AN EXPLORATION OF PUNCTUATION IN DIGITAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

In this thesis, some of the functions of punctuation marks in digital discourse are explored. A theoretical model of punctuation mark function was generated specifically for this project and is based in rhetorical theory. According to this model, punctuation marks can function in three ways: First, they can build or damage the credibility of the writer; second, they can clarify the meanings of texts in a number of ways; and third, they can convey emotional and relational meaning. Two empirical studies are presented in this thesis. The first uses data from text-messages and the second uses data from message boards. For the text-message study, a new method of data collection was employed: Respondents were given Discourse Completion Tasks that asked what text-message they would send in a series of four respective hypothetical contexts; they were then asked to type out and send their responses, in text-messages, to email addresses. For the second study, data was taken from Reddit message boards on the Internet. In the analysis sections of the thesis, punctuation marks are examined in the collected data according to the rhetorical model with special attention being paid to how punctuation marks can convey emotional and relational meaning; and they are also examined according to how they influence speech acts. It is concluded that different punctuation marks can function in a variety of ways, and that punctuation marks can exert a powerful influence on speech acts. It is furthermore concluded that the thesis's rhetorical model is effective both as a description of the ways punctuation marks can function and as a guide for analysis.

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Table of Contents

Abstract 1
Acknowledgements 2
Table of Contents 4

Chapter 1: Introduction 11
1.1 The Aim of this Thesis 11
1.2 Key Terms 11
1.3 Research Questions 13
1.4 Thesis Outline 14

Chapter 2: Literature Review 15
2.1 Introduction 15
2.2 The History of Punctuation 15
2.3 Punctuation Marks as Signs 17
2.4 Written Communication in Digital Discourse 22
2.5 Punctuation in Digital Discourse 27
2.5.1 Traditional Marks 28
2.5.2 Emoticons 30
2.5.3 Emoji 33
2.6 Considerations from Communication Theory 34
2.6.1 Schramm's Communication Model 34
2.6.2 Media Richness Theory 36
2.6.3 Nonverbal Communication Theory 37
2.6.4 Communication Accommodation Theory 39
2.6.5 The Hyperpersonal Model 41
2.6.6 Multimodal Communication 43
2.7 Considerations from Pragmatics Theory 45
2.7.1 Grice's Cooperative Principle 46
2.7.2 Speech Act Theory 48
2.7.3 Politeness Theory 50
2.8 Considerations from Rhetorical Theory 51
2.9 Text-Messaging Literature 53
2.9.1 Introduction to Text-Messaging 53
2.9.2 Social Studies 55
2.9.3 Linguistic Studies 64
2.9.4 Text-Message Corpora 70
2.9.5 Final Text-Messaging Remarks 72
2.10 Message Board Literature 73
2.10.1 Introduction to Message Boards 73
2.10.2 Message Board Literature 74
2.10.3 Reddit 76
2.10.4 Final Message Board Remarks 77
2.11 Conclusion 78

Chapter 3: A Rhetorical Model of Punctuation Mark Function 80
3.1 Introduction 80
3.2 The Field of Rhetoric 81
3.3 Article Review 84
3.3.1 Dawkins' Rhetorical Theory 84
3.3.2 Hassett's Response 87
3.3.3 Dawkins' Response to Hassett 88
3.3.4 Adaptation of these Ideas 89
3.4 Credibility 91
3.4.1 Credibility and Context 93
3.4.2 Credibility and Punctuation 94
3.5 Clarity 96
3.5.1 Structural Clarity 97
3.5.2 Conversational Implicature 98
3.5.3 Illocutionary Force Clarity 100
3.5.4 Co-presence of the Clarifying Functions 105
3.5.5 Clarifying Asterisks 107
3.6 Emotional and Relational Meaning 108
3.6.1 Meanings of Specific Marks 109
3.6.1.1 Emoticons 109
3.6.1.2 Emoji 111
3.6.1.3 Exclamation Points 114
3.6.1.4 Punctuation Strings 116
3.6.1.5 Full-Stops 117
3.6.1.6 Asterisks 119
3.6.2 Emotional Identification 120
3.6.3 Politeness 121
3.7 Other Points Related to this Model 122
3.8 Conclusion 125

Chapter 4: Methodologies 128
4.1 Introduction 128
4.2 The Text-Message Study 130
4.2.1 The Digital DCT 130
4.2.2 The DCTs and the Instrument 143
4.2.3 Analytical Framework 155
4.2.4 Future Uses of this Methodology 160
4.3 The Message Board Study 162
4.4 Conclusion 164

Chapter 5: Punctuation Practices in Text-Messages 166
5.1 Introduction 166
5.2 The Respondents 166
5.3 The Dataset 168
5.4 Content Analysis 171
5.4.1 Exclamation Points 173
5.4.2 Question Marks 175

5.4.3 Full-Stops 176
5.4.4 Emoticons 178
5.4.5 Strings 179
5.4.6 Commas 179
5.4.7 Other Marks 180
5.4.8 General Conclusions of the Content Analysis 181
5.5 Local Analyses of Each Mark 182
5.5.1 Exclamation Points 186
5.5.1.1 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 1 186
5.5.1.2 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 2 188
5.5.1.3 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 3 191
5.5.1.4 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 4 192
5.5.1.5 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points 194
5.5.2 Question Marks 195
5.5.2.1 Question Marks in the Responses to DCT 1 196
5.5.2.2 Question Marks in the Responses to DCT 2 196
5.5.2.3 Question Marks in the Responses to DCT 3 197
5.5.2.4 Question Marks in the Responses to DCT 4 197
5.5.2.5 The Question Mark as a Clarifier 198
5.5.2.6 The Question Mark's Influence on Writer Credibility 202
5.5.2.7 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks 203
5.5.3 Full-Stops 204
5.5.3.1 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 1 204
5.5.3.2 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 2 207
5.5.3.3 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 3 211
5.5.3.4 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 4 212
5.5.3.5 Conclusions Concerning Full-Stops 214
5.5.4 Emoticons 216
5.5.4.1 Emoticons in the Responses to DCT 1 216
5.5.4.2 Emoticons in the Responses to DCT 2 219
5.5.4.3 Emoticons in the Responses to DCT 3 222
5.5.4.4 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons 222
5.5.5 Emoji 223
5.5.5.1 The Single Emoji 223
5.5.5.2 The Emoji String 225
5.5.5.3 Conclusions Concerning Emoji 226
5.5.6 Punctuation Strings 227
5.5.6.1 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 1 227
5.5.6.2 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 2 229
5.5.6.3 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 3 231
5.5.6.4 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 4 232
5.5.6.5 Conclusions Concerning Punctuation Strings 233
5.5.7 Ellipses 234
5.5.8 Commas 235
5.5.9 Quotations Marks 236
5.5.10 Asterisks 236
5.5.11 Slashes 237

5.5.12 XOs 237
5.6 Other Linguistic Items of Note in the Data 238
5.7 Conclusion 239
5.7.1 General Emotional and Relational Functions of the Analysed Marks 239
5.7.2 Punctuation's Influence on Speech Acts 241
5.7.3 Punctuation in Task-Based Contexts 243
5.7.4 Further Contributions 243

Chapter 6: Punctuation Practices on Message Boards 245
6.1 Introduction 245
6.2 The Dataset 245
6.3 Analysis of Sample 1 247
6.3.1 Exclamation Points 247
6.3.1.1 Exclamation Points with Assertives 248
6.3.1.2 Exclamation Points with Expressives 251
6.3.1.3 Exclamation Points with Directives 252
6.3.1.4 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points in Sample 1 253
6.3.2 Question Marks 254
6.3.2.1 Question Marks with Explicit Questions 255
6.3.2.2 Question Marks with Implicit Questions 255
6.3.2.3 Question Marks that Introduce an Interrogative or Uncertain Element 256
6.3.2.4 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks in Sample 1 258
6.3.3 Emoticons 258
6.3.3.1 Smileys 258
6.3.3.2 A Winkey 261
6.3.3.3 Sad Faces 261
6.3.3.4 A Crooked-Mouth Emoticon 262
6.3.3.5 An Asian Emoticon 263
6.3.3.6 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons in Sample 1 263
6.3.4 Punctuation Strings 264
6.3.4.1 Exclamation Point Strings 264
6.3.4.2 Question Mark Strings 264
6.3.4.3 Conclusions Concerning Punctuation Strings in Sample 1 265
6.3.5 Ellipses 265
6.3.5.1 Ellipses that Signify Things Left to the Mind of the Reader 265
6.3.5.2 Ellipses that Create Disjunction 266
6.3.5.3 Ellipses that Signify Thoughtful Pauses 267
6.3.5.4 An Ellipsis that Prompts a Reply 268
6.3.5.5 Conclusions Concerning Ellipses in Sample 1 269
6.3.6 Asterisks 269
6.3.7 XOs 269
6.3.8 Slashes 269
6.3.8.1 Slashes that Serve as Conjunctions 269
6.3.8.2 Slashes that Serve in a Conventional Capacity 270
6.3.8.3 A Slash Used in a Not-Equal Symbol 270
6.3.8.4 Slashes that Make Reference to Subreddits 270

6.3.8.5 Conclusions Concerning Slashes in Sample 1 270
6.4 Analysis of Sample 2 271
6.4.1 Exclamation Points 271
6.4.1.1 Exclamation Points with Assertives 271
6.4.1.2 Exclamation Points with Expressives 272
6.4.1.3 Exclamation Points with Directives 274
6.4.1.4 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points in Sample 2 274
6.4.2 Question Marks 275
6.4.2.1 Question Marks with Explicit Questions 275
6.4.2.2 Question Marks with Implicit Questions 275
6.4.2.3 Question Marks that Introduce an Interrogative Element 275
6.4.2.4 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks in Sample 2 276
6.4.3 Emoticons 276
6.4.3.1 A Smiley 276
6.4.3.2 A Crooked-Mouth Emoticon 276
6.4.3.3 Winkeys 277
6.4.3.4 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons in Sample 2 278
6.4.4 Punctuation Strings 278
6.4.4.1 Two Exclamation Points with an Expressive 278
6.4.4.2 Two Exclamation Points with an Assertive 278
6.4.4.3 Conclusions Concerning Strings in Sample 2 279
6.4.5 Ellipses 279
6.4.5.1 Ellipses that Signify Pauses in Spoken Dialogue 279
6.4.5.2 Ellipses that Signify a Continuation 280
6.4.5.3 Ellipses that Create Disjunction 281
6.4.5.4 Ellipses that Signify Things Left to the Mind of the Reader 281
6.4.5.5 An Ellipsis that Calls the Reader's Attention to Thread Content 282
6.4.5.6 Ellipses that Signify Future Actions 282
6.4.5.7 An Ellipsis with a Question Mark 283
6.4.5.8 Conclusions Concerning Ellipses in Sample 2 283
6.4.6 Asterisks 283
6.4.7 XOs 283
6.4.8 Slashes 284
6.4.8.1 Slashes that Serve as Conjunctions 284
6.4.8.2 Slashes that Serve in a Conventional Capacity 284
6.4.8.3 A Slash that Indicates Nonverbal Behavior 285
6.4.8.4 Slashes that Make Reference to a Subreddit 285
6.4.8.5 Conclusions Concerning Slashes in Sample 2 286
6.5 Analysis of Sample 3 286
6.5.1 Exclamation Points 286
6.5.1.1 Exclamation Points with Assertives 286
6.5.1.2 Exclamation Points with Expressives 287
6.5.1.3 Exclamation Points with Directives 287
6.5.1.4 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points in Sample 3 288
6.5.2 Question Marks 289
6.5.2.1 Question Marks with Explicit Questions 289

6.5.2.2 Question Marks with Implicit Questions 289
6.5.2.3 Question Marks that Introduce an Interrogative or Uncertain Element 290
6.5.2.4 A Stand-Alone Question Mark 290
6.5.2.5 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks in Sample 3 291
6.5.3 Emoticons 291
6.5.3.1 Crooked-Mouth and Blank Face Emoticons 292
6.5.3.2 Sad Faces 293
6.5.3.3 Squiggly-Mouth Emoticons 294
6.5.3.4 A Winkey and a Tongue-Sticking-Out Emoticon 295
6.5.3.5 Other Tongue-Sticking-Out Emoticons 295
6.5.3.6 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons in Sample 3 296
6.5.4 Punctuation Strings 296
6.5.4.1 Exclamation Point Strings 296
6.5.4.2 A Question Mark String 297
6.5.5 Ellipses 297
6.5.5.1 Ellipses that Signify Things Left to the Mind of the Reader 298
6.5.5.2 Ellipses that Signify Thoughtful Pauses 298
6.5.5.3 Ellipses that Create Disjunction 298
6.5.5.4 Ellipses with Question Marks 299
6.5.5.5 An Ellipsis that Signifies a Pause in Spoken Dialogue 299
6.5.5.6 Conclusions Concerning Ellipses in Sample 3 299
6.5.6 Asterisks 299
6.5.7 XOs 300
6.5.8 Slashes 300
6.5.8.1 Slashes that Serve as Conjunctions 300
6.5.8.2 A Slash that Shows Two Words Being Used at Once 300
6.5.8.3 A Slash that Makes Reference to a Subreddit 300
6.5.8.4 Slashes that Indicate Explanatory Texts 300
6.5.8.5 Conclusions Concerning Slashes in Sample 3 301
6.6 Conclusion 301

Chapter 7: Conclusion 304
7.1 Summary of Results 304
7.1.1 Exclamation Points 304
7.1.2 Question Marks 307
7.1.3 Emoticons 307
7.1.4 Strings 308
7.1.5 Ellipses 309
7.1.6 Asterisks 310
7.1.7 XOs 311
7.1.8 Slashes 311
7.1.9 Final Remarks Concerning the Studies' Results 312
7.2 Limitations 313
7.3 Contributions 314
7.4 Applications 315
7.5 Paths for Future Research 317

7.6 Closing Remarks 318

References 319

Appendix 1: The Research Instrument for the Text-Message Study 342
Appendix 2: University of Nottingham Ethics Forms 344
Appendix 3: Missouri State University Ethics Forms 360
Appendix 4: Text-Message Data Organized by DCT 364
Appendix 5: Text-Message Data Organized by Respondent 371
Appendix 6: URLs of Threads Used in Message Board Study 381

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Aim of this Thesis

Punctuation marks can be vital components of communication in digital media. This thesis presents two studies in which punctuation practices in digital discourse are analysed. The first study uses data from text-messages, and the second uses data from Reddit message boards. The ultimate aim of the thesis is to show some of the new ways, along with some of the traditional ways, that punctuation marks function to make meaning in digital texts; in particular, special attention will be paid to the ways in which punctuation marks convey emotional and relational meanings in digital texts.

1.2 Key Terms

Because the emotional and relational meanings associated with certain punctuation marks are such an important part of this thesis, it is vital that the terms "emotional meanings" and "relational meanings" be understood. Most people intuitively grasp the concept of emotion, but formal definitions of the term "emotion" can be very complex – often, such definitions conflict in some way (Price, 2010). For the purpose of this thesis, a simple definition will suffice: Emotion is the feeling (whether purely psychological or a mix of psychological and physiological) that results from a given situation; for a more full discussion of the possible definitions of the term "emotion", see Price (2010). Emotional meanings are representations of the emotions of a communicator that are shared with an interlocutor or interlocutors. Relational meanings are somewhat easier to describe; these are the representations of a communicator's thoughts, feelings,

and/or attitudes concerning the relationship between him or her and his or her interlocutor or interlocutors. The adjective "socioemotional" is also used in this thesis as a way to describe communication that is of an emotional and relational nature.

The academic community has coined a number of terms to refer to the language of digital media. Crystal (2001) used the word "Netspeak" to reference the style of writing unique to the Internet. Shortis (2007) cleverly created the word "Txt" as a signifier of text used in digital media; this term, incidentally, was adopted by Tagg (2009). The more popular term "computer-mediated communication" (CMC) has been used widely in academia to reference the various forms of communication within the digital sphere; one of the greatest testaments to CMC's popularity as a term is the fact that one of the major journals related to language in new media is titled *The Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Yet while users of this term do include mobile technologies under the umbrella of CMC, the word "computer" seems to exclude mobile phones. In response to this seeming exclusion, some scholars have adopted the term "electronically-mediated communication" (EMC) (Baron, 2008). While CMC and EMC are popular and effective, in this paper, the term "digital discourse" will be used for more broad references to communication mediated by digital technologies. This term served as the title of a volume concerning communication in new media edited by Thurlow and Mroczek (2011), and it is preferred here for a number of reasons. The word "digital" is widely associated with new media technologies: Phrases such as "digital revolution," "digital

technologies," and so on, are common. The word "discourse" is specific enough to denote human interaction, while broad enough to encompass many different forms of communicative activity. And finally, the term "digital discourse" need not rely on an initialism.

1.3 Research Questions

The research presented in this thesis has been guided by four primary research questions. The first question is, "In what ways can punctuation provide emotional and relational meaning in digital discourse?" Although this first question is the chief concern of the thesis, the more general ways in which punctuation marks are used in novel ways in digital discourse are also of interest; accordingly, the second research question is, "In what novel ways do punctuation marks function in digital discourse?" The word "novel" is used intentionally in this question, but that does not preclude the scrutiny in these two studies of the ways that punctuation marks function in their more traditional ways. Because it seems clear that, in digital discourse, punctuation marks are a way of not only sharing meaning, but also of contributing to the performance of communicative social actions, the third question is, "How do punctuation marks influence speech acts?" The fourth question, which is concerned with how punctuation practices may be altered for the situation at hand, is this: "In what ways do people vary their punctuation between more social and more task-based digital messages?" In answering these questions, it is hoped that a faithful and vivid picture of the nature of punctuation in digital discourse will be presented.

1.4 Thesis Outline

After this introductory chapter, there is a chapter devoted to a review of literature. This second chapter reports findings and thoughts from a number of different disciplines, from history to semiotics to linguistics to media studies and beyond. There are also within the second chapter reviews of literature related to text-messages and message boards, since these are the two media from which the data for the respective studies were drawn. In the third chapter, a rhetorical model describing how punctuation marks function is delineated and discussed. This theoretical framework was developed for this thesis. It serves as a way to understand the different ways that punctuation marks can help to make digital discourse more effective. The analytical framework of the two studies is informed by this rhetorical view of punctuation. The fourth chapter of the thesis is devoted to explaining the methodologies of the two studies. The method for the text-message study is unique to this thesis, so it is given special precedence. The more simple method of the message board study is described briefly at the end of the chapter. The fifth chapter presents the findings of the text-message study, and the sixth chapter presents the findings of the message board study. The seventh and final chapter offers a summary of the findings of the two studies, as well as discussions concerning the thesis's limitations, contributions, and applications; this final chapter also suggests some paths for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Punctuation is a topic that is related to many disparate fields of knowledge, including linguistics, history, semiotics, and communication and media studies. An inquiry into the meanings of punctuation marks must draw from these and other disciplines; therefore, in the following literature review, a wide variety of scholarly (and popular) sources are explored and applied to the study of punctuation in digital texts. In section 2.2, the historical evolution of punctuation is briefly discussed. In section 2.3, semiotic and linguistic literature is cited to demonstrate how punctuation marks function as signifying agents in written texts. In section 2.4, there is a review of sources that illuminate some of the orthographic characteristics of writing in the digital realm. In section 2.5, there are discussions of the new ways punctuation is used in the composition of digital texts. In sections 2.6, 2.7, and 2.8 there are considerations from the fields of communication theory, pragmatics theory, and rhetorical theory, respectively. In section 2.9, text-messaging literature is reviewed. In section 2.10 there is a review of literature related to message boards. And, in Section 2.11, concluding remarks are offered.

2.2 The History of Punctuation

According to Parkes (1993), punctuation marks first appeared in antiquity, when Western culture was still primarily oral and written texts were intended to be read aloud. Punctuation then served to inform readers of when to pause and breathe in their recitations. Over the centuries, the written word began to emerge as a

medium distinct from the spoken word, and silent reading became more common. As the written word evolved, new marks with varying meanings emerged, and punctuation developed a grammatical function in addition to its previous rhetorical function. Widespread standardisation of punctuation came along after the advent of the printing press.

