Semantic amplification: Exploring metafunctional and interstratal correspondence through the transitivity and judgement systems

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Outline

- Explore the interaction of the systems of TRANSITIVITY and JUDGEMENT by presenting a parallel analysis of selections from these systems in sets of topically related texts

- Demonstrate the power of combining the two forms of analysis
  - for understanding texts as registerial varieties,
  - for exploring their ideological tendencies

Background

- What is the relationship between appraisal resources and the field of discourse?

  - what is evaluated is always something experienced (Martin & White 2005).

  - realisational grammatical frames: 'ideational meanings which redound with affectual meanings' (Martin 2000: 155)

Background

- The focus has largely been on the localised evaluative lexical content, rather than the global potential for appraisal selections afforded by semantic and contextual factors – factors which also motivate selections in other systems if we take a stratal, register perspective on text as instantiation (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen 2004).

Background

- Complementary analyses of transitivity and appraisal
  - Henderson-Brooks - psychotherapeutic discourse
  - Scott – political speeches, news reports, discussion forums
- Semantic motifs involving appraisal analysis
  - Coffin & O'Halloran 'global groove'

Analysis

1. Introduction to texts
2. Analysis and interpretation of appraisal
   - to show the results of an analysis based on appraisal alone
3. Analysis and interpretation of transitivity
   - to illustrate the impact that an understanding of experiential meanings has on interpretation of the appraisal in the text

In the News: A survivor story

- An Australian family, Bradley and Jillian Searle and their two children, Lachie (5 years old) and Blake (20 months old), were just four of the hundreds of thousands affected by the tsunamis in South-East Asia in December 2004

- 'I think this woman is the dumbest, most thoughtless mom I've heard of in a loooong while.'

- 'It may have been that she thought the younger one would be easier to hold on to. I doubt that she thought her younger child was more valuable.'

- 'She clung to her older boy for as long as she could, but as her strength waned she appealed to a young girl nearby to grab him.'

'A mother's choice'

- News discourse
  - Sydney Morning Herald 30/12/04
    - *'Her baby or her son: the choice almost tore them apart'* by Natasha Granath
- Personal responses: online discussion
  - Parenthood.com (Dec 12 2004 – Jan 1 2005)
   - 'Mother has to choose to save only 1 of her 2 sons'
    - 10 posts

The texts

- SMH text
  - "hard news" – chronicling rather than interpreting or explaining events (Iedema et al 1994)
  - Sydney broadsheet newspaper
  - Fairfax publication
- Parenthood.com
  - Discussion thread on an internet forum
  - Primary demographic: middle-class parents (mostly US)
  - Most of the speakers identify themselves explicitly as mothers, through their online pseudonyms (eg.IdahoMom) and signatures (which include children's names, birthdates, etc)
    - Members rely on their status as mothers (and wives) to validate their identities

Analysis

- Using SFL to investigate attitudes towards aspects of the event
  - Appraisal Analysis
    - Describing the attitudes of Judgement (+/-) expressed towards Jillian's actions
- Using SFL to investigate linguistic representations of the event
  - Transitivity Analysis
    - Describing the encoding of the experiential meanings through choices of Process types and Participants

Appraisal System
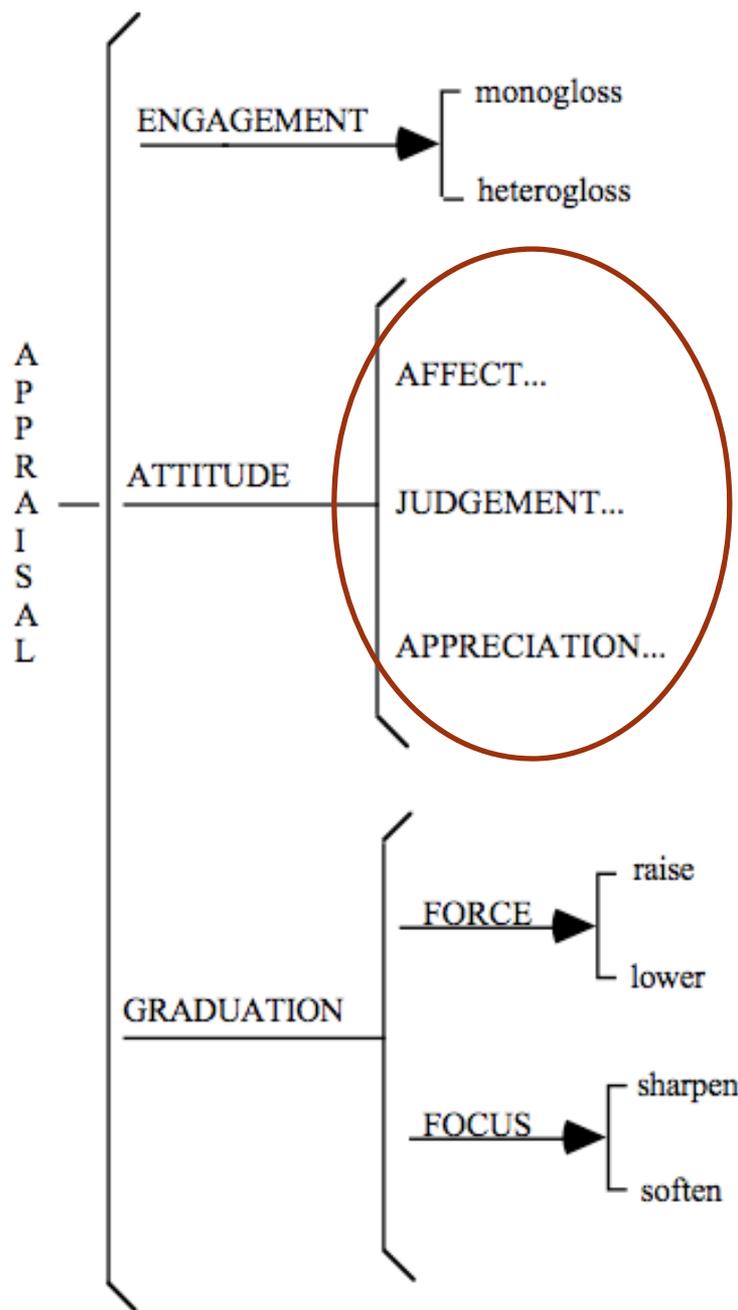
FIGURE 1. APPRAISAL systems: ENGAGEMENT, ATTITUDE and GRADUATION

