"She wasn't that pretty.. actually she was okay lah."
Negotiating different normative orders in narrative
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In his classical work "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", Goffman argues that when interacting with others, we display a series of masks to others, enacting roles, staging how we appear and constantly trying to set ourselves in the best light according to the situation. We often switch masks when enacting a different play to a different audience. Thus, our values and beliefs are not static but rather we manipulate them according to the audience. As narratives make up a majority of everyday social interaction, they do not only reveal a narrator's beliefs and values, but instead they reveal the shared group values of everyone participating in the interaction. These shared group values dictate the acceptability of a narrative within a group and hence the normative order.

The normative order of a narrative event can be described as the mutual understanding between the interlocutors and the narrator about what are the acceptable values expressed during a narration. Herzfeld(1988) maintains that different social settings have different normative orders depending on the group's shared values. But as Goffman suggests, an individual can don different masks and hence align himself with different values and beliefs according to the audience. Understanding normative order and how they are can provide a better understanding of the malleable nature of group values and how one can switch between different sets of values in different contexts.

Bruner(1991) argues that narratives of personal experience are closely related to our own construction of reality. They provide us with the deep insight into how we perceive and understand the world. According to Bruner, these narratives often feature "Intentional State Entailment" which is the idea that the narrator's values, beliefs and theories are inextricably intertwined with those of the characters in the narrative.

Analysing these expressions of a narrator's values and beliefs lays the foundation for my research about dynamic normative orders. Since the narratives are told from the narrator's point of view, analysing these provides a deeper understanding of the narrator's standpoint and judgments. In his seminal early work on narratives, Labov (1972: 355) describes narrating past experiences as *partially reliving the experience* as the narration involves the narrator's emotions. To enhance the narrative's reportability and to get his opinions across to the interlocutor, the narrator uses various forms of evaluation. These evaluative clauses display the narrator's opinions and beliefs. Hence through the amalgamation of his views in the evaluation, we can get a greater insight about the narrator's standpoint and personal values which largely shape his expression of the normative order.

Schiffrin(1996) further builds on Labov's views about evaluation and argues that evaluative clauses paint a self-portrait of the narrator. In Goffman's (1981: 144) words, the "animators" themselves are the "principle" of the narrative, and this allows them to weave together their opinions and beliefs with the narrative event. In fact according to Schiffrin, even seemingly unimportant aspects of narratives such as intonations of the narrator's voice and repetition of the same matter are invested with meaning. They display the narrator's self and identity as well as an interlocutor's alignment with the narrator.

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Schiffrin further explores Bruner's idea of an epistemic and agentive identity. In many narratives, the beliefs of the narrator might not be explicit. However, the analysis of the language of the stories show how narrators reveal aspects of agentive and epistemic selves. According to Bruner (as cited in Schiffrin 1996: 194), "we present ourselves epistemically when we state our beliefs, feelings and wants; agentive aspects of self are revealed when we report actions directed toward goals". Schiffrin calls this the "dual position" between the two selves. She argues that even when the narrator attempts to conceal his beliefs behind his agentive self, the epistemic self is still conspicuous from the analysis of the narrative language.

Schrauf(2000) also investigates the relationship between narratives and identity construction. He asserts that when a narrator's social identity is under threat they often re-position themselves in order to repair their threatened social identities. Even within a given narrative event, narrators often deploy narrative repair and self-correction to present an acceptable self-identity within the current normative order. Levelt(2000) argues that narrators often interrupt their flow of speech when they notice signs of trouble. They use *editing terms* to acquire more time to formulate a repair so that the repaired utterance mitigates the trouble and its potential consequences. Such repairs allow a narrator to fluidly move from one normative order to another.

Schiffrin's notion of identity construction can be further examined by looking at how Tannen's (1995) concept of constructed dialogue reveals a person's opinions and beliefs. Tannen maintains that through reported speech, a narrator does not merely relay a message but instead he constructs dialogue. The narration involves the narrator's emotions and evaluation and therefore even the reported speech is a construction of the narrator himself. Hence, through a constructed dialogue, self-identity can be displayed. Moreover, constructed dialogue is a very effective tool for changing alignments, and hence it can serve as a tool for manipulating normative orders.

Furthermore, not only does narrative analysis reveal a self-portrait as Schiffrin asserted, it often also reveals group identities and group values. For example, Jaworski and Coupland (2005) state that in a group setting, gossiping can build group solidarity though "othering". Othering as when an individual or group is denied a clearly defined state and a liminal identity is imposed on them. Gossiping reinstates group values and identity by defining a clear moral boundary as group members constantly define themselves by what they are not. Also, group members might deploy "self-gossip" by othering themselves in hopes that the group members reinstate their position within the group. In my research, othering of ex-partners and even of one's own self plays an important role in indicating a narrative event's normative order.

