result, a focus on what is admittedly not common occurrence in conversations, that is, on explicit articulations of identities has been under-represented. This may be so on the basis that ‘what people can state is only a small part of what they know, do and are’ (Goodwin 2006: 20).

Interestingly, this kind of propositionalization of identities forms the main object under scrutiny in identity analysis in social sciences: self-ascriptions are specifically initiated, elicited, scaffolded or questioned by researchers in interview contexts with the aim of investigating what kinds of purchase social identities such as gender, class, ethnicity have for individuals; also, what it is that individuals signal as being ‘continuous’ or ‘stable’ aspects of themselves; which social positions they see themselves as fitting in or departing from.2

In this paper, I set out to explore self- and other-ascriptions of the kind that social science interview analysts tend to focus upon, what I call self- and other-identity claims. To do so, however, I align with the concerns and tools of the interactional research of semiotic resources that only implicitly serve as identity markers. I specifically recognize the importance of storytelling in the study of identity claims and I draw on a contextually sensitive apparatus in order to shed light on them as interactional resources. I also probe into the question of what kinds of insights such claims can give us for the tellers’ solidified (cf. known, habitual) roles, that is, roles that hold above and beyond the local context of their occurrence.

The point of departure for this analysis is the occurrence of self- and other-identity claims in the context of certain stories that routinely occur in the data. These stories typically involve recent or planned, imminent interactions, e.g. on MSN, on the mobile phone, between the female tellers and boys that they are interested in. As I will explain in detail below, following recent work (Bamberg 2004; Georgakopoulou 2006, 2007), I call these accounts small stories in order to highlight the interactional features that render them distinct in relation to the lengthy, monologic narrative accounts elicited in social science research interviews.

Below, I will examine self- and other-identity claims in the context of two small stories as narrative-interactional resources and, on the basis of this analysis, show their importance as markers of solidified roles. I will also postulate the distinction between taleworld and telling identity claims recognizing that the
immediate sequential context in a storytelling event in which claims occur is consequential for their interactional management. Whether an identity claim is a teller claim or a telling claim also has implications for how it supports tellership and tellability. I will argue that identity claims are predominantly about physical appearance and modes of conduct. They are also organized relationally, in contrastive pairs of positive and negative attributes. This system of organization comprises hierarchies of attributes and thus (re)constructs notions of normative value agreed upon in the local network. Overall, I will show that the ways in which identity claims point to solidified roles are to be found in what the claims are about, how they are interactionally managed and what kinds of narrative plots they are part of.

2. DATA AND METHODS

This paper is based on data collected for an ESRC-funded project entitled UCCI (Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction), 2005–2008. The project has employed the methods of ethnographic sociolinguistics. We have focused on a group of 14 and 15 year olds in a comprehensive school in London and to collect the data we have employed participant-observation, radio-microphones, interviews, retrospective participant commentary on extracts from the radio-microphone recording and video recordings. We have also drawn on school policy and media documents to set this in a wider context. The data collection has involved two phases of audio-recorded data (180 hours in total), about one year apart, from five female and four male focal participants who were in year 9 in the first phase of the collection. The recordings covered three days of school on each occasion and included both classroom and playground recordings.

The data for this paper come from the audio-recorded interactions of one female participant whom we call Nadia. I have been focusing on Nadia and the other female students’ conversations and interviews with the aim of exploring how they locally report (e.g. rework in small stories) their techno popular-cultural media engagement, ranging from mobile phone calls, text-messaging to songs and soap-operas, PCs, internet, electronic games, fashion and body-care. I have also been documenting the kinds of narratives and meta-representations that participants draw upon when asked to reflect on this engagement and on other issues of analytical importance.

2.1 A profile of Nadia

When the recordings started, Nadia was 14 years old. Her home language is English and she describes her background as mixed race. Her mother is mixed race South African and her father is Armenian. On paper, Nadia is a ‘gifted and talented’ student, and somebody who finds it easy to get good marks without having to work too hard. Yet, in her interview, she claims that certain teachers ‘are just ganging up on [her]’ and that she finds school ‘a bit boring’. As a
result, she feels that she is ‘kind of under-achieving’ and not working to her ‘full potential’. It is therefore not surprising that during class, Nadia routinely chats with her friends and frequently engages in a playful, tongue-in-cheek banter with the teachers. This is tolerated by them partly because she is a bright student and partly because she exerts a massive influence over her classmates. Chatting with friends generally involves stories about boys, fashion talk and media references such as catchphrases from films or television programmes.

Fieldwork observations and the interviews with the participants clearly attest to a leading position for Nadia within the ‘popular’ girls’ group. It is telling that she too self-describes as the ‘queen of the class’. She also knows and socializes with people from other classes in Year 9. Shared music tastes seem to define the friendship network of the popular group but also shared attitudes to school (cf. Goodwin 2006: 78), i.e. which subject is boring or not, curricular and extra-curricular issues. The group varies in academic ability, but Nadia is one of the highest achievers. The other girls though look up to Nadia mostly for her popular culture engagement and knowledge, particularly in relation to music. This engagement is linked with her own aspirations and self-perceptions as somebody who likes ‘creative stuff’ (interview) and using the ‘left side of her brain’. Nadia has been to a dance school, and wants ‘to be an actress’ or ‘do something in the media’. It is worth noting that Nadia emerged as the most prolific user of such references in Dover’s (2007) exploratory survey of techno-popular cultural media references employed in sixteen hours of radio-microphone recordings of five of our focal participants, three female and two male.

Nadia’s status in relation to new media and technologies also seems to correlate with a certain access to the hetero-sexual market: there are notably no restrictions from her home as to spending a lot of time online and having a mobile phone, which apply to other focal participants. Nadia’s stories report access to technologies and media resources but also positions of popularity with the men she interacts with: she is the one who is contacted and texted, admired for her looks when she shares pictures on the web, and for whom boys like Stefan go ‘live on webcam’, as we will see in the data below.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Two small stories about a ‘sweet talker’ and a ‘buff boy’

In recent work, we have proposed small stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Georgakopoulou 2007) as an antidote to canonical narrative studies, a ‘new’ narrative turn that sets out to include certain under-represented activities in the focal concerns of narrative and identity analysis. We see small stories as an umbrella-term that captures a gamut of frequent and salient narrative activities in conversational contexts, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared or known events; also allusions to previous

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tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell. These tellings are typically small when compared to the pages and pages of transcript of interview narratives. On a metaphorical level, the term locates a level and even an aesthetic for the identification and analysis of narrative: the smallness of talk, where fleeting moments of narrative orientation to the world (Hymes 1996) can be easily missed out on by an analytical lens which only takes fully-fledged stories as the prototype from which the analytic vocabulary is supposed to emerge.

