Taking a break from social media: Media ideologies of (not) sharing in celebrity culture

Tereza Spilioti [a, *], Korina Giaxoglou [b]

[a] *Cardiff University, ENCAP Cardiff University, John Percival Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff CF10 3EU, UK*
[b] *The Open University, Stuart Hall Building (Level 1), Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, UK*

A B S T R A C T

Despite the continued drive for sharing the self online, social media users have been increasingly orienting to practices of 'not sharing' in the context of wider debates about digital wellbeing. In this article, we investigate how celebrities manage and navigate online sharing. We focus on media ideologies in social media posts that announce the celebrities' decision to 'take a break', i.e. to stop posting and/or engaging with social media content. Our analysis of these announcements as rich examples of *metapragmatic awareness* points to three main discourses that justify celebrities' decision to take a break: (a) mental health and wellbeing, (b) public-private boundaries, and (c) social justice and protest. These justifications of 'not sharing' are associated with *metapragmatic typifications* of celebrities who position themselves as *vulnerable*, but also as *agentive*, *professional* and *role models* for their fans. The article offers empirical insights into how power players of the social mediascape, such as celebrities, understand and orient to meanings and practices of digital sharing. In terms of practical implications, the study of celebrities' metapragmatic discourse reveals how fans, as ordinary users, are presented with opportunities and models of managing social media activity, owning mental health issues and acting on them.

© 2024 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

Sharing on social media has come to form a powerful metaphor, which constitutes "a normative yardstick by which we evaluate the way we live" (John, 2017:54). As an object of study in the broader area of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, online sharing has been approached as a pragmatic speech act (attributive speech act; Scott, 2022) and, at the same time, has been conceptualized as a set of interrelated practices of entextualizing and updating the self in social media platforms with an orientation to selected known and/or unknown audiences (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Georgakopoulou, 2017; Perez-Sabater, 2021; Ren, 2024). Despite the continued drive for sharing the self online (Spilioti, 2016), social media users are increasingly orienting towards the option of 'not sharing', identifying it as a self-disciplined return to 'real' life (Giaxoglou, 2021:52). In the context of wider media discourses that demonize social media use as detrimental to the wellbeing of users, especially young adults (Wade, 2021), this turn promotes different forms of 'not sharing', such as being more selective about what to share online or taking time off digital platforms and social media altogether. These discourses are worthy of closer examination, insofar as what they reveal about users' media ideologies of sharing can help us understand current crises in mental health and wellbeing, and how to address them.

---

* Corresponding author.
  E-mail addresses: SpiliotiT1@cardiff.ac.uk (T. Spilioti), Korina.Giaxoglou@open.ac.uk (K. Giaxoglou).

Considering the centrality of media presence and online sharing in celebrity culture and their impact on public behavior, we aim to investigate how celebrities,[1] as particularly active social media users, manage and navigate online sharing by focusing on their media ideologies. In order to achieve this, we have collected and analysed social media posts that announce the celebrity's decision to 'take a break', i.e. to stop posting and/or engaging with content on social media. Such announcements are rich examples of metapragmatic awareness (Verschueren, 2000), as celebrities rationalize and justify their media choices, use and behavior to their fans. To our knowledge, metapragmatic and media-ideological discourse about (not) sharing has not been examined so far, as emphasis has been primarily on the study of sharing as language use and as an interactional practice.

The questions that drive our analysis are: (a) what media ideologies of (not) sharing are attested in the celebrities' metapragmatic discourse, with special focus on their justification(s) for taking a social media break and (b) how celebrities position themselves and their fans in relation to wider discourses about social media and wellbeing. This analysis aims to offer empirical insights into how power players of the social media sphere, such as celebrities with millions of followers, conceptualize, understand and orient to discourses and practices of (not) sharing in changing conditions of social media use. Its theoretical contribution to the pragmatics of sharing lies in demonstrating how research on the metapragmatic discourse of social media users might fit into a comprehensive understanding of (not) sharing as a digital practice. In terms of practical implications, the study of celebrities' metapragmatic discourse reveals how fans, as ordinary users, are presented with opportunities and models of managing social media activity, owning mental health issues and acting on them.

2. Sharing: What's in a word?

2.1. The rise and fall of 'sharing' as a social media keyword

Back in 2017, Nicholas John was proclaiming that "ours is an age of sharing" and sharing is a metaphor we live by (John, 2017:5). His argument emerged from the study of uses of the word 'share' in the homepages of a range of social media (or Social Network Sites), as documented until the end of 2010. His work pointed to how the verb 'share' had come to replace earlier terminology used to refer to social media activity (e.g. 'connect', 'post', 'blog', or 'socialize') and was emerging, at the time, as a social media keyword (John, 2017:63). According to John (2017:69-75), this extension of the term 'share' to encompass a range of discursive activities online resonated with discourses in the wider social sphere, where sharing is associated with trust and equality. For example, in Western therapeutic discourse sharing, i.e. talking about one's self, thoughts, and feelings has occupied a central place on the way to self-redemption and trust-based relationships with others, and in Western economic spheres sharing has been associated with open source software (production) and file sharing (consumption), also known as the 'sharing economy'.

The popular uptake of the word in the discourse of social media platforms was also accompanied by a similar interest in the term in academic discourse (John, 2022:5). For example, media and communication scholars adopted the term as an analytical concept for critical inquiry into digitally-mediated practices (Wittel, 2011; Kennedy 2016). In the field of pragmatics and media sociolinguistics, we notice a similar turn, as evident in Androutsopoulos's (2014:4) approach to online sharing as "an interactional practice of entextualizing significant moments for a networked audience". According to his approach, this interactional practice involves three interrelated stages, namely: (a) *Selecting*: what the sharer chooses to broadcast to their networked audience, (b) *Styling*: how the sharer entextualizes their selected significant moments, and (c) *Negotiating*: how the audience engages with what is being shared. Giaxoglou (2021) adapted this framework to the study of sharing small stories online, positing the following levels as heuristics for analysis: (a) *Selecting*: what moments and events sharers choose to share as relevant and appropriate entextualizables, (b) *Storying*: how sharers configure selected events and moments into stories (*emplotment*) over multiple turns or aggregating posts, (c) *Positioning*: what kinds of identity and affective positions the shared stories make available for sharers and their audiences (Giaxoglou, 2021:55-56). Through this lens, sharing, as an analytical concept, also extends to "the entextualization of self, i.e. the construction of the self through text that is written, spoken and/or visual" (Giaxoglou, 2021:51).

