

Weak #Preemies are #MIRACLES #FIGHTERS: Hashtaged Coupling-Metaphors as Instantiations of Bonding Affiliation

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1. Introduction

“Conventional wisdom tells us that hardship may be inescapable. But we can choose how to respond to our hardships. In unfortunate circumstances we can choose to “take the high road,” to “make lemonade,” or to “roll with it.” Can the metaphors we use to describe our hardships shape the way we cope?” (Hendricks et al. 2018, p. 267).

This paper aims to explore the functions of coupling metaphors in preemies’ tweets and the resulting ambient affiliation bonding. In other words, the study seeks to shed some light on the different constructions of tagging practices that help in identifying conceptual metaphors related to the target domain of PREEMIES. The analysis of metaphors in the context of hard situations and human emotions is gaining more attention recently (Black, 2016; Kovecses, 2003; Otis, 2019). Central to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) is the notion that metaphorical references give expression to speakers’ experiences of the world (Flack, 2018). When faced with hardship, people usually evaluate the situation using emotionally-laden metaphors (Hendricks et al., 2018). Scholars have investigated the ways in which metaphors have an influential role in shaping the ways through which people emotionally appraise and cope with hard situations. Hendricks et al. (2018), for instance, examine how framing cancer as a ‘journey’ encourages the inference that the person can make peace with their illness. However, less attention has been given to metaphors function in invoking attitude (Liu, 2018) and the resulted affiliated bonds of their employment. This gap is the focus in this paper.

Hashtags are clear examples of the alignment resources embedded in social media platforms. In this regard, the current paper aims to examine how hashtags are used to negotiate a coupling metaphorical instantiation of the values positioned in corpus of Twitter posts about preemies. The study attempts to explore how parents and families of preemies employ attitudinal couplings as discursive resources to ‘call together’ communities (Zappavigna and Martin,

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2018) of emotional support and hope. In doing so, the paper extends the work of Knight (2010a, 2010b, 2013) on coupling and the work of Zappavigna and Martin (2018) on communing affiliation so as to account for the negotiated construction of ‘ambient’¹ affiliation and social bonding in preemie tweets.

Hashtags afford interpersonal alignment, which, in turn, invokes a potential network of ambient community (Zappavigna, 2015; Zappavigna and Martin, 2018). They coordinate and emphasize the values constructed in a given Twitter post (Zappavigna and Martin, 2018). Nevertheless, hashtags carry heteroglossic (Bakhtin, 1981) realisations, positioning online communities around particular values, events and themes. Commenting on the functionality of hashtags, Zappavigna and Martin (2018) argue that hashtags facilitate the analysis of particular discourse when used as a search term for sampling posts over a specific time period from the social stream. That said, this paper considers hashtags for their interpersonal and ideational functions in expressing attitudinal stance (Zappavigna, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2018). Ideational/Interpersonal functions are negotiated through the concept of ‘coupling’. This notion is expressed in Zappavigna and Martin’s (2018) suggested discursive system of ‘communings affiliation’ which identifies how values are positioned as socially alignable. Following Zappavigna and Martin (2018), the current article examines hashtags as in-text annotators which are used to enhance social affiliation around values about preemies.

2. Background Information

Premature birth describes the condition when a baby is born too early, before 37 weeks of pregnancy have been completed. The earlier a baby is born, the higher the risk of death or serious disability. Babies who survive can have breathing issues, intestinal problems, and brain bleeding. Such babies also may develop long-term problems like developmental delay and lower performance in school.

Premature babies are most often confined in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to catch up in growth. Babies may stay in the hospital until they reach the pregnancy due date. They may be cared for in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

¹ According to Zappavigna (2011, 2012, 2014), ‘ambient affiliation’ refers to online social bonding where individuals interact indirectly and engage in mass practices such as hashtagging so as to experiencing particular kinds of ‘belonging.’

3. Hashtags from a Linguistic Lens

Hashtags can be perceived as narrative resources (Giaxoglou, 2018, p. 13). They are used as resources for sharing and story making (Androutsopoulos, 2014). Hashtags can be used to classify content into topics or areas of interest, performing both linguistic and metalinguistic functions (Giaxoglou, 2018, p. 13). Importantly, they serve as bonding affiliation for networked publics, enacting ambient community (Zappavigna, 2015, 2018).

