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**SEXIST HATE SPEECH ON TWITTER: AN ANALYSIS OF FLOUTING IN COMMENTS  
LEFT ON FEMALE POLITIANS POSTS**

Porto Alegre  
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PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO - *STRICTO SENSU*



Pontifícia Universidade Católica  
do Rio Grande do Sul

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PORTO ALEGRE

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To all the women who inspired me and that will never read this. To all the girls out there that will make this a better world.

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And last, to God, for making me realize that every trial is a hidden bless.

I hate to hear you talk about all women as if they were fine ladies instead of rational creatures. None of us want to be in calm waters all our lives.

Jane Austen

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## ABSTRACT

With the increasing manifestation of trolling and other forms of abusive speech online, many female celebrities have been receiving abusive comments on their accounts on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook whenever they decide to make their point of view known by their followers. Many comments are a manifestation of sexist hate speech. As twitter politics against hate speech has become more rigid, trolls are making use of other language mechanism to harm their target. In this thesis we aimed to analyze some of the comments left on the politicians' posts on twitter, under the light of Grice's Theory of Cooperative Principles, to demonstrate how aggressors flout the main conversational maxims to produce efficient sexist hate speech without being caught on the filter applied by Twitter. We found out that the Maxim of Relation was flouted on most of the tweets selected to the analysis. We concluded that, although advanced, the filters applied on websites like twitter cannot compare to the human ability to detect the implicatures beyond the level of what is said.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics; Cooperative Principle, Conversational Maxims, Hate Speech.

## RESUMO

Com o crescimento da manifestação de trolls e outras formas de discurso abusivo em plataformas online, muitas celebridades do sexo feminino vêm recebendo um número cada vez maior de comentário abusivo em suas contas no Twitter, Instagram ou Facebook, quando quer que decidam manifestar seus pontos de vista aos seus seguidores. Muitos comentários são manifestações de discurso de ódio sexista. Uma vez que a política do Twitter contra discurso de ódio tornou-se mais rígida, trolls vêm fazendo uso de outros mecanismos de linguagem para acertar o seu alvo. Neste trabalho, nós visamos analisar alguns comentários deixados em posts no Twitter de políticas americanas, sob a guia da Teoria do Princípio Cooperativo, de Grice, para demonstrar como os agressores quebram as Máximas Conversacionais para produzir um discurso de ódio sexista e eficiente, sem serem pegos nos filtro do Twitter. Nossos resultados mostram que a Máxima mais quebrada dentre os exemplos analisados é a Máxima da Relevância. Concluimos que, ainda que avançados, os filtros implementados por sites como o Twitter não podem ser equiparados com a habilidade humana de detectar implicaturas que estão além do nível do dito.

**Keywords:** Pragmática; Princípio Cooperativo; Maximas Conversacionais; Discurso de Ódio.

## INTRODUCTION

Through history, women's opinion tended to be dismissed, reject or attacked either in public or privately. The digital sphere aggravated the scenario by offering to the aggressor an illusory feeling of "hidden identity", and therefore more liberty to express their sexist ideas towards online female speeches. With the increasing manifestation of trolling and other forms of abusive speech online, many female celebrities have been receiving abusive comments on their accounts on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook whenever they decide to make their point of view known by their followers.

Trolling is the online coined term used to describe the performance of sexist, racist or political aggressive speech against a person or an idea on social media, the term can be related to the Scandinavian hairy monster hiding in the hope to snare hapless travelers (Herring et al., p. 372). The urbandictionary.com<sup>1</sup> defines a troll as "one who posts a deliberately provocative message to a newsgroup or message board with the intention of causing maximum disruption and argument"

Platforms like Twitter have been working on methods to detect and eliminate abusive behavior from their users. Computational research developed classifiers that are trained on linguistic features, such as keywords (Xiang et al., 2012), Bag-of-words (Warner and Hirschberg, 2012) and part-of-speech n-grams (Davidson et al., 2009). Extra-linguistic features are also considered, including gender and location. These methods are very efficient detecting troll's speech that uses explicit hate language, such as swears and obscenities. Aggressors however, find ways not to be detected by deliberately misspelling words or avoiding offensive language, and it complicates the identification of such speeches by the online platforms and classifiers.

Trolls usually chose moments of great public commotion, as elections, to attack the opinion of their targets. Although trolls can attack either men or women, when the subject of their hate and insults are women, the comments are usually linked to diminishment and non-valorization of the female idea. This deliberate attack to women

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<sup>1</sup> Available in < <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Troller>> Accessed in: June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

is defined as sexist hate speech and it is not an exclusivity of online medias: it can be found at school, work place, social circles and even in the family.

Researching in a microblogging can be a multidisciplinary area, and could evolve to domains out of the linguistic sphere, such as psychology and marketing, because these platforms, specially twitter, offers samples of communication at particular temporal or contextual moments, and researchers have available and endless range of naturally-occurring discourse to conduct their studies on.

This thesis aims to analyze case of sexist attack against two female American politicians, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Cynthia Nixon, in their twitter post during the year of 2018 under the light of Grice's Theory of Cooperative Principles, to understand how it applies to the modern scenario of communications and what can be considered as its scope and limitations inside this scenario. We seek to discuss how trolls use the politicians' posts on twitter to create effective triggers of high intensity, as well as abusive language as an attempt to provoke strong emotional response. We aim to demonstrate how trolls flout the main Grice's Conversational Maxims to strength their hate speech and achieve their final objective: to demonstrate informal control, dominance or entertainment by teasing the women.

The first chapter of this builds a definition of the concepts of hate speech and sexist hate speech. We also describe the pragmatic implications of microblogging twitter and the profile of its users. The understanding of the items above is essential to the analysis this thesis intends to perform.

The second chapter consists in an analysis of six collected tweets from the profile of two female American politicians: Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and Cynthia Nixon. Ocasio-Cortez was chosen because at the age of 29 she is the youngest woman to serve in Congress in the history of the United States and her political ideas are seem as controversial to the eyes of the conservatives. Nixon was chosen because not only her start as an actress has been a reason to attempt to invalidate her political knowledge, but also because her advocacy for the LGTHQ rights, specially about same-sex marriage, also raises great opposition from the conservatives. The one thing that Ocasio-Cortez and Nixon have in common is that their political posts on their Twitter profiles are constantly under attack by trolls.

Table 1. Subjects identification on twitter

<b>Politician</b>	<b>Twitter user</b>
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	@AOC
Cynthia Nixon	@CynthiaNixom

Source: The author

The comments to be analyzed will be selected from those left on both women political posts on twitter. After selecting the comments, each one will be analyzed based on the theory of Conversational Maxims as an attempt to demonstrate that by flouting these maxims, trolls can produce their effective hate speech and yet not being caught by twitter filters.

The last section of this research is a discussion aiming to understand based on the analyses of the collected tweet:

- a) How do Maxim flouts lead to production of Hate speech?
- b) What are the scope and the limitations of Grice's model applied to the modern scenario of communication mediated by computers?