However, practices and uses of sharing have not been constant; they have been developing in response to changes in platform design and users' preferences. In a more recent paper, John (2022:11) revisited the prominence of the word 'share' in social media homepages during the period of 2011−2020 and noted its overall decline. This decline became evident in its removal from the home pages of many digital services or its minimal appearance next to concrete objects like 'pictures' or 'videos' instead of its earlier metaphorical use. According to John (2022:12-15), the decline of uses of 'share' is related to three shifts in wider social spheres and discourses.

Firstly, the overall rhetorical power of sharing and its associations with trust and equality have been waning over time as social media use is no longer perceived as something new and users become more mature; for example, users are far more aware of the commercial aspects of social media companies as well as the impact of using social media. This shift is also attested in wider public and academic debates that move away from celebrating social media positive outcomes and focus instead on their potential risks and harms, especially for younger users.

---

[1] In this article, we make a distinction between *celebrities,* who acquire their fame primarily due to a successful career beyond social media, e.g. acting, singing, modelling, and *social media influencers* who become famous and make a living primarily through social media content creation and engagement.

Secondly, the decline of the word 'share' may be associated with the decline of the power of the communicative and economic metaphors of sharing. Sharing emotions and thoughts, as well as the promises of a more open and egalitarian world, has lost its power in post-truth contexts where 'alternative facts' have become the main currency for many populist politicians and their fans, notably Trump.

Thirdly, the development of social media as a professional or semi-professional broadcasting tool, leveraged by celebrities and influencers, has affected how everyday users perceive the flow of information in their stream and undermined the interpersonal meanings of sharing as a mutual exchange of objects, thoughts, or feelings.

As John (2022:15) argues, if sharing is still a keyword, "it is of a slightly different kind: it is no longer shouted from the rooftops, or deployed as a marketing term. Instead, it would seem to be carrying out its cultural work in the background". While he tentatively lists other terms that may be replacing 'sharing', such as 'express', 'post', 'chat', 'discuss', 'talk', language-focused research in the area has shown the prominence of 'stories', together with 'storying', as a prominent keyword in contemporary social media practice (Georgakopoulou, 2021). Stories allow the sharing not only of the present, but also of the past in the users' here-and-now *via* social media features and facilities that encourage and support users in producing creative daily content.

Our discussion of the trajectory of 'share' as a social media keyword and as an analytical concept, has suggested that the focus of existing literature has been on what is being shared, posted or uploaded, as well as how it is being shared, by whom, for whom, and in what circumstances. But what about instances of not sharing, i.e. when users engage in the interactional practice of refusing to share content online? How can we extend current understandings of social media users' decisions around managing and navigating online sharing to accommodate practices of 'not sharing' and accompanying discourse (e.g. about what and when not to share, on which platforms, and for how long)? In the current social mediascape, such decisions and practices appear to go against the platform design drive for social interactivity and content curation. These practices are even more consequential for social media power players, such as celebrities and influencers, whose social status and economic value are contingent upon the constant and instant sharing of their professional and private life, in interaction with their fans and followers (Abidin, 2018:7). This expectation for maintaining the performance of an 'authentic' persona and staying 'visible' by producing new and engaging content all the time induces anxiety for celebrity and influencers as well as for ordinary users who follow their lead (Bishop, 2023: 3). While there is little, if any, language-focused research addressing these issues, the following section reviews related research from media and cultural studies which provides the context for our own study into the media ideologies of (not) sharing in celebrity culture.

2.2. Sharing cultures

Social media users, particularly younger ones, have developed a range of technological, social and interpersonal skills for managing their sharing, while safeguarding their privacy in the wider context of increased concerns around digital surveillance (Jones, 2020). High levels of awareness of *sharing cultures* among social media users have been noted in a number of studies and surveys, including Sujon and Johnston's (2017) study of user perceptions about their sharing based on diaries, interviews and surveys (18–36 years old). Their findings pointed to the importance of social privacy, that is, privacy from peers, family, employers. In order to achieve this, younger users reported using a range of sharing - as well as 'not sharing' strategies, such as coding, deleting or deactivating content (Sujon and Johnston, 2017:2). At the same time, users reported engaging in private sharing, i.e. carving out safe spaces with close friends separate from 'public' social media worlds and friendships (Sujan and Johnstone, 2017:5). They also reported that they performed a public persona on their profiles, be it personal or professional, and oriented to public friends, thus indicating their awareness that their content was to be publicly consumed and judged (Sujan and Johnstone, 2017:6). In addition to deleting or deactivating content, users reported that they often depersonalized online content, avoiding to give out details about their personal relationships, connections or thoughts and ideas (Sujan and Johnstone, 2017:4).

These strategies index the wider expectations, norms and practices that make up social media *sharing cultures*, which have become associated with users' opting for control over their privacy and visibility as well as their interpersonal relationships. Sharers' desire for control entails intense impression management work (Goffman, 1959) on a spectrum of visibility online that sharers find they are expected to navigate and even occasionally struggle with, as in the case of sharing grief online (Giaxoglou et al., 2017). Visibility has, thus, come to constitute a complex conundrum (Baym and Boyd, 2012) for sharers; it can be perhaps more fittingly conceived of as *intervisibility* (Brighenti, 2022) in the sense that it involves forms and practices of mutual interpersonal surveillance, a pervasive condition on social media that requires ongoing 'trade-offs' between the management of privacy and the achievement of public exposure. Such trade-offs are not always successful, and in the case of privacy spill-offs the impact on the sharer's wellbeing can be considerable. At the same time, intervisibility fed by everyday sharing on social media often leads to compulsive behaviours and forms of addiction to browsing and surveying others' content, affecting viewers' wellbeing as they start using this browsing as a tool of comparison to and competition with other sharers (Kent, 2020:10).

On the topic of compulsive and addictive behaviours, Kent (2020) combined ethnographic data from online sites with semi-structured interviews and reflexive diaries from 14 social media users. She pointed to how participants increasingly sought to disengage from Instagram either temporarily or permanently, while still holding on to a sense of commitment and responsibility to their devices. The two-way pull thus created could entail abstention from the hardware, as a means of resisting access to the software, even though it might restrict access to legitimate uses of the device (e.g. listening to music). This eschewing of technology at the back of an extensive period of high-level engagement with and investment in social

media is described by participants in Kent's study in medical terms as 'digital detox' or using synonyms to abstinence, e.g. 'giving up, 'quitting' or going 'cold turkey' (Kent, 2020:11).

