

IMPOLITENESS IN COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

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Eric J. Dalton

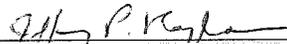
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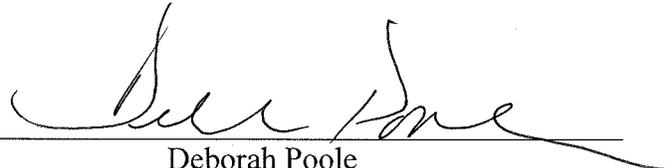
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Impoliteness in Computer Mediated Communication



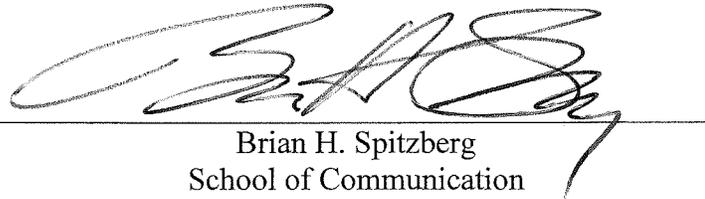
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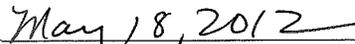


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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Ran who endured many hours of my own *impolite* behavior throughout the whole of the writing process. Her love and *politeness* will always inspire me to push beyond my known boundaries.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Impoliteness in Computer Mediated Communication

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Among enculturated internet users, social niceties that in past generations seemed commonplace and nonnegotiable for maintaining close-knit communities and servicing solid interpersonal relationships seem to be all but dissolving as virtues within CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) interaction. It is now disrespectful speech acts of impoliteness that often seem to govern the social interactions of many virtual communities. Two forms of impolite speech in particular: *flaming*, conflictive expressions of antagonistic behavior; and *trolling*, the internet equivalent of skulking about an online community looking for trouble or baiting users into an argument are the most common forms of effrontery-centric-speech associated with CMC.

As this phenomenon of online aggressiveness has become more pervasive and widespread, this thesis aims to take a deeper look at the roles and pragmatic functions that antagonistic behavior plays in negotiating the social and cultural norms of an online community. In order to accomplish this, I apply a reconstituted form of politeness theory, impoliteness theory, to two sets of data that represent distinctly different discourse types of online interaction: online public discussions from MSN.com and recorded voice chat in pre- and post-game lobbies found within the competitive online multiplayer portion of the videogame Halo 3.

Within the analysis that follows, this thesis showcases various idiosyncratic speech patterns typical of CMC discourses and discusses how these net-centric features of modern digital communication influence the interpretation of (im)polite speech acts. Furthermore, this thesis investigates to what degree the collectively established conventions of these CMC discourse patterns act as identity markers that help enculturated net users to further establish identity and communicative solidarity within their discourse communities. This thesis concludes that speech acts of (im)politeness in online discourses do play a role in negotiating cultural and community norms. I further conclude that instances of flaming or trolling are not simply unmotivated acts of aggression, but are methods of expressing solidarity with others of particular ideological stances, means of establishing a makeshift pecking order between interactants, indicators of discourse community membership based on levels of enculturated discourse competence, or are similarly used for fulfilling the personal face wants for one's own self-gratification at the expense of others.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

THE POLITENESS DIVIDE

5 people can't spot a troll.
--Scott: *Troll-spotter*

Among enculturated internet users, social niceties that in past generations seemed commonplace and nonnegotiable for maintaining close-knit communities and servicing solid interpersonal relationships seem to be all but dissolving as virtues within CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). As a result of the veiling influence of the Internet, the traditional social expectancies of polite behavior, diplomacy, and maintenance of face wants seem to be replaced by an increasing respect for quick-response cutthroat jibes and one-upmanship defamations. It is now disrespect or impoliteness that often seems to rule social interactions of the internet.

Two forms of impolite speech in particular: flaming, explicit aggressive expressions of over-the-top antagonistic behavior; and trolling, subversive lurking about an online community looking to bait users into an argument, are the most common forms of effrontery-centric-speech associated with CMC. At times repulsive, repellent, combative, and often dryly humorous, these net-nurtured speech idiosyncrasies and neo-impoliteness norms are incessantly negotiated and reconstituted by millions of internet users.

As this phenomenon of online aggressiveness has become more readily noticeable among what are commonly considered virtual communities, it behooves researchers to take a closer look at the intricacies and functions that this antagonistic behavior serves in negotiating the norms of the online community. Drawing inspiration from Watson's (1997) analysis of cyber-culture, this study will re-examine conflictive and inflammatory net-speech in order to gain a better understanding of precisely how impolite utterances are utilized by the online community members. Furthermore, this study will attempt to answer questions not realized (or perhaps even expected) by Watson such as: are these forms of aggressive net-speech predictable? What factors play a role in readers' or receivers' minds in

determining whether an utterance is inherently aggressive? Does the anonymity of the net play a role in the perception, interpretation, and communication of these inflammatory utterances? Do impolite online behaviors have similarities to face-to-face disputes found in the real world? Are there patterns of occurrence to online aggressive speech or hierarchies of inflammatory speech? What role does trolling play within an online community? How does the greater online community at large combat trolling? And what reaction do these trolls have to community responses? Moreover, this thesis will determine whether a refinement of impoliteness theory may be required when looking at not only seemingly unwarranted verbal assaults, but whether flagrant disregard by the speaker for the non-communicating members (bystanders and overhearers) of the discourse follows the established (im)politeness rules.

In order to address these questions, this thesis attempts to further investigate flaming and trolling as speech acts of linguistic (im)politeness by utilizing a reconstituted form of politeness theory, specifically impoliteness theory, championed by Bousfield (2008) and Culpeper (2010). As politeness in itself cannot handle the complexities of aggressive or impolite contexts, Bousfield's formalism will be utilized within this thesis for the study of authentic conflictual discourses gathered from online sources that constitute not only the contemporary interactional patterns of speech performed by the current enculturated netizens but also represent a cross section of the speech users directing this phase of internet savvy communication – the youth culture.

ORGANIZATION

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. It proceeds by highlighting the important factors in studying polite and impolite language, introduces the impolite speech acts of flaming and trolling, and addresses issues in the label of community-to-computer mediated environments. The methodology for the study is presented in Chapter 3 and includes a description of the transcripts and procedures followed in data collection. Chapter 4 is an analysis of explicit impoliteness (flaming) and how it is functionally employed within the Halo 3 transcripts. Chapter 5 is an analysis of implicit impoliteness (trolling) within the MSNBC transcripts. This is followed by a discussion in Chapter 6 summarizing the conclusions made within the analyses and the conclusion in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

POLITENESS AND IMPOLITENESS THEORY

In order to apply any form of politeness to the methods of conflictive online communication, one must first acknowledge the inadequacies that are inherent in the base model of politeness theory. As detailed in the 1978/1987 work, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Brown and Levinson assume a culture dedicated to harmonious interaction fueled by the cooperative interdependence of its members. By the tenets of politeness, daily conventionalized interaction and interpersonal relations are played out between interlocutors in line with culturally specific diplomatic speech acts.

Politeness theory is a robust system that attempts to categorize and predict speech acts and responses typified by Western (primarily English-speaking) societies' dyads. However, the theory is problematic when universally applying its methodology. In particular, Brown and Levinson's base model has come under fire in the past for its inability to account for more group-oriented Asian cultures' methods of interpreting in and out groups and views of group inclusiveness (Gu, 1990; Lee-Wong, 1999; Locher, 2004; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988; Terkourafi, 2008). More recently, light has been shed upon the incapability of politeness theory to explain, without significant revision or reinterpretation, even the simplest of encounters in which aggressive, impolite, or contextually negatively-charged emotions are at the heart of the conversation (Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 1996; Culpeper, 2005; Lachenicht, 1980).

This should not be surprising, as politeness theory was originally designed with the intent of delineating a universal (cross-cultural and cross-linguistic) set of behavioral expectations and strategies designed to integrate the combinatorial effects that social hierarchy, social distances, and relative forms of imposition have upon the linguistic devices speakers make use of when attempting to respectfully and tactfully maintain the face wants of others and themselves.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF POLITENESS

According to Brown and Levinson, it is always the primary concern of the speaker (the Model Person, or MP) to communicate his or her message as efficiently as possible, produce the truest expression of the intended meaning, modulate the spoken register according to the relative power and distance relationship between MP and the hearer (H), all while either appealing to or not impinging upon H's personal reserve of positive or negative aspects of face (Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987, p. 58-60, 83). Face within Brown and Levinson's framework is based on an interpretation of Goffman's (1967) definition:

[...] the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself. (p. 5)

The split of face as interpreted by B&L between Positive and Negative is best summed up in their own words (Brown and Levinson, 1978/1987):

- Negative Face: the want of every competent adult member that his/her actions be unimpeded by others.
- Positive Face: the want of every member that his/her wants be desirable to at least some others. (p. 62)

Furthermore, B&L suggest that face is not merely a set of expected social norms and values, but is more akin to a generalized set of positive and negative face wants that all members of that culture understand and in some manner desire to satisfy for themselves. It must be noted that the duality of this system of positive and negative does not represent a scalar morality between good (positive) and bad (negative). Here, Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative specifies distinct sets of face wants that are individualized according to each MP's own internalized desires. It is the primary concern of these MPs to facilitate the means toward the end of achieving their specific face wants. Thus, in order to negotiate these face wants via spoken interaction, one may need to perform spoken acts that may threaten, devalue, or run counter to the positive and negative face wants of other speakers. These face threatening acts (FTAs) similarly are categorized according to the aspect of face (positive or negative) that may potentially be threatened when the MPs impose themselves upon H (the hearer).

An example of a negative FTA, which impinges upon someone's negative face, would be to impose upon the hearer's (H's) free will by interrupting his work or stopping him from performing whatever action he is currently undertaking, thereby impeding the process of H. Impinging upon someone's positive face, likewise, threatens the hearer's own self-image, solidarity with a group, or implicates that the person's wants are unimportant.

When performing these FTAs, politeness theory assumes the desire for maintenance of and adherence to socially constructed societal roles. Alongside these roles, interlocutors must adhere to proper behavioral expectations when speaking according to an interweaving relationship of Power (P), Social Distance (D), and the absolute threat of the FTA (R). The P, D, R relationship is defined by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) was stated as follows:

P is the relative power that the Speaker has over the Hearer, D is the relative social distance of the hearer from the Speaker, and R is the ranking of the imposition involved in doing the face-threatening act (FTA). (p. 15-16)

P, D, and R here are considered to be "composite" categories, that B&L state as being "compounded of culturally specific factors" (Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987, p. 16), and these categories are to be seen as relative constants between interlocutors during spoken interaction. Beyond the P,D,R relationship, directness of an utterance is expressed by performing the utterance as either bald on record speech, which may seem explicit, direct, blunt, clear, with no politeness frills; while indirectness of an utterance is performed off record, which may be interpreted as implicit, indirect, evasive, vague, and mired by politeness additions. Brown and Levinson further elaborate that delivering FTAs in either way may have certain benefits and disadvantages to speakers. Delivering an utterance in a Bald on Record manner may be beneficial, as hearers may feel that the speaker is non-manipulative, direct, but potentially crass; while if a speaker performs an off record FTA, hearers may think a speaker is tactful, careful, and courteous but simultaneously manipulative, less than truthful, or hiding something.

In order to facilitate the maintenance of face wants of both the speaker (the MP) and the hearer (H) in adherence to the P,D,R relationship, speakers employ strategies of pragmatic modulation that alter the linguistic and meta-linguistic features of an utterance so that the MP may adjust the overall impact on the hearer's face. This modulation is based on the expectation that interlocutors will adhere to specific cultural politeness norms when

engaging in one another in conversation. These alterations of linguistic modulation are decided upon actively according to the urgency in expressing the utterance and relative potential damage to both the MP and positive or negative face of the FTA. Thus, hedging, word choice, directness or indirectness, the relative magnitude of the imposition or impact of face to both the speaker and hearer, and the relative positions of power between the speaker and hearer are weighed and evaluated, and the appropriate culturally specific speech patterns are chosen accordingly by the MP.

These options of modulation are further organized by Brown and Levinson according to hierarchical politeness paradigms that are ranked according to the relative imposition or attack (Face Threatening Act) as it would impact the hearer's face. In other words, the higher the potential risk of the FTA toward the hearer, or likewise the greater the self-effacement taken on by the speaker, the more linguistic forms of politeness additions are applied, thereby increasing the overall level of formality and or deference expressed by the FTA. FTAs that may cause a great deal of offense or imposition are effectively sugar-coated so as to appeal to the relevant aspect of positive or negative face of the hearer, thereby dissolving some of the impact of the utterance and maintaining harmony between interlocutors.

According to Brown and Levinson, the interlocking relationships described above are intended to be universal (while allowing variation according to culturally specific factors). Thus, the concepts of positive or negative face present in Japan or China, while having been altered slightly to account for cultural differences in polite interaction, should operate similarly to those of their Western counterparts.

PROBLEMS WITH POLITENESS

As has been established, politeness theory fails to adequately account for contexts in which aggressive, conflictive, or otherwise impolite speech, utterances, discourses, and contexts may occur. Watts (2003), however, stresses a crucial need to account for acts of impolite behavior and makes an initial attempt, referencing Eelen (2001), at detailing a set of parameters for the appearance of impolite speech acts. To Watts, impolite acts fall into the realm of unpredictable non-harmonious interaction. Beyond Watt's assessment, however, this thesis will highlight a few other problems with B&L's basic theory.

Politeness Theory Does Not Assume a Culture of “Mean”

The most urgent problem facing politeness theory, when addressing acts of impoliteness (for the purposes of this thesis, flaming and trolling), is one of a failure to recognize elements of purely antagonistic speech for what they can be: aggressive, offensive, careless, subversive, or insulting speech acts. These speech acts may often seem to be of no real benefit when used within a discourse other than to amuse or please the speaker or others of ideologies similar to the speaker's in-group. Politeness theory does not consider conflictive or inflammatory behavior to be a part of normal healthy social relationships. Yet, impolite speech acts did not go entirely neglected by Brown and Levinson. As politeness theory is built around the core tenet that all speakers and hearers wish to maintain and uphold the courtesies of human social relationships as determined by their society, aggressive or hurtful speech-acts within politeness theory are generally intended to serve a specific function of actual strategic politeness. Thus, Brown and Levinson determine that in standard speech events, a speaker will only act in a bald on record manner in the context of dire emergency or otherwise immediate necessity.

As a consequence, politeness theory's model implicitly suggests that politeness and the diplomacy of maintaining face wants should be the core concerns of speakers. Any situation involving social impoliteness, or as Brown and Levinson put it, “rudeness,” should be considered as nonstandard marked behavior universally. Impolite speech acts are considered by Brown and Levinson to be aberrant, anomalous, and more importantly, of little concern as they are outside the standard expectancies of harmonious behavior.

I will not dispute here that impolite utterances may be considered atypical within everyday archetypal social situations. Yet, there are contexts in which conflictive utterances are considered to be not only warranted based on the context, but are considered to be the social norm within those environments or situations. There is a great deal of research dedicated to bringing to light conflictive contexts in which rude or impolite speech events dominate the context and resulting discourse. In these discourses, impolite utterances actually become the unmarked and preferred communicative standard and are therefore considered to be the social norm, making politeness the marked act.

Research on the darker side of conversational discourses has been performed on army training by Culpeper (1996), by Lachenicht (1980) on extending speech acts of aggravation to politeness theory, and by Bousfield (2004, 2008) on both conflictive transcripts between traffic police and drivers from the BBC TV show *Clampers* and on employer-to-employee discourse. Collectively, scholars, as a part of a movement to acknowledge discord as an integral part of some forms of human interaction, have noted that these events and the contexts inherent to them consist of an expectedly negatively-charged speech environment. These contexts depend on the impolite speech to charge and further the actions involved. Polite, reserved, or indirect (off record) speech acts generally seem out of place in these contexts, and if performed would be considered the marked form or behavior, sounding strange or awkward.

Returning to the discussion of conflictive speech in online interaction, it seems that within online discourses, there exists a group of speakers who make use of the veil of anonymity and embrace the more antagonistic or bald-on record forms of internet speech. These speakers are not afraid to criticize or attack others in order to empower or amuse themselves, nor are they afraid to dictate aspects of their valued culture to others. Thus, aggressive speech acts in no way have analogous correspondences to any politeness paradigm detailed within the confines of the politeness theory's predictability matrix, and thus, politeness theory is unable to directly apply to impoliteness events unless the core of politeness theory can be tweaked to reflect interactional expectations within an impolite world.

Politeness Theory Focuses Mostly Upon Polite Requests and Impositions

Politeness theory tends to focus upon the requests and the impositions forced upon the other hearer's face as a series of FTAs (Face Threatening Acts). Whether the FTAs are bald on record or off record speech, it seems that politeness theory is concerned only with how the MPs structure the mitigation of positive and negative face damage to themselves or the hearers. In this manner, The FTA hierarchies found in the Brown and Levinson framework are mainly a series of modulated linguistic behaviors that speakers utilize for

mitigating the directness and offensiveness while attempting to pursue their individualized face wants.

Politeness Theory lists a series of (im)polite FTAs within its examples of speech acts, but only orients them contextually as a means for temporarily replacing other more polite speech acts when the context calls for acting with haste in a bald on record manner.

Interestingly, Brown and Levinson do not dismiss the possibility of re-ranking P, D, and R as a way of exploiting speech acts. They state explicitly that one may effectively “test the boundaries of power relationships and distance by flaunting P and going ‘bald on record’ to suggest that the speaker does not fear the Hearer’s Retaliation.” Also of particular interest is the section entitled “Use of non-expectable strategy to insult” (Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987, p. 229). Brown and Levinson detail how a speaker being over-polite may insult a hearer by insinuating that the speaker is more powerful than the hearer.

These exploitations of politeness strategies are nowhere to be found in the comprehensive listings of Brown and Levinson’s politeness hierarchies. Rather, these exploitations are more or less tacked on as an afterthought but never fully structured into the greater whole of the FTAs. In this study I will make use of these exploitations and other impoliteness-based FTAs not considered by Brown and Levinson when further applying (im)politeness strategies to the speech act of aggressive speech tendencies found in online discourse.

Discourse Roles and Macro Transactions

One of the biggest grievances that Bousfield (2008) has with the central tenets of politeness theory is that politeness theory has little to say about extended discourses of either politeness or impoliteness. Furthermore, examples given by Brown and Levinson are only played out amidst the immediate speakers and hearers. Brown and Levinson have little to say about bystanders and observers outside the immediate roles of speaker and hearer. The examples championed by Brown and Levinson consist typically of only two to three sequential utterances between two interactants, the speaker and the hearer (a dyad).

Bousfield (2008) elaborates on extending (im)politeness into the realm of extended discourse and the context from which these discourses are pulled by adopting Levinson’s (1979) concept of activity types from his (Levinson’s) prototype theory. Levinson states that

the social contexts of particular activities dictate the roles and the expected relative power and language use of the interlocutors involved. His examples consist of relationships such as, “teaching, a job interview, a jural interrogation, a football game, a task in a workshop, a dinner party, and so on.” Furthermore, Bousfield follows up by stating that “Levinson sees the individual’s use of language as shaping the event,” and further states that while language usage may indeed dictate how social situations play out, it is more importantly the situation (or the context-specific roles) that fundamentally dictate how language is used within a discourse (Bousfield, 2008, p. 170).

Bousfield’s analysis of Levinson holds strong implications for the analysis that follows. The anonymity of the internet allows users to shed former socially-constrained inhibitions and, within the activity of either playing an online video-game or commenting on message boards, reconstitute their roles however they see fit within the medium. This kind of dynamic of identity and behavioral adaptation is an aspect of social situations online that is not easily analogous to real-world contexts.

Bousfield further elaborates upon the elements that constitute activity types by referencing Thomas (1995), who suggests six features:

- The Goals of the Participants
- Allowable Contributions
- The degree to which Gricean maxims are adhered to or are suspended
- The degree to which the interpersonal maxims are adhered to or are suspended
- Turn-taking and topic control
- The manipulation of Pragmatic Parameters of a speech event. (Bousfield 2008, p. 171)

Bousfield (2008) makes reference again to Thomas (1986), who proposes a series of Social and Discourse roles. Social roles indicate the specific position or social relationship between two individuals during a linguistic exchange, and Levinson’s description of activity types is analogous to these relationships. Discourse roles, however, refer to the “types of individuals who produce talk.”

Thomas (1986) lists these discourse roles as Speaker, Author, Spokesperson, and Reporter. Of primary interest in the data to come will be the roles of Speaker and Spokesperson (an entity that acts as the mouthpiece of a group).

Thomas' receivers of talk are essentially the same as Brown and Levinson's roles of hearer, only more distinct. She splits hearer into two types: Addressee (the entity that a speech act has been directed towards) and Hearer (an observer who has witnessed some manner of utterance).

Thomas (1986) also distinguishes Hearers who are not a primary part of the discourse as bystanders and overhearers. Bystanders are not a part of the discourse but may have some bearing upon the way a speaker conducts himself toward the addressee. Overhearers are present for the purposes of hearing the discourse, but their presence may not be known to the speaker or otherwise has little effect upon the execution of message.

It is this melting pot of context, situation, and speaker intentions that helps to drive an evolving discourse. As Brown and Levinson focus specifically upon somewhat disembodied contexts of dyadic speech (centered primarily upon one or two utterances only) the greater discourse, or more appropriately, the events and situations that led to specific illocutionary acts, are lost within a narrow focus. Expanding context and situation beyond the speech event becomes increasingly important when analyzing impoliteness in language. Impoliteness, aggression, and offensiveness are often a result of many turns of dialogue between two or more individuals, and, as a result, there often is an offending or triggering event (Bousfield, 2008) that sees subsequent speech acts of impoliteness arise.

MICRO TRANSACTIONS IN ONLINE INTERACTION

The question of how Brown and Levinson's model of politeness handles extended narratives must also be considered as it has relatively little to say about forms of micro transactions typified by many types of online discourses. Articles found on MSN.com, forums, or within chatrooms are often commented on only once by users. Online discourses exist as a medium in which users may express only one statement, and other interactants, as well as readers and observers, may optionally ignore one another with little to no damaging social implications. This is quite different from face-to-face conversation or even from e-mail (where a response is often eventually warranted to preserve cooperative communication).

On discussion boards, a speaker (writer) may post one message with the intent of never returning to the conversation, but simply lurking behind the veil of anonymity, observing the reaction to his comment. One-utterance contributions such as these may be

conversationally relevant, although expressing one's point of view, attacking another member's utterance or ideology or likewise may consist of completely unrelated statements that veer wildly off subject. Furthermore, other users may reply to the unrelated comment directly assuming (Gricean) relevance bridging the unrelated comment to the core discussion or alternatively effectively forming a whole new topical chain. Thus, an overarching theme to an online discussion may sometimes be difficult, as seemingly random posts by other members can create a complicatedly disjointed yet intertwined discourse.

Thus, politeness theory has little to say about how a system of posting (as an utterance) and then abandoning the topic can conceptually work as an interactive or social paradigm. Within the online environment, as more often than not the speaker's identity is veiled, one needn't participate in any online community if one doesn't wish to and may simply observe (lurk) until one wishes to make a contribution. The tremendous amount of social distance this veil provides enables the communicator to be as distanced as he wishes from other users. This veil also empowers users to dictate, feign, or assert power purely by the virtue of users' discourse competence. Thus, the veil allows speakers, who in real-life may otherwise have a marginal amount of power, to reconstitute themselves with clout fashioned by dominance of personality and competence in socially relevant linguistic conventions. They therefore have as much ability to imprint their will upon, or make their presence known within their online community as they dare to express.

MANAGING POLITENESS WITH IMPOLITENESS

Having seen how politeness theory fails to account for conflictive speech and non-standard discourses, I next turn to the dark side of politeness research: impoliteness theory. The study of impoliteness attempts to address the oversight of Brown and Levinson and account for conflictive utterances and contexts and their roles within human interaction.

When analyzing impoliteness, this thesis is primarily concerned with what Culpeper, Bousfield, and Wichmann (2003) and Bousfield (2008) conceptualize as strategic or instrumental impoliteness, in other words, the precise goal-oriented function of these speech acts. More importantly this thesis is looking at the functionality of a speech act being used as a means to bring about some end result. Of particular import is Beebe's (1995) notion that impoliteness is not "failed politeness... defined as too little or too much politeness work in a

particular context” (Beebe 1995, p. 166). Rather, true impoliteness is defined by Bousfield (and Culpeper) as a speech event where it is the purposeful and willful intent of the speaker (S) is to inflict some form of verbal abuse, on a hearer (H), and this action is understood by (H) as an impolite utterance or act.

Furthermore, Bousfield argues that examples of ritual insults (Labov, 1972), where impolite language is used as a building block for forming closely-knit social relationships as a conventionalized form of solidarity, or Culpeper’s (1996) research into mock impoliteness or banter that is understood by both the speaker and hearer as being non-critical in nature should not be considered as examples of true impoliteness, as these acts are warranted by the context and situation for strengthening social ties.

CHANGES TO (IM) POLITENESS

For the purposes of this study, the formalism of impoliteness systematized by Derek Bousfield in his work, *Impoliteness in Interaction*, will be employed. Bousfield (drawing from Culpeper [2005] and Mills [2003]) acknowledges that impoliteness “is very much the parasite of politeness” (2008, p. 43). Yet, while these models diverge from the base foundation of politeness theory in order to account for impoliteness, they nevertheless stay true to their (Gricean, and subsequently, Brown and Levinson) roots. Thus, Culpeper’s five-point model (which in itself is a reiteration of his own 1996 work) is essentially the mirror-image to Brown and Levinson’s Politeness framework. Culpeper’s 5 point model consists of:

1. **Bald on Record Impoliteness:** A specific and outright attack or intent to cause face damage toward the hearer. Bousfield states that this is performed in a “direct, clear, and ambiguous manner.”
2. **Positive Impoliteness:** The use of FTAs to attack or cause damage to the hearer’s positive face wants or desires to be accepted. Bousfield (2008) lists Culpeper’s (1996) examples of positive impoliteness FTAs as “ignore, snub the other”, “exclude the other from the activity”, “disassociate from the other”, “be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic”, “use inappropriate identity markers”, “use obscure or secretive language”, “seek disagreement”, “make the other feel uncomfortable (e.g. do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk)”, “use taboo words”, “call the other names, etc.”
3. **Negative Impoliteness:** The use of FTA’s to attack or damage the hearer’s negative wants value. Bousfield 2008 lists Culpeper’s 1996 examples of Negative Impoliteness FTAs as “to frighten”, “condescend, scorn, or ridicule”, “invade the other’s space”, “explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect”, and “put the other’s indebtedness on record.”

4. **Off Record Impoliteness:** Specifically, Bousfield states that these impoliteness FTA's are "conveyed indirectly" and are able to be canceled should the need arise (in other words, deny or restate intention of the utterance to not be impolite.) EG–Sarcasm in particular.
5. **Withhold Politeness:** The deliberate refusal (or silent refusal) to employ a politeness strategy when context or the hearer typically would expect such. (Bousfield 2008, p. 92-93)

These five super-strategies described by Culpeper, while functional, are redundant when it comes not only to face, but also to the question of on- and off record speech acts. There is some degree of ambiguity between whether something falls more closely in line with either a positive or negative attack upon face. As described by Culpeper's own definitions, some aspects of negative impoliteness, such as "condescend, scorn, or ridicule," could just as easily apply to positive impoliteness.

Thus, Bousfield takes a page from Goffman (1967) and Terkourafi (2008) in stating that face is a multifaceted concept and not as rigidly defined as Brown and Levinson consider it. Bousfield considers that definitions of face are "mutually constructed" by interlocutors and not just internally or externally constructed (i.e., perceived only by the hearer or speaker). As suggested by Goffman, face is on loan from the society at large. Therefore, the speaker may wear or express different aspects of face according to context, the other interlocutors involved, and one's relative position within a society or social group.

It is with this in mind that I turn to Bousfield's pared-down reconstitution of Culpeper's five-point classification. In order to reduce redundancies and create a more concise system, Bousfield (2008) arranges just two overarching tactics and two subcategories of off record impoliteness:

1. *On Record Impoliteness*

The use of strategies designed to explicitly (a) attack the face of an interactant, (b) construct the face of an interactant in a non-harmonious or outright conflictive way, (c) deny the expected face wants, needs, or rights of the interactant, or some combination thereof. The attack is made in an unambiguous way given the context in which it occurs.

2. *Off Record Impoliteness*

The use of strategies where the threat or damage to an interactant's face is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature (cf. Grice [1975 1989] and can be cancelled (e.g., denied, or an account/post-modification /elaboration offered, etc.)

but where "...one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others" (Culpeper, 2005, p. 44), given the context in which it occurs.

Sarcasm and the Withholding of Politeness where it is expected would also come under this heading, as follows:

(a) *Sarcasm*

Sarcasm constitutes the use of individual or combined strategies which, on the surface, appear to be appropriate, but which are meant to be taken as meaning the opposite in terms of face-management. The utterance that appears, on the surface, to Positively constitute, maintain, or enhance the face of the intended recipient(s) actually threatens, attacks, and/or damages the face of the recipient(s) (see Culpeper 2005) given the context in which it occurs.

(b) *Withhold Politeness*

More specifically, withhold politeness where politeness would appear to be expected or mandatory. Withholding politeness is within the Off Record category as "[...] politeness has to be communicated [...] the absence of communicated politeness may, ceteris paribus, be taken as the absence of a polite attitude." (Brown and Levinson 1978/1987, p. 5).

(Bousfield, p. 94-95)

It is this system of impoliteness proposed by Bousfield that the present study will use, the goal being to determine what factors dictate online speakers' aggressive speech acts of flaming and trolling. I have chosen Bousfield's system as his formalism of impoliteness is not only well-detailed, but also is more succinct than Culpeper's model, addressing some minor redundancies found in Culpeper's treatment of face and FTAs. Moreover, Bousfield's reinterpretation of Culpeper's work has the benefit of being successfully applied to extended conflictive discourses (cf., Culpeper, 1996, 2005).

Furthermore, this study will use impoliteness theory to take a deeper look at just how these interactions between faceless internet users play out in extended (macro) or single utterance (micro) dominant discourses and how specific net-savvy forms of speech may be structured when members (bystanders and overhearers) are addressed beyond the immediate discourse (i.e., observers who may be lurking/reading or otherwise silent, yet still understood to be present).

INTENT OF IMPOLITENESS AND THE HEARER

Bousfield (2008) claims that for an act of instrumental impoliteness to be considered “successful impoliteness, the intention of the speaker (or ‘author’) to ‘offend’ (threaten/damage face) must be understood by those in the receiver role” (p. 78). He further develops a series of four impoliteness distinctions that further elaborate upon speaker intentionality and hearer interpretation:

1. If the Speaker (or someone in the producer role) intends face-damage and the Hearer (or someone in a receiver role) perceives the Speaker’s (Producer’s) intention to damage face... then impoliteness is successfully conveyed.
2. If the Speaker/Producer intends face damage but the Hearer/Receiver fails to perceive the speaker’s intent/any face-damage, then the attempt at impoliteness fails.
3. If the Speaker/Producer does not intend face-damage but the Hearer/Receiver fails to perceive the speaker’s intent/Producer’s utterance as being intentionally face-damaging then this could be Accidental face-damage, which could be caused by one or more of the following: Rudeness; Insensitivity; Hypersensitivity; a clash of expectations; a cultural misunderstanding; misidentification of the Community of Practice or the Activity Type in which they are engaged; some combination of these, or some other hitherto unidentified means of inadvertently causing offense or of perceiving offense when none was intended.
4. If the Speaker/Producer does not intend face-damage but the Hearer/Receiver constructs the Speaker’s/Producer’s utterance as being unintentionally face damaging then this could be one of the following: Incidental or Accidental face-damage... which could be caused by one, or more of the following: Rudeness; Insensitivity; Hypersensitivity; a clash of expectations; a cultural misunderstanding; misidentification of the Community of Practice or Activity Type in which they are engaged; some combination of these, or some hitherto unidentified means of inadvertently causing offense or of perceiving offense when none was intended (p.72-73).

