

# To whom are we polite : an examination of people' s politeness of disagreement messages amongst friends and strangers

Wong, Jody Chin Sing

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TO WHOM ARE WE POLITE

JODY WONG CHIN SING

2018



**NANYANG  
TECHNOLOGICAL  
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**SINGAPORE**

**TO WHOM ARE WE POLITE: AN EXAMINATION OF  
PEOPLE'S POLITENESS OF DISAGREEMENT  
MESSAGES AMONGST FRIENDS AND STRANGERS**

**JODY WONG CHIN SING**

**WEE KIM WEE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION**

**2018**

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**To Whom are We Polite: An Examination of People's Politeness of Disagreement  
Messages Amongst Friends and Strangers**

**Jody Wong Chin Sing**

**Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information**

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## Abstract

This study examines people's politeness of disagreement messages amongst friends and strangers in the offline and online environment, using the politeness framework of Brown and Levinson (1987). It aimed also to identify goal-states that people have when they disagree with a very specific and relevant audience. The use of hypothetical scenarios (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016) in a 3 x 2 web-based experiment design manipulates the six conditions. Results confirmed the prediction that in offline communication, people are less polite to their friends, as opposed to strangers, lending support to the politeness theory. Interlocutors care about preserving friendly relation with others (as in the case of strangers disagreeing face-to-face) and tend to mitigate/avoid face-threatening acts. With offline friends, people are driven by a task-oriented goal; with offline strangers, people are stirred by a relational-oriented goal. No reversal was found online, people were neither more polite to their friends nor were they less polite to strangers. However, the findings reveal that people experience social isolation in a mediated environment. The construct sought to differentiate the non-mediated and mediated channel characterized by their absence and presence but weakly affected people's politeness of their disagreement messages to friends and strangers. This highlights that who people disagree with and the goal-state they have matters more than the communication channel itself. Results concerning context collapse were inconclusive, although the observations emphasize the issues unique to this phenomenon. Finally, the limitations of this study are addressed alongside implications and future research directions.

*Keywords:* polite, friends, strangers, disagreement, online, offline, goal-states, context collapse

To Whom are We Polite: An Examination of People's Politeness of Disagreement  
Messages amongst Friends and Strangers

When people discuss opinions on various issues, disagreement occurs. What they understand as disagreement, and who they are with, affects how the disagreement is expressed. One way the disagreement is expressed is reflected in the politeness of the message (Scheerhorn, 1991). Politeness occurs when people simply agree or use mitigation strategies. Mitigation strategies, as explained by the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), are techniques people may choose to adopt to disagree politely or impolitely. For example, if a speaker wants to affirm mutual sociability and reciprocity with the listener, then he or she may respond using a positive politeness strategy (e.g., "Is it alright if I have a cup of Coke?"). Interlocutors do so to maintain or improve each other's "face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The concept of facework is thus derived from the politeness theory, and the politeness of disagreement messages is one way of addressing "face".

"Face" in the politeness framework can be defined as a "public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 311). A dual concept of face is proposed in the theory. A positive face refers to people's needs to have a self-image that is respected and/or approved by others while a negative face refers to people's desires for independence and freedom of their actions to not be inhibited by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Generally, people work hard to preserve their own face, as well as the face of other people that they interact with, to reduce any embarrassment or discomfort during social conversations.

Another approach to examine the politeness of disagreement messages is nested within the different goal-states that people have. According to Scheerhorn (1991) and Tracy (1984), when people are stirred by a relational-oriented goal, they



care more about wanting to be well-liked by their partners. Conversely, when people are stirred by a task-oriented goal, they are more concerned about making wise evaluations with respect to certain issues. Results from Scheerhorn's study found that a relational-oriented goal, in comparison to a task-oriented goal, is more influential in driving people's politeness of disagreement messages. Accordingly, this current study explores the assumption that people will express disagreements differently based on the individual's relationship with the people they are communicating with, offline and online. In turn, this shapes and affects how they strategically construct their politeness of disagreement messages. Specifically, the friend context and stranger context are used to examine this phenomenon.

There are differences in how disagreements are expressed amongst friends and strangers in offline settings and online settings. When people disagree with their friends face-to-face (FtF), they interpret disagreements as a form of encouragement to reach mutual understanding. These disagreements amongst friends are referred to as a "sociable argument" (Schiffrin, 1984). Friends partake in such arguments that Schiffrin (1984) describes as friendly discussions that are not serious enough to injure interlocutors' feelings. Rather, sociable arguments amongst friends "display their solidarity and protect their intimacy" (Schiffrin, 1984, p. 311). In contrast, disagreements with strangers FtF are interpreted as a form of threat to people's existing attitudes and beliefs on certain matters (e.g., Cialdini, Braver, & Lewis, 1974). In general, having disagreements with strangers is not an enjoyable experience for people. Applied to the context of politeness of disagreement messages, we can expect that people may strategically construct more polite disagreement messages to strangers, than friends.

Although the pattern discussed above regarding the individual's relationship with other people affecting their polite behavior is well-understood in the FtF context, there is a possibility that this pattern may be reversed in social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and Twitter. As such, this suggests that important work remains to be done to investigate this assumption. The present study proposes one factor, borrowed from the spiral of silence literature (e.g., Glynn, & Park, 1997; Oshagan, 1996), that can help explain the difference between the online and offline pattern when individuals express disagreements to friends and strangers online: the fear of social isolation (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016; Noelle-Neumann, 1974). In addition, context collapse (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Wesch, 2009) is explored to uncover how people may discern their audience in a mixed audience condition (i.e., friends and strangers) that potentially shape their level of politeness of disagreement messages. Each of the two concepts operate differently in SNSs than in FtF settings.

This current study has two objectives. The first objective is to identify the goal-states (Scheerhorn, 1991; Tracy, 1984) that people have when communicating disagreements to a specific audience. The second objective is to find the difference in patterns found in offline and online communication that affect people's polite behavior when they disagree. In doing so, this research hopes to provide a window into how people conduct and manage their relationships online. Finally, to the author's knowledge, few studies have taken a relationship-message approach to examine disagreements online. Therefore, it is believed that this study will also serve to provide an interesting way to approach individuals' disagreement outcomes based on their relationships with other people.

## **Literature Review**

### **Introducing Disagreements**

Broadly defined, disagreement is the expression of a conflicting opinion from one speaker that is different from that expressed by another speaker. Early literature in the 1980s on disagreement theorize the act of disagreeing with others as a negative communicative act, because it is uncomfortable, challenging, and can become confrontational during social interactions (Pomerantz, 1984). In contrast, agreeing with others signals sociability, support, and similarity amongst interlocutors (Pomerantz, 1984). Thus, disagreement was largely conceptualized previously as a “dis-preferred” act while agreement was conceptualized as a preferred act.

Atkinson and Heritage’s (1984) work explain the above point well. Their study concluded that interlocutors strategically structure their sentences to gain agreement in FtF conversations. For example, if individual A believes that individual B has fetched the newspaper from the front door, he or she would ask, “You have taken the newspaper from the front door, haven’t you?” However, if individual A believes that individual B has not fetched the newspaper from the front door, he or she would ask, “You have not taken the newspaper from the front door, have you?” The former sentence structure shows people’s preference for eliciting a positive response like an agreement, while the latter sentence structure shows people’s preference for eliciting a negative response like a disagreement. This research implies that people are driven to increase cooperation and decrease conflict when designing their sentences. The important takeaway from this example however, is the evidence of social considerations that people make during social discourse, noted even in these early works.

Sacks (1987) elaborates further on social considerations stating that people often try to live up to social expectations. He argues that people are not built psychologically to dislike disagreeing with others. Rather, they are aware that

disagreements are not well-received, or well-liked. Therefore, they try to agree more than to disagree (Sacks, 1987). Ensuing research corroborating Sacks' concept found that during interactions, people incline towards promotions of solidarity (e.g., mutual support within a group) and affiliation (e.g., a close connection to a group or individual), and decline from the weakening of solidarity and affiliation (Robinson & Bolden, 2010; see also Clayman, 2002; Lazaraton, 1997). Such perspectives draw on "face-work" (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1955; Leech, 1983) and especially, the need to mitigate and/or avoid face-threatening acts (FTAs) such as disagreements.

The concept of "face"—introduced by and derived from Goffman (1955)—is explicated in Brown and Levinson's seminal theory of politeness (1987) that links people's expressions of disagreement with polite behavior. The theory—discussed in detail in the next section of this literature review—explains that individuals have a set of *a priori* considerations when coming up with message strategies to either express disagreements, mitigate disagreements, or avoid disagreements.

### **Politeness Theory**

The politeness theory states that every person is stirred by a public self-image known as face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). People strive to either enhance, maintain, or aggravate their face, in their social interactions with others. While having social interactions, interlocutors constantly adapt to each other's face, and react accordingly to the face that is presented. *Ceteris paribus*, it is in the best interest of both parties to each preserve their face (Goffman, 1955).