If managing and controlling sharing are becoming prevalent among ordinary users, issues related to privacy and visibility are even more prominent among celebrities, as their public persona is subject to greater scrutiny than that of other users. Media exposure is both a prerequisite and a catalyst for transforming a public figure into a celebrity; through tweets, Instagram posts, and TikTok videos celebrities can increase their social capital and recognizability from others and morph their brand identity (O'Hagan and Spilioti, 2021:1). This process of mediatization also capitalizes on personalization, which involves an orientation towards the celebrity's individual qualities, with a focus on sharing their private life and, particularly, their mood, emotions and attitudes (Driessens, 2013:19). Against this sharing culture, celebrities need to tread carefully between managing privacy and achieving public exposure, especially since it is the latter that turns individual celebrities into commodities and bestows them with economic value through the promotion of products, brands, and lifestyles. In many cases, this trade-off leads to the erosion of boundaries between the public and the private, as well as between the professional and the personal, as celebrities end up commodifying their own self or, rather, an idealized version of their self (Redmond, 2014:114). Celebrities, thus, operate in an 'always on' mode, which requires a state of constant vigilance, monitoring and surveillance of the self, while sharing content with their fans and followers (Khamis et al., 2017:202; Marwick, 2013).

So far, we have highlighted the importance to celebrities of constant and instant sharing, to the extent that it involves significant self-exposure. In what follows, we turn to the discourse of 'not sharing' that topicalizes the reasons, processes, strategies and effects of deciding not to share. The data used for this purpose are drawn from the social media posts of celebrities whose previous online activity is characterized by prolonged sharing, such that their decision to stop sharing is a marked social event. In the analysis, we explore how such announcements exemplify aspects of metapragmatic discourse, which rationalize and justify the choice to behave in this apparent counter-productive way. The analysis of such discourse raises questions about the range of media ideologies that are invoked in such announcements: How do celebrities position themselves and their fans in relation to wider discourses about social media and digital wellbeing, and for what purposes? To what extent is not sharing actually more than a simple cessation of interaction and in fact an act of sharing in itself? Before addressing these questions, we outline the research design of this study in the next section.

3. Media ideologies in celebrities' announcements of 'taking a break': research design

Media ideologies refer to 'people's beliefs, attitudes and strategies about the media they use' (Gershon, 2010:391). Gershon's concept draws on Silverstein's (1979:193) linguistic ideologies which are defined as 'any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use'. These beliefs are articulated in metalinguistic and metapragmatic discourse when speakers implicitly or explicitly reflect on and evaluate language form, structure, and behavior. Similarly, social media ideologies about sharing are materialized in metapragmatic discourse when users rationalize and justify their media choices, uses and behavior; in other words, they communicate media-ideological statements about social media activities and practices, such as sharing.

Media-ideological statements, similar to language-ideological discourse, can be elicited through questionnaires and interviews with the users, as evident in Gershon's study (2010) of breakup stories and media switching. However, as with many aspects of linguistic behavior, what people say they are doing does not always represent what they actually do. In instances where the act of deciding not to share becomes a public one, like the ones we examine in this study, attention is best focused on what is said in the social media posts, and how it is said. Rather than seeking an after-the-fact explanation for such acts through interviews (cf. Gershon 2010), we therefore prioritize here the discourse of celebrities' announcements about 'taking a break'. In this discourse, the celebrities' media-ideological statements not only reflect their communicative strategies, but also have the potential to mould these strategies into continuous social practice and use (Busch, 2018:90).

For the purposes of this article, we have collected *social media announcements*, i.e. communicative acts that entextualize a key moment or event in the life of the user. Considering that the celebrity status is contingent upon a constant connection between the celebrity and their fans, *announcements about 'taking a break'* entextualize a critical moment, a moment of potential rupture in the interaction between celebrities and fans; 'taking a break' involves suspending the *generation* of content on social media and/or the *consumption* (incl. reading) of content shared on the internet. In our study, this suspension of social media activity is foregrounded by social media posts that announce either the user's decision to take a break from social media or the user's return to social media after a period of absence.

3.1. Sample and data collection methods

The data was gathered by following up on media coverage about celebrities taking a break from social media, including reports in online editions of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers (e.g. *The Independent*; *Mirror Online*) and celebrity and entertainment magazines (e.g. *Variety, US Weekly*). For example, Selena Gomez's Instagram story on October 30, 2023 about her decision to take a break from social media made headlines in a range of online media, including *The Independent, Variety, People, Deadline, Billboard,* on the following day. This initial convenience sampling was followed by more systematic sampling that draws on celebrity magazine articles that list celebrities who recently took a break; the most comprehensive article in our sample and, thus, the one used for this report has been *Celebrities Who Took a Break from Social Media* (*US Weekly,* 2023). Based on this list (of 54 celebrities and influencers), we searched and retrieved the original posts from the celebrities' social

media; in cases where posts were deleted from their social media profiles, we checked again the news articles and only included posts that were published in their original format as images (together with the user handle).

In the present account, we focus on 25 announcements from 21 celebrities (aged between 21 and 44 years old). Of course, social media influencers are also important to consider, but they are different in terms of core motivation and, thus, style and behaviour; so they are excluded from this sample and we reserve consideration of their own 'not sharing' activity for another report. In the current sample and for reasons of space, we have limited the sample to announcements during the period between 2018 and 2023. The posts collected appear on the following social media apps: Instagram (16), Twitter/X (7), TikTok (1) and podcast (1); see also Table 3 (Appendix).

Given that these texts were widely published through numerous newspaper articles and concern public figures who intentionally made these texts available to millions of fans, we have collected these texts on the basis of fair use. Our data set is limited to announcements from American and British celebrities and, thus, our findings and research reflect primarily Anglo-American celebrity sharing cultures. While Anglo-American popular culture has a strong presence worldwide, it remains to be explored whether, and to what extent, the media ideologies and sociocultural values that will be discussed resonate with other types of popular culture around the world.

3.2. Data analysis methods

In order to explore what media ideologies of (not) sharing are attested in the announcements about 'taking a break', we have investigated first the ways in which the activity of taking a break is framed, with reference to the anticipated duration of the break and the social media platforms it applies to. For this analysis, we have examined the temporal markers used in the announcements, ranging from more specific and finite temporal references (e.g. 'one week', 'summer') to more vague time expressions (e.g. 'for a while'), together with the presence or absence of references to specific platforms (e.g. Twitter). In Section 4.1, we discuss the different ways in which celebrities frame such breaks, ranging from *stopping* to produce and engage with any content across all social media platforms for an undefined period to *taking a break* from creating or responding to content on a specific platform for a finite amount of time (e.g. one week).