It is important to note that Bousfield implies that it is primarily the domain of the hearer (or as he puts it, someone in a receiver role) to determine whether an utterance is considered an act of impoliteness. Culpeper (2005), on the other hand, opts for a definition of impoliteness that lies in co-construction between the speaker and the hearer. He states:

Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2). (2005, p.38)

Culpeper (2010) further conceptualizes intentionality as being scalar in nature in that if a hearer understands an act to be intentional it magnifies the level of offense received by the hearer or addressee. Thus, an utterance produced by a speaker who truly intends an

utterance to be impolite is much more offensive to a hearer than an utterance that was not intended as impolite.

However, Culpeper's (2010) formalism also seems to view intentionality of the speaker in away more akin to Bousfield. Bousfield in particular believes that, in most cases, intentionality cannot be gleaned from the speaker's utterance alone, as one cannot peer into the mind of the individual responsible for an utterance. In effect, the researcher is only able to look at the chain of cause-and-effect that plays out between a speaker and a hearer. By this mode of thinking, one can only truly disambiguate a speaker's intention (as objective researchers) when an act of impoliteness is bare-faced and explicit. The intentions behind implicit acts such as sarcasm (or trolling, in this thesis) are likewise terribly difficult to reconstruct, as the speaker can disavow any intention of impoliteness should the hearer request clarification.

THE VEIL, FLAMING, AND TROLLING IN THE VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

The world of a virtual community is vastly different from its physical counterpart, in that users, unhindered by their physicality, are represented only in the ways that they choose to reconstitute within their virtual world. Rheingold (1993), in his assessment of community-based websites of the 1990's, goes so far as to suggest that interactions between users within an online community are conducted by reconstituted personae, or more accurately, the disembodied mentally-projected guises within the online world. These personae can likewise manifest themselves via reconstituted bodies in the forms of digital images or avatars. Watson (1997) further suggests that the veiling aspect of the medium naturally prevents interpersonal identification and the judgment process that speakers use to evaluate other members of their physical society. Online, one is only able to judge or assess others based upon what they choose to let others observe.

In addition, at any given time within the virtual community, there are unknown numbers of faceless silent users lurking about in the background who never speak or make their presence known. One is only privy to the thoughts or reflections of the minds of other virtual community members who choose to contribute to a community; and as a researchers,

one must face the fact that most assumptions about how the greater net-culture behaves are based solely on the more loquacious individuals.

Yet it would be wrong to suggest that impolite, offensive, or conflictive utterances are the predominant form of communication found in CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) communities. Just as in the real world there exist expected social niceties and acceptable behaviors that vary according to context, social and empathetical proximity, and power hierarchies, there exist methods within the online realm varied of tactfully expressing one's message.

In a sense, the veil of the internet could function similarly to a curtain separating Goffman's (1971) metaphors of "frontstage" and "backstage." According to Coates (1999), "frontstage performance is more carefully controlled and more susceptible to prevailing norms of politeness and decorum," while backstage methods of speaking are considered to be informal or relaxed registers in which interlocutors are freer to speak their minds (p. 67). Evocative comments such as flaming or trolling are most often typified by a highly informal, and at times aggressively idealistic or antisocial, backstage register. When interacting within online communities, participants are able to reconstitute their persona and perform any role they wish unhindered by the expectations of politeness norms of the physical world. Thus, speakers are able to perform in as a casual or an uninhibited manner as they wish.

In the case of message boards, forums, online video games, etc., what one witnesses when perusing comments or ongoing textual conversations is that it is generally the most vocal or evocative of members that draw the most attention. Thus, an evocative or antagonistic speaker is more likely to garner a response, have a greater impact upon, or contribute more to the overall goal of a group than the less loquacious or silent lurking members.

FLAMING

This raises the question, what is "flaming?" UrbanDictionary, a repository for commonly agreed-upon slang definitions updated for meaning by general common consensus of internet-goers, defines flaming as:

1. *Flame 1*: To insult someone electronically, or otherwise. Sometimes to be a group insult. (w4x0r, 2003)

2. *Flame 2*: To insult a person you are arguing with over the internet in hopes of reviving your argument. (Meri, 2005)
3. *Flame 3*: A flame is a tirade. The flamer may be quite articulate and intelligent as they question the upbringing of the flamee. One can also flame about a third party to a conversation. Finally, a flame may be from an idiot, in response to a reasonable post from someone else. (tony, 2003)
4. *Flame 4*: A flame is a noun associated with the action of flaming, what people do when they express a strongly held opinion without holding back any emotion. Although flames often get out of hand, they have a purpose in the ecology of cyberspace. Many flames are aimed at teaching someone something (usually in overstated language) or stopping them from doing something (like offending other people). Flame messages often use more brute force than is strictly necessary, but that's half the fun. (anataka, 2007)

At best, these are lay definitions, that (im)politeness researchers such as Bousfield (2008), Hardaker (2010), and Watts (2003), would classify as first-order comprehension or “lay interpretations” (Watts, 2003). These definitions are nonetheless useful in determining what the widespread first-order interpretation of the act of flaming is to those who perform or are recipients of the action.

Compared to the lay-definitions above, Watson’s own interpretation seems somewhat utilitarian. Watson defines flaming as a community-wide method of “self-correcting” deviant members, wherein “personal message(s) from a more experienced member(s) who attempts to inform the user of where they crossed the line of acceptability for that group” (1997, p. 111) . Most literature agrees that flaming is inherently aggressive and conflictual in nature, which in principle supports the lay definitions above.

While most academics agree on the basic elements of a flame, each gives a slightly varied interpretation of what it means to flame another user within a CMC environment. Flaming is most typically seen as offensive and often hyper-aggressive net-based attacks directed at another user. For the most concise list of features of flaming by an academic source, I turn to Turnage (2007) and her work on studying the effects of CMC on work life. Turnage, in her article, attempts to construct a more academic series of qualities, stating that flaming consists of:

- (a)tributes such as hostility, aggression, intimidation, insults, offensiveness, unfriendly tone, uninhibited language, and sarcasm ... In addition, other attributes, such as the use of profanity, all capital letters, or numerous punctuation marks at the end of a sentence in email messages, are sometimes said to be characteristic of flaming. (2008, p.44)

Turnage went on to develop a test to determine what elements of text-based speech users of a corporate network interpreted as offensive in interpersonal emails. In her study, each participant was asked to rate 20 short email messages on the levels they felt each message was hostile, aggressive, intimidating, insulting, offensive, friendly, uninhibited, or sarcastic. Finally, users were asked to rate the short message for general “flamey-ness.”

Turnage found that certain attributes tended to counterbalance others. Acronyms such as “lol” (laughing out loud) tended to soften the harshness or impolite tone of an utterance. Her example of: “Damn! You’re not a lot of help today are you? JUST KIDDING. LOL!” was considered to be within the middle range of offensiveness by participants. This may be in part due to the emphasis of the capital letters on “JUST KIDDING,” and the further reduction to the level of animosity by utilizing the tag acronym “LOL!” In this case, “LOL” is used as a replacement for the contextual equivalent of a laugh or a knowing smile, that might clue an interlocutor in that one is making an utterance in jest. Thus, that utterance may be interpreted more as a bid of ritual impoliteness (like the ritual insults of Labov [1972]) than a flame.

Turnage also goes on to suggest that an example as seen below was considered to be highly indicative of a flame. “CAN YOU PLEASE GIVE ME THE FINAL ON THIS AND DO YOU KNOW WHO WAS TO SEND THIS OUT?????????????????????” (p. 53).

I suggest this is felt to be a flame due to the pervasiveness of capitals (likening the utterance to a shout), excessive punctuation (expressing severity, haste, and vexation), and the full capitalization of the only potential redressive politeness marker (PLEASE expresses intonational impatience or shouting).

However, “WE NEED YOUR INPUT BY TOMORROW! PLEASE!” was perceived only moderately as a flame, as the sentence construction and position of positive politeness markers make the utterance feel more like begging, thereby minimizing the impact of the FTA toward the addressee. Expressions such as “PLEASE!” show that the sender values the (negative face) wants of the addressee enough to risk self-damage to his own positive face by being courteous enough to extend the proper redressive speech action.

TROLLING

Beyond the simple act of flaming, however, there is one form of impolite CMC-based utterance that has received little attention until recently: “trolling.” Returning again to Urbandictionary.com, the lay-person definition (taken directly from the website) for a troll is:

1. *Troll 1*: One who posts a deliberately provocative message to a newsgroup or message board with the intention of causing maximum disruption and argument. (Alien Entity, 2002)
2. *Troll 2*: One who purposely and deliberately (that purpose usually being self-amusement) starts an argument in a manner which attacks others on a forum without in any way listening to the arguments proposed by his or her peers. He will spark of such an argument via the use of ad hominem attacks (i.e. 'you're nothing but a fanboy' is a popular phrase) with no substance or relevance to back them up as well as straw man arguments, which he uses to simply avoid addressing the essence of the issue. (Exitium, 2003)

Furthermore, trolling as an act is defined as:

1. *Trolling 1*: Being a prick on the internet because you can. Typically unleashing one or more cynical or sarcastic remarks on an innocent by-stander, because it's the internet and, hey, you can. (EREAALLY GUD DEFUNITION MAKUR, 2004)
2. *Trolling 2*: Trolling is trying to get a rise out of someone. Forcing them to respond to you, either through wise-crackery, posting incorrect information, asking blatantly stupid questions, or other foolishness. However, trolling statements are never true or are ever meant to be construed as such. Nearly all trolled statements are meant to be funny to some people, so it does have some social/entertainment value.

"Trolling" isn't simply "harmful statements". Intentionally insulting/libelous statements are "flaming".

Just as bad as trolling is "Feeding the Trolls". This is when people say stuff that they know will prompt someone to respond with a trolled reply and/or replying to comments that are blatantly from a troll. This is especially true when a troll first makes his comment/reply, and (usually many) people respond, either trying to correct the troll, or express anger at the statement. At that point, the trolling was successful and has been fed. When encouraged by success and feeding, trolls often return. (Pachmoedius, 2009)

These definitions all have a common set of characteristics that are a good starting point toward defining trolling. One attribute shared by the definitions above is that the act of trolling is taken as a seemingly sincere contribution to a discourse that is, in reality, meant to subversively bait others into an emotional response or a conflictual discourse. This act is specifically performed for the amusement of the troll or other net-users of similar ideologies who enjoy witnessing the resulting inflammatory reactions of those trolled.

Up until recently, little research has addressed the lack of documentation on such forms of conflictive communication in CMC. However, a recent article by Hardaker (2010) addresses this lack of formalized academic understanding about trolling by studying the phenomenon as an instrumental act of impoliteness.

Similar to this thesis, Hardaker (2010) utilized Bousfield's (im)Politeness formalism, and studied the reactions of community members to the act of trolling. Doing so, she was able to reinterpret the first-order lay-person definitions into a second-order form, facilitating a more formal academic understanding of this relatively unstudied impolite phenomenon. Hardaker's formal definition of troller, as viewed through the lens of (im)politeness, is as follows:

A troller is a CMC user who constructs the identity of sincerely wishing to be part of the group in question, including professing, or conveying pseudo-sincere intentions, but whose real intention(s) is/are to cause disruption and/or to trigger or exacerbate conflict for the purposes of their own amusement. Just like malicious impoliteness, trolling can (1) be frustrated if users correctly interpret an intent to troll, but are not provoked into responding (cf. example 35), (2) be thwarted, if users correctly interpret an intent to troll, but counter in such a way as to curtail or neutralize the success of the troller (cf. examples 44_46), (3) fail, if users do not correctly interpret an intent to troll and are not provoked by the troller, or, (4) succeed, if users are deceived into believing the troller's pseudo-intention(s), and are provoked into responding sincerely (cf. example 39). Finally, users can mock troll (cf. example 25). That is, they may undertake what appears to be trolling with the aim of enhancing or increasing affect, or group cohesion. (2010, p. 237-238)

One will notice that there is indeed some amount of similarity in Hardaker's (2010) second-order definition of trolling to that of the first-order lay-person definitions given above. A further important development of Hardaker's analysis differentiates the act of flaming from that of trolling. Hardaker likens flaming, as performed by either an individual or by a community, to that of a heated or aggressive response. More importantly, this is a response to some form of stimuli, relegating flaming to that of a reactionary act that is employed in verbal conflict against some type of threat. Thus, trolling is active, whereas flaming is reactive.

This distinctly segregates the act of flaming to contexts of explicit and conflictive speech and trolling to scenarios of subversive and implicit baiting. Relegating flaming to the role of an explicit reactionary measure to some form of trigger seems to fit Bousfield's

(2008) claim that impoliteness in itself is a reaction to some form of stimuli and that there is rarely ever a context in which impoliteness is instigated without some form of logical motivation.

Trolling, however, seems to be harder to categorize according to Bousfield's estimation of how impoliteness occurs or are instigated. It is here that I find a slight weakness in Hardaker's (2010) definition of trolling as an act. Hardaker likens the act of trolling only to that of a subversive manipulation of a speech community in order to cause disruption. Yet there are instances in this thesis' data in which trolls act in a doggedly aggressive manner and manage to instigate conflicts across the entirety of an extended discourse. Furthermore, in these contexts, trolls in question have been called out as trolls, and yet they still continue to fight, pester, or incite responses from the group. Thus, I argue that, as it is the primary intent of trolls to (as per Hardaker's definition) "cause disruption and/or to trigger or exacerbate conflict for the purposes of their own amusement," they will do whatever is required in order to elicit this desired response. Therefore, if an outright dogged pursuit of a target or an FTA toward an ideology can act as an offensive trigger to incite others, they are thereby successful at baiting other interlocutors into a conflict, fulfilling the troll's want for self-gratification.

THE ROLE OF FLAMING AND TROLLING IN THE VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

Watson's (1997) article, "Why We Argue About Virtual Community", was never intended to serve as an academic introduction to the phenomenon of aggressive or antagonistic online behavior. His paper was interested very little in the pragmatic application of aggressive communications and the deeper role these behaviors play in the online societies that he studied. In fact, his intention was not even to highlight flaming as a major part of his study. Watson's primary focus was to argue for the validity of the label of virtual community as applied to the then-fledgling networks of users who shared information and resources to further the goals of their online social-aggregation (which was centered on furthering knowledge and collective resources of the band Phish). In turn, Watson's interest in the functional role that inflammatory speech played as a societal moderating tool within online group discussions was mostly secondary. Flaming was merely addressed by Watson as a

passing example of how the online group moderated itself from within and was just one of a few proofs of members systematizing order and a sense of ownership within the community.

Within Watson's (1997) study, flaming functioned to regulate the behavior of offensive or newer members, thereby training these offenders in the correct manners of the expected social norms and social interactions of the community. If a newer member went beyond what was considered the community norms of behavior, that individual would potentially face a punishment in the form of impolite or offensive emails sent en masse by the more dedicated forum frequenters. Thus, the community would police itself by verbally berating the newbie and bluntly informing the offender of his wrongdoing.

In turning to (im)politeness theory for a quick analysis of how regulatory flaming might work, one could consider the flames an FTA directed toward the positive face wants of the offender. Thus, the role of flaming was utilized as a mass regulatory punishment intending to cause immense positive face damage to the offender in order to curtail, prevent, and object to what was deemed inappropriate behavior. This, in turn, would help to reconstitute and reinforce the cultural values and expected societal norms of their virtual-community.

While many concepts within his study are somewhat out-of-date due to the vast changes seen in website-frameworks, and more importantly, due to the evolution of the roles that social websites of today play within our daily lives, Watson did provide a very important initial glimpse into the necessity for the impolite behavior of flaming. As well, he and other researchers within the early 1990's provided a first attempt to better understand why netizens feel the need to utilize such aggressive speech and why impoliteness has become a somewhat defining feature of exchanges within online interactions.

THE "METAPHOR" OF COMMUNITY

Community, as it applies to online groupings of netizens, is a somewhat tenuous concept that has been argued over by academics since the inception of social websites. Attributing the label "community" to websites dedicated to socializing such as Use.net or Phishfan.com gave rise to an argument between early internet social theorists such as Rheingold, who championed the label of community and likened the feeling of community in virtual world to that of a metaphor based in an empathic attachment or likeness to interaction

found in the real world, and scholars such as Postman (1993), who remained reluctant to assign a powerful word such as “community” to the world of online forums, message boards, and the like.

Instead, Postman preferred to adhere to the strict dictionary definition of the word “community” and interpret its meaning as a sacrosanct and immutable concept grounded in the reality and contextual physical proximity of not only shared space, but of a living, breathing, communicating, collective of neighbors and tangible societal groups. Postman’s classification of what constitutes a community is centered not simply upon members socializing, but upon members being mutually reliant and cooperatively interdependent for survival. Therefore, there is a necessity of involving oneself as an integral part of the system, or as Postman calls it, having a personal stake in the community. This means that connection to a society is not only directly analogous to continued survival, but also that the need for survival drives the betterment of the greater group as a whole.

Postman’s concept of stake involves active participation within the community and necessitates polite and diplomatic interaction with other members. It is crucial to maintain this tactful manner when interacting with other members, as failure to adhere to the diplomatic cultural standards set by the society would threaten one’s survival or wellbeing. As such, opponents of the label of community claimed that while forums, etc., were indeed a conglomerate of users communicating and pooling intellectual resources dedicated to the topic of collective purpose and interest, online social groups lacked the same stake involved within the traditional community sense. Distancing or removing oneself from the greater group does not hinder one’s chances of survival; thus, the amount of stake one would have in the community of insuring health, well-being, and the like, of every member would bear very little importance. The option to come and go as one pleases with little-to-no social repercussions, effectively distancing oneself from the community, provides far less of an attachment to the community.

Yet, Rheingold (1993) suggests that despite the lack of interdependence of survival (stake), users of forums were involved in a greater purpose of collective cooperative necessity. He proposes that the greater, and perhaps evolved, human purpose of the online community is to act more akin to a collective “online brain trust” or “computer mediated group-mind,” thereby satisfying Rheingold’s empathic feeling of a community working

together as if the members are striving for a common goal. In Rheingold's sense of virtual communities, behavior of the users is likened more to that of a collective swarming hive-mind of knowledge and societal cooperation dedicated to ever-evolving intellectual (or interest-based) advancement.

DISCOURSE: MOVING TOWARD A DIFFERENT FEELING OF COMMUNITY

While the foundational aspects of the argument over the definition of virtual communities are initially necessary to the topic at hand, it would be best to abandon the endless debate over the label of virtual communities before becoming too deeply mired in the arguments for or against. Whether or not social theorists are correctly applying the metaphor of community to online aggregations is of little concern to us. As a study of socio-linguistic and pragmatics orientation, this thesis is more concerned with analyzing the emerging and ever-evolving conventions of discourse unique to the medium of contemporary digital communication.

Social networks are built around the dissemination of information, ideas, culture, and shared interests among members. The exchange of these resources is what furthers the goals within the collective community and essentially fuels the need for interactions among members. The resources collectively established are then in turn taken in by untold numbers of reconstituted personae and then interpreted, agreed upon, amended, or debunked, according to the receivers' own ideological stances.

Arguably, it could be said that the conventions of communication in this medium are negotiated and reinterpreted incessantly by the participants of the community in this way as well. Online interaction, while having ties to the offline cultures that nurtured it, has evolved beyond its limitations of being textual or spoken utterances produced from disembodied faceless personae. As such, Rheingold's computer mediated group-mind has developed methods of communicating nuances that are otherwise limited to paralinguistic cues taken for granted in real world interaction (such as intonation, body language, and gesture). This means that effective communication in this medium requires a level of communicative competence beyond that of simply knowing how to speak, read, or write. Therefore, I in turn argue that the label of discourse community for online social aggregates as the elements

listed by Swales (1990) seem to represent a comprehensive taxonomy of the features inherent to the previously mentioned virtual communities.

Swales' six defining characteristics of a discourse community are as follows:

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.
2. A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
4. A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.
6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise. (p. 24-27)

Swales' First Three Characteristics

To briefly highlight the relevant connections that may be made to online communities, as per Swales' first three characteristics, this thesis has already extensively defined the manner in which these features are represented within CMC. Each virtual community has some common set of goals or interests for which it is established. These instances include, but are not limited to: Watson's Phishfan.net was dedicated to the collective furthering of interests and knowledge of the namesake band; Rheingold's Use.net was a bulletin-board/discussion style newsgroup; Facebook is a social networking site designed for facilitating friendships; and Xbox Live is an internet gaming hub designed for facilitating the buying of and playing of cooperative or competitive online video games. Each of these communities relies on the internet as the primary mechanism that makes their interest-based communities feasible. However, every community may make use of this mechanism for different capacities, further segregating discourse community types into more specialized subsets and genres (text-chat, comment chains, audio chat, video conferencing, etc.).

Discourse Genres

As for Swales' fourth characteristic, many online discourse communities have assimilated systems of offline communication and politeness norms into the base of their

own interactive conventions. While each net-based discourse community may require differing methods of delivery to suit the needs of the members, to understand the conventions of one community type's function-based language, may simultaneously give insight into competent communication within other CMC genres.

Genre Specific Lexis

For this study, it could be said that the MSNBC discussions may still be utilizing evolved forms of conventions established as far back as Use.net. Similarly, text-based lexis (Swales 5th characteristic) inherent to CMC have been evolving since as far back as the mid-90's. Emphatic acronyms, such as LOL (laughing out loud) and strings of all capitals (indicating shouting), represent older conventions, while newer conventions, such as FML (fuck my life) and as purposeful misspelling (representing haste, anger, or immaturity), are newer meaning-based constructions.

The Threshold of Enculturated Members

Swales' 6th characteristic could easily represent the net's disparity in communicative competence witnessed between those who behave or use forms more akin to enculturated users and those who interact with others according to conventions established offline. Learning to proficiently express one's self according to the net-centric utterance styles requires a great deal of practice (and arguably, study) and attunement to the forms and functions of particular elements (such as those described above). Thus, utterances produced by the more enculturated members act as examples of proper form and functionality within the medium. In mastering new forms of stylistic competence, newer users are effectively brought into the fold of the larger online communities.

MOVING ON

However one may be inclined to categorize online social aggregations, virtual or discourse communities have been fashioned to suit the ever-evolving dynamic interests of untold numbers of users. As such, to witness an enculturated net-user in action, one only needs to spend a short amount of time within the medium to gain a clearer perception of interaction between members as structured. Yet, even within cooperative discourses that follow proper rules of netiquette, one is quite likely to read one-shot insults or all-or-nothing

style conflictive discourses that may leave other members of the discourse entertained, perplexed, or outright offended. Thus, it is this fascinating phenomenon of semi-anonymous hyper-aggressive net-speech (flaming or trolling), and how the resulting communities utilize this new internet-savvy speech, that this thesis will analyze within the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

I wish trolls like you would stay under their rocks instead of polluting these discussion boards with their inane statements. You are adding absolutely nothing to the intelligent discussion of the article or the events in question.

--JS: *The MSNBC.com Troll-Hater*

Instrumental impoliteness is rarely an act performed without some type of provocation, trigger, or motivation. Likewise, one cannot study an act that is essentially triggered or reactionary in nature as a decontextualized utterance segregated from the situation that spawned it. Thus, to study impoliteness is to study an ever evolving discourse that is dependent upon understanding context speaker motivations, and communication beyond the speech event in which an act of impoliteness occurs.

COLLECTED DATA TYPES

The data used in this study are instances of conflictive discourses pulled from two online sources of naturally-occurring internet conversation. These sources represent distinctly different methods of interaction. The data consists of text from online forum message boards, which are available to the general public (such as MSN.com) and Recorded Voice Chat in pre- and post-game lobbies found on Halo 3 (an online videogame making use of the X-box Live internet-based gaming service). All data obtained in this study consists of naturally-occurring online-public conversations undertaken independently by the speakers with no goading, instigation, or influence by the researcher. The role of the researcher within these contexts is merely that of an unseen observer (in the case of the recorded pre- and post-game match footage) or invisible lurker (in the case of the MSN posts).

These two sources of data were chosen primarily because they represent contexts in which politeness-based interaction will run afoul of impoliteness-based conflictive discourses. In other words, within this particular internet community, the influence of the factors of environment, situation, context, and activity type allow speakers to optionally engage in either polite or impolite behavior. MSNBC.com was chosen over websites such as

4chan, Something Awful, and Reddit.com as the communicative norms of the discourse community is not based around primarily aggressive, conflictive, or offensive delivery of utterances. 4chan and Something Awful, in particular, are well known for their highly conflictive and antagonistic youth based culture. Websites such as these are meccas for enculturated internet goers who seek to share resources, interests, and collaborative goals in a more net-savvy manner, and the result is a less socially restrictive and more hostile discourse environment. These websites have also, in the past, been involved in collaborative anonymous internet activism, linked to large scale DDoS attacks, and havens of digital piracy.

Therefore, as the discussions found in the four websites listed above are extreme examples of ritual impoliteness (ritual insults) (Labov, 1972), determining instrumental impoliteness from mock offensiveness is virtually impossible without a more thorough understanding and discrimination of what constitutes true impoliteness from friendliness within the medium itself.

HALO 3 AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS

The *Halo 3* transcripts, which can be found within Appendix A, were obtained on November 7th and 8th of 2008 during the peak hours of online usage of the game *Halo 3*. At any given time, there were upwards of around 170,000 to 250,000 users playing the game in localized matches of 8 to 16 players connected simultaneously over the X-box Live network. This network acts as a centralized hub in which gamers from all over the world can connect together to play against one another for competition and fun. To facilitate the process of fluid multiplayer gaming and player networking, the game has a built-in matchmaking organizer that randomly assigns players of approximately equal skill and ability to games in which they may compete with others of the same proficiency. The massive amount of players means that rarely, if ever, will one see the same person twice without making personal connections via adding them to a buddy list and subsequently sending personal game invitations.

Each match consists of three phases: the pre-game match-up waiting room, the match itself, and the after-game waiting room, where players either leave the game or remain to play another round. The game types chosen for the purpose of this data gathering were the

typical 4-versus-4 and 8-vs.-8 player Slayer Matches (8 and 16 players, respectively). In the waiting rooms (pre and post-game), both teams are able to verbally interact with each other for roughly one to two minutes while the randomized game settings are voted upon and ultimately finalized. In total, each player will experience the others' presence for a total of approximately 15 to 20 minutes, most of which is within the competitive portion of the match itself. Furthermore, during the actual match the opposing teams are no longer able to converse with one another; only teammates can verbally interact during a match. Therefore, data was gathered inside the virtual waiting rooms so that the trash-talking and conflictive speech between opposing teams could be recorded.

The participants (players of the game) are slightly more difficult to define in terms of a cohesive social or age group. Firstly, it may be impossible to clearly gauge what age each speaker may be, as only the voice of the players can be heard. However, one can make rough estimations of age based on the vocal pitch of the speaker. It seems likely that the various speakers in the data are males of somewhere between the ages of 10 to 40, the majority of which fall within the younger tiers of that age bracket. Again, the top boundary of this range is an approximation based on vocal pitch.

It should also be noted that though there exists the capability to communicate via speech within the game, speaking is not a necessity or even a requirement to participate in the online matches. Special headsets with microphones are needed in order to speak during the match and the pre/post-game waiting rooms. Players may, or may not, participate in the spoken interaction. Players also have the ability to mute offensive or rude participants of the game, thereby providing relief from conflictive situations or harassment. Furthermore, a voice-masking service exists as an option for those who wish veil vocal distinctions such as pitch or sex. These abilities to mute others and mask one's own voice are but two of many safeguards offered to defend against or escape from the more offensive members of the online community.

METHODOLOGY OF HALO 3 DATA

To capture the short verbal exchanges between players, a video camera was set up in front of a television set and the dialogue was recorded. A video-recording of these events was chosen for two reasons, the first being that any time a player spoke in the waiting room,

a small icon would light up signifying the particular interlocutor. This was particularly beneficial for purposes of disambiguation when many interlocutors were all speaking all at once. The second reason for choosing a video recording is that the players (and more importantly the names of the players) may change each match. Without any visual cue, it may be virtually impossible allocate utterances to a specific entity.

Each video was then viewed and initially transcribed using a modified conventions of Schenkein (1978). The list of notations that have been utilized and adapted within this study are as follows:

.	indicates drop in intonation
?	rising intonation
:	elongated utterance sound
(.01 ~ 2.0)	pauses of approximate length to seconds
[start of an overlapping utterance
]	end of an overlapping utterance
==	speaker turn continues or bridges into another utterance
()	unclear vocal noise
(())	nonlinguistic nonverbal utterances e.g.((laughing)),((coughs))

MSN – FORUM COMMENT POSTS

The data within the MSNBC.com transcripts were taken from comment discussions following MSNBC news articles. At the time of this data collection, each article had garnered anywhere from between 300 to 1500 reader-generated responses. The Web-Articles being looked at are as follows:

- “Sun points a loaded gun at us”
(By Alan Boyle)
From here on referred to as “Sun Gun” (376 Comments at time of collection)
- “Pope makes NY's Timothy Dolan a Cardinal”
(By NBC News, MSNBC staff and news services)
From here on referred to as “Cardinal” (435 Comments at time of collection)
- “US soldier accused in Afghan massacre flown out of country”
(By NBC News, MSNBC staff and news services)
From here on referred to as “Soldier” (893 Comments at time of collection)

- “‘Kony 2012’ filmmaker Jason Russell diagnosed with psychosis, wife says”
(By R. Stickney, NBC News)

From here referred to as “Kony” (461 Comments at time of collection)

All of these transcripts contain the complete unedited text taken from the comment postings of the users involved within MSNBC discussion discourses. Alterations performed were slight formatting adjustments, removal of images and advertisements, and changes to the usernames of all participants.

It must also be noted that due to the lengthy nature of this conversational medium, the entirety of these discussions will not appear within the Appendix, as the text of these transcripts alone, even fully formatted to fit within the confines of these pages, would potentially cover 200 pages. Thus, this thesis will only look at choice instances of conflictive discourses within these transcripts.

A NOTE ON THE FORM OF THE DATA

The MSNBC discussion transcripts consist entirely of text-based blocks of utterances. As contextual links between statements can often be difficult to discern, MSNBC typically allows follow-up responses to original posts to be nested and indented directly below the utterances that spurred the responses. This nesting feature allows users to maintain the contextual relevance of their responses by arranging them closer to the comment of relevance. Often, chains of responses found within these nestings will form lengthy topical conversations (especially near the original posts). Furthermore, some groupings of these comment chains will often lead to isolated pockets of topic-chained discourse between users amongst hordes of other one-shot statements. That said, even with these pockets of extended discourse, the vast majority of user utterances are so wildly varied in topic, scope, point of view, register, and agenda that it is almost impossible to predict what sorts of responses will appear and how the discourse chain will ultimately come to a conclusion. As a result of this chaotically widespread and varied topic chain style discourse, responses typically occur in nested chains with complex topic structures.