Small stories can be about very recent or still unfolding events, thus immediately reworking slices of experience and arising out of a need to share what has just happened. As we will see, I call such small stories of very recent events breaking news. Small stories can also be quickly and elliptically told to back up or elaborate on an argumentative point occurring in an ongoing conversation. Certain small stories may fulfil prototypical definitional criteria such as the temporal ordering of events but others do not (for a detailed discussion of the definition of small stories see Georgakopoulou 2007: ch 2). In all cases, the identification of small stories does not rest exclusively on prototypical textual criteria. Instead, small stories are seen as discourse engagements that integrally connect with what gets done on particular occasions and in particular settings. The claim is that recognizing ‘narrativity’ or a ‘narrative orientation’ in certain activities shows regard for situated understandings and makes the social consequentiality of interactional choices part of the analysis. In this respect, I share the view of mainstream narrative analysis that narrative is perhaps the most ubiquitous of speech events, a prime site for constructing self. Within interactional studies of narrative, this view is also shared by e.g. Ochs and Capps (2001: 2) and Goodwin (2006: 209). This, however, gives the analyst more reason and urgency for not shying away from any moments of narrative proclivity in everyday environments.

To go back to the small stories of the data at hand, as suggested, these occur frequently in the classroom. On average eight small stories are launched within a period and they typically involve reports of recent mediated interactions with boys, e.g. on MSN, by texting. The sheer act of a boy making contact is tellable in these cases: it is the interaction (who said what and how) that therefore becomes the crux of event-ness in the reports. I more specifically call these small stories of very recent events breaking news and further classify them into:

a. **Reports of recent mediated interactions.** The most frequent type of small stories in the data (episodically organized as we will see along the lines of ‘he’s like/he goes/says’; and ‘I’m like/I go/say’).

b. **Stories-in-the-making.** This normally involves text-messages being read as they are received and being consequential for a future course of action.

In both cases, breaking news frequently leads to small stories of projected events (projections): these involve (near) future encounters with the men-talked-about and are episodically organized interactions of ‘I will say- s/he will say’ type.
Breaking news and projections are often sequentially contingent, interspersed with references to shared events and they present thematic affinities. They also lead to thematically related ‘second’ stories. They thus resonate with Goodwin’s (1997) ‘family of stories’ that were significant for the social group organization of pre-adolescent girls; also, with Schiffrin’s ‘intertextual stories’ (2000), which were found to be a vehicle for meaning-making in the process of putting together a life story.

Small stories occur in the classroom data amidst other activities and in that respect they are in tune with people attending to many things simultaneously. They are however clearly marked with certain framing devices (e.g. addressee-oriented questions such as ‘did I tell you?’), temporal adverbials such as ‘yesterday’, etc.). They also tend to become focal topics in that they are taken up again, if momentarily exited from (e.g. when students have to orient to the classroom agenda), with minimal marking. We can see how Nadia signals a return to the story in the data at hand (see Appendix B) in lines 35–36 with the marker ‘anyways’ (cf. line 261) and with locally subsequent reference ‘he’ (instead of full name, i.e. Adam) in locally initial position (cf. line 208, line 261): *anyways yea:h he text me yesterday*. This type of person reference ‘seeks to bring off continuity across an intervening hiatus’ and signals ‘resumed same spate of talk’ (Schegloff 1996: 452). In this way, the small stories in the data act as ‘continuing state of incipient talk’ (Schegloff and Sacks 1973), where the line of communication for telling remains open throughout the lesson and speakers can engage, disengage and re-engage with the story.

The data at hand comprise two interlocked breaking news stories both told by Nadia during a maths period. The extended sequence of the stories can be found in the Appendix B. The stories involve reports of mediated interactions with two boys/suitors the day before: the first story, which I call ‘Adam the sweet talker’, involves a reported texting communication between Nadia and Adam; the second thematically related story, which I call ‘The buff Stefan’, involves an MSN communication with a webcam appearance from Stefan. When telling the stories, Nadia sits at a small table in the back corner of the classroom with Lisa and Shenice. In the space of approximately eleven minutes, the first story is disengaged and re-engaged four times but remains focal.

As we will see below in detail, Nadia’s assessment of Adam as sweet talker at the end of the reported interaction (lines 79–80) leads to a negotiation between Shenice and Nadia around the topic of falling for sweet talk. During the negotiation two hypothetical scenarios (lines 94–95, lines 106–107) and two references to shared events (97–104, 117–121) are brought in by Nadia argumentatively (to refute Shenice’s claim that she does not fall for sweet talk). Breaking news frequently leads to projections, as suggested: in this case, the projection (line 261–272) involves a planned face-to-face meeting with Adam. The second breaking news story (lines 295–372) is more sustained: as it reports a sighting (on the web-cam) of the man talked about, it typically unfolds in slow-motion, with a detailed description of the character’s physical appearance (and
outfit) and past progressive verbs which stress the duration of the scene. To sum up, the stories introduced in this stretch of discourse are as follows:

- Hypothetical scenarios [lines 94–95, 106–107]
- References to shared events [lines 97–104, 117–121]
- Projection [lines 261–272]
- Breaking news II (a ‘second’ story): ‘The buff Stefan’ [lines 295–372]

### 3.2 Taleworld vs. telling identity claims

Using the basic definition of identity as social positions/orientations about self (but also other), I classify as identity claims (in the context of small stories in the data) all self- and other-assessments/characterizations, ascriptions, attributions and categorizations. As we will see below, they are actor-focused inasmuch as they refer to personality traits (e.g. physical appearance, modes of conduct). They are also associated with likes and dislikes and with certain category-bound activities in plots, akin to membership categorization devices (Sacks 1992). Drawing on well-established distinctions within narrative studies between narrated text and narrative event (cf. telling and tale, e.g. see Bauman 1986; Blum-Kulka 1997), I have postulated a distinction, for analytical purposes, between taleworld and telling identity claims. Taleworld identity claims pertain to characters (either third parties or the teller as a character) in the reported events and are embedded in the narrative (inter)action (e.g. they may occur in reported speech): for example he was looking so sexy (line 300). Telling identity claims on the other hand pertain to the interactional level of the here-and-now/you and I of the local storytelling situation and either suspend the narrative action (reminiscent of external evaluation, Labov 1972) or serve as a follow-up/coda to the reported action: e.g. I’m too smart for sweet talk (line 131).

This distinction between two interrelated yet analytically separable aspects of identity claims resonates with previous studies in which character assessments (characterizations) within stories are recognized to be important positioning devices. A case in point is Bamberg’s positioning model (1997; also see Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008), where how characters are positioned within the story in relation to each other and in space and time constitutes level 1; how the speaker/narrator positions oneself (and is positioned) within the interactive situation is level 2 of a three-step operation of analytically tapping into positions. From the interrelations between these two levels, we move to level 3, that is, positions that hold above and beyond the immediate storytelling situation and can be seen as solidified roles. These indicate how the speaker/narrator positions a sense of self that can be traced back to individual conversational moves, to discourses that are in circulation amongst the participants and/or to discourses

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that are called upon as not necessarily known (‘master’ discourses). Here too, we will show how taleworld and telling identity claims can provide a window into what may be habitual, tacitly accepted and known roles – but always locally occasioned.

