Totally tall sounds *totally* younger: Intensification at the socio-semantics interface[1]

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In two social perception experiments, we explore the relationship between the social meaning and the semantic/pragmatic properties of the intensifier *totally* in American English. In Experiment 1, we show that *totally* is perceived as a more salient index of social identity categories – measured in terms of Age, Solidarity and Status attributes – when it targets a scalar dimension grounded in the speaker's attitude, as opposed to when it occurs in contexts where the scale is provided by the subsequent predicate. In Experiment 2, we show that the social indexicality of *totally* is even more salient in contexts in which the intensifier, by virtue of its pragmatic contribution, invites a stance of heightened proximity and convergence between the interlocutors. These results point to a principled connection between the semantic, pragmatic and personality-based social meanings of *totally*, providing new insights into the dynamics whereby different layers of meaning conspire to determine what an expression 'says' when deployed in interaction.

Basandoci su dati raccolti in due esperimenti di percezione sociale, investighiamo la relazione tra il significato sociale e le caratteristiche semantico-pragmatiche dell'avverbio intensivo *totally* 'totalmente' in Inglese Nordamericano. Il primo esperimento mostra che *totally* è percepito come un indice di identità sociale particolarmente saliente – in termini di Età percepita e più specifici attributi di Status e Solidarietà – quando modifica una dimensione scalare relativa all'atteggiamento proposizionale del parlante; il significato sociale è invece meno saliente quando la dimensione scalare deriva dal significato lessicale del predicato seguente. Il secondo esperimento mostra che la salienza sociale di *totally* è ancora più pronunciata in contesti in cui l'avverbio, grazie ai suoi tratti pragmatici, facilita l'emergere di un atteggiamento di affinità emotiva ed epistemica tra i parlanti. I risultati degli esperimenti delineano un quadro in cui gli aspetti semantici, pragmatici e sociolinguistici del significato di *totally* sono intimamente connessi, fornendo una nuova prospettiva sulle dinamiche attraverso le quali livelli diversi di significato contribuiscono a costruire il messaggio di un'espressione linguistica. [Italian]

1. INTRODUCTION

In sociolinguistic research, the variable has been traditionally defined as 'two ways of saying the same thing' (Labov 1972: 272), severing the linguistic content from the social correlates of the expression. This separation, however, breaks down when we consider realms of socially meaningful variation in which the variants do differ from one another in terms of their semantic and pragmatic properties. These cases – which have initially drawn the attention of sociolinguists (Sankoff and Thibault 1980) and have recently seen a revival of scholarly interest in social meaning-based approaches (Acton and Potts 2014; Glass 2015 among others; see section 2.3 for further discussion) – offer a unique opportunity to cast light on the nature of the association between the semantic/pragmatic features of a variable and its social meaning. As such, they provide an angle that is not available to studies concerned with phonological and syntactic variables, for which distinctions in meaning are not immediately relevant.

The current paper aims to contribute to this growing area by looking at the intensifier *totally* in American English. On the one hand, this variable comes with a salient constellation of social meanings. On the other hand, it features a complex pattern of variation at the level of both its semantic and pragmatic meanings. Based on two social perception studies, we show that users of *totally* are perceived differently depending on the specific semantic/pragmatic properties of the intensifier in a given context. We take this as evidence that such properties affect *totally*'s potential to serve as an index of speaker qualities. On a broader level, these findings support a view in which different layers of meaning – semantic, pragmatic, social – interact with one another to determine what a linguistic expression conveys when used in communication, highlighting the importance of incorporating semantic/pragmatic analysis into sociolinguistic research.

2. BACKGROUND: EXPLORING THE SOCIO-SEMANTICS NEXUS

2.1 Social meaning and linguistic constraints

Following Eckert's (1989) seminal work, investigations of sociolinguistic variation have often focused on *social meaning* as a direct object of study. In the current paper, we follow Podesva (2011: 234) in defining social meaning as 'the stances, personal characteristics, and personas indexed through the deployment of linguistic forms'. In this view, a sociolinguistic variable does not simply invoke the demographic categories of the speakers who use them. Rather, it comes with a package of attributes that, via the enregisterment

process, 'come to be socially recognized as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users' (Agha 2005: 38). Research within this approach has shown that a variety of factors contribute to driving the association between social attributes and linguistic forms, including social, ideological and cultural forces (Eckert 1989, 2000; Zhang 2005; Campbell-Kibler 2007; Podesva 2007 among others) and the speakers' representations of the audience (Bell 1984). At the same time, it has been suggested that the variable's linguistic properties also play an important role in determining the association between linguistic forms and social meaning. The notion of markedness, in particular, has been recently highlighted as a crucial component of this link. Bender (2001), for example, shows that the social meaning of copula deletion in African American Vernacular English is stronger in environments with low frequency and high markedness (e.g. before a noun phrase), and weaker in less marked/more frequent contexts (e.g. before an auxiliary). A similar correlation has been observed for other variables. Podesva (2011) argues that rising contours, by virtue of being considerably less frequent than falling ones, are a better resource for doctors with which to construct a 'caring persona' for putting patients at ease. Callier (2013), moreover, provides evidence that creak in mid-phrasal position is perceived more negatively than in phrase-final position, where it is more frequent. As for why markedness correlates with social meaning salience, the authors suggest that marked linguistic expressions, by violating a listener's expectations about where a particular form should occur, are more easily noticeable than their unmarked counterpart. As such, they emerge as 'more apt to be assigned meaning than those which differ only slightly from the listener's customary expectations' (Campbell-Kibler 2007: 34), suggesting that (un)expectedness, besides playing a well-known role in cognitive processing (Grondelaers et al. 2009 among others), also crucially affects the social perception of speech.

Taken together, these studies represent an important step towards understanding how social meaning is linguistically constrained. At the same time, by reducing linguistic properties to patterns of frequency-based distribution and focusing on cases where the semantic meaning of the variants is assumed to be held fixed, they do not address if, and how, the emergence of social meaning can be affected by the semantic/pragmatic differences that set apart functionally similar expressions.

2.2 Embracing semantic variation

Fruitful sites to investigate this question are cases of socially meaningful variation involving forms that come with nontrivial linguistic content, and thus can provide a window into how social, semantic and pragmatic levels of meaning can be linked to one another. In a foundational paper on the topic, Ochs (1992) argues that, for these patterns of variation, social meaning is grounded in the stances, social acts and social activities that are

indexed by the deployment of a certain form in interaction. For example, she argues that the association of command imperatives with male gender in American English is grounded in the activity of ordering pragmatically indexed by the form, which in turn becomes associated with a typical affective disposition of men, suggesting that knowledge of how social meanings attach to linguistic expressions 'entails tacit understanding of how particular linguistic forms can be used to perform pragmatic work' (Ochs 1992: 342). In this view, the micro-level interactional effects brought about by the use of linguistic forms emerge as a crucial step in the process whereby such forms come to convey macro-level social identity traits, as has also been shown by a number of subsequent studies (e.g. see Kiesling 2009, in press on *dude*; Moore and Podesva 2009 and Denis, Wiltschko and D'Arcy 2016 on question tags).