To reiterate, there are 2 sources of data analyzed in this study, all naturally occurring:

1. Forum posts gathered from various articles found on MSNBC.com.
2. Recorded footage of pre- and post-game matches of Halo 3.

CHAPTER 4

HALO 3 DATA AND ANALYSIS

SETTING UP THE ONLINE REALM

Put up your flame shield, because you're about to get some hate...
--Jak: IGN.com-troll-responder

As the very nature of the Internet allows the user to mask or hide his or her true persona, one can portray to others whatever personality one wishes. In addition, interactions within the online gaming community can be difficult to analyze for aggressive or inflammatory speech acts unless one accounts for what kinds of connections players have to one another within the gaming network. In attempting this, I will analyze how Levinson's activity types or situations affect the motivations of speakers. More specifically, within the context of the activity I will need to establish not only the social roles, but also the discourse roles, that have a direct bearing on how users communicatively organize themselves within the evolving discourse.

LEVINSON'S ACTIVITY TYPES AND INDIFFERENCE TO AUDIENCE

Unlike societies found in the real world, within the context of this Halo 3 gamer community, building long-term social relationships with other players is virtually non-essential to the enjoyment of the standard online competition. As well, because players are virtually anonymous and the moments of interaction that an individual has with other players are limited in time, an individual's acknowledgement of real-world social courtesy need not play a role within the interactions between these online participants.

What may seem offensive within a real-world context may be considered a normal ritual of online communication to those enculturated to virtual societies. It is important to remember that, in this medium, elements such as turn-taking, topic maintenance, relevance, and expectancies of politeness can be manipulated to suit the whims of antagonistic speakers in their bids for advantage or group solidarity. Thus, the reconstituted personas of interlocutors' methods of face building (or in the case of flaming and trolling, face damaging

methods of expression) need not be similar or even remotely analogous to strategies dedicated to building and maintaining strong social relationships over a long period of time.

In order to understand why an individual may choose to speak in such a seemingly unmotivated and explicitly harsh manner such as flaming, I will first analyze Levinson's (1979) notion of situation or activity as it relates to the anonymous user within the realm of the Computer-Mediated-Conversation. In the case of the Halo 3 data, the activity is an online video-game. The players are virtually represented by digital avatars capable of performing specific tasks according to the mandates of the established game. Furthermore, this is a competitive experience that breeds rivalry between players; and, as in any competition, there is some amount of contention amongst members and teams to achieve victory.

Thus, even though players are randomly arranged in teams via a mathematical algorithm, players, as perceived, are immediately assigned a set of role expectations dictated by the activity type, i.e., the roles of teammate and opposing player. These roles may be further influenced by a player's numerical rank, and an estimate of the degree of skill or competency is immediately expected. Furthermore, this rank could also indicate a greater amount of enculturation of the user. If a player possesses a higher rank, this could represent the player's having invested a great deal of time, not only honing his skill in the game, but also indirectly negotiating the conversational architecture of the medium.

It is by these expectations of competency, team designation, and spoken language that a framework of instant social relationships initializes the archetypical roles understood by the players to be an integral part of the game. This assignment of social roles quickly establishes how they will view one another within their finite time spent together as teammates or enemies. As a result, even silent players will quickly be relegated to vacillating roles of comrade or enemy, to skilled player or noob, and to cooperative, antagonistic, or lone wolf.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE ROLE

As observed above, matches may consist of friends who have grouped together and are moving from game to game enjoying the experience as a cohesive or cooperative unit alongside other randomized teammates and opponents. In addition, if one had a pleasant experience cooperating or competing with another player, one has the option of sending a

friend invite so that they may game together in the future. Similarly, there are groups of players who engage in competitive play on teams or in pro-gaming leagues, and it should be assumed that in these cases, there is indeed some form of long-term social associations and diplomatic social mechanics at work furthering the need for relations among members.

Furthemore, it is not the case that in all situations players band together (according to the roles dictated by the activity) to flame or troll members of the opposite team. One will witness situations of both jocular camaraderie (similar to Labov's ritual insults) and obscenity-filled flaming. So, in this environment, one will not always arrive within a waiting room filled with abusive players. The examples below of conflictive impoliteness are taken from hours of data gathered over many matches, and often waiting rooms consist entirely of silent players not engaging in any form of communication at all. Thus, the data in the analysis to follow is not indicative of every group of players that converge in a waiting room.

THE FACE, THE STAGE, AND THE PERSONA

So, as socially lubricative forms of communication are employed to maintain long term relationships are virtually unnecessary, what forms of communication or interactions are expressed instead by the more vocal members? It seems that a competitive, aggressive or conflictive face is revealed in many (but not all) players. In a manner reminiscent of Coates' (1999) analysis of backstage speech, it seems that the internet provides these players a secure zone of social interaction in which a less socially-restrained self may be pushed forward, effectively unleashing the speaker's repressed face and replacing it with a whole new unrestrained online remediated self.

Thus, players, taking advantage of the remediated self, in turn no longer feel constrained by adhering to the societal pressures of appropriate behavioral norms. This does not mean that a player's underlying self is inherently nasty or vile; it is just that the veiled aspect of the internet allows players to perform roles that they would otherwise be unable to get away with in their physical society. This may explain why, for some users, there seems to be a removal of any pretense of social awkwardness or fear of societal reproach when speaking in a blatantly offensive manner, as this type of behavior is facilitated by the anonymity of the net. Players who wish to be offensive need not fear identification or facing

the consequences of their actions, as the community of some 200,000 players will insure that any chance encounter with someone known within the physical world will be rare.

POTENTIAL IMPOLITENESS (INDIFFERENCE TO AUDIENCE – PART 1)

Often players within this particular online medium will talk more openly about socially awkward and particularly offensive (taboo) subjects, that if brought up within the real physical world would be talked about only amongst close friends or confidants, not out in public. In the conversation that follows, it seems that the interlocutors are in no way concerned about whether or not outsiders to the conversation can hear or even react to their topic, nor are they concerned about whether their taboo speech is offending anyone.

Curiously, even though there are other members present and able to observe or overhear their discourse, these performers seem to care very little about expressing taboo or obscene topics or forcing an audience to experience the dialogue. In this sense, one could even liken the two interactants to performers attempting to put on a raucous show for those of like-minded ideologies. If this is the case, then at least some portion of the audience may matter to the performers, and in performing their taboo act, they may hope to gain positive face reinforcement from those of their ilk. Therefore, their face wants may simultaneously be to act offensively by broaching taboo topics while entertaining those who share similar values, all at the expense of potentially upsetting some members of the discourse (thereby implying that the positive face wants of those others are unimportant). Similarly, offending others may make the act all the more rewarding to the speakers and those who find value in this form of entertainment.

As one will come to see, in both the Halo 3 and MSNBC transcripts, the audience is often placed into the role of a willing or unwilling observer, while the more antagonistic members of the discourse may flame or troll (offend or bait) them in an attempt to get the silent observers to react conflictually. But should these silent observers truly be assigned a role of willing or unwilling hearers? It is impossible to interpret the feelings or thoughts of the silent or subordinate members of the waiting room discourse. Thus, I cannot say whether audience members beyond the immediate discourse may either be entertained by the conflict or opt to remain hidden to avoid facing the bully's wrath.

Furthermore, as will become clear in later excerpts, cases of cyber-bullying the audience, as well as those placed in a subordinate speaking role to the dominant speaker, plays a supporting role within conflictual discourses. The vocal portion of the audience in particular plays a more important role in these contexts beyond that of the simple bystanders, as they effectively offer positive face reinforcement to the dominant interlocutor's flames, which consequently further diminishes the flamed addressee's value positive face. At the same time, the vocal audience members ultimately help to enforce the expected or emerging cultural norms of the small group of players by supporting the ideology of the dominant interlocutor.

However, before diving into actual instances of on record impoliteness FTAs, I will start my study with a congenial (yet taboo) conversation cooperatively engaged in by almost all of the members of a Halo 3 pre-game waiting room. What made the conversation in the following transcript so striking was the readiness for all participants in the discourse, at first meeting, to speak so openly and at length about particularly vulgar and taboo topics while not ostracizing any particular member of the conversation for being unenculturated. In fact, the overly casual nature of the exchange reveals a somewhat striking camaraderie amongst the players in that there is little social posturing or flaming amongst the members, and as a result, little reason to hierarchically suppress or react harshly toward one another. No explicit flaming (according to the currently established definitions of impoliteness) occurs within the context of the initial pre-game waiting room. With the exception two violently racist utterances by Jan, all members of the conversation are amenable and willing participants, actively furthering the collective communicative goal of the group.

Excerpt 1 (taken from Transcript 1 of Appendix A):

Conversation Members – Pregame:

Red Team

X12

X05

Jan

Wobbley

Blue Team

Gotanewbjob

Nightmare**Wutang****BadKarma**

X05: Oh, a nightmare ? (0.2) I hate those .

BadKarma: ((Laughs))

X12: () Wutang () () ()

X05: Just got a no:ob-job ? (joking about a player's name)

((Random Laughing))

BadKarma: Wow .

Gotanewbjob: I ha- I [hate those]=

Wutang: [Yeah, that's] a good one

X05: =What ?

Gotanewbjob: I said I hate those

Wutang: Dude, newbjobs are the best ones, bro .

Jan: ((Using deep voice-masking)) Kill the ni:ggers

BadKarma: ((Laughs)) What ? Are you serious ?

((Random murmuring from all players.))

X05: Just got a no:ob job .

X12: ((Laughs))

Wutang: Never had a noob job before ?

BadKarma: Is that like a stick-job ?

X05: No, I do[n't get bjs .]

Wutang: [() ()] () bitch don't know what she's doing

Wutang: () =

X05: =I only get vjs

C12: [() () ()]

Wutang: [You only get] vjs ?

BadKarma: Yeah, that was a no jo[b, actually]

Wutang: [() ()] () ()

X12: () () [()]

- X05:** [You] don't know what a vj is ?
- X12:** [() () ()]
- X05:** [You don't]know what a vj is ?
- BadKarma:** Is it [like a blumpkin ?]
- Wutang:** [That's why I asked] what what what, what what what ?
- X05:** If you don't know what it is, you can't afford it ((Laughs))
- Wutang:** What, a vj?
- X05:** () oh my god, () .
- BadKarma:** I pre[fer the blumpkin .]
- Wutang:** [() () I.. I have] a lot of money though .
- Wutang:** Well, what is it? Cause, if I find out what it is I got enough
- Money** (0.4) Honestly .

((Game's 5 second countdown begins))

Jan: ((Using deep voice-masking.)) Kill the ni:ggers

((The match and play begins))

Nightmare (to team):

Anyway. ((Laughs)) (2.2) That's a pretty good way to start a match . (0.2) Betcha it pisses off black people .

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 7, 2008)

Setting aside the two utterances produced by Jan for the moment, though the content of the discourse was somewhat obscene, the general consensus amongst the group, due to cues of laughing and playing off of one another's jokes, was that the topic (taboo or not) was consensually agreed upon by the group at-large to be acceptable in the given context. As such, this manner of interaction falls more in line with Labov's (1972) study of inner-city black adolescents' ritual insults or Culpeper's (1996) study of mock impoliteness banter, where a speaker's offensive speech acts were not intended (and it was understood by H) as true impolite criticism or offensiveness toward other members of the group. Thus, while the topics of sexually explicit acts, noob-jobs, misogyny, and making light of one another's gamer tags above may be highly taboo in nature, and the language unpleasant for those who dislike talking or hearing about taboo topics, it is all a part of the communicative bonding of

their emerging, yet fleeting, social group. To put it more succinctly, these mock and ritual forms of taboo offensiveness in which members pick on one another are merely “offensive way(s) of being friendly,” (Leech, 1983, p. 144) and are understood by speakers and hearers to be furthering the communicative goals of the community and its members in socially acceptable manners.

Yet, one element of the discourse, the taboo set of utterances by Jan, is somewhat more complicated to analyze in terms of (im)politeness theory. In effect, Jan has performed an extremely taboo FTA when uttering, “((Using deep voice-masking.)) Kill the ni:ggers.” Can it be effectively argued that this was an FTA flung at the audience in general with the intent of causing offense? Or should this FTA be considered an impolite bid for positive face gains?

In order to answer these questions we must determine the nature of the group and the community of which these speakers belong. The utterances produced by Jan go far beyond racial insensitivity and that of simply producing racial epithets as they invoke a clear call for violence toward an entire ethnic group. Furthermore, the speaker has drawn a clear distinction between himself, his in-group, what he perceives to be the values of the online communities, and the entities (here non-white, specifically black ethnicities) he identifies as being within his (and by extension the community’s) out-group.

The ideals of this particular Halo 3 speech community with which Jan identifies may change according to context, but primarily, as witnessed in the transcripts above and those to follow, the community seems to find racist or white supremacist ideologies favorable, going so far as to utilize racial epithets and hate speech to signify ethnic inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Furthermore, the dominant community values expressed within these transcripts often suggest strongly hetero-normative and sexist ideals to the point of being homophobic and aggressively masculine in nature.

Thus, in returning to an assessment of Jan’s motives, the speaker must have known he was being offensive, and therefore this racially charged act of impolite speech was a calculated risk of an enculturated net user to curry positive face acceptance with the group at large. By laughing and making light of the remarks, the addressees in turn seem virtually unfazed by the harshness of Jan’s utterance and the group demonstrates that taboo utterances of offensive racial exclusivity are acceptable turns of phrase given the context.

In closing, Jan knew that in this context, and veiled with voice-masking to create a somewhat abnormal auditory effect, his obscene utterance would be taken lightly by what must otherwise be considered a dominantly white group. As a result, rather than being ostracized by the group for being racially offensive, impolite, or shocking, Jan instead was able to curry favor with the collective group, gaining positive face reinforcement through laughs and murmurs of approval. Therefore, one could make a presumption that the exceedingly taboo FTA was a well-calculated (im)politeness FTA bid for positive face group acceptance and ultimately not a true impoliteness attack upon any specific entity within the discourse's value of face.

POTENTIAL IMPOLITENESS (INDIFFERENCE TO AUDIENCE – PART 2)

Returning to Coates' backstage personas, one such instance of backstage conversation was recorded during a 4-vs.-4 pregame waiting room. The speaker, Playerfound, speaks frankly and at length about what must be assumed is his real-life friend's shockingly-explicit story in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix A):

Playerfound: ...Computer (1.8) And then um, (0.2) yeah he said that to them and then um (0.2) they believed him so then uh (0.2) they accused his sister of looking up the lesbian porn so it was.... (0.4) And then his sister's like so ugly so (0.2) All of us laughing at him was like you're gonna end up getting freaking bitch-slapped- by your sister's strap on.

Paradox: () (Unintelligible Noise)

Playerfound: Yes.. but-

Paradox: ():

Playerfound: yeah... [ah-=]

Paradox: [():]

Playerfound: =Because he has all his in his computer.

Playerfound: Yeah he () () why wouldn't he sound like he was caring

I mean if you're trying to defend yourself .

((Conversation Break))

Playerfound: Veto
BadKarma: Th[is-]
Warscr8tion: [Veto]
Playerfound: [Veto]

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 7, 2008)

The blunt, sexist, and homophobic aligned register in Playerfound's and Paradox's speech is more akin to taboo backstage speech shared between members of an intimate social group than that of a register associated with meeting new people formally. Furthermore, the topic is a particularly taboo subject matter if spoken about in public, let alone a subject broached when first meeting others. Playerfound's and Paradox's lack of a change to a more courteous register when the game placed themselves and unfamiliar players together in the waiting room shows that they cared little for any negative consequence or retribution that may have occurred due to their topic. Playerfound's manner may also signify that he considers his own personal in-group to consist of only himself and Paradox as the dominant enculturated interlocutors. This seems likely as they he did not feel any apprehension to being thought of as crass, sexist, or aggressively hetero-normative, and go on to express their values across the arena of speech, going so far as to snub the potential wants of other listeners (the potential want of not wanting to listen to the sexually explicit narrative). Thus, as Playerfound unabashedly and unapologetically announces that his ideologies will be dominant ideologies for this discourse by finishing his narrative, it must assumed that their notice of the addition of six other people as listeners did not affect their process of interaction or the formulation of their desired representation of community.

WRAPPING UP POTENTIAL IMPOLITENESS

In both of the prior conversations, the primary interactants have collectively opted to further the transfer of information and adhere to the tenets of cooperative communication. Yet their taboo topics could potentially have offended others listening in. It is here that a few questions must be asked and eventually addressed. First, should this manner of casual spoken register, or perhaps indifference to and lack of consideration toward the audience beyond the dyad, be considered an impolite speech event? Furthermore, suppose that it was not the primary intent of the speaker to offend others or that they were accidentally

inconsiderate toward their potential audience. If a silent member of the waiting room (like Wobblypress), were offended, could it be said that these speakers were successful in producing conflictive or potentially inflammatory FTAs? These are questions that will surface time and time again in this study, and in order to fully address these these issues, this thesis will need build up a cohesive argument using both examples of accidental or purposeful indifference to observers and trolling as an indirect speech act. Thus, an answer will not be formally addressed and answered until the discussion of Chapter 6. For the moment, however, I will address what has witnessed within the first two Excerpts.

According to Bousfield (2008), only utterances produced by a speaker bearing malicious or offensive intent toward a definable individual (the addressee), who understands this act to be willfully impolite, should be examples of true impolite speech acts. Unfortunately, it is practically impossible to determine whether the conversations above were intended to unnerve or gross out other members of the waiting room. All one can do is note what occurs.

However, thus far in the examples, one may also note that the taboo language, specifically Jan's speech act of taboo racism and Playerfound's sexist and homophobic soliloquy, refer to non-participants far removed from the immediate discourse. This speech community often seems negotiate its own cultural norms and ideals by engaging in racist, sexist, and homophobic communicative behavior at the expense of non-present or socially nonstandard members of the community. In other words, the in-group solidarity seems to often be grounded in the cooperative and co-constructed disdain for the community's non-socio-normative or non-standard out-groups. Thus, while these acts of impoliteness may not be considered as taboo or offensive toward members of the dominant ideological group, the taboo language certainly would be highly offensive to some entity of the out-groups, were they to be present.

Somewhat less dynamically, these out-groups may take other more benign forms. As we will come to see within the discourses of the Halo 3 data, in-group and out-groups pairs may consist of Levinson activity role couplings such as: skilled player vs. noob (unskilled player), enculturated vs. unenculturated community members, and the aggressively vocal vs. silent or passive interlocutors.

Thus, as this thesis is concerned with looking at extended transcripts of impoliteness events, evidence of intent to offend may emerge from successive turns in speakers' and addressees' responses to one another, either by the addressee taking offense to the original questionable utterance or by the initial speaker making his intended conflictive message clearer by producing an on record FTA. Thus, as one will see in the Excerpt (4) (after a brief discussion on off record impoliteness), the speaker Playerfound does indeed engage in conflictive speech very shortly following his session of unconcerned banter.

POTENTIALLY INDIRECT IMPOLITENESS

Up until this point in the discourse, all of the other newly-arrived players had opted not to engage in any form of communication other than to command others to veto a disliked game setting. After a brief pause following the various players' veto commands, and subsequently, perhaps after the air had cleared from the former conversation, a third participant, BadKarma (a member of the opposite team), makes mention of Playerfound's previous topic (see Excerpt 3):

Excerpt 3 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix A):

BadKarma: This is sort of an awkward conversation to come into a game to, actually (.)

Playerfound: Augh=

BadKarma: =Sorta feel a little nervous.

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 7, 2008)

This interjection by BadKarma was the first time any other participant, save Playerfound and Paradox, had taken part in the conversation during the pre-game waiting room session. It is impossible to tell whether or not BadKarma was truly offended by Playerfound's manner and taboo topic, taking an impolite or jocular jab at the previous interlocutors, bantering socially in the same register as the other two, or politely indicating the previous taboo topic was unwelcome. Perhaps BadKarma's response consisted of a smattering of all three processes described above. Furthermore, the intonation present in BadKarma's utterance (based on the audio) suggests more that his intention was to play at mock-seriousness or sarcasm rather than that of genuinely having been offended. Yet a significant question arises here: did BadKarma just get away with a covert (off record or sarcastic) insult?

In terms of (im)politeness theory, it seems that BadKarma does not explicitly go on record and attack, nor does he attempt overtly to damage the face of the other interlocutors; instead, he may be covertly performing an FTA off record, attempting to show discontent at the previous topic or the interlocutors themselves. As a result, he is able to express his opinion of the conversational topic and remain unscathed.

Furthermore, if one of the interlocutors did sense that he had attempted to insult them, BadKarma may very well have been able to wriggle his way out of an entanglement by denying any ill intent. To reinforce his utterance as being seemingly innocuous, BadKarma utilizes politeness markers, in particular hedging words and constructions, in order to diminish the threat to Playerfound's and Paradox's face. In so doing, BadKarma is diminishing the threat of an inflammatory response to himself.

If indeed this was an off record attempt at impoliteness, in particular Bousfield's domain of off record sarcasm, BadKarma may strategically have played to an advantage here, as he has secondarily made himself a fringe investment in the conversation. At the same time, he has also shown that he is a cunning member of the discourse community with his offhanded remark. However, an important question arises here: if BadKarma did negotiate the rules of the culture and was able to get away with producing an off record insult unscathed, could he then be said to be furthering the overall goal of the previous interlocutors; and, as such, was his statement truly an act of impoliteness if Playerfound did not perceive the utterance as such?

BadKarma within this context may have been sensed by the others to be furthering the goals of the conversation by commenting cunningly and acting as a supportive audience member who is conducive to their ideologies. Thusly, his addition was taken by the originators of the conversation as an acceptable turn of phrase for response and linguistically averted future potential entanglement with a potentially volatile interlocutor.

Hierarchical Speech Rights of the Offender

I will now examine a trend in the way that impolite speech practices are employed within these three-to-five-minute time spans in order to impose an almost instant makeshift hierarchy among the participants. Generally speaking, it is the most verbally-abusive or strategically-conflictive speakers who attempt to organize a hierarchy of dominance, with themselves at the top. In order to accomplish this, they employ blatant and evocative, often

obnoxious, verbal attacks toward others. Thus, those who are aggressive enculturated speakers will often harshly flame anyone who may have attempted to make a bid for spoken supremacy. Furthermore, there are instances where, to express their dominance over the arena of discourse, aggressors may verbally violate those who seem weaker, less cunning, or those who deviate from the aggressors' views as socially acceptable behaviors.

The rights of employing conflictive conversational tactics, in the manner described above, seem to be reserved for only the most vocal and aggressive (or perhaps vocally outstanding) members of the community; and they, alongside their contextually organized subordinate pack-mates, in turn disallow others the right to successive spoken turns in the discourse by sheer locutionary force. Thus, if these aggressive speakers (aggressors) deem others unacceptable or a threat to their hierarchy (or a threat to their collective reserve of face), then by their own self-appointed position as moderators of the community norms will they then attempt to cow others into acquiescence using strategies of vicious face attacks.

Yet, what happens when someone (seemingly) speaking according to the tenets of politeness runs afoul of one of these conflictive speakers? As one will see in the examples below, when someone simply speaks conversationally or matter-of-factly, the more-vocal members present (or perhaps the more contextually enculturated or culturally idealistic members) may not approve or may feel that the speaker's contribution to the open arena of conversation does not fit the bill of whatever the preconceived notion of community norms of conversational assembly may be.

An example of this forcibly arranged hierarchy can be witnessed just after BadKarma's indirect utterance in Excerpt 3. Playerfound has thus far found no immediate threat in BadKarma's utterance, but instead, moments later, he verbally violates his teammate Warscr8tion when Warscr8tion missteps with his jocular statement. In doing so, Playerfound also informs everyone else of his discontent with his teammate Warscr8tion:

Excerpt 4 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix A):

Warscr8tion: Alright (0.2) everyone get on a mongoose and we'll be good

Playerfound: ((Guttural Laugh)) Hey, hey red team (0.4) Red team. (1.0) I call lasers (1.2) If you spawn on lasers (0.2) alright, don't pick it up . I call it, cause I'm gonna betray my teammates with it . (0.8) I'm gonna rape, (0.4) I'm gonna rape warscr8tion. (2.0)

Playerfound: Aww, that's no fun, eh ?

((Indiscernible chatter from multiple people: ()))

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 7, 2008)

Just as in Excerpt 2, Playerfound continues speaking in his backstage register, but this time, he turns his attentions toward flaming and threatening his own teammate; in particular, Playerfound explicitly expresses what he will do to his teammate in the game, likening his forthcoming actions to that of a violent sexual assault. Again, he resorts to taboo speech in this aggressive attempt at causing positive face damage. When his teammate (Warscre8tion) refuses to respond, Playerfound follows up the silence as if the silence is in itself a response from Warscr8tion. Playerfound's immediate goading of "Aww, that's no fun, eh?" could be considered an on record attempt to incite an emotional or evocative response from Warscr8tion. But more importantly, Warscr8tion's opting out of the conversation and his refusal to fight back could be viewed as one of two things: either an acquiescence of power, or alternatively, a salient and "communicative" silent refusal that passive-aggressively expresses his disinterest in playing along (e.g., giving Playerfound the silent treatment). Regardless of Warscr8tion's approach, Playerfound has dominated his opponent via a blunt tongue-lashing.

TRUE IMPOLITENESS IN CONTEXT (EXPLAINING ON RECORD IMPOLITENESS)

So what precisely happened in Excerpt 4, how were (im)politeness strategies employed, and how do these two examples of potential impoliteness (and the subsequent response given by the offende) play out according to (im)politeness theory? In this instance, in order to put his teammate in his place, Playerfound employs an explicit on record insult and lambastes Warscre8tion in front of an audience, effectively displaying his disapproval of Warscre8tion's prior statement (the 1st turn of Excerpt 4). Yet, Warscr8tion seems hesitant to be drawn into a conflict and instead opts to remain silent, opting to not perform an FTA. Playerfound senses Warscr8tion's unwillingness to respond and seemingly interprets Warscr8tion's silence as acquiescence to the makeshift forced hierarchy established by himself (Playerfound), the stronger speaker.

Bousfield diagrams the structure of typical impolite conversational response options in Figure 1. According to Bousfield's diagram, one must start with Playerfound's reaction (Warscre8tion's comment) to an initial stimulus, a triggering event. It is then that Playerfound employs a reactionary Threatening FTA, Respond > Deny Opposition > Counter > Offensive. It is worth noting that in an earlier chart by Bousfield, he simply lists this as Respond > Counter > Offensive, and it seems that in this case, Bousfield's earlier and simpler chart may be a much more accurate assessment of how this particular argument is started. Regardless, when faced with Playerfound's offensive onslaught of threats, Warscr8tion opts to choose the strategy of "Do Not Respond (linguistically withdraw from the exchange)." I will return to this particular figure when looking at further conversations in the data.

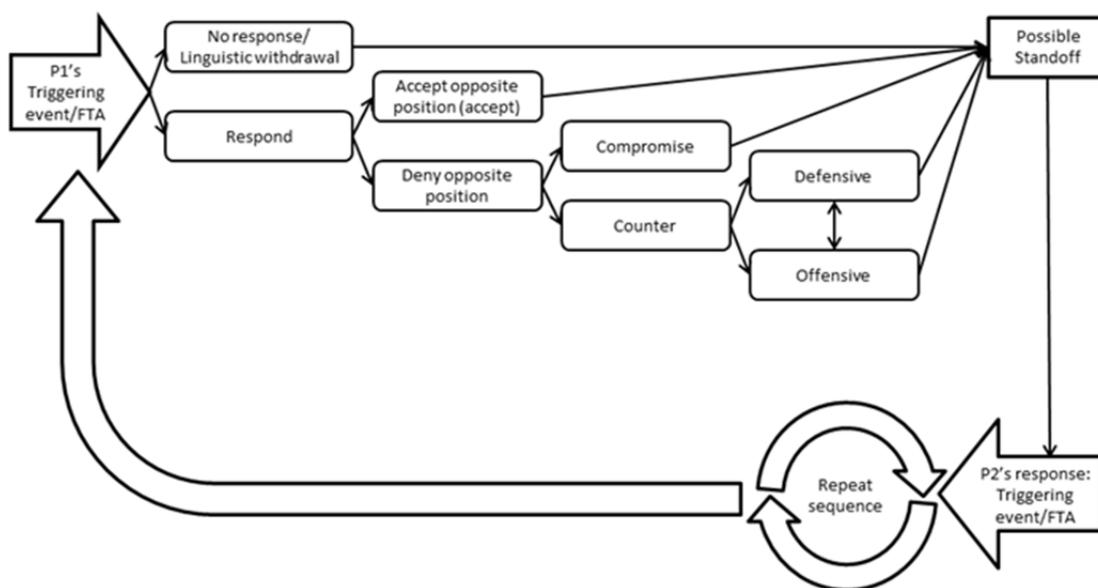


Figure 1. By Dr. Brian Spitzberg. Summary of response options (extended). Source: Bousfield, D. (2008). *Impoliteness in interaction*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 219.

TRUE IMPOLITENESS IN CONTEXT 2

Excerpt 5, below, is a perfect introduction for easing into not only Bousfield's triggering events, but also how taboo language plays an important role in expressing impolite FTA's.

Excerpt 5 (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix A):

Conversation Members (Pre-Game)

(Red Team) (Blue Team)

Niase **Brando****Noodle** **p1ay3r****Kami** **NastyVirus****Babypirate** **SHADOW****Assassin** **daddyfish(1)****Autistik1** **daddyfish****Badkarma** **Gio****Brando:** Ya:::y ?=**BadKarma:** =N::o .**Assassin:** Fuck capture the flag .**Babypirate:** ((Coughs))**Babypirate:** ()**Babypirate:** ()**Babypirate:** () ()

((veto timer begins))

Babypirate: No ? Nobody veto=**SHADOW:** =() gonna be a crappy game.**Babypirate:** You gotta be kidding me: .**BadKarma:** I believe they're not .

((veto timer ends – people vetoed capture the flag – another game type takes its place))

Babypirate: I wanna do flags, fuck ? .**BadKarma:** Get used to it kid (0.6) it's called life .**Babypirate:** ()**Babypirate:** What the fuck ?**Babypirate:** () whore .**Babypirate:** ()

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 7, 2008)

In the preceding except, one will notice immediately the discontent of members BadKarma and Assassin at the randomized initial game type. Assassin goes so far as to express his distaste in taboo language: “Fuck capture the flag.” These two utterances, by the definitions established thus far, convey a mutual discontent that is shared between these two interlocutors, and the responses, while irritable, are not expressive of uncooperative conflictual behavior. The interlocutors are just collectively expressing their dissatisfaction at the game type. What is more relevant to the topic at hand is the reaction by Babypirate to the changing of his disliked game type (to a game type he does not prefer but Badkarma and Assassin do).