from Martin, J. (2004) Mourning: how we get aligned, *Discourse & Society 15*: 321-44

Categories and subcategories of Appraisal (Attitude)

-happiness		+happiness
-satisfaction		+satisfaction
-security	Affect: Realis	+security

←——————————————————————————————→

-fear	Affect: Irrealis	+fear
-desire		+desire

-normality		+normality
-capacity		+capacity
-tenacity	Judgement: Social Esteem	+tenacity

←——————————————————————————————→

-veracity	Judgement: Social Sanction	+veracity
-propriety		+propriety

-impact		+impact
-quality		+quality
-balance	Appreciation	+balance

←——————————————————————————————→

-complexity		+complexity
-social significance		+social significance
-salience		+salience

Following Martin & Rose (2003: 60-63)

Analysis - Appraisal

- what kinds of attitudes are expressed in the texts, and
- how are the attitudes applied to people and things in the texts?

Appraisal Sub-systems

- All appraisal subsystems (AFFECT, JUDGEMENT, and APPRECIATION) are represented in the texts.

	SMH	Parenthood
Affect	2	14
Judgement	12	55
Appreciation	1	0

- However, in both text types the main kinds of attitudes that are expressed are those from the subsystem of JUDGEMENT

- Parenthood.com
  - I'm <u>glad</u> that he is alive and safe (+Affect: Happiness)

- Parenthood.com
  - I would be <u>very hurt and angry</u> (-Affect: Dissatisfaction)

- SMH
  - he had held onto the pole for nearly two hours with his head just above water (+Judgement: Tenacity (evoked))

- Parenthood.com
  - this woman is the <u>dumbest, most thoughtless</u> mom I've heard about in a loooong while (-Judgement: Propriety (inscribed))

- SMH (quoted speech)
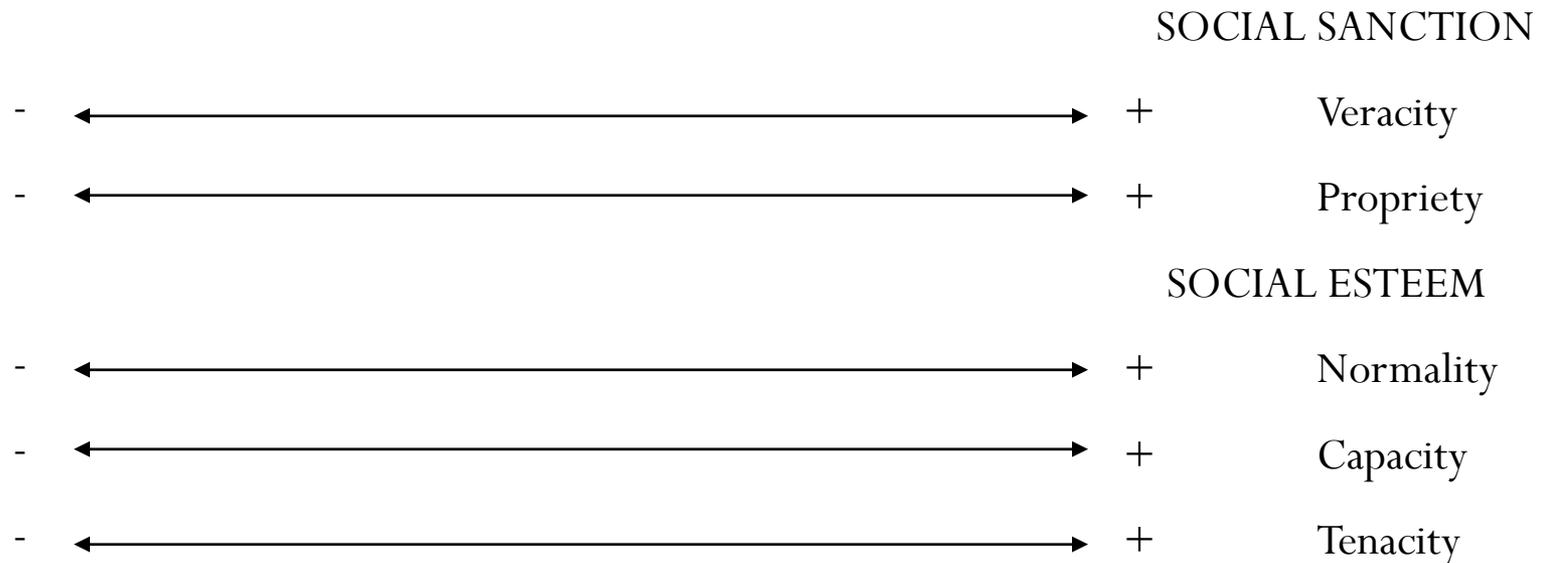 - "it {the tsunami/ the situation} was so <u>horrific</u>" (-Appreciation: Reaction)