Crucially, this outlook carries the implication that understanding how speakers use linguistic forms to construct stances and relationships cannot be done without having a full grasp of what type of linguistic content such forms contribute – e.g. what presuppositions they introduce, how they are interpreted, and what effects they have on the discourse structure, all of which squarely fall within the scope of semantics and pragmatics. Incorporating the systematic study of such components in sociolinguistic analysis has been precisely the goal of a recent strand of research, which focused on cases in which differences in the semantic properties of the variants appeared to correlate with differences in the social meaning that they convey. Acton and Potts (2014) build on Lakoff's (1974) observation that demonstratives like *this* and *that* foster a sense of 'emotional closeness between speaker and hearer' (Lakoff 1974: 351) that is instead missing in possessives like *your*. They argue that demonstratives' social effects are grounded in their presuppositional content, and specifically in the presumption that the addressee must be able to access the referent of the embedded noun phrase by considering the speaker's position in the discourse context. It comes as a consequence of this semantico-pragmatic property that 'using a demonstrative can engender or reinforce a sense of shared perspective between interlocutors' (Acton and Potts 2014: 5). Glass (2015) unveils a similar pattern exploring the social/semantic meaning nexus with deontic modals. In particular, she contrasts two variants with a slightly different semantic meaning: (1) *got/have to*, which merely expresses obligation in light of a set of circumstances/body of law; and (2) *need to*, which, besides conveying the obligation, also conveys that, according to the speaker, such an obligation is good for the hearer's well-being. It is precisely the subtle difference at the level of the lexical semantics that explains the different social meaning of these modals, where *need*, in comparison to *have*, indexes an additional component of care or presumptuousness depending on 'whether the speaker is licensed to tell the hearer what's good for him' (Glass 2015: 9).

Note that in these studies as well, despite the different empirical focus, the notion of markedness remains a crucial factor mediating the relationship between linguistic forms and social meaning. In particular, the social salience of demonstratives and *need* does not emerge as a static correlate of their lexical presuppositions, but is connected to the fact that such forms are marked with respect to functionally similar competitors that vie for the same slot, and yet provide a simpler semantic contribution (e.g. *the, have to/got*).[2] In both cases, this pragmatic competition crucially contributes to occasioning the relevant social effects, drawing the listener's attention to the specific bit of content that differentiates the two alternatives – e.g. the perspectival alignment that demonstratives presuppose, or the hearer-oriented nature of the obligation conveyed by *need*. As such, not only do these studies unveil a principled connection between the conventional meaning of linguistic expressions and their social effects; they also contribute to furthering our understanding of the interaction between social indexicality and markedness, suggesting that the correlation between these two notions can also be grounded in basic pragmatic principles.

2.3 From interaction to speaker qualities

In the present paper, we continue this line of investigation by addressing the following question: how can the semantic content of an expression contribute to inform broader, more persistent identity categories about the users of a certain linguistic form? As discussed above, both Acton and Potts (2014) and Glass (2015) primarily focused on interaction-based traits of social meaning, which involved the reciprocal positioning of the interlocutors in the here-and-now of the exchange. However, it is well known that linguistic forms normally index a constellation of 'ideologically related features' (Eckert 2008) that extend beyond the specifics of a conversation, include both demographic categories (e.g. gender, age) and more specific social types/personae (Agha 2005; Podesva 2007). In the current study, we ask whether such personality-based aspects of social meaning, on a par with the interaction-based ones, are also sensitive to the semantic properties of the variables that convey them. We investigate this issue through the lens of the intensifier *totally*, an expression that, in light of its empirically rich semantics and social indexicality, emerges as an ideal testbed for our question.[3]

3. THE VARIABLE

Intensifiers such as *really, very, extremely, so, completely* are informally defined as 'adverbs that maximize or boost meaning' (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 258). Such expressions have been long investigated in the sociolinguistic literature. On the semantic front, it has been pointed out that, despite their common strengthening function, they vary along a variety of parameters such as the

type of predicates that they modify and the type of adjectives that they intensify (Kennedy and McNally 2005 among others). On the sociolinguistic front, it has been shown that intensifiers participate in socially conditioned variation along a variety of dimensions. For example, they are by-and-large more frequently used by younger speakers and/or women (Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 2002; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005; Van Herke and the Ottawa Intensifier Project 2006; Tagliamonte 2008; Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009; Kwon 2012), and they occur more often in genres featuring a high degree of informality and emotive involvement (Biber 1988; Zhonghua Xiao et al. 2007; Brown and Tagliamonte 2012). Being deeply embedded in both semantic and sociolinguistic variation, these expressions emerge as an ideal test case for further exploring the socio-semantics interface along the lines discussed in section 2.2. As a case study to tackle this question, we opt to focus on the expression *totally*. We now introduce the features of this variable, as well as our rationale for electing it as our case study.

3.1 Totally *and social meaning*

On the interactional level, the use of *totally* presents a field of interactional effects loosely similar to those described for demonstratives. First, it has been suggested to convey a flavor of marked informality and reduced social distance between the interlocutors (McCready and Kaufmann 2013; Irwin 2014). Moreover, it has been argued that the intensifier, contrary to apparently similar maximizers like *completely* or *entirely*, has a strong (inter)subjective component, as it calls the listener's attention to the speaker's particular point of view regarding the intensification target (Waksler 2009) and it enhances agreement between the interlocutors (Anderson 2006). Besides engendering such interactional effects, *totally* evokes a constellation of ideologically-linked identity-based features, which include both demographic categories and more idiosyncratic social types. Let us consider the following entries collected from the popular website Urban Dictionary,[4] a crowd-sourced online repository that provides a window into the circulating commentaries about the use of individual linguistic expressions. Specific references to social types are underlined.

a. It's a word used by <u>ditzy young girls</u> that means 'definitely' or 'for sure'.
b. <u>Valley Girl</u> Speak.
c. A word used for emphasis. Makes you sound kinda '<u>cheerleader</u>ish' when you use it.
d. A word used by <u>girly girls, poppers, and rich spoiled little brats</u>. They use it in sentences, it doesn't really mean anything, its just their way of speaking.

Note that such a constellation of social meanings appears to be especially rich in comparison to other intensifiers that have received scholarly attention, providing a first reason to consider *totally* a suitable case study for our

investigation. *Very*, *completely* and *really*, for instance, only record a handful of more generic definitions on the Dictionary, none of which invoke as wide a range of persona-based attributes as *totally*.[5]

3.2 Totally *and semantic/pragmatic meaning*

On the semantic/pragmatic front as well, *totally* presents considerable empirical richness. On a general level, the intensifier contributes an effect of 'completion', specifying that its argument holds to the maximum possible degree (Kennedy and McNally 2005). This contribution comes with an obvious pre-requisite: in order to reach completion, the argument of *totally* must be associated with a bounded scale. It is in the way in which this scale is supplied that semantic variation enters the picture.

In canonical cases, the ordering is directly provided by the following predicate, as in (1): both *full* and *agree* come with a ready-made bounded ordering hardwired in their lexical meaning, which *totally* can bring to the endpoint. We shall refer to these instantiations as *lexical* totally.

1. a. The bus is *totally* full.
    b. She *totally* agrees with me.

In other cases (2a,b), though, *totally* appears next to predicates that do not supply a bounded ordering, like *click on a link* or *great* in the examples below.