Judging by the pitch of the speaker’s voice, Babypirate is a child between the ages of 12 to 14. When the game type changes (away from his wants), he becomes increasingly higher pitched, more vitriolic, and more taboo in his lexical choices. For this case of impoliteness, his triggering event appears to be the realization that the game type he dislikes has been voted for and will ultimately replace his desired outcome. He then begins to spout increasingly obscene (impolite FTAs) utterances while whining in frustration.

Of curious importance here is that BadKarma broaches the topic of Babypirate’s discontent twice with seemingly curt FTAs of off record impoliteness. He goes so far as to marginalize BabyPirate’s importance within the group, or more specifically, marginalize his expressed discontent, with the strategic diminutive, “kid,” thereby suggestively implying that Babypirate has acted immaturely. This diminutive in turn seems to act as a secondary trigger to Babypirate, who then turns his attention to the audience as a whole, emitting FTAs expressing discontent, not only with the game type, but also the other players collectively, “What the fuck?” He even goes so far as to call someone (presumably BadKarma) a “XX whore.”

This brings up the question: what, if anything, is the difference between the utterances of Assassin, “Fuck capture the flag,” and the utterances by Babypirate, “I wanna do flags, fuck ? What the fuck ? () whore”. The difference here is in the context from which the utterances originated. In the case of BadKarma and Assassin, they are objecting to a game. Their utterances are not directed at any specific entity within the discourse, and, as such, they are merely expressing distaste in an explicit and on record manner. Furthermore,

prior to the game-type's veto, they cooperatively construct a mutual expression of dislike of the game type.

Babypirate's utterances, however, are a vitriolic reaction, objecting to a game change away from one he wanted. In essence, his griping is due to his wants being vetoed by the other players, and in reaction, he explicitly expresses his discontent at having his face wants rejected by similarly expressing distaste, further flaming the positive face wants of those who he feels disabused him. Thus, there is no real difference in the utterances, except presumably Babypirate's "What the fuck ? () whore." being offensively directed at some specific addressee with the intent of damaging face via epithetic name calling.

RAMPING UP THE DIFFICULTY: HIERARCHICAL SPEECH RIGHTS OF THE OFFENDER DENIED

Thus far, it seems that aggressive forms of speech are used to regulate others' behavior in a one-chance-only approach to social interaction. If a speaker is viewed as doing, saying, acting, or being anything unacceptable by the hyper-aggressive dominant interlocutor, a regulatory berating is applied. This phenomenon of an aggression response is very similar to what was discussed by Watson (1997). To reiterate, Watson points out that those who did not abide by the norms or rules of the community were subject to flaming. Watson assumed flaming to be an overtly aggressive means of maintaining and expressing the community's ideals and principals by imposing them upon those who deviate or who show ignorance to the community's social norms. Furthermore, this act, according to Watson, is generally abusive by nature and often performed en masse by a large group of community members via texts, posts, or emails, all uniformly directed toward the offender. Thus, Watson claimed that the solidarity of a community is maintained by defending their invested interests and social norms are imposed by the dedicated majority of enculturated users within an online social sphere punishing a deviant offender.

Here, however, this same regulatory action used to enforce community norms on message boards (like MSNBC) can be seen in today's online video-games and expressed in examples like those shown above in Excerpts 4 and 5 and below in Excerpt 6. In Excerpt 6, however, there are not responses en masse, as Watson described, but one or more persons involved within the conversation ganging up on a deviant member of the society.

In the following exchange, a member of one team (Junker) states his feelings within what he considers to be a good conversational opener. However, other interlocutors respond with a verbal berating, and they subsequently begin to flame the offender in a bald on record manner (or in Bousfield's terms on record impoliteness), intending to inflict as much face damage in as short a time as possible (See Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6 (taken from Transcript 5 of Appendix A):

- Junker:** I'm so happy I don't have church in the morning, tomorrow .
- Rain:** [((Lau)ghing)]
- BadKarma:** [Yeah]
- Trance:** [((Laughing))=
- BadKarma:** [((Laughing))=
- Rain:** =Oh, my god (3.2)Wow, what a quote.=
- BadKarma:** =Yah, [no shit] .
- Junker:** [What ?]
- Rain:** "I'm so happy I don't have church in the morning tomorrow."=
- Junker:** =O:::h . Wow . Sorry
- BadKarma:** One way to tell if you're a noob .
- Junker:** What ? Who's a noob .
- BadKarma:** It's almost as bad as, HBO's (0.2) a channel that's blocked by my parents on my TV .
- Junker:** Wow (2.2) What channel would this be ?
- Rain:** Is he () (3.2) I'm talking to yo:u .

((Junker starts making odd noises into his headset.))

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 7, 2008)

Here, Junker (probably of about age 10-14, judging by vocal pitch) fails his one attempt at group solidarity by producing a statement that is not accepted by the particular enculturated greater community that is in attendance. His statement about not having church in the morning is met with open laughter, mocking insults, and scorn by the other members. They then openly flame him by mimicking his earlier remark and calling him a noob (a

person who does not know how to play the game or is inexperienced or unable to negotiate the norms of the community). In this case, they may equate his ability to perform in a game with that of his misunderstanding or miscomprehension of the greater community customs (that apparently do not include discussions of church). What is of primary interest here is a case in which Junker then apologizes, attempting to employ a positive face FTA in order to minimize the impact his comment has had upon his own positive face. In other words, according to Bousfield's chart (Respond > Accept Opposition > Submit).

It is then, however, that the others in the conversation employ another impoliteness FTA, "Withhold Politeness." Within typical societal roles, an apology is accepted and face is refunded to the offender. However, Junker does not regain face with the discourse members scrutinizing him when he apologizes. As the window to repair or recover from his earlier statement is long past, the other participants deny Junker the positive face return he was expecting, and the flaming continues.

Yet, there is one aspect of this conversation that goes virtually unmentioned in the impoliteness literature. Junker performs a peculiar action when he realizes there is no opportunity to save his own positive face with this group of interlocutors that has ganged up on him. Rather than make another attempt at apologizing or getting drawn into a conflictive situation (as per chart 1 above), he instead opts to make strange and raucous noises, thereby auditorily punishing his offenders. He continues making these strange noises until the match starts, effectively disallowing any further conversation by filling the channel with gibberish and noise.

Whether this is a successful attempt at revenge upon his attackers is open to interpretation. While not particularly offensive in terms of a directed verbal FTA, it is certainly aurally annoying. Furthermore, it is generally considered socially impolite to screech or make random noises in public, and one must assume also, by extension, into a headset microphone, forcing others to listen to it. So this brings up yet another question: is this indeed a case in which impoliteness theory should apply?

In short, this does appear to be an assault by utterance, not in the traditional sense of an instrumental impoliteness FTA. In order to more appropriately assess what Junker's logic may have been for choosing such an action, I must quickly refer to Bousfield's definition of on record impoliteness. Bousfield's definition is as follows:

On Record Impoliteness: The use of strategies designed to explicitly (a) attack the face of an interactant, (b) construct the face of an interactant in a non-harmonious or outright conflictive way, (c) deny the expected face wants, needs, or rights of the interactant, or some combination thereof. The attack is made in an unambiguous way given the context in which it occurs. (2008, p. 95)

Again, while non-linguistic in terms of definable word usage or sentence structures, this utterance did indeed serve a purpose. As stated earlier, Junker, when realizing that his efforts to redeem positive face had failed (this realization being Bousfield's triggering event), he filled the channel with noise. This did not necessarily assault the collective face of the gang of players that verbally attacked him, as in Bousfield's condition "(a)", but it could be said that his action did, as a last-ditch effort, protect that last vestige of his own positive face by warding off the bullies and offensively defending his stake in the discourse by subsequently disallowing any other speech action to occur. This could be said to follow Bousfield's secondary example in (b), as Junker has non-harmoniously used his obnoxious noise in an "outright or conflictive way" to defend his own value of positive face.

Furthermore, he has, in line with Bousfield's third example of (c), reciprocated and "denied the expected face wants, needs or rights of the other interactants" of the discourse. Here, Junker's FTA of unleashing punishing noise effectively destroys any form of conversational turn-taking, dominates the interactional field, and further denies the bullies their hierarchically self-appointed rights and wants to verbally castigate him. Thus, the self-appointed hierarchal rights of the offender are thereby nullified as Junker gets his last utterance of defiance in before the match starts. In this case, Junker has arguably validating some sense of personal one-upmanship at the expense of future positive face returns with the greater group by violating not only politeness expectations but also Gricean Relevance (one is supposed to respond relevantly to what was said).

TRUE IMPOLITENESS – (SEEMINGLY) UNINSTIGATED FLAMING

In some cases, a bout of flaming does not seem to be readily induced as a reaction to any of the members of the conversation. In other words, according to Bousfield's chart, there is no seemingly logical or easily noticeable triggering event that causes a participant to begin a verbal tirade. Instead, it seems that intent, context, or a simple random arrangement of makeshift social roles provides as much a cause to flame as a verbalized trigger could. In

other words, the establishment of Levinson's social roles, as well as the desire for self-gratification, acts as a primary instigating trigger. Much in the same way, one's may change register may depending on the situation and social structure of the group currently being interacted with; flaming, in the sense of the hyper-aggressive register I have been assuming thus far, could be said to enforce social dynamics and partition relationships between the online communities' members. Thus, in order to further their cause, the speakers employ whatever register produces the greatest effect (in this case, the strongest FTA's) within the shortest amount of time. In other words, in the situation of the Halo 3 waiting rooms, speakers use language that presents an air of impoliteness as not only their weapons, but as their defensive guises.

As seen above, users in virtual communities are able to form their own reconstituted hierarchy, albeit fleeting, within the discourse activity of the Halo 3 pre- and post-game waiting rooms. These new hierarchies are based upon their own force of presence that their remediated selves have reconstituted and projected within the online sphere. Ultimately, these reconstituted enculturated personas will attempt to restructure their desired social arrangement into the context at hand (the conversation) and dictate the community norms as they see fit according to their valued in- and out-groups.

In the case presented below, a hyper-aggressive young man of indeterminate age attempts to enforce a system of dominance and/or hierarchy upon the other team by drawing awareness to what he deems as his own virtual superiority through obscene and antagonistic verbal clout:

Excerpt 7 (taken from Transcript 3 of Appendix A):

Stickyking: Marujana.
Sniperz: Veto
Sniperz: Aww, dude. We got a random lieutenant. (1.8)
 Commander.
Tymac: () a general, yet?
 ((Indecipherable chatter from all speakers: ()))
Rady: Veto.
Sniperz: Fuck you, bitch. Red team sucks
Stickyking: Red team sucks d:::::ick!

- Stickyking:** I'm, onna, I'm... () alright, guys, alright Who's the best on the other team? (0.8) Um.... Alright, I wanna say that I am gonna kill...[(2.0)=
- Tymac:** [() =Proibly gonna get the Warthog first. ()=]
- Stickyking:** =[I can't even say your name... (1.2) HG-Hag ? (1.0) I'm gonna kill you the most, you faggit
- Hghag:** Oh, Why is that?
- Stickyking:** Cause you suck.
- Hghag:** Oh, [really ?]
- Stickyking:** [You su]ck dick (1.2) I will put my ass in your dick.
- Hghag:** () ().
- ((Laughing from everyone))
- Stickyking:** You know ? Yeah, get it on . You don't even know what to say .
- Stickyking:** Rehehe[((laughs)) He just got-]
- Sniperz:** [((laughs)) ()] silent now() . =
- Stickyking:** =() I know (0.6) He don't know what to say (1.0) He just got called out (0.4) He's like awww shit ((laughs))
- Hghag:** Wait wait, my () () just () formed me that just () () . I () () . [What'd y]ou= [=said.]
- Stickyking:** What?[]Wha?[A]Ai ai.. just said I'll put my ass in your dick . (1.2) Alright?
- Hghag:** Uh... peo... =
=((jumbled speech))=
- Hghag:** =I'm gonna shut up for a while .
- Stickyking:** Yeah (0.2) see ? (1.4) Shut the fuck up .

((Laughing + more garbled/mixed speech.))

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 8, 2008)

Before I head into the following analysis, it is interesting to point out that Stickyking, who ultimately becomes the dominant interlocutor in this exchange of impoliteness, makes an initial bid for attention by uttering the provocative word “marijuana.” I will not speculate

if this act was intended to be truly impolite or disrespectful nor whether it was merely a bid to encourage positive face gains from his audience.

MANAGING SOCIAL HIERARCHY THROUGH LINGUISTIC DOMINATION

The true conversational exchange in Excerpt 7 takes off when Sniperz, Stickyking's teammate, makes an initial offensive bid of one-upmanship style dominance toward Rady (the immediately previous speaker) and the opposing team with his seemingly unsubstantiated and out of the blue statement of: "Fuck you, bitch. Red Team Sucks." Yet, this utterance is not unsubstantiated if one considers that Levinson's (1979) social roles of teammate and opponent have become clearly defined by the randomized matchmaking system, and this by itself acts as Sniperz' impoliteness trigger. This in turn initiates the relative bids for dominance, akin to trash-talking between rivals in sports events.

It is then that Stickyking, however, attempts to capitalize and aggrandize his own advantage upon Sniperz' bid for dominance by yelling, "Red team sucks d:::::ick!" In this instance, the initial FTA by his teammate seems to act as Stickyking's trigger event, which furthers his own bid for hierarchical dominance. He then continues to speak nonsensically, almost narrating his thoughts, while proceeding to hunt for another victim to flame. In doing so, he effectively ties up the channel with vocal rubbish, disallowing any other bid for linguistic dominance (somewhat analogous to Junker earlier), maintaining own invested stake until he can find someone to flame.

Excerpt 8 (taken from Excerpt7):

Stickyking: I'm, onna, I'm... () alright, guys, alright Who's the best on the other team? (0.8) Um.... Alright, I wanna say that I am gonna kill... [(2.0)=

Tymac: [()]=Probly gonna get the Warthog first. ()=]

Stickyking: =[I can't even say your name... (1.2) HG-Hag ? (1.0) I'm gonna kill you the most, you faggit

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 8, 2008)

One could say, at this point, that Stickyking has effectively exploited the turn-taking system of this activity type to aggrandize upon his own agenda (here one must assume it is simultaneously self-empowerment within the group and assumedly some form of self-

gratification of belittling and offending others). Furthermore, something interesting has already happened within the social collective of the blue team at this point. Stickyking's exploitation of the turn-taking system (basically cramming as much vocal spam as possible into the auditory space so that no one else can get a word in edgewise) effectively cuts off Sniperz' initial bid for the alpha-role. Though Hghag has become the primary target of Stickyking's FTAs, by cunning linguistic maneuvering, Stickyking may have secondarily targeted his teammate, forcing Sniperz into a subordinate audience position with the same FTA.

Stickyking's piggy-backing of Sniperz' FTA should probably not be considered a case of true impoliteness directed as an insult or offensive action toward his teammate, though arguably Stickyking has secondarily denied the face wants of his teammate, Sniperz, to position himself at the head of the makeshift hierarchy. By going on the hunt and eventually attacking Hg-hag, Stickyking has strategically positioned himself as the dominant speaker in the discourse by refusing to release control of the conversational floor. Thus, by pure linguistic force, Stickyking effectively snubs Sniperz' bid for dominance and Sniperz, refusing to comment, falls into the support role, acquiescing his future discourse turns to the verbally superior Stickyking. Thus, as Stickyking has self-defined the social hierarchy within his own team without further conflict, he returns his attentions to flame Hghag, a member of the rival team.

THE PACK: ON THE WARPATH

Stickyking, judging by his prior statements, could have chosen to flame Hghag for one of any number of reasons. This could be because Hghag has the best win/loss record on the opposing team or he was chosen because his name bears resemblance to a sexually derogatory term "fag/faggit" (or even possibly "hag," a derogatory term for a female found within the player's name that evokes ugliness and makes its owner attackable).

Furthermore, an emerging social group has taken shape here between those of a hyper-masculine, vocally aggressive, sexist, and homophobic community ideology and the unwitting receiver of the hate speech. Stickyking and Sniperz make use of epithetic, sexist, and homophobic defamations to attack Hghag, simultaneously making clearer the definition between what constitutes as inclusiveness and exclusiveness in the group. In this case, to be

proscribed as “gay” or possessing feminine qualities (even if labeled as so by others within the community) demeans the value face of others and effectively lessens their worth as members within this social group. By labeling Hghag as a “bitch,” and a “faggot,” and further threatening sodomitic violence upon him, Stickyking and Sniperz forcibly exclude him from their in-group of aggressively masculine, sexist, socio-normatively enculturated net-users and (using on-record positive impoliteness) reconstruct Hghag’s face, via this hate speech, into non-normative social roles considered as disdainful by their emerging and dominant expressions of community norms.

It must also be mentioned that this is the first instance in the data of an actual possible standoff between interlocutors. For a while, Hghag attempts to counter, conversationally compromise, and defensively stand his ground against the assaults launched by Stickyking. However, Stickyking, dominating the turn-taking system, barely gives time for Hghag’s responses, and every utterance raised by Hghag is met with more aggressive language. Stickyking further employs taboo words and constructions, challenges, and insults. At one point, he even stumbles over his own insult with the following exchange:

Excerpt 9 (taken from Excerpt 7):

Hghag: Oh, Why is that?

Stickyking: Cause you suck.

Hghag: Oh, [really ?]

Stickyking: [You su]ck dick (1.2) I will put my ass in your dick.

Hghag: () ().

((Laughing from everyone))

Stickyking: You know ? Yeah, get it on . You don’t even know what to say .

Stickyking: Rehehe[((laughs)) He just got-]

Sniperz: [((laughs)) () () ()] silent now ().=

Stickyking: =() I know (0.6) He don’t know what to say (1.0) He just got called out (0.4) He’s like awww shit ((laughs))

Hghag: Wait wait, my () () just xxformed me that just () (). I () (). [What’d y]ou= [=said.]

Stickyking: What?[]Wha?[A]Ai ai.. just said I’ll put my ass in your dick . (1.2) Alright?

Hghag: Uh... peo...=

=((mixed speech))=

Hghag: =I'm gonna shut up for a while .

Stickyking : Yeah (0.2) see ? (1.4) Shut the fuck up .

((Laughing + more garbled/mixed speech.))

Xbox Live (personal communication, November 8, 2008)

Rather than let his own weakness be taken advantage of during his insult, “[You su]ck dick (1.2) I will put my ass in your dick,” Stickyking simply perseveres through his own linguistic fumble and continues to demonstrate strength while aggressively pursuing his target, implicating that his blunder is effectively meaningless. He laughs alongside his cohorts about the nonsensical meaning that his mixed-up utterance conveys. In doing so, he effectively mitigates his own face damage, curries favor with his audience, and is able to direct even stronger face attacks at his foe with the positive face support of his group.

Hence, Stickyking advances with his verbal abuse until Hghag backs down, in a way similar to the situation of Warscr8tion and Junker in Excerpts 4 and 6. This time, the submission of Hghag is explicitly expressed by his statement of, “I’m gonna shut up for a while.” He declares his withdrawal from the conversation and thus hopes to escape the tirade of Stickyking. However, just as above in the case of Junker, Hghag’s backing down does not placate Stickyking. Stickyking instead further denies the face wants of Hghag by following up with a challenge “Yeah (0.2) see ? (1.4) Shut the fuck up.” His utterance further signifies that he is not appeased by the outcome of his efforts and challenges his opponent to struggle in vain against his dominance. It is important to note that twice now flaming has evoked submission, and this submission did not stop the flaming.

FLAMING: THE MEANS TO AN END

Though Stickyking may not necessarily be the best player in terms of skill, he has solidified his verbal superiority over the vacillating hierarchal structure of the brief conversational encounter by forcefully dominating the turn-taking system and imposing his personality (via flaming) upon anyone willing to challenge his dominance.

Furthermore, Stickyking’s abusive vocal diatribe may have also placed his teammate Sniperz within a supporting role of the discourse hierarchy. The arrangement of higher and lower in power according to pure linguistic force of utterance is felt when Sniperz can only

comment momentarily upon the silence of Hghag before Stickyking returns again to his flaming. The most Sniperz can produce is a brief remark or comment favorably upon the self-imposed supremacy of Stickyking's ongoing flame. An arrangement like that of a bully and his followers takes shape, and the formation of social hierarchy is not only expressed and resolved between teams (between Stickyking and Hghag), but also within the team itself (between Stickyking and Sniperz).

It is uncertain whether or not this overt antagonism had any effect or consequence on the morale of the opposite team, the match immediately following, or the performance of a player singled out by the flaming; but for the purposes of studying the register change of a remediated self within the digital realm, this example shows a clear example of attempts at arranging a makeshift social structure through spoken bids of dominance via hyper-aggressive speech (flaming).

CHAPTER 5

MSNBC COMMENT DISCUSSIONS

DISTINCTIONS WITHIN THE FORM OF THE DISCOURSE

Listen, I'm a Troll. Even worse, I'm a Canadian Troll, and as such it is my duty to plague forums and message boards. I have to hop on here (since I have no life to speak of) and leave negative, sarcastic remarks in order for people to come back in here and defend their comments and generate SOME form of dialogue to make things a bit more interesting.... but not by much. When people are attacking PC lovers, then I am a Console elitist. When people are attacking Console lovers, I am a PC elitist. My comments are usually silly, have no base of reasoning, and more often than not, have nothing to do with the reality of the editor's article. I'm the little flea that you lean back in your chair and fantasize about smacking with various household appliances. Do I mean you any real harm outside of the computer monitor? No. In fact, I'm pretty fun to get drunk with, and yes, I may take advantage of you after getting completely stammered. But pains in the ass like myself are rampant in society and we need to exist. I'm sorry. So, in short, I'm a necessary evil and I look forward to dealing with each of you in turn. All the best!

--Cordite: A Self-Reflexive IGN.com Troll

As the MSNBC comment discussion transcripts are taken from a vastly different medium of interaction than the Halo 3 audio discussions, I will need to briefly elaborate on some unique characteristics that define this particular discourse genre.

First Distinction of the Medium: Of the Essence, Time is Not

Firstly, an utterance within the medium of MSNBC Discussion can consist of anywhere from one sentence to multiple paragraphs. I argue that this is due, in part, to speakers not needing to worry about the immediacy of a response. In this medium, users may reply to comments made across a seemingly unbounded distance of time. Thus, someone may post a response to an utterance within two minutes of the original post. Similarly, another user may post two hours later, and this new post may be arranged directly under the previous post left at the two-minute mark.

Moreover, users may also delete comments they themselves have posted, alter their messages after submission, or flag other users' posts for offensiveness (which ultimately may force a comment to be collapsed from view or deleted). One should not assume that there

exists no sense of immediacy or urgency when communicating within this medium. However, it seems safe to speculate that as members of a given discourse chain are not all vying for immediate attention with one another within a contextually restrictive aural or visual arena, it may instead be their goal to skillfully craft an utterance that will bring to bear a maximal linguistic effect upon their addressees and audience.

As speakers are restricted to blocks of text that can be somewhat tedious reading, being as evocative as possible with one's language features within one's posting space will draw more attention to one's comment. Thus, the desire to be as evocative as possible garners attention and, potentially, power toward the user.

Second Distinction of the Medium: Connecting Disconnected Relevance

The second important distinction is that that users need not always respond to the directly previous post. Topics of user comments need not have any specific or direct connection or even relevance to the content of the comment immediately preceding or following. While it must be noted that the lack of adherence to an overarching topic (in this case the content of the article) is not the norm of communication in this medium, it nevertheless does occur.

An example of an off-topic contribution within a discussion would be of a political statement uttered within a discussion about coronal mass ejections (solar flares) (see Excerpt 10):

Excerpt 10 (taken from Transcript 1 of Appendix B):

texmann!  Comment collapsed by the community

liberal propaganda. whatever.

2 votes

REPLY  #4 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 5:30 PM EST

D Fields43066

lol... oh Ilove when people like you try to read a science article. Sound it out , son...

17 votes

#4.1 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:08 PM EST

jhine57

what the hell does it have anything to do with liberal... you have to be an idiot..
u have too be

14 votes

#4.2 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:11 PM EST

trent-2358408

You give republicans a bad name(like ron paul).

6 votes

#4.3 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:26 PM EST

SonofMollyM

Bright Minds and Dark Attitudes

2 votes

#4.4 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:39 PM EST

Baddog40

Science and facts are now considered liberal propaganda to cavemen.

12 votes

#4.5 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 9:52 PM EST

Scott-E83

^ 5 people can't spot a troll ^

(Boyle, 2012)

As one can see, the response by Texmann of “liberal propaganda” has no real bearing on the conversation of coronal mass ejections. His post is therefore, superficially, a violation, or more precisely in the case of trolling a flout, of the Gricean maxim of relevance. As a result, other users assume that Texmann is following the rules of cooperative discourse (following Grice’s Cooperative Principle), even though there is no mention of coronal mass ejections within Texmann’s comment. The resulting disparity between the article and Texmann’s post forces other interlocutors to try to attribute relevance to his (Texmann’s) comment. They subsequently connect the two topics as being a modest (albeit forced) attempt at contributing to the discussion and respond accordingly (in this case, flaming the seeming ignorance or idiocy of Texmann).

Third Distinction of the Medium: Ideology

User comments are typically ideologically-centered utterances, and as such, can often be interpreted as condensed forms of the speakers' personal perspectives of the world. Furthermore, unlike in most communicative situations, the participants are extremely varied in background, perspective, and knowledge, to the point that there exists a much-less-shared common ground of assumptions. Speakers will often post their own interpretation of, assert or presuppose relative expertise in, or familiarity with, a topic and present a particular stance (be it political, intellectual, or religious), convey their personal point of view, or offer responses to other's comments or questions. As can be seen when perusing the posts that follow, the majority of users will opt to comment upon the article in a manner as follows: offering either incidental information in support of the previous user comment, stating dislike of a topic of the article or another user, or attempting to impress their own view of the world upon the readers.

Fourth Distinction of the Medium: Topical Discourse Shifts

As has already been described, the content, focus, and scope of comments can be incredibly varied, narrow, or far-reaching in terms of logical topical progression and relevance. Generally speaking, all posts are constrained to a topical adherence by the mother article and thus are all typically contextually dependent upon it for logical topical relevance. At times, user statements may be seemingly broad in their attempt to make coherent connections to previous statements either within the article or other users' points of view. As a result, the evolving discourse may stray wildly from the original post due to huge chains of topical shifts. Discussions and arguments amongst users are ultimately focused together according to the text-based-geographical discourse location of some post acting as a trigger. Thus, all subsequent comments in nested discourse chains are ultimately contextually dependent upon either the original topic of the article or some immediately prior post that acted as the divergent discourse trigger for the consequent nested conversation.

Yet, progressions of topic will have been developed cooperatively through these discourse shifts, even when members of the discourse are being particularly uncooperative. As a result, even conflictive utterances may add arguments, present new or related topics,

garner remonstrations, or provoke heated responses and subsequently develop new slants on the previous topic.

AN ASIDE ON NESTINGS AND NUMBERS

Take notice of the numbers (e.g., #1) just before the dates. These indicate the order in which the postings occurred relative to the first post. One will also notice below that the first few of these postings are numbered #1 to #1.5. Numbers beyond basic integers indicate nested comments that have been tagged to that prior post. Users may respond to any other comment, which will then nest their new response directly under the original post of their focus so that topical relevance is maintained between the original comment and the following topic-based response. These subsequent nested replies which are chained to previous user comments will again follow a linear order of progression, all nested under a previous comment of focus according to a floating point system (e.g. #1.1, #1.2, #1.3, etc.). This feature could be said to be of great benefit to those who came to post on the article or another user's comment at a later point in time. This allows those readers who came later to an article to post higher in the discourse chain on earlier posts if they so wish. As a result, in the discourse chain below, the true second (#2) comment (not #1.1) of the article ends up being discourse-geographically mapped after comment #1.17, in effect pushed down to the nineteenth position in the discourse. Thus, one's point can be read second if it is posted directly under user comment #1. This often results in a hijacking of the discourse by users wishing their own points to be seen by anyone perusing the first page of comments.

ANALYZING THE MSNBC DATA: INITIAL EXAMPLES

Now that these characteristics of the discussion comment medium have been addressed, a typical scenario that arises amidst the first few comments in an article's discussion will be detailed. One will notice in the transcripts to come that particularly lengthy discussions resolve themselves as follows: an original post is made about the article, and then subsequent responses follow according to a linear order of a first-come first-post sequence.

As can be seen in Transcript #2, due to the ability of users to link into prior relevant comments by nesting, this form of nested discourse of comments and replies can chain to

incredible lengths of thousands of user posts on the more popular or controversial topics. Typical hotbed domains of discussion and debate tend to be religion, politics, ethics, and war. As one will see in the first analysis of Cardinal below, religion will prove to be a very volatile and polarizing issue.

One will also notice that there exists quite a range of comments dedicated to either the support of or the attacking of various topics within an extended discourse. Quite often, comments will consist of a mixture of one or more of the following generalized categories:

1. *Support Supercategory:*

- a. **General Support** - A comment upon the article supporting or (at least not attacking) topics found in the article or overarching discourse. Not directed to any specific previous utterance. General feeling is neutral-to-amicable toward subject matter. These comments are typically used to show a general personal point of view on a topic without being conflictive.
- b. **Supportive Reply** – A supportive reply to a previous user’s utterance. Shows general camaraderie in point of view and may simultaneously include reference to topics in the article and reference to earlier statements made by other speakers. Usually expresses a general personal point of view on the previous utterance without being conflictive. However, these may often be polarized against others’ viewpoints not in line with utterance being supported.

2. *Opposition Supercategory:*

- a. **General Displeasure/Opposition** – A comment of general distaste, disgust, or opposition toward the subject matter found in the article or overarching discourse. Not directed to any specific previous user’s utterance. General feeling is disagreement toward the articles’ topics or overarching discourse without being outright offensive or explicitly conflictive in register. The user simply disagrees.
- b. **Displeasured/Oppositional Reply** – A reply of opposition toward topics or points of view found in previous user’s utterances. Often expresses a topical disagreement or opposition to particular points of view of other users. General feeling is disagreement toward previous utterances without being outright offensive or explicitly conflictive in register.

3. *Informative Supercategory:*

- a. **Informative Statement** – A comment dedicated to informing or otherwise bolstering information found within the article or overarching discourse. Intent is generally to augment the collective knowledge of the group, give counter-examples to previously established topics in the article or overarching discourse, or bring up related or connected topics that may correct or allow reinterpretation previously established sources of knowledge. These

statements may either support or reject previous topics, but are not explicitly combative, or conflictive.

- b. **Informative Reply** – A directed reply intended to support, refute, or otherwise increase coherent collaborative information of a previous user’s topic. Intent is generally to augment the collective knowledge of the group, give counter-examples to previously established topics in the conversational discourse, or bring up related or connected topics that may correct or allow reinterpretation previously established sources of knowledge. May often show either support or distaste, but generally attempts to back up personal stance with information not previously mentioned in the discourse. These statements may either support or reject previous topics in the discourse and relate to points found in the article, but are not explicitly combative, or conflictive.