## 1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Cooperative Principle and associated maxims

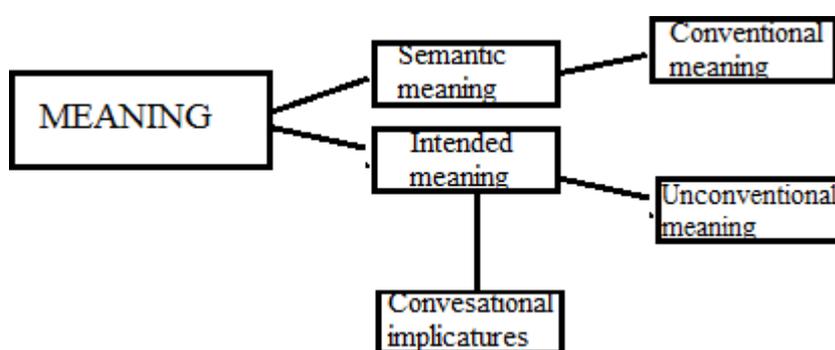
In his work *Logic and Conversation*, Grice discusses the role of implicatures. He makes a distinction between what is said in a sentence and what is meant when uttering it. He illustrates the way what is said is not what is meant with the following example:

A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, *Oh quite well, I think: he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet.* (Grice, 1975 p. 43)

By saying that “C has not been to prison yet” B is implying that C may surrender by the temptations his job offers. What B implies differs from what B said.

For Grice, there are two types of implicatures: conventional and conversational. The former happens when the conventional meaning of words determines what is implied, the later is connected to general features of discourse, inferences that correspond to the non-literal meaning of the words used by the speaker.

Table 2. Types of meaning



Source: The author, based on Grice (1975)

When we talk about Grice’s work, we should keep in mind that the main goal of his production was to find a proper way to describe the functions of meaning that are beyond the field of what is said. Important it is to highlight that Grice’s uses *say* to refer to the conventional meaning of the words in a sentence, in other words their semantic value. In his conception, there must be a language mechanism that enables the hearer to understand the implicatures of an utterance, to understand what is implied or suggested.

Grice claims that discourse raises from a collaborative effort, it is a moment in time in which the interlocutors’ main objective is to achieve one or more common goals. Grice(1989, pg 32) provides the following example:

A is standing in front of an immobilize car. A addresses B

(1) A: I am out of petrol.

B: There is a garage round the corner.

Grice explains that the utterance made by B provides A enough information to infer that according to B's knowledge the garage is open and able to provide A what he needs. Grice's explanation for such inference is that A automatically assumes that B is trying to be helpful, therefore B's utterance would not be helpful if he knew the garage was closed. The common goal in the example above is to provide A with petrol.

If discourse is the result of a shared goal between interlocutors, we may suppose that an utterance will be interpreted under the context of that discourse goals, assuming each interlocutor produces the utterance with the intention to match these goals. At least one of the interlocutors abides by the Cooperative principle.

As an attempt to demonstrate how people can imply more than what they say, Grice (1975) proposed the Cooperative Principle and associated maxims.

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." (Grice, 1975, p. 26)

The author explains that "in a conversation, logically a speaker and a hearer should have cooperation by using four maxims, i.e., maxim of quality, quantity, relevance and manner in order that one can understand what other means" (Grice, 1975, p. 45). If the utterance fails to present one of these maxims, it will not be understood by the hearer.

We can better understand Grice's maxims by the explanation below:

- Maxim of quantity: in a conversation, you need to make your statement as informative as required, but not more so.



Image 1

In this case the first user (A) requests information about her followers' experience with eldercare. The second user's (B) reply provides enough information to satisfy A request, not saying more than what is needed, nor suppressing any information that could be necessary for A's understanding.



Image 2

In the example above user A makes a question that has two possible answers. To be cooperative, user B replies with a comment that says enough to fulfill user's A need in the conversation.

- Maxim of quality: in a conversation, you do not say what you believe to be false or what you lack appropriate evidence.



Image 3

In the example above, the first user (A) asks his followers to clarify his doubt about the bird specie. The second user (B) replies with what he believes to be true. He does not contribute what he believes to be false and to be unconfirmed. A's request was fulfilled because the maxim was observed.



Netflix US   
@netflix



Martin Scorsese is The Academy's  
most-nominated living director



 The Irishman and 2 others

11:04 · 13/01/20 · [Twitter Web App](#)

**874** Retweets **5.342** Likes

Image 4

Here we have a post made by Netflix US official account affirming that Martin Scorsese is The Academy's most-nominated living director. The statement is truthful according to the current records. This means, it fulfills the maxim of quality.

- Maxim of relation – in a conversation, the speaker's contribution should relate to the goal of the exchange. It need to be relevant.



Image 5

In this example, the first user (A) makes a promotional post about a movie that will enter to the stream catalogue. B's reply does not contribute what is relevant to the purpose of the conversation. B offers an irrelevant reply to the topic, commenting about a series that had been previously cancelled by the stream channel.



Image 6

The famous actress in the example above makes a post about her point of view on diversity in films and media. She aims to engage her public in a conversation that relates to that matter. When one of her followers makes comment that agrees with her point of view and also contributes to enrich it, the user is being cooperative to make the conversation succeed and being relevant to the person who started the conversation, therefore she is fulfilling the Maxim of Relation.

- Maxim of manner: in a conversation, avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity. You need to be brief and orderly.



Image 7

The example above demonstrates that the second user (B) is being cooperative by providing to the first user (A) a clear and unambiguous answer, consequently A can conclude that B loves his cat.

Grice presents these maxims as social facts. Levinson (2008, p.127) summarizes them as it follows:

In short, these maxims specify what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, co-operative way: they should speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly, while providing sufficient information.

When establishing a conversation, people sometimes fail to observe the maxims, be it deliberately or accidentally, to produce a joke or to achieve politeness. There are five major ways of failing to observe the maxims: violating, infringing, opting out, suspending and flouting.

- Violating: it is the quiet non-observance of the maxims. As Grice (1975) affirms, a speaker who violates the maxim will be liable to mislead.
- Infringing: it occurs when the speaker fails the maxim, but he has no intention of creating an implicature and no intention of deceiving.
- Opting out: it happens when the speaker demonstrates unwillingness to cooperate in the way the maxim requires.
- Suspending: there are moments when there is no expectation on the part of any participant that the maxims should be observed, for instance poetry that suspends that maxim of manner since it does not aim for clarity and lack of ambiguity.

For this article, we will analyze the process of flouting the maxims. To flout a maxim is to choose not to observe the maxim in your remark, probably because it must imply something more than what is literally being said. To explain the process of flouting a maxim, Thomas (1995) stated:

“A S blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the S wishes to prompt the H to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning.” (page 65)

Imagine a mother arriving home to find out that her favorite vase is broken. She then asks one of her children “*Who broke the vase?*” to which the child replies “*It was one of you two children.*” The obscurity in the child’s answer is a clear and intentional flout of the maxim of manner. Therefore, flouting a maxim is a case of verbal communication in which the addresser leads the addressee to look for an implied meaning. The implicature we can find in his answer is “*I don’t want to answer this.*”

Table 3. Maxims Flouted and their results

Maxim Flouted	Result
Quantity	-understatement -overstatement -tautology
Quality	-irony -metaphor -rhetorical questions
Relation	-suddenly change of subject -failure to address the topic directly
Manner	-ambiguity -vagueness -ellipsis

Source: The author, based on Brown and Levinson (1978).