NORMATIVE ORDER AND NARRATIVE CORPUS

Before delving into the analysis, it is important to understand how different aspects of a narrative link together to form different normative order. The narrator's normative orders when narrating an incident to different people is different. For instance, when narrating a story to his girlfriend, a man may include more elaborate details which would be inappropriate when he narrates the same story to an acquaintance. Not only the details of the story would be different, in fact, the orientation and evaluation too will be different . Furthermore the version of the story would differ according to what is the self-portrait the narrator is trying to paint. This again is dependent on the mutually acceptable group values and hence the normative order.

My interest in this article is to provide a deeper understanding of different normative orders in a narrative event and how a narrator negotiates these normative orders to present a verbal narrative. I develop this interest by focusing on three recounts narrated by three male university students, Desmond, Bruce and James who are in their freshmen year at National University of Singapore (NUS). The narratives were collected in one-to-one conversations with the students about their past relationships. Narratives of past relationships serves as a very good data for studying normative order because it is a delicate topic: Most

people sketch a different version of these stories depending on who the interlocutor is. It is important to note that I was the only interlocutor present during the narrative event and that I too am a male freshman at the same university. Also, the narrators and I have known one another for a substantial period of time which is why they were more open to sharing these very personal parts of their past with me.

The next few sections present my analysis of three different narratives by Desmond, Bruce and James about their past relationships. Each story reports how the narrators view their past relationships and their expectations from an "ideal" relationship. The general theme of each story is hence very similar as every story deals with very private segments of a person's biography. My analyses mainly attend to the language deployed in these narrations and how that language evinces the negotiation of normative orders.

NEGOTIATING OVERLAPPING NORMATIVE ORDERS
In the narrative events examined, different normative orders overlap to varying degrees because what is considered acceptable in a narrative event may be acceptable in many others. For example, the narratives examined were one-to-one conversations between two male college students. Hence, one conspicuous aspect of the normative order is the self-portrayal of a mature, masculine person. This self-portrayal is not only limited to this specific situation and might be acceptable in many other narrative events as well and hence different normative orders often overlap.

On several occasions the narrator drifts away from the current normative order to another seemingly overlapping normative order. However, realising that what he says does not belong in the current normative order, he deploys narrative repair and self-correction to get back to the normative order of the current conversation. The narrator may even deploy pauses, hesitation, and editing terms in order to "buy time" to formulate a repair.

The following excerpt is extracted from "Desmond's Last trip with his girlfriend" (Appendix). In this segment, Desmond describes how his relationship was about to come to an end as he was about to leave the country for a few years. He tried to bring up this issue but his girlfriend was unwilling to talk about it.

Excerpt 1: Desmond's Breakup

27. Umm, we tried talking. I tried to
28. That was the first time I tried to approach the topic
29. And she just didn't wanna talk about it like
30. "Lets not talk about it"
31. You know that kind of a dismissive – dismissive
32. and that kind of spoiled things for me as well
33. I mean yeah. And then yeah so..
34. So that was the first time that it became..
35. I started to worry again about this thing
36. And then a few, a few weeks later she brought it up again
37. And this time seriously after band practice again
38. Umm.. as in umm.. so
39. <u>first she said she doesn't wanna be in a band with me anymore</u>
40. <u>ah.. which is okay ah maybe I mean</u>
41. **I was like "oh am I.. am I that bad or.." that kind of..**
42. **I tried to..**
43. **Anyways. Whatever, I'm being..**
44. **Yeah that was me being stupid at the time**

3.

45. kind of, I honestly tried to dismiss away all my problems
46. you know like until it comes
47. But yeah she.. yeah so then she sat me down
48. and then umm.. yeah then she told me about all this
49. like she was not very cool with it
50. She was like why prolong it if we can just end it now
51. and I was like "Oh what the hell"
52. yeah and it was.. it wasn't yeah
53. and then that was the first time after the band practice
54. we never cycled back home together

In the excerpt, Desmond narrates a story about how his girlfriend told him that she did not want to be in the same band as him (line 39). He then quotes his thoughts from that moment as an evaluation of the impact it had on him.

Throughout the whole narrative, Desmond paints a self-portrait of a mature and liberal person. Contrary to the expected assignment of praise and blame, at several occasions, he uses self-othering and even praises his ex-girlfriend. This shows how he understands his past relationship from both his and his ex-girlfriend's perspectives demonstrating liberalism and maturity. He does portray himself as irresponsible in line 45. But he uses past tense to describe that version of himself. Hence there are two self-portrayals in play in this narrative - one of Desmond's current mature and liberal self and another of his immature, emotional self in the past.