4. *Conflictive Supercategory:*

- a. **Conflictive Statement** – A generally conflictive comment dedicated to projecting explicit distaste, dissatisfaction, or outright vitriol toward a topic. Typical strategies for employing such focus on the intention to upset, unnerve, or anger other users and in turn may start an argumentative discourse in and of itself. This statement may be used to explicitly attack (flame) the writer of the article, topic, or overarching discourse using language in a bald aggressive manner and results in a combative or abusive register. Forms of attack may consist of utilizing taboo language or topics for inflammatory effect.
- b. **Conflictive Reply** – A generally conflictive reply directed toward projecting explicit distaste, dissatisfaction, or outright vitriol toward a previous comment of another user often with reference to the original topic of the article. Typical strategies for employing such language focus upon the intention to upset, unnerve, or anger other users and in turn may start an argumentative discourse in and of itself. This statement may be used to explicitly attack (flame) other users, previous topics, and may reference previous topics, comments, or ideologies of other users. Forms of attack may consist of utilizing taboo language or topics for inflammatory effect.

These super-categories will be used to classify basic utterance types. These are not the only types of utterance to be found within the data, nor an exhaustive list of all utterance types to be found in the data. Often an utterance will possess elements of more than one category within it. An utterance like comment #1.0 in Excerpt #11 below could effectively consist of super-categories of General Displeasure, with smattered hints of a Conflictive Statement. In sum, these super-categories are merely a way of attributing potential goals, functions, or motivations to users’ comments and thereby more effectively theorize about the explicit and implicit motivations that may have led to the pragmatic decision for a speaker’s language use.

DATA TRANSCRIPT 2 AND COMMENT/REPLY SUPERCATEGORIES

Transcript #2, Cardinal, consists of the first three comments (utterances #1.0, #2.0, and #3.0) posted on MSNBC.com and all subsequent nested replies. When looked at collectively, the initial utterances and nested replies produce a lengthy discourse over a total of 52 utterances. At the time of data collection, the article had accumulated 435 comments altogether.

As the original article's subject matter consisted of a report about a Los Angeles deacon, Dolan, being raised to the rank of Cardinal within the Catholic Church, the subsequent user comments found in the discussion following the article tended to be centered upon an expansive yet relevant range of topics related to the Catholic Church and all it embodies. Topics include everything from the very broad theological debate of whether religion is indeed relevant in this day and age, to the appropriateness of the Catholic stance on priests who have committed crimes against their flock, to Republican conservatism.

ANALYSIS OF TRANSCRIPT 2 (CARDINAL)

One will immediately notice a wide variety of discourse styles across these comments. Furthermore, it is easy to note the various differences in apparent or expressed education levels, grammar, spelling accuracy, building logical coherency bridges between prior topics and personal points, and political or ideological stances towards the subject matter. Within the evolving discourse, one can see everything from ideologically motivated statements, inflammatory arguments, informative exposition, to supportive acclaim. But what role does (im)politeness play within these MSNBC comment discussions? Comment #1 by Spicy Bluto immediately sets the tone of an oppositional ideology by taking a somewhat offensive stance against the Catholic Church (a topic relative to the article) with the statement of:

Excerpt 11 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix B):

Spicy Bluto

Emperor Palpatine appoints a new Sith Lord. Dolan is a despicable, criminally negligent, hateful man.

12 votes

#1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:19 AM EST

Kevin C-752389

I can just see it if Timothy Dolan is elected Pope. He will create "Vatican West", in L.A., and promise all the "boys you can (fill in your own obscenity)".

8 votes

#1.1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:38 AM EST

Casual US Taxpayer

Oh I just love getting in the face of all those morally superior people on here who love to bash the millions of good Catholics in this country. Here's some advice for you-Shove It.

15 votes

#1.2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:03 AM EST

(“Pope Makes NY's,” 2012)

Spicy Bluto’s contribution to the discussion, implicating evil motivations within the Catholic Church by flouting Grice’s maxim of Quality, projects via metaphor the conventionally understood physical image of the pope to that of a fictional entity that he feels is a culturally relevant epitome of evil: the Emperor from the Star Wars films (a malevolent leader of an evil, cult-like dictatorship). He further goes on to list what he feels are the key negative character traits of Timothy Dolan. His distaste toward the Catholic church is not lost on other users, as Kevin, nesting a comment directly under Bluto’s, offers support for the previous utterance by continuing the assault and capitalizing upon Bluto’s original topic.

What is interesting to note is that Kevin’s usage of an impoliteness element (taboo insinuations) may secondarily have been a simultaneous bid for positive face by appealing to the anti-Catholic group for solidarity. In other words, Kevin seeks to improve his own positive face (approval) toward those of Bluto’s ideological stance by assaulting (flaming) representations of the Catholic faith that those on the other side of the ideological spectrum may hold dear.

Yet these utterances may not qualify as typical instances of on record impoliteness. As per Bousfield’s definition, they do not directly or explicitly “(a) attack the face of an interactant, (b) construct the face of an interactant in a non-harmonious or outright conflictive way, or (c) deny the expected face wants, needs, or rights of the interactant” (95). If there is some intent of the speaker to insult a particular entity that may be lurking about the forum (such as a Catholic reader), then it is expressed in an ambiguous or indirect manner.

Therefore, one could argue then that these utterances, on the surface, are simply offensively-delivered oppositional statements expressing a mutual dislike of the Pope and Timothy Dolan.

Yet these two comments do baldly express distaste toward the Catholic Church (including the pope, and the Cardinal, Timothy Dolan), damaging or constructing the face of the Catholic Church, as a non-present entity, in a “non-harmonious” and explicitly “conflictive” manner, as per Bousfield’s designation (b). Moreover, Kevin’s utterance is highly provocative in its broaching of a taboo topic (Timothy Dolan fictionally promising, “all the boys you can (fill in your own obscenity)”).

Therefore, it goes without saying that Bluto and Kevin’s utterances would certainly incite ire from Catholics even if they did not directly attack another specific speaker’s personal ideology. Thus, these first two comments are essentially examples of indirect utterances that are functionally meant to be conflictive, hiding behind the form of a negatively aligned statement of general displeasure directed at the Catholic Church.

A RETURN TO TRIGGER EVENTS AND IMPOLITENESS

Within the first three comments of Transcript 1, one can clearly witness Bousefield’s trigger events on full display. In this case, as in the collecting of players together in the pre-game waiting room, the existence of the article itself (or mention of the Catholic religion) acts as the trigger and consequently sets the motivation for Bluto to express his distaste accordingly via the metaphor of suggesting the pope to be an evil mastermind. This substantiates the first ideological discourse role within the discussion: the anti-Catholic stance. Following up on Bluto’s comment, Kevin’s trigger event could be said to be a both a combination of the existence of the article and his positive face wants to secondarily express his camaraderie with the ideological anti-Catholic side of the exchange, and perhaps, as well, back up Bluto’s stance.

This said, it would be careless to assume that neither Bluto nor Kevin would have no concept of the insensitivity that they were expressing in their utterances toward a generalized audience that probably would include Catholic readers and it must be assumed that they know all too well the personal stake others may hold in their own faith.

TACKLING BAIT(ING)

While the comments above are not directed at any discourse participant involved within the discourse, they may instead function here as a lure, or more appropriately, as bait, in an attempt to goad the opposing side into an argument. A parallel can be drawn back to Excerpt #10, where Texmann gets called out by Scott for trolling the discussion comments of Sun Gun. Texmann, with his unrelated comment of “liberal propaganda. Whatever,” manages to trigger a conflictual response that draws in other members to the discussion, who reactively flame him. It is important to note that he has successfully baited, or trolled, the following five speakers, but it is Scott (who is arguably a more enculturated member of the discourse) who interprets Texmann’s ruse and attempts to thwart (according to Hardaker’s definition) him by crying troll, thereby alerting others to the ill intent of Texmann.

A comparable context can be seen below, in Excerpt #12, where Bluto and Kevin’s provocativeness and disregard toward the face of the other side of the ideological spectrum, seen in Excerpt #11, act as the trigger for another user, Casual, resulting in a similar conflictive response of flaming:

Excerpt 12 - (taken from Excerpt 11):

Casual US Taxpayer

Oh I just love getting in the face of all those morally superior people on here who love to bash the millions of good Catholics in this country. Here's some advice for you-Shove It.

15 votes

#1.2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:03 AM EST

(“Pope Makes NY's,” 2012)

It is here that one will notice the first example within this discussion of an explicit impoliteness strategy being directed at a contextually relevant addressee. Of particular interest is how Casual attempts to position himself within this conflict. He empathetically positions himself between the offenders and “the millions of good Catholics” by offensively flaming Bluto and Kevin. This flame arguably could serve two purposes: (1) To counter or offensively rebuff Bluto and Kevin with an equally offensive directive FTA, “Shove it”; and (2) To simultaneously extend positive politeness toward the pro-Catholic ideology by expressing that he wants their wants (to not have their wants, persons, or ideologies diminished in the sight of others) and that his wants coincide with theirs so far that he is

willing to share in and redress the face damage taken by their stake. Casual, put on the defensive by the utterances of Bluto and Kevin, takes it upon himself to protect the interests (stake) of “millions of good Catholics” by “getting in the face of all the morally superior people on here,” i.e., Bluto and Kevin. It is at this point that an easily definable division of personalized interests (and arguably face at stake) has taken shape in this argument, thereby polarizing sides according to support for or in opposition to the Catholic Church.

ON RECORD OFF RECORD IMPOLITENESS & BAITING

Without a doubt, Bluto and Kevin’s utterances are explicit in their intended messages, which are threefold: to express their personal ideological stances, to belittle their targets, and to simultaneously entertain those of their ideological stance. This said, returning for the moment to the argument that these speakers may secondarily wish to stir up with the opposing side of Pro-Catholics, there is no explicit message or construction utilized by these speakers that inherently posits an on record challenge to other potential interactants. Nevertheless, it seems Casual has accepted the challenge and been drawn into a conflict of ideologies with them.

Thus, it seems that in the case of Bluto and Kevin’s comments of displeasure, on record impoliteness strategies could be simultaneously utilized to off record bait others into an argument. Recalling Hardaker’s definition of trolling, this linguistic act is not an overt on record insult directed toward an addressee or faceless crowd; these comments may be subversively testing the waters or fishing for potential targets. It is also important to remember that the act of trolling is cancelable, allowing the troll to deny ill intent. Therefore, it is impossible to assign the intention of ill-will to speakers if they do not explicitly perform a conflictive speech act. A researcher must instead glean the intention of the speaker based upon how other interlocutors interpreted the initial act.

FOLLOWING UP ON THE BAITED: MOUTHS TO A FLAME

In the follow-up comments to Casual’s response, interlocutors comment upon Bluto’s and Kevin’s surface-level impoliteness message and seem to be not at all affected by the insults directed at the Catholic Church. The commenters in #1.3 and #1.5 seem to be more

concerned at assuaging Casual's offensive outburst than rising to fight for the pro-Catholic stance.

Excerpt 13 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix B):

Momus2009

Casual....Neither of them bashed the millions of "good" Catholics in this country, but they did bash the one Catholic that seemed to turn a blind-eye to the raping of little boys under his watch.

14 votes

#1.3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:20 AM EST

Ru-780672

Casual, do you defend and protect the young children raped and scarred for life the way you defend your catholics pride?

9 votes

#1.4 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:29 AM EST

Lusitania

Most nonbelievers do bash the entire congregation for these evil priests sneaking into the churches..Myself being a Catholic are disgusted by them and what has happened, they need to be thrown in jail forever as far as I'm concerned. But they'll probably end up on the streets or relocating like any other pedophile, after all they were abusing Catholics why would you care.

4 votes

#1.5 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:54 AM EST

(“Pope Makes NY's,” 2012)

As one can see, Momus and Lusitania respond directly and topically toward Casual's utterance. Momus' and Lusitania's utterances are not offensive in nature, though Lusitania's follow up query of “after all they were abusing Catholics why would you care,” is somewhat accusatory and challenging in its tone. These two are cooperatively contributing to the discussion according to the tenets of politeness theory, raising their points and presenting additional information or attempting to correct Casual for his outburst.

Ru, however, takes a more conflictive approach to addressing Casual's comment, attacking Casual's pro-Catholic stance. Ru challenges Casual to justify his stance, even in the face of an incredibly taboo fact. He also employs some fairly effective linguistic features when presenting his challenge. He uses provocative words that evoke very negative images

such as, “rape” and “scarred for life,” and furthermore analogizes “defending Catholic pride” to defending injustices. To boil down Ru’s topical argument into simpler points, Ru essentially challenges Casual to defend his (Casual’s) supportive stance toward a people or organization that he (Ru) considers to be “a group of child rapists.” Ru implies that to support the Catholic Church is a terrible or irresponsible action and further seems to suggest that no rational being should.

Yet, it is difficult to tell whether or not this utterance was truly meant to be offensive to Casual. The tone of his utterance does not seem outright offensive, yet the aggressiveness is felt more in the manner of a response someone may offer during an argument that is escalating in heated dialogue. However, while not outright offensive in his approach to responding to Casual’s outburst, one could argue that Ru has passed the boundary of polite discourse and instead has made a deliberate attempt to unnerve or offend Casual by simultaneously referencing injustices performed by the Catholic Church. Ru could further be said to be using this taboo topic of child abuse to discourage further support for the pro-Catholic stance, implying that all future backing would only draw further justified contention.

FLAME BAIT AND SWITCH: (INDIRECTNESS VS. SUBVERSIVENESS IN IMPOLITENESS)

Within the Halo 3 data, inflammatory utterances were directed toward specific individuals who deviated from the expected norm of whomever the dominant member of the conversation turned out to be. Here, however, there exists clear divisions in the conflict take shape, with essentially a great deal of support on both sides. The following comments are all divided amongst the pro-Catholic and anti-Catholic stances. Moon seems to side more with Bluto and Kevin, while Navy and Oses side with Casual, offering him face support; and thus, a discussion that follows the tenets of politeness begins to take shape. Other than Moon’s jab at “Catholic Conservatives,” the comments remain mostly innocuous and cooperatively on-topic until a statement made by Michael, who in comment #1.10 delivers a statement (that is informative yet probably conflictive) utilizing obscene topics and taboo speech, about Pope “Benedick” protecting pedophiles.

Excerpt 14 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix A):

moonbaseGOP

Just do a thorough background check on him. We don't want any "little secrets" popping up now do we???

(also might be wise to check the Conservative Catholic conspiracy in Virginia and his ties to it...)

3 votes

#1.6 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:54 AM EST

usa-navy

Don't bash catholics. THE raping of little boys is horrible and they need to go to jail and there needs to be backround checks and phsycolgal tests. But don't tell me its never happened in anyother churchs other christians are no better. THE catholic church tends to be focused on because its bigger and some people (spicy) veiw it as the galatic empire.

4 votes

#1.7 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:22 AM EST

roses4vita. Comment collapsed by the community

I so agree with 'USA-NAVY'...Our Churches, being, as stated by USA-Navy, is, by far, the largest of most all churches & due to that, our church(es) does get criticted in more ways than can be counted; though, come 'Judgement Day' those whom 'act' as if they know it all, WILL have to stand & explain thier dihonorment to Our Lord God, as to the 'ways they have NOT been good christians by putting down churches they don't truly have a 'clue' about'..this includes churches of all dinominations..all whom claim to be "Christian". Sadly, if these people would go back to the older Catholic Bibles aka: information, thay would be astounded once they discovered that all 'Catholic' means is "Christian/Christianity"..plus, why do these so called 'christians' do not 'see' that what comes from thier mouths..is NOT an act of Christianity, in any form :/ Wake up people!! We are ALL children of GOD!! Blessings.....

3 votes

#1.8 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:48 AM EST

roses4vita

Sorry..I meant to say dishonorment not dihonorment.. :#

1 vote

#1.9 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:50 AM EST

Michael French-2657864

Joe "El Raton" Ratzinger, otherwise known as the Pope Benedick XXX protects pedophiles. And he's the leader of the organization. RCC or NAMBLA, I can't tell the difference.

4 votes

#1.10 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:01 AM EST

Steven Carlson

eat u know what jerk

#1.11 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:13 AM EST

Michael French-2657864 Comment collapsed by the community

Very intelligent and well thought out reply Mr. Carlson. The facts are on my side.

Many in my family are Catholics and good people. I simply cannot understand how they or anyone else can continue to support this organization. I wouldn't give one cent or word of support to the RCC, when even it's highest leaders choose to protect pedophiles, predators, and the interests of this criminal organization over the innocent children and victims. It sickens me, and I hold everyone who supports the RCC in lesser regard, including my family members. Actions speak louder than words, and the words and actions of the RCC are loud and clear.

4 votes

#1.12 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:16 AM EST

(“Pope Makes NY's,” 2012)

Similar to the prior examples of Bluto and Kevin, Michael's turns could be construed as baiting, as Michael successfully manages to draw another user, Steve, into a conflictive response. Steve seems to interpret Michael's comments about the Catholic Church as something damaging to his personal reserve of face, and similarly to Casual, Steve responds by performing a conflictive impolite FTA, commanding Michael to “eat u know what.” He further follows up his comment by calling Michael a “jerk,” another direct face attack at Michael's perception of self.

It is at this point that something transpires that has yet to occur within the prior examples: Michael (the potential troll) performs a deliberate defensive retort of his prior statement. Michael's reply to Steve takes advantage of Steve's simplicity of utterance. Michael draws the invisible lurking crowd's attention to the somewhat base and ineloquent and offensive response of Steve by masterfully responding with, “Very intelligent and well

thought out reply Mr. Carlson,” sarcastically implicating that Steve’s utterance was nothing of the sort.

Michael, rather than using profane language or employing directly conflictive constructions, has instead utilized Bousfeld’s category of indirect impoliteness (sarcasm) to flame Steve and thereby gain an upper hand on his opponent by exploiting his adversary’s lack of cunning. Additionally, his follow-up adheres to Bousfeld’s summary of response options, where Michael (after deciding to reply to the trigger of the discussion’s pro-Catholic ideology) responds according to the path of: >Denies the opposing speaker’s position > Counter > Offensive/Defensive. Thus, Michael makes use of this offensive stance as a somewhat defensive mechanism, attempting to quell any dissent that may arise toward his viewpoint preemptively.

It must be noted that Michael’s usage of indirectness (for sarcasm) is functionally similar to baiting and trolling, in that they are both delivered as off record FTAs, but the similarity only extends so far. Sarcasm, trolling, and baiting are non-explicit in their approach toward delivering FTAs, as they are innately cancelable if called upon to explain the intentions of their utterances. Yet some acts of sarcasm (like above) seem to bear so many accoutrements of politeness that they instead become almost explicit in telegraphing their implicit attack on another person’s face. This form of explicit sarcasm is more akin to B&L’s concept of offensiveness via too much Politeness, except that here, excessive amounts of politeness are functionally used to threaten an addressee. This is quite different from trolling and baiting, in that the primary goal of a troll is to keep his intention of exacerbating conflict hidden from the community.

TO BAIT OR NOT TO BAIT

Thus far in the discourse there have been three interconnected speech events where Bluto, Kevin, and Michael may have made deliberate attempts to incite and verbally spur members or supporters of the Catholic faith into inflammatory reactions. Regardless of their intentions, what they have succeeded in doing is instigating arguments among topically polarized sides. Furthermore, it seems doubtful that it was their aim to ever change anyone’s opinion away from the pro-Catholic ideology. Yet, if their goal was to exacerbate conflict as per Hardaker’s definition of trolling (much like the instance in Excerpt #10), they have

earned a pyrrhic victory at best. They have simultaneously succeeded and had no effect upon the following four commenters (i.e., Casual, Momus, Ru, and Lusitania).

It is from this point that one will notice a trend beginning to take shape throughout the remainder of the transcript, consisting of recurring point-counterpoint acts of potential baiting and reactionary flaming. Further examples of what may potentially be considered as baiting by possible trolls can be seen in the following Excerpt 15:

Excerpt 15 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix B):

1. Example 1

Wary Alaskan

He must have had some good dirt on the pope, maybe they dated little boys together.

#1.17 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 12:11 PM EST

2. Example 2

walks-upright

Really-- a Cardinal? What new powers will he have? How much holier is he now than before?

When he walks around with that clanging incense burner -- what does it do? When he "creates" holy water, ---what is it that happens to the water-- physically and chemically? Anything? Do I want it sprinkled on me, and why? Does it go bad? Is it better than holy oils?

Good on him I guess -- but what does it mean? Can someone explain please?

1 vote

#2.13 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:24 AM EST

rusty-2418164

Great, the pope is just handing out "get out of jail free" cards to more pedophiles!

3 votes

#2.14 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:28 AM EST

Roallin

And they got flaming outfits and ceremonies to go with it. Who else would play dress up like that? Being eligible for cardinal probably means you have molested over 100 boys. And the red cap is the badge to show it.

3 votes

#2.15 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:31 AM EST

3. Example 3

★**Bobl-1819708**

True and they were the ones that burned people alive and flayed them. The also are a FAKE! The Catholic church is responsible for more murders and torture than anyone in history. Having sex with little boys is a drop in the bucket.

11 votes

#2.2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:12 AM EST

(“Pope Makes NY's,” 2012)

Again, these comments may have been intended to provoke a response or garner (positive face) support with other members of their ideology via impoliteness. Eventually, an attack will resonate strongly enough with the opposing side to warrant a response. Furthermore, sometimes other lurking members may jump in and gang up on the responder, as in the contexts of offensive comments (potential bait) and insulted inflammatory reactions (impolite flame response) below:

Excerpt 16 (taken from Transcript 2 of Appendix B):

1. Example 1

Offensive Bait★**andy-3541218**

the catholic church is a criminal network of flaming homosexual pedophiles.

8 votes

#2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:26 AM EST

Informative Response★**Casual US Taxpayer**

No, not by a long shot. While the Catholic Church has some bad apples, and I'm not defending them, the world-wide help the church has provided and continues to provide for those in need cannot be matched by ANY other organization out there. And the ceremonies and traditions are the most beautiful of any religion, IMHO.

14 votes

#2.1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:00 AM EST

Offensive Counter to Casual★**Ru-780672**

Casual, obviously you dont know the history of the catholic church. You are laughable!

6 votes

#2.3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:30 AM EST

Offensive Counter to Casual

★**moonbaseGOP**

I agree - even if all of them are not pedophiles, the Catholic leadership protects pedophiles making them all guilty as hell (which is where they are going, btw)

5 votes

#2.4 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:56 AM EST

Offensive Counter – Probably @ Casual

arguesforsport

I agree - even if all of them are not pedophiles, the Catholic leadership protects pedophiles making them all guilty as hell

Just ask Joe Paterno how that works, or does he not count because he wasn't a priest?

#2.16 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:41 AM EST

2. Example 2

Offensive Bait

Jesusiswatching

The succession of Popes will end with Dolan.....thus ushering in the anti-christ.

2 votes

#3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:28 AM EST

Offensive Response @ Jesusiswatching

★**Bobl-1819708**

BULL S. There is no anti-christ. Nor is there any Jesus that is coming back in a pink Caddy or F16. Stop believing those comic book characters. You were born with a brain...so use it!

5 votes

#3.1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:37 AM EST

Offensive Counter-Response @ Bobl

Say What?-809562

Good advice about using the brain. When do you intend to start using yours?

3 votes

#3.2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:30 AM EST

Informative Response @ Say

hockeyref

actually, bob is spot on. The Bible is a cleverly crafted piece of fiction.

4 votes

#3.3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:36 AM EST

General Response @ hockeye

Say What?-809562

I would rather believe the Bible and risk being wrong, than not believe and risk being wrong.

3 votes

#3.4 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:58 AM EST

(“Pope Makes NY's,” 2012)

Again, it must be mentioned that it is impossible to ascertain whether it was the intent of these interlocutors to bait other users into a conflictive discourse unless the speaker himself admits to it. The most that can be done is to reconstruct the intentions of a speaker according to what has occurred within the data. Thus, based on what was observed in the preceding excerpts, comments that initially instigated a response take the form of strongly-opinioned interest or ideology-based comments that may potentially be considered as FTAs by some other entity lurking about the discourse. These charged comments are aimed not only at previously established speakers in the discourse, but also at potential overhearers who may take the bait and be pulled into heated arguments, thereby fulfilling the desires of a troll to conflate an argument.

TROLLING AND THE FUNCTIONALIZATION OF TIME

This particular style of subversive FTA is unlike anything that occurred within the Halo 3 transcripts. Within the Halo 3 data, one will notice either direct aggression toward opposing sides, or vulgar face support and camaraderie akin to that seen in Labov’s (1972) study on ritual impoliteness. The oral conversations require instant spoken communication with very little time to think out responses ahead of time, and, in most cases, the most immediate, offensive, or forceful utterance effectively helped to push the interlocutor into the

dominant position of power within the discourse and further assisted in the maintaining of his superiority.

In contrast, off record impoliteness FTAs like baiting, seen in the MSNBN postings, functionalize time allowances, which permit users to post a potentially volatile utterance and lurk while waiting for the likely ideological counter explosion. As well, interaction within the medium allows users to freely engage with one another without immediate interference from other users. Immediacy of utterance production has effectively been taken out of the equation when determining whether another party will witness, read, or respond to a message. Therefore, similar to Chafe and Danielewicz's (1987) assessment of spoken vs. written language, interlocutors in this discussion medium are able to plan out utterances, employ more strategic constructions and lexical variations, bundle sentences or whole soliloquy-type speeches into a (generally) cohesive unit of thought, revise or edit utterances until satisfied, and otherwise produce the language at whatever pace they wish. Thus, production of an accomplished transmission isn't dependent upon an immediate follow-up to maintain one's position in a hierarchy, but instead is dependent upon how elaborately one crafts an overall package.

DEFENDING AGAINST THE TROLL: CONFOUNDED BAITING AND TROLL-SUPPORT

Above, this thesis has shown multiple examples of offensive speech acts that may have been used as pragmatic elicitation devices for baiting others into an argument. It must be noted that all of the previous examples, other than that of Excerpt 10, can only be considered as potential acts of baiting. There has been no awareness by other members of the discourse of a trolling speech event taking place, nor has there been any explicit indication or acknowledgment by the speaker that he or she is indeed performing the act. Again, according to Hardaker's definition, a troll is:

...a CMC user who constructs the identity of sincerely wishing to be part of the group in question, including professing, or conveying pseudo-sincere intentions, but whose real intention(s) is/are to cause disruption and/or to trigger or exacerbate conflict for the purposes of their own amusement. (2010, p. 237)

Thus, a question must be answered: what alternatives to simply falling prey to a troll's trap do online speakers take as a defense? In Excerpt 17, from Transcript 3, Soldier, a

user (potentially a troll), manages to comment first upon an article eliciting quite a strong response. The subsequent nested chain then ensues, with his comment as the primary focus:

Excerpt 17 (taken from Transcript 3 of Appendix B):

★ **conspeak** Comment collapsed by the community

Obama and Holder, with the endorsement of MSNBC will likely release the suspect to Afghanistan militants.

9 votes

#1 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:10 AM EDT

★ **R.R.-4427561**

Wonderful provocation. I'm sure you will enjoy the inevitable @\$%#storm in reaction to your comment.

12 votes

#1.1 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:29 AM EDT

charleyfarley

conspeak the Ad hominem is not even clever. This is a site for Americans. Your people are over here www_stormfront_org

3 votes

#1.2 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:42 AM EDT

★ **Carl-404329** Comment collapsed by the community

Yeah, you know, Holder will sign the papers, swear he knew nothing about it until days later and Obama will just swear that he knew nothing about it all as he rises to pray at dawn facing the East on his prayer rug.

14 votes

#1.3 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:46 AM EDT

★ **vincent lennox**

Rather silly comment.

9 votes

#1.4 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:49 AM EDT

(“US Soldier Accused,” 2012)

As one can see upon reading the first set of responses above, Conspeak’s initial comment is taken very seriously by one of the four subsequent speakers, who in turn responds with flames. Charley attempts here to shore up support against Conspeak’s ideological stance by likening him to a distasteful ideology, going so far as to imply that

Conspeak is a white supremacist by explicitly stating, “Your people are over here,” and linking the website of “www.stormfront.org” (a website dedicated to the American white supremacist movement).

Charley’s insult does little to dissuade Carl, however, who jumps in to support Conspeak, capitalizing upon con’s utterance with a more explicitly conflictive statement (whose targets it must be assumed are liberal supporters). He simultaneously shows solidarity with con’s stance and conflictively implicates, via Gricean relevance, that Obama is a Muslim (which this speaker seems to imply is “anti-american”).

Yet, it would not be wise to hastily label Conspeak a troll, as his intention could have very well been made as a sincere contribution to the open arena of discussion. However, as per the definition of trolling by Hardaker (2010), this comment, while seen as a genuine discussion contribution, may simultaneously have been employed to subversively incite anger or provoke an inflammatory reaction from other users. Furthermore, just as in the case of Bluto, Kevin, and Michael in Excerpts 11, 12 and 13 above, it seems highly likely that Conspeak knows the kind of response that his utterance would generate and chose to post based on his own clear judgment and knowledge of the consequences that would arise due to such an utterance. Additionally, based on the reaction of Charley, his desire to cause conflict amongst the other members (if indeed he was baiting for a heated response) paid off as a marginal success.

However, if Conspeak’s comment was indeed disingenuous and his intent was truly intended as an act of subversive antagonism, then his act was confounded, and in a sense marginalized of some amount of intended functionality, by R.R.’s attempt at calling attention to Conspeak’s subversive intent:

Excerpt 18 (taken from Transcript 3 of Appendix B):

★**R.R.-4427561**

Wonderful provocation. I'm sure you will enjoy the inevitable @\$%#storm in reaction to your comment.

12 votes

#1.1 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:29 AM EDT

(“US Soldier Accused,” 2012)

R.R., in calling attention to Conspeak's comment, marks it as a "provocation," informing others of Conspeak's intentions. Yet, it is difficult to tell whether R.R. is showing support of or opposition to Conspeak's actions. As R.R. starts his comment with "Wonderful provocation," it seems that he initially may be attempting to extend some amount of positive face appreciation of the utterance (or more appropriately, offering positive face support, acting akin to an artist admiring another's craft). However, based on the immediately following sentence of, "I'm sure you will enjoy the inevitable @\$%#storm in reaction to your comment," R.R.'s usage of foul language seems to retroactively color the previous utterance as a sarcastic remark and therefore gives one the impression that while he may have been sincere with his critique of the troll, he could also secondarily be flaming Conspeak off record.

This statement, ironically, while explicit in its taboo lexical choices "@!\$%#storm," is simultaneously implicit in delivery, as he could negate his intentions of ill will toward Conspeak if challenged. In the context of (im)politeness, this could be seen as a subversive impoliteness FTA, with Conspeak as his addressee. Furthermore, it seems that R.R. has attempted to unmask Conspeak's intent of trolling and block the negative face wants of Conspeak to incite an argument (via use of a negative impoliteness FTA).

It is then in the conversation that other users begin to express discontent with what they interpret are Conspeak's (and perhaps Carl's) intentions of trolling. The resulting utterances show that they also have perceived Conspeak's intent. JS, akin to Hardaker's example of reactive flaming, flames Conspeak by labeling him as a troll and qualifies his reasons for doing so:

Excerpt 19 (taken from Transcript 3 of Appendix B):

★**JS in SD**

I wish trolls like you would stay under their rocks instead of polluting these discussion boards with their inane statements. You are adding absolutely nothing to the intelligent discussion of the article or the events in question.

17 votes

#1.5 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 6:01 AM EDT

★**TexasLaw**

Once the news put a name on what they do " Trolls " everyone jumps on the bandwagon and wants to do it. The news makes it popular. It aggravates people

who want a civilized conversation and way of talking about different topics. But to others no matter how much you call them childish, idiots, trolls... the second they get attention they sit behind their computers laughing while you get extremely mad.