Hashtags can be identified as metalanguage markers which carry all the three metafunctions of Textual, Ideational and Interpersonal. Textually, they perform the role of punctuation and contextualising devices. Inserted and integrated into the content of a post as a prefix, infix or suffix (Tsur and Rappoport, 2012) or even as quotation marks (Heyd, 2014), hashtags classify, frame and contextualize contents (Martin and Zappavigna, 2018; Scott, 2018). Therefore, the Textual function of the hashtags relates to the organization of the post where hashtags function as a form of punctuation (Zappavigna 2015, p. 6).

Furthermore, hashtags have Ideational and Interpersonal meaning relations. Ideationally, they indicate and highlight the topic of the post. Interpersonally, Hashtags underline users' adopted stances and negotiated communities (Zappavigna 2015, p. 11). Significantly, due to their semiotic technological affordances, hashtags enact 'ambient affiliation' (Zappavigna, 2015, 2018) which enables online communities to be bonded by feelings of belonging and solidarity. From an Interpersonal perspective, hashtags link a given post with other posts sharing the same stance. Page (2012) calls these Ideational and Interpersonal metafunctions as 'topic-based' and 'evaluative' respectively. She argues that "hashtags are primarily used to make the topic of a tweet visible" (p. 187).

Summing up and contextualizing the three metafunctions of hashtags, Wikstrom (2014, p. 130) argues that hashtags have eight social discursive functions:

- a. *Topic tags*, where the topic is determined by the hashtag:
I hate being 'tired' where I am awake because of stimulants, but actually tired. #coffee #sleep
- b. *Hashtag games*, similar to topic hashtags in terms of classification function, but with the aim of participating in a social game:
When I say I'm great at customer service, I mean I can fake a great smile and only scream on the inside. #BaristaProblems
- c. *Meta-comments*, where the hashtag makes a comment on the content of the tweet itself rather than creating an association with other tweets:

- Yeah I order a small coffee at the daily drip but grab a large cup, so what?
#idonotgiveafuck
- d. Parenthetical explanations/additions, where the hashtag adds information explaining the tweet:
I'm in a pub at 10:20 on a Friday am. Today will be a good day haha
#drinkingcoffee
- e. *Emotive usage*, where the hashtag supports emotional expression that might otherwise be realised through some form or paralinguistic cue:
When I worked in offices, I felt like I was the ONLY ONE who ever made coffee. #sigh #ifeelyourpainbrother
- f. *Emphatic usage*, where the hashtag realises some form of intensification:
#wtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtfwtf
- g. *Humorous and playful usage*, including hashtags that support some form of joke structure, hyperbole, or self-conscious humorous self-reference, for example through excessive hashtagging:
Guys my coffee cup is empty WHAT SHOULD I DO #ifiwasonaforum
##thiswouldbeanentirewebcomic #iamnotkidding #thishappens #ohno
#theinternet
- h. *memes and popular culture references*, where knowledge of a particular trend is needed to interpret the tag. An example of this kind of hashtagging is employing the fail meme as a kind of humorous self-deprecation:
No water nor coffee, me thirsty and sleepy #fail

4. Research Questions

Focusing on Twitter discourse about preemie, the study seeks to answer the following research questions and their sub-questions:

1. How do Twitter hashtags about preemies forge ambient online networks of hope and support?
 - a. How do hashtagged couplings of Interpersonal attitudes and Ideations instantiate an ambient bond of affiliation among the preemies' families?
 - b. What are the encoded metaphoric repertoire resulted from the coupling instantiations?
2. How do preemie hashtags discharge participants from the position of sufferers and recharge them as supporters?
 - a. How do Finessing networks converse the cognitive evaluation of the emotionally distressing situation of having a preemie?

5. Methodology and Methods

5.1. Data Collection

Stories and events on Twitter tend to be centred on a hashtag. Accordingly, data for the analysis are retrieved from Twitter research engine using the keyhashtags: #preemies, #micropreemies and #premature babies. The study analysis 25 tweets qualitatively. Data are then captured by making screen shots of the entire thread. The author then copied the tweets into Microsoft Word to code the instances and linguistic triggers of Interpersonal attitudes and Ideation appearing in the texts, e.g., [positive Judgement: capacity] and [negative Ideation: painful experience]. Coding annotation is done following Martin and White (2005).