We then moved to investigate the ways in which celebrities justify their decision to take a social media break, as such media-ideological statements can attest to the media ideologies invoked in these announcements. For this analysis, we focused on the causative expressions introducing the statements that immediately followed the announcement ('I have been taking a break from social media <u>because</u> ….' Selena Gomez 2023). Based on these statements, we initially identified three main themes that revolve around (a) mental health and wellbeing, (b) public-private boundaries, and (c) social justice and protest. This initial categorization was then expanded and tested across the whole sample. Even in posts that did not include explicit causative expressions, the rationalization of the choice to take a break included expressions that were categorized around the three themes, such as adjectives and verbs that refer to mental state and health (e.g. 'happier', 'broken', 'need to reset', 'be kind', 'overstimulating', 'overwhelming'), privacy and control (e.g. 'live life to the present', 'be in the real world', 'create more boundaries', 'people close to you') and social justice or protest ('I stand by', 'change the world', 'not a place I want to be part of'). This analysis resulted in a broad categorization of the individual posts in terms of their primary orientation to the aforementioned discourses and themes (see section 4.1).

In Section 4.2, we qualitatively analyze posts representative of each theme in terms of how celebrities position themselves and their fans in relation to wider discourses about social media. Here, we focus on the metapragmatic typifications (Busch, 2018:18) of celebrities as (non) sharers and of their fans as recipients of shared content. The analysis pays attention to how such metapragmatic typifications are articulated primarily through metaphors which have the power of framing, i.e. selecting, foregrounding and, thus, evaluating experiences and relationships (Demjen and Semino 2020).

4. Analysis

4.1. Framing 'social media breaks'

The analysis of the use (or lack) of temporal markers in the posts indicates the way in which such breaks are temporally framed in the announcements. The majority of the posts (n:18, 72%) include a temporal marker that presents the suspension of social media activity as a **temporary break**. Such temporal markers range from references to a specific time period, either literally ('this week' Camilla Cabello,[2] 'summer' Chris Evans) or metaphorically ('for a minute' Channing Tatum; 'taking a second' Selena Gomez 2023), to less specific time references ('for a while' Cole Sprouse; 'for jus a lil bit' Ariana Grande). The finite nature of such breaks is also evident in the co-deployment of parting formulae with temporal markers, like 'soon', that carry the celebrity's promise of returning online to their fans and followers ('see you guys um sooner than later' Selena Gomez 2023). On the other hand, 7 (28%) announcements do not frame temporally the period of inactivity, suggesting a more **permanent break.** This more radical rupture with social media activity is also evident in the verbs used to describe the act of suspending their social media profiles, such as 'retiring from' (Awkwafina), 'deleted' (Billie Eilish), 'deactivated' (Gigi Hadid),

---

[2] References to individual announcements in our sample include the celebrity's first and last name; in case of multiple posts, the year of the post is also included. The full list of the announcements collected is available in the appendix.

and the parting formulae that do not carry any promise of returning online ('I bid you adieu' Chrissy Teigen). Considering the 'always on' celebrity culture, the celebrities' primary orientation towards framing such decisions as temporary indicates their commitment towards sharing content online despite these breaks. This is further reinforced by attention to the references to specific platforms that are included in these announcements.

As evident in Table 1, announcements have been further categorized into breaks that target activity on a specific platform (n:9, 36%) or across multiple social media (n:16, 64%). Out of the aforementioned 7 permanent break announcements, 4

Table 1
Types of social media breaks.

Posts	All social media activity	Platform-specific activity	Total
Temporary break	13 (52%)	5 (20%)	18 (72%)
Permanent break	3 (12%)	4 (16%)	7 (28%)
Total	16 (64%)	9 (36%)	25 (100%)

concern a specific social media app and, in particular, Twitter/X. In fact, close attention to the activity of the other three celebrities (Hayley Williams; Lana Del Ray; Billie Eilish) who announce a more permanent break across social media reveals that they actually returned and reactivated accounts after a certain period. References to specific platforms in these announcements indicate the celebrity's orientation to the transmedial aspect of social media sharing and the challenges of polymedia use and behavior (Madianou and Miller, 2013), as celebrities negotiate and manage their online presence through the whole ecology of social media apps. Absence from a given social media platform does not entail complete disengagement from online activity. In fact, such decisions are strategic, as they happen in response to specific events, such as the rise of hate tweets (Chrissy Teigen), or changes in social media companies' leadership and mission (Gigi Hadid). As such, they serve as attempts to manage and control the sharer's flow of information across different social media apps and they become a resource for the celebrity's positioning to specific social media apps and their values (e.g. Twitter as a toxic social media app).

With respect to how the celebrities frame their justification to take a social media break, the majority of these announcements (n:18, 72%) clearly associate the choice to take a break from social media with mental health and wellbeing reasons ('I have taken a break from social media uh <u>for</u> my mental health <u>because</u> I find Instagram and Twitter to be overstimulating to be overwhelming' Tom Holland). Discourses about managing public-private boundaries in digital sharing were prevalent in 4 (16%) announcements, while the theme of (not) using digital media for social justice and protest reasons was evident in 2 (8%) instances. The post by Margot Robbie was not assigned to a specific category because it included just the announcement, without any further justification or rationalization. As shown in Table 2, it was not always easy to distinguish the primary orientation of certain announcements, because discourses of digital wellbeing may invoke the sharer's anxiety about privacy; similarly, discourses about public-private boundaries may be accompanied by statements about the user's mental health. For that reason, we have identified two primary orientations in 4 announcements that we will discuss in more detail in the following section.

4.2. Media ideologies of (not) sharing

Table 2
Announcements' orientation to wider discourses.

Media ideologies	Primary orientation 1	Primary orientation 2	Total
Digital wellbeing/Mental health	18 (72%)	2	20
Public-private boundaries in digital sharing	4 (16%)	2	6
Social justice/Protest in digital media	2 (8%)	0	2
Unknown	1 (4%)	0	1
Total	25 (100%)	4	29

4.2.1. 'Not sharing' as a means for self-care and wellbeing

In the media ideological discourse about digital wellbeing, we can detect not only sharers' beliefs about the medium, but also the positions that such beliefs make available for the celebrities as sharers and for their fans as recipients of shared content. Of particular interest here are the metapragmatic typifications that are articulated through metaphorical language and that frame certain types of social media users, activities, and platforms. To illustrate this, we focus on two particular posts, from the female actor Sarah Hyland and the male actor Taron Egerton, respectively.

The context of Hyland's post is that in December 2018 she shared a link to a GoFundMe page, put together by a third party, to ask for donations to cover funeral and hospital expenses of the actor's relatives who had been involved in a car accident. The sharing of the specific link triggered a backlash on Twitter with a flurry of comments that criticized the celebrity for asking donations from people who may earn far less than her. In response to the backlash, the celebrity posted a tweet that announced her decision to stop engaging with online content for a while.