Furthermore, since it is a one-to-one conversation between two male college students, the normative order dictates that both the participants should, like in any other man to man conversation, present themselves as independent and tough – like a "real man". Hence, portraying oneself as masculine is evidently a significant part of the normative order as well.

41. I was like "oh am I.. am I that bad or.." that kind of..
42. I tried to..
43. Anyways. Whatever, I'm being..
44. Yeah that was me being stupid at the time
45. kind of, I honestly tried to dismiss away all my problems

In lines 42 to 44, we see a clear evidence of narrative repair. In line 41, Desmond starts to evaluate the incident but then even without finishing his evaluation, he moves back to the complicating action in line 47. Furthermore the external evaluation deployed in line 45 ("kind of, I honestly tried to dismiss away all my problems") does not link to the event of his girlfriend not wanting to be in a band with him anymore.

We can understand this sudden employment of repair by understanding the overlapping normative orders in the scenario. There are two overlapping normative orders at play in this excerpt. In one normative order, an unmasculine, immature self-portrayal is acceptable but in another normative order, such a self-portrayal would be considered a breach of normativity.

In lines 41- 42, Desmond starts describing himself as a immature person who is easily affected by his girlfriend's demand. Moreover, his evaluation in those two lines is one-sided and is expressed in a petulant tone. These two lines blur the distinction between his portrayal of an immature individual in the past and that of his current masculine self.

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Realising that this lies outside the current normative order (of men talking to men about past relationships), Desmond deploys narrative repair in lines 43 and 44, by abruptly discontinuing the evaluation to reinstate his position within the normative order. Doing so, Desmond attempts to conceal his unmasculine epistemic self. He agentively rejects this epistemic past incarnation of himself.

43. Anyways. Whatever, I'm being..
44. Yeah that was me being stupid at the time

Furthermore, there is a clear change in tense from line 43 to 44. In line 43 he says "I'm being.." and repairs that to "that was me being". This shows of how Desmond tries to differentiate between the two portrayals. He does not want to portray himself as unmasculine now and so changes the tense to differentiate his current masculine self from his immature, unmasculine self in the past.

Also, it is interesting to note the use of the word "stupid" in line 44. Desmond labels his actions of being whiny and petulant ("oh am I.. am I that bad or.." that kind of..") as stupid. This is a clear indication of the normative order Desmond wants to reposition himself within. In that normative order, being whiny and unmasculine in general is "stupid". This is why Desmond not only deploys narrative repair, he also changes the tense accordingly and rejects his unmasculine actions by labeling them as "stupid".

INTERLOCUTOR'S INFLUENCE
Before we delve into the analysis of conflicting normative orders, it is important to understand how an interlocutor's responses direct the way a narrative proceeds. An interlocutor does not necessarily need to explicitly convey his alignment with or against the narrator's values. Instead, interlocutors deploy various response tokens which indicate their position and their idea of the acceptable normative order. McCarthy(2003) asserts that these response tokens may range from non-verbal responses (i.e. by body language), to minimal non-word responses (such as "huh" and "hmm") to short function words (such as "yes" and "okay"), single lexical tokens (e.g., "good" and "fine"), short clauses (e.g., "that's true" and "I agree"), and more elaborate responses. Gardner(2001) further explores how response tokens can serve various functions such "repair initiation", "hesitation marking" and conveying acknowledgement. For the intents of this paper, we categorise these responses into three main categories:

I. DIRECT LITERAL RESPONSES
These can range from short words (such as "wow" and "great") to long extended responses formed by a few sentences. Most straight-forward literal responses usually directly indicate the interlocutor's opinions and alignment. However, a deeper analysis of such responses might show that apart from the literal meaning they carries, the way they are phrased and the voice intonations that the interlocutor deploys while delivering them might be an indicator of a different intended response.

II. USE OF GESTURES AND BODY LANGUAGE
The interlocutor may even use hand gestures and head nods to suggest an agreement or disagreement. Use of body language can be further seen through interlocutor's expressions like when he smiles or laughs. Also, acts like looking down/away can hint disagreement with the narrator's opinions.