From an anthropological perspective we may say that speakers will make statements that have a specific meaning, but that could also have another different meaning depending on the situations, because of social conventions applicable in specific speech community. Kennan (1976, p.79) explains:

But Grice does offer a framework in which the conversational principles of different speech communities can be compared. We can, in theory, take any one maxim, and note when it does and does not hold. The motivation for its use or abuse may reveal values and orientations that separate one society from another and that separate social groups (e.g. men, women, kinsmen, strangers) within a single society.

Grice's theory opened a door to a whole new universe of linguistic research. Studying language in use is probably a never-ending process, for humans evolve more and more each day and, therefore, so does language. Following human evolution, the stage in which interaction takes place also evolves, assuming new dynamics. These new dynamics that emerge are worth of understanding and pragmatics offers amazing tools to work on the process of studying them. One of the many different dynamics that emerge along the years is the Internet, and the following chapter aims to build a panorama on the role that pragmatics playing in the interactions that take place on online environments.

## 1.2 Pragmatics and the Internet

In 1949, Judy Garland and Van Johnson starred in the movie “*In the good old summertimes*” as a couple that shared a heartfelt, but anonymous, correspondence through letters they received at the same post office. Their communication was limited to lines in a piece of paper and the hope that the letters would reach their destination. In 1998, Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks relived the unimaginable couple, only this time, 49 years after its predecessor, the couple corresponds via email. No need to rely only on the post office, no need to worry whether the other would receive the message or not, no need to wait endless days for an answer. The addition of internet to the love story made it dynamics, less uncertain and gave us, the audience, a hint of how communication would evolve in the hands of this revolutionary tool. Many software updates later, in 2016, the Netflix series *Back Mirror* presented an episode entitled “*Hated in the Nation*” that had, as the movies above, mediated communication as one of its main topics. In the episode, however, communication was not a mean to spread love, quite the contrary. “*Hated in the Nation*” built a strong criticism about how while Computer-mediated communication could be a precious tool to connect people, the inconsequent use of this tool produces the exact opposite effect. In the episode, all the twitter users who were target of hate speech would appear dead the next day. A poetic physical representation of the psychological effects online harassment can cause.

The three fictional examples presented draw a line of how human communication has evolved through the years. Since the first email prototype created by ARPANET in the 60's, that allowed the communication between scientists connected to a computer using a local server, the model of quick exchanged of written information has been established and evolved. This device made possible that information run fast among a large group of people. Since then, the internet changed it in many ways, and different waves emerged according to the type of online platforms that were created. Although virtual, these spaces provide numerous scenarios of human interaction in the context they are inserted, and as an attempt to understand these interactions, we will present the following theories.

### 1.2.1 Politeness

As humans, in our social interactions we present a *Face* to the person, or group of

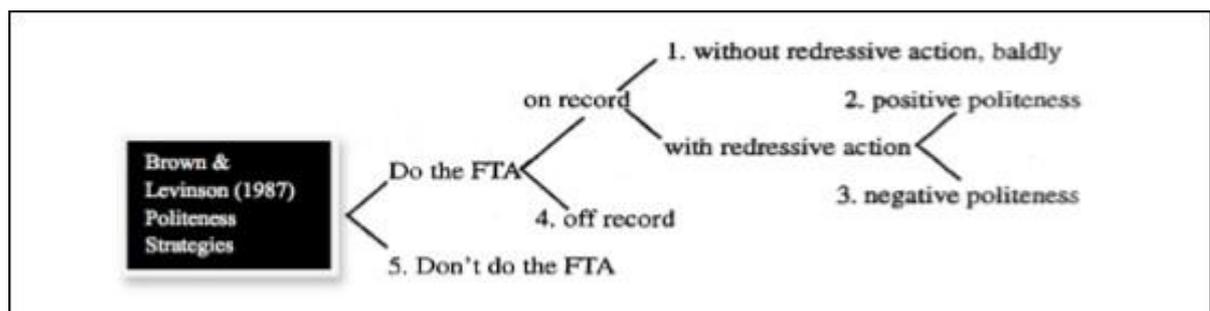
people we are engaging in a communication. This face can and will vary according to the situation and the relationship. The concept of Face has its origin from Chinese research, and although it became first known in the western culture by the work of Goffman(1955), it was Brown and Levinson's (1978) Theory of Politeness that popularized this concept among western linguists.

Brown and Levinson's work is constituted by two parts; the first presents the fundamentals of their theory concerning the nature of politeness and its function in interactions: "politeness has to be communicated, and the absence of communicated politeness may, *ceteris paribus*, be taken as absence of the polite attitude." (1987, p. 5). The second part is a list of politeness strategies exemplified in English, Tzeltal, and Tamil. The scope of Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory emerged from the Gricean Maxim of Manner: be polite. The inference of implicatures of politeness is a result of the combination of mutual face sensibility and the Cooperative Principle and "from the failure to meet the maxims at face value, plus the knowledge of face-preserving strategies, the inferences are derived" (1987, p. 6).

Politeness theory, as postulated by Brown and Levinson, approaches the attempt to maintain or save the Face, the public self-image, in an interaction. Based on the idea of mutual Face Vulnerability, it is expected that people cooperate to maintain Face in interaction, "normally everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained" (1987, p. 61), and it is usually the participants interest to demonstrate awareness of the agent's assumptions concerning face, since "people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened" (1987, p. 61).

On their study, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested four types of higher-level politeness strategies, or "super-strategies": bald-on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record politeness.

Table 4. Politeness Strategies



Source: Brown and Levinson (1987).

Bald-on record is a strategy Speakers use whenever they want to produce Face Threatening Acts (FTA) with maximum efficiency more than they want to satisfy the hearer's face. The motives that lead the speakers to choose this strategy cause it to have different usages according to the situation in which it is applied. When speakers express an intention unambiguously and directly, it is characterized as a bald-on record without redressive action, when the speaker shouts out "Help!", for instance. This strategy will only be used in the following situations:

1. In cases of great urgency or desperation.
2. Cases of channel noise, or where communication difficulties exploit pressure to speak with maximum efficiency such as in calling across a distance.
3. Task-oriented, in this kind of interaction face redress will be irrelevant.
4. S's want to satisfy H's face is small, either because S is powerful and does not fear retribution or non-cooperation from H.
5. S wants to be rude without risk of offending, so S does not care about maintaining face.
6. Sympathetic advice or warnings.
7. Granting permission for something that H has requested.

In other situations, speakers may make use of bald-on record with redressive action, which includes positive and negative politeness. Speakers perform positive politeness to save the hearer positive face, that is "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others." (p. 312, 1987). A possible FTA in this situation is diminished by the understanding that the speaker wants at least some of the hearer's wants, the hearer is treated as a member of an in-group and by establishing common

ground the positive face is saved.

Negative politeness occurs when the speaker demonstrates distance or circumspection towards the hearer's negative face, "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his/her actions be unimpeded by others" (p. 312, 1987), in other words, the speaker only partially satisfices (redresses) the hearer negative face. Negative politeness often causes the perception that the speaker is imposing on the addressee, but will only minimally interfere with the addressee's freedom of action. FTA are redressed with apologies, to avoid intruding on each other's territory, and questions, that offer to the hearer a face-saving line of scape, producing the sensation that the hearer response is not coerced.