2. a. You should *totally* click on that link! It's awesome.[6]
    b. Everything is *totally* great in Rio.[7]

Here, *totally* targets a higher-level scalar attitude, signaling that the speaker is maximally committed towards the content of what they are saying (Irwin 2014). Following the terminology of the semantic literature concerned with similar attitude modifiers, we shall refer to these cases as *speaker-oriented totally*. As far as the exact nature and target of such a scale go, it has been argued that *totally* conveys that the speaker is entirely committed to adding the content of the utterance to the Common Ground[8] of the conversation, that is, the stock of shared knowledge that includes: (1) all the propositions that the interlocutors have discussed and agreed upon in the conversation; and (2) all the beliefs/assumptions that the interlocutors share as part of their world knowledge. While there is no room here to cover the entire empirical basis motivating this analysis for the intensifier (see Beltrama 2016 for a detailed proposal), two observations are especially important in light of the aims of the current paper. First, the ability to convey a commitment strengthening flavor sets *totally* apart from other intensifiers, including maximizers like *completely* or *entirely*: while lexical *totally* is interchangeable with these expressions, speaker-oriented *totally* is not, as shown by the anomalous status of example 3b, below. By the same token, other commonly investigated intensifiers such as *pretty* and *very* also do not seem to be able to target propositions/attitudes, as suggested by the ungrammatical status of the examples in 3. This suggests that the ability to target

speaker-commitment is a property that is not inherent to intensification but, rather, distinguishes *totally* from other intensifiers.

   3. a.   The bus is *completely/entirely* full.   Lex
      b.   # You should *completely/entirely* click on that link! Sp-Oriented
      c.   # You should *very/pretty* click on that link.   Sp-Oriented

Second, by virtue of targeting the Common Ground of the conversation, the type of commitment intensified by *totally* is aimed at involving the hearer in the co-construction of the exchange. As such, it differs from the type of commitment targeted by markers like *definitely* or *absolutely*, which are instead geared towards expressing certainty or confidence in the sheer truth of a sentence (Irwin 2014). While subtle, this difference clearly surfaces in specific linguistic environments. For example, it is possible to use *totally* in situations in which the speaker asserts a proposition whose content is markedly odd or surprising, and as such it is likely to encounter the skepticism of the listener. Here, using *totally* to strengthen commitment to adding the proposition to the Common Ground serves as a felicitous strategy to address the listener's potential resistance, inviting them to accept the proposition despite its bizarre content. By contrast, *definitely* or *certainly* do not have the same inter-subjective orientation and sound markedly deviant.[9]

   4. a.   Iowa senator *totally* thinks you should be drug tested for child support payments.[10]
      b.   # Iowa senator *definitely/certainly* thinks you should be drug tested for child support payments.

Conversely, there are environments in which *totally* is not licensed, while commitment markers of other kinds (e.g. *absolutely*) sound perfectly natural. One such case is the use of deontic modals like *must* or *have to* to express a command (example 5). Because commands are directed at forcing the addressee to undertake a particular course of action, they do not present the opportunity of building common knowledge; as such, they are not compatible with a modifier like *totally*, while they can still be modified by markers that instead intensify the individual commitment of the speaker towards the command. Note, however, that the status of *totally* significantly improves if the command is turned into a piece of subjective advice, which instead presents the hearer with the opportunity of expressing agreement or disagreement, and thus provides an opportunity for enriching the Common Ground with the information that the movie is worth watching (example 5c; see Yanovich 2014 for further discussion).[11]

   5. a.   # You *totally* have to watch the movie. It's required   Command
            for the class.
      b.   You *absolutely* have to watch this movie. It's required Command
            for the class.
      c.   You *totally* have to watch this movie. It's hilarious!   Advice

3.3 From semantic to social meaning: Hypothesizing the mapping

We address the relationship between *totally*'s semantic, pragmatic and social meaning by asking the following question: how do the social qualities associated with the users of the intensifier vary depending on the particular semantic/pragmatic properties that *totally* has in a certain context? As discussed above, a crucial step towards casting light on the interface between these two dimensions concerns the type of pragmatic activity that speakers engage in when using the expression in communication. Moreover, we have seen that, across different levels of variation, social meaning is more aptly conveyed by variants that have a linguistically marked status – either from a frequency-based or a pragmatic point of view – and thus turn out to be particularly noticeable to the listener's ear. We therefore start by asking whether, on the basis of such principles, it is possible to make a prediction on how the semantic/pragmatic properties of *totally* might inform its social significance. We begin by taking into examination the distinction between the lexical and the speaker-oriented variant, and then move on to discuss the effect of more fine-grained differences within the speaker-oriented variant.

***Speaker-oriented vs lexical* totally.** As the first step, we take into consideration the interactional effects potentially associated with the semantic/pragmatic properties of the intensifier. More specifically: how good a resource is each semantic type of *totally* for performing pragmatic work? On the one hand, the lexical variant behaves as a run-of-the-mill modifier, hardly featuring any cue of this sort. By maximizing the degree to which a property applies, it merely changes the referential content of the utterance, serving a bare informational function. By contrast speaker-oriented *totally*, in virtue of the inclusive nature of the commitment that it marks, does perform significant pragmatic work: by intensifying the speaker's commitment to enriching the Common Ground shared by the interlocutors, the intensifier contributes to highlighting the conversation as a joint activity, underscoring the speaker's eagerness to augment the amount of information shared with the hearer. As such, on the basis of its semantic properties, speaker-oriented *totally* emerges as a suitable candidate to engender and reinforce a sense of affective and epistemic proximity between the interlocutors. In addition, note that the heightened interactional impact of the speaker-oriented variant correlates with a markedness asymmetry, where markedness emerges in terms of the strategy whereby the intensifier is supplied a scale. While for the lexical variant the scale is straightforwardly supplied by the following predicate, for speaker-oriented *totally* the scale needs to be recruited from the attitude held by the speaker towards the proposition, which is not overtly realized by any element of the surrounding linguistic material. As such, it is accessed through a more complex process, which makes the speaker-oriented variant marked in comparison to the lexical one. Building on these observations, we thus

suggest that speaker-oriented *totally*, in light of its semantic/pragmatic profile, should be a particularly suitable linguistic resource to be perceived as a marker of speaker social identity.

Speaker-oriented totally*: Implicit vs explicit contexts*. In addition, we observe that potentially impactful semantic and pragmatic differences are at work even within different uses of this variant. In particular, it has first been noted in Beltrama (2016) that speaker-oriented *totally* occurs in two different types of (sub)flavors. On the one hand, certain contexts provide an explicit motivation for the act of stressing inter-subjective commitment. Statements introducing uncertainty or disagreement (example 6a), for instance, highlight the need to come to a convergence point in the exchange. Likewise, propositions that discuss subjective advice or predictions – distinguished by the presence of modals like *will* or *should* (examples 6b,c) – justify the urge to give the utterance an 'extra push' for inviting the interlocutor to accept the content. We label these cases explicit contexts.

   6. a. Mark: I'm not sure John had lunch today. Ned: Yes, he *totally* had lunch.
      b. You **should** *totally* click on that link! It's awesome.
      c. The food was great, I **will** *totally* be back.

   Other contexts, however, present no such cue. We shall label them *implicit contexts*. Let us consider the two examples below, in which *totally* is used out of the blue and with propositions that describe straightforward facts conjugated in the past, as opposed to predictions or conjectures.

   7. a. Joe *totally* got fired on April Fool's Day.
      b. Iowa senator *totally* thinks you should be drug tested for child support payments.

