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Comprehensive Evaluation Paper II

Connecting with fans in under 140 characters:
Participation frameworks in the NHL's use of Twitter

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Abstract

As social media become more prevalent, they provide opportunities for both individuals and organizations to communicate in new and innovative ways. Many professional and collegiate sports teams have taken advantage of these media to reach their fan bases, with Twitter in particular taking a strong hold in the sports world. Twitter has been shown to provide a way for sports organizations to not only provide fans with updated news and information about the team, but also to provide so-called backstage information, showing off the personalities of players, coaches, and owners (Gregory, 2009). While there has been a significant push to use such 'insider' information to make fans feel more engaged with the team, participation structures are often overlooked as a potential tool for engaging fans via social media. Complex participation structures are available in interaction, and these structures can be manipulated to display stances and alignments to both the interaction and its participants and to the talk itself (Irvine, 1996; Hill and Zepeda, 1992). In order to understand how these participation structures can be manipulated to evoke different stances, a vocabulary and framework for discussing these structures are needed. Using the National Hockey League (NHL) and its official team accounts as a case study, this paper adds to the current body of research on the interactional use of social media tool Twitter by analyzing Goffman's (1981) concept of participation frameworks, examining the ways that language use on Twitter both embodies and challenges the traditional participation roles enacted in face-to-face conversation. Through analysis of a corpus of 4,266 tweets produced by the NHL team accounts in a one-week span in March 2011, this project looks to define the participant roles and frameworks available to sports organizations in producing talk for their fans via Twitter. This analysis suggests that while Goffman's conventional participant roles can be extended to this medium, they are not sufficient on their own for describing the interactions between sports teams and their fans on Twitter, indicating the need for both new participant roles and revised conceptions of these traditional roles. Finally, linguistic tools specific to the Twitter medium, such as @mentions and #hashtag terms, are discussed in regards to their role in manipulating the participation frameworks available to NHL team accounts.

1. Introduction

With the influx of social media options available for communication online, a seemingly never-ending supply of “how-to” articles are available to give readers the best practices for these social media sites. While many of these articles base their advice in the so-called rules of communication and interaction, more work is needed in investigating the linguistic and sociolinguistic principles of online interaction. Naomi Baron has led the charge to investigate the ways in which advances in technology are impacting “both the linguistic and social dimensions of human interaction” (2008: 43). Baron’s call asks researchers to investigate the social interactions and relationships that Internet communication allows one to build, and the ways that these interactions are borne out in language use. Additionally, Gershon suggests that “people’s media... practices will determine what aspect of the technology becomes significant in a given context” (2010: 5). In order to understand the ramifications of technological advances in social media, then, researchers must look to the ways that people put these media to use. This paper takes up this idea and seeks to add to the current body of research on the use of social media tool Twitter by investigating Goffman’s (1981) concept of participation frameworks, looking at the ways that language use on Twitter both embodies and challenges the traditional participation roles used to describe face-to-face conversation. Using the National Hockey League (NHL) teams¹ as a case study, this paper will discuss the linguistic resources put to use by these teams in this online platform and how this use affects the mediation of participation frameworks and participant roles.

Although they are relatively new in the history of communication, social media platforms on the Web (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) have already begun to have a profound impact

¹ The National Hockey League represents what is commonly considered to be the highest level of professional hockey, with teams spanning the United States and Canada.

on the ways that people interact with others around the globe. Yet as Gershon (2010: 9-10) notes, it is not the “fact of newness” that affects changes in the ways people communicate, but the “ways in which people understand and experience the newness of technology” that influences their interactions. Twitter in particular has taken a strong hold in the sports world. While Twitter can be used as a means to provide followers with a valuable stream of news and information, it can also be used by sports teams to provide “backstage” information, showing off the personalities of players, coaches, and owners and allowing fans to engage with their favorite sports in new and unique ways (Gregory, 2009). Depending on the ways that this new technology is taken up by its users, Twitter can provide teams with a powerful tool to encourage fan engagement and communication or with a one-way broadcasting channel for providing information to fans.

Fan identification and involvement have been studied from both marketing and psychological standpoints, with one overarching theme tying them together – fans want to feel like they are part of the team (Sutton et al., 1997; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Lever, 1983; Rooney, 1974). The more a fan can connect with a team and feel involved, the more likely they are to overlook the years of bad team performance and continue to spend their entertainment dollars on the team despite a lack of “on-field” success (Sutton et al., 1997). While there are many ways to engage fans and encourage fan identification, social media sites provide a unique opportunity for interaction between teams and fans. According to Seo and Green (2008), two primary motivations for sports fans to use the Internet are “social contact” and “fan expression”, both interactive motivations. Pegoraro (2011) found that professional athletes using Twitter were predominately using it to interact with fans one-on-one, with most athletes’ tweets directed to other Twitter users (marked by text beginning with @username). Right behind these direct

responses to fan questions were tweets about the athlete's personal life, usually insider information that fans would not be able to obtain by simply reading a team's website or local media. In using social media in this way, athletes on Twitter are providing "unmediated access to what [they] want to say to their fans, something not readily present in traditional media and in Web 1.0" (Pegoraro, 2010: 507). While it is clear that social media has given athletes a platform to interact directly with their fans, the question remains if sports teams are taking advantage of this platform in similar ways. By using social media to interact with fans, instead of just providing news and information updates, teams are more likely to satisfy the socialization and inclusion needs of fans. Teams that use social media sites to tap into these motivations are most likely to be successful in their goals of encouraging long-term fan identification and involvement. But how can teams take advantage of this opportunity?

In order to understand the stances and alignments that NHL teams are enacting on Twitter, it is important to establish a vocabulary for discussing the participant roles and frameworks available put to use by these teams. This paper looks to analyze the ways that teams are using Twitter for the purpose of establishing such a vocabulary. Starting with Goffman's (1981) concepts of participation frameworks, this research looks at the ways in which NHL teams present themselves as participants in talk and the ways that the audiences of the talk are perceived. This paper will also explore the linguistic resources for establishing participation frameworks that are put to use on Twitter, including those that are unique to the medium, such as hashtags (searchable terms marked by #text) and @mentions (references to another Twitter user with the notation "@[username]" that send a notification to that user that they have been mentioned in a tweet).

2. Background and rationale

2.1. Participation Frameworks

Goffman (1981) is commonly recognized as one of the first discourse theorists to propose a framework for investigating participants in discourse as more than just a “speaker” and “hearer” dichotomy. His paper on footing laid the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of the “who” of discourse, by elaborating participant roles beyond the those of physically uttering the words (speakers) and of receiving the acoustic signals of this speech (hearers). Goffman (1981) posits that these terms work for an acoustic analysis, but for an analysis of social organization and involvement in discourse it is important to break these concepts down further. For Goffman, *participation status* is “the relation of any one such member to [an] utterance”, while the *participation framework* is the relation “of all the persons in the gathering [to this utterance]... for that moment of speech” (137). What is important in investigating the participants in a speech act for Goffman, then, is the speaker’s relationship to both the words they are producing and those that might receive the speech.

For participants involved in production of speech, Goffman breaks down the idea of “speaker” into three roles: *animator*, *author*, and *principal*, as seen in Table 1, below. A similar breakdown in participant status is offered for the “hearer” role (or “reception role” as labeled by Levinson, 1988). Table 1 below identifies Goffman’s distinctions for participants receiving the talk: *ratified* participants, which are either *addressed* or *unaddressed*, and *unratified* participants, who are either *over-hearers* or *eavesdroppers*. Together these four categories allow for analysis of the recipient of talk to be distinguished by their relationship to the speaker (known or unknown, addressed or unaddressed) and their relationship to hearing the talk (planned or unplanned). One further concept that Goffman discusses is that of presence. The “*imagined*

Table 1. Goffman's participation roles (table from Levinson, 1988:169 ; page references refer to Goffman 1981)

<i>Production roles</i> (“production format” for Goffman)	
1	<i>animator</i> ‘the sounding box’ (p. 226)
2	<i>author</i> ‘the agent who scripts the lines’ (p. 226)
3	<i>principal</i> ‘the party to whose position the words attest’ (p. 226)
<i>Reception roles</i> (“participation framework” for Goffman)	
A: <i>ratified</i> (p. 226)	
1	<i>addressed recipient</i> ‘the one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over his speaking role’ (p. 133)
2	<i>unaddressed recipient</i> the rest of the ‘official hearers’, who may or may not be listening (p. 133)
B: <i>unratified</i>	
1	<i>over-hearers</i> ‘inadvertent’, ‘non-official’ listeners (p. 132) (also <i>bystanders</i>)
2	<i>eavesdroppers</i> ‘engineered’, ‘non-official’ followers of talk (p. 132)

recipient” (138) is physically removed from the interaction – it is known that they will hear the talk, but they are not available to provide immediate feedback or indications that they have received the talk. Goffman describes the prototypical TV or radio broadcaster that projects his talk for a large audience but does not concurrently receive any information about the reception of his talk. While Table 1 is designed to represent those participants that are physically present for an utterance, Goffman notes that persons that are not present can also influence talk.