Appraiser

- almost all the appraisal is sourced to the writers of the respective texts

- the SMH text also attributes some appraisal to Jillian and Bradley Searle through direct quotation in the newspaper article.

SMH				Parenthood			
Source	Aff	Jud	App	Source	Aff	Jud	App
Author	0	10	0	Author	14	55	0
Jillian Searle	2	2	0				
Bradley Searle	0	0	1				

Analysis - Appraisal

- Appraisal: Judgement (Martin & Rose, 2003)
  - Based on social codes and practices

SOCIAL SANCTION

- $\longleftrightarrow$ +   Veracity

- $\longleftrightarrow$ +   Propriety

SOCIAL ESTEEM

- $\longleftrightarrow$ +   Normality

- $\longleftrightarrow$ +   Capacity

- $\longleftrightarrow$ +   Tenacity

Judgement

- both positive and negative judgements of *Social Sanction and Social Esteem* in both texts

	SMH (473 words, 75 clauses)		Parenthood.com (929 words, 128 clauses)	
	+	-	+	-
Social Esteem				
Capacity	0	0	2	4
Normality	3	3	4	10
Tenacity	5	0	4	2
Social Sanction				
Propriety	0	1	5	17
Veracity	0	0	7	2
Total	8	4	22	35
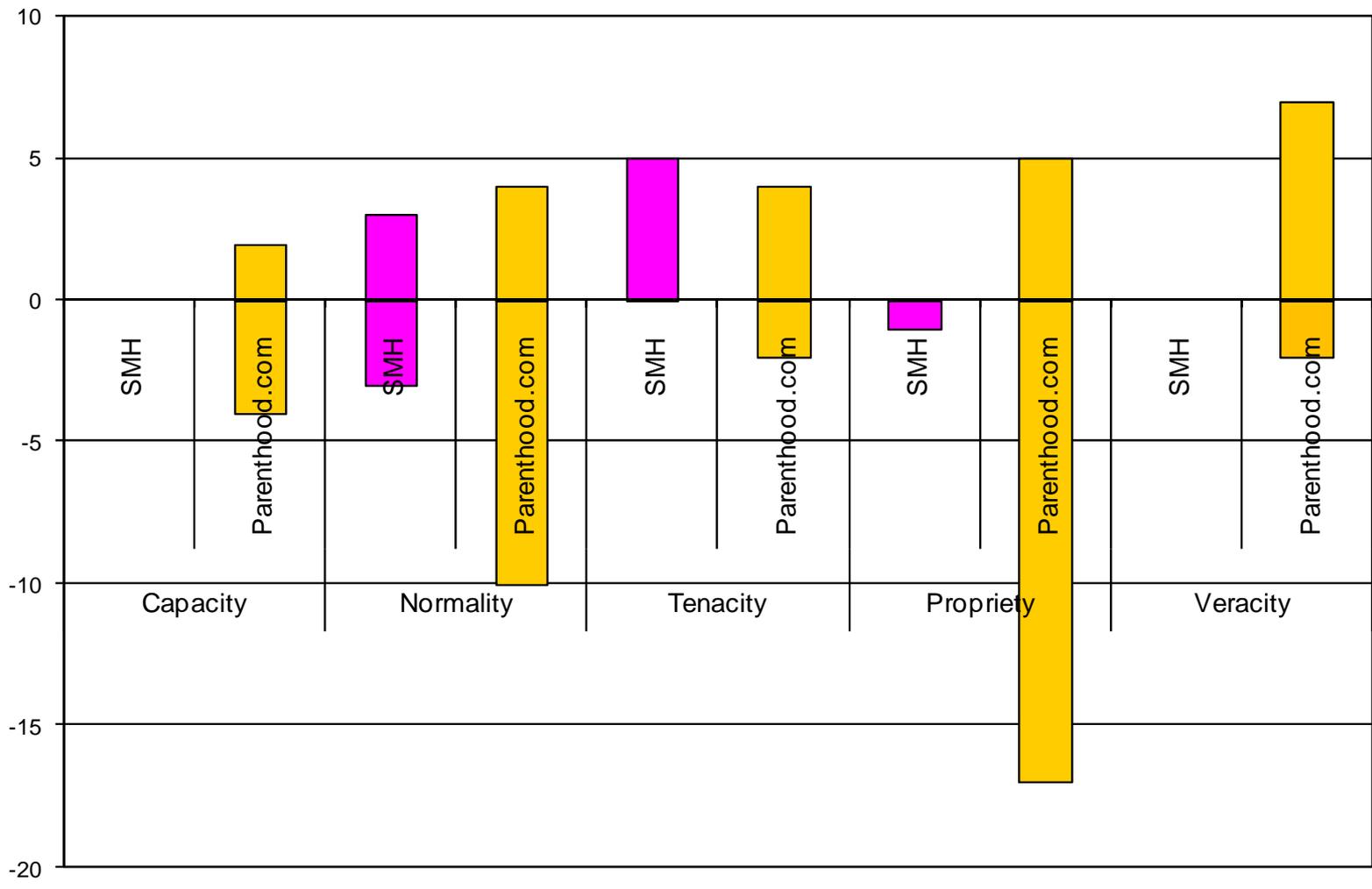
Appraised