In current usage, punctuation continues to serve both rhetorical and grammatical functions. Punctuation operates grammatically by revealing syntactical relationships: For instance, the apostrophe can indicate the possessive case; and commas, brackets, and dashes can set apart parenthetical clauses or phrases. On the other hand, punctuation operates rhetorically, "rather in the manner of musical notation" (Truss, 2003, p. 70), by conveying the cadences, emphases, and other nonverbal cues of a text, whether they be actually read aloud or only "voiced" within the mind; in this vein, Chafe (1988) used the apt term "covert prosody" to refer to what punctuation communicates to the psyches of silent readers. While there are those who view one or the other of these functions of punctuation as primary (Baron, 2000), it is clear that they are not mutually exclusive and that they are both legitimate. This duality of usage is, in fact, quite important from a linguistic perspective, in that it demonstrates that punctuation can convey information about both the structure and manner of language.

There is a present-day trend towards a more oral and informal style of writing (Baron, 2000; Baron, 2008; Danet, 2002), and punctuation is often being used for its rhetorical function (Hitchings, 2011). Furthermore, in digital media, people are using punctuation in new ways (Crystal, 2001; Crystal, 2008; Thurlow

& Brown, 2003). There are many innovative ways that writers are punctuating texts: Using traditional punctuation in various novel ways; using punctuation marks to create pictographs such as emoticons; and using premade, stylised pictographic images known as emoji. Each of these new punctuation techniques can serve in some manner to contribute to the meanings of the written text – and in some interesting cases pictographs or other marks are used without any accompanying text at all. This punctuation innovation is a promising area of research: From it, we can learn some of the ways human communication is changing in light of the unprecedented communicative opportunities of digital media.

2.3 Punctuation Marks as Signs

Cronkite (1986) offered a simple and effective definition of the term "sign": "A sign is that which, in some sense, 'stands for' something else" (p. 232). Punctuation marks are therefore signs, in that they are marks which stand for other things and which signify linguistic information to readers. Philosophers, linguists, and communicologists have pondered and explored the nature of signification for millennia. It should be noted that the authors cited within this section use a daunting mix of terminology, some of it conflicting. In particular, the reader will perhaps notice some convolution of the terms "sign" and "symbol". Both words are consistently used to reference things which stand for other things, but some scholars, as shall be more fully elucidated below, classify a symbol as a subspecies of the more general sign. Ultimately, what is important here is that each of the cited authors is concerned with the nature of signification,

which is to say with the ways in which humans use things to stand for other things.

It is appropriate to begin this discussion with the work of Aristotle, the ancient Greek polymath whose work continues to have such a considerable influence over much of Western learning. In his *On Interpretation*, he asserted, "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words" (online, Section 1, Part 1, para. 2). This quotation is important primarily because it presents the foundational principle that we can utilise linguistic entities to stand for our ideas – and this is of course the very basis and essence of communication.

In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Ferdinand Saussure (1916/1959) proposed an entire field devoted to the study of signs and called it "Semiology". He conceived of the sign as a bipartite entity within the mind, the two components of which are the "signified" and the "signifier". Saussure (1916/1959) furthermore posited the arbitrary connection between the signifier and the signified, a point which will be further discussed below. Charles Peirce (1940/1985), a contemporary of Saussure's – and, like Saussure, a patriarch of the field of semiotics – viewed sign usage in terms of three entities: The sign itself, what he termed the "representamen"; the interpretation of the representamen, termed the "interpretant"; and the "object" for which the representamen stands. Similarly, Ogden and Richards (1923), in their study on meaning, articulated the function of a "symbol" in three parts. They illustrated their conception in a popular and oft-cited diagram (Figure 1).

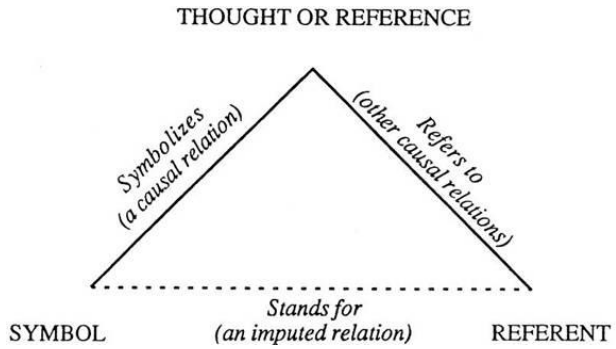


Figure 1

In Figure 1, the symbol is connected directly to its corresponding thought, and the thought is tied directly with the referent (the thing for which the symbol stands). The symbol and referent, conversely, are connected indirectly, by an arbitrary assignation – hence the dashed line. One of the main points made by the diagram is the fact that words are not necessarily connected directly with the things for which they stand. For instance, the fluctuations in the air which produce the sound associated with the word "book" have no direct connection with the item formed of cardboard, wood pulp, and ink that is checked out of a library. This point is further illustrated by the fact that words can change meaning over time, and can carry different meanings in different languages, or different meanings for different people. (There are, it should be noted, exceptions to this rule, as in the case of onomatopoeia; in such exceptional cases, the bottom of the triangle would be solidified.)

Peirce (1940/1985) distinguished three different types of signs: "icons", which look like what they signify (e.g., a sketch of a tree, or, for our purposes, an emoji); "indices", which are related physically in some way to what they signify (e.g., smoke as a signification of fire); and "symbols", which are imbued with

meaning through use (e.g., the word “book”, or a full-stop). This trichotomy makes the vital distinction between those signs which are arbitrary (symbols) and those which are related in some manner to what they signify (icons and indices).

There are several relevant principles that can be drawn from the above literature. Signs are things which represent other things to the mind. They can be arbitrary and socially constructed, as in the case of the word “book”, or they can be connected in some way with what they signify, as is the case of the onomatopoeic word “buzz” or the iconic representation of smiley face.

While the above-cited authors are concerned primarily or wholly with the usage of words, their work is relevant to the study of punctuation. Traditional punctuation marks such as the comma and full-stop are arbitrary signs, while the emoticons and other pictographs used to punctuate digital texts are non-arbitrary, iconic signs. Emoticons and emoji can function, furthermore, as a form of second-level sign, in that many of them represent certain bodily expressions, which are themselves signifiers of internal affective states; in this way, a smiley emoticon :) is an icon of a smile, which is itself a sign (an index) of a positive affective state. Although punctuation marks are not words, they do carry a linguistic import: They tell the reader something about what is happening within the text. (It is even conceivable that the marks could be replaced with certain words, as was the case historically when telegrams used the term “STOP” in place of the full-stop.) Further, because punctuation marks are signs, they are open to semiotic analysis.

Traditional punctuation marks exhibit a great flexibility in meaning. As Parkes (1993) pointed out, “apart from registering a degree of disjunction, few

punctuation symbols have a precise value or exclusive specifying function" (p. 114). Hence, the individual marks of punctuation can be used for varying purposes. Tartakovsky (2009) asserted that, while punctuation marks are somewhat standardised, they are "semantically fuzzy" and "significantly more vague than other signifiers" (p. 215). He went on to show that poet e.e. cummings used brackets for no fewer than seven semiotic functions, including iconicity and heteroglossia. Another interesting example of punctuation marks' semiotic flexibility can be taken from the work of Poe (1844/2008). In his short story "The Purloined Letter" is the following passage:

> "Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, "I really—think, G—, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?"
>
> "How?—in what way?'
>
> "Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh?— puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?" (online, paras. 78-80)

Here, in the first paragraph, we see that Poe (1844/2008) used dashes rhetorically to show irregular pauses within the dialogue of the character named Dupin. Reading these dashes in context, it becomes evident that the dashes not only represent pauses, but pauses during which Dupin is drawing on his pipe. The dash thus becomes an indicator of a specific action on the part of a character. In a similar vein, Sullivan (2007) argued that Shakespeare's punctuation was a means of stage direction, in that the different marks indicated different lengths of pause

during which actors could move about the stage. These examples demonstrate that punctuation marks, when skillfully handled, can be used to convey different kinds of meanings – they "are amenable to appropriation, to exploitation, and to projection" (Tartakovsky, 2009, p. 216). Likewise, the newer pictographic forms of punctuation can also be used to convey different ideas, depending on context (see Dresner & Herring, 2010); for example, a smiley :) can convey numerous meanings, from delight to sarcasm to teasing and beyond.

The peculiar signifying power of punctuation can be further illustrated with a humorous literary legend: Depending on the version you read, either Oscar Wilde or Victor Hugo had a newly-released book and was curious about initial sales; the author sent a telegram to his publisher reading simply "?", and received the reply, "!" (Roberts, 2006). Whether or not this anecdote is apocryphal, its import is well-taken: Much can be conveyed with only punctuation marks.

It may be concluded, then, that the marks of punctuation are unique signs. While they are not words, they are linguistic in nature. They can be arbitrary or non-arbitrary, and in either case they are flexible with their meanings. As will be shown below, this semantic elasticity allows for interesting punctuation usage within the world of digital media.

2.4 Written Communication in Digital Discourse

Mobile communication technology and the Internet have revolutionised the use of the written word. There are currently many popular digital media by which people can write and transmit messages. Basic mobile phones allow for users to send text-messages via Short Message Service (SMS), and computers and smart

phones allow for textual communication in many different channels: Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and blogs; Instant Messaging (IM) and other chat platforms; website message boards and comments sections; and email. All of these media, and some others, compose what is being referred to in this thesis as "digital discourse".

A new style of language has developed within the realm of digital discourse, and while naturally this style is not always used, it is pervasive. The new style has characteristics of written and spoken language, yet it is distinct from both and can be considered its own unique language variety (Crystal, 2001; Danet, 2002; Tagg, 2009). On the one hand, this style is orthographic, and it often follows the general structural patterns of writing. On the other hand, the style is often informal, colloquial, and orthographically inventive. Shortis (2007), following a model of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) by Werry (1996), enumerated three categories of nonstandard orthography within text-messaging. These categories can be easily broadened to encompass other forms of digital discourse:

> 1. features for economy and text entry reduction [e.g., initialisms, homophones, and reductionist respellings];
> 2. features for giving the respelling a simulation of spoken language [e.g., cos for 'cause, use of all capitals for emphasis, and repetition of letters as in "heeeey"];
> 3. features which involve a shift to multimodal visual and graphical effects and iconicity in which the linguistic sign is pushed into the periphery of meaning making [e.g. pictographs such as emoticons and emoji] (p. 25).

Similarly, Thurlow and Brown (2003) delineated three maxims which seem to underlie SMS use, and which, again, can in certain circumstances be applied to other forms of digital discourse:

> (1) brevity and speed [messages are short and created quickly];
>
> (2) paralinguistic restitution [orthographic devices such as capitalization and punctuation are used to convey information about how the written words might be said aloud]; and,
>
> (3) phonological approximation [words are written as they would sound in spoken discourse] (online, Section 4.2.1, para. 1).

These characteristics of digital discourse mean that it can convey a type of "silent orality" (Soffer, 2010), in which the patterns of spoken language are conveyed through a medium intended to be read silently. And yet the new uses of orthography seem to extend beyond merely the mimicry of oral communication: The changes can add visual emphasis and interest as well. By manipulating orthography and including pictographs, digital interlocutors can increase the amount of meaning in their texts; they can, in other words, give texts an added semiotic richness. Another novel aspect of digital discourse is the varied temporality of interactions: Communicative exchanges can happen in real-time (synchronously) or can happen with significant lags between messages (asynchronously). In either case, digital media often allow for people to choose whom they communicate with and when they want to communicate (Baron, 2008). Moreover, digital conversations can happen while interlocutors are engaged in other activities (Baron, 2010). Digital media also allow for people to

have multiple conversations simultaneously (for instance, on the phone, on IM, and through email), a behavior called multicommunication (Reinsch, Turner, & Tinsley, 2008). These various facets of digital discourse demonstrate some of its novelty and uniqueness.

Digital discourse's special features have developed (and are developing) at least partly because of the social nature of communication on the Internet and mobile devices. Rheingold (1993) showed that communication in the digital sphere leads to the creation of social communities; he furthermore demonstrated that although these are virtual communities, they are in fact very real and can be powerful in the lives of the people who are members of them. Of course, since Rheingold (1993) was writing, community-building on the Internet has only increased. Myers (2010) put these communal aspects of interaction on the Internet in a historical context, writing, "In oral cultures, the individual is the locus of truth and meaning; in print cultures, truth comes to reside not in individuals, but on the page. But in...Web 2.0, the locus of truth is...in the community" (p. 50). The new communicative networks afforded by digital media have proved important in many different areas of human society: Journalism is no longer about the masses receiving news, but about how the masses engage with news – it is now about conversation within the community of readers and viewers (Gillmor, 2004); businesses can now use social media as a means of engaging with customers and measuring reactions to the products and/or services they offer, as Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, and Chowdury (2009) demonstrated in a study of Twitter; and second-language learners can increase L2 communicative competence by

using Twitter to socialise with native and fluent speakers of the L2 (Borau, Ullrich, Feng, & Shen, 2009), a practice which could easily be extended to other social media platforms and web-based communication tools. Moreover, like the Internet, SMS is largely used as a social medium. Text-messaging on mobile phones became popular in the late 1990s, and has from its earliest days been associated with socialising. Grinter and Eldridge (2003) delineated three of SMS's primary functions: Chatting, coordinating communications, and planning activities (p. 444). Some texters even indicate that SMS is their preferred means of communication (Faulkner & Culwin, 2005). Because so many of the functions of digital media are social, there is a certain communicative freedom within them that probably would not be felt as much within more formal, professional, or task-based spheres. Further, as Baron (2008) pointed out,

> For better or worse, writing used to be different. With writing, you were supposed to be on best behavior, because someone could re-read what you had inscribed. Grammatical or orthographic errors might come back to haunt you. Electronically-mediated communication is written, though we tend to think of it as more like transient speech. Most messages we read and delete; like speech, they're gone. (p. 166)

Thus technologies that allow for digital discourse, and the common social usages of these technologies, contribute not only towards a sense of linguistic liberty, but also potentially towards a sense that mistakes or nonstandard usages do not really matter as much – Baron (2008) termed this attitude "linguistic whateverism."

The media of digital discourse provide opportunities for people to engage in many different kinds of communicative activity, and many people use them for informal recreation. The world of digital media is a figurative place that people can go to have fun. Scholars recognise the frequently ludic nature of digital discourse (Crystal, 2001; Crystal, 2008; Myers, 2010; Thurlow & Brown, 2003), and even a very cursory reading of digital discourse in different media will demonstrate that what people write on their phones and the Internet is often intended as humorous and playful. Further, the informal and recreational arena of digital discourse allows not only for the language to be used for fun and social purposes, but for the language itself to become a means of fun and sociability through novel usages of orthography. Because these usages can become standardised in small or large virtual communities, they can be used as a method of showing group membership (Crystal, 2008). They can also be a way of creating a virtual identity (Soffer, 2010).

2.5 Punctuation in Digital Discourse

Punctuation is utilised in many different ways within digital discourse. It is used in both a standard and nonstandard manner. In some cases, punctuation in digital discourse is minimalistic – or even omitted completely (Crystal, 2001). The use of punctuation ultimately depends on the individual; some will more strictly adhere to standard punctuation practices, while others will fully embrace the new forms and uses. As Baron and Ling (2011) asserted, any number of factors, from age to culture to digital medium to gender, can influence punctuation patterns. What is

clear is that new uses of punctuation are emerging in the world of digital discourse.

2.5.1 Traditional Marks

In many cases in digital discourse, traditional punctuation marks are put to new purposes. The ellipsis was formerly used as a sign of omitted words, a pause in verbal dialogue, or more to come at the end of a text; in the context of digital discourse, it has also become a popular conjoining marker (Raclaw, 2006). In the context of text-messaging in particular, ellipses can be used to prompt an interlocutor to reply if he or she is taking too long to respond (Curzan, 2013). In a study of SMS and IM, Baron (2008) found that ellipses and dashes were used in place of periods, question marks, and commas, and were used to indicate other forms of pause as well. The exclamation point was formerly used to express excitement; it can now also be used to convey friendliness or to accentuate factual statements (Waseleski, 2006). The asterisk was formerly used as a means to indicate a reference or omission; it is now often added to both sides of a word or phrase to add emphasis (Crystal, 2001; Danet, 2002) or to enclose a description of physical actions related to a written text (Crystal, 2001); brackets can also be used for this latter function (Shortis, 2007). Further, in digital discourse, traditional punctuation marks are often written in strings of repeats, such as !!!! or ???? (Crystal, 2001; Thurlow & Brown, 2003). Kalman and Gergle (2009), in a study of punctuation and letter repeats in the Enron corpus, found that repeats of full-stops, exclamation points, and question marks were all common. While the authors concluded that strings of articulable letters are potentially a way for

writers to demonstrate vocal cues, they went on to make the important point that "the existence of a significant minority of un-articulable repeats, as well as of repeated punctuation marks, remind us that repeats can also be used as purely visual emphasis tools, not necessary linked to an audible counterpart" (Kalman & Gergle, 2009, p. 21).

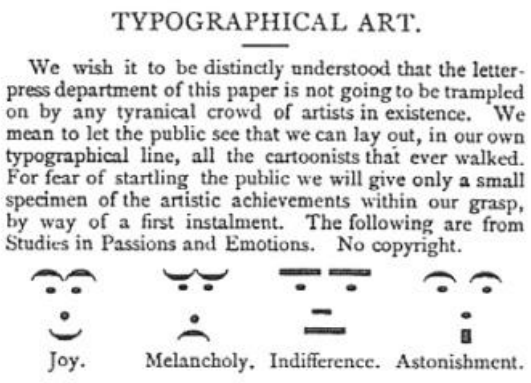
Baron (2008) found that message-final punctuation was lacking in a preponderance of messages in her samples of SMS and IM. This paucity of message-final punctuation is of particular interest – it seems that full-stops at the ends of sentences in digital discourse can be construed as conveying terseness or sarcasm; they can, in other words, be perceived as an unduly harsh means of terminating a correspondence. Baron and Ling (2011), in an analysis of focus group data collected by the Pew Internet and American Life Project and the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Michigan, found that adolescent girls perceive the terminal full-stop as potentially negative; they quoted one female focus group respondent as saying: "[We get into an argument] if [interlocutors] say something and put a period at the end. It'll be like really abrupt. And you'll be like oh that sounded like they are mad" (p. 53). Similarly, in an online opinion piece for the *New York Times*, Yagoda (2012) mentioned that his daughter has told him to avoid the full-stop (or "period" in the American vernacular) because it can come across as sarcastic. She says that no final punctuation is needed in simple messages where tone is a non-issue. This young lady's opinion seems to reflect the prevailing wisdom. In addition to the omission of the full-stop, emoticons or exclamation points at the end of messages can also

help to avoid any potential negative connotations, and can in fact be viewed as marks of courtesy (Baron & Ling, 2011). It is not clear if the rise of the exclamation point and emoticon are a partial result of the full-stop stigma, or if they helped to create it.

2.5.2 Emoticons

In addition to traditional punctuation marks, texts in digital discourse are often punctuated with emoticons, which are pictographs composed of sequences of punctuation marks; the smiley :) is an example. Truss (2003) called the emoticon "the greatest (or most desperate, depending on how you look at it) advance in punctuation since the question mark in the reign of Charlemagne" (p. 192). Her jocular tone notwithstanding, the point is valid. Emoticons are an important linguistic development. Within the context of the English language, they are a pictographic element in an alphabetic system of writing, and they help to create meaning in many interesting ways.

The emoticon has a number of remarkable antecedents. In an 1881 edition of *Puck* magazine, a humorous insert (Figure 2) was published which claimed that the magazine's letter-press department could create its own form of art (Zimmer, 2012). It is fascinating to note that this art takes the form of human faces expressing emotion.



TYPOGRAPHICAL ART.

We wish it to be distinctly understood that the letter-press department of this paper is not going to be trampled on by any tyranical crowd of artists in existence. We mean to let the public see that we can lay out, in our own typographical line, all the cartoonists that ever walked. For fear of startling the public we will give only a small specimen of the artistic achievements within our grasp, by way of a first instalment. The following are from Studies in Passions and Emotions. No copyright.

Joy. Melancholy. Indifference. Astonishment.

Figure 2

Zimmer (2012) also presented some other interesting precursors to the emoticon: Ambrose Bierce, in a facetious newspaper column written in 1887, proposed a smile-shaped mark to be used as a signifier of humor or irony; and Vladimir Nabokov suggested a similar mark in an interview with the *New York Times* in 1969. The contemporary emoticon was invented in 1982 by Scott Fahlman, a faculty member of Carnegie Mellon University. Dr. Fahlman posted the following message to a digital bulletin board associated with the university:

> 19-Sep-82 11:44 Scott E Fahlman :-)
>
> From: Scott E Fahlman
>
> I propose that the following character sequence for joke markers:
>
> **:-)**
>
> Read it sideways. Actually, it is probably more economical to mark things that are NOT jokes, given current trends. For this, use:
>
> **:-(** (Long, 2008, online, para. 1)

Since that post, many new and varied emoticons have been developed.