While Goffman's work set the ground for understanding participation, issues with these participation roles were soon brought to the forefront. Some scholars, such as Levinson (1988), argued that Goffman had not broken down the roles of speaker and hearer enough, and suggested a framework consisting of 17 different roles for production and reception. Others, including Irvine (1996), argued that Goffman's approach at decomposition of speaker and hearer is unable to account for the context of an utterance. Irvine suggests that the best approach to understanding participation structures in talk includes “retain[ing] a quite simple set of primary participant roles (Speaker, Addressee, and third parties present and absent), while deriving more subtle types from a notion of intersecting frames and dialogic relations” (1996: 136). The establishment of

participant roles for each utterance or spoken turn should be determined in conjunction with a participant's footing with regards to the other participants and to the interaction itself. Keane (2000: 271) argues for a similar consideration, noting the importance of understanding "the complexity and manipulability of participation roles, by which persons can take on a wide range of possible alignments towards the words being used in any given context, e.g., claiming authorship versus merely reporting another's words". Hill and Zepeda's (1992) work on the distribution of responsibility in talk also reveal the complexity of participation structures, showing that speakers can create and manipulate many different roles and frameworks to align themselves with or distance themselves from the talk.

Studies have also shown that in addition to social context, the medium of the talk plays a role in understanding the potential participant roles and structures. O'Keefe (2006) reveals the complexity of participation structures in live call-in radio talk shows, including how turn-taking in the talk is managed by participants and how relationships between speaker and audience are established. Myers (2010) investigates this question in regards to Internet blogging. One key difference is that many of the gestural contextualization cues are no longer available to the person producing the talk. While a participant in face-to-face interaction can address another participant by simply looking in their direction, this is not a possible in blogging or most of forms of online talk (or any written talk, for that matter). Address must be done more directly, by singling out participants by name or by making references to a larger audience, often by use of personal pronouns. Pegoraro (2010) found patterns in athletes' use of Twitter, where the predominant form of the tweets was that of a direct response with an "@ mention" to address a particular user that has asked a question. Myers (2010) also found heavy use of questions and directives in blogs to address and engage the audience and many bloggers directly encouraged responses to these

speech acts in the comment section of the blogs. This paper continues in the trend of investigating participation structures by incorporating the social and technological contexts of the talk.

2.2. *Why Twitter?*

As the use of social media continues to grow, it is important to understand how users are participating and how interaction is taking place on these new platforms. Twitter (www.Twitter.com), founded in 2006, represents a form of social media known as *micro-blogging*. Micro-blogging, like blogging, allows users to broadcast information to anyone who chooses to view it. Unlike social networking sites such as Facebook, where one needs to have a reciprocal connection (a “friendship”) for information sharing², Twitter and other micro-blogging sites allow for non-reciprocal relationships – one user can follow the broadcasts (or “tweets”) of another user without that user following in return. These tweets consist of 140 characters or fewer and appear in a collected feed on the user’s home Twitter page that can be viewed by any other Twitter user³ (much like the collection of posts on a blog). The “follow” function allows users to receive an updated stream of tweets produced by other users that they have chosen to follow (known as their “timeline”) as these users produce new posts. Twitter is the most highly used and highly visible micro-blogging site: as of April, 2011 Twitter had 7 million unique visitors per month with a monthly growth rate of 1382% (Thomas, 2011; McGiboney, 2009). According to Thomas (2011: 115), “Technology gurus predict Twitter will surpass other social media outlets like Facebook... in the near future”.

² Facebook has since enabled companies such as sports organizations to start fan pages, which users can “like” to follow their updates. This relationship, much like following on Twitter, allows for a non-reciprocal relationship where fans can follow an organization without that organization following them in return, as required by the “friend” function.

³ While it is possible for users to set their account to “private”, only allowing approved users to view their page, it is largely uncommon and does not apply to any of the accounts that will be discussed in this paper and therefore will not be explored further here.

As Ovadia (2009:204) notes, “Twitter, at its core, provides access to conversations”. While Twitter is often seen by non-users to be merely a collection of updates about certain topics (whether that topic be a user’s daily life or a more global topic like political riots), research has found that most users find Twitter to be “more valuable than other media for connecting information to personal goals, for knowing what is on others’ minds at this moment, and for prompting opportunistic conversations” (Zhao and Rosson, 2009:251). Users are not just turning to Twitter to find out what is going on in the lives of others, but to use that information socially – to discover the minds of others and then engage them in conversation. This drive for social connection and interaction makes Twitter an interesting site for sociolinguistic research into the work that is being done by its users to create interpersonal communication.

In addition to the conversational goals of its users, linguistic functions unique to the Twitter interface make it an appealing ground for investigation. Like the call-in talk shows studied by O’Keeffe (2006), Twitter provides opportunities for one-on-one engagement that can also be viewed by a wider audience: if a tweet begins with a mention of another user (the @ symbol followed by a user’s Twitter account name), that user will receive a special notification of the tweet and the tweet then only goes into the timeline of users that follow both accounts. However, anyone visiting the Twitter page of the sender will be able to see that tweet in his or her collected feed. As with the blog posts described by Myers (2010), the Twitter medium can enable a multiplicity of audiences. Additionally, the function of “retweeting” (rebroadcasting a tweet produced by another user, most often marked with the use of RT before the text of the rebroadcasted tweet) allows for a new method of distinguishing between author and animator, similar to the use of quotation marks in other forms of written talk. By applying the participation framework model to this relatively new medium, one can hopefully come to understand how the

new linguistic resources provided by Twitter are being employed within talk to mediate production and reception roles in interaction.

2.3. The National Hockey League as a case study

As technology advances, sports organizations and their fans often find ways to put it to use. From fantasy sports leagues conducted online with any imaginable statistic at participants' fingertips to high definition (HD) and even three-dimensional (3D) broadcasting, the sports world has been active in taking up new ways of bringing the game to the fans. With every new media advance, the sports fan can be provided with more "up-to-the-minute information and a more detailed and personalized experience" (Rein et al., 2006:70). This move towards a more personalized experience has changed the approach that sports teams and leagues must take to engage the fan. As Rein et al. (2006:296) note, "Interacting with the fan, forming a personal relationship, and connecting on an emotional level are now key objectives of sports brands". Social media provide an avenue for teams to reach out to fans and interact with them in a conversational way. While team websites often utilize a more "bulletin board" style, posting information but not allowing team representatives to directly interact with the fans, social media present a new opportunity to directly engage with fans, both one-on-one and en mass.

Crawford (2003:234) highlights the important role that social interaction plays in "the induction and career progression of a sport supporter". His study of fandom from the early stages of general interest through later stages of devotion suggests that fans become more involved and engaged in supporting their favorite team(s) primarily through social interaction, whether that be face-to-face interaction or "the use of mass media and consumer goods" (234). Through interaction and consumption of media and goods related to the team, fans are able to secure their identity as an affiliated member of the team community (McDonald et al., 2002). In a study of

fan motivation for visiting team Websites and making use of online content, Seo and Green (2008) found interpersonal communication and fan expression to be more important than the even the content of the site. While content is certainly still important, the desire for interaction and community turns out to be even more significant. If the goal of a sports organization is to build fan loyalty (and with many studies showing that increases in fan loyalty equate to more dollars spent on that team or sport, it seems fair to say that is a primary goal), satisfying the fan need for interaction is critical. Social media provide a platform for satisfying that need.