Further, face is asserted as "basic wants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 312). People continuously try to satisfy these basic wants by them supposedly knowing what others desire during interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1955). These basic wants are referred to as either a positive face or a negative face. On one hand, a

positive face refers to the wants of every person to be well-liked, and/or well-received by others. On the other hand, a negative face refers to the wants of every individual to not be encroached or impeded by others. Based on this concept of dual face that people have, Brown and Levinson posit a series of communicative acts that threaten their positive face. Amongst them, expressing disagreements (other examples include challenges, disapprovals, etc.) are said to be face-threatening because they infringe on interlocutors' need to maintain self-esteem, and to be respected during the interaction. Further, they may feel awkward and become embarrassed in such a situation. In other words, disagreements raise the defenses of people whose positions are opposed because they may believe that the speaker who disagrees is mistaken by his or her views (Scheerhorn, 1991).

Brown and Levinson consider their concept of face to be universal. Across societies, people use "face" as a point of elaboration before performing an action (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, politeness in this framework is defined as the occurrence when interlocutors have intentions to maintain or enhance each other face by mitigating or avoiding FTAs (Mills, 2003).

### **Degrees of Politeness in Disagreements**

There are four mitigation techniques termed as politeness strategies when individuals perform a FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987): (1) bald-on-record strategy, (2) negative politeness strategy, (3) positive politeness strategy, and (4) off-record-indirect strategy. First, the bald-on-record strategy does not minimize any threat to interlocutors' face. That is, people are performing the FTA directly (e.g., "I want popcorn."). Second, the negative politeness strategy addresses interlocutors' face, but it also imposes on them (e.g., "I don't want to bother you but would it be possible for me to have some popcorn?"). The positive politeness strategy addresses interlocutors'

face, and affirms mutual respect between conversation partners (e.g., “Is it alright for me to have some popcorn?”). Lastly, the off-record-indirect strategy is used to remove any opportunity for imposition on interlocutors, alluding only to the speakers’ request (e.g., “It’ll be nice to have something to snack on while watching our movie.”). The important takeaway of bringing up these four politeness strategies is not to point out specifically which strategies people might adopt. Rather, it reflects an overall approach to how they may construct their messages to combat the apparent level of threat to the other individual with whom they are conversing.

Specific to the context of disagreements, Scheerhorn (1991) expanded on the above four politeness strategies to examine people’s politeness when they disagree with one another. Using a goal-oriented behavior approach (Tracy, 1984), he argued that the variability in individuals’ goal-states result in the variability of their message strategies. Two goal-states are identified. The first goal-state refers to a task-oriented goal, where individuals are driven by their motivation to make wise evaluations (Gouran, 1982). The second goal-state refers to a relational-oriented goal, where individuals are driven by their motivation to preserve friendly relations with others (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Janis, 1972). Taken together, these two goal-states influence people to strategically construct their politeness of disagreement messages.

According to Scheerhorn’s message-scoring system on disagreement strategies developed from the politeness theory, if people have intentions to maintain their relationship (in the case of a relational-oriented goal), their disagreement messages will be more polite. For example, in a strong agreement response, the speaker will approve unequivocally and comment, “You are absolutely right!” Conversely, if people are mostly interested in finding the best solution for solving a task and less interested in relationship maintenance (in the case of a task-oriented goal), their

disagreement messages will be less polite. Based on the same scale from Scheerhorn (1991), if a speaker strongly disagrees, the response is termed as an “aggravate disagreement”. For example, the speaker will disagree unequivocally and comment, “No, that is not true at all!” In this regard, an aggravate disagreement, compared with a strong agreement, scores low in politeness because the former leaves no ambiguity in the expression of the opinion (Scheerhorn, 1991).

Apart from strong agreements and aggravate disagreements, Scheerhorn developed a total of eight disagreement strategies varying in politeness that individuals use to express, mitigate, and/or avoid disagreements. These strategies were arranged on a scale that is similar to Brown and Levinson’s treatment of perceived face-threat (Scheerhorn, 1991). The eight strategies ranging from low politeness to high politeness are: (1) aggravate disagreement, (2) direct disagreement, (3) indirect disagreement, (4) indirect disagreement and modest viability, (5) praise and indirect disagreement, (6) praise and provisional acceptance, (7) implicit or direct agreement, and (8) strong agreement (see Figure 1).

The results from Scheerhorn’s work concluded that participants were most influenced by a relational-oriented goal, as compared to a task-oriented goal, citing support for the politeness theory. The study provides good foreground on understanding people’s objectives when expressing disagreements. Of strong relevance to this current study however, is the idea that people consider their social relations with other people to be more influential in driving their disagreement outcomes (Asch, 1951; see also Janis, 1972). Importantly, relational-oriented goals were activated only within the context of conversations amongst strangers, and the relevance may not be as strong in conversations amongst friends. Against this

backdrop, it is worthwhile to consider that people express disagreements differently to friends and strangers that produce variations in politeness.

## **The Current Study**

### **Variations in Politeness**

**Expressing Disagreements to Friends and Strangers Offline.** Amongst friends, disagreement occurring FtF was welcomed and not perceived as a FTA. Studies on examinations of politeness amongst friends show that people interpret disagreements with family members and peers as an intimate and sociable experience (Tannen, 1993; Tannen & Kakavá, 1992). Schiffrin (1984) offers a substantial explanation for these findings. She asserts that peer disagreement can be conceived as a form of friendly debate, referred to as a “sociable argument”. In such sociable arguments, people continually disagree, and have opposing ideas, to achieve certain interactional goals (Schiffrin, 1984). These arguments also validate interlocutors’ relationship distance—how close an individual is to another individual—because the peer relationship is intimate enough to tolerate (as opposed to jeopardize) what may be interpreted by strangers as verbal assaults (Ashton, 1980; Kerckhoff & Davis, 1962; Schiffrin, 1984). In the same vein, research provide further evidence that the occurrence of disagreements amongst peers do not threaten their relationship (Georgakopoulou, 2001). Rather, they serve to enhance the friendships instead (Tannen & Kakavá, 1992).

In contrast, disagreement occurring FtF amongst strangers were found to be unfavorable. A study by Lewis and Gallois (1984) found that participants rated expressions of disagreement from strangers as a more negative experience, as compared to expressions of disagreement from friends. In line with this argument, other studies state that disagreement amongst strangers implies having dissimilar



attitudes with other people do not serve to validate one's beliefs and feelings (Cialdini, Braver, & Lewis, 1974; Johnson, Gormly, & Gormly, 1973). Rather, they pose threats and are disliked. A difference in opinion amongst strangers was perceived to be more hostile and less appropriate as compared to a difference in opinion amongst friends (Lewis & Gallois, 1984).

Taken together, it is likely that at the point of elaboration before conceiving any disagreement messages amongst friends that individuals perceive it is less important to mitigate or avoid FTA, as opposed to disagreements amongst strangers. Depending on who people are expressing their disagreement to, whether to friends or strangers, they interpret and understand disagreements differently FtF. In turn, this affects how polite they are in their expression of the disagreement.

The literature discussed above suggest that amongst friends, disagreements do not threaten interlocutors' positive face. Thus, intentions to mitigate or avoid disagreements to preserve or enhance each other's face are unnecessary. On the other hand, amongst strangers, disagreements do threaten interlocutors' positive face, and intentions to mitigate or avoid disagreements may be useful.

**Expressing Disagreements to Friends and Strangers Online.** People may express disagreements differently to friends and strangers online. The fear of social isolation is offered as a factor to explain first, why it may be challenging for people to express disagreements to friends and strangers online, and second, how it can affect their politeness of disagreement messages.

***The Fear of Social Isolation.*** A challenge people face when they express disagreements to friends and strangers in online communication stem from the fear of social isolation (FOSI) (see for review, Noelle-Neumann 1974; 1995). Numerous studies in the spiral of silence literature demonstrate that the norms or opinions of

people's friends are more important to the individual, than the norms or opinions of strangers (Glynn, & Park, 1997; Oshagan, 1996). For example, people are more likely to share their opinions if they think they share similar attitudes and beliefs with their friends and family members (Moy, Domke, & Stomke, 2001). The authors provide an explanation for this finding, drawing on the FOSI. They state that being socially isolated from "a primary group would seem to be a more meaningful concern than isolation from society as a whole" (Moy, Domke, & Stomke, 2001, p. 9). In line with this argument, an examination of ostracism in everyday life found that people who were socially ostracized by their friends felt more threatened, than when they were socially ostracized by strangers (Nezlek, Wesselman, Wheeler, & Williams, 2012). Although ostracism is experienced more often from strangers than friends, participants reported increased negative experiences overall when excluded by friends in contrast to when strangers excluded them (Nezlek, Wesselman, Wheeler, & Williams, 2012).

Recent research examines the FOSI on SNSs. Results from a study by Neubaum (2016) show that people had a higher fear of being socially excluded by a relationally closer group such as friends on Facebook. Conversely, people had a lower fear of being socially excluded by a relationally distant group such as strangers on Facebook (Neubaum, 2016). Accordingly, if people are more cautious of their behavior due to the FOSI on SNSs, they may disagree more politely to their friends than to strangers. Contrary to what is expected in FtF communication, where people are more polite to strangers, as compared to their friends, disagreement outcomes amongst friends and strangers may be reversed on SNSs.