In such cases, as discussed in section 3.2 above, the use of the intensifier is directed at managing the skepticism that the listener, due to the bizarre content of the proposition, might potentially manifest as a reaction to the assertion. The anticipatory nature of speaker-oriented *totally* in implicit contexts carries important implications at the social level. More specifically, the use of the intensifier where no disagreement/uncertainty concerning the content was previously made explicit suggests that the speaker has a window into the hearer's beliefs and opinions and knows what kinds of things the hearer would regard with skepticism.[12] As such, the use of *totally* as a tool to pre-emptively fend off potential skepticism presumes an especially high degree of alignment or intimacy, contributing to 'creating a we' grounded in the shared evaluation of the sentence as outrageous/odd. In light of this observation, we suggest that, within the whole range of speaker-oriented uses of the intensifier, those coming in implicit contexts should be especially suitable to emerge as carriers of social meaning. Once again, this prediction is

further justified by the observation that, as it was the case for the lexical vs speaker-oriented contrast, the variant with the highest interactional impact is also the linguistically marked one. While in explicit contexts the move of intensifying commitment is cued by overt linguistic elements like modals or statements of uncertainty, in implicit contexts it is not explicitly called for, making it less expected, and therefore better suited to 'stand out' to the listener's ear.

In sum, the discussion thus far has unveiled two crucial features of *totally*: (1) it is a salient carrier of a variety of persona-based social meanings; and (2) by virtue of being able to target both lexical and commitment scales, it is embedded in a pattern of semantic/pragmatic variation that sets it apart from other intensifiers. We have also observed that the different semantic variants of *totally* are mapped onto a continuum of speaker-hearer inclusiveness and linguistic markedness, ranging from a minimum value in the lexical use to a maximum value in speaker-oriented uses in implicit contexts. Based on these observations, we put forward the hypothesis that speaker-oriented *totally* should have higher potential to index social meaning than lexical *totally*, and that such potential should be especially salient when *totally* occurs in implicit contexts. We now proceed to test this hypothesis via two perception studies.

4. EXPERIMENT 1: LEXICAL VS SPEAKER-ORIENTED *TOTALLY*

4.1 Methods

Building test scales. We first conducted a preliminary study to construct the evaluation scales to be used to measure social meaning in the experiment. The study was designed with the software Qualtrics and subsequently circulated on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Sixty subjects, who self-declared to be native speakers of American English and between 18 and 35 years old, were recruited and paid $0.50 for participating. First, each subject saw a written sentence containing either an instance of lexical *totally* or speaker-oriented *totally*. The subjects were asked to provide four adjectives to describe the imagined speaker of the sentence. Based on the most frequently recurring adjectives in the responses, a total of eight evaluation dimensions were selected as particularly salient in connection with the use of the intensifier. Four of these dimensions, based on the participants' responses, appear to be positively associated with the use of the intensifier. Following the literature on language attitudes (Lambert et al. 1960), we call them 'Solidarity' attributes. The other four dimensions express identity categories that feature a negative association with *totally*. We label them 'Status' attributes.[13] The resulting eight scales are summarized as follows:

- **Solidarity**: Friendliness, Coolness, Outgoingness, Excitability
- **Status**: Articulateness, Maturity, Intelligence, Seriousness

Stimuli. In the construction of the stimuli, our goal was to cue a lexical or a speaker-oriented reading of *totally* while leaving the rest of the sentence unaffected. In order to do so, we tested *totally* in combination with three different classes of adjectives, all of which are well established in the semantic literature. To cue lexical *totally*, we used the intensifier next to *bounded* adjectives (also known as *absolute* adjectives; Kennedy and McNally 2005), a category of expressions that lexicalize a scale closed on top as part of their lexical meaning. An example is *bald*: because the scale has an upper boundary, it lends itself to be compositionally accessed by *totally*, thus licensing a lexical reading of the intensifier. The boundedness of adjectives like *bald* can be probed with the following semantic diagnostics. First, a bounded adjective must be compatible with a full range of maximizers, including *entirely* and *completely*. Second, if the adjective is modified by *totally*, it is odd to continue the sentence by stating that another individual instantiates the property to a higher degree.

> 8. a. John is *completely*/*entirely* bald.
>   b. # John is *totally* bald, and Mark is even balder than him.

To cue speaker-oriented *totally*, we used instead unbounded adjectives (also known as *relative* adjectives; Kennedy and McNally 2005) such as *tall*. These adjectives encode scales that are open on top. As such, they offer a commitment scale as the only possible target for the intensifier. The lack of an upper-boundary of such adjectives is shown by their lack of compatibility with other maximizers, as well as by the compatibility of the use of *totally* with another individual instantiating the property to a higher degree.

> 9. a. # John is *completely*/*entirely* tall.
>   b. John is *totally* tall, and Mark is even taller than him.

Finally, we tested *totally* in combination with the class of *intermediate* adjectives (also known as *extreme adjectives*; Morzycki 2012). These adjectives – exemplified by predicates like *awesome, huge, amazing* – have been claimed to occupy a middle ground between bounded and unbounded adjectives (for more in-depth discussion, see Paradis 2001; Morzycki 2012). On the one hand, they are similar to unbounded adjectives in that they are associated with open scales, as shown by the fact that, even when they are modified by *totally*, it is always possible to find an individual that instantiates the property to a higher degree (example 10b). On the other hand, they tend to sound much better with all maximizers (Paradis 2001), similarly to bounded adjectives (example 10a).

> 10. a. (?) John is *completely*/*entirely* awesome/amazing/huge.
>   b. John is *totally* {awesome/huge}, and Mark is even more {awesome/ huge}.

In virtue of the semantically hybrid nature of intermediate adjectives, the question arises as to whether the use of *totally* in combination with

Table 1: Experiment 1 – adjective types and variants of *totally*

Adjective type	Example	Bounded scale availability	Variant of *totally*
Bounded	*bald*	Yes	Lexical
Intermediate	*awesome*	Intermediate	Intermediate
Unbounded	*tall*	No	Speaker-oriented

intermediate adjectives is perceived by listeners as likewise intermediate between a lexical and a speaker-oriented variant, as shown in Table 1.

In the other factor, the type of modifier accompanying the adjective came in four different conditions: the target intensifier, *totally*; two control intensifiers, *really* and *completely*; and the bare, non-intensified form. On the one hand, *completely*, contrary to *totally*, is exclusively able to target lexical scales, as seen above. As such, it cannot modify speaker-oriented scales, resulting in ungrammaticality when used with an open-scale adjective (see example 9a, above). On the other hand, *really*, contrary to *totally*, is not sensitive to boundedness. As such, it can combine at the lexical level with any scalar adjective, regardless of the type of scale that they encode (for further discussion on the semantics of *really*, see McNabb 2012). In light of these properties, we predict that, if an effect of the semantic type of *totally* is observed on the social meaning, the same effect should not be observed on the two control intensifiers. Finally, as we discuss below, the bare form serves as a baseline condition to isolate the contribution of each intensifier to the social meaning, filtering out effects on social meaning contributed by other elements in the sentence (e.g. the adjectives themselves). Twelve items, each with a different set of adjectives, were crossed in a Latin Square Design. Example 11 is a full paradigm for an item across conditions.