III. USE OF NON-WORD RESPONSE TOKENS
In most cases, an interlocutor's remarks are in forms of words like hmm, uh-huh, oh etc. or the responses are accompanied by such words. Although they might look rather meaningless on the surface, as Schiffrin points out, they are invested with meaning. These words often indicate an interlocutor's views and his alignment with or against the narration. A closer analysis of such utterances and which aspects of the

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narration does the interlocutor respond to we can us deduce a person's values and beliefs and hence his idea of the normative order. Some common non-word response tokens encountered in narratives examined are:

er/err: Suggests hesitation. This may also hint disapproval.
hmm: Suggests that the interlocutor is being pensive about what the narrator just mentioned
hmm (with a rising intonation): Suggests that the interlocutor is surprised or does not believe the narrator.
mm: Suggests agreement with the narrator's views
oh: Used as an exclamation
oh really?: Suggests that the narration was a breach from the canon.
oh really (in a sarcastic tone): Suggests that the interlocutor doubts the narrator's version of the story
woah: Used to respond to a highly reportable incident mentioned by the narrator
ugh: Suggests hesitation. This may hint disapproval or displeasure.
uh huh: Suggests agreement with the narrator's views
uh-huh?(with a rising intonation): Used as an alternative to "So what"
uh-oh: Used to respond when something has gone wrong
umm: A filter used to "buy time" to formulate a response.
umm: Hints disapproval when deployed as a hesitation marker

NEGOTIATING CONFLICTING NORMATIVE ORDERS
The normative order of a narrative event must be mutually acceptable by both the narrator and the interlocutor for the narration to continue without any contestation. However, sometimes the narrator's idea of what the normative order is does not tally with the interlocutor's. This, I describe as *conflicting normative orders* which is not to be confused with *overlapping normative orders* where normative orders from different possible narrative events share some common aspects.

A conflict between the two normative orders continues until it surfaces when the narrator breaches the interlocutor's understanding of the normative order. At this point the narrator either uses self-correction to align himself with the interlocutor's normative order or justifies himself and tries to get the interlocutor to align with his version of the normative order. In either case, the narrator or the interlocutor must re-position himself in terms of normative order so that the narration can continue.

The following excerpt is a segment from a conversation with another student, Bruce. During the conversation, he talked about his four ex-girlfriends and his expectations from a relationship. In this segment, he talks about his second girlfriend whom he met online.

Excerpt 2: Bruce's girlfriend "wasn't that pretty"

31. I don't know how I met her online.
32. Through a friend definitely
33. like from my class, my secondary school class
34. She was from another school altogether
35. So, yeah we just texted.
36. She was from the primary school of my classmate
37. So thats how they knew each other
38. And yeah turns out.. I mean
39. we clicked because she had a similar taste in music
40. and umm.. she was quite.. she was quite like umm,,
41. a.. she had issues ah and I had issues as well so

6.

42. I mean thats how we click ah
43. Common Issues

Interlocutor: Issues?

44. Issues as in like
45. you have beef with life
46. like beef. You got issues.
47. You don't.. you.. you don't like
48. life in particular ways
49. and you know.. you are miserable
50. but you are miserable together
51. or some shit like that yeah   [Interlocutor nods and replies with an affirming umm hmm]
52. Thats how it is.
53. The first two (girlfriends I had) were way less interesting
54. because they were no where near serious ah

Interlocutor: Then why did you.. why did you break up with her if you had common interests and stuff?

55. Cause I saw her in person,
56. she wasn't that pretty
57. Like I'll be upfront ah

Interlocutor: So..(with a rising intonation)   [with a quizzical facial expression with raised eyebrows]

        (interrupts the interlocutor)
58. She was no way near what she thought she looked like
59. She never showed me her face

Interlocutor: On MSN?

60. Yeah..

Interlocutor: Hmm.. (with a pitch contour suggesting pensiveness)
                So one of your main criteria for a girlfriend is that
                she must be pretty is it?

61. Not say pretty lah.
62. (Pause – 3.5 seconds)
63. Actually she was alright lah. I don't mind it
64. (Pause – 3 seconds)
65. But the way she behaved
66. it was so..
67. it was her disposition
68. Whats the word for it?
69. I don't know maybe
70. its disposition

Interlocutor: The way she carried herself is it?

71. The way she carried herself yeah.

Interlocutor: But you only met her twice.

7.

72. I only met her twice
73. but she was really really quiet
74. Didn't wanna talk
75. Looked away constantly kept on looking away
76. I don't really like that yeah

In this excerpt, Bruce describes how he met his second girlfriend when he was in Secondary School. In lines 1 to 21, he initially reveals that even before meeting her in person, he had a good connection with his girlfriend as they shared "common issues". When asked why he broke up with her, he justifies by unequivocally saying was that "she wasn't that pretty" (line 26). I, as the interlocutor reacted to this with a quizzical expression. This response, although subtle, was an indication of a conflict of normative orders between the Bruce and the interlocutor.