One last strategy presented by Brown and Levinson is off-record. It occurs when the speaker gives hints, clues and formulates ambiguous utterances, leaving no room for one clear interpretation of his communicative intention, therefore, to avoid the responsibility for and FTA, the speaker can make it off-record and the hearer will need to make an inference to decide how to interpret it. The process behind this comprehension of inferences is not fully understood, however it is most likely divided in two stages, a trigger that shows to the addressee that an inference is required, and a mode of inference that differs what was said from what was actually meant. Violation of Gricean Maxims, as pointed out by Brown and Levinson, is the strongest candidate to for the role of trigger.

If Politeness is the behavior of maintaining or saving a person's face, or self-image, Impoliteness often involves seeking to damage and/or damaging a person's identity or identities (Culpeper, 2011). It should not, however, be analyzed exclusively as the "politeness antithesis". Investigating Impoliteness involves the study of particular communicative behaviors in society interactions (Culpeper, 2011).

We can better understand how politeness and impoliteness diverge by looking at the following chart:

Table 5. Politeness and Impoliteness comparison

Politeness	Impoliteness
Provides a social balance in interactions	Breaks the social balance in interactions

A part that it is not marked in behavior	Can be marked or not, depending on the situation
Represents parameter given by society	Reveals the individuality of the speaker or of a group behavior
Usual and massive	Occasional and individual
Presence of mutual commitment	Absence of mutual commitment: mutual prevention or expectation to be the causing or the receiver of impoliteness

Source: The author.

For Locher and Bounsfeld (2008), impoliteness is the behavior that is face-aggravating in a particular context. Culpeper (2003) defines it as communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony. And Lakoff (1989) explains that rude behavior does not utilize politeness strategies where they would be expected, which leads to understand that the utterance can be interpreted as intentionally confrontational.

The notion of impoliteness depends on the perception of the agents to what is said and done in a social interaction. It is extremely attached to a person's mental attitude and their negative evaluative beliefs about social behaviors. To exemplify this concept, we may think about a person in two different social contexts. The first is a response of a young man to his parents after being grounded, and the second is his response to the opponent team strategies during a football match. If in the first scenario the person responds with extremely offensive language, it will be understood as an impolite act. In the second scenario however, due to the social construction, if he uses offensive language as a response, it not necessarily will be takes as an impolite behavior.

When we think about a community of impoliteness practice, we may outline two different groups of people: bidirectional and unidirectional. The bidirectional group is inclined to reply to the impoliteness acts, the commitment to politeness turns into a mutual prevention or a realization of the possible hostilities that a person could make use of in order to their goals, it is what could happen in political debates, for instance. The unidirectional group is the group where an impolite act does not receive a reply.

The mutual commitment to be polite turns into an expectation: people with less power expect to receive impoliteness from people that hold more power.

The subject with less power is aware of the possibility of being victim of hostility from a subject with more power, and the later in turn has the expectation to cause impoliteness, meaning it has consciousness of its capacity to weaken the image of the subject with less power, just as occurs in the military service community of practice or in legal hearings. (Marlageon, 2017, p. 104)

Summarizing, we may say that either politeness and impoliteness occur, in essence, due to the presence or absence of mutual commitment from the subjects.

As in polite acts, impolite acts also have their own strategies that map the logical, rational choices to achieve the goals in the interaction that are conventional to a particular community. The following strategies are shown as presented by Culpeper (1996):

8. Bald on record impoliteness: the face threatening act (FTA) is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way where face is not irrelevant.

9. Positive impoliteness: the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants.

10. Negative impoliteness: the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants.

11. Sarcasm or mock politeness: the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.

12. Withhold politeness: the absence of politeness work where it would be expected.

13. Sarcasm or mock politeness: the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.

Both politeness and impoliteness depend on the level of commitment, or

cooperation, established by the participants. This level will much depend on the social level occupied by the subjects. The following chapter will provide and understanding on the idea of social power and how it dictates the rhythm of a communicative act.

When face attacking strategies are used, in most cases more than one context is accessed, and a flout to a Gricean Maxim may happen, therefore leading to a required implicature because of contextual clues that the recovery of the logical preposition does not offer.

### 1.2.1.1 Politeness and Power

One among the many social dimension that determine the appropriate degree of politeness one person will receive and the weight of a face-threatening act is *Power*. Brown and Levinson (1987) defines power as “the degree to which H [the hearer] can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation(face) at the expense of S’s [the speaker’s] plans and self-evaluation”. Van Dijk (2008) describes it as an inherent characteristic of group relations, that will always be manifest in interactions. How power is distributed in a context is a result of different fonts, like money, knowledge, social prestige, that are cultured constructed in many communities, for instance the power of the first born over the youngest child, or the power of male over female (Holmes, 1995). Power revolves around the capacity of one participant to influence the other, or the opportunity to imposing one’s will over the other. Or, as Van Dijk attempt to simplify, power is about control: control of one group over other group and their members.

when there is an imbalance of power between interlocutors, the more powerful interlocutors has more freedom to be impolite, because of some reasons. (Culpeper, 1996, p.354)

When power is manifest in communicative interactions, we observe the raise of power of the discourse of others:

People are no longer free to speak or write when ,where, to whom, about what or how the want, but they are partly or wholly controlled by powerful others, such as the state, the police, the mass media, or a business corporation interested in in suppressing the freedom of text and talk. (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 9)

In interactions, negative politeness tends to emphasize social distance and power discrepancy, while positive politeness emphasizes solidarity and equality between the participants. Women occupy the social position of subordinate, or the group less powerful than man in many communities, and this position influences in the politeness devices used by and addressed to women. A subject placed in the role of subordinate can be treated impolitely, be interrupted, talked over, ignored or insulted, and no punishment will be applied.

Brown (1980) suggests three factors that will determine how polite men and women will be when interacting:

1. One tends to be more polite to people who are socially superior to oneself or socially important: the boss, the vicar, the doctor, the president.
  
2. One also tends to be more polite to people one doesn't know, people who are somehow socially distant: strangers, persons from very different walks of life. In the worst situation politeness tends to go one way upwards (the superior is not so polite to an inferior), while in the second situation politeness tends to be symmetrically exchanged by both parties.
  
3. A third factor is that kinds of acts in a society come ranked as more or less imposing, and hence more or less face-threatening, and the more face-threatening, the more polite one is likely to be.

Women often show awareness of their interlocutors' negative face, especially if the subject is a man. The unequal power between the two genders leads to women displaying a powerless linguistic behavior "characterized as hesitant and unassertive and showing negative politeness for others through what is seen to be excessive use of respect and deference." (Mills, 2005, p. 205). Mills also highlights that women are politer during interactions than man, as a strategy to compensate their unbalanced power position.

The relation of politeness and power relies on interaction. Any place that offers an environment conducive to interaction, will also be conducive to the manifestation of these two constants. With that in mind, we assume that interaction mediated by computers will reflect these and other aspects of communication, therefore, the following paragraphs will be dedicated to understanding how communication is built in

one of the many spaces that arose from computer mediated communication.

### 1.2.2 Twitter as a channel for communication

Conventionally, the study of utterances is a pragmatic concern. For Grice, an utterance was both a cause of and a reason for the hearer's interpretation. Although twitter allows only 280 characters posts, this space is enough to produce utterances, to engage users in an exchange of ideas, thoughts and ideals.