Below, I provide a list of taleworld and telling identity claims in each of the two breaking stories. These are also indicated in bold and bold and italics respectively in the data in Appendix B. Transcription conventions are listed in Appendix A.

**Taleworld identity claims in ‘Adam the sweet talker’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Identity Claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>[I was like] oh::: you’re so lovely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>[you’re like] oh he’s so sweet he’s so lovely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>S:</td>
<td>[I said] they were butt ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>[you think] he’s lovely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>[breres are like] ah you’re the best thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>267</td>
<td>L:</td>
<td>well, I’ll act like I’m a little white girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>272</td>
<td>L:</td>
<td>then he won’t like a pretty bla- little white girl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Telling identity claims in ‘Adam the sweet talker’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Identity Claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>N(adia):</td>
<td>ohh he’s so sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>but (.) I don’t like sweet talkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>I’m too smart for sweet talk (cf. line 138 No seriously I am)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>L(isa):</td>
<td>I’m a little white girl; repeated in line 160, partially repeated inline 155. (Strictly speaking, these occurrences are outside the context of the small story, but the claim is taken up in it later, from line 267 onwards).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>So what if you’re white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161–162</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>you’re not a little white girl, you’re black ha ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>268</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>you are a little white girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>270</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>Yeah, but you are a pretty little girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>273</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>I swear down this girl she’s so funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>281</td>
<td>L:</td>
<td>You’re so deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>285–286</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>Just cos you’re white doesn’t mean that you are stupid or anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287</td>
<td>L:</td>
<td>Being a little white girl is so funny sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>you’re so funny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second breaking news story, the identity claims employed are as follows:

**Taleworld identity claims in ‘The buff Stefan’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Identity Claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>He was looking so sexy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>305</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>He was lookin’ cris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>307</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>He was looking some kinda sexy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>364</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>[He’s like to me] ‘hey beautiful’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>367</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>[I don’t like it when breres say] you’re buff or you’re choong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368</td>
<td>N:</td>
<td>[when they say] you’re beautiful or you’re gorgeous or you’re stunning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Telling identity claims in ‘The buff Stefan’

301 N: My man’s light skin yeah
303 N: He IS buff!
313–314 N: And he’s mixed race nice colour mixed race
316–317 N: He’s a little bit darker [...] and nice smooth skin
334 N: Because Madeleine’s butters
337 N: Cos you’re too pretty
361 N: but he’s so nice

As we can expect, most such claims (in fact, all of them in the second breaking news) are introduced by Nadia, as the main teller. In addition, telling identity claims are more frequent than taleworld identity claims (61.1% vs. 38.9%), which is typical not just of this sample but of our other data too.

Positive and negative attributes in identity claims. The analysis below will show that what identity claims are about and how they are organized semantically and lexically are linked both with the themes of the stories at hand and with how they contribute to a story’s tellability and tellership. But first let us note what the common lexical choices in the identity claims are. As we can see in Table 1 below, claims are normally made up of actor-focused qualifiers. These are organized relationally, with contrastive and associative relationships, so that a list of positive and negative attributes concerning primarily physical appearance, but also modes of conduct, emerges. Associations can reinforce positive or negative assessments or equally mitigate or cancel them out. For example, although little white girl is employed as a negative attribution (see discussion below), its association with good looks (pretty) immediately mitigates the negative force. The reverse applies to sweet (positive attribution) in correlation with sweet talker (sweet then takes on a negative connotation).

The qualifiers of the claims present meanings that have purchase or are sanctioned in the local network. For example smart and stupid tend to refer to popular culture engagement and knowledge (music in this excerpt); also, to ways of operating within the heterosexual market (e.g. ‘seeing through’ guys, as in this case).

3.3 Identity claims as narrative resources

Below, I will show how identity claims support the main teller’s rights to tell of the story’s events and how they contribute to their tellability; also how they create opportunities for negotiation and co-construction between the interlocutors. In conversations, it has been shown that first assessments make a claim to epistemic primacy for the speaker (Raymond and Heritage 2006). We can extend this argument to the taleworld identity claims of the stories at hand. Such claims support tellership in the sense of experiential primacy. It is thus not accidental that in both breaking stories Nadia as the main teller is the one who produces all taleworld identity claims.6

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Table 1: Contrastive qualifiers in identity claims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive qualifiers</th>
<th>Negative qualifiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lovely – nice – sweet</td>
<td>Sweet talker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexy – buff – cris (mostly reserved for boys)</td>
<td>Butters – butt ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty – beautiful – gorgeous – stunning (reserved for girls)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light colour mixed race (esp. when combined with blue eyes and tall)</td>
<td>Dark skin – brown eyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Telling identity claims on the other hand are normally produced in relation to a story’s evaluation in the sense of local relevance of telling and of overall assessment of the characters talked about. They therefore set up spaces for co-construction between teller and interlocutors and a joint exploration of moral frames. We can see this in Nadia’s question at the end of the reported texting interaction with Adam: *Do you fall for sweet talk?* (line 82). This question immediately follows a telling identity claim (*he’s so sweet*) and the dislike associated with it (*but I don’t like sweet talkers*), as we can see in extract 1 below:

(1)  
79   o:hh he’s so sweet  
80   bu:t (.) I don’t like sweet talkers

This leads to a sequence of negotiation between Nadia and Shenice, which we will discuss below.

Identity claims also contribute to or undercut tellability. Taleworld identity claims in the stories at hand enhance tellability by reporting the positive or negative attributes of the male characters talked about. They thus play a pivotal role in stories which serve as occasions for (re)affirming and constructing the teller’s positions in the heterosexual market. In Nadia’s case, these are positions of popularity, as the one who is being pursued (e.g. contacted or texted by men who tend to be positively assessed). Such stories also serve as occasions for the joint exploration and (re)affirmation or contestation of normative models of heterosexual relationships. In the data at hand, the negotiation between Nadia and Shenice on the topic of falling for sweet talk is premised on an agreed implied norm that sweet talkers and falling for them are ‘bad’. In this negotiation, identity claims become consequential for plots, allowing or disallowing certain future scenarios. For instance, Nadia’s proclamation *I’m too smart for sweet talk* (line 131) at the end of the negotiation puts a particular interpretative spin on the previously reported events. It indicates that, in a market in which Nadia has got multiple suitors, prospects of a relationship with somebody who says the wrong thing are slim. Comparably, in the projected meeting with Adam (line
261–272), Lisa attempts to allow for the scenario in which she will be joining Nadia at the meeting by bringing in the identity claim of a little white girl:

(2)

\[
\begin{align*}
261 & \quad \text{N: } \quad \text{Anyways yeah (.) he’s like (.)} \\
262 & \quad \text{he wants to come and see me} \\
263 & \quad \text{but I would say yeah you can come Lisa} \\
264 & \quad \text{but you can’t} \\
265 & \quad \text{L: } \quad \text{Why:} \\
266 & \quad \text{N: } \quad \text{Because he’ll like you instead} \\
267 & \quad \text{L: } \quad \text{Well I- I’ll act like I’m a little white girl ( )} \\
268 & \quad \text{N: } \quad \text{You are a little white girl}
\end{align*}
\]

The taleworld identity claim ‘I’ll act like I’m a little white girl’ (line 267) is mobilized here by Lisa to disallow the scenario of Stefan liking her and, instead, to allow for her to join Nadia at the meeting. We will see in more detail below how this particular identity claim of a ‘little white girl’ is employed throughout the telling of the small story involving Adam.