Far from being mere ornamental devices, emoticons "do have an impact on message interpretation" (Derks, Bos, & von Grumbkow 2008a, p. 387). They

are more often used in social than task-based contexts (Derks, Bos, & von Grumbkow, 2007), and they are frequently used "for the expression of emotion, for strengthening the verbal part of a message, and for expressing humor" (Derks, Bos & von Grumbkow, 2008b, p. 101). In particular, emoticons depicting smiling and laughter are common, and most frequently occur in places which punctuate, rather than interrupt, semantic units, as in the case of real laughter (Provine, Spencer, & Mandell, 2007). Laughter communicated by emoticons (and by alphabetic representations such as 'haha' and 'LOL') has been shown to have an impact on the perception of personal interaction similar to that of real laughter: Naturally, both have a positive effect (Vlahovic, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2012). Yuasa, Saito, and Mukawa (2011) demonstrated that the sections of the brain associated with the perception of emotion are in fact activated by emoticons; they furthermore found "that brain sites dealing with both verbal and nonverbal information are activated more strongly when emoticons are added to sentences, than in the case of plain text" (p. 22).

Marcoccia, Atifi, and Gauducheau (2008) showed that emoticons do not always mirror the actual expressions of digital interlocutors. While emotion certainly plays a role in emoticon use, not all emoticons are used as symbols of affective information: They can be, and often are used, as a means of clarifying writer intent in a way analogous to traditional punctuation marks (Dresner & Herring, 2010). Markman and Oshima (2007) likewise posited that emoticons are punctuation devices:

> In [their] data, emoticons are most typically deployed at the end of sentences or clauses (when part of a parenthetical remark), or turns at chat, either with or in place of standard sentence-final punctuation marks. In this usage, the emoticon functions to close off the sentence or thought by confirming the action performed by the text. In this sense, the emoticon can be seen to complement, strengthen, or clarify the illocutionary force of the utterance, while at the same time providing a cue to interpreting the structure of the message. (p. 5)

In these ways, emoticons can supplement a text with information beyond merely the affective. Amaghlobeli (2012) enumerated five ways that emoticons can function: They can incorporate nonverbal information into a message; they can emphasise the meanings of written text; they can counter the meanings of written text; they can serve as entire turns in digital conversation; and they can serve as structural markers. These functions are not, of course, mutually exclusive; someone sending a text-message, for instance, may use an emoticon as a structural marker, a means of emphasising accompanying text, and a means of conveying nonverbal information.

2.5.3 Emoji

In addition to punctuation-mark-based emoticons, developing technologies have allowed for the use of premade, stylised pictographic representations known as emoji. In a column for *The Boston Globe*'s website, Peterson (2013) wrote:

> Beloved not just by teens but by adults, including the lexicographers of the online OED (who added the term this summer), emoji have won fans

> partly through their sheer entrancing bizarreness. But they can also be a clever, highly contextual, visual code that comes as a novelty for those used to communicating through an alphabetic language (online, para. 2).

Peterson (2013) went on to point out that people play with emoji, creating entire messages or narratives out of the pictographs; she linked a Tumblr account entitled "Narratives in Emoji" (narrativesinemoji.tumblr.com), which posts entire stories written with only emoji. Emoji can be used in much the same way as emoticons, although the large numbers of different emoji available – from icons of facial expressions to icons of automobiles, food, plants, animals, buildings, and more – give emoji users a great deal of creative freedom.

2.6 Considerations from Communication Theory

Digital discourse, and the punctuation used in digital discourse, can be further explored and explicated through communication models and communication theory.

2.6.1 Schramm's Communication Model

Schramm's (1955/1997) communication model (Figure 3) is a simple and effective representation of the communication process.

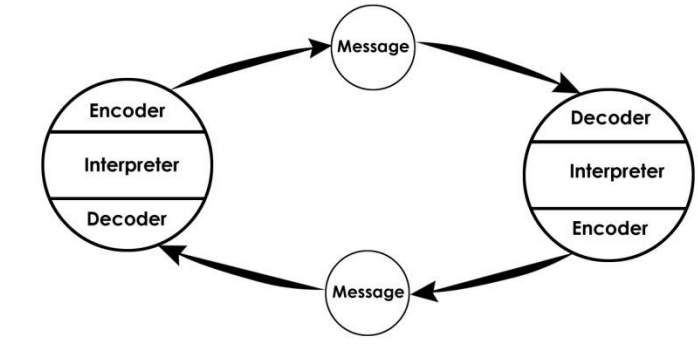


Figure 3

In this model, communicators are shown as encoding and sending messages, while others decode and interpret those messages. This model furthermore represents communication as a cyclical process. People both send and receive messages, and they often do so at the same time; for instance, in a face-to-face conversation, one person may speak while observing and interpreting the feedback (verbal, nonverbal, or both) of his or her interlocutor. This model, because of its simplicity, can be applied to many different forms of communication, including digital discourse. When using a digital medium, people first encode their messages in their minds, then produce them textually and send them through the chosen electronic channel. The messages are transmitted with minimal delay if the system is functioning correctly, and, once transmitted, they may be seen and decoded at the time of receipt, or later, depending upon the situation and inclination of the recipient. The model reminds us that in the digital realm, the communication process in not always cyclical. There can be technical problems in the transmission of messages. Further, feedback is not always immediate, and it might not be forthcoming at all: Digital discourse can be synchronous or asynchronous, and people can choose those with whom they communicate and when they communicate.

Schramm (1955/1997) also offered a diagram (Figure 4) that illustrates the function of signs, which are denominated ‘signals’ in his vernacular.

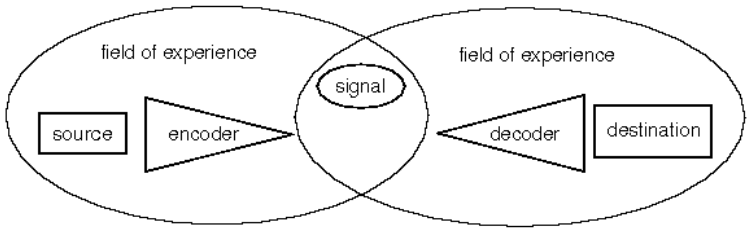


Figure 4

Figure 4 is tied closely with the brief review of signification literature above. It illustrates the fact that in order for a sign to be used effectively, communicators must share at least some mutual understanding of that sign. This point applies directly to digital discourse, where the novel terminology and orthography can create confusion for inexperienced users. On the other hand, for the initiated, these unique linguistic usages can be used as a means of demonstrating understanding of, and membership in, the prevailing digital culture, or in one of its subsets, e.g., a certain internet forum (Crystal, 2008). Because digital discourse is a unique and new form of communication, familiarity with its basic processes and linguistic idiosyncrasies is important in order to achieve effective interaction.

2.6.2 Media Richness Theory

In more recent years, the proliferation and prevalence of new kinds of media has led theorists to explore the nature and efficacy of mediated communication. Daft and Lengel (1983) discussed the important concept of "media richness" (an idea which has gone on to develop into Media Richness Theory). The authors explained that different communication media allow for different degrees of communicative affordance. Face-to-face communication allows for the richest communication because of the immediacy of feedback, the presence of nonverbal

cues, and the use of natural language. Next in the hierarchy of media richness is the telephone, which allows for natural language, tone of voice, and immediate vocal feedback, but precludes visual communication. After the telephone come written documents, which (generally) lack immediate feedback as well as nonverbal information; importantly, the authors pointed out that personal missives, because of their natural language, can be richer than bulletins and other formal, impersonal documents. Finally, at the bottom of the hierarchy are numeric documents, which are numbers-based reports that give only very basic information. (In the world of contemporary media, video-conferencing can be added between face-to-face and telephone communication.)

2.6.3 Nonverbal Communication Theory

Writers in the digital sphere often make up for the absence of nonverbal communication, which is a very important aspect of human interaction. At its most basic level, nonverbal communication is comprised of paralinguistic behavior (how we say what we say) and kinemics (our body movements and facial expressions) (Poyatos, 1992). Nonverbal cues are an integral part of in-person communication (Mortensen, 1972), and they work with verbal words to co-create meaning (Streeck & Knapp, 1992). Some of the important functions of nonverbal communication are conveying emotion, giving additional information about verbal messages, and communicating information about the relationship between communicants (Myers & Myers, 1980). Richmond, McCroskey, and Payne (1991) enumerated six functions of nonverbal behavior: Complementing verbal messages; contradicting verbal messages; repeating verbal messages;

regulating the flow of verbal messages between interlocutors; substituting for verbal messages; and accenting verbal messages (pp. 10-11). Richmond et al. (1991) further pointed out that

> For the most part verbal messages serve primarily a content function whereas nonverbal messages serve primarily a relational function. The cognitive content of what we are sending to others usually is sent primarily via verbal messages. The affective, or emotional, meaning we have for the other person is sent primarily via nonverbal messages. This relational, or affective, meaning often is referred to as "immediacy," by which is meant a feeling of physical or psychological closeness to another person. (p. 12)

This notion of immediacy is very important within communication research. Immediacy is a sense of social closeness, and it can be conveyed with either nonverbal or verbal behavior. Verbal immediacy is communicated by expressing feelings or ideas of closeness. Saying "I love you" is certainly one of the most powerful ways of conveying verbal immediacy. Anderson (2008) wrote that nonverbal immediacy behaviors are those which are "Warm, involving, [and] engaging" (p. 191), and went on to give a detailed list of such behaviors, which include bodily closeness, eye contact, smiling, and vocalic expressiveness (pp. 193-206). The respective converses of these behaviors communicate detachedness or aloofness. There has been copious research into nonverbal immediacy demonstrating its importance and generally positive impact in educational, organizational, and interpersonal communication; see Anderson (2008) for a

review of immediacy scholarship. Textual communiqués traditionally lack these important nonverbal cues, a problem encountered by Tolstoy's (1869/2009) Natasha in *War and Peace*: "She could not write, because she could not conceive the possibility of expressing sincerely in a letter even a thousandth part of what she expressed by voice, smile, and glance" (online, Book Seven, Chapter XIII, para. 14). Digital conversationalists have helped to bridge this gap to some extent through the aforementioned orthographic changes, which can help to convey information analogous to paralinguistic cues (e.g., all capitals for emphasis), and, in the case of emoticons and other pictographic representations, kinemics cues. These changes, whether or not they are a means of directly conveying a type of nonverbal information, do allow for new meaning-making potential and for new ways to communicate emotional and relational information (including immediacy cues). Therefore, they are a way of increasing the richness of the media, which can ultimately increase its utility. Further, the frequent use of informal language in digital discourse also contributes towards a greater richness.

2.6.4 Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) provides a framework for understanding the ways that people use their communication to increase or decrease social distance between themselves and their interlocutors (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The theory explores communicative "convergence", which occurs when people adapt their manner to be more like the manner of interlocutors, communicative "divergence", which occurs when people adapt their manner to be less like that of interlocutors, and communicative "maintenance", which occurs

when people do not change their manner during an interaction ("Communication Accommodation Theory", 2012). CAT is concerned not only with the interpersonal facet of communication, but also the intergroup facet, and the complex interplay between the two; Giles and Oday (2007) asserted that people frequently converge because of a desire for social approval, while they frequently diverge in order to highlight differences in group membership. CAT was initially formulated in the early 1970s (Giles, 1973; Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973) when it was concerned with face-to-face interaction. The theory has expanded greatly since its early days ("Communication Accommodation Theory", 2012), and it is now being applied to digital discourse: Bunz and Campbell (2004) demonstrated that individuals accommodate their politeness levels in email exchanges; de Siqueira and Herring (2009) and Riordan, Markman, and Steward (2013) found convergence in temporal patterns in IM usage; and although Christopherson (2012) did not find significant evidence that librarians accommodate their language when they help patrons through Internet chat, she did give reasons why such accommodation may be desirable from a customer-service standpoint. Punctuation is a tool by which people can either converge or diverge in digital discourse. People can chose to reflect the punctuation patterns of their interlocutors, or they can choose to punctuate differently. For example, a person having a text-message exchange with someone using an abundance of nonstandard punctuation may converge and utilise a similar punctuation style in order to foster social closeness, or may diverge and use standard punctuation or no punctuation in order to demonstrate social distance, or may simply maintain

his or her normal punctuation practices; and any of these options may be adopted consciously or unconsciously.

2.6.5 The Hyperpersonal Model

The hyperpersonal model of computer-mediated communication (Walther, 2007) offers a number of important concepts related to digital discourse. This model was preceded by Walther's (1997) Social Information Processing theory (SIP), which posits that digital media can foster strong interpersonal relationships, but these relationships take longer to develop than in-person relationships because the media generally require that people share smaller amounts of information with each other over time. The hyperpersonal model develops this view further, asserting, amongst other things, that media allow people the opportunity to carefully construct messages and identity (Walther, 2007). Baron (2008), making a similar point, quoted a student of hers who used the phrase "my best day" to describe how she can use Facebook to "stage herself as she wished to be seen by her friends" (p. 71). Walther (2007) wrote that the hyperpersonal model is unique in that it emphasises the benefits, as opposed to the hindrances, of communicating via digital media; he enumerated the following benefits: Communication in the digital sphere is editable; it allows more time for composition and reflection than face-to-face encounters; it precludes interlocutors from seeing potentially confusing or otherwise undesirable nonverbal cues; and it allows people to give their full mental attention to message composition (pp. 2540-2541). Ultimately, then, "When CMC users are motivated to do so, these processes allow them to manage impressions and ultimately exceed parallel FtF [face-to-face] partnerships

in social orientation or intimacy, according to the hyperpersonal perspective" (Walther, 2007, p. 2541). It should be noted that these benefits of digital discourse apply not only to efforts at self-representation, but also towards all aspects of an interpersonal exchange; that is, people who wish to show kindness, or to challenge a viewpoint, or who have any other interpersonal purpose, have the opportunity through digital discourse to more carefully construct their messages. The hyperpersonal model naturally carries implications for the study of punctuation in digital discourse. Digital writers can use punctuation (including emoticons and emoji) to carefully construct messages and self-representations. If someone wants to be fun-loving, he or she can use playful emoticons or emoji (this, as has been noted, seems to be a popular motivation), whereas if someone wants to be taken seriously, he or she can use standard punctuation, spurning the newer forms. Further, people can use punctuation to create clarifications and nuances in order to ensure the efficacy of their communiqués. For instance, if the text of a person's message is ambiguous, an apposite emoticon could serve as a way to clarify the sender's communicative intention. Contrarily, a message sender may wish to keep a message ambiguous in some way, in which case he or she can create a message free of punctuation or other orthographic cues, or one in which conflicting information is presented. Of course, as any glance at digital discourse will show, people do not always carefully consider their writings, and there will be times when punctuation is completely absent due to apathy, lack of knowledge of standard usage, or both.

2.6.6 Multimodal Communication

Crow (2010) argued that in developed contemporary society, we are witnessing a communicative shift from the word to the image: The twentieth century saw a massive increase of imagery in print media (especially in magazines), as well as the advent and widespread promulgation of television, the Internet, and the mobile phone, all of which can function to convey images. Further, Crow (2010) pointed out that pictograms are more common in current society; for instance, we have computers that display iconography such as the trashcan and ticking watch, and our public places are rife with notices depicting glyphic representations which, it is hoped, to some degree transcend language and culture.

The shift towards a more image-oriented culture is reflected in the growing academic interest in multimodal communication. Communication is multimodal when it utilises more than one semiotic mode (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). Thus, spoken communication is multimodal because it fuses verbal words with paralinguistic cues and kinemic cues (Adolphs & Carter, 2013). Written documents are multimodal because they utilise words, typefaces (or handwriting), layout, and perhaps photographs, diagrams, and/or other imagery. One of the richest examples of multimodal communication is the motion picture, in which the multimodal communication of humans can be displayed along with other imagery, sounds, and music; even lighting, colour-saturation, camera angle, and other such technical considerations serve as meaning-making resources for filmmakers. The webpage, likewise, is a multimodal medium par excellence. Webpages can convey meaning through

words, typefaces, colours, images, sounds, motion pictures, etc. (see Pauwels, 2012). Our society, through these and other media, is inundated with multimodal communication. As Gibbons (2012) asserted:

> Notably, the development of the academic study of multimodality was catalysed by the rise of digital technologies, provoking increase in multimodal products, which can now be created cheaply and easily. After all, this is the epoch of the internet, of hyperfiction, of the iPod, even of the Sony Reader whose marketing slogan announces, "Finally, the digital book has come of age". Indeed, the twenty-first century can be perceived as a quintessentially multimodal era. (p. 8)

This increase in multimodality can be seen quite clearly in digital discourse. Many digital media allow for users to compose messages with texts, pictographs, videos, animations, photos, sounds, and music. Further, orthography may be viewed as a semiotic mode distinct from written words, just as paralinguistic cues may be viewed as a mode distinct from spoken words: In both cases, there is a difference between the words themselves and the way in which they are presented. (This point is illustrated by the respective work of Nørgaard [2009] and Van Leeuwen [2006], who explored the meaning-making potential of typography.) Through these multimodal allowances of the digital revolution, the semiotic potential of written discourse has greatly increased, allowing communicators the opportunity to create meaning above and beyond words.

2.7 Considerations from Pragmatics Theory

The study of punctuation in digital discourse can also be richly informed by pragmatics theory. Pragmatics is a sub-discipline of linguistics that is concerned with the construction and interpretation of meaning in context. Pragmatics is distinct from semantics and syntax (Cutter, 2002). Syntax is concerned with grammatical arrangement, and semantics is concerned with the meanings of individual, decontextualised words; pragmatics, on the other hand, is concerned with the meanings utterances have which are related to various contextual factors – which include, for the purposes of this thesis, punctuation. Hymes (1974) made the helpful differentiation between grammatical competence and communicative competence: The former is related to an understanding of how to formulate grammatically standard utterances, and the latter is related to an understanding of how to communicate in a manner appropriate to the given situation. Pragmatics is associated primarily with communicative competence. Punctuation marks, while certainly syntactic markers, can also function in such a way as to make them pragmatics markers: They can help create meaning which transcends syntax and semantics, and can contribute towards communicative competence in the digital sphere. The punctuation of a message, in other words, can provide a context for an understanding of the message's intended meaning. For instance, the messages "Good job." and "Good job! :)", while the same words in the same order, convey different meanings on account of the punctuation. In these examples, the punctuation syntactically signifies the end of the utterance, while it pragmatically indicates a sense of the purpose and underlying meaning of the utterance. The

theories generally seen as the pillars of pragmatics are as follows: (1) Grice's (1975/1996) Cooperative Principle; (2) Speech Act Theory; and (3) Politeness Theory. Each of these three theories will be discussed briefly below, with some remarks on how each relates to punctuation in digital discourse.

2.7.1 Grice's Cooperative Principle

Grice (1975/1996) asserted that human communication can be generally characterised by a sense of cooperation: Our communicative interactions, he wrote, "are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant sees in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction" (p. 158). This point forms the essence of Grice's (1975/1996) Cooperative Principle. Grice (1975/1996) further enumerated a set of four general maxims which, when followed by communicants, should "yield results in accordance with the Cooperative Principle" (p. 159). These Maxims, often referred to as the Gricean Maxims, are Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The Maxim of Quantity states that conversational contributions should have the appropriate amount of information – neither too little nor too much. The Maxim of Quality states that contributions should be, to the best of the contributor's knowledge, true. The Maxim of Relation states that contributions should be relevant. And the Maxim of Manner states that contributions should be clear. It is apparent that these Maxims are accepted by most people: We want to be told enough, and yet we don't want to be prattled at; we want to be told the truth; we want conversations to have some coherence; and we want to understand one another. However, there are

unquestionably times when interlocutors who intend to be conversationally cooperative do not follow the Maxims. In such cases, there are usually variables which redress the communicative balance by allowing the hearer or reader to infer the intended meaning. Such variables may be cultural, related to past experience (as in the case of an inside joke), or they may be related to nonverbal behavior or punctuation. (The preceding list of variables is not, of course, exhaustive). These variables serve to create what Grice (1975/1996) termed "conversational implicature" (p. 161). Conversational implicatures are the implied meanings that allow for communication to be efficaciously accomplished even if one or more of the Maxims is not followed in an utterance. In digital discourse, punctuation can be used to ensure that the Gricean Maxims are followed; in particular, it can uphold the maxim of Manner by keeping messages clear. Punctuation may also be used to provide conversational implicature in cases when the Maxims are flouted; for instance, in a message that is incomplete (thereby violating the maxim of Quantity), an ellipsis can be used to communicate that more is to come – or that the writer is intentionally leaving something to the imagination of the reader. To give another example, a message that is patently false, as in the case of ironic utterances, may be followed with a wink ;), indicating that the message was meant in jest. In either case, whether punctuation helps in adherence to the Maxims or serves to aid in the creation of conversational implicature, it is a tool which can help people communicate in a manner in keeping with the Cooperative Principle.