- The main focus of the appraisal in both texts is Jillian Searle.
  - In the SMH text, Lachie Searle, Bradley Searle, the Searle family, and the tsunami are also appraised
  - In the Parenthood.com text, journalists and Parenthood.com mothers also appear as targets of appraisal, whilst Bradley Searle does not.
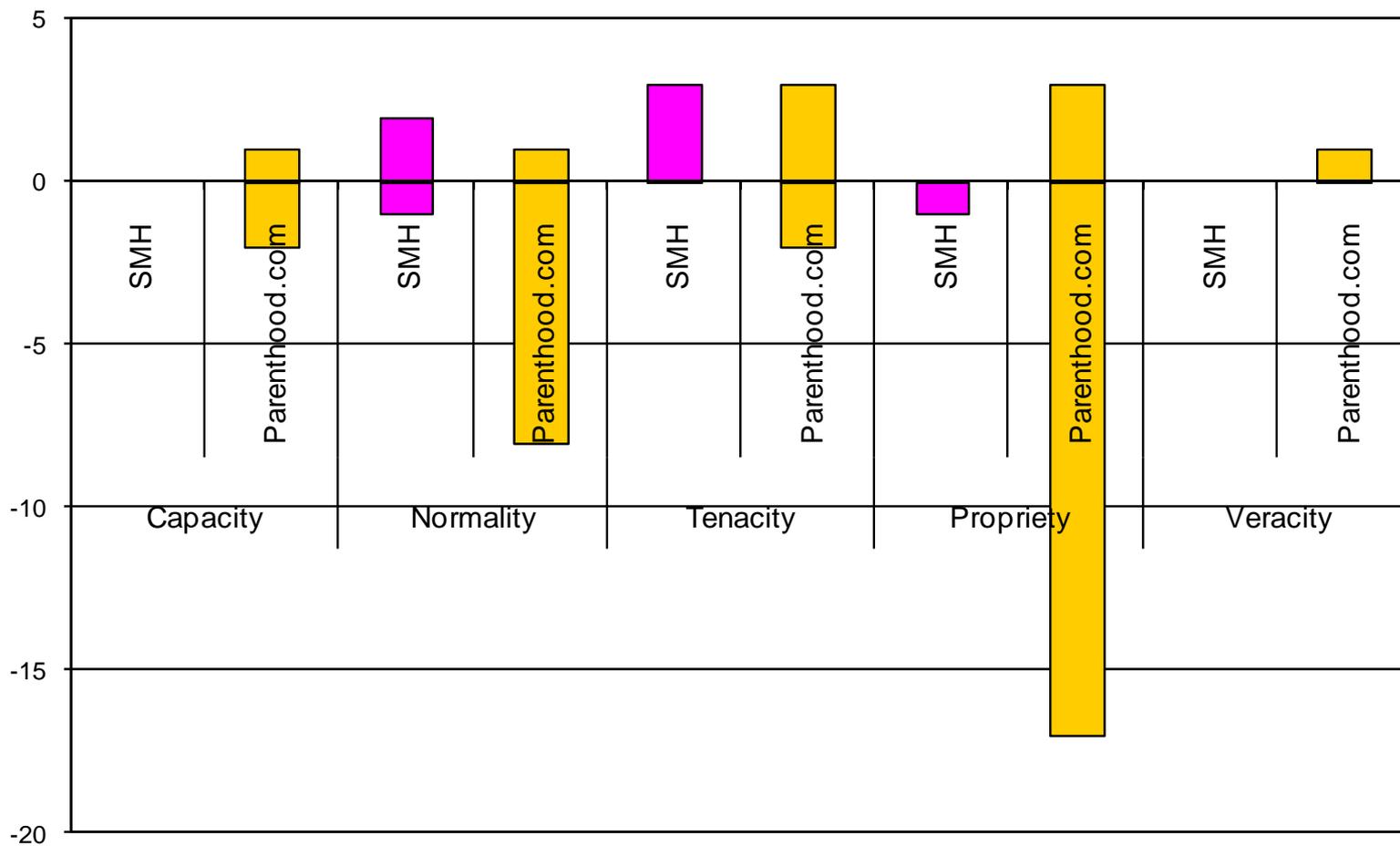
Appraisal of Jillian

Social Esteem	
Category	*Example*
+Capacity	She made the right [decision]
-Capacity	this stupid lady…
+Tenacity	She didn't just "let him go"
-Tenacity	… letting this tale out without really thinking about how it might be affecting her son
+Normality	She was SO lucky in how it turned out!
-Normality	I can't imagine what this woman went through

Examples from Parenthood.com texts

Appraisal of Jillian

Social Sanction	
Category	Example
+Propriety	She shouldn't feel bad or guilty or ashamed
-Propriety	this woman is the dumbest, most thoughtless mom I've heard about in a loooong while
+Veracity	She has nothing to hide
-Veracity	--

Appraisal of Jillian

- Mostly negative (31 tokens)
  - The speakers in the discussion forum criticise Jillian for thoughtlessness and unluckiness, and condemn her on the basis of immorality and negligence.