In addition, identity claims may be confirmed or refuted by prior (shared) experiences and may be qualified as a result. We can illustrate this in the interactional sequence between Nadia, Lisa and Shenice on the topic of falling for sweet talk:

(3)

\[
\begin{align*}
82 & \quad \text{N: } \quad \text{do you fall↑ for sweet talk?} \\
83 & \quad \text{L: } \quad \text{hmm↑} \\
84 & \quad \text{N: } \quad \text{Do you fall for sweet talk?} \\
85 & \quad \text{L: } \quad \text{Not really} \\
86 & \quad \text{N: } \quad \text{Do you?} \\
87 & \quad \text{don’t lie to me Shenice}
\end{align*}
\]

As we can see in extract 3 above, Lisa’s qualified negative answer (not really, line 85) to Nadia’s question ‘Do you fall for sweet talk?’ (line 82) prompts Nadia to specifically address Shenice, probably by turning her head towards her at the same time as uttering the exclusive ‘Do you?’ (line 86). There must be some kind of a non-verbal cue in the place of a ‘no’. This is a dispreferred response: the preference for agreement in type-conforming questions is well attested to (see Raymond and Heritage 2006). Nadia picks up on this non-verbal cue of a negative answer and as a result goes on to say ‘don’t lie to me Shenice’ (line 87).

Accusations such as this (don’t lie to me Shenice) make relevant a denial or some type of counter-claim by their recipients (Goodwin 2006: 118). In this case, this takes the form of an extreme case formulation (line 96 I’ve never said that to you; Pomerantz 1986) from Shenice, after Nadia has brought in one hypothetical scenario in order to back up her accusation:
if a breke says one nice thing to you you’re like
((high pitched)) >oh he’s so sweet he’s so lovely<
I’ve never said that to you

Extreme case formulations lend themselves easily to refutation by a single reference to one exception and in this way they are ‘factually brittle’ (Edwards 2000). In this case, Nadia responds to it by moving from the hypothetical to the actual, thus bringing in one narrative incident, which she presents as shared memory with Lisa (like remember you called me):9

like if you get chirpsed on road
like remember you called me
to tell me ‘bout that time you was with Laura

A second extreme case formulation (line 112 cos a breke has never said something sweet to me) by Shenice is also a response to a hypothetical scenario brought in argumentatively by Nadia:

if a breke says something sweet to you
you think he’s lovely
((background)) you’re doing your coursework
you didn’t even bother to bring your basic equipment
how can you do your work properly?
I don’t know
cos a breke has never said something sweet to me

The extreme case formulation in line 112 is met by yet another accusation from Nadia (line 113 don’t lie), which repeats that of line 87 (don’t lie to me Shenice). This leads to a reformulation by Shenice (line 116 Not that I can remember).10

don’t lie
I swear to God =
= sure
Not that I can remember
Dan said he loved you
that’s sweet =
= (that’s) different
How is it different
It’s different
but innit?
Do you fall for sweet talk
on a level?

( )
I’m too smart for sweet talk

Having qualified her claim, Shenice opts out of elaborating on how the incident referred to by Nadia was different and does not respond to Nadia’s (slightly qualified) restated initial question: ‘do you fall for sweet talk on a level?’ (lines 127–128 above). This may be heard as backtracking on Shenice’s part. Indeed, Nadia hears this silence as a transition relevance point and, after a rather long pause (8 seconds in line 130), she shifts from Shenice to her own point of view on the topic. She does this by means of the telling identity claim ‘I’m too smart for sweet talk’ (line 131) which we will discuss in more detail below.

3.4 Identity claims as interactional resources

In this section, I will show how identity claims are drawn upon as interactional resources, in order to justify, defend, or challenge a point of view. In similar vein, I will argue that tellers of identity claims do not always wholeheartedly subscribe to the claim made but at times they may playfully invoke it and distance themselves from it. I suggested above that telling identity claims often become the object of negotiation and contestation amongst the participants. This may be so because they tend to be invoked accountably, that is, so as to justify either another claim or a selected course of action in the taleworld. For example, ‘I am too smart for sweet talk’ (line 131) justifies Nadia’s previously stated dislike of a telling identity claim (line 80, I don’t like sweet talkers). In similar vein, tellers tend to defend their self-identity claims in cases of challenges. In this case, Nadia insists on her claim that she is too smart for sweet talk (line 138, No seriously I AM) as a response to Shenice’s laughter (line 132, ha ha ha) that is heard as undercutting it. There are also cases, however, when the tellers do not wholeheartedly identify with the identity claims they make but instead over-perform, play with and ironicize them. We can see this in the case of the identity claim I am a little white girl. Its first mention illustrates the accountable uses of identity claims, as discussed above. Specifically, Lisa uses it to justify why she does not know the tune Make it vibrate that Nadia is singing (line 150).

((singing a tune)) make it make it vibrate

Thereafter, the claim remains focal throughout this stretch, entering the story of projected events, as we will see in excerpt 11 below. However, my contention

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is that, in contrast to ‘I’m too smart for sweet talk’, ‘I’m a little white girl’ is not to be taken at face value, that is, as a statement that Lisa fully subscribes to. Instead, it presents a double-edginess throughout. On the face of it, it is not a refuted claim: Nadia’s denial, ‘you are not white, you are black’ (line 161–162), is keyed as non-serious, as evidenced by the accompanying laughter. It is also contradicted later on: You are a little white girl, line 268 (excerpt 11 below). The claim is also supported by a telling of shared events (see excerpt 9 below) which provides purchase for the trajectory of this self-claim, showing that Lisa ‘being white and not black’ has at times been focalized in the friends’ interactional history:

(9)

273  N: ((laughs)) I swear down this girl she’s so funny
274        she goes to me do my make up please
275        so I done it yeah (.) I made her look like a clown
276        ((laughing)) I put yeah (.)
277        brown people’s foundation on her ((slaps table twice))
278        I made her wash it off though
279        then I put like this thick black stuff on her eyes
280        It was so: funny

However, there also seems to be a knowing allusiveness in ‘I’m a little white girl’. First, it is uttered by Lisa in a stylized way (i.e. keyed as non-serious, jocular), accompanied by a shift in tone of voice and laughter (e.g. line 284 in excerpt 10 below). It also co-occurs with ‘stock-phrases’ in Nadia’s group that are uttered in either stylized posh accent or in stylized American English (line 289 shut up, line 290 but no, line 291 you’re so funny):

(10)