The news does wonders for bringing these things to light and making it worse. When you are anonymous behind the computer screen... people act say and do things they would most likely never EVER do in their normal everyday lives. The internet is their way of making people mad, being hateful and causing such an uproar with usually no consequences. They're just people sitting in their parents basement with no real lives of their own and whose only enjoyment is to make others furious.

11 votes

#1.6 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 6:28 AM EDT

stonedog34

LOL

I think it's funny!

With a world that has gotten so deadly serious and downright tragic for a lot of people these days, I think we need some idiots to laugh at from time to time.

1 vote

#1.7 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 6:58 AM EDT

(“US Soldier Accused,” 2012)

Texas follows up on JS’s utterance by going so far as to further elaborate upon the nature of trolls by qualifying the previously established definition with a broader elaboration of the canonical set of trollish qualities, mannerisms, and actions. He further attempts to explain why he believes people feel trolling the internet is a worthwhile expenditure of time and energy and further expresses his concerns about trolling as an act, belittling Conspeak, (and trolls in general) and shunning the act.

It is then that an interesting user reaction occurs. In response to TexasLaw’s condemning of trolling as an act, a new troll, Stonedog, appears to take advantage of the anti-troll topic and sends a baiting challenge back, making light of Conspeak’s utterance and admitting the absurdity of the original troll.

He seems to further convey that the mocking of the topic by a troll (Conspeak) and the subsequent reaction of those who took it seriously is an enjoyable scenario by saying, “LOL I think it's funny!” Thus, he seems to appeal, via implication that the idiocy of the

initial trolling as an act is validated and this form of behavior should continue, if for no other reason than to break up the tedious monotony of a “deadly serious” and “downright tragic” life. Furthermore, this utterance by Stonedog may have simultaneously been an attempt at expressing positive politeness solidarity with the act of trolling, the ideology of trolling as a discourse community, or trolls in general. This support of the troll (and perhaps the lack of empathy toward the severity of the original topic) likewise garners opposition by the next few commenters who appear to staunchly oppose Stonedog’s behavior but say their pieces in non-conflictive manners according to the original tenets of B&L’s Politeness.

Excerpt 20 (taken from Transcript 3 of Appendix B):

★**AnIndividual**

To each his own, stonedog. I think it is sad for our country, our society, and especially a bad example of people of the age of adulthood acting like schoolyard bullies when actual children need much better examples.

6 votes

#1.8 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 7:11 AM EDT

johnnyeaston

Indeed.

1 vote

#1.9 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 7:45 AM EDT

★**Rick-2416019**

You think that your comment was funny, but wait, didn't I read in the same article that a road side bomb killed several civilians and another killed an intelligence officer and others. I would say that the Afghanistan people are like monkeys and only know what they are taught. Monkeys that kill each other and then get mad at others for trying to stop the insanity.

If your from an arab country, go back and fix it. If your from a third world country go back and improve it. If your from this country (AMERICA) support it.

5 votes

#1.10 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 8:35 AM EDT

Pat-419920

Amen!....to rick's comment

#1.12 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 8:54 AM ED

(“US Soldier Accused,” 2012)

This results in an interesting situation, where the commenters Individual, Johnny, Rick, and Pat initially reference Stonedog's comment, scold him, and then follow up by addressing the lurking audience, parading Stonedog as an example of bad behavior as if they are instructing the unseen masses of others on how to properly behave.

HJACKING THE DISCOURSE: THE BALLAD OF AN UNRELENTING TROLL

Now that there exists a basic set of examples of trolling as an instrumental speech act, this thesis shall endeavor to apply the knowledge gleaned from the previous examples to a more advanced illustration of the form. Of further interest here are the types of language features, tactics, and constructions that the troll, Moped, employs during the act of trolling. The analysis will begin first with the structure of his typical Point-Counterpoint-Challenge utterances constructions and then move on to other striking features of text-based paralinguistic markers and deflection techniques.

ELABORATION OF THE TRANSCRIPT

In the extensive Transcript #4 of Appendix B, one will read the sprawling battle of a single troll against the MSNBC discussion discourse community. The article that garnered the discussion in Transcript 4 was topically centered upon the medical diagnosis of Jason Russell (founder of Kony 2012). Following his being detained by San Diego Police for public nudity and erratic or obscene behavior, Russell was treated at a local hospital and diagnosed with brief reactive psychosis. The replies to the article are a hodgepodge of topics that included well-wishings for the filmmaker, debates on the validity of the diagnosis, and arguments over the content and the potential political manipulation of viewers found in the Kony 2012 film. Up until the point when the troll, Moped, entered the discussion, comments were generally favorable toward the diagnosis and users were wishing for his quick recovery. This is not to advocate that there were not people suggesting that drugs or an overload of fame played a role in Russell's off-the-wall behavior; but generally speaking, until the arrival of Moped, the discussion was mostly a benign discourse of cooperative point-counterpoint organization with supportive, informative, and oppositional utterances.

Transcript #4, therefore, consists of all comments posted by the troll, all relevant comments that the troll references, and all replies to the troll. For clarity, the number above

each comment is labeled according to the actual chronological order of his posts as they occurred throughout the time period of approximately two hours. Within this period, the troll performed 27 extended utterances and ultimately hijacked the majority of conversations to suit his agenda.

As one will notice, the troll here wages a flame war across the length and breadth of multiple nested comment discourse locations. His first utterance occurs as the third comment to the article at around 1:50 p.m., and his last comments occur at the discourse position of the 69th (and #69.1) comment head at 3:36 p.m. As stated, the troll is waging a war across quite a wide spread area of this MSNBC discussion, and as a result, one will notice that his eleventh overall comment, according to the chronological order of time, appears just under another user's reply to his third comment (# 3.5 overall) at 2:18 p.m., while his fourth comment (#4.1 overall) occurs as a response to another user he disagrees with at 1:55 p.m. For a reader attempting to analyze this speaker's speech, the ability for users of this system to post under any comment (and subsequently reply to multiple discussions freely at any time they wish) may seem somewhat overwhelming and or confusing. To help disambiguate the sequential order of the troll's posts according to time of posting, a counter, (1) through (27), is supplied above each utterance of the troll so that one can quickly refer from post to post and fully grasp what kind of war this troll is waging against his fellows.

IDEOLOGIES OF THE TROLL ON THE PROWL

Throughout this time span, the troll is seen starting and continuing conflicts, stoking the fires of anger of other users, provoking other users who have challenged him, and generally being as conflictive and intolerable to the group involved in the discussion as possible. However, it is important to note that the troll seems to stick to a particular set of ideals (ideals that are generally counter to the overwhelming majority of the rest of the discussion group). Yet his points are at the same time informative while conflictive, but not conflictive in an unreasonably illogical manner. Throughout the entirety of the transcript, he consistently refuses to validate any other opinion other than his on the diagnosis of Russell. Moped takes every opportunity possible to either express his assertions, or respond conflictively to any other speakers' opinions, adamantly asserting the following four points that mostly run counter to the discussion:

1. Moped asserts that he firmly believes Russell is a homosexual.
2. Moped refuses to accept that that some type of substance did not play a role in Russell's erratic and obscene behavior (not simply an exhaustion-based psychosis).
3. Moped denounces what he feels are propagandized government and MSNBC conspiracies to not inform the public of various facts (this point is not always centered on the article's topic and is fairly broad-reaching).
4. Moped looks down upon the readers of the article and consumers of mass media as brainwashed and states that they prefer to remain ignorant rather than enlightening themselves to facts that are potentially unpleasant.

After taking time to peruse Transcript #4, one will notice a few recurring themes or sequences that seem to play out over and over: Moped will initialize a debate or argument by posting a somewhat opinionated stand-alone comment, or he will post a combative reply to another user that he ideologically disagrees with (individuals usually with an opinion counter to his arguments). Thus, posting conflictively opinionated comments serves as his initial baiting tactic. Furthermore, his comments often consist of information that seems logically sound yet stand ideologically contradictory to the others involved in the discussion. He is also generally dismissive of the point of view of others involved in the discussion, often alluding to their ignoring of what he considers blatantly obvious facts, being blind to media cover-ups, or preferring to see things in what he suggests to be counter to the truth.

Of particular interest are the types of language features, tactics, and constructions that Moped employs during the act of trolling, starting with the structure of his typical construction of Point-Counterpoint-Challenge utterances and then moving on to other more striking features of text-based paralinguistic markers and deflection techniques.

THE POINT-COUNTERPOINT TEXT-BLOCK STRUCTURE

When making generalized comments about the article, Moped's posts often consist of reasonably built arguments. In fact, he debates in a logical, yet very sarcastic, manner, making sure to reinforce his comments with supportive facts (that may or may not be true) or opinions that he deems to be relevant. His comments that typically begin conflicts consist of an initial bridge to old information (a previous utterance or topic). This bridge may be in the form of a quoted snippet, a preemptive insult aimed at the original utterance, or a headline statement that broadcasts his feelings about a previous topic. He will then follow up his old information bridge with an informational statement (generally new or supportive

information) where he either expresses his opinions on the topic or supports it with some sort of facts or opinions that are debatably factual and certainly opinionated. He then follows up with an explicitly sarcastic (explicit in the sense that it isn't difficult to miss the intention of his conflictive message) rebuttal to the audience in general or a snide challenge to other commenters. A few examples of this behavior can be seen below:

Excerpt 21- *Bridge to Point-Counterpoint Structure – Examples* (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix B):

(1)

★**Moped** Comment collapsed by the community

(Sarcastic Bridge)

Never mind that anyone with any exposure to drug addicts, meth heads, or LSD overdose, or anything that would completely vaporize someone's brain - and lead to "bizarre behavior" might possibly think that Jason was on drugs.

("Factual/Opinionated Statement)

He was just "tired." Because his wife said so. Didn't you see the evidence that MSNBC accidentally didn't provide - and assumes you will just believe 'cause it said so?

(Sarcastic Rebuttal/Challenge)

By the way, Leprechauns exist and Santa Claus is real. I don't need to prove it - just believe me because I told you so on MSNBC.

6 votes

#3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:50 PM EDT

(4)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

(Sarcastic Bridge + Factual/Opinionated Statement)

. . . and Sergeant Bale is a nice man and sells ice cream to kids while teaching at Orphanages when he is not (allegedly) gunning down and burning women, men, and children in cold blood.

(Sarcastic Rebuttal/Challenge)

Nice.

3 votes

#4.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:55 PM EDT

(5)

★Moped

(Sarcastic Bridge)

I certainly like how MSNBC, CNN, and most other Main Stream Media has adopted the "successful" strategy of "If We Cover Our Eyes, It Will All Go Away."

(Factual/Opinionated Statement)

Yup, the daily reports of shootings, people murdering their entire families and burning down / blowing up their homes, emergence of huge shanty towns across the nation, and "warped" presentation on the state of our economy isn't indicative of anything gone terribly wrong.

(Sarcastic Rebuttal/Challenge (continued through to post 6.1))

We can Make It All Better By Just Not Reporting About It.

. . . or, more likely, Alienate Your Readership,

Reinforce the belief that the Main Stream Media is comparable to the Iranian "Mouth Piece" State Media,

and has absolutely zero credibility.

5 votes

#6 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:01 PM EDT

(6)

★Moped Comment collapsed by the community

If We Just Close Our Eyes, all the

poor people;

the starving people;

the massive creeping drug cartels that are now invading southern parts of North American parks;

the millions of dying refugees which we've created from our military adventures;

the completely shattered global "trust" in American Exceptionalism;

the rotten, corrupted core of our Corporate Industry;

It will all go away.

5 votes

#6.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:04 PM EDT

(7)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

(Sarcastic Bridge + Factual/Opinionated Statement)

Gosh, I love how I can cover more "News" in the world than MSNBC by just posting a few comments.

(Sarcastic Rebuttal/Challenge)

If you cannot do your job, MSNBC, your commentators will do it for you. For free. Without pensions, retirement, and medical benefits.

We will do your Jobs for you.

1 vote

#8 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:06 PM EDT

(8)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

(Sarcastic Bridge + Factual/Opinionated Statement)

Jason just flipped out, jacked off in public, ranted like crazed flamboyant coke head, and was slapping the ground with his hands while screaming incoherently.

(Sarcastic Rebuttal/Challenge)

But don't judge, bro.

3 votes

#9.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:16 PM EDT

(Initial Trigger Stimulus that Provoked Moped's Subsequent Response)

★ **Baja5B**

Moped: if you have a solid source of info share it. If you don't and therefore are just speculating, hold your tongue.

5 votes

#3.8 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:22 PM EDT

(11)

Moped

(Comment Bridge)

I didn't -state- anything.

(Continued Bridge → Factual/Opinionated Statement)

I just made the comment that, most commonly, if one were to observe what Jason did, one may come to a generally assumed conclusion that, based on his dialogue, mannerisms, - he may be homosexual in nature as homosexual men tend to behavior / speak that way.

And, his behavior could be "associated" to the behavior triggered by what happens when a foreign substance (aka A DRUG) essentially "hot wires" the human mind - causing a distortion of perception on reality which results in behavior which is a departure from what is the expected "norm" in society.

(Sarcastic Rebuttal/Challenge)

BUT, I GUESS, if a person got really really really "tired" and "emotional," I GUESS they COULD have a psychotic fit - that might like look a drug-fueled freak out that most coke heads display - and you are certainly super-duper right that it was just "exhaustion."

Oh, and for posterity, I'd like to see research that indicates that it could create what appears to be a complete psychotic breakdown.

3 votes

#3.9 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:24 PM EDT

(Stickney, 2012)

Thus, using this construction of Bridge → Factual Opinionated Statement Challenge structure, he is able to relevantly and cooperatively post topical (yet strongly opinionated) statements of (arguably) factual information that support his stance and then follow up with a counterattack, rebuttal, or challenge to his addressee or the community at large. This challenge then acts as bait for his next potential target. Furthermore, this structure seems to function well in not only delivering his intended message but also in inciting responses from targets (which is the ultimate goal of a skillful troll).

It is interesting to note that many of Moped's comments are not outright inflammatory as per Bousfeld's definition of impoliteness. Initially, his contributions tend to adhere to the taxonomy of Hardaker's academic definition of troll(ish) behavior, as he follows the general tenets of cooperative discourse, albeit unwavering and unapologetic in adhering to his highly opinionated and oppositional stance. Furthermore after his initial bids of seemingly cooperative discourse, his intensified frequency of postings, and unusually aggressive and forceful pursuit of others becomes almost abusive toward other discourse members whose insights or feelings about the topic do not match his own. As a result, his

own elocutionary force certainly contributes to his eventually being labeled as a troll by the community at large.

There is absolutely no way to know for certain that the truths he builds his arguments with are, in one way or another, factual statements. It is just a facet of his internet persona that he tends to attempt to support the majority of his utterances with supporting information that may or may not be fact, but is delivered in a highly opinionated manner. He further seems to end every utterance with some form of a challenge or sarcastic remark, further stirring the pot and provoking others into flaming him.

Paralinguistic Features in Textual Discourse

Rather than retreating back through the veil of anonymity after inciting conflictive response flames, this troll prefers to face his attackers head-on (again on multiple fronts), engaging them with enculturated internet savvy by making use of a plethora of constructions and CMC-based stylistic features. His tone of choice is that of that of off record FTAs such as sarcasm, and he prefers to present the guise of one who is completely unafraid of flames made by the community (and capable of handling whatever FTA may be aimed at him). Below, examples are shown of initial speakers' flames, and Moped's subsequent counters and rebuttals that are stylistically only present within CMC.

Excerpt 22 (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix B):

1. Example 1

Dave-3502795

So, you're proving your point by stating an absence of evidence? You're not an attorney, are you?

#3.4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:11 PM EDT

(10)

Moped

INTERNET BATTLE!! 11!!

long, time-wasting verbal textual battle with Dave3502795 about meaningless stupid online comment

rage, pound on keyboard to PROVE I AM RGHTT!!11!!!

#3.5 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:18 PM EDT

2. Example 2

★JB from metro NY

Not only are Moped's comments complete garbage....he never shuts up. Isn't that always the way? The biggest fool has the biggest mouth.

OK Moped, please add a stupid reply to verify my comment about you.

#3.16 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:39 PM EDT

(21)

Moped

OH GOD, MOPED IS SO MEANS11!!! He is obveriously crazy! he must haets the GAYS because he pointed out a behavior indicator! >:(

oh dears! I verified your prediction that I might reply! noooes.

#3.17 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:41 PM EDT

3. Example 3

(24)

Moped

Moped: Public enemy Terrorist #1.

Saying controversial things that make stupid people rage and obsessively click "like" buttons when the obligatory rebuttal appears.

QUIK SOMEONE NEEDS TO MODARATERD HIM!!!11!!

Ah muagh quieter. tiem to get back to my irrelevant, vapid, reality-deprived happy world.

#69 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:36 PM EDT

(Stickney, 2012)

By the time that utterances #3, #4, and #3.5 come about, Moped has already had a few heated exchanges with Dave. Here, he references that Dave has been pursuing him in heated arguments. In order to highlight Dave's incessant pursuit in challenging him (Moped), he makes use of text-based paralinguistic markers that key enculturated net users into a greater understanding of the troll-speak utterance. Moped mocks Dave first by implying shouts with capital letters, underscored by playing on a typical net-savvy meme of trolling that involves replacing exclamation marks with 1's. This marker (sarcastically) implicates that the conversation has gotten far too heated, and as a result of his rage-fueled intensity, that he (Moped) has forgotten to hold the shift key (1 shifted on a keyboard is !). He further punctuates this message of childish rage by carefully and purposefully misspelling key words in his utterance, thereby expressing either haste, immaturity of action, or perhaps even signifying a self-reflexive look at trolling as an aggressive, juvenile, or rage fueled act.

As an aside, it must also be noted that the usage of ungrammatical language spoken in a juvenile manner (as best seen above in examples 2 and 3) is another contemporary net-savvy troll-speak form of discourse. In the excerpts directly above, Moped has purposefully bungled the grammaticality and spelling of his own sentences. While I cannot give a perfectly lucid explanation of why Moped (or trolls in general) decide to employ ungrammatical constructions, my guess would be that ungrammaticality in an utterance, whether in nature being childish ignorance, purposeful, or accidental, creates dissonance when being read and subsequently, interpreting non-standard forms of otherwise conventionalized discourse forms is a communicatively non-harmonious hassle. As it is in the intent of trolls to create disunity, reject coherence, and disrupt otherwise the harmonious communication and reception of a message, this tactic of ungrammaticality in discourse is a clear violation of Grice's maxim of manner, and subsequently a rejection of the Cooperative Principle (as far as conveying a clear, concise, and collaboratively negotiated message is concerned).

Returning to the topic at hand, Moped then bridges a gap to the overarching context, referencing his prolonged battle with Dave. By using asterisks (*), he encapsulates the previous arguments with Dave into a single ongoing action: “*long, time-wasting verbal textual battle with Dave3502795 about meaningless stupid online comment*.” He then uses asterisks again to signify an imaginary action and imitates what he thinks Dave is doing while arguing with him (Moped): “*rage, pound on keyboard to PROVE I AM RGHTT!!11!!!*”. By performing this utterance, he (Moped) self-reflexively implicates an admission that he is indeed trolling Dave.

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT AS IMPOLITENESS MARKERS OF SARCASM

In the excerpt below, Tetra has sparked a debate with Moped after replying to his (Moped's) comment about how people and the mass media prefer to turn a blind eye to injustices and reality. The resulting conversation comes to a head when Tetra produces an utterance that, under other circumstances, might seem polite. However, there is no apparent connection between the two, other than the previously established conflictive discourse:

Excerpt 23 (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix (B):

Tetrapoda

I think I agree with your general analysis of problems, but blaming the media for everyone's day to day oblivion is getting into creepy "Ron Paul is ignored by the media!" territory.

#6.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:23 PM EDT

(12)

Moped

Yes, blaming the Media - which blankets the entire nation / globe with information to receptive minds - certainly isn't the way to go.

I think most propagandists would completely agree with you 100%.

#6.3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:25 PM EDT

Tetrapoda

Since I taught Goebbels everything he know, I have to agree with you. Have you removed your fillings yet?

#6.4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:27 PM EDT

((One must assume he is referencing the Nazi war Propagandist Joseph Goebbels.))

(16)

Moped

I'm sure you did. That's nice dear.

#6.5 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:30 PM EDT

(Stickney, 2012)

The first statement by Tetra, that he “taught Goebbels everything he kn(e)w” about manipulating media and propaganda (hereby assuming Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi war propagandist), is untrue in the sense that he could have never done so. He thus has flouted Grice’s maxim of quality to imply that he knows a great deal about media manipulation. Yet this utterance is seemingly harmless, and he more or less gives an air of playing along with Moped’s sarcastic discourse.

The second question of Tetra is somewhat more absurd in its tone, asking whether Moped has “removed his fillings yet.” This could be a further reference to Nazi theft from Jewish holocaust victims (as they went so far to remove gold fillings). As far as I can observe, this mockingly-sentimental query by Tetra is meant to convey a message to Moped

that may imply being mockingly concerned with his state of being. As a result, Moped's follow-up utterance of "That's nice dear," plays off of Tetra's tone of mock-sincerity and further clashes with his (Moped's) established overarching tone of antagonistic discourse between the two. Thus, when Moped follows up his statement of, "I'm sure you did," (which one must assume carries the disrespect of the previous discourse) with "That's nice dear," (which carries the coddling-mother familial sense of closeness), the resulting pair of utterances creates quite a degree of dissonance for any reader. The term of endearment "dear" also seems to suggest that not only is Moped turning Tetra's tone back upon him, but that Tetra is further being likened to a coddled child by Moped (who one must assume is utilizing this construction to negate or refute Tetra's status as a willful adult or competent member of the argumentative discourse). To restate this in Gricean terms, Moped's statement flouts the maxim of relevance, and any competent reader understands that Moped in no way believes there to be truth or wit in the previous speaker's exaggerated claim; and as a result, Tetra's attempt at humor (at Moped's stake) has been effectively thwarted.

Deflection as an Offensive Rebuttal

The following examples are a series of similar utterances where Moped the troll takes pieces of the previous flames against him and then deflects the utterance with counter-offensives. These counter-offenses are in the form of current internet savvy troll-speak and are constructions that have been conventionalized by online forum-goers to goad or challenge other users. Two typical constructions such as "you mad, bro?" are seen in Examples 3 and 4, and the copying a previous utterance changing a relevant word to deflect the utterance back at the previous speaker (Excerpt 23-Examples 1, 2 & 3), are employed by Moped:

Excerpt 24 (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix B):

1. Example 1

★**Dave-3502795** Comment collapsed by the community

Moped - SHUT THE F*CK UP!!!!!!

19 votes

#11 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:14 PM EDT

(9)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

Dave3502795, SHUT THE F*UCK UP!!!!!!

you mad, bro?

2 votes

#11.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:16 PM EDT

2. Example 2

★**Okie-1425202**

Moped, I have to say, you sound like maybe you need to be in the bed next to poor Jason.

15 votes

#14 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:23 PM EDT

(15)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

you mad, bro?

1 vote

#14.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:29 PM EDT

3. Example 3

★**Ruken**

Moped, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

13 votes

#3.10 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:25 PM EDT

(13)

Moped

Ruken, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

3 votes

#3.11 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:26 PM EDT

★**Ruken**

Ruken, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

I'm not the one constantly claiming Jason is a gay drug user. Nice job deflecting though.

6 votes

#3.12 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:31 PM EDT

(18)

Moped

Ruken, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

I'm not the one constantly claiming Ruken is looking for an INTERNET BATTAL. Nice job deflecting though.

2 votes

#3.13 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:34 PM EDT

(Stickney, 2012)

As one can see in Example 3, Moped turns Ruken's own utterance against him, not once, but twice, changing Ruken's structure just enough to re-threaten Ruken with Ruken's own FTA. This construction of mirroring the previous utterance reflects whatever FTA was originally produced back at the previous speaker via extension. This tactic also somewhat nullifies the original comment as unimportant or childish (as this counterattack-FTA is in itself childish or of a schoolyard mentality) thereby disarming it of its original power, making a mockery of an insult, and, by extension, mocking the original speaker as being an incapable opponent. Here Moped also climaxes his utterance using all capital letters (to emphasize textual shouting and or seriousness) and purposeful misspelling to underscore that he is getting away with trolling Ruken and further making sure to emphasize the childishness of the overall context. More importantly, Moped projects this contextual childishness upon the previous speaker (Ruken) while secondarily emphasizing the futility of Ruken's continued will to fight as a lesson to other lurking members not present within the discourse.

MOCK EMBARRASSMENT AND CHILDISH UTTERANCES

Again, here is an instance of Moped playing at a couple of net-speak conventions.

Excerpt 25 (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix B):

Tetrapoda

You've lead a sheltered life, I gather?

4 votes

#9.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:24 PM EDT

(14)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

Oh yes, very sheltered. Very very sheltered.

In a basement. With my mommy. :(

#9.3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:28 PM EDT

(Stickney, 2012)

Rather than adopt an explicitly conflictive tone in response to his opponent, he mockingly hints that there may be a secret truth in Tetrapoda's previous statement, "You've lead a sheltered life, I gather?" and that Tetrapoda has discovered his embarrassing secret. To do this, he (Moped) mockingly acknowledges Tetrapoda's claim by stating, "Oh yes, very sheltered," drawing attention to the absurdity of the previous poster's statement by reproducing not only a portion of Tetra's previous statement, but also reduplicating the adverb "very" for increased stress (thereby again underscoring dissonance of sincerity via intense emphasis), further implicating that he was in no way sheltered and that the very idea is absurd. To further highlight the absurdity of Tetrapoda's statement, Moped follows up with the comment, "In a basement. With my mommy. :(," where he plays at the conventional laymen's taxonomy of troll traits that trolls live in their parents' basements and are essentially immature juvenile delinquents that have no lives and contribute nothing worthwhile to society). Interestingly, he reinforces his utterance with an emoticon (:(→ ☹), mockingly suggesting that either the previous utterance by Tetra has hit too close to home and that he is emotionally harmed by the insinuation, or that he is satirically pretending to be upset with himself for potentially having no life (and that being called out on it has threatened his personal reserve of positive face). Consequently, he has deftly circumvented Tetra's attack by rolling with the punches, so to speak, and deflects the utterance back at its original speaker. This deflection serves as a counter-offensive strategy, insinuating that Tetra's attack was in no way effective and that Tetra is neither as savvy nor intelligent as his (Tetra's) intended addressee (Moped).

ANALYSIS OF THE TROLL AND HIS ACT

It must be noted, before moving on, that Moped never explicitly states that he is trolling or even flaming other members of the discussion. His initial bids within the discussion are, on the surface, genuinely cooperative (yet oppositional), informative, and (while argumentative in nature) not explicitly counter-productive. Thus, his initial utterances made as though he is wishing to engage in a healthy debate.

Up until this point, Moped has done little except express his opinionated beliefs in an open forum. There is very little reason to label him a troll other than his insistence that others adopt an alternative outlook on the events surrounding Jason Russell's arrest. Yet, it is very early on that his speech acts are deemed by the community to be subversive, purposefully (and conflictively) counter-topic, and delivered in an aggressive enough manner to levy the label of troll upon him. It is then that the other members of the discourse that begin explicitly flaming him for expressing his openly opinionated and alternative interpretations of the events.

Thus, due to the striking impact that his comments have had upon offended members of the discourse, his turns in the discussion are subsequently dismissed as being nonsensical, raving, counterproductive to the discourse, and wholly uncooperative; and as a result, he is branded a troll by members of the discourse.

It is important to note that while it may very well have been the intention of Moped to troll in the first place, it is his offended addressees and observers that initially identify his sarcastic speech acts as trolling. Only later does he begin fighting and flaming with apparent intent to abuse, chastise, and argue.

It is here that several prior questions must be addressed: Can trolling or flaming only be an offensive speech act when the addressee or observer deems it to be offensive language use and was simultaneously offended? Furthermore, what elements in the discussion lead to this assumption (of Moped being a troll) by the community? If Moped did intend to annoy these members of the discourse by baiting and flaming them, is it aggressive action even if others did not perceive it to be so? For now, this work will analyze how the discourse community reacted to Moped, and save the questions about intent for the following discussion chapter.

There are two specific qualities that are outstanding about his behavior and led to the community flaming and retaliating against him. Firstly, when challenged, he aggressively retaliates with linguistic force, and always with a snarky response or snide counter-challenge. Furthermore, one cannot deny that due to his choices of taboo words, utilization of constant biting sarcasm and irony, usage of troll-speak paralinguistic features, challenge oriented constructions, his unrelenting vigor of doggedly pursuing his opponents point-for-point, the repeated refutations of claims of other users, and his obsession with ramming his point of

view down the throats of other users, his motivations becomes somewhat suspect as trolling when looked at as a complete package. These qualities united seem to hint at motivations beyond his seemingly dogged pursuit to present knowledge to the unseen audience. Furthermore, his eventual rantings at comments #69 and #69.1, reproduced below, prove that he at least at some point stopped pretending to be a congenial member of the discussion, and instead has become bent upon stirring people's emotions and sowing seeds of chaos and inciting anger.

Excerpt 26 (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix B):

Comment Heading #69

(24)

Moped

Moped: Public enemy Terrorist #1.

Saying controversial things that make stupid people rage and obsessively click "like" buttons when the obligatory rebuttal appears.

QUIK SOMEONE NEEDS TO MODARATERD HIM!!11!!

Ah muagh quieter. tiem to get back to my irrelevant, vapid, reality-deprived happy world.

#69 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:36 PM EDT

(25)

Moped

Stay tuned for more potentially "damaging" comments to be collapsed by the community - despite having what appears to be people agreeing with him.

Oops.

#69.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:36 PM EDT

(Stickney, 2012)

Armed with this knowledge, one will notice throughout all of his comments and responses (even those that seem to congenially address the topic as a valid member of the discourse community) that there is a subversively conflictual undertone of sarcasm in his tone. He wields sarcasm for the purpose of spreading anarchy against the status-quo (the previously established attitude of other posters toward the topic of discussion). Furthermore, where Moped could have simply expressed his point over one, two, or maybe three

utterances, he continues to attack, respond, insult, and conflate the situation across a total of 27 utterances.

Thus, the troll knows how to push the buttons of the other members of the discourse, and it seems that the resulting en-masse response of flames that he receives from the greater whole of the discourse community only fuels his desire to conflate the discussion-wide arguments further. Eventually, discussion members begin calling for site moderation against him and succeed in collapsing (so that they cannot be seen unless expanded) most of his comments altogether. In this instance, the greater discourse community (except a few individuals who feel Moped may be correct or find him generally amusing) is able to band together to moderate this user, and, work toward achieving an overall shared goal in temporarily silencing the troll so that their more harmonious discourse may continue.

While Moped generally seems to remain unfazed by the flaming rebuttals by the community against his tirades, it is interesting to note the reaction Moped has to all of his harsh comments being collapsed. It seems that the only sure-fire method to upset or confound a troll is to eliminate his subversive contribution. As his final act against the community at large, Moped unleashes these utterances:

Excerpt 27 (taken from Transcript 4 of Appendix B):

(24)

Moped

Moped: Public enemy Terrorist #1.