5.2. Research Procedures

To answer the research questions, the study draws on the concepts of Coupling (Knight 2010a, b) and Communing Affiliation (Zappavigna and Martin, 2018) as its theoretical basis. It deploys these concepts to decode the Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff, and Johnson, 1980) constituting the ambient community of preemies' families. The qualitative analysis adopted in the study comprises two main stages based on the adopted framework. In the first stage, the coupled resources of Interpersonal attitudes and Ideations are identified. In stage two, the resulted cognitive conceptualisation of these couplings is highlighted to decode the cognitive features of establishing an affiliated community of sufferers. For the purpose of the analysis, the tweets under discussion are then classified into two subcategories that carry the themes of “the convoked communities of SUPER PREEMIES” and “Finessing: Hashtags as Discharging and Recharging Devices.” The following section and its sub-sections provide a detailed account of the adopted framework.

5.3. Theoretical Framework

The general linguistic theory this paper draws on is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994). Of particular relevance within the tenet of SFL is the affiliation cline which assigns the evaluative couplings of [ATTITUDE + IDEATION], constructing a community of shared values and networks of bonding affiliations (see Figure 1 below). Accordingly, metaphorical encodings of the experience of having a preemie are discussed in terms of the couplings of Interpersonal and Ideational meanings.

The ATTITUDINAL resources are defined within the Appraisal System as having three discursive regions: AFFECT (expressing emotion, e.g., love, disgust, fear, etc.), JUDGEMENT (assessing behaviour, e.g., competent, ethical,

trustworthy, etc.) and APPRECIATION (estimating value, e.g., beautiful, valuable, noteworthy, etc) (see Marin and White, 2005).

When the network of evaluation is achieved through the shared couplings of [ATTITUDE + IDEATION], it constructs potential bonds ‘bonding affiliation’, calling together communities of shared ideological positioning. A bond in this context is defined as “the cultural pattern by which we discursively construe our communal identities by laughing at, communing around or rejecting them through discourse in the form of coupling” (Knight 2010b, p. 42).

Such bonds can reach different levels of communities, from local communities to general communities (Knight, 2010b; Liu, 2018). Figure 2 is illustrative.

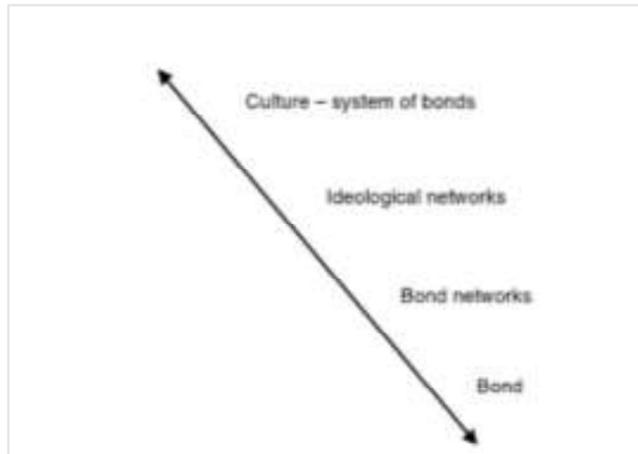


Figure 1.
The affiliation cline of relations
(Knight, 2010b)

Zappavigna and Martin (2018) apply the model of ‘communing affiliation’ as a discursive system to reveal how particular values about depression are negotiated as bondable through social tagging practices

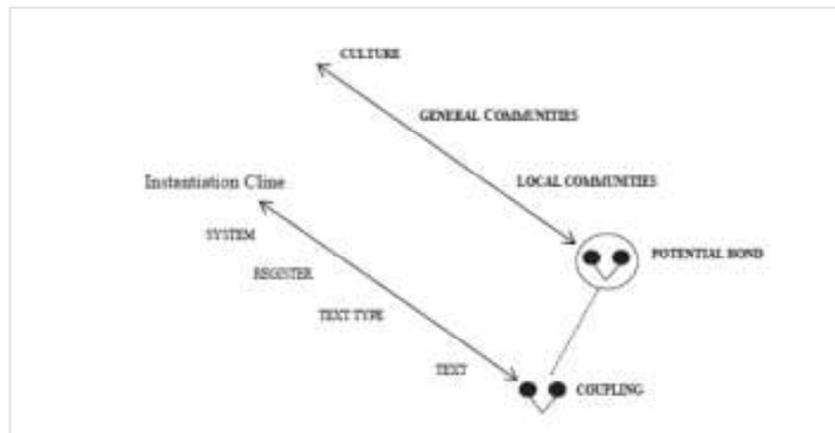


Figure 2.
Affiliated coupling
(Knight, 2010b)

(see Figure 3 in the next section). Their model identifies the key ways in which couplings “can be proffered and modulated as part of processes of social bonding.” They examine the role of social tagging in aligning networks of solidarity about depression. A detailed account of the theoretical framework adopted in the current study is presented in the following subsections.