- Some positive (14 tokens)
  - Discussion text (9): these tokens come from only a couple of the discussion forum speakers
  - News text (5): 3 of these tokens are attributed to Jillian herself as she is directly quoted in the article.

Summary of appraisal analysis

- SMH text
  - Jillian admirable in terms of resolve (+Tenacity) to save her family by whatever means possible
  - Jillian fortunate (+Normality) to have emerged from the situation with all family members surviving

Summary of appraisal analysis

- Parenthood.com text
  - Jillian morally questionable (-Priopriety) for making the decision to risk the life of one of her children
  - Jillian unfortunate (-Normality) to have found herself in such a situation
  - Jillian defended by a minority as innocent and trustworthy (+Veracity)

Summary of appraisal analysis

- One action, two evaluative motifs:

SMH: shows courage and determination in a difficult situation

Parenthood.com: indicates some kind of moral deficiency

Jillian letting go of Lachie

"try to keep everyone alive, no matter what it takes"

"never let go of your child, not matter what the consequences"

…and two underlying ideologies

Semantic amplification

- What else can we discover about the texts by carrying out a parallel analysis of transitivity?
  - Is there a correspondence between appraisal and transitivity in terms of the construction of ideology?

Results - Process Types
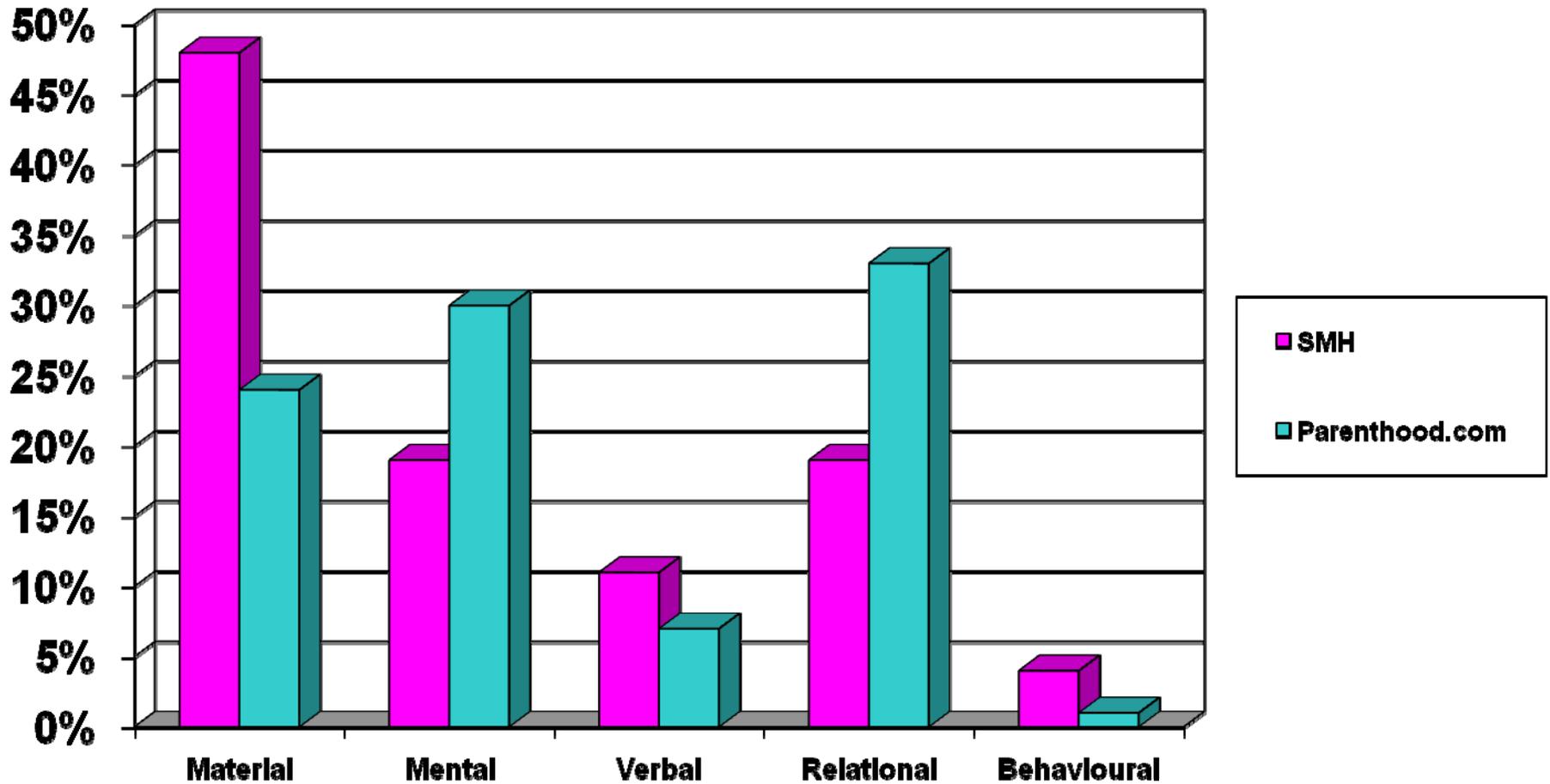
Construing experience

SMH

She <u>clung</u> {Material} to her older boy for as long as [[she could]], || but <<as her strength <u>waned</u> {Material}>> she <u>appealed</u> {Verbal} to a young girl nearby || <u>to grab</u> {Material} him.