Saying controversial things that make stupid people rage and obsessively click "like" buttons when the obligatory rebuttal appears.

QUIK SOMEONE NEEDS TO MODARATERD HIM!!11!!

Ah muagh quieter. tiem to get back to my irrelevant, vapid, reality-deprived happy world.

#69 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:36 PM EDT

(25)

Moped

Stay tuned for more potentially "damaging" comments to be collapsed by the community - despite having what appears to be people agreeing with him.

Oops.

#69.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:36 PM EDT

(Stickney, 2012)

Note that within the utterances above, Moped makes use of almost every linguistic form discussed: the topical bridge to challenge structure, the usage of ungrammaticality, excessive stylistic punctuation (!), and the acting out of how his potential addressee, audience, target, or community may potentially be relieved when (Moped's) utterances are collapsed.

ENCAPSULATING

To reiterate what has been discussed within this section, I have first elaborated upon, via examples, specific ways that trolls are typically thought to behave, according to the definition by Hardaker. Typical behaviors include: intent to subversively act as a sincere member of a discussion, baiting, disingenuous contributions used to provoke responses of anger or ire, and the dogged pursuit of countering other speaker's viewpoints or ideologies to the point of being frustratingly offensive.

I then discussed practical methods for determining intent of trolling when trolling, by definition, is an off record act. Following up on that, I presented an extended discourse in which a troll goes on an unrelenting verbal tirade across a large swatch of a discourse. Across 27 utterances he picks fights, incites heated emotional responses from other members, flagrantly disregards others' right to have an opinion, abusively talks down to the community as a whole, labels them as ignorant, blind, and delusional if they do not share his views; and combats flames aimed at him with trollspeak, net-savvy constructions features, and flames of his own.

I further picked apart the discourse of the troll in order to identify defining characteristics of net-savvy speech employed by enculturated net users and (by extension) trolls. The features witnessed in the data include but are not limited to: utilizing juvenile mock speech acts (such as mirroring of utterances, ungrammaticality (including misspellings), challenging other users and entities beyond the established discourse to a textual battle (only to verbally chastise and aggressively harass them when they do), and using negate-able sarcasm to tactfully and implicitly express FTAs toward one's target and the lurking audience.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Wonderful provocation. I'm sure you will enjoy the inevitable @!\$%#storm in reaction to
your comment(s).
--R.R.: *The MSNBC Troll-Fighter*

It is now time to being summarizing what has been observed across the entirety of this thesis and attempt to cohesively address the questions raised thus far. These questions were:

1. In what ways does (im)politeness apply to instances of online flaming and trolling?
2. As intent is difficult to infer based on speaker motivation, one must instead observe the hearer, (or in the case of CMC, the addressee's) reaction to an impolite FTA. Can, or should, intent of impoliteness be extended to contexts where interlocutors openly discuss offensive or taboo topics and effectively show unconcern to others who may listen in or observe and as a result potentially be offended?
3. For what functional purposes do users employ impolite speech acts (flaming & trolling) within online communities? Similarly, what roles do flaming and trolling serve for establishing and maintaining norms or relationships within online communities? How does community play a role in establishing the practice of impolite speech acts?

WAYS (IM)POLITENESS APPLIES TO INSTANCES OF ONLINE FLAMING AND TROLLING

So far, this thesis has established a number of explanations about what flaming and trolling represent as speech acts. These explanations have been aided by the application of (im)politeness theory to Watson's usage of flaming as a community regulator and applying Hardaker's academic definition for trolling to extended discourses.

Within the Halo 3 transcripts, interactants of the pre- and post-game waiting rooms used offensive and taboo topics to build solidarity with others of similar ideological dispositions. Yet these examples, while not offensive to the primary intended addressee, were likely offensive to others who are disregarded by the primary interlocutors as irrelevant to the discussion.

Yet, these examples of ritual impoliteness are quite different from flaming. Flaming within these transcripts is the functional application of impolite speech acts, used by the most loquacious and conflictive speaker to insult, abuse, or offend. These acts are functionalized to fulfill the face wants of the speaker, wielding a reconstituted value of power, for the purposes of harassing and picking on weaker interlocutors or to hierarchically divide the discourse participants according to roles of dominance and submission. Furthermore, targets of the dominant speakers are often members who stray too far from the values established by the primary antagonist. Flaming, apart from simply picking on weaker discourse members, was found to be a tool utilized against those who did not share culturally similar net-savvy mannerisms, lacked an immediate grasp of proper behavior within the discourse, or did not competently communicate according to the established norms of an enculturated net user. In this way, impolite speech acts of flaming are employed to not only to signify group inclusiveness and exclusiveness but also to form and solidify makeshift hierarchies of power within the dominant speaking group.

Within the MSNBC transcripts, there exists a much different form of conflictive speech act, the act of trolling. Examples from these transcripts highlighted not only net specific discourse stylings that enculturated net-users employ when articulating themselves in text, but also discourse specific structures, patterns and forms of baiting elicitation that serve as conflict starters and methods of exacerbating discord.

Similarly, this thesis has shed light upon the roles that trolling and flaming play in the maintaining the values and norms of an online community. Oftentimes, the domains of both behaviors do seem to overlap, as flaming can consist of sarcastic off record utterances that are contextually explicit in their delivery, and trolling can take the form of biting sarcasm when delivered in an openly contentious and doggedly unrelenting pursuit of a topic. In particular, there has also been examples of Hardaker's reactionary flaming (impoliteness utilized for the sake of defending the positive face ideals or the values of a speech group) as a result of trolling.

Finally, and most importantly of all, is the concept that instrumental impoliteness may simultaneously, or secondarily, be functionalized for building, strengthening, maintaining, or defending the individual positive face of speakers or the collective positive face aspect of ideologies. Examples of flaming utilized as a defensive mechanism occurred when Casual

defended Catholicism from anti-Catholics, bullies harassed weaker discourse members as a method of building positive face solidarity and distributing hierarchical roles within the group, and interlocutors engaged in ritual impoliteness with one another (ritual insults (Labov, 1972)) at the expense of neglecting the face wants of a silent lurking crowd. Furthermore, ritual impoliteness may be functionalized as an act to gain positive face reinforcement from a crowd of similar ideology while simultaneously potentially being offensive to a lurking member of the discourse, as witnessed in the examples of Playerfound's taboo story.

INTENT OF THE SPEAKER AND HOW UTTERANCES ARE PERCEIVED BY A HEARER

One of the most pressing questions that must be addressed is how to attribute intent to indirect or implicit acts of impoliteness. To reiterate, Bousfield (2008, p.72) claims that “for impoliteness to be considered successful impoliteness, the intention of the speaker (or ‘author’) to ‘offend’ (threaten or damage face) must be understood by those in the receiver role.” One of the primary questions addressed about intentionality is whether or not an act of impoliteness should be considered impoliteness if entities (bystanders and overhearers) beyond the immediate addressee were offended. Within the Halo 3 transcripts this thesis exhibits examples where taboo and offensive topics were broached in a public auditory space with little to no concern for others in the room. Furthermore, within the MSNBC data there are instances of potential impoliteness that could be considered baiting or trolling (as these speech acts instigated quite a harsh reaction from those not even previously part of the discussion). These acts in particular, while they may have been directed at a particular addressee within the context of the discourse, could be argued to also simultaneously be meant to attack the face of a group of people who potentially exist lurking beyond the immediate discourse.

Attributing offensive intentionality to the speaker within these particular scenarios is quite unfeasible as it is only the reactions by the hearers that designate whether an utterance has made an impression upon an audience (e.g. this is only the reconstructed interpretations of the speakers' intention by the addressees). Furthermore, Hardaker (2010) stresses that, as

it is primarily the hearer who attributes intent, there can be cases of an observer (H) misinterpreting the intent of (S).

Hardaker goes on to give a brief description of short exchange between a few interlocutors:

In this case, S may self-assess her behaviour as politic and judge that H sees it likewise, whilst H may view S's utterance as a faux pas. Other Hs may judge differently:

Example (4) [060929]

4. A That poster "C" is a troll. Have you guys not figured that out yet? Read his post on [URL] and elsewhere.

5. B A I don't think C is a "troll".

Example (5) [030925]

6. D BTW [by the way], E is neither a troll nor is she baiting you any more than you are baiting her IMO [in my opinion] (2010, p. 221).

Note that, it is this confusion and potential ambiguity of intention of which trolls take advantage. And while there were no instances within this thesis' transcripts of a troll defending itself against accusations of trolling, Hardaker does provide examples of an individual defending herself against such allegations:

Example (6) [060318]

7. A If you are a troll ... I'm sure you'd never admit it. If there even is a *real* pony in all of this, I feel very sorry for it.

8. B I am not a troll ... I am only doing what my vet has advised me to do.

Example (7) [060514]

9. C If I say something that makes you nervous on account of your horsey experiences, that doesn't make me a troll.

Example (8) [090603]

10. D I am not a troll, you little jealous children. (2010, p. 222)

Thus, in the case of Hardaker's potential troll, even claims against being a troll must be interpreted by hearers as sincere, and as one can see, claims of innocence are not accepted as genuine very readily. As a result, one cannot prove that a potential troll intends trolling as an act unless said speaker admits to the act.

What I will say, however, is that when looking at data such as this, where intentionality is in question, one should never fully discount the speaker from ill intent, just as one should never fully dismiss their actions entirely as innocuous. The reconstruction of intentionality is in the eye of the beholder, and that is just as true for the addressee in a discourse as it is for bystanders and overhearers lurking behind the veil of anonymity and the researchers or readers of this thesis that come upon these utterances as data.

I therefore claim that if a speaker performs an utterance that may be potentially intended as offensive, given the common knowledge that such a topic hypothetically could be offensive to a particular group (whether present in the discourse or not), then goes on to then flame someone explicitly, it is then reasonable to assume that this speaker's original questionable utterance intent was implicitly meant to incite conflict. In this manner, I suggest that instances such as Excerpt #2 of the Halo 3 data, where Playerfound and Paradox (the primary interlocutors) acted with negligence (either accidental or purposeful) toward those not immediately in the discourse, could be considered as an act of impoliteness. Their seemingly uncaring attitude toward the potential face wants of the bystanders and overhearers (the want to not have to hear about taboo topics or explicit language) warrants their personal conversation simultaneously an act of constructive camaraderie in one sense and an act of intrusive impoliteness in another.

I feel that this illustration likewise extends to the MSNBC discussion discourses, in that while one cannot glean the intent of entities that may potentially be trolls when they are simply expressing oppositional statements, after these speakers have gone on to exacerbate conflict elsewhere in a discourse via more explicit means, a researcher can then retroactively impute intentionality to their prior utterances of ambiguous intent. Thus, to give this context, while Moped's first few utterances could be taken as seemingly genuine attempts at cooperative discourse (though strongly opinionated, oppositional, and laced with sarcasm), a much clearer picture of what his original intentions may have been takes shape when looking at the greater whole of a discourse after he goes on to flame or troll, stirring up conflict across the following 24 utterances. While he could have changed his position of being a truly cooperative contributor to that of a belligerent and conflictive offender, I feel that his having changed intent is unlikely. Moped's attempts at contributing to the discourse, even from the beginning, are laced with sarcasm so strong that is conveyed as explicit.

Furthermore, his comments are so ideologically oppositional, and delivered with such persistent tenacity, that I feel his only purpose was to hijack the discourse from the start for the sheer purpose of watching others react conflictively.

RETURNING TO COMMUNITY

I think it is important to consider the notion that, as there exists no perfectly analogous scenarios in which net-based societies and communities can perfectly match their real world counterparts due to the lack of stake, interdependence, and proximity, and codependence upon other members for survival, online communities must be looked at in two ways.

First, as has already been established, internet communities are primarily interest-based amalgams of users who collect together via a shared communicative medium for some specific information or activity-oriented purpose. These purposes may be for discussion, pooling of information, resources, sharing in interests, or any number of other unspecified reasons or activities. Human society and community existed long before the arrival of the internet, and human society would stagger on fine without it. Online communities and CMC therefore symbolize features of a society that has grown dependent upon such methods of communication as an integral (yet also critically non-essential to survival) part of their daily lives.

Second, as online communities are generally interest-based, one is no longer grounded in looking at politeness as the solely necessary tenet for navigating or upholding community norms through harmonious interaction. Online, users no longer need to worry about offending others, as they are not dependent upon their addressees for survival, nor need they fear retaliation due to the effectively perfect anonymity and non-proximity of other interlocutors' locations.

Consequently, interest-based communities have developed forms of communicating and behaving as interrelated societies. Just as in the real world, a single member of one internet community may simultaneously belong to many other online communities, and therefore community norms within one community may infect others, which in turn renegotiate these net specific behaviors. In this sense, Rheingold's Computer Mediated Hive Mind is not always a single hive, but a network of interconnected minds. Therefore, it

cannot be suggested that any single online site or group has exclusively developed these methods of net-savvy speak, but it is collaborative and evolving, and each community takes what it needs from the whole and adapts it to serve the purposes of the members.

Moreover, net-nurtured behaviors and discourse patterns are not shared by all members of every community online. This thesis has provided quite stark examples of speakers who produce utterances using net-enculturated forms (flaming and unconcern for the audience in Halo, l33t speak, and trolling within the MSNBC.com transcripts) turn upon those who are either less culturally knowledgeable or who do not behave according to the ideals prescribed to by some vocal entity (a single troll) or group (an collective of speakers defending some ideological stance).

Thus, community as a metaphor for online aggregations can be a vastly nebulous concept. Community in the net is not one in which members have been negotiating from birth. Community here is one that one must learn to negotiate and act accordingly in as a culture secondary to the society in which one has been raised. As a result, community online is based on alignment of interests, and a want to fit in with a particular grouping of likeminded individuals. When a group is determined to be appropriate by a user, they then begin to embrace mannerisms, speech patterns, discourse intricacies, and adopt some if not all of the ideologies of that community so that they may more readily participate in that society as a member.

Interestingly enough, it is not until the transcripts of Moped's trolling that clear net-specific conventions in the form of specialized utterance constructions and text-based tactics are observed. What was observed (if one was to juxtapose this according to Swales' taxonomy of discourse community features) was an experienced user of the trollspeak specific forms of netspeak modulating their learned (not innately developed) language practices to play at net enculturated utterance structure conventions. These stylized conventions of paralinguistic modulation are established collectively by net-users who are essentially the dynamic purveyors of the ever changing norms of digital communication. Functionally, these conventions are features or sets of highly stylized text-based culturally idiomatic expressions that speakers make use of when conversing in their domain specific internet registers. Practical application of these particular discourse styles expresses one's own level of net-wise enculturation. Thus, to be a part of this progressive digital savvy

collective, one must speak and act as they do, and if one represents themselves competently by fluently learning to negotiate the net-savvy stylistic language conventions, then one's use of these societal markers of language likewise ritualizes inclusion, thereby signifying to others that one is a savvy enculturated member of the an internet discourse community.

In this manner I suggest that trolls do have, or belong to, a community as well. Furthermore, I suggest that the discourse community of trolls is decentralized from a specific hub of learning or organized effort to train others. Though they may not necessarily require a centralized hub of interest to negotiate norms of conduct, this impolite behavior is more pronounced and can be seen on display within communities such as 4chan, Something Awful, Reddit, etc. where conflictive discourses of the net thrive. In these communities, people troll and flame one another for fun. Yet, the message is not received in the same way as it would be on MSNBC.com, as offensive language is the norm for building solidarity. Participants of these communities therefore no longer feel the inherent offensiveness or sarcasm in a speech act, and instead converse offensively according to the community norms.

Thus, I suggest that trolls learn this art by observation and perhaps by being victims of the act themselves while interacting with others more adept at the act. In essence, learning to be a part of this community is more of a case of wanting to be like big brother. In order to act more like the enculturated big kids and ultimately gain membership to this community, trolls build communicative competence by mimicking and copycatting those of more experience. These norms of conflict are then developed and nurtured across various communities and make use of other established stylistic and communicative choices prevalent within other forms of CMC.

Hence, as the art of trolling has become indefinitely widespread throughout the cosmos of the internet, the act itself has taken on form and meaning as an ideology. For some, like the comment by Cordite at the beginning of Chapter 5 they believe themselves to be an integral part of cooperative discourses, lightening things or providing comedic relief. Perhaps some, like Moped, believe their behavior is necessary shake up the status quo, making others consider concepts beyond topics that are simply presented to them, even if it is counter to the established discourse. Perhaps more flammers and trolls, like many offensive contributors in the MSNBC transcripts, are just individuals out to satisfy their own face wants of self-gratification.

Just as trolling is an act that defines trolls, the people who perform the act define a discourse community by their particular forms of style, utterance, interests, and objectives. Therefore, I suggest in closing that the discourse community of trolls and some types of flammers (like those seen in Chapter 4) is essentially an interest-based discourse community centered around the non-harmonious and disingenuous subversion of other communities, and as such, even when it seems that trolls are inherently against other speech communities dedicated to harmonious discourses; trolls believe themselves to be an integral equalizer of the cooperative system. Nevertheless, the opposite is also true, as the subversive act of trolling is parasitic, in that trolling does not function without cooperative politeness discourses to confound.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As it was the intent of this thesis to study the roles that impolite speech acts such as flaming and trolling play within semi-diplomatic online discourses, this thesis has found some research into politeness inadequate for studying discourses of a purely conflictive nature. In particular, analyzing speaker intention is far too heavily entrenched in the reconstruction of intent by the hearer. I propose that, as understanding speaker intent is a primary issue when studying acts of impoliteness, that future research must address problems in inferring intent in an effort to move away from simply favoring hearer reconstruction. Communication is a mutually constructed medium and speakers and hearers co-construct meaning. To simply fault a speaker for the interpretation a hearer devises is unsound. As seen above, even instances of what may potentially be valid contributions to a discussion can be taken as offensive if a hearer reconstructs that as the message. Furthermore, some hearers may simply be hardwired to seek offense in even non-conflictive messages. In these sense, as the speaker can produce a faux pas when speaking, so can a hearer misconstrue a meaning.

Moving beyond the need to improve methods of investigating intention, I suggest that future impoliteness research needs to investigate the binary roles that acts of impoliteness may play within an event. Speech acts may be impolite while secondarily or subversively paying tribute to entities aspects of positive face. Thus, the role of ritual impoliteness ritual insults must be extended to cover cases of speaker neglect toward bystanders and hearers as well as more appropriately consider contexts of instrumental impoliteness being

functionalized for positive face gains at the expense of another entity's (present or not) aspect of face.

In closing, I also suggest that researchers need to address instances beyond events where impoliteness confounds politeness. In this sense, I suggest that future work in this area must look at instances of impoliteness in contexts where offensiveness of utterance is the norm, not a weighted option (like MSNBC). Thus, I suggest that impoliteness used in discourses already established as ritual impoliteness would be a worthwhile study; in other words how trolling or flaming can be deemed successful on the forums of 4chan or Reddit. As these forums are known for their volatile nature and offensive banter, it would be a worthwhile challenge for politeness-based research to not only disambiguate between utterances instrumental and ritual impoliteness, but also to determine how addressees or observers react to these categories.

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APPENDIX A
HALO 3 TRANSCRIPTS

The following transcriptions come from 5 specifically selected pre-game matches in an online game known as Halo 3. The game is considered a first person shooter in which the players, when playing against one another will attempt to kill each other. The most kills wins. There are also various other objective-based games such as, capture the flag.

The pre-game allows both teams (red and blue) to talk to one another before the actual match starts. These transcriptions are taken directly from speech recorded both before and after the match. The participants involved (judging by voice) are roughly between the ages of 10 and 23.

Some various information:

noob (newb) = inexperienced or bad player

vj = sex (vajina-job)

bj = blow-job

veto = the ability to cancel or change a map / game type before the
game starts

voice-masking = An ability in the software to change or alter the sound of one's
voice.

Transcript #1

Conversation Members - Pregame

Red Team

X12

X05

Jan

Wobbley

Blue Team

Gotanewbjob

Nightmare

WuTang

BadKarma

X05: Oh, a *nightmare* ? (0.2) I hate those .

BadKarma: ((Laughs))

X12: () Wutang () () ()

X05: Just got a *ne:wb-job* ?

((Random Laughing))

BadKarma: Wow .

Gotanewbjob: I ha- I [hate those]=

Wutang: [Yeah, that's] a good one

X05: =What ?

Justgotanewbjob: I said I hate those

Wutang: Dude, newbjobs are the best ones, bro .

Jan: ((Using deep voice-masking)) *Kill the ni:ggers*

BadKarma: ((Laughs)) What ? Are you serious ?

((Random murmuring from all players.))

X05: Just got *a no:ob* job .

X12: ((Laughs))

Wutang: Never had a noob job before ?

BadKarma: Is that like a stick-job ?

X05: No, I do[n't get *bjs* .]

Wutang: [() ()] () bitch don't know what she's doing

Wutang: ()=

X05: =I only get *vjs*

X12: [() () ()]

Wutang: [You only get] *vjs* ?

BadKarma: Yeah, that was a no jo[b, actually]

Wutang: [() ()] () ()

X12: () () [()]

X05: [You] don't know what a vj is ?

X12: [() () ()]

X05: [You don't] know what a vj is ?

BadKarma: Is it [like a blumpkin ?]

Wutang: [That's why I asked] what what what, what what what ?

X05: If you don't know what it is, you can't afford it ((Laughs))

Wutang: What, a vj?

X05: () oh my god, () .

BadKarma: I pre[fer the blumpkin .]

Wutang: [() () I.. I have] a lot of money though .

Wutang: Well, what is it? Cause, if I find out what it is, I got enough
Money (0.4) Honestly .

((Game's 5 second countdown begins))

Jan: ((Using deep voice-masking.)) *Kill the ni:ggers*

Nightmare: Anyway. ((Laughs)) (2.2) That's a pretty good way to start a match.
(0.2) Betcha it pisses off black people .

Post-game. ((X05 helped xReallybadKarma kills his own teammates.))

X05: I just wanna drive .

BadKarma: Hey, it was nice, I appreciate it. Thanks for letting me gun down your own team ((Laughs))

X05: Alright dude (0.2) thanks for letting me suck your dick .

Transcript #2

Conversation Members – Pre-game.

Red Team

Cyde

Kakashi

BadKarma

Donuts1

Blue Team

Bidoof

Playerfound

Paradox

Warscr8ion

Playerfound: Computer (1.8) And then um, (0.2) yeah he said that to them and then um (0.2) they believed him so then uh (0.2) they accused his sister of looking up the lesbian porn so it was.... (0.4) And then his sister's like so ugly so (0.2) All of us laughing at him was like you're gonna end up getting freaking bitch-slapped- by your sister's strap on.

Paradox: ()

Playerfound: Yes.. bu-

Paradox: ():

Playerfound: yeah... [ah-=]

Paradox: [():]

Playerfound: =Because he has all his in his computer.

Playerfound: Yeah he () () why wouldn't he sound like he was caring
I mean if you're trying to defend yourself .

((Conversation Break))

Playerfound: Veto

BadKarma: Th[is-]

Warscr8tion: [Veto]

Playerfound: [Veto]

BadKarma: This is sort of an awkward conversation to come into a game to, actually

Playerfound: Augh=

BadKarma: =Sorta feel a little nervous.

Paradox: ()

Playerfound: Augh.

Warscr8tion: Alright (0.2) everyone get on a mongoose and we'll be good

Playerfound: ((Guttural Laugh)) Hey, hey red team (0.4) Red team. (1.0) I call lasers (1.2)
If you spawn on lasers (0.2) alright, don't pick it up . I call it, cause I'm gonna betray my
teammates with it . (0.8) I'm gonna *rape*, (0.4) I'm gonna rape warscreation .

Playerfound: Aww, that's no fun, eh ?

((Indiscernible chatter from multiple people: ()))

(Conversation notes)

- A mongoose is a small fast vehicle with no defenses and no weapons, and the lasers are shoulder-mounted cannons capable of destroying vehicles with relative ease. #Thus, Warscr8tion's remark was that of pure jest and probably not meant to be taken seriously, as they would be destroyed easily and thus penalize their own team. –

Transcript #3

Conversation Members (Pre-Game)

(Red Team)	(Blue Team)
Soup	Kalamazoo
Soup(1)	CREEND
Rainingblood(1)	Rady
Rainingblood	Rady(1)
Tymac	Sniperz
Hghag	Batman
Autistik1	Stickybug
Badkarma	SHOCKER

Stickyking: Marjuana.

Sniperz: Veto

Sniperz: Aww, dude. We got a random lieutenant. (1.8)Commander.

Tymac: xx a general, yet?

((Indecipherable chatter from all speakers: ()))

Rady: Veto.

Sniperz: *Fuck* you, bitch. Red team sucks

Stickyking: Red team sucks d:::::ick!

Stickyking: I'm, onna, I'm... xxx alright, guys, alright Who's the best on the other team?

(0.8) Um.... Alright, I wanna say that I am gonna kill... [(2.0)=

= [I can't

Tymac: [()] =Probably gonna get the Warthog first. () ()=]

Stickyking even say your name... (1.2) HG-Hag ? (1.0) I'm gonna kill you the most, you *faggit*

Hghag: Oh, Why is that?

Stickyking: Cause you suck.

Hghag: Oh, [really ?]

Stickyking: [You su]ck dick (1.2) I will put my ass in your dick.

Hghag: () ().

((Laughing from everyone))

Stickyking: You know ? Yeah, get it on . You don't even know what to say .

Stickyking: Rehehe[((laughs)) He just got-]

Sniperz: [((laughs)) () () ()] silent now ().=

Stickyking: =() I know (0.6) He don't know what to say (1.0) He just got called out (0.4) He's like awww shit ((laughs))

Hghag: Wait wait, my () () just ()formed me that just () (). I () ().

[What'd y]ou= [=said.]

Stickyking: What? []Wha? [A]Ai ai.. just said I'll put my ass in your dick .

(1.2) Alright?

Hghag: Uh... peo...=

=((mixed speech))=

Hghag: =I'm gonna shut up for awhile .

Stickyking : Yeah (0.2) see ? (1.4) Shut the fuck up .

((Laughing + more garbled/mixed speech.))

Transcript #4

Conversation Members (Pre-Game)

(Red Team)	(Blue Team)
Niase	Brando
noodle	p1ay3r
Kami	NastyVirus
Babypirate	SHADOW
Assassin	daddyfish(1)
Autistik1	daddyfish
Badkarma	Gio

Brando: Ya::y ?=

BadKarma: =N::o .

Assassin: *Fuck* capture the flag .

Babypirate: ((Coughs))

Babypirate: ()

Babypirate: ()

Babypirate: ()()

((veto timer begins))

Babypirate: No ? Nobody veto=

SHADOW = () gonna be a crappy game.

Baby pirate: You gotta be kidding me: .

BadKarma: I believe they're not .

((veto timer ends – people vetoed the map – another map takes its place))

Babypirate: I wanna do flags, fuck ?

BadKarma: Get used to it kid (0.6) it's called life .

Babypirate: ()

Babypirate: What the *fuck* ?

Babypirate: () *whore* .

Babypirate: ()

Transcript #5

Conversation Members (Pre-game)

(Red Team)	(Blue Team)
Oneshot(2)	Junker
MadMax	Junker(1)
Rain	Oneshot
Trance	Oneshot(1)
sloppydru(1)	Kirby
sloppydrunk	Kirby(1)
redstop	BerryAutistik
redst(1)	BadKarma

BadKarma: A sloppy drunk, huh .

Junker: I'm so happy I don't have church in the morning, tomorrow .

Rain: [((Lau)ghing)]

BadKarma: [Yeah]

Trance: [((Laughing))=

BadKarma: [((Laughing))=

Rain: =Oh, my god (3.2)Wow, what a quote.=

BadKarma: =Yah, [no shit] .

Polish Junker: [What ?]

Rain: "I'm so happy I don't have church in the morning tomorrow."=

Junker: =O:::h . *Wow* . Sorry

BadKarma: One way to tell if you're a noob .

Junker: What ? Who's a *noob* .

BadKarma: It's almost as bad as, HBO's (0.2) a channel that's blocked by my parents on my TV .

Junker: Wow (2.2) What channel would this be ?

Rain: Is he xx (3.2) I'm talking to *yo:u* .

((Junker starts making odd noises.))

APPENDIX B
MSNBC DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPTS

Transcript #1. Comments #4 through #4.6 of SUN GUN

texmann!  Comment collapsed by the community
liberal propaganda. whatever.

2 votes

REPLY  #4 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 5:30 PM EST

D Fields43066

lol... oh Ilove when people like you try to read a science article. Sound it out , son...

17 votes

#4.1 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:08 PM EST

jhine57

what the hell does it have anything to do with liberal... you have to be an idiot..

u have too be

14 votes

#4.2 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:11 PM EST

trent-2358408

You give republicans a bad name(like ron paul).

6 votes

#4.3 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:26 PM EST

SonofMollyM

Bright Minds and Dark Attitudes

2 votes

#4.4 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 8:39 PM EST

Baddog40

Science and facts are now considered liberal propaganda to cavemen.

12 votes

#4.5 - Sat Feb 11, 2012 9:52 PM EST

Scott-E83

^ 5 people can't spot a troll ^

Transcript #2. Comments #1 through #3.12 of Cardinal (52 total comments out of 435)

Spicy Bluto Comment collapsed by the community

Emperor Palpatine appoints a new Sith Lord. Dolan is a despicable, criminally negligent, hateful man.

12 votes

#1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:19 AM EST

Kevin C-752389

I can just see it if Timothy Dolan is elected Pope. He will create "Vatican West", in L.A., and promise all the "boys you can (fill in your own obscenity)".

8 votes

#1.1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:38 AM EST

Casual US Taxpayer

Oh I just love getting in the face of all those morally superior people on here who love to bash the millions of good Catholics in this country. Here's some advice for you-Shove It.

15 votes

#1.2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:03 AM EST

Momus2009

Casual....Neither of them bashed the millions of "good" Catholics in this country, but they did bash the one Catholic that seemed to turn a blind-eye to the raping of little boys under his watch.

14 votes

#1.3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:20 AM EST

Ru-780672

Casual, do you defend and protect the young children raped and scarred for life the way you defend your catholic pride?

9 votes

#1.4 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:29 AM EST

Lusitania

Most nonbelievers do bash the entire congregation for these evil priests sneaking into the churches..Myself being a Catholic are disgusted by them and what has happened, they need to

be thrown in jail forever as far as I'm concerned. But they'll probably end up on the streets or relocating like any other pedophile, after all they were abusing Catholics why would you care.

4 votes

#1.5 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:54 AM EST

moonbaseGOP

Just do a thorough background check on him. We don't want any "little secrets" popping up now do we???

(also might be wise to check the Conservative Catholic conspiracy in Virginia and his ties to it...)

3 votes

#1.6 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:54 AM EST

usa-navy

Don't bash catholics. THE raping of little boys is horrible and they need to go to jail and there needs to be background checks and psychological tests. But don't tell me its never happened in anyother churchs other christians are no better. THE catholic church tends to be focused on because its bigger and some people (spicy) veiw it as the galatic empire.