This narrative is another example of dual normative orders. However unlike in Desmond's narrative, here we see a conflict between the normative orders of the narrator and the interlocutor. In Bruce's normative order, it is acceptable to break-up with someone solely based on their physical appearance while it is not so in the interlocutor's. Bruce's frank reply was therefore not acceptable to the interlocutor and thus Bruce's remark *breached* the interlocutor's normative order.

Interlocutor: So..(with a rising intonation)   [with a quizzical facial expression with raised eyebrows]

       (interrupts the interlocutor)
58. She was no way near what she thought she looked like
59. She never showed me her face

Interlocutor: On MSN?

60. Yeah..

After the interlocutor's initial response ("So..."), Bruce persists with his idea about the importance of looks. To justify his action of breaking up with his ex-partner, Bruce assigns blame to his ex-partner in line 29 ("She never showed me her face"). However, the narrator replies with a pensive non-word token, "hmm", as if he was surprised with Bruce's reply. The interlocutor goes one step further to ask a closed question about how important are a girlfriend's looks to him. The response token and the probing question further exemplify the breach of the interlocutor's narrative order.

Sensing this breach and understanding that the interlocutor is not realigning himself even after the justification, Bruce deploys narrative repair to better align himself to the interlocutor's normative order to elude the possibility of further contestation:

55. Cause I saw her in person,
56. she wasn't that pretty
57. Like I'll be upfront ah

Interlocutor: So..(with a rising intonation)   [with a quizzical facial expression with raised eyebrows]

58. (interrupts the interlocutor)
59. She was no way near what she thought she looked like

8.

61. Not say pretty lah.
    (Pause – 3.5 seconds)
62. Actually she was alright lah. I don't mind it
    (Pause – 3 seconds)
63. But the way she behaved
64. it was so..
65. it was her disposition

Here we notice that Bruce pauses twice which helped him "buy time" to formulate a repair. And in line 62, we see a stark contradiction to his previous claim about how she was not pretty (lines 51 to 55). Furthermore, he even went on to blame her disposition as the factor which caused him to break up with her. This drastic change in the evaluation allowed him to very conveniently move away from his initial normative order and adapt a new one which the interlocutor aligned with.

Excerpt 3: Bruce is a changed man
This abstract is taken from a later part of the conversation where Bruce was describing what his expectations from a relationship were:

1. So okay yes common beliefs
2. Thats very important because
3. what more can you say if you only have
4. common background
5. For example you all are only from USP
6. and you all can talk about is USP events
7. things happening in USP.. gossip.
8. What's the point if you all are from the same interest group
9. Its not enough
10. You all need to have the same outlook on life
11. And thats a..
12. **Actually that's even more important than looks**
13. **Thats even more important than anything**
14. Like for example when I met the umm..
15. that second girlfriend right?
16. I realised that she was very…
17. She didn't only wanna talk about anything
18. She was very comfortable with typing online
19. Right, **she was a complete recluse in person**
20. **and thats not me ah**

Interlocutor: Yeah

21. I am very talkative.
22. I like to really engage myself in a..
23. in any kind of social interaction yeah..
24. and **if you are not comfortable with being yourself in reality**
25. **it doesn't work out lah.**

Interlocutor: Yeah (nods head in affirmation)

26. **I mean look. I tried. It happened twice**
27. **I went for a second one as well.**
28. It didn't work out lah.

9.

This excerpt is yet another striking example of negotiation overlapping normative orders. After changing the normative order to one which are more acceptable by the interlocutor, Bruce is faced with two overlapping normative orders - the current one where judging girlfriends by their looks is unacceptable and his initial normative order that he moved away from to avoid contestation. Even though Bruce was describing his expectations from a relationship, he, without any prompt from the interlocutor, brings up the importance of having a common outlook in a relationship on life and downplays the importance of looks to reinstate his position within the new normative order. To further strengthen his position, he claims that it was because she was a recluse that he broke up with her; implying that her appearance was not the main reason for the break-up.

Bruce revisited his narrative about his second girlfriend and restated his "new opinion" about the importance of looks of his own accord. It shows that maintaining and building solidarity with the interlocutor remains an overriding concern for Bruce. Furthermore, this excerpt demonstrates the importance of a mutually acceptable normative order in a narrative event.

EXPLICIT DECLARATION OF A NORMATIVE ORDER
From the past two narrative analyses, it is clear that to arrive at a mutually acceptable normative order, the current normative order is constantly updated by back-channeling and narrative repair. However, in some cases, the normative order may be explicitly declared by the narrator instead of being subtly negotiated as the narrative progresses. Such a explicit declaration clearly delineates the boundary within with the participants must operate.