Twitter is a microblog that emerges right after status updating on Facebook started to become a practice. It allows its users (people or organizations) to share short messages instantly around the world. The possibility of having your ideas and thoughts quickly spread worldwide brings to this social broadcast a variety of people with different voices and perspectives.

The main argument to be developed is that Twitter is providing a particular communicative space which is affording the emergence of a new type of publicness: the "personal public". (Schmidt, 2013 p. 4)

Either from a computer or from a mobile device, users can access their accounts and quickly update their selves about everything the people they are following post, or the trending subjects in their country or in the world. As stated by Yus, 2011 "there are various reasons for using this microblog service, but most of them are related to a human need for 'permanent connection' with other users and the desire to be constantly updated about what others are doing". At a first glance, one may think that twitter is like any other social media that intend to connect users with their friends, but one very important aspect about this microblog is that it allows people that have never met each other, but share the same interest, to connect.

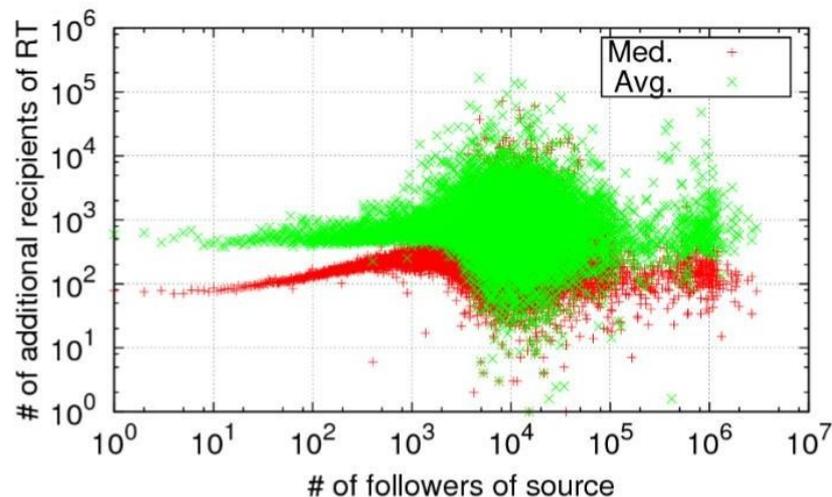
"Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This purpose or direction may be fixed from the start (e.g., by an initial proposal of a question for discussion), or it may evolve during the exchange... But at each stage, some possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable" (Grice, 1975, p. 45)

In other words, twitter creates the perfect environment for its users to find their pals, to dialogue about subjects they may not be able to discuss with people from their real-life circle, therefore by replying to a tweet, most of the times users unconsciously cooperate to demonstrate the common ground present in the conversation. Users choose who they will follow based on their personal interests, and by following other users, they put together the pieces of subject they want to be exposed to.

Becoming a follower of a user is similar to subscribing to their updates, so their tweets will show up (together with those of the other people you follow) in your timeline, the reverse-chronologically sorted collection of updates. Contrary to social network sites such as Facebook, where social relationships are required to be reciprocal, the follower/followee relationship can (but does not have to) be unilateral. (Schmidt, 2013, p.5)

To understand range of users a single tweet can reach, we may look to the following graphic from a research conducted by Haewoon Kwak, Changhyun Lee, Hosung Park, and Sue Moon in 2010:

Table 6. Range of users reached by a tweet.



Source: Kwak et al.(2010).

For the research they conducted, they crawled the entire twitter site and obtained 41.7 million user profiles, 1,47 billion social relations, 4,262 trending topics, and 106 million tweets. The table above demonstrates the average and median number of additional recipients of a tweet aside from the accounts that follow the user who

originated the tweet. The median lies almost always below the average, indicating that many tweets have a very large number of additional recipients. What they conclude is that it does not matter the number of followers an account has, for the mechanism of retweet gives to every user the power of spreading information broadly. In the first trimester of 2019, twitter release a note announcing that the total accounts logged in the website nowadays is 330 million, which mean that probably, a similar research conducted in the actual network scenario could display an even larger number of recipients per tweet.

The global character of the microblog grants to the user a window with a constant view to the world. A person can create his/her “@username”, chose a profile picture, set a cover and create a description, and then his/her profile is ready, it becomes his online identity inside the twitter universe. The user creates the character he wants people to see, based on his/her interests and what kind of public he\she wants to reach.

After conducting a research with Twitter users, Zhao and Rosson (2009) listed the following reasons why people use the microblog:

- a) Frequent brief update about personal life activities;
- b) Real time information;
- c) Information is short (no more than 280 characters);
- d) Easy status update
- e) Messages can be tweeted from many different devices, especially mobile devices.

As said before, twitter users create their profiles to match the kind of image they want to transmit and the message they want to raise.

The decision to tweet or withhold a certain opinion, link, piece of information, etc., will be based on the user’s perception of their own audience: how large is it, and how many people from which role contexts are among the followers? (Schmidt, 2013, p. 10)

In a linguistic analysis, messages on twitter carry a level of flexibility when it comes to spelling and punctuation, the use of characters like asterisks, exclamation marks or parenthesis can be deliberately exorbitant, to achieve a level where the participants interaction is as closest as possible to a face-to-face interaction. Another element that

contributes to achieve this level is the possibility Twitter offers to explicitly refer to a previous message when starting a new message, may it be by retweeting or starting a thread under the previous message, by using typically oral discourse markers (*so, ok, well, fine, I mean*) or by indicating feedback. In a pragmatic view, these are mechanisms that build the impression of adjacency pairs, which makes the interaction resemble a conversation.

When it comes to politics, twitter is one of the most relevant tools politicians use to communicate and express their opinions and positions. The amount of interaction that twitter provides can create an idea of a direct and personal relationship between the politicians and their followers, and the brevity of the messages incite the creation of short, yet resounding posts.



Image 8

The democratic aspect of the microblog, allows the interchange of ideas and the manifestation of multiples points of views, which provides an increase of dialogue. On the other hand, the sense of free speech and liberty to speak literally everything in this environment also creates a fertile soil for the raising and manifestation of hate speech, especially when the topic is political position.

### 1.2.3 Sexist hate speech

Sexism is the ideology and practice of relegating women to a lower rung on the social hierarchy than men simply because of their femaleness (Lillian, 2007). Sexist hate speech is a manifestation of sexism and, according to the Council of Europe for Gender Equality Strategy, it can be described as any supposition, belief, gesture or act that is aimed to disrespect or reduce a person because of her sex or gender. This type of hate speech includes manifestations that spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on sex.

Sexist hate speech can occur in all forms of social interaction: face-to-face or virtual, among friends or from total strangers. Works on social psychology and human behavior create a large literature on the topics of aggression and aggressive acts. Researchers now see verbal acts as harmful to a person subconscious as physical acts, which leads to a clearer definition of aggression.