11. I just met the new boss. He's {totally/completely/really/∅} {bald/awesome/ tall}.

Procedure and statistical analysis. Every subject saw a total of 12 written sentences – one sentence for each condition. Each sentence was followed by a series of questions aimed at assessing gender and age perception, as well as the solidarity-based and non-solidarity-based traits of social meaning discussed above. They were presented in the form of a 1–6 Likert scale, where 1 indicated the minimum value and 6 the maximum value. The study was created with Qualtrics and carried out online. Thirty-six self-declared native speakers of American English, aged 18–35, were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk and compensated $2 for their participation. For statistical analysis, mixed-effects models were run for each attribute with the R statistical package lmer4 (Bates et al. 2015). The fixed effect predictors included Adjective and

Intensifier and their interactions, and the random effects included at least random intercepts for subjects and items. Each independent variable was dummy coded.[14] When a higher-level main effect or interaction was significant, for each adjective type we followed up with posthoc Tukey HSD comparisons between each intensifier and the bare form, so as to isolate the social meaning effect of *totally*, *completely* and *really* from the social meaning independently introduced by the adjective.

4.2 Results

For each category of tested attributes, we report the summary of the main effect and interactions, as well as the results of the relevant comparisons. The average scores for each attribute are reported in the Appendix.

Age. Age was first converted from a categorical to a numerical variable.[15] Table 2 reports the summary of the mixed effects model. A main effect of Intensifier was found, reflecting the fact that, in general, *totally* was associated with a lower age perception than the other intensifiers. No main effects of Adjective type or interactions between Adjective and Intensifier type were found. We now focus on the specific contrasts between intensified forms and the bare forms, which allow us to gauge the effect of *totally*, *completely* and *really* in the different linguistic environments in which they were tested. The scores are plotted in Figure 1. Concerning *totally*, the intensifier caused a significant lowering of the perceived Age of the speaker when occurring with unbounded and intermediate adjectives ($ps < 0.05$). No significant effect is found for bounded adjectives ($p > 0.1$). No significant effect is found for *really* and *completely* (all $ps > 0.1$), although *completely* with unbounded and intermediate adjectives displays a trend similar to the one of *totally*.
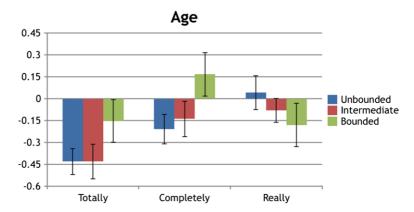

Figure 1: Experiment 1 – Age. The y-axis indicates the value of the subtraction between the score of each intensifier and the bare form. The x-axis groups the different intensifiers [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Table 2: Experiment 1 – mixed effect model summary for Age

Factor	F-value	p-value
Intensifier	3.74	<.01
Adjective	1.36	-
Adj:Int	1.40	-

Table 3: Experiment 1 – mixed effect model summary for Gender

Factor	F-value	p-value
Intensifier	1.9	-
Adjective	0.9	-
Adj:Int	0.3	-

Table 4: Experiment 1 – mixed effect model summary for Solidarity

Factor	Excitable		Outgoing		Friendly		Cool	
	F-value	p-value	F-value	p-value	F-value	p-value	F-value	p-value
Intensifier	4.7	<.001	1.4	-	0.6	-	3.5	<.05
Adjective	11.0	<.0001	7.3	<.0001	1.4	-	6.1	<.001
Adj:Int	3.4	<.05	2.3	<.05	2.5	<.05	2.3	<.05

Gender. As with Age, Gender was converted into a numerical scale.[16] Hence, the higher the resulting score, the higher the likelihood that the person was perceived to be female. No main effects or interactions were found. Table 3 reports the summary of the mixed effects model.

Solidarity. Table 4 reports the summary of the mixed effects models for the Solidarity attributes. For all Solidarity attributes, an interaction between Intensifier and Adjective was found, reflecting the fact that *totally* with unbounded adjectives is perceived as higher. In addition, a main effect of Adjective was found for Excitable, Outgoing and Cool. Finally, a main effect of Intensifier was found for Excitable and Cool. The scores are plotted in Figure 2.

For all attributes, *totally* with unbounded adjectives was perceived as significantly higher than the corresponding base forms ($ps < 0.01$). No significant contrasts were found for *totally* with intermediate adjectives or bounded adjectives, although we observed a trend to raise the solidarity perception. No significant contrast was observed for the other intensifiers.
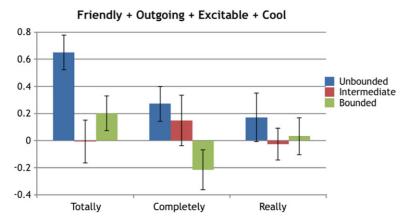
Figure 2: Experiment 1 – Solidarity. The y-axis indicates the value of the subtraction of each intensifier from the bare form. The x-axis groups the different intensifiers. Error bars indicate standard errors [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Table 5: Experiment 1 – mixed effect model summary for Status

Factor	Articulate		Mature		Intelligent		Serious	
	F-value	p-value	F-value	p-value	F-value	p-value	F-value	p-value
Intensifier	6.0	<.001	10.0	<.0001	8.8	<.01	10.9	<.001
Adjective	1.6	-	3.7	<.05	4.3	<.05	3.4	<.05
Adj:Int	3.1	<.01	1.8	-	2.0	-	1.3	-

Status. Table 5 reports the summary of the mixed effects models for the Status attributes. For all attributes, a main effect of Intensifier was found, with *totally* being associated with lower Status perception than the other conditions. A main effect of Adjective was found for Mature, Intelligent and Serious, with bounded adjectives being rated higher than intermediate and unbounded ones. Finally, an interaction between Intensifier and Adjective is found for Articulate. The differences between the score of each intensifier and the corresponding base form are plotted in Figure 3.

For all attributes, *totally* with unbounded and intermediate adjectives was perceived as significantly lower than the corresponding base forms ($ps < 0.01$). No significant contrasts were found for *totally* with bounded adjectives. Concerning the other intensifiers, while no signifiant contrast emerged, *completely* with unbounded adjectives displayed a marked trend to decrease the perception, with effects that near significance (all $ps < 0.1$).
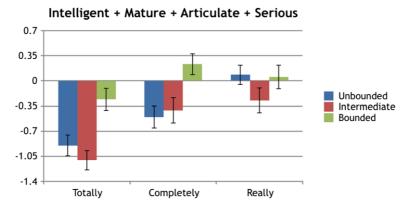
Figure 3: Experiment 1 – Status. The y-axis indicates the value of the subtraction of each intensifier from the bare form. The x-axis groups the different intensifiers. Error bars indicate standard errors [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

4.3 Discussion

In Experiment 1, we tested the prediction that speaker-oriented *totally*, by having distinctive semantic features that presuppose and foster engagement and proximity between the interlocutors, should be a more suitable linguistic resource with which to convey social qualities about the speaker than lexical *totally*. The results confirm our prediction: for all tested dimensions but gender (see below for further discussion), the effect of *totally* on the social meaning is systematically stronger with the speaker-oriented variant than with the lexical one. By contrast, no such association surfaces for lexical *totally*. At the same time, it is worth noting that the salience of *totally* does not reflect the continuum in the distinction between lexical and speaker-oriented uses. As far as Age and Status are concerned, the effect is comparable to the one observed for unbounded adjectives, suggesting that listeners interpret the use of the intensifier in these contexts as an instantiation of the speaker-oriented flavor. Concerning Solidarity, *totally* has no effect, leaving the perception unchanged from the bare form. This might be due to the fact that intermediate adjectives, by virtue of referring to properties that are already instantiated to a very high degree, tend to come with a considerable emotive charge on their own. As such, they turn out to feature a remarkably high value on their own along the tested attributes – the Appendix shows that the average difference between the bare forms of intermediate adjectives and the other two types of adjectives is 0.48, the biggest gap among bare forms across all tested attributes – causing a ceiling effect that neutralizes the effect of *totally*. Taken together, these observations suggest that *totally* with intermediate adjectives patterns with *totally* with unbounded adjectives, with the differences most likely due to the independent semantic features of the adjective per se, rather than the contribution of the intensifier.