282  N: It was hilarious (.) I was laughing
283        hhhhhh ((in American accent)) she didn’t find it funny though
284  L: I don’t find anything funny (.) I’m a little white girl hhhh
285  N: Could you stop saying that please? just cos you’re white
286        doesn’t mean that you’re stupid or anything
287  L: Being a little white girl is so funny sometimes
288  N: (3) ((stylized American)) is it me or is my leg vibrating
289  L?: Is ((stylized American)) is it me or just shut up
290  N: ((stylized posh accent)) but no
291  L: ((laughing)) you’re so funny
292        ((gasping)) (I’m a loner)
293  N: You said it ((sings)) make it make it vibrate        ((23.08 mins))

In addition, the more the associations of the claim are unpacked, the more its negative force is cancelled out:
IDENTITY CLAIMS IN SMALL STORIES

Here, Lisa distances herself from the claim by shifting from ‘I am a little white girl’ to ‘I’ll act like I’m a little white girl’ (line 267). Nadia picks up on this distancing and reinstates the claim (line 268). Whether she orients to both the skin colour and the cultural capital that ‘little white girl’ evokes is unclear in this case. However, in line 270, she mitigates what is perceived as negative about the claim by referring to Lisa’s looks. Further down (line 285–286 in excerpt 10 above), Nadia explicitly disassociates white from stupid (in the sense of not plugged into certain kinds of music, ‘un-cool’): Could you stop saying that please? just cos you’re white doesn’t mean that you’re stupid or anything. In response to this, Lisa herself also qualifies the negative associations of ‘I’m a little white girl’:

4. IDENTITY CLAIMS AND SOLIDIFIED ROLES

Uncovering some kind of continuity of self (i.e. stable and habitual aspects that hold above and beyond local contexts), even if multiplicities and contradictions are allowed, remains central to any identity analysis project. To this, the identities-in-interaction inquiry has raised serious objections by stressing the irreducible contingency and the discursive emergence of self. At the same time however, there has been a recent turn towards a more moderate and conciliatory position of documenting habituality in constructions of self and other, while staying committed to fine-grained language-focused analysis (e.g. Wetherell 2007; Wortham 2006). Within this turn, continuity in self-construction tends to be sought on the intersection between ethnographic methods and analyses of patterns across data. The former provide access to what the participants routinely orient to as stable aspects of themselves and others. The latter allow the analyst
to identify certain semiotic resources that recurrently serve as markers of self and other.

In the same spirit as the above research, I began this paper with the aim of finding out what kinds of insights into solidified roles the analysis of identity claims in small stories affords us. As this sort of analysis shies away from any deterministic, a priori assumptions about people’s identities,11 it needs to be made clear that solidified roles are not seen as static and context-independent self-definitions. Instead, solidified roles offer ‘glimpses’12 of identities that may have some kind of constancy for the participants. Constancy refers to habituality and resonance for the participants (e.g. ‘I can identify with this self-description’) as well as to sharedness and recognition (e.g. ‘People who know me well recognize this self-description’).

On the basis of this paper’s analysis, I argue that identity claims, even if always locally occasioned, are not necessarily ephemeral self- and other-ascriptions that occur only once. Instead, they often are recurrent ascriptions that have been uttered before and are recognized as such. In those cases, we can claim that identity claims are closely linked with solidified roles: they call upon them and are shaped by them. In fact, the narrative-interactional analysis of the identity claims in the two small stories at hand allows us to take one step further and suggest that there are three interactional features that contribute to identity claims acting as markers of solidified roles: iterativity, narrativity and stylization. The more these features are at play, the more an identity claim refers to an aspect of self or other that is solidified.

Let us take each feature separately. As noted by previous studies (e.g. Wortham 2006), recurrence, what I call here iterativity, of certain semiotic resources, in this case, of identity claims, is highly suggestive of solidified roles at play. In my analysis, iterativity includes not only recurrence (over time and across data) but also habitual formulations (e.g. by means of a closed set of lexical choices) and associations such as the ones we saw above. To be specific, the positive and negative self and other attributes expressed in slang lexis (e.g. ‘buff’, ‘cris’, ‘butters’) were frequently used in stories not only in the first phase of the data collection, but in the second phase too (one year later). Similarly, the frequently used identity claims presented a certain constancy in terms of lexical formulations: e.g. ‘little white girl’ was always uttered in the data as one prosodic unit and was not decomposed into e.g. ‘little girl’ or ‘white girl’.

Iterative identity claims call upon and form evidence for the participants’ shared interpretative repertoires, defined as ‘systems of signification and building-blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures in talk’ (Potter and Wetherell 1995: 85). Interpretative repertoires constitute ‘available resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions’ (Potter and Wetherell 1995: 85). These shared systems of meaning making can be assumed to be traceable to the systematic recurrence of identity claims in certain discourse practices in certain sites; in this case, small stories amongst friends during the school lesson. The assumption

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here is that any self- and other-identity claims are inextricably linked with the social relations at play and the fact that they appear in the context of telling small stories, indeed, a specific type of small stories.\textsuperscript{13}

Identity claims also invoke solidified roles by drawing on lived/shared experience. In fact, they are often traceable to or accountable for within stories of shared events. We saw an example of this in the case of ‘I am a little white girl’ and the reference to the shared event of Nadia giving Lisa a makeover with ‘brown people’s foundation’ (line 270–280). This jointly constructed story shows that the identity claim in question has, if anything, been circulating in the group and become part of their interactional history. The same applied to Shenice’s claim that she does not ‘fall for sweet talk’, which, as we saw, was challenged by Nadia with references to shared events (lines 97–104, 117–121). In both cases, identity claims presented \textit{narrativity}, that is, they had become part of emplotment scenarios (ready-made experiential packages), which could be invoked argumentatively. This tends to have implications for the uses of identity claims as negotiation devices in local contexts and the extent to which they can be contested, by whom, and how. In a previous study, identity claims and other social positions that were frequently employed in stories of shared events were found to be less contestable than more ephemeral claims (see Georgakopoulou 2007: ch. 4). This is not to be taken as a deterministic finding. Instead, the suggestion here is that from the moment identity claims enter shared emplotment scenarios in a close group’s interactional history, they tend to become more crystallized and tacitly accepted.

A third interactional feature of iterative identity claims in the data is that of \textit{stylization}. This refers to crystallized or formulaic phrasing (cf. ‘iterative and quotable fragments of language’; Coupland 2001: 345), allusive and with the potential of playful engagement. As both Rampton (1999) and Coupland (2001) have argued, stylization involves exaggerated and performance-oriented quotations of voices that introduce shifts to codes other than the one of the surrounding talk. In the data at hand, ‘I am a little white girl’, for instance, tends to be uttered in an American accent or a baby-like intonation. In addition, as we have seen, it co-occurs with other stylized phrases (e.g. \textit{oh shut up}). Stylizations have been found to act as indexical resource (Rampton 1999; Coupland 2001) by being conventionally associated with certain types of people, activities, social groups and situations.