5.3.1. Coupling: Some Reflections on Lexical Metaphors. Coupling defines “the ways in which meanings combine, as pairs, triples, quadruplets or any number of coordinated choices from system networks” (Martin 2008, p. 39). According to Knight’s model of affiliation, social alignment is discursively actualized as patterns of couplings of Ideation and Attitudinal resources. Knight (2010, p. 219) provides an example of “Apple pie tastes amazing” which involves a coupling of the Ideation ‘apple pie’ and positive Appreciation ‘tastes amazing’. Knight’s example can be annotated as:

[IDEATION: apple pie / ATTITUDE: positive Appreciation]

The symbol ‘/’ indicates that the Ideation and evaluation are ‘coupled’ and infused together to instantiate a value that can be shared and negotiated by interlocutors. The following table is illustrative:

Table 1
Positive evaluation of a pie party in a casual conversation (cited in Zappavigna and Martin, 2018 as adapted from Knight, 2010b).

Turn	Speaker	Talk	Coupling
1	A	Party’s over. For me;	
2	B	No more pie party ==	
3	C	== This was an awesome pie party guys	[ideation: pie party/attitude: positive appreciation]
4	B	I love pie parties	[ideation: pie party/attitude: positive t-appreciation]
5	C	I can’t wait to have another one	[ideation: pie party/attitude: positive t-appreciation]

‘t-’ is used in the above to indicate a ‘token’ of attitude. The affect (*love*) is a token of appreciation in Turn 4, implying that it is a ‘good’ pie party.

This table explains the interaction of “three conversational participants [who] commune around a bond realised by a coupling of intensified positive appreciation of a pie party that they regularly participate in together” (Knight 2010b, p. 219). Combining Attitudinal resources with Ideation, couplings can tell about how interactants share and interpret values (Knight 2010b, p. 40). Therefore, analysing couplings enables one to come up with the aspects of identity negotiated through social networking and shared values.

The concept of coupling is of a particular relevance to the current study since it decodes the values associated with preemies’ tweets. The type of coupling the paper focuses on is that instantiated between the Interpersonal system of discourse, particularly the Attitudinal and the Engagement resources, and the

Ideational system. The couplings of choices from these discourse systems, the paper argues, negotiate a metaphorical conceptualization that aligns preemies' parents and families into shared community of hope. As is the case of the built in coupling, metaphors accumulation constructs affiliative bonds for writers and readers to rally around. As such, coupling metaphors “function[s] as a resource for community formation” (Liu 2018, p. 3).

5.3.2. Bonding Affiliation. Zappavigna and Martin’s (2018) discursive system of ‘communing affiliation’ is deployed to interpret how particular values are positioned as bondable in the ‘ambient environment’ of Twitter. Communing affiliation identifies how values are positioned, through hashtags, as socially alignable in three ways: by being directed at particular communities (*Convoking*), entering into relationships with other potential value positions (*Finessing*) and being foregrounded interpersonally in various ways (*Promoting*), (see Figure 3). The values of Convoking, Finessing, and Promoting are presented as shareable through hashtags that convoke or call together potential personae or communities.

Convoking marks the network of meaning concerning the ways in which a Twitter post brings together a community to bond around a coupling. According to Zappavigna and Martin (2018, p. 8), “the term convoking (or convocation) alludes to the role that systems of address (e.g., vocatives) play for directing proposals and propositions at particular interlocutors in dialogic exchange”. Tweeting, in this sense, convokes a community or, in the words of



Figure 3.. The system of communing affiliation (Zappavigna & Martin, 2018)

Zappavigna and Martin, a ‘college of potential bonders’ by deploying hashtags. Within the convoke system, hashtags have both Ideational and Interpersonal functions. For example, the hashtag *#depression*, if viewed from an Ideational perspective, indicates that this

post is about depression. If viewed from an Interpersonal perspective, hashtag then functions as a link that relates the post with other posts sharing the same stance.