"The water <u>had gone</u> {Material} out || and ^IT just <u>rushed</u> {Material} back in again || and it <u>was</u> {Relational} so horrific || that <<when I <u>got</u> {Material} out [of the front [of the hotel]]>> I <u>thought</u> {Mental} || they <u>were</u> {Relational} all dead for sure."

When the water <u>subsided</u> {Material} || the couple <u>began</u> {Material} a frantic search of the hotel, in darkness, || <u>wading</u> {Material} through wreckage.

Parenthood.com

I <u>think</u> {Mental} || that<u>'s</u> {Relational } every mother's worst nightmare – [[having to choose between which child to save]]

Admittedly, the first time [[I <u>heard</u> this]] I <u>was</u> {Relational} so choked up… || her kids <u>are</u> {Relational} about the same age as mine. || ^IT<u>'S</u> {Relational} A horrible thing [[to have to decide]].

How <u>is</u> this 5 year old <u>going to feel</u> {Mental} || <u>growing up</u> {Material} || <u>knowing</u> {Mental} || his mama <u>let</u> him <u>go to die</u> {Material}
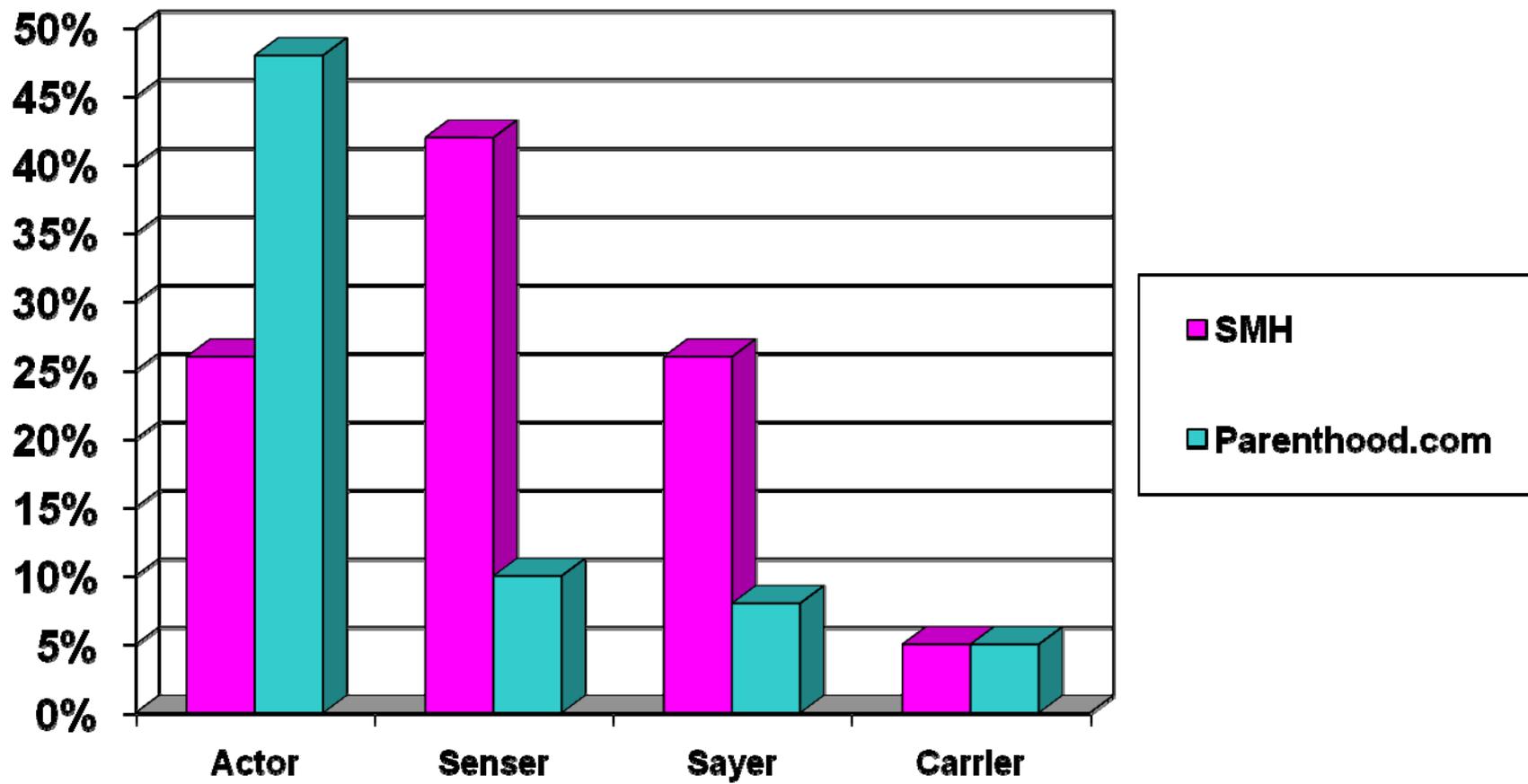
Results – Participants (1st Position)
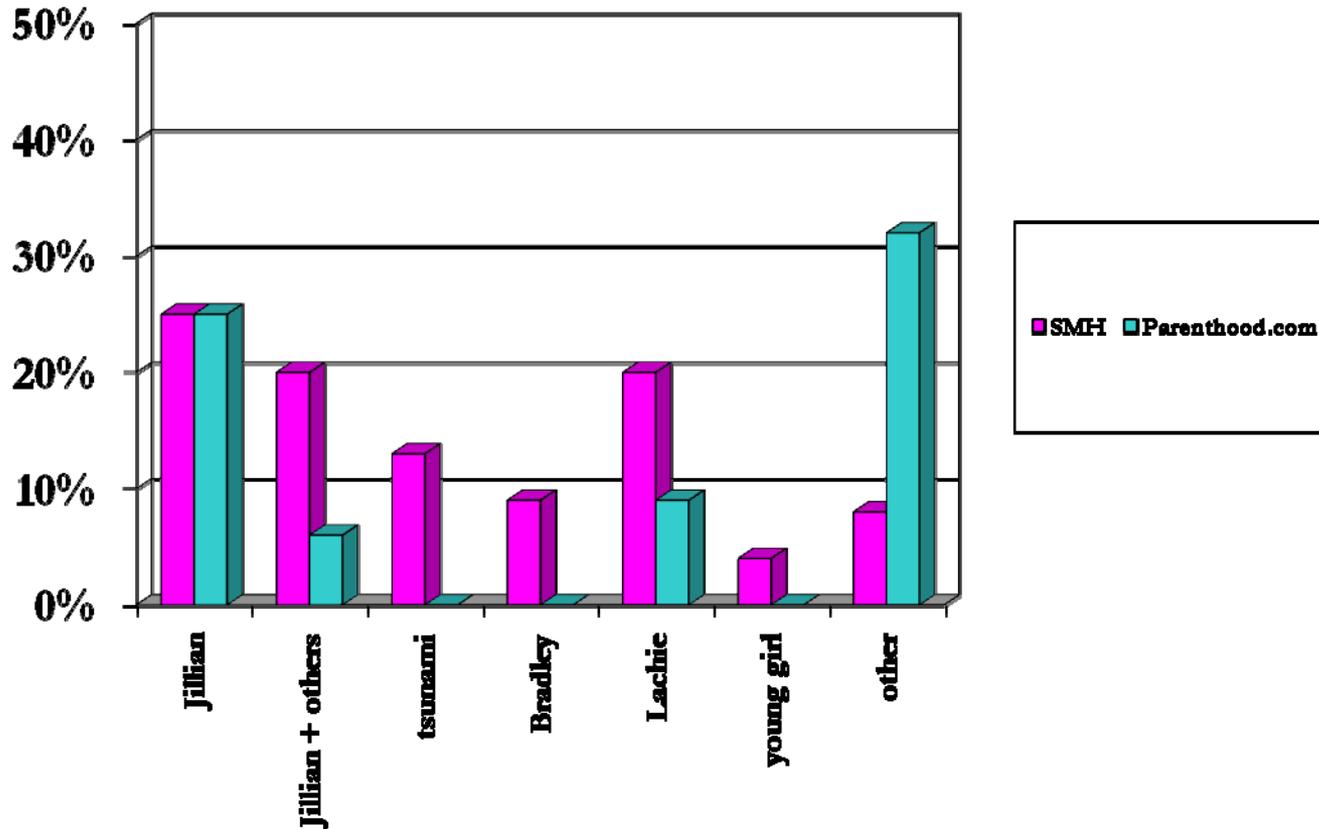
Experiential Meanings: Participants