In the light of the above, we can say that through habitual engagement (iterativity) in similar practices, participation in plots (narrativity), and formulaic uttering (stylization), certain identity claims can become part of a \textit{rehearsed self}. This involves a more or less strategic and agentive deployment over time of more or less reflected upon, tried out and experimented with positions (versions of self). In other words, it is in those continuous and repetitious engagements that we can begin to get a sense of a habitus (plural) that then becomes the source for a continuous sense of who people are – a sense of a person as ‘same’ in spite of continuous change. Put differently, the actual ‘work’ that is being conducted by
individuals in interactive engagement with identity claims in the telling of small stories can feed into a sense of self – in the form of a continuous process within which this sense comes to existence (emerges).

We present the above schematically in Table 2. The left column summarizes (in no particular order) the three interactional features of identity claims in small stories (i.e. iterativity, narrativity, stylization) that act as pointers to solidified roles. The middle column shows the links of these features with the interlocutors’ (shared) models of meaning making in local contexts. Finally, the right hand side column shows their links with the production of social life. These interrelated processes should not be seen as linearly connected but as mutually feeding and multiply associated. It is my contention, however, that there are closer links to be found horizontally in Table 2 than vertically.

5. CONCLUSION

Drawing on classroom-based data from a London comprehensive school, I have attempted to establish links between identity claims and the telling, tellers, and tellability of small stories in which they routinely occur. I have also delved into the habituality and tacitness of the versions of self and other that these claims support and are shaped by. To do so, I have closely attended to the relation of the identity claims to the stories’ sequential unfolding (i.e. as taleworld vs. telling identity claims).

The analysis showed that it was not only the occurrence of the identity claims in the current story that was of significance but also their narrativity in a more general sense, that is, their belonging to a history of shared events. Claims were supported or challenged by references to such shared events. As such, they supported tellership rights but they also opened up spaces for a joint exploration of normative notions of what constitutes an agreed upon list of attributes (positive and negative, having to do with what one does and says) in heterosexual relationships. From this analysis, I abstracted iterativity, narrativity and stylization as the three main interactional features through which identity claims invoke and are based on solidified roles. In turn, I argued that each of those processes intimately linked with certain patterns of interactional management and intersubjectivity amongst the participants, having to do with models of sharedness (interpretative repertoires – emplotment scenarios – indexicality); also with the production of social life in time and space.
(practice – historicity – rehearsed versions of self). I posed those interrelations as dynamic and mutually feeding as opposed to being linearly connected and immovable.

As suggested, the study of identity claims tends to fall within the remit of social science interview research. In this paper, I adopted an interactional perspective in order to identify a range of analytic tools for explaining how participants bring in self- and other-ascriptions within stories-in-interaction, which should however be of relevance for narrative interview research as well. Here, I will single out certain points of intersection between the interactional management of identity claims and social identities, as those have emerged from our analysis. These, I believe, can constitute relevant domains for narrative interview research too.

The first has to do with well-rehearsed arguments in the literature (e.g. Potter and Hepburn 2005 for a recent example) according to which all interview data should be treated as interactional data. As we have seen in the analysis, when participants bring into their practical activity self- and other-identity claims, they still locally occasion them; in other words, they mobilize them in support of interactional projects. This suggests that the commonly found emphasis within narrative interview research on the representational aspects of the stories and the claims in them (cf. Atkinson and Delamont 2006) may be overstating them as self-construction resources as well as skewing the ways in which they are intimately linked with the interview as talk-in-interaction. We have seen here that identity claims are integrally connected with the local interactional context in which they occur and should therefore not be taken as unmediated or authentic records of self.

The second notable feature of the identity claims studied here is that they predominantly involve ‘others’ (which, in turn, normatively implicate self). This suggests that the excessive emphasis on stories and statements about self in interview situations underestimates the wealth of identity work done when the focus is on characterizations of others.

As we have seen, identity claims draw irrevocably on lived/shared experience and have a historicity that can be contested or accepted. This is normally obscured in interview narratives, where primacy is given to the single event and the researcher’s extrapolation of dominant discourses at play from that event.

Finally, the approach of this paper recommends a shift from the ‘big’ identities (e.g. ethnicity, class, gender) to their co-articulations and mediations by the participants’ focal concerns at a particular point in their lives. It must be recognized that participants can talk about big identities in more or less explicit ways, in other words, that propositionalization is not an all or nothing issue. In this case, we saw an emphasis on actor-focused claims that apprehended race and gender rather than explicitly stating them. Perhaps more importantly, we saw those claims being mediated by and subservient to the participants’ focal concerns. These had to do with heterosociability and heterosexual relationships.
as those were informed by communication technologies and the possibilities they afford for the (re)formation of interpersonal relationships.

NOTES

1. This research has been part of the ESRC-funded (Identities in Social Action Programme, www.identities.org.uk) project on Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction. In addition to myself, the team comprises Ben Rampton (director), Roxy Harris, Constant Leung and Lauren Small (all based at King’s College London) and Caroline Dover (Westminster). I am indebted to all the team members for stimulating discussions which have been instrumental in shaping the ideas for this paper. I am particularly grateful to Lauren Small who undertook the project’s fieldwork and a first transcription of this paper’s data. I am also grateful to two anonymous reviewers and Allan Bell for their very helpful suggestions for revision of an earlier version of this paper.

2. There is a tendency for representational approaches (i.e. identities seen as ‘behind’ the discourse that is used to ‘represent’ them and as given, pre-existent) within this line of inquiry that stands in contrast to the situational and contextual emergence views of identity within interactional studies.

3. In my study of the conversational data of a group of Greek female adolescents (Georgakopoulou 2007), stories of projected events proved to be more frequent than stories of past events: imagining the future was thus a more potent and meaningful discourse practice than that of remembering the past.

4. In this respect, I am in tune with Ochs and Capps (2001), who rather than identifying a set of distinctive features that always characterize narrative, stipulate dimensions (e.g. tellability, tellership, linearity, moral stance, etc.) that will always be relevant to a narrative, even if not elaborately manifest. These pertain both to narrating as an activity and to narrative as text: also, each narrative dimension establishes a range of possibilities which may be realized in a particular narrative (e.g. from one main teller to multiple co-tellers, from high to low tellability, etc.).

5. These reports foreground the movement of narrative time (with ‘and’ as a continuation marker commonly prefacing the quotative verbs: e.g. ‘and I said to him’, line 47, ‘and he was like’ line 49). They also present a constant tense shift from narrative present to past tense (e.g. ‘he was like’, line 7, ‘he’s like’, line 11 in the data at hand).

6. Nadia seems to be granted strong telling rights: this is related to her leading position in the group and to the type of story (non-shared events), which differentiates participants between knowing (teller) and not-knowing (audience; cf. Goodwin, 1986). Another factor here is that Lisa and Shenice tune in and out, as they have to get on with their work, which Nadia finds easy.

7. Georgakopoulou (2007: 108–115) has shown that co-construction (even in stories of shared events) normally pertains to the interpretation of the events and to character assessment, and not to the accuracy or authenticity of the events themselves.