The notion that aggression involves either harm or injury to the victims implies that the physical damage to the recipient is not essential. So long as this person has experienced some type of aversive consequence, aggression has occurred. Thus, in addition to direct, physical assaults, such actions as causing others to “lose face” or experience public embracement, depriving them from needed objects, and even withholding love or affection can, under appropriate circumstances, be aggressive in nature. (Baron and Richardson, 1994, p. 9)

Aggressors will often try to harm the victim social image, for it attacks the idea the victim wants to build of their selves as people in society. This behavior is known as *Social Harm*:

Social Harm involves damage to the social identity of the target persons and a lowering of their power or status. Social harm may be imposed by insults, reproaches, sarcasm, and various types of impolite behavior. (Tedeschi and Felsons, 1994, p. 171)

Aggressors often use false compliments or supposed jokes to humiliate or ridicule

the victims. There are many factors that contribute to the raise of sexist hate speech, among them women's portrayal in the media, hypersexualized images of girls and women which ends up objectifying the female figure and the notably different expectations about men and women's sexuality and roles in a patriarchal society. These factors help to perpetuate gender stereotype and they become stronger and even more harmful when they appear altogether in social medias, especially because of gaps in legislation and policies to deal with anonymity online that contributes to a climate of impunity to aggressors. Extreme ideologies such as anti-feminist movements and conservatism are frequently great diffusors of hate towards women, mainly when these women do not match the role they are expected to play on society.

Although young girls are the most frequent target of sexist hate speech, women who are public figures, particularly those who are directly linked to political subjects, find that their public status intensifies the hate speech they receive. According to the Council of Europe for Gender Equality Strategy:

They face sexist hate speech from individuals among the larger public and in their work environment. Women's right defenders face more attacks than male human rights activists and sexist hate speech often takes place when women stand against discriminatory or traditional cultural and religious beliefs or customs. (Council of Europe, p. 4)

Sexist hate speech is still treated as a harmless issue, or even as a joke. Its consequences, however, include extreme psychological damage, humiliation, image degradation, objectification of women and constant fear. Sexist hate speech silences women, and many times it forces them to limit their actions and activism. Many authorities try to justify the presence of this speech in the internet with the idea that freedom of expression is a fundamental right; however, freedom of expression is closely linked to other rights, such as gender equality. Therefore, freedom of expressions and equality between men and women must always walk side by side, and cannot be used as opposed to each other. There is no real freedom if it causes the silence of women and girls.

In cases of CMC (computer mediated communication) where the communication

between humans is mediated through a device, such as a smartphone or a laptop, aggressors are named trolls, an online coined term generally used to “describe online antagonism undertaken for amusement’s sake” (Hardaker, 2013, p. 77). The belief of anonymity raised by online environments like twitter, encourages a loss of self-awareness, a sense of impunity and an increasing tendency to act upon normally inhibited impulses. On twitter, trolls find a perfect space to post incendiary comments with the intent of provoking others into conflict, therefor producing hate speech

### 1.2.3.1 TWITTER POLICY AND THE DETECTION OF HATE SPEECH

On twitter Terms and Policy, the first topic highlighted to those who desire to create an account on the microblog is that *“Twitter is public and Tweets are immediately viewable and searchable by anyone around the world.”* (Twitter terms and policy). However, if the user desires, the platform guarantees non-public ways of making posts on it, that is by opting to have a close account, which means the tweets and direct messages are protected and can only be seen by people the user allows to follow his account. Also, the tweets he posts are not retweetable.

When it comes to the nature of content shared on the platform, its terms make clear the user is responsible for the way he uses the network and for the content he provides. The reliance or use of any material shared on Twitter is at the risk of the user, for the platform states that it does not endorse, support or guarantee the truthfulness and accuracy of the content promoted n it. The exposure to a diverse range of intentions is also under the responsibility of the user.

You understand that by using the Services, you may be exposed to Content that might be offensive, harmful, inaccurate or otherwise inappropriate, or in some cases, postings that have been mislabeled or are otherwise deceptive. All Content is the sole responsibility of the person who originated such Content. We may not monitor or control the Content posted via the Services and, we cannot take responsibility for such Content. (Twitter terms and Policy)

On the section denominated *Twitter Rules*, of its Terms and Policy, the platform states that “Violence, harassment and other similar types of behavior discourage people from expressing themselves., therefore this sort of content goes against the main goal of the network that is to serve the public conversation, once the nature of aggressive posts diminishes the value of global conversation. To grant the users safety, twitter rules contain, among others, three important topics as follows:

Table 7. Twitter Rules

TOPIC	RULES
Violence	You may not threaten violence against an individual or a group of people. We also prohibit the glorification of violence.
Abuse/harassment	You may not threaten violence against an individual or a group of people. We also prohibit the glorification of violence.
Hateful conduct	You may not promote violence against, threaten, or harass other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease

Source: Twitter Terms and Policy.

The massive increasing of social interaction on online platforms caused therefore an increase of hateful activity on social networks. On twitter, we can consider as hate speech those tweets that contain abusive message targeting an individual or particular group.

To deal with raising of hate content on the website, twitter relies much on the report of other user, especially if the aggression is not explicit on the sentence level. The penalty for inflicting the community rules may vary according to factors such as the severity of the post and recurrence.

For example, we may ask someone to remove the violating content and serve a period of time in read-only mode before they can Tweet again. Subsequent violations will lead to longer read-only periods and may eventually result in permanent suspension. If an account is engaging primarily in abusive behavior, we may permanently suspend the account upon initial review. (Twitter norms and policy)

Grice's theory offers tools to perform research around language being used in context and the implications beyond what is uttered in a communicative act. The author's four maxims demonstrate the idea that cooperation is needed during interaction, and the lack of cooperation appears to fulfil a purpose. From Grice's studies, Brown and Levinson enhance and popularize the Politeness Theory, that aims to understand the process behind acts that maintain or threaten a person's Face, or their social image, starting from the belief that both actions of maintaining or threatening a face depends on the level of communicative cooperation the participants decide on using during a communicative act. Both theories seem to be much needed to understand how interaction evolves following the rhythm dictated by the advance of technology. As this chapter demonstrates, technology changed the way and the velocity in which people communicate and interact, having on one hand its coins, for example amplifying people's contact network, and on the other hand carrying its coins, serving as example the unstoppable raising of hate speech in online platforms. The next chapter will be devoted to the analysis under the light of the Cooperative Principle of hate speech, more specifically sexist hate speech on Twitter, one of the many online platforms that offers a channel for interaction.

## **2 ANALYSES**

In this section, we will analyze selected comments left on the Twitter posts of Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and Cynthia Nixon, treated in this thesis as implicatures, following the Gricean model.

We aim to analyze if the selected implicatures, by flouting the Gricean conversational maxims can produce utterances that could be characterized as sexist hate speech, even if they do not present explicit harmful language.

## CASE I



Image 9

At the example above, we can notice that the user [@thebossusa1](#) is flouting the Maxim of Quantity and Relation by adding a comment that brings more information than what the post made by [@AOC](#) requires and by opening a subject that is not pertinent to the topic of the post. The word *balls* in the user's comment has an ambiguous meaning, evading from the formal usage of the word ball, as a round object that can roll and usually bounce, and going towards a colloquial usage, where balls can be associated to the idea of being a man, thus being brave, and by doing that, the user is also flouting the Maxim of Mode.

The production of sexist hate speech occurs mainly by the flouting the

Maxims of Relation and Mode. The sentence “every woman is a dress expert, you make it clear” albeit insinuates that every woman fits into the same category of “dress expert” remains in the topic of discussion raised by the post. The following sentence, nevertheless, “politics however, requires balls, you also make it clear...” is not related or relevant to the conversation. The user chooses not to be cooperative by approaching politics when the main topic of the conversation is the perception the congress woman has on the video of a child trying a dress. By flouting the Maxim of Relation, the user shows his intention, that is demonstrate that politics is a male field, while women should oversee issues related to the fashion world. His intention is emphasized when he flouts the Maxim of Mode in “politics however, requires balls”. Balls in this context in an allusion to maleness, therefore the user is implying that maleness is a requirement to a person that wants to do politics, consequently implying that women are not able to participate in politics matters.