While it is fair to say that people experience a greater FOSI from their friends on both mediums, compared with strangers, it may be more apparent online than offline. According to Hesse, Werner, and Altman (1988), while people have more time

and therefore, greater control over how they want to phrase and post arguments online, they also experience a greater loss of control with respect to how these messages are seen by others. The loss of control online is due to issues of “persistence” (Treem & Leonardi, 2013, p. 155), derived from an affordance perspective. Persistence refers to statements shared online that stay accessible in its original state after an individual has posted his or her comment online. This perceived loss of control is magnified on SNSs such as Facebook (boyd, 2011). Consistent with the arguments discussed above, Neubaum and Krämer (2016) found that people perceive a higher level of control in FtF settings than on Facebook. In FtF settings, people can rectify any wrong impressions, and they are more willing to express their opinions. However, on Facebook, people think that it is riskier and to a certain extent, more difficult to rectify any wrong impressions in their on-going conversations.

*Expectations of Sanctions.* The expectations of sanctions (EOS) manifest from the FOSI. While the FOSI is viewed as an innate trait influencing individuals’ willingness to express a deviant opinion (Hayes, Matthes, & Eveland, 2011; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Lee, 2001), the EOS differs in that it presents itself accordingly to the social situations people are put in (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016; Neuwirth, Frederick, & Mayo, 2007). The EOS explains people’s fear of being personally attacked by other people when they express a deviant opinion (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016). This fear leads people to think about the repercussions they may face before they express any opposing ideas.

Three main EOS are measured by Neubaum and Krämer (2016) in their study: (1) the fear of being judged (e.g., losing face, being personally picked on), (2) the fear of being rejected (e.g., being ignored by others, being rejected by others), and (3) the fear of being personally attacked (e.g., being laughed at, being insulted by others). The

results from their study concluded that people had a greater fear of being personally attacked on Facebook than in FtF settings. The willingness to express a deviant opinion also reduces. Neubaum and Krämer note that the nature of the mediated context seems to lead people to have a greater fear of being personally attack by other users. Participants perceive that the Internet is an environment where posting something controversial or deviant will easily escalate to something personal. Thus, the tendency to keep silent is increased online, as opposed to offline (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016).

Drawing on the concept of the FOSI, the literatures discussed suggest that when people express disagreements to their friends online, they need to work harder to maintain each other's face to satisfy each other's needs (Holmes, 1995), especially in a disagreement situation. They will also experience a greater FOSI from their friends, as opposed to strangers. Concurrently, the FOSI and EOS—measured as an *a priori* consideration in this study—is greater amongst friends, as opposed to strangers, before expressing the disagreement. Based on all lines of argument presented above, the author therefore hypothesizes the following:

H1: The politeness of the disagreement messages will depend on the communication channels, such that the disagreement messages for offline friends and online strangers will be lower in the level of politeness, while the disagreement messages for online friends and offline strangers will be greater in the level of politeness.

Next, a moderated-mediation relationship is hypothesized:

H2: The effect hypothesized in H1 will be mediated by (a) the fear of social isolation, and (b) expectations of sanctions people perceive from friends and strangers.

**Context Collapse.** Another facet that raises further question about people's politeness when they disagree with other individuals is whether it is easy for them to discern who they might be expressing disagreements to when put in an environment with a mixed audience. That is, a group whom individuals converse with may comprise of more than one type of a partner (i.e., friends and strangers) in each situation. In FtF settings, individuals can easily recognize who they are addressing, whether friends, strangers, or a mixed group of people (Wesch, 2009). Having knowledge on who one is conversing with is helpful because one can calculate how an opinion is expressed to a mixed group of people. The individual can also gauge certain reactions from specific interlocutors during social conversations despite facing multiple people all at once (Wesch, 2009). Specific to the context of disagreements in FtF settings, the ability to evaluate the context and decide how people construct and present themselves serves as a guide for their employment of politeness strategies in their disagreement messages.

In contrast, context collapse is not as straightforward in the online environment. Wesch (2009) first noted that the difficulty when conversing with a mixed group of people online is not due to the lack of context. Rather, it is the idea that people have numerous contexts collapsing into a single moment recorded online. Wesch states that in every online moment recorded, the information (e.g., images, words) shared by individuals may persist and be preserved anywhere in the virtual world (Wesch, 2009). Due to this persistency of information in the online environment, people's social networks (e.g., friends) can assess information (e.g., opinions) they have posted publicly any time. This suggests that people may be more cautious of context collapse in the online environment than in the offline environment. A second distinction of the context collapse in the online environment is people's

inability to assess the situation because they are unable to physically see who they are addressing. Thus, when posting opinions online, individuals need to address anybody, everybody, and perhaps even nobody concurrently (Wesch, 2009). Marwick and boyd (2011) corroborate this line of argument stating that people must direct their intended messages to an “imagined audience” (p. 115) who are absent physically online. That is, they must form mental conceptualizations of the individuals with whom they are communicating (Litt, 2012).

Further, context collapse is noted to be most prominent on SNSs (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) because people frequently face multiple audiences that consist of their friends, acquaintances, and strangers (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Thus, people try to have a sense of their audience in their mediated conversations so that they can present themselves in an appropriate way to their audience (Marwick & boyd, 2011). For example, studies of self-identity and self-presentation on profile-based SNSs show that social network profile owners are highly attentive to their audience (e.g., boyd, 2006b).

A recent study by Neubaum (2016) investigated further the concept of the imagined audience. Participants were randomly assigned into one of the four audience conditions on Facebook (strong ties, weak ties, strangers, and multiple audience). They were asked who they imagined when confronted by a relationally diverse audience. In the multiple audience condition, which was the most representative of a real Facebook context because it includes people’s friends, acquaintances, and strangers, the results concluded no significant difference between this condition and the strong ties condition. This indicates that the strong ties group may be the most salient audience to people when they face a relationally diverse audience (Neubaum, 2016).

Taken together, it is highly probable that people present themselves to a heterogeneous group in ways that may be similar to how they would present themselves to their friends online. Applied to the context of expressing disagreements on SNSs, they act appropriately and accordingly to how they imagine friends or strangers would react. This is not to say that all individuals envision their friends when they are in a disagreement online, but it could be one of the ways people try to navigate through an invisible audience. On the one hand, people may be less polite because they think they are communicating with strangers. On the other hand, people know that their messages may persist and be seen by their friends, and thus they may become more polite when they disagree. The following research question probes into how context collapse affect people's politeness when they disagree in a mixed audience condition on both FtF and SNS:

RQ1: When people communicate to an offline and online mixed audience, what is the level of politeness of disagreement messages?

### **Method**

Two studies were conducted to achieve this current research's objectives. First, a pilot study tested for participants' ( $N = 80$ ) pre-existing attitudes on three pre-selected controversial topics publicly discussed in Singapore. The purpose of the pilot study is to determine the most controversial topic that yields the most polarized results amongst participants in terms of public opinion. One of the three controversial topics was selected as the experimental stimulus for the main study. Following, the main study ( $N = 104$ ) tested participants' politeness of disagreement messages in three conditions offline and online. Approval by the local Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) for the procedure of both studies was attained before the commencement of the research study.

## **Pilot Study**

### **Pre-Selection of Topics**

The three controversial topics were (1) single parenthood in Singapore, (2) abolition of the death penalty in Singapore, and (3) legalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) marriage in Singapore. These topics derived from a youth census conducted by the Dream Future Forum organized by the Association for Public Affairs at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. The sample size was 300 Singaporean students from various tertiary levels (i.e., polytechnics) to universities, or were working adults (Ong, 2016). Results of the youth census state that 86% of participants supported single parenthood in Singapore; 31% of participants supported the abolishment of the death penalty in Singapore; and 37% of participants supported the legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore (Ong, 2016). Accordingly, the author selected these three topics to test her measures for the pilot study.

### **Sample**

A total of 80 participants completed a web-based questionnaire hosted on the Qualtrics platform. All participants were recruited from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information's (WKWSCI) subject pool on the SONA Systems. They were awarded .5 course credit incentive for participation. As a pre-requisite for study participation, all participants were NTU undergraduate students aged 19 to 29.

### **Procedure**

Prior to the commencement of the pilot study, WKWSCI participants were invited to sign up on the SONA Systems to partake in an online study via a mass email advertisement. Once signed up, participants were automatically given a link to complete the survey, including an informed consent that they had to sign digitally. Following, they were awarded the .5 course credit incentive after the completion of the



questionnaire. The pilot study was completed within five days. All participants were emailed a debriefing note upon the conclusion of the pilot study.

### **Measures**

Participants' opinion including current attitude, attitude certainty, perceived importance, perceived knowledge, perceived controversy, and the frequency of interpersonal discussion (Neubaum & Ho, 2016) on the three pre-selected topics were measured. Example of an item accessing the above-mentioned six variables on a topic were respectively, "How much do you support the issue on single parenthood in Singapore?", "How certain are you in your opinion about single parenthood in Singapore?", "How important is the issue of single parenthood in Singapore for you?", "How would you estimate your knowledge about the issue on single parenthood in Singapore?", "What do you think: To what extent is the issue on single parenthood a controversial issue in Singapore?", and "How often do you talk to other people about the issue on single parenthood in Singapore?".

All participants were given the definition of each topic in the questionnaire and were instructed to respond to these statements on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Thus, a higher mean of this scale indicated a higher certainty or higher knowledge etc., depending on the question. Respectively, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for single parenthood in Singapore was .781, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for abolition of the death penalty in Singapore was .732, and the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore was .632.

An additional measure, item seven, asked for participants' stance on each topic, "If you had to decide whether to support or oppose single parenthood in Singapore - what would you do?". They were instructed to respond to the binary scale that expressed their agreement (Neubaum, 2016), either "I would support single

parenthood in Singapore”, or “I would oppose single parenthood in Singapore”. Items appear in Appendix A.