The following excerpt is a segment from James' narrative about his first relationship in his Secondary 4 year. In this segment, James describes how his friend Kenneth was trying to woo James' girlfriend, Jacqueline by giving her gifts and constantly messaging her. Jacqueline was contemplating breaking up with James to get together with Kenneth.

<u>Excerpt 4: James' Bro Code</u>

16. and she just told me that told lor
17. "How is Kenneth doing so nice things
18. when you're not giving.. doing anything much?"
19. (laughs)
20. I was like "Oh okay"
21. I was like "Ooo.. kaay"   [Accompanied with the sad expression]
22. Then I was a bit kind of..
23. umm..
24. worried.. about it first
25. Then I confronted Kenneth
26. I told him that we are together so
27. don't try to do anything to her   [Enacts by pointing a finger as if pointed at Kenneth]
28. (laughs)

Interlocutor: Was he trying? He was right?

29. He was (strong emphasis on "was")
30. He was rea.. trying very hard actually
31. Ya then after I tell him

32. cause we are like **very very close friends**
33. **we are bros**
34. because the three of the, the three guys
35. we go to chinese.. Higher Chinese lesson
36. every Tuesday and Thursday
37. so very very close ya.. very tight
38. I told him I.. expect like..
39. **You know Bro Code?**
40. ...to be fulfilled

Interlocutor: **(laughs)**

41. **Correct right?**

Interlocutor**: Yup**

42. **(laughs)**

Interlocutor: **Ya**

43. Oh but no. He never..
44. he never backed down afterwards
45. He even like push for
46. even harder
47. like tried even harder after I told him
48. about that we are together
49. because he explained to me that
50. "How come James is not doing enough?"
51. like he will he will talk he will
52. tell Jacqueline that
53. "Oh James doesn't.. you don't deserve James"
54. "You deserve someone much better"

Interlocutor: ooh *(3 seconds long)*

55. He would say things like that
56. He was like "How come James-

Interlocutor**: That is.. totally against what a bro should do!**

57. **(smiles)**
58. **Exactly.**
59. Aiya but self is like its..
60. like cannot really blame him.
61. Cause love is selfless
62. No, love is selfish yes
63. Love is selfish.

In this excerpt, James declares in line 33 that Kenneth and him were "bros". Then in lines 38 to 40, he explicitly announces his values:

11.

38. I told him I.. expect like..
39. **You know Bro Code?**
40. ...to be fulfilled

Hence, James clearly displays his belief that two close males must always operate under the "Bro Code" i.e. a set of rules, set forth by the society and the popular media, which "bros" are expected to follow. Moreover, instead of merely stating his values, he explicitly asks the interlocutor,"Correct right?" (line 41). This allows him to gauge the interlocutor's normative order. The interlocutor then replies with a "Yup" confirming that operating within the "Bro Code" is mutually acceptable and thus is a part of the current normative order. Hence the negotiation of normative order was more direct and explicit instead of subtle shifts through back-channelling like that in Bruce's narrative. By such a clear declaration, the narrator minimises the possibility of arriving at conflicting normative orders during the narration.

Another interesting result of this explicit declaration is seen in lines 51 to 68:

51. like he will he will talk he will
52. tell Jacqueline that
53. "Oh James doesn't.. you don't deserve James"
54. "You deserve someone much better"

    Interlocutor: ooh *(3 seconds long)*

55. He would say things like that
56. He was like "How come James-

    Interlocutor**: That is.. totally against what a bro should do!**

57. **(smiles)**
58. **Exactly.**

The "Bro Code" dictates that a "bro" shall never pursue his bro's girlfriend. Knowing that the bro code is acceptable within the current normative order, James narrates how his friend Kenneth tries to woo Jacqueline, James' girlfriend. During his narration James did not provide any evaluation for Kenneth's actions because it is understood that within the current normative order, such an act is considered despicable. In fact, the evaluation was provided by the interlocutor - "That is.. totally against what a bro should do!". Evidently, this shows how the interlocutor shares the same normative order which was earlier agreed upon by both and that he is actively operating within its defined boundaries. As a short response to the interlocutor, James smiles and replies by saying "Exactly" in line 58 which again restates that the normative order is mutually acceptable and the narration continues within the normative order's confines.

CONCLUSION
This article has used a detailed analysis of three stories to show how the multiple normative orders exist within any given narrative event and how these normative orders are negotiated during the narration. As we have seen through the data analysed in this paper, there is no single way to negotiate these different normative orders. In particular, this paper presented three different ways in which such negotiations might take place. Firstly, overlapping normative orders might be negotiated by the narrator without any influence from the interlocutor. The narrator might decide to change his position in terms of normative order according to what he deems appropriate. Secondly, a narrator might shift between different normative orders if a conflict between the his and the interlocutor's normative orders arises. In such a situation either the narrator

or the interlocutor changes from one normative order to another to allow the narration to continue. Finally, the normative order can also be explicitly declared and agreed upon by the narrator and the interlocutor. This allows the participants to be clearly aware of the normativity of the narrative event and hence they operate within its boundaries.