- Jillian Searle is chosen as main Participant most frequently in both texts, so:

  - What choices do the writers make in representing Jillian's role in the experience?
  - What is her Participant profile?

Participant Roles: Jillian

Jillian as Senser

Clause	Instance
SMH15	she <u>feared</u> ||16 that <<17 if she tried to hold both Lachie and her baby, Blake,>> they would all be lost
SMH24	<u>fearing</u> ||25 she <u>would</u> never <u>see</u> her son again
SMH28	and she <u>learned</u> ||29 {the girl} had lost hold of Lachie

Participant Roles: Jillian

- SMH text
  - Jillian is represented as the person with the most Agency in the event.
  - Jillian is portrayed most frequently as Senser, then as Actor and Sayer.
    - The newspaper report is concerned with Jillian's internal processes.
    - Jillian is represented as a rational person, who thinks before she acts and has some control over what happens to her. She is given a high degree of 'human-ness'.

Participant Roles: Jillian

- Parenthood.com text
  - Jillian is represented as the person with the most Agency in the event.
  - Jillian is portrayed most frequently as Actor, then as Senser and Sayer.
    - The discussion text is concerned with Jillian's physical actions.
    - Jillian is represented as dynamic Participant who has the potential to affect others, notably Lachie.

Semantic amplification

- The appraisal and transitivity resources work together towards common semantic goals:
    - SMH positive appraisal of Jillian's tenacity consistent with experiential construction of Jillian as a rational person
    - Parenthood.com negative appraisal of Jillian 's propriety & normality corresponds with experiential construction of her as rash, unthinking

Ideology of Motherhood

- Do the transitivity patterns reflect the same 'ideology of motherhood' as the appraisal patterns?
  - What do they reveal about 'good mother' ideals?
  - What aspects of the context are implicated in the differences?