### **Data Analysis**

All data was analyzed with the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Before running more advance statistical analysis on SPSS, the descriptive statistics of the three topics were individually evaluated to determine the most viable topic for the experimental stimulus of the main study. Following, the selected topic was subjected to binomial logistic regression with item seven as the dichotomous dependent variable. The objective was to predict the likelihood of supporting or opposing the selected topic using the six measures mentioned above as the independent predictors for public opinion.

### **Results**

**Descriptive Statistics.** An examination of the descriptive analysis for topic one (single parenthood in Singapore) revealed that at least 95% of participants ( $M = 1.05$ ,  $SD = .219$ ,  $N = 80$ ) supported the topic. The descriptive analysis for topic two (abolition of the death penalty in Singapore) revealed that 55% and 45% of participants ( $M = 1.45$ ,  $SD = .501$ ,  $N = 80$ ) supported and opposed the topic respectively. The descriptive analysis for topic three (legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore) revealed that at least 75% of participants ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = .436$ ,  $N = 80$ ) supported the topic. Based on these preliminary findings, the abolition of the death penalty was determined as the most viable for further statistical analysis as it depicted the most polarized topic amongst all eighty participants. It is noteworthy to mention that selecting the most polarized topic (abolition of the death penalty) as opposed to the most contentious topic (single parenthood in Singapore) is critical to accessing interlocutors’ disagreements that may vary in degrees of politeness. By intentionally

providing a more polarized environment to introduce disagreements for participants, better observations may be made with regards to the varying degrees of politeness (see Figure 1) in interlocutors' disagreement messages.

**Binomial Logistic Regression.** Results from the binomial logistic regression showed that the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant,  $X^2 = 40.2, p < .001$  with  $df 6$ . The results further supported the six predictors as a set of reliably distinguished measures between supporters or opposers of the topic, abolition of the death penalty. Further, the model explained 52.8% of the variance (Nagelkerke  $R^2$ ) and correctly classified 55% of the cases. Prediction success overall was 82.5%, with 84.1% of participants supporting the topic, and 80.6% of participants opposing the topic. In sum, the results from the regression analysis provided confidence that the abolition of the death penalty served as a good indicator that the eighty participants were split on the topic and achieved the author's objective of finding a topic that was the most polarized to increase the plausibility for participants to disagree, no matter what position they held.

## **Main Study**

### **Research Design**

A 3 x 2 between-subject factorial web-based experimental design was employed. The independent variables were: (1) communication channels (offline x online), and (2) individuals' relationship with other people (friends x strangers x mixed audience). The dependent variable of the main study was the politeness of disagreement messages.

### **Sample**

A total of 132 participants completed a web-based questionnaire hosted on the Qualtrics platform. The initial sample size was based off Scheerhorn's (1991) work

and a power analysis performed using G\*Power. Of the 132 participants, 12 participants were dropped as they had participated in the pilot study previously. The remaining 120 participants were randomly assigned to the six conditions in which the first four conditions (offline friends, online friends, offline strangers, online strangers) had 20 participants each. Manipulation checks were conducted on the last two conditions (offline mixed audience, online mixed audience) to assess successful manipulation of context collapse. 16 out of the 40 participants in the last two conditions failed the manipulation check. Thus, for the final data analysis, a sample of 104 participants was used. Half of the sample were recruited from the WKWSC SONA systems, while the other half of the sample were walk-ins on the week the experiment was held. All participants were given the choice of a .5 course credit incentive or a \$5 cash incentive for their participation. As a pre-requisite for study participation, all participants were NTU undergraduate and graduate students aged 19 to 29.

### **Experimental Stimulus**

The selected topic, abolition of the death penalty, was written into six hypothetical scenarios (see Appendix B) for each of the six conditions respectively: (1) offline friends ( $N = 20$ ), (2) online friends ( $N = 20$ ), (3) offline strangers ( $N = 20$ ), (4) online strangers ( $N = 20$ ), (5) offline mixed audience ( $N = 15$ ), and (6) online mixed audience ( $N = 9$ ). The context for each of the six conditions was respectively an offline birthday party with friends only, an online discussion on Facebook with friends only, a five-hour bus journey with strangers only, an online discussion on Facebook with strangers only, an offline birthday party consisting of friends and strangers, and an online discussion on Facebook consisting of friends and strangers. These six hypothetical scenarios were the experimental stimulus for participants ( $N = 104$ ) in

part because this research borrows the concept of EOS (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016) from the spiral of silence literature that widely uses this technique.

Each of the six scenarios described a situation in which participants were discussing the abolition of the death penalty with a group of people, and most of these people in the group opposed the opinion of the respondent (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016). Offline and online friends were defined to participants as people who people may share similar interests with (i.e., enjoy the same music, “hang out” in specific venues), are in constant contact with, and see often (Georgakopoulou, 2001). Offline and online strangers were defined to participants as people who people have not met before and have not seen any posting of one’s information online (i.e., a posting of one’s Facebook status) (Georgakopoulou, 2001). Depending on the condition that participants were randomly assigned to, they were provided the specific definition (e.g., participants in the online friends were given the definition for friends).

For participants randomly assigned to the offline and online mixed audience condition, the hypothetical scenarios described a situation where they discussed the abolition of the death penalty with both friends and strangers. Therefore, participants in these two conditions were provided the definition for friends and strangers. To avoid anchoring participants in the two mixed audience conditions, half of the participants were presented the scenarios with “friends and strangers”, while the other half were presented the scenarios with “strangers and friends” (see Appendix B).

### **Procedure**

Prior to the commencement of the main study, a mass email advertisement was sent to undergraduate and graduate students of WKWSCI, the National Institute of Education (NIE), the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS), and School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences (SPMS) at NTU. In addition,

recruitment posters were pasted around common areas in WKWSCI (e.g., lift), where the experiment was conducted, to inform students that walk-ins were welcomed.

During the actual study held at the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) Laboratory in WKWSCI, participants turned up at their selected timings and were showed to their computer desk by the research assistant (if they had already signed up on SONA systems) or were randomly allocated a computer desk by the research assistant (if they were walk-ins). Next, they were given the informed consent to sign and a set of instructions regarding the procedure of the experiment. All participants begun the web-based questionnaire where they answered a series of questions regarding FOSI, and EOS. The experimental stimulus for each specific condition was then presented, and participants were instructed to imagine the situation described. Following, they were asked how they would respond to the situation by writing their response in the questionnaire. Participants in the online condition (friends and strangers) were prompted that only friends and strangers would be able to see their posting of the disagreement.

To introduce the context collapse in the last two conditions, offline and online mixed audience group, they were reminded that their social network and Facebook network were aware of their expression of disagreements. Social network and Facebook network refer to participants' friends and strangers in their Facebook account. Participants in the offline mixed audience group were reminded that their disagreement will be heard by both friends and strangers; participants in the online mixed audience group were reminded that their Facebook network will be able to see the disagreement that they have posted online. The reminder served to reinforce to participants that their disagreement may persist and be seen by members of the mixed group (e.g., friends).

After completion of the questionnaire, participants were given the choice of receiving .5 course credit incentive or \$5 cash credit incentive. The lab experiment was completed within a week. All participants were debriefed via a mass email sent by the author upon the conclusion of the experiment.

## **Measures**

**Fear of Social Isolation.** Participants ( $N = 104$ ) were instructed to respond to five items (e.g., “It is scary to think about not being invited to social gatherings by other people.”) measuring the FOSI (Hayes, Matthes, & Eveland, 2011) with regard to how much it applied to themselves and their lives. All five items (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .882$ ) were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. A higher mean on this scale reflected a higher level of the FOSI. Items appear in Appendix C.

**Expectations of Sanctions.** Following the questions on FOSI, participants ( $N = 104$ ) were asked if they expected negative consequences should they express a disagreement in the condition they were randomly assigned to. To assess the manifestation of sanctions in the given situation, a 32 item EOS scale developed by Neubaum and Krämer, 2016 was used (e.g., “If I expressed my disagreement in this discussion, I would fear of getting rejected by others.”). All 32 items (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .979$ ) were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. A higher mean on this scale reflected a higher level of the EOS. Items appear in Appendix D.

**Politeness of Disagreement Messages.** A method of scoring the disagreement messages by Scheerhorn (1991) measured the dependent variable of this study. Figure 1 shows the scale (with examples) that has been adapted to the selected topic. As explained in the literature review section of this research study, the eight strategies

were arranged on a continuum that is similar to Brown and Levinson's treatment of politeness (Scheerhorn, 1991). The scale ranged from one (low politeness) to eight (high politeness).

An aggravate disagreement (one) is the most severe and least polite strategy. When people express an aggravate disagreement, they negate all information provided to them. A direct disagreement (two) is a minimal increase in politeness where people express the disagreement less critically but the disagreement message is still clear to the receiver. Following, an indirect disagreement (three) occurs when people attempt to get their disagreement across by obtaining more information from the receiver on the veracity of the information provided to them. Strategies four and five are considered neutral disagreement strategies on the politeness scale. An indirect disagreement and modest viability strategy (four) occur when people express the disagreement in the same manner an indirect disagreement (three) is expressed but they take it upon themselves to find out more about the information provided to verify what the receiver has said. A praise and indirect disagreement (five) occur when people express their disagreement indirectly (three) and they compliment the receiver to be polite concurrently.