8. In this case though, this question shows a certain command of the terms to be used by the recipient in the answer (i.e. making relevant a type-conforming answer – yes, no type of question, cf. Raymond and Heritage 2006).
9. Bringing in shared events (either in the form of elliptically (re)told shared stories or in the form of quick, even one-line references) argumentatively (e.g. to contest an interpretative angle put forth by an interlocutor, to challenge a point of view, etc.) is common practice in the conversations of intimates (see Georgakopoulou 2007: 50–57).

10. In line 119 Shenice opts for format-tying (i.e. same grammatical and syntactic structure, Goodwin 2006: 191) in her utterance ‘That’s different’ (line 119) as a response to Nadia’s prior utterance ‘That’s sweet’. Contesting the interpretative angle of the reference to the shared events that Nadia proposes as opposed to the actual content of what was said is typical of the interactional management of references to shared stories (Georgakopoulou 2007: 112–114). Nadia’s response in the form of a questioning repeat (Pomerantz 1984), ‘how is it different?‘ (line 120) is also typical (Pomerantz 1984).

11. The very usefulness of the concept of identity is also questionable in this inquiry. Identity is seen as a second-order notion that demands abstraction from the first-order, tractable aspects of practical experience. That said, conversation analysts are interested in cases when the participants themselves orient to or make relevant certain aspects of their and others’ identity. Admittedly, this is more easily done in cases of explicit self-ascriptions, such as the ones we have focused on here.

12. The language tends to be metaphorical here to accentuate tenuousness of links: e.g. there is talk of ‘window’, ‘glimpses’, ‘platforms’, etc. (as in e.g. Zimmerman’s model of identities-in-interaction, 1998).

13. A detailed analysis of participant roles, which is outside the scope of this paper, would show that the participants are differentiated in terms of who has the right to evaluate what state of affairs, whose identity claims become more ratified or challenged, and what kinds of identity-bound knowledge support the claims made.

14. An interactional analysis of identity claims is more easily translatable into interview research, as I believe that the cross-fertilization between interview research and language-focused studies of identity is hampered by the differences in their focal concerns: the former looks out for articulations of identities while the latter tunes in to the subtle and indirect cues of them.

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APPENDIX A

Transcription conventions:

// the point in a turn where the utterance of the next speaker begins to overlap
= two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap
( ) speech that can’t be deciphered
(text) analyst’s guess at speech that’s hard to decipher
(( )) stage directions
(1.) approximate length of a pause in seconds
—— emphasized speech
> < faster than normal speech
:: extended speech
↑ rising intonation/question
↓ falling intonation
CAPITALS loud utterance relative to the surrounding talk
- abrupt cut-off or self-interruption of the sound in progress

APPENDIX B

Period 1 Maths: 8.55–9.40am

The following extract is a transcript of the extended sequence containing the two small stories discussed in section 3. The extract begins five minutes after Nadia has entered the classroom. Nadia sits at a small table in the back corner of the classroom with her friends Lisa and Shenice (her best friend Laura is not in the lesson). The girls are supposed to be doing their maths coursework but Nadia has been talking about her looks, stating that she will never be able to be a model because she is not the correct weight and has a bump on her nose. They then share some snacks as Nadia compares Harry Potter’s eyebrows with those
of a character from the television programme ‘The OC’. As Mr O’Cain begins the lesson, Nadia launches the small story about Adam texting her the previous day.

Participants =  N: Nadia, L: Lisa, S: Shenice

**Bold** = Taleworld identity claims.

**Bold italics** = Telling identity claims

((12.31 minutes into the lesson))

1 N: ((excited)) oh: Adam text me yesterday
2 d’ you know what he said?: =
3 L: = Re:ally?
4 N: he was gonna come and see me (. ) yesterday
5 Mr O: Folks you haven’t got time to talk
6 N: and then I says why didn’t you?
7 he was like (. ) cos I got lost
8 he said (. ) I was gonna come down to your school
9 I was like hh ((high pitched))
10 and you never come becau:se↑’
11 he’s like (. ) I didn’t know where I was going
12 > I was like< ((high pitched)) **you’re so lovely**
13 I love you (. ) oh my **God**

((12.52 mins))

In the interim, Nadia asks Mr O’Cain for the equipment she needs to begin her coursework. When asked by Lisa (and Shenice?) to help them with their coursework, she (jokingly) refuses to do so by saying ‘you’ve got to work it out for yourselves’. As the girls are trying to do that, she hums the tune of a song called ‘Make it Vibrate’. She then returns to the story about Adam, in a whispering voice.

((14.49 mins))

35 N: Anyways yea:h
36 he text me yesterday h-
37 oh yeah (. ) I didn’t forget my phone by the way
38 (6) ((taking phone out?))
39 he text me
40 I don’t know
41 (6) ((going through messages?))
42 Yeah he said (. )
43 Mr O: ((taking register)) Laura
44 N: ((locating text))Here
45 Mr O: Habibah
46 N: I goes to- he text me
47 and I said to him
48 wait (. ) this is how the conversation went
49 he text me and he was like hey (girl)
50 let me know when you get this
51 > I was like< who the fuck is this?
52 Mr O: Lisa

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53 L: Yes sir
54 Mr O: Otis
55 N: He goes hey girl
56 how are you doing
57 hope you’re all good
58 was gonna try come see you today
59 and I was like
60 Mr O: //Shenice
61 N: //who’s this?
62 S: Yes sir
63 N: he’s like you forgot me already (. ) it’s Adam
64 and I was like (. ) oh I didn’t have your number saved
65 and he goes (. ) I gave it to you yesterday (boo)
66 how was your day?
67 and I was like ( . ) > it was alright <
68 and then he’s like-
69 I go why didn’t you come?
70 and he goes didn’t know where I was going //but I
71 Mr O: //Nadia
72 N: might come next week
73 ((louder))yes sir
74 he said he’s gonna come next week
75 to see me
76 I was like YES!
77 (4) ((reading text)) yeah just cochin now
78 dad was on it (. ) I miss you still
79 o:hh he’s so sweet
80 ((shift in tone)) but (. ) I don’t like sweet talkers
81
82 do you fall↑ for sweet talk?
83 L: hmm↑
84 N: Do you fall for sweet talk?
85 L: Not really
86 N: Do you?
87 don’t lie to me Shenice
88 that is =
89 ?: shh::
90 N: = breeze
91 ((laughing)) that’s rubbish
92 you do
93 L: (how do you spell multiples?)
94 N: If a brere says one nice thing to you you’re like
95 ((high pitched)) > oh he’s so sweet he’s so lovely <
96 S: I’ve never said that to you
97 N: Oh yes you have
98 like if you get chirpsed on road
99 like remember you called me
100 to tell me ‘bout that time you was with Laura
L: (how do you spell multiples?)
N: Me um:- wait let me write it down
S: I didn’t say they were (lovely)
I said they were butt ugly
N: Yeah I know but like
if a brere says something sweet to you
you think he’s lovely
Mr O: ((background)) you’re doing your (coursework)
you didn’t even bother to bring your basic equipment
how can you do your work properly?
S: I don’t know
cos a brere has never said something sweet to me
N: don’t lie
S: I swear to God
N?: = sure
S: Not that I can remember
N: Dan said he loved you
that’s sweet =
S: = (that’s) different
N: How is it different
S: It’s different
N: (Okay)
((referring to food the girls are sharing)) give me some
more please (.) they taste good
(11) ((Nadia eating))
but innit?
do you fall for sweet talk
on a level?
S: ( )
(8)
N: I’m too smart for sweet talk
L: ha ha ha
N: What d’you mean ha ha ha?
I AM
?
mm↑ mm↓
N: huh↑
?: mm↑ mm↓
N: No seriously I AM
breres are like
ah you’re the best thing I’ve seen in Kilburn all day
is it re:ally? ((laughs))
how many other girls have you said it to so far?
((17.33 mins))