Example 1[3]

1   *You guys finally did it. Your horrible negative ignorant words have broken me. Happy?*
2   *Staying offline for a while. I have a special announcement and video releasing on*
3   *Wednesday I believe. So. There's that. [peace emoji]*

In Example 1, Hyland positions herself as a *vulnerable person*: the act of sharing and engaging with content from other users has left her 'broken'. The metaphor of 'broken' is commonly used in online depression communities to conceptualize the self as a MACHINE with weak properties and, thus, underline the helplessness of the experience of depression (Shi and Koo 2023:11). At the same time, she positions her audience as the *agents* ('you … did it', l.1), responsible for the negative and toxic social media activity that led to her current mental state. The impact of trolling on users' wellbeing is widely discussed and recognized, but accusing fans of trolling is potentially a delicate act for the celebrity persona. For that reason, such announcements soften the force of such statements, either by portraying this type of content as 'ignorant' (and, thus, void of knowingly malicious intent, as in this case) or by distancing their loyal and 'good' fans from the trolls. As for the activity of not sharing, it is framed in spatial terms and it involves occupying a different place ('staying offline'), where Hyland can (re) position herself with more *agency*. Taking a break does not necessarily mean being absent. In this case, it involves refocusing on sharing professional, rather than personal, content (e.g. job announcements, releasing videos) and, thus, regaining a sense of control, a point we will return to in the next section.

In June 2023, Taron Egerton shared a lengthy Instagram post where he announced that he is 'going to take a break from social media for a while' (Example 2). His action received extensive media coverage, including a direct mention by another actor, Chris Evans, who embedded Egerton's original post in his own taking-a-break announcement.

Example 2

1   *Im going to take a break from social media for a while. I'm not sure why I'm making a big*
2   *declaration about it; I just think it's hard to break away from a cycle that I've grown to find a*
3   *bit addictive and this is me making a commitment to myself.*
4   *I've gotten myself into a place where I spend too much time scrolling and I actually feel like*
5   *my ability to sit and be present and read books and watch movies and even seek out the*
6   *company of people I love is eroding as a result. I feel a bit removed from myself. And with*
7   *regards to work, I know I am capable of more and IG is one of several impediments to me*
8   *getting there.*
9   *Thanks everyone for saying such nice things all the time; I so appreciate it but I just need*
10 *to not read the thoughts of strangers for a while; Im really not sure this stuff is very good*
11 *for any of us [red heart emoji]*

Like Hyland (Example 1), Evans positions himself as a *vulnerable person*. Through the mobilization of social media is a DRUG metaphor (Vanden Abeele et al., 2022: 2), the celebrity is positioned as a person who has lost agency: he finds himself trapped in a harmful and addictive 'cycle' he is trying to 'break away from' (l.2). This lengthy announcement also draws on the SPLIT SELF metaphor, common in online discourse about depression (Shi and Koo 2023:10) where the person is viewed as a divided entity. In this case, the focus is on feelings of dislocation framed in terms of psychological distance from the self ('removed from myself' l.6). Feelings of distance and dislocation lead many of the celebrities we have studied to argue about their need to manifest 'presence' in another realm, away from social media and their fans, resulting in a tension between the expectation to engage and interact with their fans and the balancing of their wellbeing.

Unlike Example 1, however, where vulnerability is attributed to the negative and toxic sharing of others, this announcement portrays even the exposure to positive comments as problematic. This is rare in our sample and the celebrity's positioning of the fans and other users as '*strangers*' (l.10) appears to deviate from the constructions of intimacy that are widely discussed in celebrity culture research (Abidin, 2015; Droz-dit-Busset and Spilioti, 2024; Glatt, 2023). Nevertheless, it does underline the feelings of distance and dislocation foregrounded in this announcement and reframes issues of wellbeing not only as a result of others' negative behaviour but also as constitutive of one's own media choices. At the same time, Evans positions himself as a potential *role model*: the post indirectly encourages readers to do the same and stop engaging with online content for a while, an activity which, in his words, is not 'good for any of us' (ll.10-11).

Against this backdrop, the choice of 'not sharing' allows a different sense of presence in an alternative space where other activities are valued (e.g. reading books, watching movies and being in the company of people we love). This choice is also associated with a shift of focus on the *celebrity's professional persona* and not just the celebrity as a person. Social media platforms appear to be perceived by sharers as obstacles ('impediments') to reaching one's potential not only as a healthy human being, but also as a successful professional. In fact, their positioning as a role model, i.e. making the right choices for their wellbeing, could also be seen as part of their professional persona, extending their role to that of lifestyle influencers who promote wellbeing and healthy living through their actions.

---

[3] All written posts are reproduced verbatim, with visual signs, such as emojis, glossed in square brackets []. TikTok and Instagram story videos were transcribed using Jefferson's transcription system; other visual aspects, such as colour, camera shot, etc, were not annotated for the purposes of this study.

4.2.2. 'Not sharing' as a means for navigating the public-private boundaries

As illustrated above, media ideologies about digital wellbeing invoke discourses about the celebrities' challenge of navigating boundaries between the professional and the personal, as well as between the public and the private. In certain announcements (n:4, 16%), these discourses about the navigation of such boundaries in digital sharing are further topicalized. Here, the act of not sharing is presented as a means through which the celebrity can manage and, to some extent, take back control over the erosion of these increasingly fluid boundaries.

Example 3 is an Instagram post by Hayley Williams, the American musician and lead singer of the rock band Paramore. The post announces the singer's decision to stop uploading and engaging with content on her personal accounts, including her finsta (fake instagram, but also referring to more private instagram accounts reserved for interaction with close friends).

Example 3

1 *I've been on the internet and more specifically, social media, since I was 15. Maybe even*
2 *younger. It started with the blog sites... then Myspace. The Paramore became a thing and*
3 *social media wasn't even just for my own personal use anymore but it was just part of the*
4 *job. I crave connection and the internet is a pretty good tool for that when it's not tearing us*
5 *apart.*
6 *The thing is connection is and will always be a part of my job (thankfully). As for my own*
7 *personal experience with social media, I just don't want it anymore. I've carefully*
8 *considered this decision for almost a year now. Now I know for sure that my desire to*
9 *move away from my personal accounts (yes, even my finsta) is based on nothing more*
10 *than my interest in keeping a boundary between a public and a private life... and wanting*
11 *to spend more time looking up and out, rather than down.*
12 *No judgement to anyone who loves their social media. Just a huge encouragement to*
13 *anyone needing permission to create more boundaries and space to grow - sometimes*
14 *"no" is the kindest thing you can say... to anyone!... even yourself.*
15 *Finally, if you're looking for me, don't look here.*
16 *Follow @paramore.*

In Example 3, Williams positions herself as a *mature internet user* who has been online since her preteen years and seen the massive expansion of the internet in relation to and in parallel with her own rise to fame. Similar positions were also found in the announcements by Selena Gomez (2023) and Billie Eilish. Maturity with social media use is coupled with *agency* in this type of discourse: the media choice of not engaging with her personal accounts is portrayed as the result of careful consideration and framed through explicit statements about the celebrity's interests, wants and desires (l.7: 'I just don't want it anymore'). Spatial metaphors ('move away from my personal accounts', l.9) are also mobilized to frame the move between the professional and the personal and, thus, echo discourses of control and boundaries between the public and the private. This type of discourse draws on long-standing metaphors of the internet as PLACE, which contribute to the conceptualization of online spaces with distinct 'architectures, boundaries and multiple entry and exit points' (Markham 2003:7).