Concerning the other intensifiers, no systematic pattern emerges. As predicted, *really* has a minor impact on all the evaluation scales and presents no significant difference across the tested adjective types. Concerning *completely*, we also observe that the intensifier features a trend more similar to the one of *totally*, but also does not change the perception of the sentence in a systematic way. We expand on the comparison between *totally*, *completely* and *really* in section 6.1.

In conclusion, the findings from Experiment 1 reveal a systematic association between the social meaning indexed by *totally* and the type of scale targeted by the intensifier, providing support for the idea that the social meaning of *totally* is crucially connected to its semantic/pragmatic content. Yet, an additional factor could also have affected the results. One could suggest that speaker-oriented *totally* is a particularly productive index of social meaning not because of its semantic properties, but simply because it is the result of a recent semantic change (Irwin 2014), which leads listeners to associate it with the attributes of the speakers that are most likely to use it. In this view, the connection with the semantic content and its pragmatic implications would be merely indirect, as it would only be driven by the perception of the linguistic form as an innovation. To cast light on this issue and investigate the interaction between social and semantic/pragmatic meaning more closely, we test the effects on social perception of the distinction between explicit and implicit contexts, the other axis of variation that emerges from the semantic analysis.

5. EXPERIMENT 2: EXPLICIT VS IMPLICIT CONTEXTS

As discussed under the heading 'Speaker-oriented *totally*: Implicit vs explicit contexts' (in section 3.3), speaker-oriented *totally* occurs in two different types of environment. In *explicit contexts*, the use of the intensifier is pragmatically called for by an element in the surrounding linguistic material. Examples of such cues are a statement of doubt on the part of the interlocutor, which justifies an emphatic response of the speaker; or a modal (e.g. *will*) that weakens the overall force of the utterance, warranting the use of *totally* as a pragmatic tool to back up the speaker's subjective prediction. By contrast, in *implicit contexts* – such as propositions that describe straightforward facts – *totally* is not directly motivated by any element in the overt linguistic material. Here, as discussed above, the interpretation of the intensifier presupposes that the speaker and the hearer both see the content of the utterance as unbelievable, amusing or highly remarkable in some way, and thus worthy of an 'extra push' to be added to the Common Ground. We predict that, if the social indexicality of *totally* is grounded in its pragmatic effects, *totally* in implicit contexts should have especially high social meaning potential for two reasons. First, it contributes additional evaluative alignment between the speaker and the hearer; second, by occurring in an environment that does not

overtly call for its use, it is more likely to strike the hearer as unexpected, and thus particularly socially salient, on a par with what has been claimed for other socially meaningful instances of variation.

5.1 Stimuli, procedure and statistical analysis

Following the procedure of Experiment 1, we tested *totally* in sentences with explicit and implicit contexts, with three critical conditions.

12. a. Josh will *totally* get pulled over for texting and driving.　Explicit, will
    b. A: I can't remember if Josh got pulled over for texting
      and driving.
      B: Yes, he *totally* got pulled over.　　　　　　　　Explicit,
      　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　response
    c. Josh *totally* got pulled over for texting and driving.　Implicit

Two baseline conditions without *totally* were also employed, one in the future and one in the past. Ten items were crossed in a Latin Square Design. Every subject saw a total of 10 written sentences, two sentences for each condition. Each sentence was followed by the same 10 questions that were asked in Experiment 1. The study was created with Qualtrics and carried out online. Forty self-declared native speakers of American English, aged 18–35, were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk and compensated $2 for their participation.

To investigate whether the nature of the context – explicit vs implicit – affects the social perception of *totally*, we carried out planned t-test comparisons between the implicit context condition and each explicit context condition. To rule out the possibility that having *will* or past tense had any independent effect on social perception, the analysis was carried out on the value obtained by the *subtraction* between each condition and the corresponding baseline.

5.2 Results

Age. As in Experiment 1, Age was converted into a continuous variable with values comprised between 1 (youngest) and 4 (oldest). As in Experiment 1, the presence of speaker-oriented *totally* made the speaker sound younger across contexts (all $ps < 0.001$). Critically, though, when *totally* was used in implicit contexts, the speaker was perceived as even younger than when it was used in explicit contexts. Both the difference between the implicit context and the response condition ($t(39) = 2.4$, $p < 0.05$) and between the implicit context and the *will* condition ($t(39)=3.1$, $p < 0.01$) are significant. Finally, no significant difference was found between the two baseline conditions.

Gender. As in Experiment 1, Gender was converted in a continuous variable. No significant difference was found between the three critical conditions (all $ps > 0.1$).

Solidarity. Concerning 'Outgoing', 'Excitable' and 'Friendly', *totally* in implicit contexts was associated with a higher evaluation than *totally* in responses (Outgoing: t(39) = 4.7, $p < 0.001$; Excitable: t(39) = 4.7, $p < 0.001$; Friendly: t(39) = 2.1, $p < 0.05$). A significant difference was also found between implicit *totally* and *totally* with *will* (Outgoing: t(39) = 4.3, $p < 0.001$; Excitable: t(39) = 4.3, $p < 0.001$; Friendly: t(39) = 4.1, $p < 0.001$). Concerning 'Cool', *totally* in implicit contexts was associated with higher score than *totally* with *will* (t(39) = 2.1, $p < 0.05$). No significant difference was found between responses and implicit contexts.

Status. Concerning 'Serious' and 'Mature', *totally* in implicit contexts was associated with lower scores than *totally* in responses (Serious: t(39) = 2.7, $p < 0.01$; Mature: t(39) = 2.4, $p < 0.05$). No significant difference was found between *totally* in implicit contexts and *totally* with *will*. Concerning 'Intelligent' and 'Articulate', no significant difference was found between the three conditions.

5.3 Discussion

In Experiment 2 we investigated the effect of the pragmatic context on the perception of speaker-oriented *totally*'s social meaning, confirming the prediction that the intensifier in implicit contexts has even higher potential to index social meaning than in explicit contexts: users of speaker-oriented *totally* in implicit contexts are indeed perceived as significantly younger, lower in Status and higher in Solidarity than users of *totally* in explicit ones. Looking at the broader picture, this result provides further support to the idea that the semantic properties and the social meaning of the intensifier are correlated in a principled fashion. Especially important, in this perspective, is the fact that the correlation between social meaning and semantic/pragmatic properties turns out to hold along two different axes of variation, one of which corresponds to the contrast between two diachronically distinct variants of the intensifier – i.e. speaker-oriented vs lexical – but one of which is internal to the most innovative variant – speaker-oriented in implicit vs explicit contexts. This result suggests that the observed differences in the perceived social meaning are most likely not exclusively caused by speaker-oriented *totally*'s status as a recent innovation, but are also driven by the genuine semantic and pragmatic differences between the different uses.