A continuous negotiation of normative order through narration also suggests how flexible our group values are. Goffman rightfully described everyday life as a stage where we play different characters and plays for different audiences. As seen from the analyses of the three narratives, our identities which are shaped by our values are as easily switched as masks for a different play. The true self behind the mask, as Goffman described is only seen behind the stage where there is no audience to enact for. But at the main stage, which is where we interact with everyone else, it is never truly possible to know someone's "real" self which lies behind the mask. In the end, all the values we share with people are our own creation which are revised and updated constantly through everyday interaction.

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14.

APPENDIX

Excerpt 1: Desmond's Last Trip with his girlfriend.

1. It was what I hoped would be the most like..
2. the most memorable night of my relationship.
3. Umm.. turned out to be a bit sour
4. Cause.. as in.. okay.. so.. as in..
5. I.. I.. the reason we went to Norway was cause
6. cause like we were hoping to catch the Northern Lights but we didn't. (laughs)
7. We missed it (laughs)
8. I.. I caught it much later with like another yeah..
9. Same kind of thing.
10. But.. but umm this.. this trip we didn't catch it.
11. But it was still.. it was still very pretty
12. the night sky and like beautiful
13. can can spot the constellations I was like
14. Go read up on all the maps just to impress her you know

Interlocutor: (laughs)

15. (laughs)
16. (enacts) "Oh this, thats Draco" (laughs)
17. You know that kind of (both laugh)
18. Classic ah Classic
19. Yeah so yeah so.. as in.. so it was an important trip to me yeah
20. And then she.. she was as in
21. I think I think that was one of the
22. I think she felt it as well
23. and rather than being rather excited about it she was like..
24. she became rather nihilistic about it
25. like "Oh its the last trip we're gonna have together" kind of thing

Interlocutor: Oh   [accompanied with a serious facial expression]

26. And then like so she was visibly distant throughout
27. Umm, we tried talking. I tried to
28. That was the first time I tried to approach the topic
29. And she just didn't wanna talk about it like
30. "Lets not talk about it"
31. You know that kind of a dismissive – dismissive
32. and that kind of spoiled things for me as well
33. I mean yeah. And then yeah so..
34. So that was the first time that it became..
35. I started to worry again about this thing
36. And then a few, a few weeks later she brought it up again
37. And this time seriously
38. After band practice again
39. Umm.. as in umm.. so
40. first she said she doesn't wanna be in a band with me anymore
41. ah.. which is okay ah maybe I mean
42. **Its like "oh am I.. am I that bad or.." that kind of..**
43. **I tried to..**
44. **Anyways whatever, I'm being..**

15.

45. Yeah that was me being stupid at the time
46. kind of, I honestly tried to dismiss away all my problems
47. you know like until it comes
48. But yeah she.. yeah so then she sat me down
49. and then umm.. yeah then she told me about all this
50. like she was not very cool with it
51. She was like why prolong it if we can just end it now
52. and I was like "Oh what the hell"
53. yeah and it was.. it wasn't yeah
54. and then that was the first time after the band practice
55. we never cycled back home together which was

Interlocutor: Ohh

56. Yeah..
57. And she's like

Excerpt 2: Bruce's girlfriend "wasn't that pretty"

1. I don't know how I met her online.
2. Through a friend definitely
3. like from my class, my secondary school class
4. She was from another school altogether
5. So, yeah we just texted.
6. She was from the primary school of my classmate
7. So thats how they knew each other
8. And yeah turns out.. I mean
9. we clicked because she had a similar taste in music
10. and umm.. she was quite.. she was quite like umm,,
11. a.. she had issues ah and I had issues as well so
12. I mean thats how we click ah
13. Common Issues

Interlocutor: Issues?

14. Issues as in like
15. you have beef with life
16. like beef. You got issues.
17. You don't.. you.. you don't like
18. life in particular ways
19. and you know.. you are miserable
20. but you are miserable together
21. or some shit like that yeah
22. Thats how it is.
23. The first two (girlfriends I had) were way less interesting
24. because they were no where near serious ah

Interlocutor: Then why did you.. why did you break up with her
                             if you had common interests and stuff?

25. Cause I saw her in person,
26. she wasn't that pretty
27. Like I'll be upfront ah

16.