This post also shows awareness of the potential impact that such decisions may have on the celebrities' fans and followers. Williams explains that her decision does not judge or position negatively those who 'love their social media' (l.12) and, thus, choose sharing (over 'not sharing'). Nevertheless, her direct encouragement to those who wish to do the same (l.12) contributes to positioning herself *as a role model* and her addressees as *potential followers* of the proposed lifestyle. The closure of the announcement with aphorisms, like "no" is the kindest thing you can say to anyone even yourself', indexes a rather didactic tone and persona, reinforcing the 'good influencer' role who is oriented to and evangelizes personal growth and healthy behavior. The post's secondary orientation to digital wellbeing is also evident in the metaphorical framing of her decision as 'looking up and out, rather than down'; these expressions are the opposite from the DESCENT and CONTAINER metaphors that are conventionally associated with depression and illness (El Refaie, 2014).

4.2.3. 'Not sharing' as a means of protest

In this section, we focus on announcements where the media choice of deactivating one's account or pausing the sharing of content on social media goes beyond the celebrity's personal issues and is presented as a political act or a form of protest. In November 2022, the model Gigi Hadid announced on Instagram that she deactivated her Twitter account (Example 4). Together with the announcement, her Instagram post included a screenshot of the tweet by Shannon Raj Singh, a member of the Twitter Human Rights Team, who announced the team's dismissal by the new Twitter owner, Elon Musk.

Example 4

1 *I deactivated my Twitter account today.*
2 *For a long time, but especially with its new leadership, it's becoming more and more of a*
3 *cesspool of hate & bigotry, and it's not a place I want to be a part of.*
4 *Only sorry to the fans, who I've loved connecting with for a decade via Twitter, but I can't*
5 *say it's a safe place for anyone, nor a social platform that will do more good than harm.*

Drawing again on spatial metaphors ('cesspool', 'place', l.3), the announcement evokes a discourse that associates the social media app with negative social values. In Example 4 (see also Example 1), Twitter is metapragmatically typified as an unsafe and potentially harmful place, which is implicitly juxtaposed with other social platforms that 'will do more good than harm' (l.5). The deactivation of the account allows the celebrity to position themselves away from this negative space and, thus, associate themselves with sociocultural values that promote users' safeguarding and wellbeing. The position of the

active and agentive social media user is again central in this type of discourse. The *selective sharer*, i.e. the celebrity who chooses where (and when) they will be present or absent, is also portrayed as a responsible and caring social media user. The decision for the deactivation of the Twitter account is driven by concerns about not only their own safety but also everyone's safety, including their fans ('for anyone', l.5), portraying the act of not sharing not only as a sign of self-care but also as an act of social care. The fans are also positioned as *members of a positive and affective relationship* ('I've loved connecting', l.4). In this type of more permanent platform breaks (i.e. account deactivations), apologies to fans (l.4) are mobilized to mitigate the potential face threat that such radical acts of not-sharing bring to the public persona of the celebrity and their relationship with their fans and followers.

Beyond the deactivation of social media accounts, celebrities also announce their choice to stop posting in response to tragic events, such as wars (Example 5). In October 2023, the singer and actor Selena Gomez posted a social media story that announced her taking a break from social media in response to the dramatic events in the Israel−Palestine conflict.

Example 5

1 *I've been taking a break from social media because my heart breaks to see all the horror,*
2 *hate, violence and terror that's going on in the world. People being tortured and killed or*
3 *any act of hate towards any one group is horrific. We need to protect ALL people,*
4 *especially children and stop the violence for good. I'm sorry if my words will never be*
5 *enough for everyone or a hashtag. I just can't stand by innocent people getting hurt. That's*
6 *what makes me sick. I wish I could change the world. But a post won't.*
7 *Love, Selena*

In Example 5, the 'broken' metaphor (l.1) is again used to position the celebrity in terms of wellbeing, but her personal wellbeing is discussed in the context of a wider conflict and human suffering. The decision to not post and stay silent is associated with the persona of a *mature internet user* who displays awareness of what social media content can or cannot achieve in such crises. The announcement implicitly criticizes the oversharing of content or the ecstatic sharing of hashtag activism in moments of crisis, as evident in her mock apology 'I'm sorry if my words will never be enough for everyone or a hashtag' (ll.4-5). The media choice to stop posting and stay silent becomes socially and politically meaningful in the context of compulsive sharing and consuming of horrific, hateful and violent content. The potential face threat of such decisions is also mitigated through parting formulae that affectively position the celebrity towards her fans ('Love Selena', l.7). At the same time, the decision to remain silent in response to crises where taking a stance or supporting one side can be detrimental to the celebrity's public persona is instrumental for successful face management. It potentially immunizes the celebrity against future backlash from those who may support the opposite side and protects them from the perils of cancel culture and online public shaming (Garces-Conejos Blitvich, 2022).

5. Concluding discussion

It seems that we have come a long way since the age of compulsive and instant sharing on social media, as evident in the decline of the word in social media platforms (John, 2022) and the drive for more selective sharing and/or digital detox (Sujon and Johston 2017; Kent 2020). Our study, however, of celebrities' announcements about 'taking a break' suggests that not sharing is actually more than a simple cessation of interaction and in fact, a performative act of sharing in itself. While the decision to suspend content production and/or consumption online reflects the celebrities' wider concerns with their digital wellbeing and privacy, we also found that it is closely linked to the (re)positioning of the celebrity's online persona and self-brand in social media platforms. In our sample, celebrities position themselves as *mature, agentive, selective, professional* and *caring* content creators who are acutely aware of the discontents and risks of social media and who take action to mitigate these. Such announcements are, thus, important windows into the ideologies of users as sharers, of sharing as an activity, and of social media platforms as interactional spaces.