2.7.2 Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory has its provenance in the work of Austin (1962), who explained that words not only mean things – they also do things, such as command, request, apologise, and praise. Austin (1962) demonstrated that there are three acts associated with any given utterance: The locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. The locutionary act is the literal production of an utterance and the transfer of its basic meaning. The illocutionary act, which is the act with which Speech Act Theory is primarily interested (O'Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011), is the act (or acts) which is (or are) accomplished in the delivery of the utterance (e.g. congratulating, consoling, thanking, etc.), often termed the 'force' or the 'illocutionary force' of the utterance. The perlocutionary act is the effect that an utterance has on a hearer or hearers. Put another way, a locutionary act is a transfer of meaning, an illocutionary act is the performance of a certain social action resultant from the transfer of meaning, and a perlocutionary act is the accomplishment of something in the thoughts – and, potentially, outward actions – of the hearer. An example will further explicate these acts: A young boy approaches his mother with a ball in his hand and says, "It's such a nice day outside!", and his mother accompanies him to the garden to play. The boy's actual words, and their meanings concerning the climatic conditions outside, constitute the boy's locutionary act. The illocutionary acts, as well may be inferred, are, first, an informational statement, and second, a request to go outside and play; the boy is, in other words, informing and requesting. And the perlocutionary act is the persuasion of the mother to

allow the boy to go outside. Searle (1979) further elaborated and honed Speech Act Theory by discussing indirect speech acts, which are those acts which take the form of one act while also performing another. In the preceding example of the boy who wanted to go out to play, the boy uttered a statement, while clearly wanting it to function additionally as a request; the request is an indirect speech act. Searle (1979) also furthered Speech Act Theory by creating a classification system for illocutionary acts: He divided speech acts into the following categories: Assertives, which are truth claims; Directives, which are efforts to have someone do something; Commissives, which obligate the communicator to some future action; Expressives, which demonstrate feelings; and Declarations, which make whatever is said the case in reality. In digital discourse, because of the potential paucity of certain contextual cues, the illocutionary force of a message may be opaque; in such cases, punctuation can be an important clarifier. Dresner and Herring (2010) pointed out that emoticons function as indicators of illocutionary force in digital discourse; for instance, this emoticon :p can show that an interlocutor is being playful. Put another way, the illocutionary force of an utterance with a :p could be that of "playing" or "flirting", and the emoticon can make this force more clear. In addition to simply clarifying a speech act, it seems that punctuation marks can potentially influence speech acts in other ways; thus one of the research questions guiding this thesis is, "How do punctuation marks influence speech acts?" In answering this question, it will be shown how punctuation marks contribute to the meanings of messages, and to the social actions of messages.

2.7.3 Politeness Theory

There is a remarkable robustness of academic literature related to Politeness Theory (O'Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011), but potentially the most important foundational work in the study of politeness is that of Brown and Levinson (1987). Their work is rooted in an adaptation of Goffman's (1967) abstract concept of "face". The term "face" is related to the idioms "losing face" and "saving face" in that it refers to the positive social reputation that a person would like to have. Brown and Levinson (1987) delineated two types of desires associated with face: The desire for positive face, which is a person's desire for a favorable self-image, and the desire for negative face, which is a person's desire for personal liberty. Brown and Levinson (1987) labeled those utterances which infringe upon someone's positive or negative face "face-threatening acts or FTAs" (p. 25); they posited that certain politeness strategies can help to mollify such acts. While Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory seems largely negative, in that they view politeness in terms of the avoidance of insults and impositions, it is worth remarking that their politeness theory can be understood in a more positive light: In addition to softening the blow of FTAs, politeness strategies could be viewed as the means by which people actively engender a sense of value and autonomy in other people. Leech (1983) put forward a different model of polite behavior; he termed his courtesy-construct the Politeness Principle, and he viewed it as working together with Grice's (1975/1996) Cooperative Principle to ensure effective communication. The essence of Leech's Politeness Principle is that communicants should seek the benefit of others over the benefit to self, and seek

to attain and maintain harmony between others and self. In written messages, punctuation can help to convey politeness. For instance, Baron and Ling (2011), in their analysis of focus group data, showed that adolescent girls sometimes use punctuation marks as indicators of courtesy; "…they show an awareness that punctuation (including emoticons) can function as a conversational softener, almost like adding a "please" to a direct request such as "Pass the salt."" (54).

2.8 Considerations from Rhetorical Theory

Before commencing with a discussion of rhetorical theory and its pertinence to the topic of punctuation in digital discourse, a careful distinction must be made in regards to the term "rhetorical". In the opening passages of this literature review, the word "rhetorical" was used to denote the more orally oriented functions of punctuation as it relates to the structure of messages – those functions which relate to the flow and rhythms of text, either when read aloud or read within the mind. Here, where the discussion is concerned with rhetorical theory, the term "rhetorical" is used in reference to the more general study of effective communication which dates back to the ancient Mediterranean world.

In antiquity, rhetoric was related to the arts of persuasion and public speaking. Contemporary understandings of rhetoric are broader than those in the ancient world, and taken collectively, they present a general field in which the ways that humans use symbols (or signs) to effectively communicate are studied (see Campbell & Huxman, 2009; Foss, 2009; Lynn, 2010; "Rhetoric", 2012).

Rhetorical theory's applicability to the study of punctuation is illuminated by an academic exchange of articles from the mid-1990s in *College Composition*

and Communication. In the first of these articles, Dawkins (1995) offered a method by which to teach punctuation. In the article, he first posited a set of general punctuation principles which students should be taught to follow. Then he asserted that, beyond these basic principles, students should be taught to punctuate rhetorically, which is to say they should be taught that punctuation is a way to actively make meaning within their texts. This view of punctuation is in marked contrast to the more negative, rules-oriented approaches that students may often encounter in the classroom. Hassett (1996), in the second article of the exchange, praised Dawkins's (1995) pedagogical theory, and then took it several steps further, by stating "such an approach [to punctuation] requires a much broader understanding of the rhetorical nature of punctuation, an understanding that includes issues of genre, ethos, reader interpretation, and identification" (p. 421). Dawkins (1996) responded with the third and final article of the exchange, in which he argued that his purpose was really more related to the writing process, and not the written product.

The general import of these articles is that punctuation can be used rhetorically; that is, it can be used in such a way as to actively create meaning and thereby contribute to effective communication. Although these articles were composed prior to the full blossoming of the digital revolution, their rhetorical view of punctuation is highly applicable to digital discourse. In particular, punctuation in digital contexts can be used for the following three rhetorical purposes: Indicating writer ethos; clarifying intended textual meaning; and conveying relational and emotional information. The first purpose is related to the

choice of punctuation style, while the other two are related to usages of punctuation marks which convey certain meanings. The purposes are not mutually exclusive. Each of the purposes will be broadly explored in Chapter 3, in which this thesis's rhetorical model of punctuation mark function is explained.

2.9 Text-Messaging Literature

While punctuation in all of the genres of digital discourse is of interest, in this thesis, punctuation usage in text-messages and online message boards is investigated. This section offers a review of pertinent text-message literature. First, there is a brief introduction to text-messaging, which includes a discussion of the history of the medium and some statistics concerning its usage in the United States, where the text-message data for this thesis was gathered. Text-messaging literature is then explored, starting with studies of a sociolinguistic nature and moving on to studies which examine the linguistic structures and patterns of text-messages. Then there is a brief discussion of text-message corpora. Because the text-message study detailed in this thesis was performed with a novel method of text-message collection, special consideration is given in this section to the data collection methodologies used in previous studies. At the conclusion of this section, the ways in which this thesis contributes to the literature of text-messaging are discussed.

2.9.1 Introduction to Text-Messaging

In the early days of text-messaging – which is to say, in the 1990s – text-messages had to be composed using a numeric keypad. They were then, like now, limited to 160 characters in length. Notwithstanding these seeming constraints, text-

messaging exploded in popularity. It served to usher in a communication revolution in which mobile phone users were potentially always connected to other mobile phone users, whether for purposes of work, education, security, or recreation. European countries were the first to embrace texting, but the popularity of this new medium soon spread beyond the borders of Europe, and it can now be characterised as a global phenomenon. Furthermore, since those early days, the technology of text-messaging has developed and become more sophisticated. Now, many mobile users have full QWERTY keyboards in place of numeric keypads, and there are even special emoji keyboards available to some mobile users. Smart phones allow users to access the Internet, thereby giving people access to email, message boards, comment threads, social networking services, etc. There are also popular mobile applications, such as iMessage and WhatsApp, which allow users of smart phones to send textual messages from phone to phone via the Internet instead of via the traditional SMS; these types of messages are not inhibited by the SMS's 160 character limit, and thus they allow for more substantial exchanges.

The research for this thesis was conducted in the United States, where mobile technology and text-messaging are pervasive – and where, incidentally, mobile phones are more frequently called "cell phones" or even "cells" if not simply "phones". The citations in this paragraph reference reports of surveys conducted by researchers at the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C.; the results of these surveys illumine just how important mobile phones and text-messaging are to Americans. Brenner (2013) reported the following statistics:

91% of adults in the United States have a mobile phone; 56% have a smart phone; 63% report using their mobiles to access the internet; 67% check their mobiles for messages even when they have not felt the phone vibrate or heard it ring; and, importantly, “29% of cell owners describe their phone as “something they can’t imagine living without”” (online, para. 8). Smith (2011) reported that 73% of American adults communicate with text-messages (and this percentage may well have increased since 2011). Smith (2011) also reported that “Text messaging users send or receive an average of 41.5 messages on a typical day, with the median user sending or receiving 10 texts daily” (online, para. 4); for young adults these numbers are, unsurprisingly, significantly larger: “Cell owners between the ages of 18 and 24 exchange an average of 109.5 messages on a normal day—that works out to more than 3,200 texts per month—and the typical or median cell owner in this age group sends or receives 50 messages per day (or 1500 messages per month)” (online, para. 3). Without a doubt, text-messaging is a popular a means of communication that is deserving of scholastic scrutiny.

2.9.2 Social Studies

Grinter and Eldridge (2001) offered an early and robust study of the text-messaging practices of teenagers. The subjects of their study were teens from South Cambridgeshire. Data for the study was collected in three parts. First, there was a questionnaire component. Second, there was a logging component in which respondents kept a written record of their text-message activity, providing information about each message they sent or received, such as the general content of the message, any abbreviations or shorthand utilised, their location when the

message was sent or received, and so on; conspicuously, transcriptions of the messages themselves were not elicited. Third, the study had a focus group component. The authors found that teenagers often used text-messaging to coordinate communication in other mediums, such as a landline phone or IM. Teenagers also frequently used text-messages to coordinate in-person activities and to coordinate with their families. Beyond these more pragmatic uses, text-messaging was found to be a popular medium by which to chat. The teenagers who participated in the study indicated that they appreciated a number of the characteristics of the text-messaging medium: It allows for quick conversations in which normal social pleasantries can be bypassed; it is cheap; and it allows for communication in which either one or both of the interlocutors are in a context where a voice call may be deemed inappropriate. Teens did express some concerns about text-messaging, however. In particular, the respondents noted that sometimes they had difficulty in interpreting messages. These difficulties were at least partially resultant from unfamiliarity with certain abbreviations and from the lack of tonal information in messages. Another issue discussed in the study was misaddressing messages; such accidents can lead to interpersonal awkwardness.

Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002) examined the text-messaging culture of children and teenagers in Finland. Their research drew on multifarious forms of data which were collected in a larger research project looking at the overall mobile culture of Finnish youth; this data included transcribed text messages, surveys, interviews, journal entries, and field notes. The authors reported that Finnish teens used text-messaging for many different reasons, including but not

limited to meeting up, helping each other with schoolwork, and dating. The authors furthermore pointed out that romantic relationships between Finnish youth could be initiated and maintained through text-messaging. At the time this article was written, texts were not saved in the phone, so some teens would keep a physical notebook in which they would inscribe messages of special sentimental value. The authors observed that the text-messages of Finnish youth were often written and interpreted with the help of friends; in some cases, an exceptionally skillful texter would be consulted to ensure that a message was clear and otherwise effective. Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002) observed that teens would alter their style of text-messaging depending on the recipient. A point made in this study which is of particular interest for our purposes is that young people's text-messages were often emotional in nature: "Through SMS, teens hate, love, gossip, mediate and express longing, even when the writer lacks the courage to call or in situations where other communication channels are inappropriate" (p. 171). Although text-messages are generally lacking in the cues which traditionally convey affective meaning, the texting medium was, even in the early 2000s, of such importance to young people that it was put to use as a way to send messages that were not simply informational but also emotional; that is, from its earliest days, text-messaging has had an emotive and relational function. Punctuation marks can contribute to the conveyance of emotional and relational information, thereby making the medium more effective in these important interpersonal and affective capacities.

Ling and Yttri (2002) examined mobile phone culture in Norway. They collected data from ten focus groups: Four of the groups were composed of teenagers from 14 to 18 years of age; two of the groups were composed of people from 19 to 27 years of age; two groups were composed of parents; and two groups were composed of older users. It is interesting to note the different ways that these respective age groups spoke about mobile phones:

> …the oldest users frequently focused on issues of safety and security when discussing mobile telephony. The middle-aged users focused on the coordination potentials of the system. The youngest users – those in their mid-teens – had perhaps the most distinct profile. Beyond the instrumental uses of safety and logistical coordination, their use was often expressive in nature (p. 147).

The authors later elaborated: "At a more abstract level, these expressive messages are confirmation of a relationship. It is a type of social interaction in which the sender and receiver share a common, though asynchronous, experience. Sending a message refreshes the contact between the two" (p. 158). Mobile phones are thus a way to express oneself and present oneself to others.

Harkin (2003) conducted a series of focus groups composed of people of varying ages to investigate mobile phone usage in England. He offered a number of interesting sociological observations: Mobiles were often viewed as a security device; amongst teens, mobiles were not only a way to stay in touch with friends, but also a way to communicate outside of the observation of parents and/or other adults; mobiles were frequently used to stay in contact with people who see each

other often; and in keeping with indications from other researchers, he wrote, "Our research uncovered myriad examples of people using text to send intimate and loving messages" (p. 20). Harkin (2003) made the interesting point that texting allows for a special type of mediated communication that is both intimate and distant:

> In our research, particularly among our schoolchildren interviewees, the intimacy afforded by mobile communication was often associated with a means of overcoming shyness. Texting is often used for apologies, to excuse lateness or to communicate other things that make us uncomfortable. It offers intimacy of a particularly controlled form, useful for its discretion and emotional parsimony, but valued by those who find it difficult to express their emotions more discursively. (21-22)

Text-messaging can be an empowering and emboldening medium, and it allows for a way to send electronic missives in which the display of emotion can be managed according to the communicative needs of the situation.

Taylor and Harper (2003) engaged in anthropological-style fieldwork to examine text-messaging among young people. They posited that text-messaging can be viewed as a gift-giving phenomenon. Gifts, the authors explained, are ways in which people can render their intangible feelings tangible. Text-messages are a form of gift in that they are interpersonal messages that are shared and can be stored. Individual text-messages can, like physical gifts, be associated with memories – they can function as poignant reminders of times past. The authors discussed the fact that the unorthodox orthographies seen in text-messaging can

be seen as the "'wrapping' of the gift"; this wrapping, they continued, can "imply intimacy or emotional affection" (p. 290).

Oksman and Turtiainen (2004) used data from single and group interviews of teenagers to explore the mobile communication of Finnish young people. They observed that text-messaging, in addition to keeping young people in touch with their existing social group, was used as a way to cultivate new relationships, including romantic relationships. Their respondents attested to appreciating the privacy of text-messages; in the case of voice calls, any people surrounding either interlocutor may overhear half of the conversation, or more, depending on how loud the phone's speaker is – while in the case of text-messages, there is less concern about foreign parties being privy to what is being communicated. Like other scholars, Oksman and Turtiainen (2004) asserted that text-messaging "has developed into rich emotional communication" (p. 326). They also made a very important observation concerning the distinction between text-messaging and Internet-based forms of digital discourse: While the Internet is certainly a medium which allows friends and family to communicate, it is also a medium by which strangers can easily interact via message boards, chat rooms, comments sections on websites, etc.; text-messaging, on the other hand, seems to be used between people who have some sort of existing social connection (however tenuous or distant), and much of the communication accomplished with text-messaging is between people of intimate acquaintance.

Faulkner and Culwin (2005) utilised a widely-distributed questionnaire and a diary study of university students in England to investigate text-messaging;

their diary study, unlike that of Grinter and Eldridge (2001), did elicit transcriptions of the actual text-messages. Faulkner and Culwin (2005) found that texting is used for many different purposes. They ascertained that women texted somewhat more than men, and that younger people texted more than older people. The authors also remarked upon some of the linguistic patterns they observed in their text-message transcriptions: More than half of the 337 text-messages in their database contained no "textish" (the term they employed to reference the shorthand often associated with text-messaging), and "Punctuation was sparse although exclamation marks and question marks were used" (p. 179).

Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, and Purcell (2010), conducted survey and focus-group research through the Pew Research Center. They found that text-messaging is the primary channel of communication between teenagers and their friends in the United States, and that text-messages were used by teens for numerous communicative purposes including but not limited to chatting, micro-coordination, discussing personal matters, and managing schoolwork. Lenhart (2012), after further investigations through the Pew Research Center, corroborated that teenagers indicated that text-messaging is a pervasive part of their daily communication.

Harrison and Gilmore (2012) utilised an online questionnaire to explore the social contexts of American college students' text-messaging. The questionnaire asked respondents to estimate how many text-messages they sent on a daily basis; the answers ranged from one to 300, with the average number of texts per day being 71 and the median being 31. For most respondents, text-

messaging was the preferred medium of communication with friends. Responses also showed that texting was an important way for college students to stay connected with their families. Importantly, Harrison and Gilmore (2012) found that text-messaging was not only used for socially positive purposes: "Most people in our sample," they wrote, "use texting for maleficence" (p. 516). They also observed that respondents admitted to texting during times which might be considered inappropriate, such as during a religious service, while on a date, or while in the company of friends. The responses to the questionnaires ultimately led Harrison and Gilmore (2012) to conclude that the medium of text-messaging can cause social disinhibition as well as a neglect of people who are physically present. This study is significant because it points out that text-messaging, while an important medium of socialisation amongst young people, can potentially contribute to social friction and social disconnection.

Morrill, Jones, and Vaterlaus (2013) engaged in a questionnaire study to examine mobile ownership and reasons for text-messaging amongst American young people. Unsurprisingly, 99% of the study's respondents were mobile owners. The authors found that females generally got their phones at an earlier age than males, were more attached to their phones than males, and sent more text-messages than males. It was found that women were more likely to use text-messages to express feelings and increase the intimacy of existing relationships, while men were more likely to use texting to meet people. Females, moreover, were more likely to use texting as a means of escapism.