The last three strategies increment towards high levels of politeness. A praise and provisional acceptance strategy (six) occurs when people accept the information they receive and agree with the receiver while throwing in a compliment simultaneously. An implicit or direct agreement (seven) occurs when people have gone beyond the point of acceptance by saying nothing, or simply concurring with the information they receive. Finally, a strong agreement (eight) is the most polite. When people express a strong agreement, they state that they are in complete agreement and



use stronger words (than compared with strategy seven) to affirm their agreement (see Figure 1).

Two coders were trained by the author to score the message types identified in Figure 1 (including a codebook developed by the author) the week after the study concluded. The dependent variable was coded on a continuous scale from 1 to 8, 1 = *low politeness*, and 8 = *high politeness*. For each of the eight disagreement strategies varying in politeness, the two coders agreed on the scoring of the messages (Cohen's *kappa* coefficient (*k*): .766), indicating a good inter-coder reliability based off Landis and Koch's (1977) *kappa* statistic. When the two coders did not agree on the message type, they held a discussion until agreement was reached, and arrived at the final code for data analysis.

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**Figure 1**  
**Eight Disagreement Strategies varying in Politeness**

**LOW POLITENESS**

One: *Aggravate disagreement.*

Example: "No, that is not true at all!"

Two: *Direct disagreement.*

Example: "No, I feel that what you're saying isn't right."

Three: *Indirect disagreement.*

Example: "Do you really think that the death penalty should not be abolished in Singapore? When did you hear that?"

Four: *Indirect disagreement + modest viability.*

Example: "I think you should be able to find other information saying otherwise. If I come across any such articles, I can share it with you."

Five: *Praise + indirect disagreement.*

Example: "That sounds right, but I am not entirely sure. Thanks for letting me know though!"

Six: *Praise + provisional acceptance.*

Example: "You're so informative! I sort of agree with you, but maybe times have changed."

Seven: *Implicit or direct agreement.*

Example: Say nothing, or say, “You’re right.”

Eight: *Strong agreement.*

Example: “You are absolutely right!”

## **HIGH POLITENESS**

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*Figure 1.* The eight disagreement strategies varying in politeness adapted to the selected topic.

**Manipulation Check.** A single-item measure (Neubaum, 2016) checked for context collapse for participants in the offline and online mixed audience condition. Of the 40 participants in these two conditions, 16 participants were eliminated for the data analysis as they failed the manipulation check. Items for the manipulation check appear in Appendix E.

### **Data Analysis**

All data was analyzed with the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. First, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test H1 with eighty participants ( $N = 80$ ) from the conditions (1) offline friends, (2) online friends, (3) offline strangers, and (4) online strangers. H1 was the interaction hypothesis, and H2 was the moderated mediation hypothesis of this study. After a significant interaction was found for H1, the data was split and separated by the independent variable, individuals’ relation with others. Simple effect tests (one-way ANOVA) were conducted to evaluate the differences in population means among levels of one factor for each level of another factor (see results below).

The mediation hypothesis, H2 was subjected to a moderated mediation analysis using SPSS PROCESS Macro Model 7. A moderated mediation refers to the occurrence of both mediation and moderation in a single model (Hayes, 2018). The analysis was performed using 5,000 bootstrap resamples with a 95% confidence

interval (CI). If an interaction effect is found at  $p < .10$ , the analysis probes further for conditional effects of the focal predictor (individual's relationship with others) at values of the moderator (communication channels) for both FOSI and EOS (mediators). Indirect effects were considered significant should the respective CI not include zero. Lastly, a one-way ANOVA was performed to answer the exploratory research question (RQ1) of this study in respect to context collapse in the last two conditions (offline and online mixed audience;  $N = 24$ ), even though the author notes the unequal and small sample size in these two conditions.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

**Fear of Social Isolation.** The five-item scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .882$ ) measured participants' FOSI ( $M = 25.2$ ,  $SD = 6.20$ ,  $N = 80$ ).

**Expectations of Sanctions.** The 32-item scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .979$ ) measured participants' EOS ( $M = 138.3$ ,  $SD = 44.0$ ,  $N = 80$ ).

**Politeness of Disagreement Messages.** The intercoder reliability was ( $k$ ):  $.766$ ,  $p = .000$ . First, aggravate disagreement (coded as 1) yields 29 agreements (27.9%) between the two coders. Direct disagreement (coded as 2) yields 32 agreements (30.8%), and indirect disagreement (coded as 3) had nine agreements (8.7%) between the two coders. Respectively, indirect disagreement and modest viability (coded as 4) yields 18 agreements (17.3%), and praise and indirect disagreement (coded as 5) yields eight agreements (7.7%) between the two coders. Lastly, praise and provisional acceptance (coded as 6) yields six agreements (5.8%), and implicit or direct agreement (coded as 7) yields two agreements (1.9%) between the two coders.

**H1.** A significant interaction effect was found for H1 ( $N = 80$ ) with the two-way ANOVA. H1 predicted that depending on the communication channels, the politeness of the disagreement messages for offline friends and online strangers would be lower in the level of politeness, while the disagreement messages for online friends and offline strangers will be greater in the level of politeness. The results revealed a small effect size,  $F(1, 76) = 7.64, p = .007, \eta^2 = .091$ , supporting H1 (see figure 2). Accordingly, simple effect tests were conducted according to reasons provided above in the section on data analysis.

The one-way ANOVA performed supported the prediction (in H1) that people ( $N = 40$ ) were less polite to their friends and more polite to strangers in the offline environment,  $F(1, 38) = 9.26, p = .004$ . A closer examination of the mean and standard deviation of the two offline groups cited further evidence that people in these groups reacted differently to their respective groups in the given channels (see Table 1). Against expectations, in the online environment, no statistical significance was found,  $F(1, 38) = 1.186, p = .283$ , and it remains unconfirmed that people ( $N = 40$ ) were more polite to their friends and less polite to strangers. The mean and standard deviation from the analysis of online friends and strangers showed that there was little difference between the two groups, suggesting that there could be other variables at play (see Table 1).

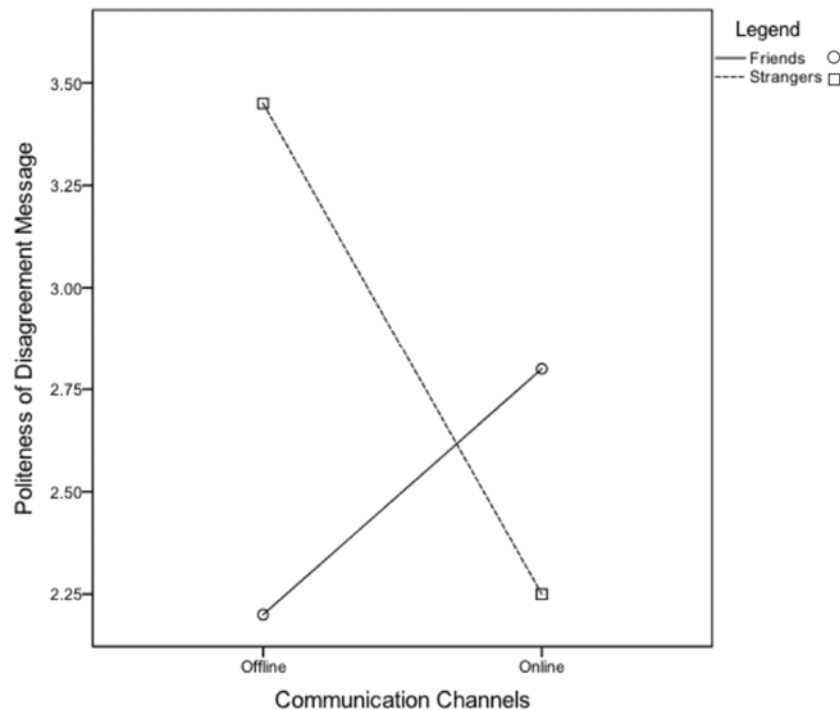


Figure 2. A significant interaction was found for H1.

**H2.** A moderated mediation was performed to find out if FOSI and EOS (the mediators of the current study) have an indirect effect on H1, moderated by communication channels (offline or online). Two separate bootstrap analyses (5,000 samples,  $N = 80$ ) were performed to ascertain a bias-corrected and accelerated 95% CI for the moderated mediation effect of FOSI and EOS respectively on the politeness of disagreement messages. As expected, for FOSI, it acted as a significant mediator ( $\beta = 1.04$ ,  $SE = .38$ ,  $p = .008$ , 95% CI = [.2814, 1.799]) moderated by the online environment of the effects of individual's relationship with others and politeness of disagreement messages. No statistically significant relationship ( $\beta = .000$ ,  $SE = .38$ ,  $p = 1.000$ , 95% CI = [-.7586, .7586]) was found for FOSI in the offline environment. Against expectations, no significant interaction relationship was found for EOS (mediator) on individuals' relationship with others and the politeness of disagreement

messages at  $p < .10$ , therefore no further probing was performed to analyze the moderating effect of the communication channels on the main interaction effect.