4 votes

#1.7 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:22 AM EST

oses4vita_ Comment collapsed by the community

I so agree with 'USA-NAVY'...Our Churches, being, as stated by USA-Navy, is, by far, the largest of most all churches & due to that, our church(es) does get criticted in more ways than can be counted; though, come 'Judgement Day' those whom 'act' as if they know it all, WILL have to stand & explain thier dihonorment to Our Lord God, as to the 'ways they have NOT been good christians by putting down churches they don't truly have a 'clue' about'..this includes churches of all dinominations..all whom claim to be "Christian". Sadly, if these people would go back to the older Catholic Bibles aka: information, thay would be astounded once they discovered that all 'Catholic' means is "Christian/Christianity"..plus, why do these so called 'christians' do not 'see' that what comes from thier mouths..is NOT an act of Christianity, in any form :/ Wake up people!! We are ALL children of GOD!!

Blessings.....

3 votes

#1.8 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:48 AM EST

roses4vita

Sorry..I meant to say dishonorment not dihonorment.. :#

1 vote

#1.9 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:50 AM EST

Michael French-2657864

Joe "El Raton" Ratzinger, otherwise known as the Pope Benedick XXX protects pedophiles.

And he's the leader of the organization. RCC or NAMBLA, I can't tell the difference.

4 votes

#1.10 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:01 AM EST

Steven Carlson

eat u know what jerk

#1.11 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:13 AM EST

Michael French-2657864  Comment collapsed by the community

Very intelligent and well thought out reply Mr. Carlson. The facts are on my side.

Many in my family are Catholics and good people. I simply cannot understand how they or anyone else can continue to support this organization. I wouldn't give one cent or word of support to the RCC, when even it's highest leaders choose to protect pedophiles, predators, and the interests of this criminal organization over the innocent children and victims. It sickens me, and I hold everyone who supports the RCC in lesser regard, including my family members. Actions speak louder than words, and the words and actions of the RCC are loud and clear.

4 votes

#1.12 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:16 AM EST

 mozzie-600

And these OLD CELIBATE (maybe) MEN are in charge of telling young women what to do with their bodies. Preposterous!

5 votes

#1.13 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:27 AM EST

arguesforsport

Here's some advice for you-Shove It.

Another good, forgiving christian. Ever notice how the "good christians" on this site are also some of the most venomous people on this site?

3 votes

#1.14 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:38 AM EST

Linda M-311663

Actually, reading all the anti-Catholic rhetoric here can lead even the most loving soul to blast off. Almost a quarter of all Americans are Catholic and to see this constant bashing of so many Americans shows the hypocrisy of so many posters here. Let one person bash gays, blacks, Mexicans, all you liberals get into a self-righteous mode and rightfully so. But many here feel that they can bash all Christians, especially Catholics and that is justified.

HYPOCRITES!

I know this post will be collapsed but be consistent, for all of our sakes!

#1.15 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:50 AM EST

Momus2009

Linda...No one is bashing ALL Christians or Catholics. What I find most people talking about though are the Pope and this Dolan character, because they had the power to stop the madness of what was going on under them and they failed to do so.

1 vote

#1.16 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 12:00 PM EST

Wary Alaskan

He must have had some good dirt on the pope, maybe they dated little boys together.

#1.17 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 12:11 PM EST

REPLY 

★andy-3541218

the catholic church is a criminal network of flaming homosexual pedophiles.

8 votes

#2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:26 AM EST

★Casual US Taxpayer

No, not by a long shot. While the Catholic Church has some bad apples, and I'm not defending them, the world-wide help the church has provided and continues to provide for

those in need cannot be matched by ANY other organization out there. And the ceremonies and traditions are the most beautiful of any religion, IMHO.

14 votes

#2.1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:00 AM EST

★Bobl-1819708

True and they were the ones that burned people alive and flayed them. The also are a FAKE!

The Catholic church is responsible for more murders and torture than anyone in history.

Having sex with little boys is a drop in the bucket.

11 votes

#2.2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:12 AM EST

★Ru-780672

Casual, obviously you dont know the history of the catholic church. You are laughable!

6 votes

#2.3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:30 AM EST

★moonbaseGOP

I agree - even if all of them are not pedophiles, the Catholic leadership protects pedophiles making them all guilty as hell (which is where they are going, btw)

5 votes

#2.4 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:56 AM EST

★usa-navy

Yes that happened bobl but how about protestants william of orange eather you were protesant or you were died plain and simple. the potatoe famine in ireland was perventable the queen with held food from the irish because they are catholic. Examine your own churchs history before you bash the catholic churchs history

5 votes

#2.5 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:27 AM EST

Say What?-809562

And how long have you been a member?

1 vote

#2.6 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:28 AM EST

★hockeyref

most pedophiles are not homosexuals. IDIOT!

7 votes

#2.7 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:31 AM EST

knock-3163058

1

#2.8 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:39 AM EST

★knock-3163058

instead of united and love each other ,is that what you say about the church, i guess you not Christians, these are individual that they made mistake but look at the Christan religion as a whole, the most peaceful religion, go read the bible and learn from jesus

5 votes

#2.9 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:40 AM EST

David Stone-3900289

Reeeeealy Andy????? Was that before or after you joined?

#2.10 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:55 AM EST

roses4vita

AMEN!! This to 'knock-3163058' Totally agree with you!! Go & read, but, also, understand..comprehend..what you are reading! If, by chance, you don't understand something(s) that have been written, then, plz!! Go & ask..if not from the Catholic Church..any Christian Church or better yet, get on the internet & learn ;)

2 votes

#2.11 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:02 AM EST

brokeincolorado

Sounds like someone is very angry with God....Perhaps you should ask why?

3 votes

#2.12 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:20 AM EST

walks-upright

Really-- a Cardinal? What new powers will he have? How much holier is he now than before?
 When he walks around with that clanging incense burner -- what does it do? When he
 "creates" holy water, ---what is it that happens to the water-- physically and chemically?
 Anything? Do I want it sprinkled on me, and why? Does it go bad? Is it better than holy oils?
 Good on him I guess -- but what does it mean? Can someone explain please?

1 vote

#2.13 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:24 AM EST

rusty-2418164

Great, the pope is just handing out "get out of jail free" cards to more pedophiles!

3 votes

#2.14 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:28 AM EST

Roallin

And they got flaming outfits and ceremonies to go with it. Who else would play dress up like that? Being eligible for cardinal probably means you have molested over 100 boys. And the red cap is the badge to show it.

3 votes

#2.15 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:31 AM EST

arguesforsport

I agree - even if all of them are not pedophiles, the Catholic leadership protects pedophiles making them all guilty as hell

Just ask Joe Paterno how that works, or does he not count because he wasn't a priest?

#2.16 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:41 AM EST

tom343

MENTOR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

#2.17 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:52 AM EST

guy from orlando

@Bobl and Ru

Your weak knowledge of the church is laughable. The Church of yesteryear was all about power. Nothing they did in the Crusades was for God, it was for power.

Let me teach you about proper, not-Atheist influenced history (no offense to those atheists that are actually tolerant, nice and deserve respect).

The Crusades were a series of wars between the Church and its allies, the Crusaders states (Kingdom of Israel, Lesser Armenia, etc.) and several other lands. The main fighters were Catholics/Christians and Muslims.

The Byzantine Empire was falling, and the situation between Constantinople and the eastern Muslim world was heating up. The ruler of the Byzantines, Alexios, sent an urgent letter to the Pope, asking for help, considering the Pope was a powerful figure. The Pope saw this as a chance to gain power and land, so he used the fact that there was no real journalism or ways to find out the truth to manipulate the Church's followers into thinking that the Muslims had taken over Jerusalem, and raping, pillaging and murdering people there (which in fact they didn't, the Muslims treated the people of conquered lands quite well actually, they tolerated and allowed the practice of other religions in those lands). The Pope had raised HIS personal army in a speech at Clermont, France. He edited the words of the Bible and Jesus, claiming that the only way to cleanse yourself from sin was through "Holy War", and that it was only a sin to kill Christians. Instead, he caused a massive immigration of Scots, Germans, Frenchmen and other devout followers into Constantinople.

And so forth, a long history of war followed, with thousands killed.

I hope you now understand that all acts of war blessed by the Church were for personal interests, not for the religion itself.

It's up to you two if you want to keep acting like fools or have a more broad, truthful understand of reality.

1 vote

#2.18 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:54 AM EST

Ozzi-502718

Since when was church and religion separate?

#2.19 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 12:08 PM EST

CuongDNguyen

@brokeincolorado

I didn't know getting angry at someone equals to angry at God. Did God told them to do all those criminal act? I don't think so.

This behavior you said is like what they did so many times ago, "My words are god's words", "my actions are god's actions", that was their excuse back then when they torture people and burn them in the name of god. Guess that excuse still popular now.

1 vote

#2.20 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 12:22 PM EST

REPLY 

Jesusiswatching

The succession of Popes will end with Dolan.....thus ushering in the anti-christ.

2 votes

#3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 7:28 AM EST

★Bobl-1819708

BULL S. There is no anti-christ. Nor is there any Jesus that is coming back in a pink Caddy or F16. Stop believing those comic book characters. You were born with a brain...so use it!

5 votes

#3.1 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 8:37 AM EST

Say What?-809562

Good advice about using the brain. When do you intend to start using yours?

3 votes

#3.2 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:30 AM EST

hockeyref

actually, bob is spot on. The Bible is a cleverly crafted piece of fiction.

4 votes

#3.3 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:36 AM EST

Say What?-809562

I would rather believe the Bible and risk being wrong, than not believe and risk being wrong.

3 votes

#3.4 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 9:58 AM EST

roses4vita

AMEN!! To 'Say What?-809562'

1 vote

#3.5 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:04 AM EST

brokeincolorado

I am ashamed to read most of the comments here. Most of you have no spiritual training what so ever. If you did, you wouldn't be speaking these words.

Study of Divinity and Scripture would help many of you to understand that there has always been a battle between good and evil, no matter the particular religion. It is obvious who is who here.

2 votes

#3.6 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:18 AM EST

roses4vita

To: 'brokeincolorado'...AMEN to u!! ;) It truly doesnt matter what the 'religion' for the 'words' are still the same..

#3.7 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 10:49 AM EST

Matilda Tuscany

Whether or not there is a God and, if so, whatever may be His nature, there is one fact which NO rational person denies, regardless of one's religion or lack thereof. There is good and evil in humanity. Period! Even if there is no God! Even if there is no devil! We ourselves possess something within our souls (whatever a soul is) which impels us to both Good and Evil, thus, for all practical purposes (if they do not exist already) there is a God and a devil. Formally worship God or not, formally refute the devil or not; but live as if there is a God, because, in our hearts, God is. Refute the devil formally, or not, but live as if there is a devil, because our bloody history proves incontrovertibly that, in our souls, the devil is.

#3.8 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:02 AM EST

Momus2009

So basically, if there is indeed a heaven and a hell, there can only be one true religion that has it right, therefore, all of the other religious zealots will be mad as hell when they find out they've been duped all of those years. And, since the Bible says Jesus was a Jew, wouldn't that make the Catholic church one of the bastard religions?

#3.9 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:38 AM EST

arguesforsport

I would rather believe the Bible and risk being wrong,

Worship through fear and intimidation...what a kind and loving god....

2 votes

#3.10 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:45 AM EST

arguesforsport

Study of Divinity and Scripture would help many of you to understand that there has always been a battle between good and evil, no matter the particular religion. It is obvious who is who here.

So if someone doesn't believe in the same fairy tales as you they are evil? Thanks for clearing that up.

2 votes

#3.11 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 11:46 AM EST

CuongDNguyen

That is how they label those heretic in the past, either believe the same thing as they do or get torture and kill off right away. Too bad they can't do it anymore.

As for believe is better not to believe, did you win any lottery? There are so many religions out there, how do you know you are getting the right one? Not to mention the life-time of wasting doing something pointless and finally found out you got a wrong one.

#3.12 - Sat Feb 18, 2012 12:29 PM EST

Transcript #3. Comments #1 through #1.16 of SOLDIER (17 total comments)

conspeak Comment collapsed by the community

Obama and Holder, with the endorsement of MSNBC will likely release the suspect to Afghanistan militants.

- 9 votes

#1 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:10 AM EDT

R.R.-4427561

Wonderful provocation. I'm sure you will enjoy the inevitable @!\$%#storm in reaction to your comment.

- 12 votes

#1.1 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:29 AM EDT

charleyfarley

conspeak the Ad hominem is not even clever. This is a site for Americans. Your people are over here
www_stormfront_org

- 3 votes

#1.2 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:42 AM EDT

Carl-404329 Comment collapsed by the community

Yeah, you know, Holder will sign the papers, swear he knew nothing about it until days later and Obama will just swear that he knew nothing about it all as he rises to pray at dawn facing the East on his prayer rug.

- 14 votes

#1.3 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:46 AM EDT

vincent lennox

Rather silly comment.

- 9 votes

#1.4 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 5:49 AM EDT

JS in SD

I wish trolls like you would stay under their rocks instead of polluting these discussion boards with their inane statements. You are adding absolutely nothing to the intelligent discussion of the article or the events in question.

- 17 votes

#1.5 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 6:01 AM EDT

TexasLaw

Once the news put a name on what they do " Trolls " everyone jumps on the bandwagon and wants to do it. The news makes it popular. It aggravates people who want a civilized conversation and way of talking about different topics. But to others no matter how much you call them childish, idiots, trolls... the second they get attention they sit behind their computers laughing while you get extremely mad. The news does wonders for bringing these things to light and making it worse.

When you are anonymous behind the computer screen... people act say and do things they would most likely never EVER do in their normal everyday lives. The internet is their way of making people mad, being hateful and causing such an uproar with usually no consequences. They're just people sitting in their parents basement with no real lives of their own and whos only enjoyment is to make others furious.

- 11 votes

#1.6 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 6:28 AM EDT

stonedog34

LOL

I think it's funny!

With a world that has gotten so deadly serious and downright tragic for a lot of people these days, I think we need some idiots to laugh at from time to time.

- 1 vote

#1.7 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 6:58 AM EDT

AnIndividual

To each his own, stonedog. I think it is sad for our country, our society, and especially a bad example of people of the age of adulthood acting like schoolyard bullies when actual children need much better examples.

- 6 votes

#1.8 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 7:11 AM EDT

johnnyeaston

Indeed.

- 1 vote

#1.9 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 7:45 AM EDT

Rick-2416019

You think that your comment was funny, but wait, didn't I read in the same article that a road side bomb killed several civilians and another killed an intelligence officer and others. I would say that the Afghanistan people are like monkeys and only know what they are taught. Monkeys that kill each other and then get mad at others for trying to stop the insanity.

If your from an arab country, go back and fix it. If your from a third world country go back and improve it. If your from this country (AMERICA) support it.

- 5 votes

#1.10 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 8:35 AM EDT

Luis Perez-1281366

Good, do it.

when Afghan kill Americans, they are handed over to the U.S. fair is fair.

#1.11 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 8:50 AM EDT

Pat-419920

Amen!....to rick's comment

#1.12 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 8:54 AM EDT

douglas oates

REALLY?...EUROPEAN PLEASE TAKE YOUR ARSSES BACK FROMwhere ever the hell your from!!!!

#1.13 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 8:55 AM EDT

JerkInCoolClothes

sigh... if only some of you knew the difference between knowing your @\$%# and knowing you're @\$%#.

- 2 votes

#1.14 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 9:05 AM EDT

osiris-667199

And how many of you would really be surprised if conspeak is proven right?

#1.15 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 9:39 AM EDT

saxon

there will be no death penalty case; with his history, known so far, a diminished capacity , defence will spare him that; he will however spend the rest of his life in a prison and a mental hospital; get the hell out of Afghanistan now, we have nothing to gain and everything to lose.

#1.16 - Wed Mar 14, 2012 11:00 AM EDT

Transcript # 4: Moped the Troll taken from KONY:

(1)

★ Moped Comment collapsed by the community

Never mind that anyone with any exposure to drug addicts, meth heads, or LSD overdose, or anything that would completely vaporize someone's brain - and lead to "bizarre behavior" might possibly think that Jason was on drugs.

He was just "tired." Because his wife said so. Didn't you see the evidence that MSNBC accidentally didn't provide - and assumes you will just believe 'cause it said so?

By the way, Leprechauns exist and Santa Claus is real. I don't need to prove it - just believe me because I told you so on MSNBC.

- 6 votes
#3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:50 PM EDT

★ UDunnoBro

This is exactly the kind of statement I would expect from someone too lazy to pedal!

- 23 votes
#3.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:52 PM EDT

(2)

★ Moped Comment collapsed by the community

Wouldn't it be a believable story that Jason was actually possibly gay, was at a club, OD'd on some sort of drug, and flipped out?

Naaaaaahhh . . . a bit of a stretch of the truth. Though, if you listen to his speech and gestures while ranting and raving, one could possibly swear that they are watching a gay man drug user having a meltdown.

- 6 votes
#3.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:53 PM EDT

(3)

Moped

"Too lazy to pedal" - eh? I'm not sure what you're inferring.

- 1 vote
#3.3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:53 PM EDT

Dave-3502795

So, you're proving your point by stating an absence of evidence? You're not an attorney, are you?

- 2 votes
#3.4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:11 PM EDT

(10)

Moped

INTERNET BATTLE!! 11!!

long, time-wasting verbal textual battle with Dave3502795 about meaningless stupid online comment

rage, pound on keyboard to PROVE I AM RGHTT!!11!!!

- 4 votes
#3.5 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:18 PM EDT

★ the bigpicture

at moped ... your name is moped.... meaning you don't use a bike.

exhaustion can do crazy things to someone, not too mention the negative critique of his work has garnished (I being one of them). extreme stress has scientifically been proven to cause certain periods phycosis, so I am not sure why you think it's because he is gay and on drugs
.....

- 10 votes
#3.6 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:19 PM EDT

★ Baja5B

Moped: if you have a solid source of info share it. If you don't and therefore are just speculating, hold your tongue.

- 5 votes
#3.8 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:22 PM EDT

(11)

Moped

I didn't -state- anything.

I just made the comment that, most commonly, it one were to observe what Jason did, one may come to a generally assumed conclusion that, based on his dialogue, mannerisms, - he may be homosexual in nature as homosexual men tend to behavior / speak that way.

And, his behavior could be "associated" to the behavior triggered by what happens when a foreign substance (aka A DRUG) essentially "hot wires" the human mind - causing a

distortion of perception on reality which results in behavior which is a departure from what is the expected "norm" in society.

BUT, I GUESS, if a person got really really really "tired" and "emotional," I GUESS they COULD have a psychotic fit - that might like look a drug-fueled freak out that most coke heads display - and you are certainly super-duper right that it was just "exhaustion."

Oh, and for posterity, I'd like to see research that indicates that it could create what appears to be a complete psychotic breakdown.

- 3 votes
#3.9 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:24 PM EDT

★ Ruken

Moped, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

- 13 votes
#3.10 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:25 PM EDT

(13)

Moped

Ruken, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

- 3 votes
#3.11 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:26 PM EDT

★ Ruken

Ruken, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

I'm not the one constantly claiming Jason is a gay drug user. Nice job deflecting though.

- 6 votes
#3.12 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:31 PM EDT

(18)

Moped

Ruken, why are you so obsessed with homosexuality?

I'm not the one constantly claiming Ruken is looking for an INTERNET BATTAL. Nice job deflecting though.

- 2 votes
#3.13 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:34 PM EDT

★ skrekk

Moped - I just made the comment that, most commonly, if one were to observe what Jason did, one may come to a generally assumed conclusion that, based on his dialogue, mannerisms, - he may be homosexual in nature as homosexual men tend to behavior / speak that way.

That was a really dumb comment.

- 9 votes
#3.14 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:36 PM EDT

★ Pandora6

Psychiatrists/psychologists might say you're obsessed because of "reaction formation". Try to decrease your anxiety. Hope this was helpful.

- 5 votes
#3.15 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:37 PM EDT

★ JB from metro NY

Not only are Moped's comments complete garbage....he never shuts up. Isn't that always the way? The biggest fool has the biggest mouth.

OK Moped, please add a stupid reply to verify my comment about you.

- 8 votes
#3.16 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:39 PM EDT

(21)

Moped

OH GOD, MOPED IS SO MEANS11!!! He is obviously crazy! he must hates the GAYS because he pointed out a behavior indicator! >:(

oh dears! I verified your prediction that I might reply! noooes.

- 3 votes
#3.17 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:41 PM EDT

★ Mark Stephens-4334123

Best to ignore Moped. I think he is a gay 14 year old who skipped school due to jokes being made about him. Since his mommy is at work, he is playing with mommy's computer.

Mommy better check for gay porn on the hard drive.

- 5 votes
#3.18 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:45 PM EDT

rae-1629223

I think this moped guy is even too lazy to moped -he just sits all day and types reply's to reply's to his comments

- 3 votes
#3.19 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:48 PM EDT

(23)

Moped

Funny. Seems like most of the comments below seem to be reflecting what I stated from the beginning.

Oh well.

#3.20 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:50 PM EDT

★lawfull

Perhaps his name is not Moped, as in the vehicle. It may be moped, as in the past tense of mope. For example, after a prolonged ranting post, he moped around the house for hours.

- 5 votes
#3.21 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:52 PM EDT

Ruken

Best to ignore Moped. I think he is a gay 14 year old who skipped school due to jokes being made about him. Since his mommy is at work, he is playing with mommy's computer.

Mommy better check for gay porn on the hard drive.

He escaped from 4chan.

- 1 vote
#3.22 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:53 PM EDT

SmarterThanYou-2513768

you guys are stupid shut the hell up! children these days... p.s I agree with Moped, as having seen drug fiend tirades before I would lean towards this having to do with maybe a bad "E" pill or Mushrooms or possibly even Exhaustion.. due to being up for 3 days on Crystal meth!!! the guy was totally tweeking out and needs to be put on blast... If he was a black guy it would'nt even be a debate you interneters would be all over the guy like "see this black ass spent all of our donation money on crack!!!" but since hes a white evangelical you all want to give him a the benifit of doubt...

- 2 votes
#3.23 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:59 PM EDT

BROOKE IN FT LAUDERDALE

Who cares!!!! The man has had a break. Give him a break. I hope he is ok. Good Lord people and MOPED..... now the man is gay and on drugs? WTF?

- 4 votes
#3.24 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:14 PM EDT

DancingSpiderman

INTERNET BATTLE!! 11!!

long, time-wasting verbal textual battle with Dave3502795 about meaningless stupid online comment

rage, pound on keyboard to PROVE I AM RGHTT!!11!!!

Of COURSE, Moped what else are we gonna do?

- 1 vote
#3.25 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:35 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #4 -----

★ Heazzer012

Everybody has a breaking point. He will get better and he will again be the voice that so many need him to be. We are so spoiled here in America....let's join him in looking outside of ourselves to help others in desperate need!

- 14 votes
#4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:52 PM EDT

(4)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

. . . and Sergeant Bale is a nice man and sells ice cream to kids while teaching at Orphanages when he is not (allegedly) gunning down and burning women, men, and children in cold blood.

Nice.

- 3 votes
#4.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 1:55 PM EDT

denver bill 2 Comment collapsed by the community

Heazzer012,

Suppose "the voice that so many need him to be" is saying "stand on a street corner, spout gibberish and choke yer chicken". Shall we still join him?

- 4 votes
#4.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:11 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #6-----

(5)

★ Moped

I certainly like how MSNBC, CNN, and most other Main Stream Media has adopted the "successful" strategy of "**If We Cover Our Eyes, It Will All Go Away.**"

Yup, the daily reports of shootings, people murdering their entire families and burning down / blowing up their homes, emergence of huge shanty towns across the nation, and "warped" presentation on the state of our economy isn't indicative of anything gone terribly wrong.

We can Make It All Better By Just Not Reporting About It.

. . . or, more likely, **Alienate Your Readership,**

Reinforce the belief that the Main Stream Media is comparable to the Iranian "Mouth Piece" State Media,

and has **absolutely zero credibility.**

- 5 votes
#6 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:01 PM EDT

(6)

★ Moped Comment collapsed by the community

If We Just Close Our Eyes, all the

- poor people;
 - the starving people;
 - the massive creeping drug cartels that are now invading southern parts of North American parks;
 - the millions of dying refugees which we've created from our military adventures;
 - the completely shattered global "trust" in American Exceptionalism;
 - the rotten, corrupted core of our Corporate Industry;
- It will all go away.
- 5 votes
#6.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:04 PM EDT

Tetrapoda

I think I agree with your general analysis of problems, but blaming the media for everyone's day to day oblivion is getting into creepy "Ron Paul is ignored by the media!" territory.

- 3 votes
#6.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:23 PM EDT

(12)

Moped

Yes, blaming the Media - which blankets the entire nation / globe with information to receptive minds - certainly isn't the way to go.

I think most propagandists would completely agree with you 100%.

- 3 votes
#6.3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:25 PM EDT

Tetrapoda

Since I taught Goebbels everything he know, I have to agree with you. Have you removed your fillings yet?

- 1 vote
#6.4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:27 PM EDT

(16)

Moped

I'm sure you did. That's nice dear.

- 2 votes
#6.5 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:30 PM EDT

Mark Stephens-4334123

Is there no moderator who can ban Moped until he is at least 18 years old?

On the other hand, reading all of his collapsed comments is an entertaining way to kill time, if you can think like a 14 year old.

- 3 votes
#6.6 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:25 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #8-----

(7)

Moped  Comment collapsed by the community

Gosh, I love how I can cover more "News" in the world than MSNBC by just posting a few comments.

If you cannot do your job, MSNBC, your commentators will do it for you. For free. Without pensions, retirement, and medical benefits.

We will do your Jobs for you.

- 1 vote
#8 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:06 PM EDT

Robert Archbold via Facebook

What??

#8.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 4:18 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #9-----

★ FactOfTheMatter

I would be more critical but had a close friend experience the same sort of thing basically out of the blue. Wasn't on drugs or anything.

Had to admit him to the psych ward, he's much better now but at the time it would have been easy to judge him too.

- 18 votes
#9 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:11 PM EDT

(8)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

Jason just flipped out, jacked off in public, ranted like crazed flamboyant coke head, and was slapping the ground with his hands while screaming incoherently.

But don't judge, bro.

- 3 votes
#9.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:16 PM EDT

Tetrapoda

You've lead a sheltered life, I gather?

- 4 votes
#9.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:24 PM EDT

(14)

Moped  Comment collapsed by the community

Oh yes, very sheltered. Very very sheltered.

In a basement. With my mommy. :(

#9.3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:28 PM EDT

 BROOKE IN FT LAUDERDALE

Moped

Please stop talking....or typing

- 7 votes
#9.4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:19 PM EDT

FactOfTheMatter

But don't judge, bro.

Troll somewhere else.

- 2 votes
#9.5 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:54 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #11-----

 Dave-3502795  Comment collapsed by the community

Moped - SHUT THE F*CK UP!!!!!!

- 19 votes
#11 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:14 PM EDT

(9)

Moped  Comment collapsed by the community

Dave3502795, SHUT THE F*UCK UP!!!!!!

you mad, bro?

- 2 votes
#11.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:16 PM EDT

BROOKE IN FT LAUDERDALE

right on Dave. I don't care for stupid.

#11.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:21 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #14-----

★ Okie-1425202

Moped, I have to say, you sound like maybe you need to be in the bed next to poor Jason.

- 15 votes
#14 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:23 PM EDT

(15)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

you mad, bro?

- 1 vote
#14.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:29 PM EDT

★ Okie-1425202

Not mad. Not a bro. But your posts are all over the map and, pardon me for pointing this out, but basically just bat shi* crazy. I guess I should assume that you are gay and on meth as you did Jason but I think it goes deeper than that.

- 15 votes
#14.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:35 PM EDT

★ Dave-196007

I whole heartedly agree. Moped is either insane, or is having some drug induced psychosis...probably the latter since he/she doesn't seem to believe that Jason could have had the episode without drugs.

- 10 votes
#14.3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:37 PM EDT

(19)

Moped Comment collapsed by the community

Ah, pointing out gaping holes in the "coverage" of the news and not putting up with brainless internet denizens who are just looking to waste my time with banter certainly is "insane."

Yup.

- 1 vote
#14.4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:38 PM EDT

(20)

Moped

cough It certainly gets really "annoying" when someone camps on internet articles, posting gobs of pointless, meaningless bulls.hit,

isn't it?

- 1 vote
#14.5 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:39 PM EDT

BROOKE IN FT LAUDERDALE

Me too..... Moped is DOPE

#14.6 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:23 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #17-----

(17)

Moped

If only that stupid video showing everyone what happened hadn't surfaced, maybe this article would actually have done what it was suppose to do!

Blargh! We need to somehow prevent people from video taping damning evidence and learning to think for themselves!

- 1 vote
#17 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:32 PM EDT

Tiredoflosers

Blargh! We need to somehow prevent people from video taping damning evidence and learning to think for themselves!

Man does that sound like a statement from a Obama Administration official

- 3 votes
#17.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:53 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #30-----

(22)

Moped

I like how anyone who even "suspects" Jason was on drugs is instantly jumped upon by a pack of lemmings seeking to 'soften' the damage of his meltdown.

- 1 vote
REPLY #30 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 2:43 PM EDT

Steve-369761

...also, where are the sex offender charges? Men urinating in public have been placed in sex offender status...why not masturbating?

- 1 vote
#30.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:18 PM EDT

Robert Archboldvia Facebook

Perhaps because law enforcement officers are more astute about these things than you. That's why they quickly figured out that Mr. Russell needed medical attention, not a rap sheet.

#30.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:52 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #69-----

(24)

Moped

Moped: Public enemy Terrorist #1.

Saying controversial things that make stupid people rage and obsessively click "like" buttons when the obligatory rebuttal appears.

QUICK SOMEONE NEEDS TO MODARATERD HIM!!!11!!

Ah muagh quieter. tiem to get back to my irrelevant, vapid, reality-deprived happy world.

#69 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:36 PM EDT

(25)

Moped

Stay tuned for more potentially "damaging" comments to be collapsed by the community - despite having what appears to be people agreeing with him.

Oops.

#69.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:36 PM EDT

-----Comment Heading #81-----

illuminati666

i only feel bad for the guys 2 kids but not this war advocate, kony2012 was nothing but war propaganda to go into uganda for the recently discovered oil. kony has been gone since 2006, and the ugandans who saw the flim got pissed off about it wonder why.

- 3 votes
REPLY #81 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:56 PM EDT

★ Moped (26)

Because the film is designed to brainwash morons.

And anyone who isn't a moron would be insulted by it.

- 5 votes
#81.1 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 3:58 PM EDT

Jimmy TwoTimes

Yeah. I read that too. That Kony hasn't been seen for years. And read that the Ugandans were angry over the video. Also I heard his charity only gives a little over 30% of what it takes in, the rest are all expenses to keep this charity running.

- 3 votes
#81.2 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 4:00 PM EDT

Jimmy TwoTimes

Also, I found it bizarre that on YouTube there were so many commentaries by little kids on this Kony2012 video. Supposedly it was aimed at children? I didn't watch the video but I saw one clip where he was dancing around like Barney and singing a song...not sure if that was in the Kony video or a different video, but it was weird.

- 1 vote
#81.3 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 4:04 PM EDT

Moped (27)

The targeted audience was the "younger generation."

It is specifically geared to utilized social media and manipulate young people who are not old enough to have any real world experience, have probably not read extensively on political or

governmental subjects, but are very **emotional, gullible, and possessing too short of an attention span to actually consider what they are supporting.**

- 2 votes
#81.4 - Wed Mar 21, 2012 4:08 PM EDT