Kelly, Keaten, Becker, Cole, Littleford, and Rothe (2012) conducted focus groups with American college students in order to explore their text-messaging practices. The characteristics which make text-messaging a unique medium were viewed by the students in both positive and negative lights. The lack of nonverbal information was seen as liberating and emboldening (especially in uncomfortable situations), but also as increasing the amount of miscommunication. Similarly, the brevity of text-messaging was viewed as increasing the directness of communicative exchanges, but also as increasing the possibilities for ambiguity. Students expressed that the asynchronicity of text-messaging allows people to reply at their convenience and to take the time to carefully construct their responses; however, this asynchronicity means that exchanges can be drawn-out temporally, and that the initial sender may not receive a response as quickly as he or she desires. The fact that text-messages can be sent and received anywhere where there is a cellular signal was also viewed both positively and negatively by the participants: Positively, because people can be in contact with others whenever they wish, and negatively, because people can be contacted with trivial news at times when they would rather be left alone, such as when they are sleeping. Most contemporary phones can store text-messages, a feature which the focus groups esteemed, because it allows for rereading, but which they also regarded with some measure of wariness, because recorded conversations can fall into the hands of people who were not meant to see them. This study thus shows that at least some young people have a highly equable view of text-messaging, a view in which they see its possibilities and affordances as well as its pitfalls and

constraints. This sense that young texters can be thoughtful in their communication is strengthened by the fact that the focus groups indicated that they choose their medium of communication based on factors such as recipient and the purpose of the message. This conscientiousness on the part of young texters may be expressed in thoughtful punctuation practices.

2.9.3 Linguistic Studies

With this sociological basis thus established, attention will now be turned to studies which examined the linguistic patterns of text-messaging. This thesis will contribute to this body of linguistic text-message literature by showing how punctuation marks can contribute to the construction of meaning in text-messages.

Thurlow and Brown (2003) constructed a corpus of text-messages by asking students at Cardiff University to hand-write "five messages that they had either sent or received in the previous week and to transcribe them as accurately as possible (i.e. 'exactly as they appeared on the display screen')" (online, Section 2, para. 1). A total of 544 text-messages were collected from 159 participants. The authors reported that two-thirds of the text-messages in the corpus were relational. They observed that much of the writing in the text-messages was conversational and informal, and they noticed a playful air in many of the messages. There were 39 emoticons in their corpus, in addition to 509 typographic symbols, "almost all of which were simply kisses and exclamation marks usually in multiple sets (e.g. xxxxxx and !!!!!)" (online, Section 3.2, para. 3). Using their corpus as a guide, Thurlow and Brown (2003) enumerated three maxims which appear to

underlie much of text-message usage; these were mentioned above, and are here quoted once more with the same explanatory notes:

> (1) brevity and speed [messages are short and created quickly];
>
> (2) paralinguistic restitution [orthographic devices such as capitalization and punctuation are used to convey information about how the written words might be said aloud]; and,
>
> (3) phonological approximation [words are written as they would sound in spoken discourse] (online, Section 4.2.1, para. 1).

In keeping with these maxims, and especially in keeping with maxim (2), the authors observed that texters used "grammatical marks...for other less grammatical effects (e.g. wow!!!! or No wait…)" (online, Section 4.2.1, para. 2). These writing techniques allow for more meaning to be conveyed, and much of that meaning, of course, is of a relational and/or emotional nature.

Tagg (2009), in a predominantly British study, built a corpus of 11,067 text-messages from friends, family, and an online forum. The messages from friends and family were handwritten or typed into an Excel template. Based upon analysis of the text-messages in the corpus, Tagg (2009) asserted that text-message respellings were often a form of volitional creativity in which senders presented themselves in a certain way and expressed playfulness and informality. This creativity was not limited to respellings, however: Many other forms of linguistic creativity were exhibited in the corpus, including but not limited to metaphors, neologisms, puns, and metacomments. Furthermore, the most frequent words in Tagg's (2009) corpus are enlightening: The top five were, in descending

order, “you,” “to,” “i,” “x,” and “a.” The sociality of the text-messaging medium is underlined by the fact that the word “you” holds the preeminent position on this list, and the typographic interest of the medium is highlighted by the fact that “x,” which symbolises a kiss in texting language, is number four.

Baron and Ling (2011) investigated the text-messaging of American young people in a two-part study. In the first part, they looked at the differences between male and female punctuation practices in text-messaging. Toward this end, they examined focus group data collected in 2009 by the Pew Internet and American Life Project and the University of Michigan. The ages of the participants in the focus groups ranged from 12 to 18 years old. (This is the same focus group data that was used in the study of Lenhart et al. (2010), cited above.) Baron and Ling concluded that

> Female members of the focus groups were vocal about the importance of using emotion-tinged punctuation markers such as smileys, lexical shortening, or multiple exclamation points, both to express their "enthusiasm" for the communications they were crafting as well as to soften messages that might otherwise seem overly direct. By contrast, males were reluctant to engage in such practices (a fact noted by the females), and even complained about the excesses (e.g., use of emoticons, repeated letters in words) they observed in texts sent by females. (p. 55)

In the second part of their study, Baron and Ling (2011) assembled a corpus of text-messages from college students in order to examine patterns of punctuation. They utilised a handwritten diary methodology to compile the corpus. The

messages were collected in 2005, and all of the participants who submitted messages were female. There were a total 191 text-messages in the corpus. Although this amount of data is obviously limited, the authors did discern a number of punctuation patterns in their sample. First, punctuation was often omitted from messages altogether. Second, texters were more likely to include final punctuation when the sentence was not at the end of a transmission, indicating a pragmatic choice on their part. The punctuation at the end of a message is seemingly superfluous, and it can thus be omitted, whereas at the end of a sentence which is not at the end of a message, it serves the purpose of facilitating reading and comprehension, and it is thus more likely to be included. Question marks were more likely than other marks to be included at the end of a message, demonstrating a choice on the part of participants to include punctuation that increases clarity of purpose. The authors observed texters using ellipses in place of full-stops, and texters were furthermore observed "using exclamation points and smileys to replace periods while simultaneously expressing emotion and/or softening the directness of the message" (p. 61). These patterns demonstrate that although punctuation usage may be somewhat unorthodox in the texting of young people, it is not necessarily erratic or lacking thought; on the contrary, the conclusions of this study, limited though it is, suggest that young people at least sometimes deploy text-message punctuation with tact and care.

De Jonge and Kemp (2012) investigated the abbreviations, or "textisms" as they termed them, used in the text-messaging of Australian high school and university students. Their study is relevant to this thesis primarily because of its

methodology and methodological conclusions. In the study, the authors had students transpose English sentences into "textese", or text-message style; they had some students type text-messages into their phones and then write down, by hand, exactly what they had typed, and they had other students simply hand-write their text-messages on paper. In addition to studying the textisms used, the authors compared the messages that had been typed and then handwritten with those that had only been handwritten: The results were similar, suggesting that young people can reflect on their use of textisms and produce legitimate handwritten versions of text-messages. However, as shall be more fully discussed below, the electronic delivery of text-messages is certainly a more appropriate collection method for the study of text-messaging, especially in the age of the emoji – students cannot be expected to draw the emoji that they would use in a given situation or one that they had used in the past; De Jonge and Kemp (2012) admit, "While the use of written data could be justified in conducting a study that focused on the proportion and/or consistency of textisms used, the use of texted data would be more appropriate for a fine-grained analysis" (p. 63). Indeed, while it is good to note that young people can handwrite text-messages with a certain level of validity, the study of text-messaging is surely best accomplished by examining actual text-messages that have been typed in a phone and sent electronically.

Lyddy, Farina, Hanney, Farrell, and Kelly O'Neill (2014) studied the text messages of Irish university students. They used a collection method similar to that of Thurlow and Brown (2003). They requested that their participants

handwrite on paper ten text-messages they had sent in the last week that were representative of their general texting habits. The respondents were encouraged to transcribe the text-messages such that they were exactly the same on paper as they would be on the screen. The researchers also asked that the respondents label the text-messages they submitted according to a set of given functional categories; in other words, they asked the students to tell them what the purposes of their submitted text-messages were and gave them a list of categories with which to label the text-messages. A code was also provided to the respondents that they could use to occlude personal or sensitive information. The text-message corpus Lyddy et al. (2014) built was composed of 936 messages and had 13,391 words in it. 76% of the words were spelled standardly. The majority of nonstandard spellings were words that were not capitalised in a standard fashion. Other forms of common nonstandard spelling they found included accent stylisations, letter/number homophones, and omitted apostrophes. 11% of the messages in the corpus included an emoticon (with, the researchers point out, women providing most of them). 27% of the messages in the corpus were labeled as seeking information or making a request; 16.5% were labeled as making arrangements; 17% were labeled as replies to messages; and 13% were labeled as sharing information. After reporting these figures, the authors added, significantly, the following observation:

> This sample of text messages therefore would seem to underrepresent those sent for the purposes of maintaining or supporting relationships; for example, the greetings category accounting only for 6% of the total. This

> suggests a certain level of censorship when participants chose which messages to contribute. It may be that texts which support relationships were more personal and participants may have been reluctant to share them. (554)

This is a vitally important point. Many of the sociological studies cited above show unequivocally that the text-messaging medium is one that is used for relational purposes. It would seem in this study that people evince a certain hesitancy to share text-messages of a relational nature, even when they are given the means to code their messages to dodge any undue disclosure. In the concluding passages of their report, Lyddy et al. (2014) gave a frank discussion of the limitations of their study: They reiterated that a bias was introduced by allowing the participants in their study to choose the messages they submitted; they observed that, because the respondents were told that the study was related to texting language, the respondents may have chosen to share messages of one type or another (ones that downplay or exaggerate their normal texting language), notwithstanding the fact that they were asked to choose representative messages; and finally, the authors observed that the transcription process was a limitation as well.

2.9.4 Text-Message Corpora

Like Tagg (2009), other scholars have constructed larger text-message corpora. How (2004), for an undergraduate thesis at the National University of Singapore, collected 10,117 text-messages via volunteers, the Internet, and email solicitation, in order to study how text-entry could be improved on mobile phones. Work on

this corpus was restarted in 2010 at the National University of Singapore (Kan & Chen, 2013); it is publicly available online at http://wing.comp.nus.edu.sg:8080/SMSCorpus/overview.jsp, and it is currently accepting English and Mandarin text-message submissions from international contributors. Text-messages may be submitted to the corpus in different ways, depending on the type of phone the contributor has: For Android users, there is an app which can be used to upload messages; Nokia users can export their sent messages as .csv files and email them; and for users of other types of phones, there is a webpage where text-messages can be typed into fields. For obvious ethical reasons, it is requested that contributors only submit messages that they have sent, and not ones that they have received. Fairon and Paumier (2006) made a corpus of 30,000 French text-messages by putting out public requests for people to copy text-messages from their phones and send them to a toll-free number. Treurniet, De Clercq, van den Heuvel, and Oostdijk (2012) constructed a corpus of about 53,000 Dutch text-messages using collection methods similar to those used by Kan and Chen (2013) at the National University of Singapore: An application program for Android users (adapted from the program used by the National University of Singapore), an online mailbox and dropbox to upload back-up files of sent messages for Nokia and iPhone users, and an online submission form where contributors can type their messages into fields. These large corpora all avoid the problems associated with transcribing text-messages by hand, although, in the case of the corpora which allow online input, there could be some transcription changes or errors.

2.9.5 Final Text-Messaging Remarks

The literature of this section shows that text-messaging is an important and revolutionary new form of communication. Texts may be sent at any time and from any place (with a mobile signal), and thus the text-messaging medium gives users the possibility of perpetual social contact. Texts can be composed with relative ease and celerity. They can be sent and received in times when other forms of communication are not possible or appropriate. Text-messages can also embolden people, and give them the opportunity to conscientiously think through what they wish to communicate before they engage in the communicative act. These benefits, of course, also come with certain drawbacks. Text-messages, because of their brevity and lack of traditional nonverbal information, can be ambiguous. They can moreover cause a negative form of disinhibition which may lead to aggression or malicious communication that would not normally be used in the physical presence of the recipient. From a linguistic standpoint, text-messages often exhibit interesting orthographic patterns. Much of the time, the writing is in a familiar, relatively standard style, and yet there are certain practices, such as the use of capitals, punctuation strings, and emoticons, which are non-standard and increase the semiotic possibilities of the text.

The text-messaging literature reveals that texting is often a medium of relational and emotional messages. Especially amongst young people, texting is a way to cultivate, maintain, and deepen relationships with friends and family. In order for texting to fulfill these functions, it is necessary for users to symbolically share relational and emotional meaning. While the literature notes that

punctuation and other orthographic practices can help to convey such meaning, there have been no studies examining the specific ways in which punctuation can symbolise relational and emotional ideas. Such an academic task is admittedly difficult because of the personal nature of text-messages and the challenges of text-message collection. The messages collected in the literature are generally random. Even the large corpora, which hold significant promise for future research, contain decontextualised text-messages, and without certain contextual data, such as information concerning the relationship between interlocutors and the circumstances of the message, efficacious analysis of relational and emotional meaning is not tenable. Thus, for this study, a methodology that circumvents these issues of social context and data collection was adopted – namely, a text-message discourse completion task (DCT). A full discussion of this methodology is given in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

2.10 Message Board Literature

Punctuation marks on Internet message boards were examined in the second study detailed in this thesis. In this section, a short introduction to message boards is given, followed by a review of selected literature concerning message boards. Then, the message board service Reddit, from which the corpus for the study was constructed, is explained. Finally, the contribution of this thesis to message board literature is discussed.

2.10.1 Introduction to Message Boards

A message board is an online medium that allows people to have asynchronous discussions. On message boards, people can make posts, comment on posts, and

comment on other comments. Discussions are normally arranged into what are called “threads”; in a thread, an initial poster writes something or shares a piece of writing or other media, and other posters then discuss the content of the first post – and any other topics that might come up. This form of Internet-based colloquy has it roots in online discussion communities called “newsgroups”, which were conceived in 1979 and reached their peak usage in the 1990s (Arendholz, 2013). Now, there are myriad message boards available online. They are frequently used in educational contexts to mediate discussions, and have been shown to enrich student learning (Krentler & Willis-Flurry, 2005). They have also been used to gather data for academic research: They can, for instance, facilitate online focus groups (Deggs, Grover, & Kacirek, 2010); and ethnographers can use them to study virtual communities (Steinmetz, 2012).

2.10.2 Message Board Literature

People use message boards both to gather information and to socialise (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Studies of online discussions of healthcare issues have been particularly enlightening in regards to the socioemotional facets of interactions on message boards. Gold, Boggs, Mugisha, & Palladino (2012) found that mothers grieving a stillborn child or the loss of a pregnancy can find solace and support by being involved with message board support groups. Similarly, Houston, Cooper, and Ford (2002) concluded that message boards can help people suffering from depression. In a study of message boards for teenage women who were pregnant or mothers, Sherman and Greenfield (2013) found that a majority of initial posts were oriented towards building community as opposed to seeking information;

they furthermore found that young ladies offer each other emotional support through message boards. Asbury and Woszidlo (2012) examined the message boards of a weight-loss company and found that users offered more emotional support than practical, informational knowledge about best practices for weight loss. In a study of message boards for people suffering from Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, Rodham, McCabe, and Blake (2009) found that the message boards were used to offer and receive support and to express emotions. Johnson, Zastawny, & Kulpa (2010) studied message boards for people who self-injure and discovered that the communities established via the message boards can provide a variety of information to people who self-injure, and, hearteningly, can lead to some people self-injuring less. Of course, message boards can be devoted to the discussion of any imaginable topic, and not only those topics related to healthcare. These healthcare studies were chosen for citation because they amply and poignantly demonstrate the power of communities based in online message boards – and the emotional support these communities can provide. But the Internet is also, famously, a place for words of disparagement and disrespect (see Sindorf, 2013). In either case, people use message boards not merely to post information, but to engage in socioemotional interpersonal interaction, and punctuation marks can help in the conveyance of the emotional and relational meanings writers wish to express.

Emoticons and emoji can be important meaning-making tools for people who post on message boards. Arendholz (2013) studied messages posted to *The Student Room*, a message board service for higher education students in Britain

and abroad. She found that emoji (of both the static and animated varieties) accompanied different speech acts and were a common and important part of posts. They were used in *The Student Room* to express feelings and attitudes, and to stand in for certain interpersonal nonverbal behaviors (such as hugging, for instance); and they were also deployed as a means by which to ameliorate directives (which can be FTAs). In perusing the examples selected by Arendholz (2013), one cannot help but be impressed by these colourful and imaginatively designed and implemented icons: They "came in handy," Arendholz (2013) wrote, "to reproduce non-verbal behavior iconically, among others hugging, high-fiving, or flipping somebody the birds, or to convey opinions quite outspokenly" (p. 250). Arendholz also found, incidentally, that posters used other orthographic means (such as fonts and all-capitalised letters) to contribute to the meanings of posts. In a study of emoticons on educational message boards, Yigit (2005) found that people used more emoticons in social contexts than in task-oriented contexts. In the same study, it was also found that emoticons, when used in socioemotional situations, can help people to express ideas and feelings and understand the ideas and feelings of other message board users. Waseleski (2006) scrutinised the use of exclamation points on an online discussion list (a medium similar to, if not exactly the same as, a message board) and found that the marks were used frequently to signify, in addition to excitement, friendliness and emphasis.

2.10.3 Reddit

The messages evaluated for the second study of this thesis were taken from message board host Reddit.com. Reddit has been styled as a news aggregation site

(Bergstrom, 2011; Wasike, 2011), but it is much more than that – it is also a place for social interaction and community building. Indeed, at the top of Reddit's "About Reddit" page, the website's mascot is shown with a speech bubble, the contents of which read, "we power awesome communities" (About Reddit, 2015, online, page heading). A Pew Research Center study reports that 6% of Internet-using adults use Reddit (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Reddit itself reports that in February of 2015, it had 151,712,210 unique visitors (About Reddit, 2015, online, "stats at a glance"). Reddit hosts discussions and discussion communities (called "subreddits") on a vast array of topics (Sanderson & Rigby, 2013). Registered users of the site can up-vote or down-vote posts and comments, such that posts that receive approbation can be given precedence and posts that receive opprobrium can be moved out of sight (Sanderson & Rigby, 2013). Moreover, Reddit users are assigned scores reflecting the up-votes or down-votes they have received for posts and comments (Bergstrom, 2011).

2.10.4 Final Message Board Remarks

There have been very few studies of punctuation mark usage in message boards, and the second study of this thesis will to some degree fill in this lacuna in the current literature. The functions of punctuation marks in message boards will be looked at in general in the study, but uses related to socioemotional communication will be examined in particular; in this way, the study will contribute to our understanding of the ways that people socialise on the Internet.

2.11 Conclusion

Punctuation marks are linguistic signs which aid readers in their understanding of the meanings of written texts. They are signs which possess an interesting semiotic flexibility and subjectivity, such that they can be used to communicate varying meanings, depending upon the context. The digital revolution has led to a new form of written expression which, in many of its manifestations, exhibits a strong trend towards colloquialism and orthographic creativity. Within this context, punctuation marks are used in both traditional and nontraditional ways. Further, pictographic representations such as emoticons are now used as punctuation devices. These new usages and forms of punctuation, as well as the other orthographic techniques mentioned above, are a means for people to increase the semiotic richness of texts.

This thesis offers two studies of punctuation in digital discourse. The first study is of punctuation in text-messages. Text-messaging has become an extremely popular form of digital communication. A digital DCT can be used to help us better understand the ways that punctuation is used in the text-messaging medium; this method of data collection will be more fully explained in Chapter 4. Text-messages are used for many communicative purposes, but they are frequently relational and emotional in nature, and, in this thesis, special attention is given to the ways that punctuation can contribute towards the construction of relational and emotional meanings in text-messages. The second study of the thesis examines punctuation use in online message boards. Like text-messages, message boards can mediate socioemotional interactions, so punctuation marks

will, in the second study, be examined in terms of how they operate as signifiers of emotional and relational meanings. In both studies, the functions of punctuation marks will be discussed in respect to the speech acts they accompany, and it will thus explicitly be shown how punctuation can influence social action in textual exchanges. Moreover, any similarities of punctuation usage in text-messages and message boards may suggest some general patterns of punctuation use in digital discourse.

Chapter 3: A Rhetorical Model of Punctuation Mark Function

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a rhetorical model of punctuation mark function is delineated; the model was inspired by and adapted from the content of an exchange of articles by Dawkins (1995, 1996) and Hasset (1996). The model, in short, states the following: Punctuation can contribute to or detract from a writer's credibility; punctuation can serve multiple vital clarifying purposes; and punctuation can convey emotional and relational meanings. These three components of the model are broad rhetorical categories of punctuation mark function. Within these categories, the functions of punctuation marks can be understood in terms of notions from the discipline of linguistic pragmatics (e.g., speech acts, Gricean Maxims, and politeness theories). In this chapter, the categories are introduced and explained, and it is shown how punctuation marks perform their functions within these categories largely as pragmatics markers. Hypothetical examples are given for the purposes of illustration here, and in later chapters empirical evidence from the thesis's studies is given which validates the model both as an explanatory device and as a guide for analysis.