According to Michael DiLorenzo, the NHL's former director of social media marketing and strategy, "NHL fans are the most tech-savvy among the major sports" and therefore "social media is right in their wheelhouse" (Leggio, 2010). At the time this study began, the NHL was the only one of the four major US sports leagues to have every single team actively utilizing an official team Twitter account. With fans so enthusiastically involved in new technologies, including social media, teams on Twitter have a ripe chance to reach out and interact with the fans. But are they taking advantage of this opportunity? Teams could continue to use Twitter as a sort of team website – as a "bulletin board" to update fans about new content. Alternatively, teams can use Twitter to interact with fans in a more conversational way – to answer individual questions, to communicate one-on-one, and to provide "insider" content and opportunities for fans utilizing social media. This study looks to create a vocabulary and framework to begin to analyze the participation structures that are available to NHL teams for establishing a connection with fans on Twitter. A look at both the more institutional talk (conventional, "update style" tweets aimed at a nameless audience) and the more conversational (direct interactions with individual fans) illustrates and illuminates the many participation frameworks available for sports organizations using the Twitter medium.

3. Methodology

This study employs both Conversation Analysis (CA) and Corpus Linguistics (CL) to analyze the use of participation roles and frameworks in the NHL's use of Twitter. As Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008:12) write, "the objective of CA is to uncover the often tacit reasoning procedures and sociolinguistic competencies underlying the production and interpretation of talk in organized sequences of interaction". The CA approach is used here to investigate both the shape and function of the talk establishing participation frameworks on Twitter by the NHL team accounts. By focusing on the ways that the talk produced by these accounts is structured, one can make "inductive comments about social organization", in this case, the organization of participant roles in the teams' Twitter usage (O'Keeffe, 2006:34). Additionally this analysis will allow for exploration of the varying means of address and use of other linguistic resources available for creating participant frameworks using the Twitter platform. While CA allows for descriptive review of talk-in-interaction, the primary goal of such an approach is to answer two core analytical questions: (1) "What interactional business is being mediated or accomplished through the use of a sequential pattern?" and (2) "How do participants demonstrate their active orientation to this business?" (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008:93). For this paper, these questions can be reformulated as follows:

- What participant roles are being mediated or accomplished through the talk produced by NHL teams on Twitter? (i.e. How can one talk about the roles that are available and utilized for participants in this talk?)
- How does the talk demonstrate an active orientation to these participation frameworks? (i.e. How are linguistic resources being put to use to build these frameworks?)

In addition to using the more qualitative approach advanced by CA, the methodology of Corpus Linguistics has something to add to this study. As CA "employs a methodology in which

exemplars are used as the basis on which a generalizable description is built”, CL enhances this approach by providing quantitative evidence from a larger corpus (2008:93). O’Keeffe notes in her research on participation frameworks that CL is best used within an analytic framework to complement qualitative approaches like CA by illustrating trends and tendencies over large amounts of data (2006). While the CL approach might offer little on its own here, when combined with the CA approach, it can be used to support the generalizability of the analysis gained from studying the so-called exemplars.

The data for this study were collected from Twitter over a one-week period (Saturday, February 26, 2011 to Saturday March 5, 2011) from all 30 official NHL team accounts, as well as the NHL league account. In total, 4,266 tweets were collected from the 31 accounts⁴. The software program DiscoverText (Texifter LLC, 2009) was used to collect the tweets produced by each of the subject accounts, harvesting the data from Twitter once an hour.

The data have been coded for the following interaction variables, modified from Pegoraro’s (2010) study on athletes use of Twitter:

- 1) mention of another Twitter user, by use of @username within text;
- 2) direct response to a Twitter user, by use of @username at the beginning of text;
- 3) use of a link to an Internet website within text;
- 4) use of link to a picture or video;
- 5) use of a searchable "hashtag term", in the form #text;
- 6) references to the addressees of the talk, which vary in linguistic form (e.g. 2nd person pronouns, "hey fans", etc.);
- 7) references to the author or producer of the content, again varying in linguistic form (e.g. 1st person pronouns, identified quotes, etc.); and
- 8) none of the above

Each tweet was coded for whether it contained one or more of each element (or none of the elements); tweets could be coded for more than one element if multiple elements were present, however multiple uses of one element (e.g. more than one hashtag term) were coded only once

⁴ See Appendix A for information about each team account at the time of data collection, including the number of followers each account has and the total number of tweets produced by each account.

per tweet. Each of these interactional variables provides a possible resource for establishing participation frameworks on Twitter. While several of these resources are common in conversational speech (e.g. references to the addressee, references to the producer of the talk), many are new resources, particular to the Twitter platform (e.g. hashtags and retweets). The investigation of these variables primarily seeks to answer the second research question raised above.

4. Production Roles

Participation in talk on Twitter demonstrates similarities with more traditional forms of face-to-face interaction, as well as differences arising due to use of the medium that challenge Goffman's participation statuses. Section 4 focuses on the roles within the production of talk on Twitter, ranging from the most basic tweeting functions to the more complex. Revisiting the concepts of *animator*, *author*, and *principal* via Twitter leads to extension of these traditional production roles to this online written medium, as well as suggestions for their reinterpretation and addition of new roles to accommodate this relatively new form of interaction.

4.1. "Voicing" the tweet

If speakers tend to have a concept of a "basic" dyadic conversation, with two participants exchanging speaking turns during the interaction, Twitter users might consider the "basic" tweet to be one that is produced by a single user and broadcast to all of his or her followers. Here the roles of animator, author, and principal are likely conflated in this single user, who scripts and physically produces a tweet that attests to his/her position. For this "basic" tweet, the traditional production roles of Goffman's participation framework appear to be easily identifiable and to translate well to this new medium.

Challenges to these roles begin to arise quite quickly, however, when going beyond this basic tweet, as in the case of NHL team accounts on Twitter. With an individual user, it is easy to envision a person at a computer or mobile device typing out their thoughts and hitting enter, followed by a post appearing in his/her Twitter feed. With these users, there is little confusion for the audience of the tweets in identifying the individual with whom the Twitter account's identity lies and the individual that physically produces the talk by typing the actual tweets. But what happens when the voice of the account is no longer that of an individual? As Androutsopoulos notes, "Internet users do not necessarily reproduce offline (or real-life) identities in their Web literacy practices, but may choose to foreground alternative aspects of self" (2007: 282). For NHL team accounts, the online identity of the account is often a collective one: the "team" operates the account and users choose to follow the "team". How, then, does this affect the role and perception of the animator on Twitter? Do users still think about the person behind the computer entering the text when they have no idea who it is that might be entering this information? And how does this ambiguity affect the interaction itself?

Goffman (1981:226) defines the role of the animator as "the sounding box" that physically produces the talk. While the sounding box metaphor does not equate perfectly to its written text counterpart, it is clear that Goffman's intentions can be translated to describe the person that physically produces the written text. In face-to face spoken conversation however, it is usually visually clear who the animator is: one can see the person that is animating the talk because he or she is physically present in the interaction. While it may not always be clear whose words are being uttered, it is obvious to the other participants who is physically producing the words and with whom the participants are currently interacting. Conversational participants are accustomed to interacting directly with the animator of talk, whether that is an active role of

interaction, as in back-and-forth conversation, or a more passive role of interaction, by simply listening to someone speak. When the participants in spoken conversation are not in the same physical location, for example in a telephone call, the identity of the animator may not be immediately clear, but the recipient of the talk still (usually) knows whether or not they are interacting with a person that is uttering the words. But what happens with written interaction in an online medium? When someone types out a tweet, they have filled the role as the animator of the talk; however, if their identity is unknown or unclear to the audience of the tweets, the other participants may not have any idea with whom they are interacting. For the NHL team accounts, the account identity is that of the team, but the animator is often an unknown person. Is the participant that is “voicing” the talk, then, the person that physically types the talk and hits enter or the identity constructed for the account that broadcasts this talk and makes it available to others? When users read a tweet from the New York Rangers, are they interacting with the person who produced the tweet or with a greater “team” voice? As Keane (1999: 272) notes, “heteroglossia refers to multiple voices within a single speaker, participation roles entail aspects of a single voice distributed across several speakers”. In the case of NHL teams using Twitter, the voice can be attributed to multiple entities, suggesting the need for a split between the roles of (imagined) *animator* and the *broadcaster*.