*M* and *SD* of Offline Friends and Strangers

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Offline Friends</b>	2.20	1.20
<b>Offline Strangers</b>	3.45	1.40
<b>Online Friends</b>	2.80	1.74
<b>Online Strangers</b>	2.25	1.45

*Table 1.* Mean and standard deviation of offline and online friends and strangers.

**RQ1.** The research question (RQ1) in respect to context collapse in this research study asked, when people communicate to an online and offline audience, what is the level of politeness of the disagreement messages? A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine which direction the remaining participants ( $N = 24$ ) lean on the politeness of disagreement scale, and the results of the test were not statistically significant,  $F(1, 22) = .940, p = .343$ . An examination of the mean in both conditions (offline mixed audience,  $N = 15, M = 2.20$ ; online mixed audience,  $N = 9, M = 2.78$ ) suggested that people were not particularly different in terms of the politeness level when disagreeing with others in the two channels in a mixed setting.

### Discussion

The overarching argument of this study at the start states that the extent to which people will be polite when they disagree varies. It is dependent on two factors, first, where the disagreement occurs, and second, who people are opposing. First, results from the two-way ANOVA confirmed a significant interaction effect for H1. In other words, depending on the communication channel, individuals fluctuate in their levels of politeness in their disagreement messages to an offline friend group, online friend group, offline stranger group, and online stranger group. More specifically, when disagreeing to offline strangers and offline strangers, participants were more polite in their construction of disagreement messages. When disagreeing to offline

friends and online strangers, participants were less polite in their construction of disagreement messages.

In line with previous work, individuals enjoy disagreements with friends FtF and interpret disagreements as friendly and healthy discussions that encourage intimacy and friendship (Schiffrin, 1984; Tannen & Kakavá, 1992). In such conversations with friends, people partake in disagreements and do not appear to face any apparent level of threat, thus the intention to maintain or enhance each other's face (Mills, 2003) is unnecessary. However, disagreements with strangers FtF hint at intimidation and adversary (Cialdini, Braver, & Lewis, 1974; Johnson, Gormly, & Gormly, 1973). The occurrence of disagreements amongst strangers force interlocutors to mitigate or avoid FTAs (Mills, 2003) by using more polite message strategies to reduce any embarrassment or discomfort during social conversation. In the online environment, a reversal was not found, and it remains unconfirmed if individuals incline or decline away from politeness when disagreeing based on their relationship with other individuals.

The second analysis revealed that FOSI was a significant mediating variable of individuals' relationship and the politeness of disagreement messages moderated by the communication channel (H2). In the online environment, the manifestation of FOSI within individuals seem to evoke trait-like fears (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; 1995) that cause them to think twice—as opposed to the offline environment—before constructing their disagreement messages. With respect to the manifestation of EOS (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016) however, it did not regulate sanctions alongside the situations people were put in. *Ceteris paribus*, the findings of this study show that although people expect to experience social isolation in the online communication channel as compared to in the offline communication channel, they may react in the

former environment in a similar manner they would in the latter environment to friends and to strangers. Importantly, FOSI was able to differentiate the non-mediated and mediated channel characterized by its absence and presence respectively albeit weakly affecting people's politeness of disagreement messages. This implies that who people disagree with alongside the goal-state they have may hold matter more than the communication channel itself.

That is, when communicating disagreements to strangers, people may be more concerned about protecting or maintaining a positive face, and the politeness of individuals' disagreement messages may vary. While it is fair to assume that people consider the relational-oriented goal, as opposed to the task-oriented goal, to be superior in driving their message construction and production (Asch, 1951; Gouran, 1982; Janis, 1972; Scheerhorn, 1992; Tracy, 1984), the relevance of the relational-oriented goal appears stronger amongst a group of strangers offline. Amongst offline friends, making wise evaluations during "sociable arguments" (Schiffrin, 1984; Tannen & Kakavá, 1992) to achieve certain interactional objectives point towards a task-oriented goal. Nevertheless, it is not to say that people do not ruminate their relationships as well. In any degree, people think about their relationships first (e.g., who the audience is), and then the interactional objectives (e.g., preserving friendly relations) they purpose to achieve with different groups of individuals, before expressing anything.

The results concerning context collapse in the second part of this study were inconclusive due to an unequal sample size for the final analysis (RQ1). However, it is noteworthy that a closer examination of the manipulation check for participants who were dropped infers two observations. Of the forty participants in the offline mixed audience condition, five participants were dropped because they reported to imagine



their friends in the heterogenous group. Seven participants in the online mixed audience condition were dropped because they reported that they imagined strangers, while four participants reported that they imagined their friends in the heterogenous group. First, corroborating Wesch's (2009) work on context collapse, people present more difficulty in traversing through an audience in the mediated environment in the absence of a physical audience.

Following, the idea that several contexts are collapsing into one moment recorded online with the need to address anybody, everybody, and even nobody (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Wesch, 2009) simultaneously suggests that people are uncertain and confused about how they should post a message, who the message will reach, and what purpose they aim to achieve when posting a message in a multiple audience situation. Applied to the context of this study, it becomes increasingly demanding for individuals to recognize what goal-state (relational-oriented or task-oriented) one will have, much less the direction of the politeness of the message. As such, the exploratory section of this research study emphasizes the difficulty in examining this phenomenon and leaves more questions than explanations for context collapse.

The present study offers the following contributions. Earlier work (Asch, 1951; Gouran, 1982; Janis, 1972; Scheerhorn, 1992; Tracy, 1984) shed light that the difference in goal-states produces difference in message construction and production. This scholarship extends previous work by showing that when people are constrained by the different relationships they have, it activates different goal-states (relational-oriented or task-oriented) and different interactional objectives (e.g., achieving mutual understanding amongst friends) within individuals that result in variations in their disagreement message outcomes in the offline environment. In this regard, whether

one's goal-state or one's interactional objective precedes the other or occurs concurrently when constructing and producing a message to a specific audience (e.g., a spouse, a group of acquaintances) is left unknown. For example, if an individual is in a disagreement with a spouse, he or she may be torn between putting the relationship first (e.g., considering one another's feelings) and wanting to get his or her point across to reach common ground. In this respect, how does this implicate message construction and production? Will the individual incline towards the use of a more neutral message strategy to combat the dissonance between a relevant relationship and his or her conversational objective? Or will the individual choose to threaten the positive face of a significant other knowing that their relationship is intimate enough to tolerate a message that is not as neutral? Future research should look into which might be the more salient variable of the two, if one precedes the other, and its effect on the message outcome. It may be interesting to explore the probability that goal-states and interactional objectives may be decision-making processes that occur simultaneously, suggesting a dual-process event (in the case of a neutral message strategy), as opposed to a single-process event (in the case of one variable being more salient than the other), before message construction and production.

Next, the findings pose theoretical implications for the spiral of silence theory. Conventional work in the area states that the willingness to express opinions for individuals depends on two factors. First, what side the individual is on, whether the majority or the minority (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; 1995) and second, situational cues (e.g., communication channel, audience) the individual confronts (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016). As opposed to using a topic with a majority opinion climate that forces participants to take a specific stance, this study was novel in that it presented participants with an open deliberation context with the use of a highly polarized topic

to express disagreements, irrespective of what position they held. Given that participants were free to perceive which side they were on for the topic, their responses painted a different story to the silence mechanism in the spiral of silence theory. That is, with regard to what message strategies were used amongst offline and online friends, 35% of participants ( $N = 40$ ) chose to use an aggravate disagreement strategy, while 27% of participants chose to use a direct disagreement strategy. Only one participant chose to be polite by not responding (i.e., keeping silent) and was in total agreement. Amongst offline and online strangers, participants ( $N = 40$ ) engaged in a pro and contra argument (see Hayes, 2007; Neubaum & Krämer, 2016) to express their disagreements. At least 30% of participants used the indirect disagreement and modest viability strategy.

Taken together, the silence mechanism appears to attenuate in front of a very specific and relevant audience. The author provides one possible explanation for this observation. Amongst a very specific and relevant audience such as friends, people may not perceive a greater loss of control, whether offline or online. While it is fair to say that the loss of control stems from issues of “persistence” (Treem & Leonardi, 2013, p. 155) of message, people may not be as concerned about it amongst their friends. What may be interpreted as hostile comments amongst friends online may still be rectified to correct any wrong impressions or misunderstandings amongst friends offline at a later time (e.g., the following day FtF). On the other hand, the loss of control may be greater perceived amongst strangers, and it is almost impossible for unacquainted individuals to meet FtF after a disagreement has occurred online. In the same vein, the persistency of a message becomes a great discomfort when people communicate disagreements to strangers. In the virtual environment, future research should look to investigate the assumption that if the invisible audience is no longer

invisible and constrained to only a very specific and relevant group of people for the individual, how does this affect one's response? In doing so, it verifies the possibility that the silence mechanism attenuates amongst a group of friends online, as it does amongst a group of friends offline.

Finally, this research study is not without its limitations. First, hypothetical scenarios were used to evaluate people's politeness of disagreement messages. Although the use of these scenarios combined with participants' self-reported data is debatable (Hayes, Shanahan, & Glynn, 2001), it is an important and systematic improvement from the methodology employed by Neubaum and Krämer (2016), and Scheerhorn (1992). Concurrently, by virtue of using the same social contexts employed in Neubaum and Krämer's work and applying it to this current study may have influenced the results of this study. That is, in using very different scenarios for each condition, it may have contributed to the mixed results of this study. Researchers interested in this area of work should conduct observational experiments in the future to see if the mechanisms observed in this study may be applied to a real-life and tangible context, with participants being pressured by a real group of people.