The chapter is laid out in the following manner. In section 3.2, the field of rhetoric in general is examined and it is shown how it applies to the study of punctuation. In section 3.3, the articles in the aforementioned exchange are reviewed, and it is shown how the model presented in this thesis has been adapted from them. In sections 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6, the three respective tenets of the model

are discussed. In section 3.7, other theoretical points are explored, and in section 3.8, concluding remarks are offered.

3.2 The Field of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is one of humanity's oldest fields of study. In the ancient world, rhetoric was related to persuasion and public speaking. The first example we have of the formal teaching of rhetoric is from the 400s BC, when a period of political upheaval on the island of Sicily led to a proliferation of land disputes; a tutor named Corax capitalised on this chaotic and litigious situation by offering to teach people how to best represent their property claims in court (Lynn, 2010). Corax inscribed his theory of rhetoric in a document titled *Art of Rhetoric*; this work has been lost, but there is historical evidence to suggest that a major tenet of the work was the importance of expounding upon probabilities when making assertions about uncertain issues (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2002).

In the 300s BC, Aristotle's teachings on the subject of rhetoric led to the compilation of what is essentially the first communication textbook, *Rhetoric*. In this still-relevant and much-studied opus, Aristotle offers the following definition of rhetoric: "The faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (online, Book 1, Part 2). Aristotle viewed rhetoric not as a field, but as a faculty, i.e. an ability. Aristotle posited three modes of persuasion: Ethos, which involves the speaker's presentation of personal integrity; pathos, which involves the speaker's cultivation of certain affective states in the audience; and logos, which involves the speaker's employment of logical arguments to support the positions he or she puts forward. Although Aristotle wrote about these three

topics in light of persuasive communication, the topics demonstrate some of the ways communication in general can function – namely, in the sharing of meanings related to credibility, emotion, and logical ideas. The triadic model of punctuation herein presented, it will be noticed, is closely related to these three functions, reminding us that while the media and the styles of communication may change, its potential functions are perennial.

Since its inception in the world of ancient Greece, rhetoric has developed into a full and fruitful discipline. Definitions of the term "rhetoric", and conceptions of what exactly constitute the field of rhetoric, abound (Lynn, 2010; McNally, 1970). While, as mentioned above, the ancient understandings of rhetoric were largely centered upon public speaking and persuasion, over the centuries, understandings of rhetoric have broadened considerably. Lynn (2010) gave a three-part definition of rhetoric, as understood from the standpoint of teaching written composition:

> (1) "Rhetoric" refers to practical instruction in how to make an argument and persuade others more effectively.
>
> (2) "Rhetoric" also refers to the strategies that people use in shaping discourse for particular purposes.
>
> (3) "Rhetoric" also refers to the study of (1) and (2). (p. 14)

Campbell and Huxman (2009) defined rhetoric as "the study of all the processes by which people influence each other through symbols (verbal, nonverbal, visual, aural)" (p. xvii), and Foss (2009) defined it as "the human use of symbols to communicate" (p. 3). To give some popular definitions, Johnson's

famous dictionary published in 1755 defined “rhetorick” first as “The act of speaking not merely with propriety, but with art and elegance,” and second as “The power of persuasion, oratory” (online, Definitions 1 and 2); and the current Merriam-Webster dictionary’s first definition of “rhetoric” is “the art of speaking or writing effectively” (online, Definition 1).

Given these definitions, rhetoric in general can be viewed as the study and practice of effective communication. To put it another way, rhetoric is concerned with the ways by which meanings can be efficaciously conveyed in messages, such that message-receivers will comprehend what the message-sender desires for them to comprehend. (This definition is in keeping with the more contemporary definitions of the term, as cited above; however, the more persuasion-oriented form of rhetoric is still tied to this contemporary understanding, in that in order for an orator or writer to persuade, he or she must communicate persuasive concepts effectively.)

Any form of communication can be understood from a rhetorical perspective. The effective speechwriter rhetorically evaluates the purpose of the speech, the speech’s audience and their expectations, and the general situation in which the speech will be delivered, so that he or she can construct a piece of oratory that will be comprehensible to the audience and appropriate for the situation in which it will be uttered. The effective book author likewise keeps in mind the book’s purpose and audience. And the effective text-messenger considers similar factors: The purpose of the text-message and the person or persons to whom the message will be sent. By evaluating communicative

situations in a rhetorical manner, communicators are enabled to make decisions about the best ways to convey intended meanings.

Rhetoric, then, is clearly tied to the study of linguistics, in that linguistic decisions are made in order to convey certain meanings. From the rhetorical perspective, punctuation marks – whether in books, articles, chat-room conversations, text-messages, or other media – are viewed as orthographic devices that can serve to influence the efficacy of messages; in particular, they are viewed as influencing the efficacy of messages by contributing towards the credibility of the sender, clarifying meanings, and communicating emotional and relational information.

3.3 Article Review

3.3.1 Dawkins' Rhetorical Theory

In an article titled "Teaching punctuation as a rhetorical tool", Dawkins (1995) observed that excellent writers often do not follow the punctuation rules enumerated in style guides; rather, they "punctuate according to their intended meaning, their intended emphasis" (p. 534). In accordance with this observation, Dawkins' (1995) offered a method of teaching punctuation that emphasises the creation of meaning over a slavish adherence to prescriptive rules. There are certain guiding principles of punctuation, according to Dawkins (1995), which writers should follow, and yet there is often a significant amount of freedom in the choice of punctuation marks. Dawkins (1995) posited that punctuation choices should involve not only grammatical considerations (i.e., considerations of his guiding principles), but also considerations of the meaning and emphasis the

author wishes to communicate. His system "is a surprisingly simple system", he wrote; "it is a system that enables writers to achieve important – even subtle – rhetorical effects" (p. 533). It is worth noting that the duo of dashes in the preceding quote is an apt example of the ways in which emphasis can be given, and hence meaning can be made, with punctuation marks. In short, Dawkins' (1995) pedagogical strategy is to teach punctuation in a way that is in accord with generally-observable best practices, and yet that encourages students to be engaged in choosing marks to create meaning. This strategy is starkly opposed to the more arbitrary and rules-based negative approach that has students punctuate to avoid violating rules. A short description of Dawkins' (1995) principles and pedagogical theory is offered in the following paragraphs.

Dawkins' (1995) principles are predicated upon a hierarchy of punctuation marks. In this hierarchy, the marks are ordered according to the degree of disjunction they provide. At the top of the hierarchy are the full-stop (or "period" in the American vernacular), the question mark, and the exclamation point, which provide the greatest level of disjunction. The marks that provide a medium level of disjunction are the semicolon, the colon (which, according to Dawkins [1995], also carries an "anticipatory" meaning), and the dash (which, according to Dawkins [1995], also carries an "emphatic" meaning). The comma provides a low level of disjunction, and the "zero", which is the absence of a mark, carries no disjunction.

Dawkins (1995) used the independent clause as his primary unit of discussion: "all prose", he wrote, "written or spoken, consists of concatenations of

independent clauses" (p. 535); importantly, he added that these independent clauses include "underlying independent clauses" – ones that are incomplete, and yet whose missing elements can be easily inferred by readers or hearers (p. 535). Dawkins (1995) wrote that single independent clauses may have words, phrases, or dependent clauses attached to them in three different arrangements. First, additions may come before the independent clause; in these cases, only zeroes, commas, dashes, or colons may be used to separate the pre-clausal unit from the independent clause. Second, additions may come after the independent clause; in these cases, any mark may separate the independent clause from the post-clausal unit. And third, additions may come in the middle of independent clauses; in these cases, any punctuation which can operate in pairs (zeroes, commas, dashes, and parentheses) may be used on either side of the interrupting unit in order to separate it from the surrounding independent clause. After this consideration of single independent clauses, Dawkins (1995) turned his attention to the ways that independent clauses can be punctuated relative to each other. In his view, independent clauses can be separated using the punctuation marks listed in the hierarchy, or with conjunctions, or with a combination of a punctuation mark and a conjunction. (He noted that zeroes without conjunctions are usually only used to separate independent clauses in poetic and experimental writing.)

Dawkins (1995) used the terms "raising" and "lowering" to refer to the acts of picking marks higher or lower on the hierarchy. Raising leads to greater levels of disjunction, thereby potentially affording the portion of text following (or surrounded by) the punctuation more emphasis; and lowering leads to a

greater since of contiguity between the punctuated portions of text. In addition to the punctuation hierarchy, writers can also consider the traditional meanings associated with punctuation marks when making decisions about which mark to use: For example, the colon can be used to convey a medium amount of disjunction as well as a sense of anticipation, the dash can be used to convey a medium amount of disjunction as well as a sense of emphasis, the exclamation mark can be used to convey a maximum amount of disjunction along with a sense of excitement, and so on. In regards to the decisions to be made concerning connecting independent clauses, the hierarchy of punctuation may be considered, along with the semantic content of any conjunctions that may be used. Dawkins' (1995) article thus offers a series of guidelines for punctuation usage, while also highlighting how punctuation marks can be chosen to contribute to the rhetorical construction of meaning.

3.3.2 Hassett's Response

Hassett (1996) responded to Dawkins (1995) with an article titled, "Toward a broader understanding of the rhetoric of punctuation". In this response piece, Hassett (1996) lauded Dawkins (1995) for his theory, and asserted that additional rhetorical concepts would enlarge and improve the theory. First, Hassett (1996) wrote that the concept of genre should be a part of any rhetorical theory of punctuation, since different genres of writing call for different styles of punctuation. Second, Hassett (1996) wrote that the concept of ethos (i.e., credibility) should be considered. (It should be noted that Hassett's [1996] view of the relationship between ethos and punctuation is different than that presented

in this thesis; this point shall be more fully explained below). According to Hassett (1996), the preexisting ethos of the writer – that is, the writer's credibility apart from the written piece – will contribute to what is deemed acceptable in the writer's text: As Hasset (1996) explained, "I am much more inclined to accept that Alice Walker used a sentence fragment for rhetorical effect than I might be if I encountered the same fragment in a student paper" (p. 420); he went on to add, "our attribution of intention in cases of unconventional punctuation may be tied to our feelings toward the author of a text" (p. 420). Third, Hassett (1996) wrote about the importance of reader interpretation of punctuation marks. He asserted that not all readers will have the exact same view of what a mark means. He gave the example of the dash, which Dawkins (1995) labeled as having an "emphatic" meaning, but which Hassett (1996) viewed not necessarily as something which provides emphasis, but rather as something which propels the reader forward along the line of text. Fourth and finally, Hassett (1996) brought up the point of Burkean identification. (Again, his usage of this rhetorical concept is different than the one presented in this thesis, as shall be discussed below.) Hassett (1996) pointed out that students often attempt to emulate the punctuation practices of excellent writers, thereby attempting to identify their writing with the writing of professionals.

3.3.3 Dawkins' Response to Hassett

In the final article of this exchange, Dawkins (1996) offered Hassett (1996) a concise follow-up response. He wrote that while his rhetorical theory of punctuation did not explicitly make mention of the concepts which Hassett (1996)

brought up, it does have application to them: In its simplicity, the theory can be applied toward any rhetorical concept. At the end of his response, Dawkins (1996) addressed the important issue of reader interpretation of punctuation marks. In his opinion, we should view punctuation marks in the same way we view words: There will be some differences of interpretation concerning their meanings, but they do possess general meanings that most people will agree upon.

3.3.4 Adaptation of these Ideas

The authors of these articles are concerned primarily with the issue of how best to teach punctuation in the context of higher education; and yet in exploring this issue, they have necessarily begun a discussion concerning how punctuation marks function. They view punctuation in the light of rhetoric, and this perspective is appropriate, since punctuation marks are written symbols that aid in the effective construction of meaning. Thus this exchange of articles inspired the rhetorical view of punctuation constructed in this thesis. There are, of course, significant differences between the rhetorical theory of punctuation that is preliminarily drawn by the authors of these articles, and the model presented in this chapter. The most significant departure is based upon the fact that this thesis is concerned with digital discourse, which was only in its most incipient stages at the times when the preceding articles were composed. Since the mid-1990s, digital discourse has not only exploded in popularity around the globe, but it has effectively helped to alter the ways that people communicate with the written word – and so it has contributed to changes in punctuation practices. These new practices call for a new and more thorough model – one that takes into account

the informal nature of much of the text in digital discourse, and one that recognises the emotional and interpersonal meanings that punctuation can carry. Further, while the model purveyed in this thesis includes the rhetorical concepts of ethos and Burkean identification, it applies them to punctuation very differently than Hassett (1996). Where Hassett (1996) viewed the ethos of the author as something which affected the reader's response to punctuation, the model presented here views punctuation as a means by which the author can cultivate ethos. Undoubtedly both of these views are helpful, but this thesis, and, in turn, the model offered in this thesis, is concerned with how punctuation can function in texts, not how a reader might respond based on prior understanding of the writer's credibility. (Further, as shall be demonstrated in the following section, the view of ethos adopted in this thesis is more closely aligned with Aristotle's original conception.) Hassett (1996) relates Burkean identification to writers trying to punctuate in such a way that their texts are identifiable with the texts of respected scribes; in this thesis, contrastingly, Burkean identification is viewed as something that is accomplished interpersonally: Writers can identify with their interlocutors through punctuation by signifying emotion or by reflecting the punctuation of the interlocutor. Again, both of these views are worthy of consideration, but in the case of this thesis and this model, the interpersonal aspects of punctuation are of greater importance than aspects concerning the writer's attempt to punctuate in a manner reflecting literary luminaries.

While it is true that the model of punctuation presented in this thesis does patently diverge from the theoretical tenets discussed in the exchange reviewed

above, it should be made abundantly clear that the model herein presented does not seek to argue against or counter any of the ideas of Dawkins (1995, 1996) or Hassett (1996); on the contrary, the model seeks to build upon the foundation set by these two scholars. The rhetorical ideas presented in this thesis should be considered along with the ideas of Dawkins' (1995, 1996) and Hassett (1996). Taken together, all of these conceptualisations can lead to a greater understanding of the ways punctuation marks function in texts to contribute towards the effective construction and conveyance of meaning.

3.4 Credibility

Traditionally, in rhetorical circles, the notion of communicator credibility has been termed "ethos". This Greek word was taken from the work of Aristotle, who was perhaps the first scholar to expound upon the importance of communicator credibility. In his *Rhetoric*, he discussed the importance of an orator's perceived integrity in the context of persuasive public speaking:

> Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. This kind of persuasion, like the others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. (online, Book 1, Part 2, para. 3)

Aristotle importantly pointed out that credibility is something that can be built within the communicative act itself. Therefore, the manner in which communication is accomplished can edify or tear down credibility, and this point is not limited to public speaking contexts. To give an example: A person who is unable to make eye contact and who stumbles over words when making simple statements may be perceived as being evasive or deceitful, while a person who looks his or her interlocutor in the eye and speaks as if at ease is more likely to be perceived as trustworthy.

Credibility is valuable in any communication situation. As Aristotle pointed out in *Rhetoric,* in public speaking situations, audiences are more apt to receive the points of a speaker who is perceived as virtuous and able, whereas they would be more likely to disregard the points of a speech given by a person lacking credibility. In a group or organizational setting, the credible communicator will probably have his or her ideas more readily considered, whereas the ideas of a suspect communicator may be disregarded, or at least not given full attention. In interpersonal social settings, the credible communicator can build and develop relationships more easily than an untrustworthy person. In any such case, a person who communicates in a manner which demonstrates a lack of credibility could experience any number of detrimental repercussions, including, to give a few examples, the deterioration of personal relationships, the loss of social respect, or even the termination of a professional position. Thus, in addition to being committed to sharing truth, communicators must be aware of the ways in which they can cultivate the personal air of truth, knowledge, and

competence – they must not undercut themselves by seeming to be deceitful, stupid, or inept.

3.4.1 Credibility and Context

Communicative credibility is inextricably bound to communicative context. Certain styles of communication are called for in certain contexts, and using the wrong style can lead to a loss of credibility. It is axiomatic that people in informal interpersonal contexts should not speak as if they were addressing Parliament, and vice versa. The rhetorical concept of genre, as articulated by Hassett (1996), is helpful here. Communication occurs within different genres which have differing conventions (Halliday & Hasan, 1989); departure from the conventions could lead to a loss of credibility, since it would appear that the communicator is ignorant of the proper behaviors or unable to actualize them. Genres, although structured to some degree, are also elastic (O'Keeffe, 2006). Within an individual genre, common sense dictates that different contexts may call for different styles. For instance, in the genre of email, different contexts call for different styles of writing. In a case where two close friends fire off emails to one another every thirty seconds or so in an exchange similar to an online chat, a certain informality of language and form would not only be acceptable, but called for: It would be unusual to include proper salutations and sign-offs, and would slow the progress of the virtual conversation. Alternatively, in a case where a potential employee applies for a job via email, formal language and conventional form would be called for. It would be unusual, and potentially injurious to the applicant's

chances of employment, to exclude the salutation and sign-off, or to write in an unduly casual manner.

3.4.2 Credibility and Punctuation

These issues of credibility extend to the world of punctuation. In the realm of formal writing – which is to say, in the realm of professional and academic writing – punctuation which follows general principles of standard use can demonstrate that a writer is knowledgeable and articulate and therefore worthy of consideration and esteem. Contrarily, punctuation which is haphazard and flouts general best practices can demonstrate that a writer is lacking in knowledge and eloquence and therefore not worthy of consideration and esteem. In informal writing contexts, nonstandard punctuation can be a way to build emotional, or interpersonal, credibility: A person can use punctuation such as exclamation points, emoticons, and emoji, to demonstrate excitement or affection or other affective states that are appropriate to the situation at hand. In certain contexts, and depending upon the recipient, the lack of these types of emotive punctuation – or at least some other signs of emotion, such as affective words – might make a message seem flat, insincere, or sarcastic. These are points that will be further explored in this thesis's studies.

In the realm of digital discourse, there are both formal and informal contexts. These contexts do not exist in a strict dichotomy, but rather on a continuum, and numerous nuanced contextual factors will dictate the punctuation style a writer should use. As illustrated above, there are certain situations in which email should be used formally, and others when it should be used informally. IM

chatting would generally be viewed as an informal medium, and yet there are circumstances when even it would call for a more formal writing style. Many different kinds of institutions utilise web chat platforms as a way to communicate with people, often with the aim of answering questions and helping to solve problems. In chatting contexts such as these, in which the purpose is task-based and less emotive, a certain level of formality is definitely called for, both on the part of the professional, and the person who is seeking service, such that information can be exchanged simply and quickly. That is not to say that there can be no signs of emotion in these virtual conversations: A well placed smiley or an exclamation point can convey friendliness, and that may serve the exchange well. In the world of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, there are, again, different contexts in which different styles would be appropriate. On a business's Facebook page or Twitter feed, some level of formalism would usually be called for. On an individual's personal page or feed, there is more leeway. Text-messages, likewise, are used for sundry purposes, both formal and informal, and thus different styles of punctuation can be used in them as well. In the case of any of these digital media, the recipient of a person's message should be a factor in the decision of whether to us a formal or informal style. Krohn (2004), for instance, prudently suggested that students of business communication be taught to consider the generation of the recipient when deciding whether or not emoticons might be appropriate in a message. Furthermore, there are some recipients who might highly prize creative punctuation usage, while there are others who might view such usages as inane or puerile. Some may view the use of

punctuation at all as stuffy and unnecessary. A knowledge of the recipient can help the sender choose an appropriate punctuation style.

Where the other two tenets of this rhetorical model are concerned with the specific ways that punctuation can create meaning within a message, this tenet is concerned with the ways that punctuation can create meaning about the person sending the message. Different punctuation styles can build credibility in different situations. If, in a digital message which is more task-based or professional, there is a profusion of exclamation points and pictograms, the sender may well be viewed as lacking a proper sense of appropriateness. If, however, such a litany of marks were used in an interpersonal message for purposes of expressing emotion or conveying humor, not only might the punctuation be seen as acceptable, but indeed it could be viewed as eloquent and clever, thereby increasing the social credibility of the sender. In these informal situations, punctuation can also demonstrate a certain authenticity of emotion – that is, it can show that the sender is in fact feeling what he or she is representing in text. Punctuation is thus a method by which digital communicators can demonstrate genuineness, knowledge, and communicative competence. A person who is characterised by such attributes will be able to engage in more effective communication.