While Goffman’s animator role is still relevant in this online written medium, the concept of the *imagined animator* becomes necessary. By and large, NHL teams have taken the approach of leaving the animator unidentified, with the account taking the team’s identity. Of the 4266 tweets collected for this study, only 12% (518) contained a reference to the animator of the tweet (e.g. 1st person pronouns or references to the animator’s identity, location, or activity). 88% of the tweets produced by the NHL teams give no indication as to the person that might be writing

them, including even the most generic of references indicating that there is some individual writing the tweet, such as the pronoun “I”. In most NHL team tweets, such as those produced for the Philadelphia Flyers account in Example 1, below, the animator of the talk cannot be readily identified by other participants:

(1) from @NHLFlyers:

(a) Flyers goin on the PECO pp with 11:46 left in the 3rd. BUF shot the puck over the glass in the defensive end

(b) WATCH as Flyers' defenseman Matt Carle presents his \$10,000 check to C.H.O.P. for reaching 10,000 followers on twitter! <http://bit.ly/dFCyo0>

(c) beauty of a backhand on Miller and JVR makes it 2-0 Flyers!

In these tweets, much like Goffman’s “imagined recipient” (1981:138), the animator here can be said to be removed from the interaction. In (1a), there is no indication as to an animator of the tweet – there is simply an update filled with factual details of the game play. When @NHLFlyers tells its followers to watch a video clip in (1b) or evaluates the play of “JVR” (James van Riemsdyk) in (1c), there is no reference to indicate the presence or identity of the animator. Participants know that someone is producing the talk (and giving directives and making evaluations), but the animator must be imagined by the other participants in the interaction, as there is no clear reference to the animator at any point in the talk or in the identity of the team account. In interactions using Twitter, participants do not have face-to-face access, but as Zhao notes, “individuals interact with one another ‘face to device’” which “conceals the identity of an individual while allowing him/her to maintain instantaneous contact with someone” (2005: 390-1). This anonymity has a significant effect on the participation framework, as there is often no way of knowing the identity of the animator for these accounts, which have taken on the team voice in their tweets. In fact, there is no indication that the talk even comes from the same animator every time. With tweets coming at all hours of the day, it is probable that there is more

than one animator for many of these accounts; however, that is never made clear to the other participants in the talk. The real world physical identity of the animator is unknown to the audience of the tweets; therefore, for the purposes of the interaction, the animator is simply an imagined entity for the other participants of the talk in this case.

In using the concept of “imagined recipient”, Goffman (1981) indicates that the talk is at least in some way designed for this imagined audience, even if they are not able to provide immediate feedback. With the imagined animator then, it is important that the audience of the tweets knows that there is a person producing the talk, as their participation in the interaction is in some way a reaction to this knowledge. When users respond to a tweet from a team account or direct questions to the account, they are not reacting to the general team identity, but to the individual that is animating the tweets, even if this identity is not readily available to them. While tweets are broadcast by the team account, the knowledge that there is a person producing the tweets is important to the making the followers feel like one-on-one interaction is possible. If teams wish to be able to utilize Twitter to be able to speak to the fans’ need for interaction and conversation, it is important for fans to know that the account is humanized in some way – a person telling followers to watch a video link, as in (1b) above, not just a list of links that could be automatically posted by a programmed command. Evaluations of team play, as in (1c), allow for a more personal and interactive experience than simply listing box scores. The interaction, and therefore the talk produced for the interaction, is impacted by the belief that there is at least one individual animating the tweets and not solely a “team” voice behind the posts.

In addition to the imagined animator, the role of the *broadcaster* is necessary in understanding interaction on Twitter for the production format. Some (possibly imagined) person is animating tweets for the team accounts, but these tweets are broadcast from the account

identity, which is that of the organization in the case of these NHL team accounts. The broadcaster role for Twitter could be defined as “the ‘followable’ entity that makes the talk available to recipients”. While the identity of the broadcaster may be the same as the animator for tweeters using their own identity, for employees of an organization, that may not always be the case. One cell-phone information company, Phonedog, is currently in the process of suing a former employee for not abandoning his Twitter account after leaving the company (Yandle, 2011). The account, @Phonedog_Noah, was run for the company by the individual Noah Kravitz. Following his departure from the company, Kravitz simply changed the username on the account, retaining the followers of the @Phonedog_Noah account. Phonedog is now suing Kravitz for \$370,000, claiming that the followers had chosen to follow the brand, not the individual. While this unprecedented case has yet to be decided, it is clear that its basis lays in the question of whose voice the account represented and what entity was making the tweets available to the accounts followers. Although Kravitz was animating the tweets, Phonedog is making a case that they had a share in the voice of the tweets as the broadcaster for this account.

For the NHL teams, there also appears to be a clear and important distinction between the entity that is animating the text of the tweets and the entity that makes the tweets accessible to the followers. Fans on Twitter are not choosing to follow the imagined individual that is animating the tweets – they are following the team. When leaving the animator’s identity to the imagination of the readers of the tweets, the team accounts are allowing their identity as an organization to remain in focus, while the animator remains in the background. Tweets like the ones in Example 2, below, show that the voice of the animator can be clearly distinguished from the team. In (2a) the team identity of the Anaheim Ducks (referenced with the hashtag term #NHLDucks) is separated from the animator here with the use of the 3rd person pronoun “they”

(2) from @AnaheimDucks:

(a) The #NHLDucks have earned one point and will look for one more as they head to overtime tied with the #Wings at 1-1.

(b) The Oscars are coming up & we asked the #NHLDucks to give their pick for Best Picture. WATCH: <http://bit.ly/fLr8Vt>

to refer back to the team. This use of third person here shows that the animator and the team are distinct entities. In (2b), the animator again separates himself from the team, with the choice of “we asked the #NHLDucks”. The person writing the tweet could have chosen to say “the players” instead, setting up a distinction between team account and team players, but the use of “we” vs. “the #NHLDucks” (i.e. “the team”) clearly separates out these two identities. While the use of 1st person pronouns in the team tweets was quite rare (recall less than 12% of the tweets made any reference to the animating individual), the juxtaposition here makes it clear that the voice of the animator and the team that is broadcasting the tweets are not always one and the same. The third person pronoun surfaces again in (2b), separating out the Ducks team as giving “their pick” for the Oscar.

While most team accounts did very little to identify the animator of the tweets, one team, the Boston Bruins, chose to identify the animator of almost every tweet (132 out of 137 total tweets by the @NHLBruins account). For this account, the animators “signed” their tweets with a “^” symbol followed by the shortened form of the animator’s name (either BB, BISH, or TV). The tweets in Example 3 show that the animator is quite distinct from the team broadcaster

(3) from @NHLBruins:

(a) The Bruins tie the game with 33 seconds left in regulation. David Krejci at 19:27 of the 3rd.^BISH

(b) It's @NHLBruins Tim Thomas vs. @pghpenguins Marc-Andre Fleury in goal @TDGarden. Join the live blog.^BISH <http://bbbru.in/vsPIT0305>

(c) 2-1 final, Bruins win! That makes 7 straight wins for the B's who are now just 3 points behind PHI for 1st place in the East ^BB

identity. In these tweets, the role of the imagined animator is not needed – it is quite clear to the other participants who has animated the tweet based on the signature at the end. Even if the other participants do not know these animators in the “real world”, they are able to see that such a real world identity has been assigned for the animator role. By letting the audience know who is animating the tweet, these tweets again separate out the roles of animator and broadcaster. In (3a) and (3c), the animator makes several references to the team (“The Bruins”, “Bruins”, “the B’s”), distinguishing the team identity from the animator. In (3b) the animator even chooses to reference the name of the account that he is tweeting from (@NHLBruins), clearly distinguishing the account identity from his own. By referencing the goalie (Tim Thomas) as a member of the @NHLBruins, BISH brings the team account identity to the forefront as a participant in the talk, connecting the account directly to the team, but continues to make it clear that he is the one producing the talk in the tweet. Recipients of the tweet know that they are reading text produced by BISH, but it is only because they are following the team account that they have access to this text. Additionally, if other Twitter users were to mention the @NHLBruins in their own talk, they would often not be referencing BISH, the animator of the tweet, but the team identity that is embodied by the account. The broadcaster role and animator role can clearly be separated in use of the Twitter medium, allowing for potential manipulation of stance and alignment. Both roles are integral in making a tweet available to an audience, and the complex participant structures enabled by use of both of these roles should be considered by sports organizations.