Essentially, the concept of communing affiliation, as suggested by Martin and Zappavigna, enacts ‘embedded dialogism’ (Han 2015, p. 64) which positions users of the ambient environments around aligned values. In this regard, hashtags emphasize how values are negotiated in interaction. This is related to the notion of Finessing which is concerned with how Ideation-evaluation values are modulated through heteroglossic contraction (*Not*) coupling:



Figure 4. Invoking an opposing coupling through engagement together with a hashtag

[evaluation: ≠ negative affect/ideation: depression] as in “#depression is not a weakness” (Zappavigna and Martin, 2018, p. 9), (see Figure 4). Hashtags also can interpersonally promote, or in other words emphasize, a coupling in a tweet, performing the same function of upscaling attitude within the resources of Graduation proposed by Martin and White (2005).

6. Analysis

6.1. Convoking Communities of SUPER PREMIES

Hashtaging the word *preemie* convokes a potential ambient community that has the same parental experience and use the same tag. The convoking metaphorical network is achieved in the tweets tagged #preemie through the coupling formulation of [negative Ideation: health problem/Attitude: positive Judgement(capacity) and/or positive Appreciation (valuation)]. Such a metaphorical coupling instantiates an ambient community which believes in PREMIES AS SUPERHEROES. The following examples are illustrative:

- a. **Your strength** [positive Judgement: capacity] has taught [positive Appreciation: insightful experience] us the meaning of patience, And not to rush things that need time to grow. As we breathe in the delicate NICU air [negative Appreciation: hard experience], We are forever changed by your **early arrival** [negative Ideation: health problem]. ≠Preemie ≠NICU ≠micropreemie ≠newborn ≠Neonatal [negative Ideation: health problem] [positive Appreciation: valuation]

- b. 2 years ago we were told our **1 lb baby** [**negative Ideation: physical deficiency**] wouldn't make it through surgery. Our **superhero** [**positive Judgement: capacity**] defied the odds then and continues to do so now #Premie
- c. I'm so lucky to be able to spend a few hours every day cuddling my little **fighter** [**positive Judgement: capacity**] #Premie

Although acknowledged ideationally as being both physical deficiency and distressing parental experience, preemie babies are metaphorized positively as insightful experience, superheroes and fighters. Accordingly, tweets about preemies convoke a community that shares the view of preemies as strong human beings and sometimes superheroes that can defeat all the odds and survive. Hashtags of the previous examples act as topic tags, contextualizing the topic of the utterance.

Moreover, the tweets under discussion convoke associations of SUPER POWERS by negotiating metaphorical religious references. Consider the following tweets:

- a. Happy Birthday to my little **angel** [**positive Judgement: veracity**] Maya. This time 4 years ago Maya **weighed 940g** [**negative Ideation**] and was fighting for her life. Thank you @WestHertsNHS Watford SCBU Team for saving my little angel's life. #premiefighter [**positive Judgement: capacity**]
- b. We are surrounded by **miracles** [**positive Judgement: veracity**] everyday. #gratefulforlife #premiemiracle #nicu
- c. Delmy Moreno's nephew was as a #preemie [**negative Ideation**]. Look how grown up he looks now :) In the words of Delmy: "**Miracles** [**positive Judgement: veracity**] are often disguised as preemies."
- d.

Love this! What is a Premie? #Premie #Miracles #Fighter #TinyHuman
#Incubator #NICU #EarlyArrival #PremieSupport #Parents



The couplings of these examples draw on quasi-religious metaphors to forge social affiliation of believers in the religious message behind having a preemie. This metaphorical coupling of [positive Attitudinal religious values (angels and miracles) + Ideation experience of preemies] construes an ambient community of believers in the religious values. The fourth example, which is worth to be screenshot as it is, carries a metaphorical orientation to dictionaries. Such a dictionary-like simile acts as a Promotion technique, upscaling the contained religious references (heaven and miracle). Thus, the tweets carry the stance that delivering a preemie is a message from God to make people believe that miracles do happen. Significantly, in these examples, the hashtags #preemimiracle and #preemiefighter function as a ‘prosodic resonance’ (Hood 2010, p. 141), meaning the scope of the ‘meta-evaluation’ expressed by the hashtag extends along the entire clause of the tweet. It is worth noting that the Convoking system in these examples assumes the role of a dialogic exchange and incorporates named social interlocutors in the form of other users as exemplified in the first example with reference to the @ mention convention. In the first example, the tweet draws on the @ character to refer to Watford SCBU user account in a manner similar to face-to-face conversation (Zappavigna and Martin, 2018). However, the @ character is used to emphasize the metaphorical conceptualization in the following example:

- a. Your #baby thinks of you like @BrunoMars [**positive Judgement: capacity**]. You’re amazing just the way you are. #preemie #micropreemie #preemiomom [**negative Ideation**]

The @ character here carries as well a ‘metaphorical dialogism’ reference, so to speak. To clarify, this dialogic exchange of @BrunoMars is not conversational in nature; rather it indicates an intertextual orientation. The preemie hashtag here intertextually mentions Bruno, a famous song writer, singer, record producer and choreographer. Interestingly, Bruno-Mars has his good reputation for doing many things at a time. For this particular characteristic, Bruno-Mars is intertextually mentioned in this tweet as a metaphor for the preemies’ mom to ease their sense of guilt for being unable to protect their infants from early arrivals. In the same vein, the following tweets aim at freeing moms from their sense of guilt and regret by foregrounding the metaphorical proposition of AMAZING PREEMIES’ MOMS.

- a. The fasted path [**positive Appreciation: valuation (journey metaphor)**] to healing is not to avoid the harsh realities, but to own them,

say them out loud, let them flow through you and then release the. #highriskpregnancy #bedrest #preemie #birthtrauma [**negative Ideation**].

- b. Feel broken? Like a failure? Like you deserve this? You're not alone. How to overcome **the burden of guilt and self-blame** [**negative Ideation: Distressing experience**] you're carrying with you so **you can find peace** [**positive Appreciation: valuation**] no matter what hurdles lie ahead. #infertility #bedrest #preemie #micropreemie #NICU

Interpersonally, the hashtags of these examples link the post to other potential users in the ambient online domain who are experiencing the same emotions of feeling guilty and suffer from negative self-assessment. However, the deployed metaphorical conceptualizations of PATH/JOURNEY and PEACE intend to mitigate such guilty feelings. Metaphorizing the experience of having a preemie as a JOURNEY is also evident in the following tweets:

- a. 5 years ago, our little preemie wonder **was born at 28 weeks** [**negative Ideation**] – almost 12 weeks early. The road was challenging but **the journey** [**positive Appreciation: valuation**] has been so rewarding #preemie
- b. To honor my sweet baby girl and **the journey** [**positive Appreciation: valuation**] that has taken so far #premiestrong

In the following tweets the users employ the hashtag #famouspreemies to convoke an additional community of preemies' families who presumably would support the metaphorical couplings regarding the SUPER MENTAL POWER of premature babies.

- a. Pablo Picasso, **famous** [**positive Judgement: capacity**] Spanish painter and sculptor regarded as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, was **born premature** [**negative Ideation**] in 1881. #FamousPreemie #Preemie
- b. **Influential scientist** [**positive Judgement: capacity**], Sir Issac Newton, **weighed only three pounds** [**negative Ideation**] at birth – Christmas day 1642. Sir Issac Newton. #famouspreemies #NICU #Preemie #Micropreemie
- c. Anna Pavlova, world **famous ballerina** [**positive Judgement: capacity**], was born **two months early** [**negative Ideation**] in 1885. #famouspreemies #NICU #micropreemie #preemie #prematurity.

In all of the examples cited above, the hashtag #preemie serves as a topical entity that links the tweet with an external community or audience. Even when accompanied by other words such as strong, fighter or so they appear as one word. Using the hastags ≠preemiestong, preemiefighter, ≠preemimiracle, ≠and FamousPreemie as one word promotes and upscales the conceptualized metaphors. Furthermore, considering the position of the sentences where these hashtags occur, it is found that they are placed as suffix. This serves to bracket and foreground the Interpersonal/Ideation coupling and the resulting metaphorical orientation. In other words, hashtags of the tweets under study act as metaphorical stance marker. They are deployed as an evaluating resource for foregrounding metadiscourse, with the ≠ symbol functioning as punctuating form that marks the point in the text where the metadiscourse lies (Zappavigna, 2017, p. 445).