At the same time, this observation does not exclude the possibility that the recency of speaker-oriented *totally* could have also played a role in determining listeners' social evaluations. In this respect, it is important to note that the differences in social meaning emerging in Experiment 2 are not as strong and systematic as those observed in Experiment 1. On the one hand, Solidarity attributes are those tracking variations in pragmatic convergence more deeply, as they turn out to be significantly affected by both the axes of variation

characterizing *totally*. A possible explanation of this result could be that these very same qualities are those that embody more clearly the effects of inclusiveness, convergence and proximity indexed by the intensifier at the pragmatic level, and are thus more directly grounded in the pragmatic work that *totally* performs. On the other hand, the prominence of Age and Status attributes is more heavily affected by the distinction between speaker-oriented and lexical uses than it is by the one between explicit and implicit contexts. We suggest that, for these attributes, the social indexicality of the intensifier is less grounded in its pragmatic effects than it is in the circulating ideological characterization of whatever speakers are socially recognized as its typical users: presumably younger people, who are stereotypically associated with a set of salient personality attributes that include the Status dimensions used in the study. On this view, it would not come as surprise that the strongest effects on social perception are observed on the axis of variation that involves a contrast between the most recent and the oldest variant of the intensifier, and thus allows the listener to readily associate the different variants with different demographic profiles. A crucial step towards substantiating this hypothesis would be to systematically explore the actual use of *totally* in spontaneous speech, so as to achieve a thorough understanding of the demographics of who uses each variant of the intensifier more prominently. While such an investigation goes beyond the scope of the present paper, we see it as an exciting avenue of further research to extend this project.

6. GENERAL DISCUSSION

We now turn to discuss in greater detail the significance of these results for the investigation of the interface between semantic, pragmatic and social meaning. We begin by taking into consideration the domain of intensification, and then move on to consider how the case of *totally* compares to other expressions that have received scholarly attention.

6.1 Totally *and intensifiers*

In the current study, we aimed to investigate whether the perception of the personality-based social meanings of *totally* is affected by the semantic/pragmatic properties of the intensifier. Selecting *totally* as a case-study was motivated by the observation that, in comparison to most intensifiers, this expression features a wide range of semantic/pragmatic variants, as it can operate with both lexical and commitment scales, and with or without explicit licensors in a given context. The specific semantic/pragmatic features of the speaker-oriented variant and in particular its high degree of speaker-hearer inclusiveness and linguistic markedness motivated the hypothesis that this use of *totally*, and in particular the one occurring in implicit contexts, should be more likely to be perceived as a marker of social identity than the lexical use.

Results from two experiments support the prediction: users of speaker-oriented *totally* are perceived as younger, higher in solidarity and lower in status than users of lexical *totally*; and users of *totally* in implicit contexts are perceived as even more socially salient. At the same time, it is quite surprising that no significant association emerges between *totally* and gender. While *totally* is slightly more likely to be associated with a female than a male speaker, the effect is considerably more tenuous than the one recorded for Age. This suggests that this particular trait of social meaning, despite the frequent association with markedly feminine social types such as Valley Girl or 'cheerleader' (see section 3.1) in circulating commentaries, is somewhat peripheral for *totally*. A possible reason could be that, as discussed in section 3.1, the use of *totally* also triggers the association with masculine types (e.g. Surfer Dude), even though these are not as pervasive. The availability of these other categories could explain why, in the absence of further cues, listeners do not show a marked preference for the gender of the speaker.

Notably, the same fluctuations in the social perception are not observed for *really* and *completely*, the two intensifiers that, featuring different semantic-pragmatic properties from *totally*, were used as control in the first study. Because it lacks the semantic ability to target commitment (see section 4.1), *completely* can only grammatically operate in the presence of predicates that lexicalize a bounded scale (e.g. *bald*), while it is expected to be infelicitous in linguistic environments that do not provide one (e.g. *tall*). In virtue of this, we predicted that the intensifier should not be able to convey the pragmatic effects of inclusiveness and convergence that we instead consider to be distinctive of speaker-oriented *totally*, and therefore should not be a suitable candidate for enregistering as a carrier of social meanings. The results confirm this prediction. Across the board, the presence of *completely* does not significantly change the social perception of the sentence; nor does *completely* with adjectives like *tall* feature a significantly stronger/different association with social meaning than *completely* with adjectives like *bald*. The one exception to this pattern are Status attributes, for which *completely* displays a lowering trend that, while having smaller magnitude, mirrors the one of *totally*. A possible explanation could be that the use of forms that present semantic/syntactic violations is independently associated with social meaning, and in particular with a negative evaluation along dimensions such as Articulateness, Smartness and similar. The observed social effects, as such, would have little to do with the status of *completely* as an intensifier, and would instead be grounded in the ungrammatical status of the construction. On the other hand, *really* was used as a control by virtue of not being sensitive to the boundedness of the target scale, and thus being able to semantically combine at the lexical level with all types of scalar adjectives used in the experiment. It was therefore not expected to give rise to a speaker-oriented interpretation in any of the tested environments, leading to the prediction that no difference in social meaning should be observed across the different adjective types. Once again, the prediction was borne out, as *really*

turned out not to have a significant impact on social meaning in any of the tested environments. In sum, the null result for *completely* and *really* suggest that the social meanings conveyed by *totally* cannot be interpreted as a general property of the lexical category of intensifiers, but is instead grounded in the features that, beyond the common contribution of maximization/ intensification, set *totally* apart from semantically/pragmatically similar expressions.

While these findings point to a principled connection between the semantic properties of an intensifier and its potential to convey personality-based social meanings, it is important to point out a limitation that calls for caution in the interpretation of the results. While *really* and *completely* provide a significant contrastive baseline for the investigation of *totally*, the category of intensification includes many other members – e.g. *very*, *so*, *super* – that are not considered here. As such, the experiments provide only a limited comparative perspective on the social meanings conveyed by other intensifiers. To strengthen our argument, a systematic comparison with other intensifiers should provide further negative evidence, showing that other expressions lacking *totally*'s distinctive semantic ability to bear on the speaker-hearer alignment also tend to be associated with less-salient social meanings. By the same token, we would expect that an intensifier that has also grammaticalized *totally*'s ability to intensify the relationship between the speaker and the Common Ground would carry analogous interactional implications for the alignment between the interlocutors, thus emerging as a salient social meaning carrier. A possible candidate to provide this type of positive evidence could be the use of *so* as a modifier of non-gradable predicates (e.g. example 13a) as opposed to gradable ones (in 13b).

13. a. We are *so* going to lose the game tonight.
    b. John is *so* tall.

While no formal analysis has been offered of this particular flavor of *so*, it has been observed that this intensifier likewise appears to intensify an attitude that relates the speaker to the proposition (Potts 2005; Zwicky 2011), thus embodying the potential of carrying interactional implications similar to those observed for speaker-oriented *totally*. In this sense, it is quite revealing that such a variant of *so* has indeed been informally described as a salient carrier of social meanings in comparison to its lexical counterpart, as suggested by labels such as 'Generation X so' (Zwicky 2011) or 'Drama so' (Irwin 2014). Such an association provides encouraging, if provisional, evidence that the mechanisms unveiled for *totally* might well apply to other intensifiers, and are not just a historical accident of our case study.

6.2 The broader picture: A natural socio-semantics class?

In this final section we would like to adopt a broader outlook and consider how the characteristics of *totally* compare to those of other socio-semantically

relevant variables outside the domain of intensification. The studies reported above have shown that the indexicality associated with *totally* is particularly salient for the variants of the intensifier that present two simultaneous characteristics: (1) a semantic content that brings about interactional alignment/convergence between the interlocutors; and (2) the status of linguistically marked variants. As we now turn to discuss, the combined action of these two features is highly consistent with the general principles that have been argued to inform the mapping between forms and social meaning, making the dynamics underlying the socio-semantics interface of *totally* remarkably similar to those invoked for other variables.