4.2. Principal vs. Broadcaster

When discussing the role of the broadcaster on Twitter, it is important to consider its relationship with the principal role. At first it may seem that the identity that is being labeled as the broadcaster is actually the same as the principal for the talk: that is, “the party to whose

position the words attest” (Goffman, 1981:226). Taking the accounts used for this study, it would seem that the words would be meant to attest to the position of the team, hence the use of the team account. And in some cases, these roles do intersect. The tweets by the Chicago Blackhawks account, seen in Example 4, do not make it clear who the principal is, suggesting that it is that of the account identity:

(4) from @NHLBlackhawks:

(a) Toews wrists one from the slot, 4-1 Hawks! 3:30 to play in the 2nd period.

(b) Man advantage for Chicago as The Captain draws a penalty, hooking called on Sarich, who was injured on the play. 6 to play in the 2nd.

The tweet in (4a) gives information to followers about a goal that has been scored by (Jonathan) Toews, a Blackhawks player. While the team name (Hawks) is identified by the animator, there is no use of 3rd person pronouns here to indicate a separation between the account identity and the voice of the talk. Twitter is being used in this case to update followers on the game status, presumably from the perspective of the team they have chosen to follow. The exclamation point used in this tweet also helps to identify the team (or at least as an associate of the team) as the principal, showing excitement that the team now has a sizeable lead over their opponent, in this case, the Calgary Flames. In fact, a tweet about the same event from the Flames account (@NHLFlames) shows less enthusiasm: “#Hawks goal. Toews with his 2nd of the game. 4-1 with 3:27 left in the 2nd”. The subtle differences in these two tweets on the same subject help to illustrate the team’s perspective, and thus the team as principal, for this talk. Similarly (4b) gives another game update, with a mention of “The Captain” (team captain, Jonathan Toews). In illustrating Toew’s ties to the team with this epithet, the talk here is connected even more clearly to the Blackhawk’s identity, again suggesting the team as both broadcaster and principal.

However, in looking at the talk produced for the NHL accounts, it is clear that the broadcaster and principal roles are not always conflated and that the broadcasting party is not always the principal of the talk. The Buffalo Sabres account, for example, is described as “The Official Twitter of the Buffalo Sabres” in the “bio” section for the account, but goes by the username @SabresDotCom. Here, the broadcast identity speaks specifically to the Internet presence of the team by identifying the website information in the username; followers can see that they are following this online presence associated with the team, not the more general team entity. The tweets produced by this account, though, do not always speak to this identity as can be seen in Example 5:

(5) from @SabresDotCom:

- (a) Game Day as Buffalo is set to take on the Flyers today at 1:00 PM - check out the full game preview at <http://bit.ly/hweTtO>
- (b) @BillMarkle Both DirecTV channels are OK in Buffalo. Contact them directly if you are having problems. It has nothing to do with us.
- (c) That's the third period and we are still tied at 2 - we are heading to overtime

In (5a), the broadcaster and principal appear to be the same, as the broadcasting identity is that of the online presence and the talk indicates this as well, by asking followers to check out their website for information about the game. In (5b), however, the broadcaster and principal do not match up as clearly. In response to user @BillMarkle, who has asked why the current Buffalo Sabres game is not being broadcast on the television channels he is expecting, the animator here tells him that “it has nothing to do with us”. The use of “us” here could have several referents: the team, the operators of the team’s Internet presence, or specifically the operators of the team account. However, it is unlikely that @BillMarkle has assumed that the people that run the Twitter account, or even the team website, are the same people that are responsible for producing the broadcast of the game. Here, @BillMarkle is likely attempting to contact the team

organization more generally, in hopes of solving his problem. While the “us” in (5b) remains ambiguous, the multiple possible interpretations suggest that the broadcaster and the principal may not be, or at least may not be seen by other users, as one and the same. (5c) again highlights this separation between the online identity of the broadcaster and the team identity as the principal. The use of “we” in “we are still tied at 2” and “we are heading to overtime” suggests the team identity as the party that the words represent, as it is the team that is playing in this overtime game. It is clearly not the online presence of the team that is being referenced with “we” here, once again distinguishing the broadcaster from the principal.

Evidence of separation of the principal and broadcaster roles can be seen in accounts in which the broadcaster role is represented by the team identity as well. In the examples in (2) and (3) above, a clear separation from the team identity is created by the continued use of 3rd person references to the team. In these cases, the broadcast identity is still that of the team, but the principal role is taken over by the person in the animator role in these cases. The talk cannot be said to attest to the position of the teams, as the teams are described as “they” or “the Bruins” instead of “we” or other first person references, and therefore the principal must be seen as an entity separate from the team identity. The principal is a shifting role that can be taken up by different identities in different cases of talk (as in the examples in 5, where there is the potential for different principals for each tweet), while the broadcaster is a more stable role, maintaining the same identity throughout all of the tweets by that account. The principal and broadcaster, then, may not be the same participant in the talk and should be recognized as separate roles.

4.3. Authorship and quoting

Thus far, Goffman’s animator and principal roles have been discussed to the exclusion of the role of *author* or “the agent who scripts the lines” (1981:226). Generally, the role of author

on Twitter translates well from Goffman's conception of author in more conventional, spoken forms of conversation. In the most basic forms of conversation, participants often expect that the animator of the talk is also the author of the talk, scripting the words that they will voice. When the animator and author roles are not filled by the same individual, such as when a speech writer has written a speech, the author often remains unidentified, a figure acting behind the scenes, unseen by other participants in the talk. The author role is similarly played out via Twitter, with the animator of the tweets often scripting the lines as well. Also much like spoken conversation, it can be unclear whether the author of a tweet is distinct from the animator, particularly with the case of the imagined animator on Twitter. While references to the animator or principal can often be made clear through subtle language use, such as 1st versus 3rd person pronouns, the author is usually lost beneath the surface of the talk, leaving room for other participants to make assumptions about the person scripting the lines. While the role of imagined animator for Twitter interaction can be manipulated in ways that are different from the known animator, the author can be enshrouded in similar ways for both the spoken and written format.

It is clear, however, that, as with spoken conversation, the role of author and animator cannot always be conflated on Twitter, and the difference can be made apparent through the use of quotation. As Bucholtz writes, "Quotation enhances the expressive dimension of speech by providing an enacted performance of what was said rather than an indirect report" (2011: 107). As noted above, providing insider access to fans is one of the primary opportunities that NHL teams have on Twitter, and such insider access is often presented in the form of quotation of coaches, players, and general managers associated with the team. As shown in narrative work, employing quotation in different ways allows an animator to distance herself from or align herself with the talk (Hill and Zepeda, 1992). For the NHL teams using Twitter, there are

multiple ways to express and enact quotations to their followers, as seen in tweets from the New York Rangers account in Example 6, below.

(6) from @thenyrangers

(a) Gaborik: “I was very, very excited I was on ice today, and I felt good... see how it feels afterwards.”

(b) Gaborik says he “kind of blacked out” on hit from Brooks Orpik “but thought it would just go away...never had concussion before”

(c) Torts calls Bryan McCabe “a gamer” & says he’s brought life back to team’s PP; other defensemen should watch how he is always ready to shoot

In (6a), the animator of the tweet has been made quite distinct from the author (and principal) of the talk in the tweet. Here, the talk is coming from Rangers player (Marian) Gaborik, as noted by the use of his name followed by a colon before the talk that he produced during interviews about his current health, found in quotation marks. Here the imagined animator has reanimated this talk that was originally spoken by Gaborik in written format for Twitter, but the words are still those that were scripted by Gaborik during his original instance of speech. In (6b) a multi-author approach is presented, with the animator using a mix of both original text and quotations. Gaborik’s talk is again presented in quotation marks, with some clarification by the animator between the quotes. Here, the animator is taking partial authorship in the way that he is arranging and explicating the quotes to make sense for followers in the Twitter context (as opposed to their original context of the interview format, where the other participants likely had access to the question that was asked of Gaborik and did not need to fill in information that was elided in his response). Finally, in (6c), a third approach to presenting quotes is taken. Here, most of the tweet involves paraphrasing the original animator/author (coach John Tortorella, or “Torts”) with only one term taken from the original utterance. The animator is also authoring most of the text, going away from direct quotation with his or her own paraphrase, but still attributing the ideas back to

“Torts” as the principal. These examples highlight the fact that there are myriad options for manipulating authorship and alignment to the talk on Twitter, as in conversational speech.