Ideology of Motherhood

- SMH text foregrounds positive judgements of Tenacity and Normality, and construes Jillian as Senser more than Actor
  - A mother should think before she acts
  - A mother should be able to make rational decisions in difficult situations
  - A mother should do whatever she thinks is best for her children

Ideology of Motherhood

- Parenthood.com text foregrounds negative appraisal of Tenacity, Normality (especially unluckiness) and Propriety, and construes Jillian as an Actor more than a Senser

  - A mother should show resolve and determination
  - A mother should show propriety and virtue
  - A mother should think before she acts

Ideology of Motherhood

- A mother should never value one child over another
  - 'that's every mother's worst nightmare – having to choose between which child to save!' (Tess)
    - -Normality: Luck
  - 'His mom chose to protect his little brother and not himself' (Sandy)
    - -Propriety: Inconsiderate

Ideology of Motherhood

- A mother should never value one child over another
  - '… how his mom could still love him as much as his little brother and let him go like that' (Sandy)
    - -Propriety: Inconsiderate
  - 'she is basically saying that it would be better for the older one to die than the younger' (ehartsay)
    - -Propriety: Unjust

Ideology of Motherhood

- A mother should not allow her family to become subject to public scrutiny
  - 'she really should never have let this get out to the press' (Sharon)
    - -Tenacity: Rash
  - 'I don't agree with announcing this story to everyone for the sake of her son!' (Debbie)
    - -Tenacity: Rash

Ideology of Motherhood

- A mother should not allow her family to become subject to public scrutiny
  - '…for letting this tale out without really thinking about how it might be affecting her son' (Sandy)
    - -Tenacity: Rash
  - 'this lady made the WRONG choice by… telling the news' (Brianna-Rose)
    - -Tenacity: Rash

Ideology of Motherhood

- A mother's gotta do what a mother's gotta do
  - 'if she hadn't made that choice, no doubt all three of them would be dead' (Kathy)
    - +Tenacity: Heroic
  - 'she gave him to a lady next to her so they can all try to survive' (Debbie)
    - +Tenacity: Dependable

Registerial implications

- Same topic interacting with different configurations of tenor and mode variables

	SMH	Parenthood.com
Field	Reflection-based Discoursal Narrating	Relation based? Meta-discoursal Commenting
Tenor	Status difference Social distance maximal	No power/status difference Social distance minimal
Mode	Monologic Mediated: edited Fixed endpoint (deadline) Graphic: Printed Written-like Constitutive	Dialogic, co-constructed Mediated: delayed No fixed endpoint Graphic: Pixeled Spoken-like Constitutive

Following Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Butt 2004)

Registerial implications

- Different contextual configurations
  - license different evaluative reactions, realised by choices from appraisal (here, judgement)
  - motivate different experiential orientations realised by choices in the lexicogrammar (here, from transitivity)
- Likewise, local appraisal and transitivity selections jointly construe the same global semantic and contextual features

Registerial implications

- "hard news" not just defined by a lack of explicit appraisal
  - Recognised by configuration of contextual variables (cf. Lukin 2008)
  - Perhaps certain kinds of events and outcomes 'license' expression of positive/negative appraisal in journalism
    - For the purposes of 'bonding' (cf. Caple 2009)?
    - Cf. Wyong Housefire data
  - Is there a place in this kind of reporting for publicly judging the behaviour of ordinary people who end up as news actors?

Wyong House Fire Coverage

Trapped on a burning balcony – winter claims four more lives

…The fire that tore through the two-storey brick and particle board home in Panonia Road early yesterday killed the four children. As the news spread, concern grew over how so many children could be home alone…

…Lisa Forde, a mother of eight who rents the home where five of her children live with her, had been at a friend's place in Tuggerah for nearly three hours with Wayne Shepherd when the fire started just before 2am…

…Mr Shepherd - who was outside the house yesterday drinking a long-neck as reporters milled around - said Ms Forde had gone to check the children when the fight ended. She had returned to the club and told him a friend was going to look after them and the couple drove to Tuggerah…

Sydney Morning Herald, 10th June, 2005

Wyong House Fire Coverage

Four home-alone children perish in inferno

The Mundine fight was on at the bowls club across the road, so mother of seven Lisa Forde and her de facto husband wandered over to have a few beers and watch the action.

Seven children from three families, ranging in age from 15 months to 13 years, were left behind…

…Jethro's father Glenn Sparkes, the only father of the three dead boys not currently in jail, released a statement through police.

"We are shocked and devastated by our tragic loss. As yet we are still waiting to find out how this tragedy occurred," he said…

The Australian, 10th June 2005

Registerial implications

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Conclusions

- All texts foreground the 'choice' made by Jillian
  - Not all speakers/writers agree on the choice
  - What they say about the choice reflects their ideas about what a 'good mother' is and does
  - Ideology of motherhood seems to be contextually motivated
- Experiential and Appraisal functions work closely together to create systematic meaning

Conclusions/Further Questions

- Is there a consistent 'ideology of motherhood/ parenthood' systematically presented by the media?
  - If so, what ideology is reflected?
  - If not, what contextual factors might cause differences?
- How has the media representation of parenting changed over the last 50 years, particularly since the advent of the technological era?

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