Concerning the first characteristic, our results provide further empirical evidence for Ochs' (1992) observation that the potential of linguistic expressions to convey social meanings is grounded in the pragmatic implications that they carry for the mutual positioning of the speakers in interaction. In this perspective, the investigation of *totally* connects with a number of studies that unveiled the social effects of other expressions that similarly index a marked stance of inclusiveness at the pragmatic level, including Acton and Potts' (2014) demonstratives, and certain uses of tag questions that facilitate interactional agreement (Moore and Podesva 2009) and perspective taking (Denis, Wiltschko and D'Arcy 2016) among the interlocutors. For all these cases it is possible to observe a connection between how the semantic content contributes to 'creating a we' between the interlocutors and the richness of these expressions as carriers of social meanings, ranging from those grounded in the here-and-now of the interaction to those based in the ideological links between forms and the personal features of their users. The emerging picture is one in which, across different types of variables, the pragmatic implications associated with the use of a linguistic form are a crucial domain in which to understand its potential to index social meanings on a variety of levels, and how different layers of an expression's meaning can work in synergy to determine the total package of what an expression conveys when used in communication.

Concerning markedness, once again, a remarkably similar pattern ties together the behavior of *totally* with that of other socio-semantically relevant variables, and demonstratives in particular. The point is illustrated particularly well by the parallel between the use of *totally* in implicit contexts and the use of demonstratives that are completely unnecessary for referential purposes, such as those modifying proper nouns (e.g. 'That Henry Kissinger'). In both cases, the marked status of the form is grounded in the clash between the form's semantic function – e.g. singling out a referent for *that*, stressing commitment for *totally* – and the pragmatic expectations generated by the linguistic context, in light of which the expression emerges as unwarranted, unexpected, and therefore better equipped to strike the listener as a stylistically salient choice. Such cases afford a novel angle from which to consider the long-investigated relationship between linguistic properties and social meaning potential. Not

only do they align with the generalization that marked variants tend to be particularly salient carriers of social meanings across phonological, morpho-syntactic and semantic types of variation; they also show that this correlation can also apply to instances of markedness entirely grounded in pragmatic, as opposed to frequency-based criteria (see section 2.1), unveiling a consistent pattern holding across different cases of socio-semantic variation.

NOTES

1. We would like to thank Annette D'Onofrio, Penny Eckert, Itamar Francez, Emily Hanink, Susan Gal, Anastasia Giannakidou, Julian Grove, Chris Kennedy, Dan Lassiter, Tim Leffel, Alda Mari, Constantine Nakassis, Rob Podesva, Chris Potts, Michael Silverstein, Ming Xiang, as well as other linguists at the University of Chicago and Stanford University who provided insightful comments on different parts of this project. All errors and oversights are our own.

2. For further discussion of the pragmatic dynamics underlying such a competition, see Horn (1984).

3. As an anonymous reviewer points out, the fact that research on demonstratives/modals primarily focused on the interactional aspect of their social meanings does not mean that these expressions are not/cannot be associated with such ideologically linked traits as well. In fact, we argue throughout the paper that, in light of their semantics, these forms are indeed highly suitable persona-based social meaning carriers as well. See section 6.2 for further discussion.

4. Source: http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=totally

5. The entry for *very* makes reference to generic metalinguistic comments, such as 'An overused adverb meaning "in a high degree" or "extremely"'; no entry for *completely* is recorded as of January 10, 2017.

6. https://www.facebook.com/TheBiscuitGames/posts/488916347870627. Last accessed on 5 June 2015.

7. http://www.mediaite.com/online/everythings-totally-great-in-rio-you-guys-man-with-water-bucket-tries-to-extinguish-olympic-torch/

8. The notion of Common Ground has been long investigated in pragmatics. While the current paper cannot exhaustively review the vast literature on the topic, see Stalnaker (1978), Farkas and Bruce (2010) for further discussion.

9. We assume that these sentences are produced out of the blue. Note that *definitely* or *certainly* would instead be felicitous in a context where these utterances come in response to a discourse move that explicitly calls into question the speaker's individual certainty, such as 'Are you sure that an Iowa senator thinks that you should be drug tested for child support payments?'. But this would introduce a further complication in the context, whose discussion extends beyond the scope of this paper.

10. http://www.mommyish.com/2012/04/13/iowa-senator-totally-thinks-you-should-be-drug-tested-for-those-child-support-payments-960/

11. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this example.

12. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for sharing this insight.

13. Adopting these labels is motivated by the need to have a conventional term to refer to each class of social evaluation scales. We do not intend to make a specific commitment to saying that all attributes reflect solidarity or status in a strict sense.

14. 'Bare' was selected as reference level for the Intensifier factor, since it corresponds to the non-intensified version of the adjective; and 'bounded' was selected as reference level for Adjective, since it corresponds to the type of adjective with which all intensifiers are predicted to operate through the same semantic mechanism.

15. Every life stage provided in the multiple choice response was assigned a numerical score with increasing value, where Kid=1, Teenager=2, Adult=3 and Elderly=4. This ensures that the higher the Age score, the higher the perceived age of the speaker. In case multiple life stages were chosen, the average was calculated. For instance, if a subject selected 'Kid' and 'Teenager', the resulting score would be $(2+1)/2=1.5$, which returns an intermediate value between the two categories.

16. With 'Male' = 1, 'Could be either' = 2, and 'Female' = 3.

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APPENDIX

Experiment 1: Average score for all base forms and average differential effects for each intensifier (bare = bare form; tot = *totally*; com = *completely*; rea = *really*)†

Attribute	Unbounded				Intermediate				Bounded			
	Bare	Tot	Com	Rea	Bare	Tot	Com	Rea	Bare	Tot	Com	Rea
Age	2.55	**−0.42***	−.20	+.03	2.70	**−0.43***	−.13	−.09	2.54	−.12	+.18	−.18
Articulateness	3.68	**−0.87****	−.54	+.23	3.91	**−0.86****	−.26	−.14	3.47	+.03	+.55	−.02
Maturity	3.68	**−0.93****	−.54	+.11	4.05	**−1.20*****	−.43	−.50	3.77	−.42	+.31	−.03
Intelligence	3.60	**−0.84****	−.37	+.34	4.00	**−1.03*****	−.35	−.37	3.77	−.19	+.17	+.08
Seriousness	4.22	**−1.01*****	−.55	−.14	4.25	**−1.15*****	−.31	−.12	4.22	−.31	+.00	+.00
Excitability	3.51	**+0.61***	+.25	+.01	3.80	+0.34	+.42	−.08	3.19	+.54	−.05	−.08
Outgoingness	3.65	**+0.74****	+.26	+.26	4.34	−0.09	+.14	−.48	3.80	+.05	−.39	+.05
Friendliness	3.68	**+0.65***	+.37	+.34	4.20	−0.26	−.03	−.23	3.94	+.00	−.44	+.17
Coolness	3.02	**+0.85****	+.06	−.02	3.45	−0.03	+.26	−.40	2.97	+.17	−.18	+.00

†Significant contrast is in bold and indicated with * , where *=$p<.05$, **=$p<.01$; ***= $p<.001$