Several different methods of “retweeting”, or reproducing text produced in a previous tweet, are also available for manipulating authorship, but length considerations do not allow for an in-depth analysis of retweeting in this paper.

4.4. Conclusions on production format

Thus far, this paper has shown that the production format of Twitter can be quite complex and that varying production roles and participation frameworks are available to NHL teams in their use of the medium. Introducing the role of the *broadcaster*, the participant that represents a followable entity on Twitter, allows for a distinction between the participant that shares the text and the participant that animates the text, a distinction that is not commonly available in face-to-face communication. The *imagined animator* also provides a framework that is not available in conventional face-to-face talk, when participants are corporeally co-present. Because users on Twitter are often only co-present in the digital sense, the concept of an imagined animator allows NHL teams to either keep the animator identity hidden, promoting the idea that fans are interacting with a “team” entity, or to promote the identity of the animators (as done by the Boston Bruins account) to add a more personal touch to the account but risk separation from the team identity. The Twitter medium provides similar opportunities to negotiate the author and principal roles as face-to-face communication, giving teams many options for aligning themselves to the talk they are presenting.

5. Reception Roles

For Goffman (1981), the “hearer” roles in a participation framework are broken down by several key concepts: ratification, presence, address, and purposeful attention to the talk. Section

5 discusses these four concepts in their regards their application to participation roles in an online written medium. In particular, challenges to these traditional are considered, as well as consideration of new tools available via Twitter that play a part in participation for the reception side of the talk.

5.1. Ratification and presence in a public online medium

Ratification refers to the awareness and acknowledgement (on the part of the producer of the talk) of the other participants that are involved in the interaction. Unratified participants, then, are those that the speaker is not aware of in the interaction. Recall the idea of a “basic” tweet, one in which a single user broadcasts a tweet that will be appear in the their timeline as well as that of their followers. Because tweets are publically available to anyone with an Internet connection, the “audience” becomes an indefinite set of potential readers of the tweet. As Warner (2002: 413) notes in his work on defining publics, “A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself. It is autotelic; it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, websites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced.” The public nature of Twitter, then, makes the audience of the tweets anyone that comes across them in the medium. Tweets produced by teams and athletes are also commonly represented in other sports media formats, such as newspaper articles, blogs, and sports talk shows on radio and television widening the potential set of recipients even further. Due to the very public nature of these tweets, talking about “official” and “unofficial” hearers loses its meaning. For public figures, including sports teams, there is a sense that talk is designed as if it can be heard by anyone. Again, turning to Warner, “To address a public we don’t go around saying the same thing to all these people. We say it in a venue of indefinite address, and hope that people will find themselves in it” (418). NHL teams (and others) using Twitter cannot the exact set of

participants that will read their tweets, and thus produce their tweets “in a venue of indefinite address”. Sports teams in particular tend to avoid controversial topics as they wish to avoid alienating fans, and therefore this sense of a vast expanse of “official” hearers can be seen in the topics and wordings they choose.

However, in addition to official and unofficial receivers of the talk, it is also useful to discuss the distinction between a likely and unlikely audience in regards to ratification on Twitter. It is clear that followers of the account are more likely to receive a tweet than those that are not following the account. Even if these followers are not specifically addressed (address will be discussed further in Section 5.2 below), they clearly hold a privileged position in the participation framework over those that are not following an account. Consider tweets by the Montreal Canadiens, as seen in (7):

(7) from @CanadiensMTL:

(a) Deux minutes de punition à Travis Moen pour avoir accroché / Moen gets 2 for hooking. 5-on-3 PK/DN Canadiens #gohabsgo

The first part of this tweet presents a game update in French, while the second part presents the same information in English. While all other NHL team accounts tweet only in English, the Canadiens, who have many French-speaking fans, as they are located in the Quebec province of Canada, provide all of their tweets in both English and French in consideration of their followers⁵. As Bell (1984) discusses in detail, there is significant evidence that speakers consider their audience when designing their talk. It is clear here that @CanadiensMTL takes into account their most likely audience and privileges them in the interaction. The other 29 team accounts and the league account do not use French, as they are less likely to be followed by audiences expecting French-language tweets. While all of these team accounts, then, know that anyone in

⁵ Longer tweets that cannot fit within the 140-character limit in both languages are split into two tweets – an English version and a French version.

the world might be an audience to their tweets, they can be seen to ratify likely participants with their choice of the language in which they broadcast these tweets.

Another tool for ratification in this broad public forum is the use of the “hashtag”, or terms marked by the ‘#’ symbol that can then be easily searched for all uses of that designation of the term. An example of a hashtag term is provided in (7a) above, as #*gohabsgo* (go Habs go) at the end of the tweet⁶. While this tweet produced by @CanadiensMTL will be broadcast in the timelines of their followers, anyone searching for #*gohabsgo* will also see the tweet as part of the search timeline for that term. Hashtag terms are quite popular among NHL team accounts, with over 53% of tweets (2,264 of 4,266) using at least one hashtag term. These terms also allow followers of the team account to reproduce this hashtag in their own tweets to join in on a broader conversation that may reach many more users than just their own followers. The hashtag, then, can act as a means of ratification, by widening the pool of Twitter users that are likely to come across a tweet, even if they are not following a particular account.

In addition to ratification, the concept of *presence* is of interest to interaction. In Goffman’s (1981:138) discussion of an “imagined recipient” he notes that such recipients are not actually participants in an interaction because they are not present, even if talk is designed for such recipients. He distinguishes these imagined recipients, such as the viewing audience of a television talk show, from those that are physically present by noting that “live witnesses are coparticipants in a social occasion, responsive to all the mutual stimulation that that provides; those who audit the talk by listening to their set can only vicariously join the station audience” (138). The concept of “live” physical presence does not apply to talk on Twitter, however, as the medium makes it possible for participants in many locations to interact. In addition to corporeal

⁶ The Montreal Canadiens are affectionately referred to by fans as the “Habs”, based on the French nickname for the team, “Les Habitants”.

presence, temporal presence is also unnecessary. Based on distinctions in Baron (2004:398), Twitter is an asynchronous form of computer-mediated communication, in that users are not required “to be [instantaneously] physically present to read messages and respond to them”. Once a tweet is posted on Twitter, other users can read and respond to it right away, several hours later, or even days, months, or years later. The “presence” of a recipient, then, is relevant only in the sense that the recipient must be a user of Twitter in order to interact using this medium. It is possible for any Twitter user, following an account or not, to be a “coparticipant in [the] social occasion”, interacting by retweeting, responding, or even simply reading the tweet (Goffman, 1981:138). “Imagined recipients” then become those recipients that are not “present” on Twitter, those that come across the talk produced for the tweet in a different medium, such as a reproduction of the tweet on a sports talk show. These recipients are unable to interact directly with the talk (at least within the confines of the Twitter medium) and are therefore only “vicariously” joining in (138).

5.2. Means of address on Twitter

The use of Twitter also provides for unique considerations for the idea of address. The concept of *addressed recipients* in an online written medium is problematic when considering Goffman’s (1981:133) initial phrasing of the role: “the [participant] to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over the speaking role”. Goffman does note that this can become complex with three or more participants, but that the speaker will “address his remarks to the circle as a whole, encompassing all his hearers in his glance” and that address is “often accomplished exclusively through visual cues, although vocatives are available for managing [address]” (133). In interaction via Twitter, gaze and visual cues are not available to the participant in the “speaker” role as a means of confirming address.

Additionally, “speakers” may not always expect addressed participants to take over the next turn of producing, but may desire other participatory action, such as following a link or viewing a photo. This section discusses the options available to participants in regards to addressing other participants in this medium.