Interlocutor: So..(with a rising intonation)
28. (interrupts the interlocutor)
29. She was no way near what she thought she looked like
30. She never showed me her face

Interlocutor: On MSN?

31. Yeah..

Interlocutor: Hmm (with a pitch contour suggesting the interlocutor is pensive)
                        .. So one of your main criteria for a girlfriend is that
                        she must be pretty is it?

32. Not say pretty lah.
33. (Pause)
34. Actually she was alright lah. I don't mind it
35. (Pause)
36. But the way she behaved
37. it was so..
38. it was her disposition
39. Whats the word for it?
40. I don't know maybe
41. its disposition

Interlocutor: The way she carried herself is it?

42. The way she carried herself yeah.

Interlocutor: But you only met her twice.

43. I only met her twice
44. but she was really really quiet
45. Didn't wanna talk
46. Looked away constantly kept on looking away
47. I don't really like that yeah

Excerpt 3: Bruce is a changed man

1.   So okay yes common beliefs
2.   Thats very important because
3.   what more can you say if you only have
4.   common background
5.   For example you all are only from USP
6.   and you all can talk about is USP events
7.   things happening in USP
8.   gossip.
9.   What's the point if you all are from the same interest group
10. Its not enough
11. You all need to have the same outlook on life
12. And thats a..
13. Actually that's even more important than looks

17.

14. Thats even more important than anything
15. Like for example when I met the umm..
16. that second girlfriend right?
17. I realised that she was very…
18. She didn't only wanna talk about anything
19. She was very comfortable with typing online
20. Right, she was a complete recluse in person
21. and thats not me ah

Interlocutor: Yeah

22. I am very talkative.
23. I like to really engage myself in a..
24. in any kind of social interaction yeah..
25. and if you are not comfortable with being yourself in reality
26. it doesn't work out lah.

Interlocutor: Yeah (nods head in affirmation)

27. I mean look. I tried. It happened twice
28. I went for a second one as well.
29. It didn't work out lah.

Excerpt 4: James' Unsatisfied Girlfriend

16. At that time she realised, how come my boyfriend is not doing as much as my friend Kenneth?

Interlocutor: ooh *(2.5 seconds long)* ..okay

17. Then she started to become very close with Kenneth and started texting him a lot.. ya

Interlocutor: This was going on without your notice?

18. At first I never notice
19. Then… then afterwards she kind of told me
20. She told me in the face that,
21. "How come Kenneth buy me sweets? How come you can't you do that.. for me?"

Interlocutor: hmm (with a falling intonation)

22. Something like that
23. She is just trying to let me know
24. what's going on
25. Yeah she.. she..
26. Our conversation are quite blunt
27. She would be very frank.. with me
28. Ya, because she knows I'm her boyfriend
29. and she wants me to improve
30. I think thats the.. thats her rationale
31. and she just told me that told lor
32. "How is Kenneth doing so nice things
33. when you're not giving.. doing anything much?"

18.

34. (laughs)
35. I was like "Oh okay"
36. I was like "Ooo.. kaay"   [Accompanied with the sad expression]
37. Then I was a bit kind of..
38. umm..
39. worried.. about it first
40. Then I confronted Kenneth
41. I told him that we are together so
42. don't try to do anything to her   [Enacts by pointing a finger as if pointed to Kenneth]
43. (laughs)

Interlocutor: Was he trying? He was right?

44. He was (strong emphasis on "was")
45. He was rea.. trying very hard actually
46. Ya then after I tell him
47. cause we are like very very close friends
48. we are bros
49. because the three of the, the three guys
50. we go to chinese.. Higher Chinese lesson
51. every Tuesday and Thursday
52. so very very close ya.. very tight
53. I told him I.. expect like..
54. You know Bro Code?
55. to be fulfilled

Interlocutor: (laughs)

56. Correct right?   [This question was directed to the interlocutor]

Interlocutor: Yup

57. (laughs)

Interlocutor: Ya

58. Oh but no. He never..
59. he never backed down afterwards
60. He even like push for
61. even harder
62. like tried even harder after I told him
63. about that we are together
64. because he explained to me that
65. "How come James is not doing enough?"
66. like he will he will talk he will
67. tell Jacqueline that
68. "Oh James doesn't.. you don't deserve James"
69. "You deserve someone much better"

Interlocutor: ooh *(3 seconds long)*

70. He would say things like that
71. He was like "How come James-

19.

Interlocutor: That is.. totally against what a bro should do!

72. (smiles)
73. Exactly.
74. Aiya but self is like its..
75. like cannot really blame him.
76. Cause love is selfless
77. No, love is selfish yes
78. Love is selfish.