3.5 Clarity

Punctuation marks function as important clarifiers in written messages. Communicative clarity is an important aspect of rhetoric. I. A. Richards (1969), in fact, thought that rhetoric should be defined as “a study of misunderstanding and its remedies” (p. 3): Rhetoric, in his view, was to be a field devoted to the study of

ways that messages could be made understandable; this view, it will be observed, is very similar to the definition adopted in this thesis. Given the intrinsic imperfections of languages and the vast and sundry differences between people, occasional miscommunication is not only natural – it is inevitable. Miscommunication can lead to many problems, some of them merely humorous, some of them extremely serious. In order to avoid tribulations caused by communicative infelicities, some effort must be expended on the part of communicators: They must work to ensure that their communication is lucid, and in the orthographic realm, punctuation can help tremendously in this respect.

3.5.1 Structural Clarity

In the first place, punctuation marks can clarify messages by performing their basic and original function of clarifying the structure of messages. More specifically, punctuation marks can create disjunction between words, phrases, and clauses in such a way as to elucidate the underlying meanings of text, create rhythms (even if they are read in the mind), and give emphasis to certain ideas. Often, in the world of digital discourse, messages are quick and simple. In these cases, punctuation may not be necessary in order for the meaning to be effectively conveyed, and it is sometimes excluded without consequence. In other cases, however, even if the message is short, punctuation may be appropriate to help get the meaning across. Consider the two-word message “Leaving later”. Written in that way, it seems to be saying, “I will be leaving after some time has passed.” Now, repunctuated as “Leaving. Later” or “Leaving! Later!” the message conveys something along the lines of “I am leaving and I’ll see you later” as a result of the

disjunction created between the word “Leaving” and the word “Later”. And finally, repunctuated again as “Leaving later?”, it means “Are you leaving after some time has passed?” as a result of the interrogative mood indicated by the question mark. In these ways, punctuation can radically alter the grammar of even very short utterances. In longer missives, such as extended emails or text-messages, punctuation is helpful for structural clarification in the same way that it is in any longer piece of prose.

3.5.2 Conversational Implicature

Punctuation marks also clarify texts by conveying conversational implicature. According to Grice’s Cooperative Principle (1975/1996), which was introduced briefly in Chapter 2, human communication is generally an activity in which interlocutors work together to share meaning. Grice (1975/1996) outlined four maxims which are foundational for cooperative communication: The first is the Maxim of Quantity, which says that messages should not be too brief or too verbose – they should contain the appropriate amount of information for the situation in which they are sent; the second is the Maxim of Quality, which says that messages should be true and that the communicators who offer them should have reasonable justification for believing them to be true; the third is the Maxim of Relation, which says that messages should be relevant to the circumstances in which they are given; and the fourth is the Maxim of Manner, which says that messages should be clear. These four Maxims are sometimes not followed, even in situations where the speaker or writer fully intends to be cooperative. In these situations, there are often implied meanings, which Grice terms “conversational

implicatures", that make up for the violation and allow whatever is missing to be inferred, or whatever is seemingly amiss to be understood in the correct light. Numerous factors can create conversational implicature: They include linguistic conventions, shared knowledge of the past, non-verbal and paralinguistic behavior, and, for the purposes of this thesis, punctuation.

Punctuation marks can be deployed in numerous ways to convey implied meanings that can make up for apparent transgressions of the Gricean Maxims. A message which says simply "lunch" would seem to be lacking in enough information for a recipient to know what the sender is trying to communicate; this message would therefore violate the Maxim of Quantity. When a simple question mark is appended to the word, "lunch?", although the messages is still only a single word, the punctuation mark indicates a conversational implicature which would lead most people to understand the message as asking, "Are you free for lunch?" or "Would you like to go to lunch?" In other situations in which the Maxim of Quantity is seemingly flouted, ellipses can be of help in establishing conversational implicature: When placed at the end of a message which appears to be incomplete, they can let the recipient know that certain things are being left to his or her imagination; or they can let the recipient know that the current transmission has been, for whatever reason, cut short, but there is more to come at some time in the future. The Maxim of Quality is violated in the cases of sarcasm and other forms of ironic communication in which the meaning of the words is not intended to be taken as the literal truth. Emoticons such as the smiley :) and the winkey ;), or their emoji analogues, can demonstrate that messages are not

meant to be taken at face value. Similarly, jokes can violate the Maxim of the Quality, since they are frequently not meant to be understood as truth. Jokes can also violate the Maxim of Relation, since their literal meanings may not have any direct bearing on the information being exchanged between interlocutors. As in the case of ironic messages, jokes can be signaled with emoticons or emoji. The Maxim of Manner may be violated in digital discourse whenever the tone of a message is not immediately obvious: Such a message, while its words may be understood, is unclear from an affective standpoint. As has been discussed at length in the preceding chapter, in digital discourse, the lack of nonverbal and paralinguistic cues from an in-person interlocutor can lead to a certain tonal opacity in messages. In messages where the emotional import is unclear, punctuation can be used to show how a message is meant to be taken. A more robust discussion of the matter of punctuation conveying emotional information will be given in the next section of this chapter.

3.5.3 Illocutionary Force Clarity

Punctuation can also clarify the speech acts, or illocutionary forces, of messages. Austin (1962) posited that when people use words they both share meaning and perform social actions. This thought gave birth to Speech Act Theory, which was further expanded and developed in the work of Searle (1979). Speech Act Theory was succinctly introduced in Chapter 2, and is here discussed with further elaboration. According to Austin (1962), any given statement has three constituent acts associated with it. The first is the locutionary act, which is the transferal of basic meaning. The second is the illocutionary act, which is the

social action accomplished with the words. The third is the perlocutionary act, which is the effect that the message has on the mind(s) of the person or people who hear it. The comment, "You look nice today," when uttered aloud, carries the locutionary act of telling the person being addressed that he or she is looking good in some way – perhaps the person is well-dressed or looking particularly well-rested and chipper. The illocutionary act is that of complimenting or praising. The perlocutionary act of this utterance, in the vast majority of cases, would be making the addressee of the message feel good about him or herself. Searle (1979) pointed out that there are times when speech acts are indirect. Consider a situation in which someone is invited to go to dinner and he or she replies, "I'm free after seven." The locutionary act of this utterance lets the hearer know when the speaker has no prior engagements. The illocutionary force, in this case, is twofold: These words function as a statement, but also, indirectly, as an acceptance of the invitation, if the dinner can take place after seven o'clock. The perlocutionary force will probably be to cause the inviter to plan to meet the invitee after seven o'clock. Another example of an indirect speech act is offered in the preceding chapter, and is here quickly reiterated: A boy approaches his mother with a ball and exclaims, "It's such a nice day outside!" The indirect speech act at play in this utterance is an illocutionary request to be allowed to go outside and play. Searle (1979) also developed a classification system for illocutionary acts. In his system, there are five major categories: Assertives, which are statements of fact (e.g., "I sailed from England to America on the Queen Mary 2."); Directives, which are imperative utterances (e.g., "Please board the Queen

Mary 2 now."); Commissives, which commit the communicator to some future act (e.g., "I will sail on the Queen Mary 2 in the spring."); Expressives, which are displays of affect concerning an implicit proposition (e.g., "Thank you for joining me on this sea voyage."); and Declarations, which are statements in which whatever is said is made to be the case in reality (e.g., "I christen you the "Queen Mary 2""). Another important notion related to Speech Act Theory is that of the felicity condition. Felicity conditions, introduced in an inchoate form by Austin (1962) and further explored and developed by Searle (1979), are factors attendant to a given speech act that give the act legitimacy. If someone utters a Directive, for instance, then the person whom that person directs should be able to perform the action he or she is called to enact – otherwise the speech act is lacking in felicity. Similarly, any person can articulate a Declarative (say, a marriage), but that person must have the proper authority in order for the speech act to be felicitous; if the person does not have the proper authority, then the speech act is infelicitous and void. One important type of felicity condition is the sincerity condition, which, according to Searle (1979), is the psychological state that is appropriate for a given speech act; if one states a fact (thereby performing an Assertive), in order for the sincerity condition to be met, the utterer must believe the fact; and, if one congratulates a friend (thereby performing an Expressive), in order for the sincerity condition to be met, the congratulator should actually be happy for the person receiving the remarks of felicitation. These conditions are important for our purposes, because when a person expresses appropriate affective meaning or emphasis with punctuation marks, these marks can reinforce

the sincerity conditions of speech acts – they can, in short, aid in the display of sincerity. And this sincerity contributes to the writer's credibility – in particular, it contributes to their interpersonal credibility.

Dresner and Herring (2010) offered an excellent discussion of the ways that punctuation can be involved in the clarification of the illocutionary force of a message. A section of their paper merits quoting in its entirety:

> Analogous to syntactic indications of mood, some of the signs that appear as part of standard contemporary typography help indicate force. Thus, the question mark is coupled with the interrogative mood to indicate acts of questioning, and the exclamation mark, albeit more heterogeneous in function than the question mark, is associated with commands, protests, and other speech acts that can be considered forceful or emphatic. However, as in the case of the relation between mood and force, punctuation marks are not nearly as numerous as types of speech acts, nor are they correlated in a strict, rule-like fashion with the speech acts that they indicate. This is not to suggest, however, that textual markers such as punctuation cannot be useful and important in helping indicate the force of written utterances, nor that written communication might not benefit from expanding the textual means for expressing force. We turn now to argue that such an expansion is taking place in contemporary CMC with respect to emoticons. (p. 255)

In this selection, the authors made the point that punctuation in general can help in the understanding of illocutionary force. Further down in their article they

asserted that though emoticons are frequently associated exclusively with emotional meaning (an understandable association, given that their name is a portmanteau that combines the words "emotion" and "icon"), they often function to show what a sender is actually doing with his or her words: They clarify, that is, the sender's speech act or illocutionary force. Dresner and Herring (2010) gave some apposite examples of how such clarification can be accomplished. In the preliminary passages of their article, they pointed out that the :-p emoticon, which is a representation of a visage from which a tongue is protruding, does not really convey any specific emotion, but rather can convey illocutionary forces such as teasing, joking, or flirting, depending upon the context in which it appears. (Generally this emoticon would convey a certain level of positive affect; however, Dresner and Herring's [2010] point is taken – the emoticon is not merely emotional, since it also helps the reader to understand the illocutionary force of the message.) The authors furthermore gave the winking face ;-) as an indicator of the illocutionary force of joking, and observed that joking is not associated with only one emotion. Dresner and Herring (2010) then went on to assert that emoticons can be used to diminish FTAs: They gave the example of someone who had written a message that could be construed as a Directive, but the addition of a winking emoticon (to be specific, this ;-> subspecies of the winkey) helped to show that the message was really meant to be taken as more of an Assertive. Dresner and Herring (2010) went on to give the example of a person who had written a message in which many personal problems were delineated. At the end of the message, the writer had put a smile :). Clearly, the smile was not meant to

mean that the person was happy about her problems; it was, rather, as Dresner and Herring (2010) argued, meant to make the message seem less like a complaint and more like an assertion. She was, in effect, mollifying the illocutionary force so as to make it more palatable to readers. It will be noticed that these examples are highly contextualised and nuanced, reminding us of a vital point made by Dresner and Herring (2010): "there appears to be no simple one-to-one mapping between any of the commonly used emoticons discussed in this article and a particular illocutionary force" (p. 260); emoticons, like other punctuation marks such as the exclamation point, can help readers to understand the illocutionary forces of utterances, but the context is vital for understanding how in particular the marks function.

3.5.4 Co-presence of the Clarifying Functions

Punctuation marks can thus clarify messages by elucidating structure, providing conversational implicature, and explicating illocutionary force. Depending on the message, punctuation marks may perform only one of these functions, or they may perform two of the functions, or indeed they may perform all three of the functions. The example given above of the message "Lunch?" is a good example of the way that punctuation can clarify in all of the three ways listed above. The question mark conveys a meaning that is related to both grammatical structure and illocutionary force: It indicates, that is, that the message is to be understood as a question and invitation. The interrogative mark also supplies conversational implicature in the sense that it helps the receiver of the message to understand that the message means something along the lines of "Would you like to go to lunch

today?" Without the question mark, the message would not necessarily carry that fuller meaning – and, even if it did, the message without the question mark certainly would not convey the meaning as efficaciously as in the message that has the question mark. To give an example of how punctuation might operate in two of these clarifying capacities: Suppose, after sending a message that had a glaring typo or mistake, a person sent a follow-up message reading "I'm such a great typist :\". The emoticon works to provide implicature by demonstrating that the message is not meant to be understood as a blunt statement of fact – if it were, it would seem to violate the Maxim of Relation (supposing, of course, that this were not an exchange concerning typing skills), and it could possibly be viewed as flouting the Maxim of Manner, because its purpose could be unclear, as well as the Maxim of Quality, since the person may not actually be a great typist. But with the addition of the emoticon, a certain meaning is conveyed which demonstrates that the message is intended as a wry comment, given the slant of the iconic face's mouth. The emoticon functions to clarify illocutionary force by demonstrating that this message is not simply a statement, but is a self-abnegating witticism. The emoticon in this example could be replaced with the winkey ;) and a similar effect would be achieved concerning the message's lucidity of meaning, but the emotional meaning of the message would seem to be different in that it would be more positive – a point that will be further explored in the following section of this chapter.

3.5.5 Clarifying Asterisks

There is another form of message clarification involving punctuation that should be noted in this section: The asterisk is frequently used in digital discourse as a marker that signals a correction. This method of communicative rectification is seen in multiple genres of digital discourse, but especially those genres that lend themselves to more synchronous exchanges, such as chatting and text-messaging. When people are typing messages to one another at a celeritous pace, and/or when they are using miniscule, telephone-based keyboards, typos are nigh unavoidable. Furthermore, autocorrect programs on mobile phones oftentimes will take a misspelled term – or an unfamiliar term, which, for whatever reason, is not included in the phone's dictionary – and will change it to a word that has a similar orthographic construction, but which has a meaning outrageously divergent from the word originally intended. This problem even has merited its own appellation: "the Cupertino effect"; Zimmer (2011) explained that this phrase was created by European Union writers who saw that the spellcheck program in the 1997 version of Microsoft Word did not recognise the unhyphenated spelling of the word "cooperate" and offered as a replacement the term "Cupertino" (the name of the Californian town where Apple, Inc., one of Microsoft's great rivals, is located). In digital discourse, the Cupertino effect can lead to humorous messages. The Internet is rife with examples of the ways that autocorrect can skew text-messages in hilarious ways. In any case, whenever there are mistakes in digital communiqués, people will often send a follow-up message in which an asterisk is placed in front of or behind the correct version of the word or phrase. For

instance, someone might send the inadvertently incorrect message “The rain is running late” and then send a message which reads either “*train” or “train*” in order to clarify that the message does not directly concern meteorology, but rather the transportation situation of the sender. The asterisk, through such usages as these, has become a sign of orthographic correction. The use of this punctuation mark is yet another way in which punctuation devices are used as clarifiers.

3.6 Emotional and Relational Meaning

Humans communicate cognitions and feelings. Both the ideational and the emotive components of communication are vital. Aristotle, as cited above, recognised these aspects of communication as important in the persuasion of individuals; both logical and emotional appeals were key ingredients in his rhetorical formula. Schnoebelen (2012), in the abstract of his Ph.D. thesis, aptly stated the importance of emotional communication:

> People use language to position themselves, their audiences, and their topics relative to one another. Expressions of emotions are more than internal states made visible, they are actions that have particular interpersonal causes and consequences, which are understood linguistically (“I’m mad/happy/scared”) and which collectively add up. (p. iv)

In in-person conversations, ideational meanings are usually conveyed with words and emotional and relational meanings are usually conveyed with nonverbal behaviors (Richmond, McCroskey, & Payne, 1991). Punctuation marks can be used, and often are used, as a way to convey emotional meanings in the informal

written texts of digital discourse, where body language and paralinguistic cues are absent. In this way, punctuation marks can serve a crucial purpose in communication: That of demonstrating sender's feelings in regards to any number of topics, including his or her circumstances (past, present, or future), the subject under discussion, the receiver or receivers of the message, and the very conversation itself. The demonstration of such feelings, as expressed by Schnoebelen (2012), is not a mere ornament of discussion, nor is it only a supplement to the more ideational meanings expressed – on the contrary, emotional meanings can function as substantive components of communicative acts, and their effects can be far-reaching and powerful.

3.6.1 Meanings of Specific Marks

3.6.1.1 Emoticons

Emoticons are probably the most obvious form of punctuation that convey emotion. As discussed above, emoticons can have functions beyond the expression of affective states – in particular, they can help to clarify the speech act of a message – but they do indeed function as indicators of emotion as well. Some emoticons, as Dresner and Herring (2010) pointed out, do not map automatically to any single emotional state; they give the illustrative example of this emoticon :-p. However, the simple smiley :) – or, if the nose is included, :-) – and the simple sad face :(– or :-(– unquestionably do correspond to certain respective emotions: Happiness and sadness, or, more generally, varying forms of positive affect and negative affect. The :) and the :(will, of course, vary in specific meaning depending upon the context in which they are put forth; they can

be put to highly subtle communicative uses; but all the same, they will always relate in some sense to the general respective emotions associated with positive affect and negative affect. Furthermore, it has been shown that emoticons are impactful in an affective sense. Derks, Bos, and von Grumbkow (2008a), in a study of emoticons, found that "A positive message with a smile is rated more positively than a positive pure message, and a negative message with a supporting frown is more negative than a negative pure message" (p. 385). The "frown" here is a reference to what is denominated above as the sad face; in either case, the sign communicates negative affect. Derks, Bos, and von Grumbkow (2008a) went on to make the following conclusion: "emoticons can serve as useful nonverbal surrogates for facial behavior in online communication and do have an impact on message interpretation" (p. 387). In another study, Derks, Bos, and von Grumbkow (2008b) used a questionnaire to determine people's motives for emoticon use; they found that the three most popular motives were "Expressing emotion…strengthening the message… and expressing humor" (p. 100). Yuasa, Saito, and Mukawa (2011) used fMRI technology to measure the responses of people's brains to emoticons; they found that the sections of the brain associated with the perception of other people's emotions are activated by emoticons; they also found that emoticon-supplemented text, in comparison to text that does not have emoticons, results in stronger activation of the respective sections of the brain that process verbal and nonverbal information.

If someone is sent a kind text-message (such as a message conveying consolation or congratulations or a compliment or something similar), and the

person replies “Thanks” or “Thanks.”, then the responder will have expressed, linguistically, their gratitude. If the person replies with a “Thanks :)” he or she will have expressed his or her gratitude with the word, and will have further expressed his or her affective state with the punctuation. In the first case, a positive affective state may be inferred, since it normally would accompany a statement of gratitude, but in the case in which the emoticon is used, the positive emotion is much more overt. The messages without the emoticon could simply convey mechanical, or perhaps even grudging, gratitude (although it would not necessarily), whereas the message with the emoticon can be taken as having a stronger sense of gratitude and positive affect towards the sender. The message with the emoticon would, to explain this in terms of Speech Act Theory, indicate the fulfilment of the sincerity condition of gratitude, which may be construed as a form of positive affect. This type of emoticon usage, it will be noticed, does not have any effect on the illocutionary force of the message: Whether an emoticon is used or not, the speech act here enacted is that of thanking; however, the emotional weight of the act is in fact altered by the presence of the emoticon. This is an important point: Although emoticons can certainly help clarify illocutionary force, there are cases in which emoticons will carry an emotional meaning only, and will not affect the illocutionary force of the message.

3.6.1.2 Emoji

In the current state of digital discourse, writers often have access to pre-fabricated, stylised pictograms; these are often termed emoji. Many smartphones have entire keyboards of emoji, supplying their users with copious pictographs

that can be inserted into texts with the touch of a button (or screen). Emoji represent any number of different things: Facial expressions, certainly, but also flora and fauna, vehicles, buildings, food, everyday objects such as tools and writing utensils, and common iconic signage. Apple's popular emoji keyboard – which boasts hundreds of pictograms – includes representations of nonfacial body language such as clapping, giving a thumbs-up and thumbs-down, waving, and pointing.

The emoji that signify facial expressions are many and sundry. Because of their great variety, these emoji can convey more specific feelings than the traditional :) and :(and other emoticons. For instance, on the iPhone, there are emoji that represent many different kinds of smiles: There are smiles with open mouths, smiles that are more along the lines of wry grins, and there is even one character who smiles suavely while wearing sunglasses. If someone wishes to express a bit of amorousness, there are no less than four emoji with puckered lips. If someone wishes to express a fairly severe form of anger, there is an emoji which is scarlet-hued and frowning. If someone wishes to express mirth, there is a laughing face with tears coming from its eyes.