(6)
N: ((singing a tune)) make it make it vibrate
do you like that tune?
S: No
147 N: *make it make it vibrate*
148 L: I’ve never heard of it
149 N: Ok
150 L: *I’m a little white girl*
151 N: So what *if you’re white* (. )
152 that doesn’t mean you don’t know you can’t know
153 you know you know some music
154 //because *you’re white*
155 L: //little white girls like me
156 don’t know a lot of things //(
157 N: //you know cos just cos
158 you probably don’t like them kind of music innit
159 L: ((sarcastic tone)) no >it’s cos<
160 N: I’m a little white girl =
161 N: = *you’re not a little white girl*
162 you’re black >ha ha< and it’s not cos you smoke too much
163 cos you don’t smoke (. )

((18.15 mins))

Mr O’Cain asks the class to be quiet. Nadia continues to whisper to Lisa about the Government’s plans to stop people smoking. She and Lisa debate whether they Government will be able to achieve their target. Lisa tells Nadia her mum smokes.

((19.53 mins))

207 N: but still
208 and he was like I’m gonna come see you next week
209 I was like ((high pitched)) yea:h!
210 and I was like-
211 I was talking to this next boy Lee who knows him
212 and he’s like ((deeper voice)) ah
213 he’s like to me (1)
214 oh (. ) how (. ) he doesn’t-
215 ((low voice)) I said to him
216 but he won’t like me yeah if we link
217 and he goes ‘how d’you know that’
218 I said beca::use-
219 he goes why d’you think that
220 >and then he goes< um
221 if you say it’s because of your looks yeah
222 ((smile voice)) I’m gonna slap you
223 seriously cos I know it’s not
224 I was like-.hh
225 (. ) yeah but it IS
226 he’s like no >no no no no<
227 I don’t think so

((20.27 mins))

Lisa changes the subject back to the coursework task by criticising (Shenice?) for doing something incorrectly. She refers to a scratch on her face which leads the girls
onto the subject of Lisa’s cat. Nadia muses over how much time there is before the lesson ends.

261  N:  Anyways yeah (.) he’s like (.)
262    he wants to come and see me
263    but I would say yeah you can come Lisa
264    but you can’t
265  L:  Why:
266  N:  Because he’ll like you instead
267  L:  Well I- I’ll act like I’m a little white girl ( )
268  N:  You are a little white girl
269  L:  Exactly:: gosh
270  N:  Yeah but you’re a pretty white girl
271  L:  Look (.) you can do the make up on me you did at my house
272    then he won’t like a pretty bla- little white girl
273  N:  ((laughs)) I swear down this girl she’s so funny
274    she goes to me do my make up please
275    so I done it yeah (.) I made her look like a clown
276    ((laughing)) I put yeah (.)
277    brown people’s foundation on her ((slaps table twice))
278    I made her wash it off though
279    then I put like this thick black stuff on her eyes
280    It was so: funny
281  L:  She’s so deep
282  N:  It was hilarious (.) I was laughing
283    hhhhhh ((in American accent)) she didn’t find it funny
284    though
285  L:  I don’t find anything funny (.) I’m a little white girl
286  N:  Could you stop saying that please? just cos you’re white
287    doesn’t mean that you’re stupid or anything
288  L:  Being a little white girl (is so funny sometimes)
289  N:  (3) ((stylized American)) is it me or is my leg vibrating
290  L?:  Is ((stylized American)) is it me or just shut up
291  N:  ((stylized posh accent)) but no
292  L:  ((laughing)) you’re so funny
293  L:  ((gasping)) (I’m a loner)
294  N:  You said it ((sings)) make it make it vibrate
295  ?  ( )
296  N:  Anyways Shenice
297    yeah oh m-
298  N:  ((excited)) oh my God oh my God
299  L:  ((muffled)) Oh my God
300  N:  Stefan yeah? he went on webcam for me
301    ((high pitched)) he was looking so sexy
302    ( ) my man’s light skin yeah?
303    >he got cane-row and everything<
he IS ((excited whisper)) buff!
he went on webcam for me yesterday yea:h?

he was lookin’ cris
> and I was like < blood

((stylized)) he was looking some kinda sexy
> I was like < > quack quack quack <

?: ((giggling))
N: An’ his eyes look blue you know:
cos he was wearing (.) dark blue
and um: (.) silver

and he’s mixed race
nice colour mixed race > wait <
(2) there’s no one in our class

he’s like (.) a little bit darker than Madeleine yeah::
and (.) nice smooth skin everything
no // spots (and like that)

L: // tall- taller than you?
N: No

L: Smaller?
N: yeah // he’s

L: // Taller than me?
N: He’s five- seven

L: Taller than me ok (.) // ( )
N: // listen and he’s and he’s
I goes to him I goes- um =
L: = if you give him my email address

?: No =
N: = NO:
L: Why::

N: He’s got Madeleine’s you know
L: Why Madeleine’s?
N: ((hushed)) because Madeleine’s butters
and he doesn’t like her

L: Why not me?
N: Cos you’re too pretty
you’ll take him away from me

L: No I won’t
because I’m never online ((laughs))
N: ((laughing)) that’s true
cos your sister’s always on
L: NO!:
N: Well she’s on when you wanna go on
and she turfs you an’ things
L: Oh my gosh! I’ve got these leather shoes- ↑
N: Yeah anyways (.) and // um ((laughs))

S: Sha// :: me =
N: ((laughing)) = I haven’t finished
and then he goes-
and I goes to him (.) what colour are your eyes? yeah
cos his- cos he was wearing blue↑
his eyes looked blue
>and I was like< what colour are your eyes?
he was like (.) blue
no I’m joking ((laughs))
the camera just makes them look blue
> I was like < oh seen
L: (right) what colour are his eyes?
N: They’re just brown
but he’s so nice (.) I was like
?: (He::)
N: and I was like (.) he’s like to me (.) he’s like to me
hey beautiful when I came online
I was like ((high pitched)) ahh:::::
I don’t like it when brere’s say
you’re buff or you’re choong it’s-
(.) when they say you’re beautiful::
or you’re gorgeous::
or you’re stunning↑
or something like that
it’s just better

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