Second, this study used a two-way ANOVA (as opposed to non-parametric statistic) to analyze the main interaction effect. This research study is the first (to the author's knowledge) to evaluate the politeness of disagreement messages using Scheerhorn's scale, therefore it was imperative to the author to validate his results by using the same analytic procedure. However, the author strongly encourages future researchers to consider coding the politeness of disagreement messages as ordinal data and to sought a more appropriate non-parametric statistic for better accuracy of the scale.

Finally, the sample of this study is limited to the use of undergraduate and graduate students in a university. This raises questions as to whether the results found in this research study may be generalized to other populations of different age groups and different educational levels. Further studies need to be conducted using other sample populations and sizes to verify the assumptions of this study.

### **Conclusion**

This research study aimed to identify difference in patterns found in offline and online communication that affect people's politeness when they disagree with a particular social group. A friend context and a stranger context examined this phenomenon through the use of online and offline hypothetical situations (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016) to manipulate the six conditions. It predicts that in offline communication, people are less polite to their friends, as opposed to strangers. The results substantiate this hypothesis, validating previous research with respect to people's goal-states when going against specific groups of people (Caldini, Braver, Lewis, 1974; Schiffrin, 1984; Scheerhorn, 1991; Tracy, 1984). It also lends support to the politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) by showing that when people are concerned with preserving friendly relations with others (as in the case of offline strangers), they tend to mitigate or avoid FTAs. This scholarship demonstrates that even as the relational-oriented goal seem to contribute more to people's decision-making processes, it may be more complex than just a single-process event *per se*. Prior to any decision-making, perhaps the consideration of the audience attributes to what people want to achieve in a conversational exchange, although more research needs to be done to investigate this assumption. Further, the exploration of different dimensions of friendship (i.e., best friends, acquaintances) and the extent to which they affect the way one disagrees will be interesting to study.

In the online environment, the pattern is argued to be reversed. Although no reversal was found, the mediated nature of the environment evokes the FOSI within individuals prior to expressing any disagreements. With respect to how polite people are when they disagree with friends and strangers online, the question is left unanswered. Assuming that the individual envisions the same group (i.e., friends) offline and online, does this make a difference to how they express the disagreement? Or does envisioning a homogenous group, irrespective of the environments one is in, nullifies the manner of how one expresses a disagreement? If the latter is true, what then is the role of FOSI and EOS, and what implications does this pose for spiral of silence theory? The silence mechanism attenuates for an individual when the imagined audience (in terms of a very specific and relevant group) is no longer invisible online, even if the environment induces social isolation and sanctions. Is there a possibility that there could be other variables at play? Finally, the second part of this study probed into the concept of context collapse to assess people's polite behavior when disagreeing with a heterogenous group in the two environments. Although the results to the research question posed by the study were deemed inconclusive, the examination of the manipulation check (for dropped participants) inferred both similar and novel observations (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Neubaum, 2016; Wesch, 2009) that were unique and problematic to context collapse. Future research should look into context collapse with a larger sample size to achieve stronger results.

In sum, this study was helpful in that it gave insight to people's decision-making process during a disagreement discussion. By constraining people to specific conditions, it identified and explained the kind of social goals that appear more salient to people that potentially shapes their polite behavior, and consequently, the outcome of their conversation. Amongst friends, people are driven by a task-oriented goal;

amongst strangers, people are stirred by a relational-oriented goal. Although the study was successful in identifying the goal-states people have amongst offline friends and strangers, more work needs to be done to identify the goal-states people have amongst online friends and strangers. Despite its shortcomings, this study remains the first step, to the author's knowledge, to uncovering how a specific and relevant/irrelevant audience might play a larger role in people's polite behavior during a disagreement.

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Appendix A  
**Pilot Study: Pre-existing Attitude**

**Topic One**

Please indicate your opinion about the topic **“Single Parenthood in Singapore”** by clicking on the option for the number that expresses your level of agreement with each statement (Neubaum & Ho, 2016).

Read every statement carefully and decide to which extent you disagree or agree with it.

**Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    **Strongly Agree**

**“Single Parenthood in Singapore”** refers to a legal and primary caretaker (most commonly a mother, or father) who is responsible for raising a child or children in Singapore. The death of a partner, a separation between two partners, or a divorce between two partners are potential reasons for the single parenthood.

1. How much do you support the issue on single parenthood in Singapore?
2. How certain are you in your opinion about single parenthood in Singapore?
3. How important is the issue of single parenthood in Singapore for you?
4. How would you estimate your knowledge about the issue on single parenthood in Singapore?
5. What do you think: To what extent is the issue on single parenthood a controversial issue in Singapore?
6. How often do you talk to other people about the issue on single parenthood in Singapore?

Lastly, please indicate your opinion for the following question about the topic **“Single Parenthood in Singapore”** by clicking on one of the two options that expresses your agreement (Neubaum, 2016):

7. If you had to decide whether to oppose or to support single parenthood in Singapore – what would you do?

I would support single parenthood in Singapore.

I would oppose single parenthood in Singapore.

## Topic Two

Please indicate your opinion about the topic **“Abolition of the Death Penalty in Singapore”** by clicking on the option for the number that expresses your level of agreement with each statement (Neubaum & Ho, 2016).

Read every statement carefully and decide to which extent you disagree or agree with it.

**Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    **Strongly Agree**

**“Abolition of the Death Penalty in Singapore”** refers to legally removing the government sanctioned practice whereby a person is put to death by the state as a punishment for a crime in Singapore.

1. How much do you support the issue on abolition of the death penalty in Singapore?
2. How certain are you in your opinion about abolition of the death penalty in Singapore?
3. How important is the issue of abolition of the death penalty in Singapore for you?
4. How would you estimate your knowledge about the issue on abolition of the death penalty in Singapore?
5. What do you think: To what extent is the issue on abolition of the death penalty a controversial issue in Singapore?
6. How often do you talk to other people about the issue on abolition of the death penalty in Singapore?

Lastly, please indicate your opinion for the following question about the topic **“Abolition of the Death Penalty in Singapore”** by clicking on one of the two options that expresses your agreement (Neubaum, 2016):

7. If you had to decide whether to oppose or to support abolishment of the death penalty in Singapore – what would you do?

I would support abolition of the death penalty in Singapore.

I would oppose abolition of the death penalty in Singapore.

### Topic Three

Please indicate your opinion about the topic “**Legalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Marriage in Singapore**” by clicking on the option for the number that expresses your level of agreement with each statement (Neubaum & Ho, 2016).

Read every statement carefully and decide to which extent you disagree or agree with it.

**Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    **Strongly Agree**

“**Legalization of LGBT Marriage in Singapore**” refers to legally allowing members of the same sex (two females or two males) to be formally recognized as the union of two partners in a personal relationship.

1. How much do you support the issue on legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore?
2. How certain are you in your opinion about legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore?
3. How important is the issue of legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore for you?
4. How would you estimate your knowledge about the issue on legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore?
5. What do you think: To what extent is the issue on legalization of LGBT marriage a controversial issue in Singapore?
6. How often do you talk to other people about the issue on legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore?

Lastly, please indicate your opinion for the following question about the topic “**Legalization of LGBT Marriage in Singapore**” by clicking on one of the two options that expresses your agreement (Neubaum, 2016):

7. If you had to decide whether to oppose or to support legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore – what would you do?

I would support legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore.

I would oppose legalization of LGBT marriage in Singapore.



## Appendix B Stimulus

Please consider the following hypothetical situation. As you read the description of this situation, imagine that you are in this situation as the events unfold. Imagine what you'd be seeing and feeling. Imagine the following situation (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016).

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### **Condition One: Offline Friends**

“You are attending one of your friend’s birthday party. At the birthday party, you meet all your friends. These friends are people who you may share similar interests with (e.g., enjoy the same music, “hang out” in specific venues), are in constant contact with, and see often. During the birthday party, you get involved in a discussion with them. At one point during the discussion, one of your friends brings up the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. The discussion deals with the question of whether one agrees or disagrees with this view. As you are listening to the discussion, it becomes apparent to you that your friends in this group disagree with your opinion on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. That is, the majority in this group have a different opinion than you do on this topic. Your friends firmly believe that their opinion is right, but you are certain in your opinion as well. As you were deciding on how to say your disagreement to your friends, you fear that it may become awkward and uncomfortable at the birthday party. However, you decide to express your disagreement to your friends anyway.”

Given that the above was to occur in the situation described, I am interested in knowing how you would express your disagreement to your friends at the birthday party. In the space below, please type out how you would say your disagreement to your friends at the birthday party.

### **Condition Two: Online Friends**

“You are browsing through your Facebook newsfeed. Here, one of your Facebook friend adds you to a channel containing your friends. These friends are people who you may share similar interests with (e.g., enjoy the same music, “hang out” in specific venues), are in constant contact with, and see often. On the Facebook channel, there is a posting on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. Within the comments related to this posting, the question comes up to whether one agrees or disagrees with this view. As you are reading the comments on this discussion, it becomes apparent to you that your friends in this Facebook channel disagree with your opinion on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. That is, the majority in this Facebook channel have a different opinion than you do on this topic. Your friends firmly believe that their opinion is right, but you are certain in your opinion as well. As you were deciding on how to post your disagreement to your friends, you fear that it may become awkward and uncomfortable on the Facebook channel. However, you decide to express your disagreement to your friends anyway.”