One of the more obvious means of address on Twitter includes what is often referred to as an “@mention”. Similar to vocatives, @mentions include the “@” symbol, followed by a username, which will then send a notification to the user that they have been mentioned in a tweet. These @mentions are often used at the beginning of a tweet to signify that a message is being addressed to a specific user. In addition to providing that user with a notification that they have been mentioned, this format also makes the message somewhat more limited in distribution than tweets that do not begin with an @mention. While @mention tweets will still appear in the timeline of the user that has produced the tweet, only users that are following both the broadcasting account and the addressed account will see the message in their own timeline. These tweets, then, are publicly available, but they are not as readily distributed to other users as a “basic” tweet. NHL teams that make use of this format often do so to directly respond to users that have addressed a question to the team account. If this question does not likely affect many other followers, they can respond directly to the user that asked the question and the tweet will then only appear in that user’s timeline and anyone that is following both the team and that user. NHL teams made varying use of this approach, with teams like the New York Islanders, Toronto Maple Leafs, and Chicago Blackhawks choosing to make use of direct address relatively often (68, 48, and 42 direct addresses in the one-week period), while teams like the Philadelphia Flyers and Pittsburgh Penguins did not use this option at all despite tweeting over 100 times during the observed timeframe.

Another way that teams can use the @mention involves putting it within the text of a tweet instead of at the beginning, to make mention of another Twitter user without directly replying to them. In this situation, the mentioned user will still receive a notification that they have been mentioned in a tweet; however, this @mention works somewhat differently in regards to address. In example 8, below, several tweets from the New York Islanders account (@NYIslanders) illustrate the different uses:

(8) from @NYIslanders:

(a) @jessharka In the future plans.

(b) As always, thanks to @ehornick for tonight's #IslesTNT. If tonight wasn't your lucky night, you can try again next Wednesday. #Isles

(c) Check out the @Pepsi Pack! 4 #Isles Tickets, 4 Nathan's Hot Dogs and 4 Pepsi Fountain Drinks for only \$99. <http://ow.ly/488QG>

In (8a), @NYIslanders is replying directly to a specific user (@jessharka, regarding the availability of the Islanders official app on the Android platform). In (8b), @NYIslanders mentions another user within the text of the tweet. Here, they are addressing @ehornick with a thank you, but also making the tweet more widely available to all of their followers (and, in fact, addressing their other followers with the 2nd person pronoun in the latter part of the tweet). The notification that the mentioned user receives on Twitter may be seen as taking over the role of gaze in this format – while a speaker may choose to look at (the real world correlate of) @ehornick when thanking him in a face-to-face conversation, here the “gaze” can be enacted by a notification that one has been addressed. However, as can be seen in (8c), this Twitter version of “gaze” may not always be used for addressing the intended recipient of the talk. In (8c), @NYIslanders mentions their sponsor @Pepsi (Pepsi Cola brands) in identifying a ticket package that Pepsi has helped to make available for fans. It is clear in this example that although

@Pepsi is being mentioned, the talk is addressed to the followers of the @NYIslanders account, as they are being told to “check out” the ticket package. The @mention here may be acting as a way to let @NYIslanders followers know that Pepsi also has a Twitter account, or it might be a way to let their sponsor know that they have been advertised via this account. Regardless of the specific reason, the @mention is performing different functions in (8a), (b), and (c).

As seen in (8b), Twitter users may also use personal pronouns and other address terms in their talk to address a wider audience. In (8b) the 2nd person pronoun “you” is used, to widen the scope of the address from a specific user (@ehornick) to all of the followers of the account. Teams may also use directives (as seen in (8c) with the phrase “check out”) or other address terms such as “hey fans” to specifically pick out and direct their speech to their followers. Roughly 20% (881 of 4,266) of tweets produced by the teams included an address of some kind to the audience of the tweet. While these types of address terms do not send users any specific notification, and therefore may not have a technologically manifested equivalent of “gaze”, they function to make the tweet more interactive by letting recipients know that they are indeed being acknowledged by the producer of the tweet. Such means of address often come in tweets that encourage a response from the recipient in some way, whether that be replying to a fan contest or clicking on a link to visit the team website (as in (8c)) or to view pictures or videos posted by the team. While not all tweets containing links include this type of address to the recipients (1,559 tweets contained links to websites, pictures, or video, compared to only 881 addresses to the audience of the tweet), they are most likely to be found in talk that seeks some sort of follow-up, even if it is not in the form of taking over the next speaking turn. In tweets with content that is not as interactive, such as game updates, it is less common to find terms addressing the account’s

followers, suggesting that the talk in these tweets does not necessarily require further action on behalf of the recipients and that they are known (ratified) but unaddressed.

5.3. *Purposeful attention to the talk*

In his consideration of *purposeful attention* to talk, Goffman discusses the roles of *eavesdroppers* and *over-hearers* (1981:132). For Goffman, these participants are the unrati­fied participants that come across the talk, and whether their participation is “inadvertent” (over-hearers) or “engineered” (eavesdroppers) is significant in regards to their potential effect on the talk. Eavesdroppers likely have designs on either influencing or re-appropriating the talk – whether their plans are malicious or otherwise – as they have purposely put themselves in position to be a recipient of the talk without the speaker’s awareness. Over-hearers, on the other hand, are less likely to have specific plans for interaction, as they have come across the talk by accident, although they certainly may still influence the interaction nonetheless.

On Twitter, because the talk is publicly available and the concept of ratification is altered, it is useful to talk about purposeful attention to talk in regards to both known and unknown, likely and unlikely participants. Both Goffman (1981) and Goodwin (1986) note that all participants, whether or not they are ratified or addressed, have the option of attending to the talk or directing their attention elsewhere. Several aspects of purposeful attention can be considered for interaction on Twitter. Participants can make their intention of being a recipient of talk clear by choosing to follow a Twitter account. While these followers may not be “present” for all tweets produced by an account (they may miss tweets, even though those tweets are still available in the timeline later if they choose to search for them), they have demonstrated the desire to receive that user’s tweets. Participants that have chosen to follow an account are the most likely to seek out interaction with that account’s user, as they have specifically put

themselves into the pool of ratified participants for that user's talk. Another method for participants to choose to attend to talk is not to follow an account but to seek out a specific tweet or collection of tweets by a user. Most similar to the role of "eavesdropper", these participants do not seek to receive all talk by a Twitter user, but, in the case of NHL accounts, these "eavesdroppers" may check a team's timeline for specific news items or a particularly interesting video. These participants purposely seek out talk, but may be seen as "unratified" even in public communication because they do not choose to follow the account and therefore are unlikely recipients of the talk, as discussed in section 5.1. Additionally, participants may inadvertently come across a tweet, for example in a retweet by a user that they are following. Much like Goffman's "over-hearer", these participants do not plan their interaction with the talk of that specific user, but instead are made a party to the talk due to someone else's actions. Again, these participants can be seen as "unratified" in this sense in that they are far less likely to come across the text than followers of the original tweeter.

5.4. Conclusions on reception format

Section 5 has shown that the concepts by which recipients of spoken talk are often categorized must be modified for describing interaction on Twitter. *Ratification*, *presence*, *address*, and *purposeful attention to talk* all take on different forms and meaning in talk produced by NHL teams for this medium. Because the talk is publicly available, the idea of "known" and "unknown" recipients becomes less relevant to ratification, while a distinction between "likely" and "unlikely" recipients moves to the forefront and can be seen in its reflection in the talk. Physical presence also becomes unimportant for the Twitter medium, as the concept of presence becomes an issue of whether or not one is a member of the Twitter community. Finally, means of

addressing recipients are enacted differently on Twitter, with the notification system built into the Twitter user interface acting similarly to visual gaze in face-to-face interaction.

6. General Conclusions and Future Research

This paper has investigated the availability of participant roles and participation frameworks at work in the NHL's use of Twitter. By reconsidering and redefining participant roles from the side of both the production and reception of the talk, the concept of the participation framework can be updated and applied to new forms of talk as the technology available for interaction continues to advance. There are many ways to talk about a participant's relationship to the talk and to other participants in the talk, and establishing a vocabulary and framework for this discussion is an important step in analyzing these relationships. The analysis of the talk produced by NHL teams for this paper illustrated different ways that participation frameworks can be manipulated by the teams in interactions with their fans (and other Twitter followers), allowing researchers to move forward in analyzing how teams manipulate these frameworks to reach the goals of the organization in their use of Twitter.