6.2. Finessing: Hashtags as Discharging and Recharging Devices

This section revolves around the source metaphor A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL, marking what may be labelled as a conversed cognitive evaluation, so to speak. A conversed cognitive evaluation of the emotionally distressing situation of having a preemie baby may help in mitigating and coping with the associated feelings. In the words of Hendricks et al. (2018, p. 268, author's emphasis) "one way of coping is by reconceptualising our experiences. The process of *reappraisal* allows us to change the way we feel about something by changing the way we think about it". Applying this notion of cognitive conversion to the ambient environment of Twitter can be related to Zappavigna and Martin's (2018) Finessing. Finessing network is closely related to the Engagement resources of the Appraisal System. As explained by Martin and White (2005), Engagement resources deal with the interplay of voices within a given text. They focus on "meaning making processes by which the speaker/writer negotiates relationships of alignment/disalignment vis-à-vis the various value positions referenced by the text and hence vis-à-vis the socially constituted communities of shared attitude and belief associated with those positions" (Martin and White 2005, p. 95).

However, while Engagement accounts for the patterning of attitude, Finessing deals with how the ideation-evaluation resources are infused and modulated. Interestingly, deployment of Finessing in the tweets about preemies corresponds to Han's (2015) notion of interpersonal 'discharging'. Such tweets carry conversed cognitive evaluation by retelling the experience of having a preemie as an exciting and sometimes blessing one, which in turn, discharges the experience from negative Judgements and recharges it with positive

assessments. The Finessing resources negotiated in the tweets forge social affiliation around values of hope and support. In so doing, the Finessing network follows the coupling formulation of [Dialogic Expansion/Dialogic Contraction: Disclaim: Deny or Counter] (see Martin and White, 2005 for more on the Engagement resources). The Finessing network employs Expansion resources that associate negative values with preemies and contraction systems that challenge and refute such values. Such dialogic coupling is brought together along with negative Ideation. Triple coupling is then evident. Example instantiations of hope to cite are represented in the tweets below:

- a. 21 years ago, my son was born as **a 25wk ≠preemie @820g [negative Ideation]**. He had **a ventricular bleed, retinopathy and BPD [negative Ideation]**. For all the parents in an ≠NICU who are sick with worry, he's in 4th y university **now [Contraction: Counter]**. Keep your hopes up.
- b. Our pre-term baby is seven **today! [Contraction: Counter]** Eternal thanks to @NHS_Lothian for everything they did **that frightening night and in the bewildering days [negative Ideation]** that followed ≠Preemie
- c. When **you're given [Expansion: Attribute] less than a 50% chance [negative Ideation]** to make it out of the NICU and are **now [Contraction: Counter]** thriving. Our two ≠micropreemie kids are healthy **today [Contraction: Counter]** ≠preemiebaby
- d. My precious grandson... He **don't [Contraction: Deny]** look like what **he's been through [Expansion: Attribute/negative Ideation]** ≠1lb8oz ≠BornAt27Weeks ≠preemiebaby ≠preemiestrong
- e. **Today [Contraction: Counter]** is my sons 6th Bday! He **was born at 21wks [negative Ideation]. Under a LB when born [negative Ideation]. Part of me [Expansion: entertain]** thought he'd never make it here today. I'm so proud of him and me also! ≠preemiebaby ≠micropreemie ≠proudmommy

The contraction here is established between the instantiations of 'was' and 'now' and the antonyms relations between 'worry' and 'hope'. The dialectical tension between now and then carries a challenging tone against the negative Ideation values. An assumed ambient community of preemies' families that holds an opposing positive view is then convoked. The use of this particular heteroglossic contraction instantiating positive Judgement (e.g., strength)

together with the hashtag #preemie is a typical repeated pattern in the tweets under discussion.