Ultimately, celebrity announcements about not sharing appear to reinforce the construction and management of a particular type of sharer who is initially *vulnerable* and gradually becomes more *agentive and in control* (e.g. taking measures to protect their private life), *personally and socially responsible* (e.g. going on 'digital detox' to safeguard their own wellbeing, but also avoiding posting that can be seen as inappropriate and even offensive, especially at times of crisis) and *influential role models* (e.g. seeking to persuade others more or less directly to take more care of their self and their sharing). These positions are metapragmatically framed and typified through a range of pervasive metaphors about the internet and wellbeing. For example, agency and selectivity are associated with perceptions of the internet as PLACE with distinct boundaries, as well as entry/exit points. Similarly, agency and control are juxtaposed with addiction and depression, together with the related dystopic metaphors, which are mobilized particularly in the portrayal of the celebrity's old and vulnerable self. It seems that metaphors as a semiotic resource play an important role in this metapragmatic framing which shapes, sustains and, potentially, enregisters social media users as particular types of (non) sharers. To paraphrase Deschrijver (2021:311), enre-gisterment may occur based not only on phonetic/lexical varieties, but also on any metapragmatically describable feature of semiotic practice and communication.

Through their posts celebrities appear to register wider concerns about the discontents of social media as well as their savviness about the often unintended harms and risks from online sharing. However, this awareness does not necessarily entail a full break from social media activity. Rather, it calls for heightened reflexive attention to sharing activity in the context of the sharer's life and the relational work achieved through a range of digital platforms (cf. Maiz-Arevalo 2024). Celebrities

are seen to want to take the lead in this movement by mobilizing 'not sharing' announcements as resources for displaying their continued commitment to their sharing activity and, more importantly, to their followers and fans. The study of metapragmatic discourses of social media users is, thus, important, because such discourses reveal understandings of (not) sharing as a digital practice. Research on the metapragmatic discourse of power players in social media, in particular, can unpack forms of what Bishop (2023) describes as *influencer creep*, i.e.of the ways in which norms and practices developed within influencer cultures creep into the lives of workers and social media users, more broadly. For example, our study has offered insights into how fans, as ordinary users, are presented with opportunities and models of managing social media activity as well as with models of owning and acting on mental health issues.

Getting to the heart of how social media break announcements operate, and the effect they have, requires a mosaic approach, drawing on different methodologies and sources. This study is, then, just one of several that could augment our understanding. For example, notwithstanding the limitations of self-reports through interviews and surveys, further insights could be gained through carefully crafted questions and follow up interviews with celebrities and other social media users. Research on the uptake of such announcements in the 'Comments' section of YouTube videos, Instagram posts, and other such sections can also reveal how ordinary users react to these discourses and positions, as well as the extent to which they reproduce similar positions and metapragmatic discourse. While social media practices and affordances develop faster than our ability to document them in real-time, there is scope and need for tracking such shifts in users' media ideologies and investigating their metalinguistic and metapragmatic discourse, as we have started doing in this article.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Tereza Spilioti: Writing — original draft, Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing — review & editing. **Korina Giaxoglou:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing — original draft, Writing — review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Appendix

Table 3
List of collected celebrity announcements.

Year (Month)	Celebrity	Medium	Type of Announcement
2023 October	Selena Gomez	Instagram	Story (text)
2023 June	Chris Evans	Twitter (X)	Tweet
2023 June	Chris Evans	Instagram	Post (text)
2023 June	Taron Eagerton	Instagram	Post (text)
2023 March	Billie Eilish	Podcast	Interview (audio)
2023 February	Selena Gomez	TikTok	Video
2022 November	Gigi Hadid	Instagram	Post (text)
2022 August	Tom Holland	Instagram	Post (Video & Caption)
2022 February	Charli XCX	Twitter (X)	Tweet
2022 February	Awkwafina	Twitter (X)	Series of Tweets (2)
2022 January	Nick Jonas	Twitter (X)	Tweet
2021 December	Camilla Cabello	Instagram	Story (text)
2021 September	Lana Del Ray	Instagram	Story (video)
2021 October	Jennifer Love Hewitt	Instagram	Post (text)
2021 October	Hayley Williams	Instagram	Post (text)
2021 June	Margot Robbie	Instagram	Post (text & image)
2021 March	Chrissy Teigen	Twitter (X)	Series of Tweets (4)
2021 March	Chrissy Teigen	Instagram	Post (text)
2020 July	Cole Sprouse	Instagram	Post (text)
2020 January	Lizzo	Twitter (X)	Tweet
2019 August	Channing Tatum	Instagram	Post (text)
2019 July	Demi Lovato	Instagram	Story (text)
2018 December	Sarah Hyland	Twitter (x)	Tweet
2018 October	Ariana Grande	Instagram	Story (text)
2018 September	Selena Gomez	Instagram	Post (text)

References

Abidin, Crystal, 2015. Communicative intimacies: influencers and perceived interconnectedness. Ada: A J. Gender New Media Technol. 8. https://adanewmedia.org/2015/11/issue8-abidin/.

Abidin, Crystal, 2018. Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online. Emerald Insight Publishing, Leeds, England.

Androutsopoulos, Jannis, 2014. Moments of sharing: Entextualization and linguistic repertoires in social networking. J. Pragmat. 73, 4−18.

Baym, Naomi, Boyd, Danah, 2012. Socially mediated publicness: an introduction. J. Broadcast. Electron. Media 56 (3), 320−329.

Bishop, Sophie, 2023. Influencer creep: how artists strategically navigate the platformisation of art worlds. New Media Soc. 1−18.

Brighenti, Andrea Mubi, 2022. Introduction: issues in the visible. In: Brighenti, Andrea Mubi (Ed.), The New Politics of Visibility: Spaces, Actors, Practices and Technologies in the Visible. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Busch, Florian, 2018. Digital writing practices and media ideologies of German adolescents. In: The Mouth. Critical Studies on Language, Culture and Society, 3, pp. 85−103.

Demjen, Zsogia, Semino, Elena, 2020. Metaphor, metonymy and framing in discourse. In: De Fina, A., Georgakopoulou, A. (Eds.), The Cambridge Handbook of Discourse Studies. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 213−234.

Deschrijver, Cedric, 2021. On the metapragmatics of 'conspiracy theory': scepticism and epistemological debates in online conspiracy comments. J. Pragmat. 182, 310−321.

Driessens, Olivier, 2013. The celebritization of society and culture: understanding the structural dynamics of celebrity culture. Int. J. Cult. Stud. 16 (6), 641−657.

Droz-dit-Busset, Olivia, Spilioti, Tereza, 2024. "Getting personal with you": Affect and authenticity in confessional videos of YouTube lifestyle and beauty influencers. In: Garces-Conejos Blitvich, Pilar, Georgakopoulou, Alexandra (Eds.), Influencer Discourse: Affective Relations and Identities. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 284−308.