The analysis in this paper suggests several avenues for future research. While the analysis touches on stances and alignments that can be enacted by adopting different participation frameworks, there is much more to be said. As noted, NHL teams are looking to engage their fans on Twitter, and stances of solidarity and power (as the holder of insider information) as enacted through the talk produced in this medium should be studied. Additionally, as Goodwin (1986) notes, recipients of talk are not static and their reactions to talk should be considered when looking to understand the effects of participation frameworks as utilized in interaction. Investigation of the types of tweets that receive the most interactive feedback (for example the tweets that are retweeted and replied to most often) and are most attended to by recipients is

necessary to fully understand participation by sports organizations and their fans on Twitter. Finally, while this paper looks at the talk produced by organizational users, participation frameworks can also be used to investigate interaction between individual users. Further investigation of participation frameworks on Twitter may aid in the understanding topics such as network-building, humor provided by “fake” accounts (i.e. accounts set up to represent an individual or organization, but not run by that entity) and interaction for the sake of political gain.

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Appendix A

Information about the National Hockey League official Twitter accounts as of February 26, 2011

Team Name	Username	Tweets	Following	Followers
<i>Anaheim Ducks</i>	AnaheimDucks	3881	3277	15704
<i>Atlanta Thrashers</i>	AtlThrashers	1891	48	9831
<i>Boston Bruins</i>	NHLBruins	3799	64	27983
<i>Buffalo Sabres</i>	SabresDotCom	4656	50	18465
<i>Calgary Flames</i>	NHLFlames	6914	159	24861
<i>Carolina Hurricanes</i>	nhl_canes	3392	103	11202
<i>Chicago Blackhawks</i>	NHLBlackhawks	10338	391	54077
<i>Colorado Avalanche</i>	Avalanche	848	21	15250
<i>Columbus Blue Jackets</i>	BlueJacketsNHL	5655	206	11478
<i>Dallas Stars</i>	DallasStars	2795	55	16436
<i>Detroit Red Wings</i>	DetroitRedWings	7713	3035	42401
<i>Edmonton Oilers</i>	NHL_Oilers	4329	123	27527
<i>Florida Panthers</i>	FlaPanthers	3441	613	9238
<i>Los Angeles Kings</i>	LAKings	6313	1193	19985
<i>Minnesota Wild</i>	mnwild	4561	529	15376
<i>Montreal Canadiens</i>	CanadiensMTL	5335	72	91971
<i>Nashville Predators</i>	PredsNHL	2093	720	9420
<i>New Jersey Devils</i>	NHLDevils	5888	599	17791
<i>New York Islanders.</i>	NYIslanders	9602	1585	8249
<i>New York Rangers</i>	thenyrangers	8389	5599	25069
<i>Ottawa Senators</i>	NHL_Sens	4740	35	13705
<i>Philadelphia Flyers</i>	NHLFlyers	4499	58	33477
<i>Phoenix Coyotes</i>	phoenixcoyotes	3112	2774	8960
<i>Pittsburgh Penguins</i>	pghpenguins	5287	70	59234
<i>San Jose Sharks</i>	SanJoseSharks	1253	72	22006
<i>St. Louis Blues</i>	St_Louis_Blues	2854	9246	18673
<i>Tampa Bay Lightning</i>	TBLightning	5601	906	14684
<i>Toronto Maple Leafs</i>	MapleLeafs	6447	22316	32987
<i>Vancouver Canucks</i>	VanCanucks	5370	123	54374
<i>Washington Capitals</i>	washcaps	6385	46	28559

Key: Team Name = the name of the NHL team associated with the account; Username = the Twitter username for the account; Tweets = total number of tweets produced by the account since it was created; Following = the number of other users the account is following; Followers = the number of users following the account

Appendix B

Information, by team, regarding the number of tweets that make use of linguistic and Twitter specific features to build participant frameworks.

Team	Total Tweets	Response	Mention	Ref. Audience	Ref. Speaker
Anaheim Ducks	126	2	29	30	12
Atlanta Thrashers	114	10	7	16	14
Boston Bruins	137	8	10	31	132
Buffalo Sabres	142	4	3	19	6
Calgary Flames	134	10	0	17	11
Carolina Hurricanes	62	6	8	23	2
Chicago Blackhawks	208	42	3	36	29
Colorado Avalanche	13	0	1	3	0
Columbus Blue Jackets	160	18	18	9	3
Dallas Stars	70	7	2	4	3
Detroit Red Wings	179	15	23	47	37
Edmonton Oilers	97	9	5	30	13
Florida Panthers	84	1	1	10	7
Los Angeles Kings	173	12	43	38	21
Minnesota Wild	90	3	25	19	4
Montreal Canadiens	152	3	0	32	2
Nashville Predators	106	17	32	33	14
New Jersey Devils	225	12	16	25	19
New York Islanders	379	68	28	84	32
New York Rangers	225	0	10	19	46
NHL	228	31	30	80	15
Ottawa Senators	113	0	0	23	0
Philadelphia Flyers	108	0	1	5	1
Phoenix Coyotes	65	1	5	9	0
Pittsburgh Penguins	182	0	9	31	19
San Jose Sharks	40	0	9	10	1
San Jose Sharks In-game	79	0	2	2	0
St. Louis Blues	31	0	1	10	0
Tampa Bay Lightning	120	4	1	5	10
Toronto Maple Leafs	232	48	31	84	8
Vancouver Canucks	163	18	30	87	48
Washington Capitals	108	1	0	12	9
<i>Totals</i>	<i>4266</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>381</i>	<i>881</i>	<i>518</i>

Key: Team = name of the NHL team associated with the account; Total Tweets = number of tweets produced by the account during the observation period; Response = number of tweets in the form of a response (beginning with @username); Mention = number of tweets that contained @username in a non-initial position; Ref. Audience = number of tweets that made a reference to the intended audience of the tweet (e.g. 2nd person pronouns, expressions such as “Hey fans”); Ref. Speaker = number of tweets that made a reference to the producer of the talk (e.g. 1st person pronouns, “signatures” on tweets)

Appendix B (con't)

Information, by team, regarding the number of tweets that make use of linguistic and Twitter specific features to build participant frameworks. (con't)

Team	Total Tweets	Hashtag	Link to webpage	Link to picture /video
Anaheim Ducks	126	86	34	26
Atlanta Thrashers	114	72	28	17
Boston Bruins	137	14	21	30
Buffalo Sabres	142	67	24	2
Calgary Flames	134	104	17	28
Carolina Hurricanes	62	0	43	5
Chicago Blackhawks	208	13	11	15
Colorado Avalanche	13	1	7	3
Columbus Blue Jackets	160	135	9	15
Dallas Stars	70	3	15	14
Detroit Red Wings	179	42	12	33
Edmonton Oilers	97	74	49	22
Florida Panthers	84	5	22	5
Los Angeles Kings	173	100	17	27
Minnesota Wild	90	79	23	8
Montreal Canadiens	152	66	35	35
Nashville Predators	106	72	23	15
New Jersey Devils	225	22	16	3
New York Islanders	379	311	76	20
New York Rangers	225	106	17	12
NHL	228	245	86	123
Ottawa Senators	113	110	50	22
Philadelphia Flyers	108	3	7	10
Phoenix Coyotes	65	36	38	16
Pittsburgh Penguins	182	164	30	18
San Jose Sharks	40	15	17	8
St. Louis Blues	31	3	14	3
Tampa Bay Lightning	120	10	9	3
Toronto Maple Leafs	232	168	62	81
Vancouver Canucks	163	129	30	55
Washington Capitals	108	9	25	18
<i>Totals</i>	<i>4266</i>	<i>2264</i>	<i>867</i>	<i>692</i>

Key: Team = name of the NHL team associated with the account; Total Tweets = number of tweets produced by the account during the observation period; Hashtag = number of tweets containing a #hashtag term; Link to webpage = number of tweets containing a link to information on the team website; Link to picture/video = number of tweets containing a link to picture or video content; RT = number of tweets containing retweeted material; Comment on RT = number of tweets containing additional comments on retweeted material