The dialectical tension that exists between positive and negative social esteem resources of capacity further reinforces the source metaphor of LIGHT AT THE END OF A TUNNEL. This notion is evident in the following example:

- a. After spending her first year of life visiting numerous doctors, undergoing tons of testing, and experiencing significant delays [negative Ideation]... Makayla's taking risks and playing BIG in life! [invoked Contraction: Counter] #brave #parenting

The interplay of between expressions like 'significant delay' and 'taking risks and playing BIG in life' enacts a dialectical tension. Such a tension is realised by 'discordant evaluative couplings' (Martin, 2000a) in the texts. The Finessing hashtags of the tweets under discussion discharge assessment of preemies as negative Capacity. Consider the following two tweets:

- a. Although [Contraction: Counter] your arrival was chaotic and shaky [negative Ideation], you are thriving now [Contraction: Counter]! We are thrilled to celebrate 5 wonderful years with you ≠micropreemie
- b. Happy 5th birthday to our warrior princess! Our miracle baby girl was a 1 lb 13 oz ≠micropreemie. O2, wires, feeding tubes, blood transfusions, blood gasses, and feeding clinics [negative Judgement: Capacity] were our normal! You've never [Contraction: Deny] stopped fighting! [positive Judgement: Capacity] I'm so proud of you and blessed to be mommy!

The Finessing resources in these examples are expressed through the Disclaim values of dialogic counter and deny respectively. These resources reject the dialogic alternative of despair and losing hope, instantiating a metaphorical coupling of a community of hope. Correspondingly, the dialogic alternatives of helplessness and despair associated with the experience of having a preemie are challenged and excluded, entering the putative readers into an online affiliated domain of 'counter-expectation' (Martin and White, 2005). Significantly, Finessing network in the tweets about preemies presents the addresser as having great experience, allowing him/her to cognitively take the role of correcting some misunderstanding or misconception on the addressee's part. A cognitive role of supporter rather than sufferer is then established.

Interestingly, identifying oneself with a larger community of supporters may be of a significant importance for participants to be able to move on and coping with the hard situation.

Finessing is conveyed via the deployment of conjunctions and connections such as ‘although’, and ‘but’. However, the finessing resources of countering are established as well by the use of the comment adverbials such as ‘surprisingly’ and ‘suddenly’. Comment adverbials carry a counter expectational aspect to their meaning.

- a. I allowed Mojo latch on and “nuzzle@. Suddenly, his progress increased for the best and he was eating a lot sooner! Never underestimate the power of a premise! #preemistrong

7. Conclusion

This paper examined the role performed by Twitter hashtags in forging ambient online networks of hope and support about preemie - a distressing experience for the parents and the families. It investigated how hashtagging the word *preemie* convokes a potential ambient community that has the same parental experience and uses the same tag. The study took the concepts of Coupling (Knight 2010a,b) and Communing Affiliation (Zappavigna and Martin, 2018) as its theoretical basis. It deployed these concepts to reveal the Conceptual Metaphor established in the ambient community of preemies’ families.

It was found that tweets about preemies align participants with an affiliated community of believers in hope, miracles, and superheroes. The analysis also revealed that hashtags in the context of preemies’ experience discharge participants from the position of sufferers and recharge them as supporters and experienced persons who provide advice.

The convoking metaphorical network is achieved in the tweets tagged #preemie through the coupling formulation of [negative Ideation: health problem/Attitude: positive Judgement(capacity) and/or positive Appreciation (valuation)]. This metaphorical coupling instantiates an ambient community which believes in PREEMIES AS SUPERHEROES. As for the finessing values of Disclaim (counter and denial), it is affiliative in that it invokes a community of hope that presents itself as countering and negating beliefs and claims that having a preemie is a hopeless situation. the Finessing network follows the coupling formulation of [Dialogic Expansion/Dialogic Contraction: Disclaim: Deny or Counter]. The dialectical tension resulted from the coupling of two opposing propositions construes the source metaphor of A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL, marking what may be labelled as a conversed cognitive evaluation.

The framework of Coupling (Knight 2010a, b) and Communing Affiliation (Zappavigna and Martin, 2018) that the author used is based on SFL. As for the cognitive interpretation, it is influenced by Lakoff, and Johnson's (1980) approach to Conceptual Metaphor. Although appearing as somewhat incompatible on an epistemological level, these frameworks, when combined, can be a valid tool for analyzing a social cognitive concept such as in-group identity formation in the process of constituting an affiliated community. This study raises implications for the applications of these SFL-oriented approaches to reveal cognitive conceptualisations rather than being confined to investigating textual negative/positive evaluations. Accordingly, the study calls for replicating this approach of qualitative analysis to a larger corpus of tweets that voice other painful experiences such as mental illness and chronic diseases.

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