CASE II



**Cynthia Nixon**  @CynthiaNixon · Nov 13

Yet another act of police brutality against a young Black man on the subway

Do something @NYGovCuomo & @NYCMayor. In the age of Trump, we are supposed to be a progressive state — not a police state.



**Rebecca Kavanagh** @DrJKavanagh · Nov 13

7:30 last night, 4 police officers brutally tackling a Black teenager to the ground at the 125th street Harlem subway stop.

They were arresting him for selling candy.

[Show this thread](#)



**Young Ideas**

@DickYoungsGhost

Replying to @CynthiaNixon @NYGovCuomo and @NYCMayor

Dilettante actress worth \$50 million thinks people give a shite about what she tweets, the twat.

3:46 PM · Nov 13, 2019 · [Twitter for iPad](#)



Image 10

In this case, sexist hate speech is built upon the flouting of three Conversational Maxims: Relation, Quality and Mode, all three working together to maximize the user's goal that is to reduce Nixon's opinion to a nonvalid level.

@CynthiaNixon's post aims to start a discussion on the over use of brutality by New York police towards civilians. By bringing Nixon's previous career as an actress and her net worth in this career, the first maxim the user flouts is the Maxim of Relation. His intention is not to contribute to the conversation; therefore, his utterance is not relevant to the topic. When the user describes Nixon as a "dilettante actress", he is flouting the Maxim of Quality, considering that is common knowledge that Cynthia Nixon played for years one of the main characters of a worldwide successful show (*Sex and the City*), hence she is not an amateur when it comes to acting. The user however succeeds at implying that Nixon has no considered value neither as an actress nor as a politician. Similar to Case I, in this situation, the user also flouts the Maxim of Mode by using an ambiguous word to generate his implicature. *Twat* is a word used to rudely refer to the female genitals, and, unlikely *balls*, *twat* is colloquial used as an insult, to demonstrate a lack of respect towards the receiver of the insult. Thus, the user builds his sexist hate speech by choosing a word that not only flouts the Maxim of Mode for its ambiguity, but also carries a connotation that implies that femaleness is something that should not be respected.

 **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**  @AOC · Jan 10   
The people who tell you we DO have war money but DON'T have healthcare money, tuition-free money, infrastructure money, or Green New Deal money are playing games with you.

 5.3K

 38.5K

 179.4K



**Ohio For Trump**

@OhioForTrump01 

Replying to @AOC

Hey bartender, save the political talk and make me a drink.



4:20 PM · Jan 10, 2020 · [Twitter for Android](#)

3 Retweets 15 Likes

Image 11

In order to be successful in his attempt to produce sexist hate speech, the user @OhioForTrump flouts the Maxim of Relation. He opts not to be cooperative to the topic raised by @AOC, instead he brings into the conversation a comment that is not relevant, thus it will not contribute. The conversation that @AOC aims to start with her

followers is purely political and concerns the use of public money. In this scenario, we may expect that to be cooperative the other part of the conversation, the followers, will add comments that will bring their opinion on the matter, either for or against @AOC's position. @OhioForTrump however, has no intent to engage in the raised topic.

When he writes "hey bartender", he is referring to Ocasio-Cortez previous job, before she joined politics. At this point, the user flouts the Maxim of Quality, since it is known fact that Ocasio-Cortez is no longer a bartender, but a congresswoman. By addressing the politician as a bartender, his intention is to diminish her and her position, for if she is a bartender, she is not qualified to give opinions about politics.

Beyond a written statement, the user adds to his comment a picture. In the picture we see a dog using a cocktail shaker, in a position that resembles a bartender. The inference we have by the combination of comment and image is that the user relegates the woman to the position of a dog, in other words he downgrades her to a sub-human category. His last utterance "make me a drink" is an imperative sentence, which sounds like an order or a demand. It demonstrates the belief of superiority and the power that a social superior class can exert over the dialogue of a social inferior class

## CASE IV.



**Cynthia Nixon** ✓ @CynthiaNixon · Dec 9, 2019

"While the D.C.C.C. is screening political consulting firms for "incumbency loyalty," it's not doing the same for real values.

That means firms working for corporate interests — pro-gun, anti-choice, anti-environment, anti-health care — are welcome."



Opinion | A Policy to Quash the Women's Wave. From Democrats. The D.C.C.C.'s blacklist against people working to oust incumbents has caused untold damage.  
[nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

11

95

273



**I Publicus**  
 @JonThrobs

Replying to @CynthiaNixon

You lost. Your 15 minutes is up. See you in the Sex and the City sequel. Oh, there isn't going to be one. Guess you've got no career left, eh?

9:11 PM · Dec 9, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

By flouting the Maxim of Relation, the participant, in this case the user, intends that the speaker, @CynthiaNixon, will be able to imagine an utterance that was not said. He expects that the politician will understand his intention when flouting the maxim. But what is the user's intention here? Which implicature is he conveying by highlighting her loss on the run for NYC Major and the discontinuation of the show that made her an international famous actress in a comment that is not relevant to the politician's ideas on that post? By pointing her losses and misfortunes, he intends to subdue her standpoint speech and diminish her competence as an influencer.

When the user utters "See you in the Sex and the City sequel. Oh, there ins't going to be one" he relies on irony to imply that @CynthiaNixon did not fail only on her attempt to success as a politician, but also as an actress. The use of irony by @JonThrobs can be understood as a flout of the Maxim of Quality. The analysis of the previous utterance can be reassured by the user's statement "Guess you've got no career left, eh?". He obviously does not believe that a well-known actress and active politician will be left without a career to pursue. His utterance flouts, once again, the Maxim of Quality, reinforcing the idea that if the politician lost the campaign and the successful television show she was part of is no longer airing she failed and her voice can no longer be listened.

## CASE V



Image 13

On the example above the Maxim of Relation is flouted once again. @AOC makes a post that intends to expose her political thoughts on the usage of Weapons of Mass Destruction. What one may expect is that in order to play a cooperative role in the conversation, users will either agree or disagree with the politician and/or expose their own thoughts on the matter. User @NMLifestyles however, makes the choice to leave a meme as a comment on the post. The picture of Ocasio-Cortez with the caption on it, has the intention of producing humor and it is not relevant to the main topic of

conversation.

Besides being dismissive of @AOC 's opinion by flouting the Maxim of Relation, the meme used by the agent also flouts the Maxim of Manner. The caption on the picture "I was wondering why the frisbee was getting bigger" will initially leads to the idea that the Maxim of Quality is being floated, for we have on our mental domain the knowledge that frisbees are objects that do not hold the ability to change sizes, so the statement "the frisbee was getting bigger" would have to be something different from the truth. The last line nevertheless, cancel that initial supposition by adding "then it hit me." To the process of meaning construction. We may say that it flouts the Maxim of Manner for its construction is obscure and not orderly or logical for the reader at first. By flouting these two maxims, the user achieves two of his goals: he redirects the attention of the post and he weaken the politician's credibility by making she looks like a fool, once it is her image he uses on the meme.