El Refaie, Elisabeth, 2014. Looking on the dark and bright side: creative metaphors of depression in two graphic memoirs. a/b: Auto/Biography Stud. 29 (1), 149−174.

Garces-Conejos Blitvich, Pilar, 2022. Moral emotions, *good* moral panics, social regulation, and online public shaming. Lang. Commun. 84, 61−75.

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra, 2017. Sharing the moment as small stories: The interplay between practices & affordances in the social media-curation of lives. Narrative Inquiry 27 (2), 311−333.

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra, 2021. Designing stories on social media: a corpus-assisted critical perspective on the mismatches of story-curation. Ling. Educ. 62, 100737.

Gershon, Ilana, 2010. Breaking up is hard to do: media switching and media ideologies. J. Ling. Anthropol. 20 (2), 389−405.

Giaxoglou, Korina, Döveling, Katrin and Pitsillides, Stacey. 2017. Networked emotions: Interdisciplinary perspectives on sharing loss online. J. Broadcast. Electron. Media. 61 (1), 1−10.

Giaxoglou, Korina, 2021. A Narrative Approach to Social Media Mourning: Small Stories and Affective Positioning. Routledge, New York and London.

Glatt, Zoe, 2023. The intimacy triple bind: structural inequalities and relational labour in the influencer industry. Eur. J. Cult. Stud. https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494231194156, 0(0).

Goffman, Erving, 1959. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y.

John, Nicholas, 2017. The Age of Sharing. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

John, Nicholas, 2022. Sharing and social media: the decline of a keyword? New Media Soc. 1−18.

Jones, Rodney, 2020. Discourse analysis and digital surveillance. In: De Fina, A., Georgakopoulou, A. (Eds.), The Cambridge Handbook of Discourse Studies. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 708−732.

Kennedy, Jenny, 2016. Conceptual boundaries of sharing. Inf. Commun. Soc. 19 (4), 461−474.

Kent, Rachael, 2020. Self-tracking health over time: from the use of instagram to perform optimal health to the protective shield of the digital detox. Soc. Med. Soc. (July-September 2020), 1−14.

Khamis, Susie, Ang, Lawrence, Welling, Raymond, 2017. Self-branding, 'Micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. Celebr. Stud. 8 (2), 191−208.

Madianou, Mirca, Miller, Daniel, 2013. Polymedia: towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication. Int. J. Cult. Stud. 16 (2), 169−187.

Maiz-Arevalo, Carmen, 2024. Sharing is caring: an ethnographic approach to Spanish WhatsApp groups. J. Pragmat. 226, 78−88.

Markham, Annette, 2003. Metaphors reflecting and shaping the reality of the Internet: tool, place, way of being. In: Paper Presented at the Conference of the International Association of Internet Researchers in Toronto, Canada, October 2003. Available at: http://markham.internetinquiry.org/writing/MarkhamTPW.pdf.

Marwick, Alice E., 2013. Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age. Yale University Press, New Haven & London.

O'Hagan, Lauren, Spilioti, Tereza, 2021. The Edwardian Selfies: A transhistorical approach to celebrity culture and pictorial bookplates. Discourse, Context and Media 43, 100522. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.10522.

Perez-Sabater, Carmen, 2021. Moments of sharing, language style and resources for solidarity on social media: a comparative analysis. J. Pragmat. 180, 266−282.

Redmond, Sean (Ed.), 2014. Celebrity and the Media. Macmillan Education, London, UK.

Ren, Wei, 2024. Low spirits vs. high spirits: how failure and success influence sharing in social media groups. J. Pragmat. 225, 139−149.

Scott, Kate, 2022. Pragmatics Online. Routledge, London and New York.

Shi, Jiayi, Koo, Zhaowei, 2023. Words for the hearts: a corpus study of metaphors in online depression communities. Front. Psychol. 14, 1227123.

Silverstein, Michael, 1979. Language structure and linguistic ideologies. In: Clyne, Paul, Hanks, William F., Hofbauer, Carol (Eds.), The Elements. Chicago Linguistic Society, Chicago, pp. 193−248.

Spilioti, Tereza, 2016. Digital discourses: a critical perspective. In: Georgakopoulou, Alexandra, Spilioti, Tereza (Eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication. Routledge, Oxon and New York, pp. 133−148.

Sujan, Zoetanya, Johnstone, Lizette, 2017. Public friends and private sharing: understanding shifting privacies in sharing culture. In: #SMSociety17: Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society, 19, pp. 1−13.

US Weekly, 2023. Celebrities who took social media breaks: Kim Kardashian, Selena Gomez and more, 31 October 2023. http://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/pictures/kim-kardashian-more-celebrities-who-took-social-media-breaks/. (Accessed 14 June 2024).

Vanden Abeele, Mariek, Hafmann, Annabell, Lee, Edmund, 2022. Drug, demon or donut? Theorizing the relationship between social media use, digital well-being and digital disconnection. Curr. Opinion Psychol. 45, 101295.

Verschueren, Jef, 2000. Notes on the role of metapragmatic awareness in language use. Pragmatics 10 (4), 439−456.

Wade, Prudence, 2021. What happens psychologically when we're cut off from social media? The social media outrage proved just how addictive these apps can be. Independent, 5 October 2021. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/facebook-down-social-media-addicted-b1932682.html?utm_content=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=Main&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1633441037. (Accessed 25 March 2023).

Wittel, Andreas, 2011. Qualities of sharing and their transformations in the digital age. Int. Rev. Inf. Ethics 15, 3−8.

Tereza Spilioti is Reader in Language and Media in the Centre for Language and Communication Research at Cardiff University, UK. Her research interests and publications focus on the areas of language and new media, new literacies and multilingual writing, media ideologies, research ethics, and media socio-linguistics. Her work draws on theories and methodologies related to digital discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and linguistic ethnography. She has co-edited the special issue on The Ethics of Online Research Methods in Applied Linguistics (with C. Tagg) and the Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication (with A. Georgakopoulou).

Korina Giaxoglou is Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics & English Language at The Open University, UK. She is a narrative (socio)linguist who has been researching narrative and sharing practices of mourning and small stories of life, illness and death in digital contexts. She has been developing the analytical framework of affective positioning for the empirical study of affect performances in context. She is the author of the research monograph A Narrative Approach to Social Media Mourning: Small Stories and Affective Positioning (2021) and co-editor (with A. Georgakopoulou & S. Patron) of Small Stories Research: Tales, Tellings, and Tellers across Contexts (2024).