Given that the above was to occur in the situation described, I am interested in knowing how you would post your disagreement to your friends on the Facebook channel. In the space below, please type out what you would post to your friends on the Facebook channel.

*Reminder:* Only your Facebook friends who are in this Facebook channel will be able to see the disagreement you have posted online.

**Condition Three: Offline Strangers**

“You are on a five-hour journey by bus. At a rest area, the bus stops for a break and all passengers get out of the bus. These passengers are people who you have not met before and have not seen any posting of your information online (e.g., a posting of one’s Facebook status). You get involved in a discussion with them. At one point during the discussion, someone in the group brings up the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. The discussion deals with the question of whether one agrees or disagrees with this view. As you are listening to the discussion, it becomes apparent to you these strangers disagree with your opinion on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. That is, the majority in this group have a different opinion than you do on this topic. These strangers firmly believe that their opinion is right, but you are certain in your opinion as well. As you were deciding on how to say your disagreement to these strangers, you fear that it may become awkward and uncomfortable at the rest area. However, you decide to express your disagreement to these strangers anyway.”

Given that the above was to occur in the situation described, I am interested in knowing how you would express your disagreement to these strangers at the rest area. In the space below, please type out how you would say your disagreement to these strangers at the rest area.

**Condition Four: Online Strangers**

“You are browsing through your Facebook newsfeed. Here, you find several messages from other channels you are subscribed to. One of these channels containing strangers (people who you have not met before and have not seen any posting of your information online (e.g., a posting of one’s Facebook status) has posted a posting on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. The discussion deals with the question of whether one agrees or disagrees with this view. As you are reading the comments on this discussion, it becomes apparent to you that these strangers on the Facebook channel disagree with your opinion on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. That is, the majority in this Facebook group have a different opinion than you do on this topic. These strangers firmly believe that their opinion is right, but you are certain in your opinion as well. As you were deciding on how to post your disagreement to these strangers, you fear that it may become awkward and uncomfortable on the Facebook channel. However, you decide to express your disagreement to these strangers anyway.”

Given that the above was to occur in the situation described, I am interested to know how you would express your disagreement to these strangers on the Facebook channel. In the space below, please type out what you would post to these strangers on the Facebook channel.

*Reminder:* Only strangers in this Facebook channel will be able to see the disagreement you have posted online.

**Condition Five: Offline Mixed Audience**

“You are attending one of your friend’s birthday party. At the birthday party, you meet some of your friends and some strangers (*or* some strangers and your friends). During the birthday party, you get involved in a discussion with them. At one point during the

discussion, one of your friends brings up the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. The discussion deals with the question of whether one agrees or disagrees with this view. As you are listening to the discussion, it becomes apparent to you that your friends in this group disagree with your opinion on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. That is, the majority in this group have a different opinion than you do on this topic. Your friends firmly believe that their opinion is right, but you are certain in your opinion as well. As you were deciding on how to say your disagreement to your friends, you fear that it may become awkward and uncomfortable at the birthday party. However, you decide to express your disagreement to your friends anyway.”

Given that the above was to occur in the situation described, I am interested in knowing how you would express your disagreement to this group of people at the birthday party. In the space below, please type out how you would say your disagreement to your friends at the birthday party.

*Reminder:* Your social network will be able to hear the disagreement you have expressed.

**Social network** refers to your friends and strangers at the birthday party.

\*Friends refer to people who you may share similar interests with (e.g., enjoy the same music, “hang out” in specific venues), are in constant contact with, and see often.

\*Strangers refer to people who you have not met before and have not seen any posting of your information online (e.g., a posting of one’s Facebook status).

#### **Condition Six: Online Mixed Audience**

“You are browsing your Facebook newsfeed. Here, you find several messages from other channels you are subscribed to. One of these channels containing both your friends and strangers (*or* both strangers and your friends) has posted a posting on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. The discussion deals with the question of whether one agrees or disagrees with this view. As you are reading the comments on this discussion, it becomes apparent to you that this group of people on the Facebook channel disagree with your opinion on the abolition of the death penalty in Singapore. That is, the majority in this Facebook group have a different opinion than you do on this topic. This group of people firmly believe that their opinion is right, but you are certain in your opinion as well. As you were deciding on how to post your disagreement to this group of people, you fear that it may become awkward and uncomfortable on the Facebook channel. However, you decide to express your disagreement to them anyway.”

Given that the above was to occur in the situation described, I am interested to know how you would express your disagreement to this group of people on the Facebook channel. In the space below, please type out what you would post to this group of people on the Facebook channel.

*Reminder:* Your Facebook network will be able to see the disagreement you have posted online.

**Facebook network** refers to your friends and strangers in your Facebook account.

\*Friends refer to people who you may share similar interests with (e.g., enjoy the same music, “hang out” in specific venues), are in constant contact with, and see often.

\*Strangers refer to people who you have not met before and have not seen any posting of your information online (e.g., a posting of one's Facebook status).

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Appendix C  
**Measure: Fear of Social Isolation**

Please think about whether you agree or disagree with the statement with respect to how it applies to you and your life (Hayes, Matthes, & Eveland, 2011).

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

**Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    **Strongly Agree**

1. It is scary to think about not being invited to social gatherings by other people.
2. One of the worst things that could happen to me is to be excluded by other people.
3. It would bother me if other people did not want to be around me.
4. I dislike feeling left out of social functions, parties, or other social gatherings.
5. It is important to me to fit into the group I am with.

Appendix D  
**Instructions to Participants: Expectations of Sanctions**

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**Condition One: Offline Friends**

Please imagine you are about to contribute to a discussion amongst your friends at a birthday party. Would you expect negative consequences in case you have expressed a disagreement in this context? (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016)

**Condition Two: Online Friends**

Please imagine you are about to contribute to a discussion amongst your friends on Facebook. Would you expect negative consequences in case you have expressed a disagreement in this context? (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016)

**Condition Three: Offline Strangers**

Please imagine you are about to contribute to a discussion amongst a group of strangers at a rest area. Would you expect negative consequences in case you have expressed a disagreement in this context? (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016)

**Condition Four: Online Strangers**

Please imagine you are about to contribute to a discussion amongst a group of strangers on Facebook. Would you expect negative consequences in case you have expressed a disagreement in this context? (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016)

**Condition Five: Offline Mixed Audience**

Please imagine you are about to contribute to a discussion amongst some friends and some strangers at a birthday party. Would you expect negative consequences in case you have expressed a disagreement in this context? (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016)

**Condition Six: Online Mixed Audience**

Please imagine you are about to contribute to a discussion amongst a mixed group on Facebook. This mixed group is made up of your friends and strangers. Would you expect negative consequences in case you have expressed a disagreement in this context? (Neubaum & Krämer, 2016)

\*Friends refer to people who you may share similar interests with (e.g., enjoy the same music, “hang out” in specific venues etc.), are in constant contact with, and see often.

\*Strangers refer to people who you have not met before and have not seen any posting of your information online (e.g., a posting of one’s Facebook status).

---

### Measure: Expectations of Sanctions

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

**Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    **Strongly Agree**

If I expressed my disagreement in this discussion, I would fear of...

1. ...getting rejected by others.
2. ...getting excluded by others.
3. ...getting pilloried.
4. ...getting exposed to ridicule.
5. ...being ignored by others.
6. ...getting judged due to my personal opinion.
7. ...being avoided by others.
8. ...being left alone.
9. ...being insulted by others.
10. ...being laughed at.
11. ...being verbally attacked.
12. ...making a fool of myself.
13. ...not having enough arguments to present my point of view.
14. ...being bullied.
15. ...being in the center of this discussion in an unpleasant way.
16. ...becoming a victim of a mass outrage on the Internet.
17. ... others having better arguments to present their point of view.
18. ...becoming a victim of a group.
19. ...being put in a bad light.
20. ...getting attacked publicly.
21. ...others making false impressions about me as a person.
22. ...becoming the "loser" of the discussion.
23. ...building a bad reputation.
24. ...losing my face.
25. ...a mass of people talking insistently to me.
26. ...others showing no understanding for my opinion.
27. ...other people uniting against me.
28. ...being personally persecuted.
29. ...losing potentially important relationships.
30. ...experiencing negative consequences on a personal and/or professional level in the future.
31. ...my opinion being always associated with my identity.
32. ...getting a "label" due to my opinion.

Appendix E  
**Manipulation Check: Context Collapse**

**Condition Five: Offline Mixed Audience**

When expressing your opinion to the mixed group (friends and strangers) at the birthday party, who do you imagine you are addressing it to? (Neubaum, 2016)

I imagine that I am expressing my opinion to my friends.

I imagine that I am expressing my opinion to the group of strangers.

I imagine that I am expressing my opinion to both my friends and strangers.

**Condition Six: Online Mixed Audience**

When expressing your opinion to the mixed group (friends and strangers) on Facebook, who do you imagine you are addressing it to? (Neubaum, 2016)

I imagine that I am expressing my opinion to my friends.

I imagine that I am expressing my opinion to the group of strangers.

I imagine that I am expressing my opinion to both my friends and strangers.