CASE VI



**Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** @AOC · Jan 5

This clip is from 6 months ago.

Pay attention. The Trump admin has been chomping at the bit to pursue conflict with Iran for months.

We must act now to save lives, protect the innocent, and limit the immense damage that has been done.

War isn't "smart" - it's barbaric.

**NowThis** @nowthisnews · Jun 20, 2019

..@AOC minced no words in her comments on Iran and the Trump administration

0:03 4.8M views

3.7K 26.9K 118.3K



**Lee Spector, Ed.D.**

@Ispect01

Replying to @AOC

I know when I want a solid opinion regarding international affairs and the possibility of war, I always consult w/the 29 yr. old bartender socialist because, well dang, she's just so well informed about everything!

11:36 PM · Jan 5, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

4 Retweets 76 Likes

Reply Retweet Like Share

The user turns to irony to create her idea of a harmful speech. According to Grice irony corresponds to a flout of the Maxim of Quality, for the utterances are transparently false. In the case above, irony is in how the user attributes to Ocasio-Cortez's age and previous job experience the certainty of a wisdom to solve problems regarding international affairs and possible wars. However, it is common knowledge that 29 years is not socially seem as an age that grants wisdom to people. This is an ability commonly associated to elderly people. In addition, we understand that the position of bartender is not enough to prepare a person to deal with situations as the one quoted on the post. Therefore, a reasonably informed participant will understand that the utterance made by the user is blatantly untruth, and as a consequence the user is not attempting to mislead the congresswoman or her followers. We understand the user intends to mean the opposite, the negation, of what he is actually saying. This transmits the user's hostility and his felling and evaluation that Ocasio-Cortez is not well versed to state an opinion to the post situation. Nevertheless, the degeneration of the congresswoman relies on the fact the user makes use of only two facts to build his utterance: her age, and her job as a bartender. Any other background and life experience that the politician has, and that may serve as an apparatus to her position, is deliberately ignored by the user.

As we can observe, in the cases presented above, at a first glance, the comments left on the politicians' posts do not make use of syntactically explicit offensive language. It guarantees that the utterances they create will pass through the filter applied by twitter, and, therefore they will not break the website terms and policy. However, a more careful and accurate analysis of the comments, as performed above, will reveal that, although not explicit in the choice of offensive language, the users succeed in creating utterances that replicate violence, harassment and hate. Below we offer an example of a tweet that breaks the Terms and Policy of Twitter:



Image 15

The user @Justin\_timee05 uses explicit aggressive structures, slurs, to attack the image of a person, in this case the subject is Bosh. By making use of the words *Fuck*, *Fucking* and the combination *Fucking Die*, the user violates the specific rule presented on Twitter Terms and Policy that states “You may not threaten violence against an individual or a group of people. We also prohibit the glorification of violence.”

The utterance made in Case I is structured to demonstrate @thebossusa1’s belief that @AOC femaleness is a reason to relegate her to a lower level of treatment not only on twitter, but on society. Such belief leads to a negative politeness, based on the user’s idea of power discrepancy, that would, as stated by Van Dijk (2008), justify the controlled of @AOC speech by this powerful other.

In Cases II, III, IV and V users’ utterances attack @AOC and @CynthiaNixon social image, the identity that both politicians want to build and preserve in front of their followers. By threatening @AOC and @CynthiaNoxon’s face, the aggressor performed what Culpeper (2011) referred to as an act of damage to a person’s identity, or an impolite behavior. By constructing the utterances around both @AOC and @CynthiaNixon previous occupation before assuming political positions, aggressors shape a speech the aims to show power over a subordinate, being the aggressor in the position of power and @AOC and @CynthiaNixon in the position of subordinate,

and for being subordinate, an impolite treatment towards the politicians would be justifiable.

Cooperative Principle and Politeness are probably the most important theories in Pragmatics research. One can be complementary to the other and supply the theoretical concepts necessary to understand linguistics phenomena:

"There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as 'Be polite,' that are also normally observed by participants in talk exchanges, and these may also generate nonconventional implicatures. The conversational maxims, however, and the conversational implicatures connected with them, are specially connected (I hope) with the particular purposes that talk (and so, talk exchange) is adapted to serve and is primarily employed to serve." (Grice, 1975, pg.28)

Being polite in a linguistic context is, consequently, an act strongly connect to moral and social rules and the choice of not being polite, as presented in the analyses above, can represent an intention of not being cooperative, and if, as state by Grice, 1975, communicative exchanges 'are, to some degree at least, cooperative", the flouting of conversational maxims in addition to the lack of politeness to produce sexist hate speech, shows that at least one of the parties during the time being of the conversational exchange do not identify their selves with the transitory interests of the other party.

### **3 CONCLUSION**

The speedy progress of technologies has been changing the way we face many aspects of our daily life. Internet has created a whole new meaning to human interaction and communication changes in a similar proportion. The understanding that such changes can and will happen leads to an endless number of potential variants to how people achieve their communicative goals and consequently to an endless manner to study these variants.

This research aimed to offer an analysis of the flouting of conversational maxims with the intention producing efficient sexist hate speech on Twitter. To produce a proper analysis we based our research on the Theory of Conversational Maxims,

postulated by Grice and on the Theory of Politeness, as presented by Brown and Levinson.

By flouting one or more Conversational Maxims, the speaker aims to convey a meaning that could be communicatively efficient, but that not necessarily will be socially acceptable or moral. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that this mechanism not only transmits information, but also allows the maintenance of the appearance that the speaker embraces, even if this appearance is directly related to aggressiveness.

Through the analyses of comments left on the posts of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Cynthia Nixon, two prominent American politicians, we aimed to understand how Cooperative Principle and its Maxims, as stated by Grice, works in the building of sexist hate speech in an online environment.

We can observe that the filters applied by twitter failed to detect hate speech that is not explicit on the syntactic and semantic levels. That leads to the conclusion, that even though advanced, these filters are not able to follow the pragmatic changes that the online environment offers, consequently they cannot be compared to the human ability to detect implicatures generate in utterances as the ones presented on this research.

The analysis leads to the conclusion that the flout of the Conversational Maxims can be an efficient tool to produce sexist hate speech that will not be explicitly offensive, but that will build a potentially harmful result through the implicatures it will generate. Although three of the four main maxims proposed by Grice appeared in the analysis, one proved to be more recurrent than all the others: The Maxim of Relation. In five of the six examples used in the corpus, the users flouted at first instance the Maxim of Relation to start the composition of their speech. Where does it lead us? Well, what could be a better way to diminish and scorn another person than assuming a dismissive posture towards their speech? And when we realize that this maxim is being flouted in a conversation ignited by a woman, it tells us something more: the user flouts the Maxim of Relation for his social construct puts him in a position of power, therefore his words are more relevant than the words said by those who have less power than him. That is to because the agent that starts the conversation is a woman, and for being a woman she is in a less power social position, her ideas are not to be heard nor respected.

Once the Maxim of Relation was not as explored by Grice as the Maxim of Quality or Quantity, we believe the model offers limitations to the deeper exploration

and understanding of the hate speech phenomenon and the proposals made by neo-gricean researchers, for instance Levinson, could function as a great complement to facilitate the theoretical observation and explanation of this communicative singularity that has been changing faster and faster each day assisted by the internet.

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