Emoji can also convey even more nuanced meanings. If someone wishes to express that special feeling associated with being embarrassed and nervous and amused all at the same time, there is a laughing emoji with a sweat droplet on its brow that seems to serve the purpose with excellence. Likewise, if someone wishes to express a feeling of happiness and contentment tinged with bashfulness – that certain species of self-conscious joy which can come, for instance, from

having received high praise – there are actually two emoji that could serve the purpose: They both represent closed-mouth (and therefore somewhat decorous) smiles, and flushed cheeks. If someone wishes to demonstrate that they are being intentionally absurd, there is of course a winking emoji with its tongue hanging out, whereas if a person wishes to express a more reserved sense of joking, there is a winking emoji that keeps its mouth closed. Emoji can, like emoticons, convey both emotion and illocutionary force. Moreover, it should be noted that emoji, because they represent so many different types of things, can be used in an informational capacity. They can be used to playfully illustrate what has been written, as in the case of someone who writes a message about picking flowers and finishes the message with an emoji representing blossoms. Or they can stand in for words, as is shown in the following examples. If a person wants some French fries, he or she can send a message which says "In the mood for" and then insert the French fries emoji. If a person receives a message inquiring as to his or her present location, he or she can respond with a picture of a house if he or she is at home, or an office building if he or she is at work. Someone asked conversationally about the weather where he or she is could respond with an image of falling leaves, or water droplets on an umbrella, or a snowflake (or many snowflakes), or a benevolently shining, and smiling, sun.

Emoji are not limited to the medium of text-messaging. Because smartphones now are used to access all of the many communication media the Internet facilitates (including social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, message boards, and chat rooms), these pictograms are being used in many

different textual media. Skype, Gmail, and many message board providers offer their own emoji for writers to use. Even Microsoft Word, in its most recent iterations, offers emoji.

3.6.1.3 Exclamation Points

Exclamation points are another possible way of conveying affect in digital discourse. The exclamation point, as its name suggests, is traditionally associated with the emotions which would accompany verbal exclamations: Namely, different forms of excitement. And certainly exclamation marks continue, to some greater or lesser degree, to convey positive or negative excitement. However, Waseleski (2006), in a study of exclamation points on online discussion lists, found that the exclamation point is frequently used, by both genders, as a marker of friendliness. Similarly, Baron and Ling (2011) argued that the exclamation point can be viewed as a "courtesy symbol" (p. 54). Friendly or polite uses of the exclamation point may not communicate pure excitement, but they do convey a certain level of positive affect, if, importantly, the content of the message is not inherently negative. Exclamation points, when used in patently nonnegative circumstances, show, on the part of the person who included them in a message, a level of engagement in the discussion, and at least some amount of positive feeling towards the interaction and those involved in the interaction. Put another way, exclamation points are often used for purposes of affability or courtesy; and even though in such cases they may not be conveying pure excitement, they do signify some measure of social enthusiasm. If the "Lunch?" example from above is given an exclamation mark at its end, "Lunch?!", a new, positive affect is

introduced. An exclamation point of this sort seems to convey an excitement on the part of the sender concerning the prospect of a midday meal with the recipient. This excitement is also a sign of courtesy, in that excitement to be in someone's company is generally taken as a compliment. Thus the exclamation mark can show both excitement and courtesy. When an exclamation point is included in a quick message of gratitude like the "Thanks!" message from above, it could, like the "Lunch?!" message, carry either a meaning of excitement, or courtesy, or both. If the service rendered to the sender of the "Thanks!" message is one of a professional, quotidian nature (i.e., watching the office for five minutes), the exclamation point is probably not one of pure excitement, but rather one of courtesy and friendliness; it might also be said that this exclamation point is one that give emphasis to the gratitude and thereby accentuates the fulfilment of the speech act's sincerity condition. If the service rendered is one that would actually precipitate some level of excitement (i.e. passing along good news), then the exclamation point can be regarded as a conveyor of that excitement (and, potentially, as a marker of courtesy). To give some examples from the more negative side of the spectrum: If someone sent a friend a messages reading "Hurry up!", the exclamation point would not be read by any normal person as a sign of courtesy. It would, rather, be read as a sign of agitated excitement on the part of the sender (if there were not, of course, other circumstances to ameliorate the seeming hostility of the message). Similarly, if someone were textually asked if he or she enjoyed a certain food, and he or she responded with a "No!", the mark would be taken as a sign of emphasis, and it would therefore indicate an especial

distaste for the cuisine in question. Once again, context dictates the nuances of meaning that the punctuation carries.

3.6.1.4 Punctuation Strings

These discussions bring us to the point of punctuation strings. If, in any of the cases above, additional exclamation points were appended, and a string was thereby created ("Lunch?!!!", "Thanks!!", "Hurry up!!!!", "No!!!"), the respective meanings of the messages could be seen as being more intense or emphatic. Likewise, if an added question mark were added to the lunch inquiry, as in "Lunch??" or even "Lunch????", the message's meaning could come across as more emphatic. It is furthermore possible that, because of the informality of the punctuation string, the meanings might, depending on the context, come to be seen as less serious, especially in the examples where there are numerous exclamation marks; if this is the case, then the negative uses in particular would undergo an alteration in meaning: The "Hurry up!!!" may be seen as less agitated and more playful, and the "No!!!" may be read as more funny. In any case, if an outrageous number of exclamation points were added to the messages – as in the case of "Thanks!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" or "No!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" or "Lunch?????????????" – the sender would probably in most circumstances be viewed as being humorous. As was shown in the "Lunch?!" example, strings need not always be composed of the same mark. In fact, the combination of exclamation points and question marks (as in, "!?!?") seems, anecdotally, to be a somewhat popular string: It shows, on the negative side, consternation, and on the positive side, surprised enthusiasm, or excitement and the seeking of

confirmation. Again, because of its informality, even when this string is used for the purposes of conveying a feeling more akin to consternation, the meaning may be coloured with a certain playfulness, in which case the feeling communicated would not be entirely negative. Kalman and Gergle (2009) studied the Enron corpus and found many examples of punctuation strings. They concluded that the strings can help to make up for the lack of paralinguistic cues and can serve as "purely visual emphasis tools, not necessarily linked to an audible counterpart" (p. 21). Once again, it is clear that, depending on the context, strings of punctuation marks can signify different kinds of emotional and relational meaning. It will be noticed that a theme is beginning to emerge: Punctuation marks can operate for numerous affective purposes depending upon the context in which they are found. Each punctuation mark carries its own general import, and yet each demonstrates a certain elasticity of meaning.

3.6.1.5 Full-Stops

The full-stop, in this context of emoji and exclamation marks, has, for some people, come to symbolise negative affect. At the end of a message, especially a short, informal text-message or IM transmission, full-stops are not necessary to demonstrate the end of the utterance. Often, therefore, they are not used (Baron, 2008). So, when full-stops are used, they can be seen as a harsh termination of the message. Crair (2013), for an article in the *New Republic*, engaged in an email exchange with linguistics professor Mark Liberman, who offered a number of illuminating remarks concerning this topic. Dr. Liberman wrote to Crair (2013)

and asserted that final punctuation is often omitted in text-messages and IM transmission, such that

> choosing to add a period also adds meaning because the reader(s) need to figure out why you did it. And what they infer, plausibly enough, is something like ‘This is final, this is the end of the discussion or at least the end of what I have to contribute to it.’ (online, para. 11)

Dr. Liberman also gives a personal anecdote: His son, who is 17 years old, informed him that “many of [his] texts seemed excessively assertive or even harsh” (online, para. 5) because of the inclusion of full-stops at the end of the transmissions. Yagoda (2012), in an online piece for the *New York Times*, related that his young daughter had given him similar advice, informing him that the full-stop can imbue messages with a feeling of sarcasm. Baron and Ling (2011), having evaluated the data of focus groups comprised of adolescent females, concluded that some such young ladies view the terminal full-stop as a potentially negative symbol. Baron and Ling (2011) offered the following interesting quote, taken from the focus group data: “[We get into an argument] if [interlocutors] say something and put a period at the end. It'll be like really abrupt. And you'll be like oh that sounded like they are mad" (p. 53). In looking at each of these examples, it will be noticed that several forms of negative affect can be associated with the full-stop: Harshness, anger, sarcasm, etc. It is furthermore clear that the full-stop at the end of a transmission, the one that is redundant, is probably the primary offender; others would be seen as serving their normal purpose of separating independent clauses (or implied independent clauses). Furthermore, it would seem

that this sense of negative affect would only be perceived in informal, interpersonal contexts, and in particular in contexts where messages are relatively short (e.g., IM messages and text-messages); it is difficult to imagine a business person being upset because an email he or she received ended in a full-stop. In the contexts where the full-stop is most readily perceived as negative, however, such a perception is understandable. In a sea of messages showing enthusiasm with exclamation marks and smiles, a full-stop may indeed feel a little flat, at best, or harsh, at worst. Further, when the mark is superfluous, it is reasonable to view the full-stop as having some sense of finality, which, depending on how the conversation is going, could in turn convey a sense of rudeness. Yet again, context is key for understanding how this punctuation mark can convey affect.

3.6.1.6 Asterisks

Another punctuation mark that can aid in the communication of emotion is the asterisk. In digital discourse, this symbol is often placed on both sides of a written description of nonverbal behavior (Crystal, 2001; Zimmer, 2013). For instance, a person may write something like this: "Sounds great *rolls eyes*" or "Sounds great *rolling my eyes*". In these examples the description of physical action encased within the asterisks would convey a sense of exasperation (or something similar). This use of the asterisk along with written words is a straightforward way to make up for the deficiency of nonverbal cues in digital discourse: A writer can simply describe physical actions that he or she has taken – or that perhaps he or she has not literally taken, but that are appropriate for what is trying to be expressed – and mark the description with a duo of asterisks to avoid confusion.

The asterisk, then, is not a direct symbol of affect, but it can aid in the conveyance of affect by marking off descriptions of physical actions which can convey affect. (It should be noted that Shortis [2007] stated that brackets can also function as a means by which to enclose descriptions of physical actions.)

3.6.2 Emotional Identification

Signs of emotion, as discussed above, can demonstrate the feelings a person has concerning interlocutor(s), topics of conversation, or the conversation itself. But there is another very important way that signs can be put to an emotional purpose: Namely, as a means of emotional identification. Such identification occurs when an interlocutor expresses that he or she is to some degree partaking of the emotional state of the receiver(s) of the message. The notion of identification was a salient component of the rhetorical thought of Kenneth Burke. In his *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke (1969) expressed that rhetoric is concerned with the how people connect with one another – with how they recognise their shared substance. Punctuation, as a means of sharing emotion, is a way of demonstrating shared emotion in the form of sympathy and empathy. When the sender of a message is aware of a certain affective state of the receiver, he or she can utilise punctuation marks as a way to identify emotionally with the receiver of the message. Two rather obvious examples of punctuation-based emotional identification would be the use of a sad face :(in a consolatory message and the use of a smiley :) in a congratulatory one. When punctuation is used as a means of emotional identification, it not only displays affective meanings, but also relational meanings, in that it shows a closeness between interlocutors as perceived on the

part of the message sender, as well as a sense of goodwill and affection on the part of the sender.

3.6.3 Politeness

As was discussed above and in the preceding chapter, punctuation marks can be marks of courtesy; they can, in other words, convey politeness. Punctuation marks such as the smiley and the exclamation point can serve as mollifiers of face-threatening acts; by showing an iconic smile, or by demonstrating friendliness and enthusiasm by means of an exclamation mark, a potentially threatening message can be made more pleasant. It is fascinating to observe that, given the discussion of the full-stop above, the omission of the full-stop may be a way to be polite. It is clear that the inclusion of a full-stop can be seen by some as a face-threatening act, depending on the context of the message. By omitting the full-stop, a message-sender can avoid creating a potentially face-threatening act, or can lessen the threat of the act that exists within the message. Moreover, nonstandard punctuation – in any of its various forms, from exuberant successions of exclamation points, to emoji, and beyond – can be viewed, in and of itself, as conveying a sense of intimacy between the author of a message and the message's receiver(s). Punctuation of the nonstandard variety can show that interlocutors are passed signals of formality; they can show, in other words, that a person is willing to be a bit more uninhibited and express themselves in a manner that is more personal. In this way, the use of nonstandard punctuation can be a sign of interpersonal closeness. In conveying politeness and intimacy, punctuation marks

can demonstrate positive feelings, and a positive relationship between interlocutors.

3.7 Other Points Related to this Model

In regards to the latter two tenets of this rhetorical model of punctuation, it is clear that punctuation marks contribute towards the meanings contained within texts: They are orthographic devices that combine with written words to co-create textual meaning. Punctuation is, in this regard, analogous to the nonverbal behaviors that combine with spoken words to co-create conversational meaning in in-person interactions (see Streeck & Knapp, 1992). When punctuation serves in a clarifying capacity, it is co-creating meaning through clarification of meaning. That is, the clarifications that punctuation can provide in regards to structure, conversational implicature, and illocutionary force all contribute towards the overall meaning which is contained within a text. Punctuation-based meanings related to emotions and the relationship between interlocutors likewise combine with the meanings of words to co-create the aggregate import of the message.

The three rhetorical functions of punctuation discussed in this chapter are by no means mutually exclusive. Indeed, punctuation will oftentimes be deployed in such a manner that it in some way performs two, or even all three, of the functions at once. A heart (either of the typographic variety, composed with a less-than symbol and a numeral three thusly <3, or of the emoji variety, of which there are different colours and styles) placed at the end of a message reading "Thinking of you" would, to most people, convey affection, and could be viewed as performing all three of the rhetorical functions: It could create a certain form of

interpersonal credibility by evincing an appropriate affective state; it could clarify that the there is a romantic connotation to the message; and obviously it would convey the emotion of love, and an intimate relationship between the interlocutors, or at least the desire for an intimate relationship on the part of the sender. A question mark string added to the end of personal interrogative message, as in "How are you doing??" can also be viewed as performing all of the three rhetorical functions of punctuation: Like the former example, the punctuation here seems to create a certain interpersonal credibility; it performs the normal grammatical function of signaling a query (even though, admittedly, in this case it would probably not be necessary in order for the question to be understood); and, by giving a certain emphasis to the question, it seems to convey an ingenuous concern on the part of the sender, and the existence of (or a desire for) a closeness in the relationship. A winkey ;) (or one of its sundry emoji counterparts), when added to an ironic statement in an informal text-message, would probably perform two of the functions: It would not, in all likelihood, have any major impact on credibility, even if its use did evince some level of cleverness or communicative prowess and some positive emotional state; it would, however, clarify the jocular illocutionary force of the message; and it would demonstrate some positive affect. In the professional sphere, where, in formal contexts, emotive and relational punctuating will almost certainly be scarcer, punctuation can often perform the first two functions outlined in the model: It can, when deployed in a standard manner, maintain ethos; and it can clarify messages from a structural standpoint.

Sometimes, a single punctuation mark or a set of punctuation marks constitute the sole content of a message. This type of purely punctuation-based writing was prefigured in the literary anecdote that was briefly given in the previous chapter, and which is here related once more for the purposes of illustration. An author of great repute – perhaps Victor Hugo, or perhaps Oscar Wilde – was curious about the sales of a newly released opus. He sent a telegram to his publisher; it read simply "?". The publisher replied with a message reading "!". (This telegraphic exchange, along with others of importance, is given by Roberts [2006]). Now, this particular telegram-mediated conversation may or may not have actually happened. But, in any case, it does reveal some of the unique potency of punctuation. Most literate people who read these telegrams, and are aware of the basics of the context of the messages, would understand exactly what was being communicated by both interlocutors. The question mark almost certainly carries a meaning along the lines of "How is the book selling?", and the exclamation mark in reply almost certainly carries the meaning "Very well!". The meanings may be phrased differently in the minds of readers, but these extrapolations certainly represent the general meaning of the messages. In a similar manner, digital discourse allows for the transmission of messages in which only punctuation marks are written. In these types of messages, like in the telegram example, there will be contextual variables that will serve to elucidate the meaning of the messages. For example, if someone receives a complement via text-message, he or she may respond with only a smiley :). A person who hears some kind of surprising or exciting news may reply with a single exclamation

mark, or with a string like this one “?!?!”. Someone who is perplexed by a message they have received may respond with simply a question mark in order to elicit further explanation. The single question mark could also be used, of course, in a manner similar to one utilised by the author mentioned above: It could be sent as a means of posing a query, the implied content of which, because of past interactions between the interlocutors, would be readily manifest. Someone who is awaiting a text-message, and feels that he or she has been waiting for a long enough period of time to justify a minor prod, might text a single ellipsis to show that he or she is still waiting to hear back from his or her interlocutor. And so on. Punctuation marks that are the only content of a message could only fulfill two of the three functions of punctuation that are presented in this chapter. They can have an impact on credibility – in most cases, they would be detrimental to credibility in a formal context, whereas in informal contexts they could build, hurt, or have no effect on credibility – and they can convey emotional and relational meaning; they cannot, however, play a clarifying role within a message: They simply are the message.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter offers a model that serves as a systematic way to understand the meaning-making functions of punctuation marks (especially punctuation marks in informal contexts such as those of digital discourse). Because the model describes the ways that meaning can be effectively conveyed with punctuation, the model is termed a rhetorical model of punctuation. The model took its inspiration from the scholarly articles of Dawkins (1995, 1996) and Hassett (1996), in which

punctuation was discussed from a rhetorical perspective. However, the model presented in this chapter, while it owes its inspiration to those articles, diverges from the ideas within them considerably.

Punctuation can first be viewed as a way to establish or harm the credibility of the writer. In different contexts, different styles of punctuation are called for. The writer who can aptly choose the correct style of punctuation for a given situation will present his or her ideas more clearly, and will cultivate for him or herself a greater degree of respect, thereby ensuring that his or her communiqués are viewed positively and engaged with, and not disregarded or treated contemptuously. Such a sagacious punctuation user will furthermore be able to generate a positive, or at the very least a desired, social response from readers, which could lead the way for more and better communicative relations in the future. On the other hand, one whose punctuation is lacking in appropriateness for a specific context might very well suffer undesirable consequences, and his or her discourse may be interrupted or hurt in some way; future conversation, likewise, may be threatened. Thus it is that style of punctuation must be chosen carefully and tailored to the context in which it will be read, in order for effective communication to occur.

Punctuation marks can second be viewed as clarifying tools. They can perform their standard function of structural clarification by separating language into appropriate units. This divvying can help the reader to quickly and correctly understand the intended meaning. Punctuation marks can also clarify messages by providing conversational implicatures, which is to say, they can convey implied

meanings associated with the words of a message. And punctuation marks can clarify the illocutionary force, or speech acts, of messages; that is, they can clarify what exactly it is that the writer is doing with his or her message.

The third function that punctuation can be viewed as serving is that of conveying meanings of an emotional and relational nature. Punctuation can demonstrate a writer's affective states and information about the relationship between the writer and his or her reader(s). Different punctuation marks can have different effects, and the communication of emotional and relational meaning is heavily influenced by context.

All in all, punctuation is a vital factor in the construction of meaning in the world of the written word. Its functions, especially in the media of digital discourse, extend far beyond merely making syntax clear. Indeed, punctuation allows for more robust communication by conveying numerous types of meanings, from those related to credibility, to those related to communicative clarity, to those related to emotion and the relationship between interlocutors.

Chapter 4: Methodologies

4.1 Introduction

The research in this thesis was guided by four research questions. The first and primary question is, "In what ways can punctuation provide emotional and relational meaning in digital discourse?" The second, much broader question, is, "In what novel ways do punctuation marks function in digital discourse?" The third question is, "How do punctuation marks influence speech acts?" And the fourth question is, "In what ways do people vary their punctuation between more social and more task-based digital messages?" To provide answers to these questions, two studies were performed. For both studies, I utilised the same basic qualitative analytical technique in examining punctuation marks, but the studies are of different genres of digital discourse, and I obtained the data for the respective studies in different ways. The first study was of text-messaging. The data collection technique used for this initial study is new to digital discourse research – with only one other study I am aware of having used it (Plester, Wood, & Joshi, 2009) – and thus the majority of this chapter is devoted to discussing it and its justifications. The second study was of online message boards. The sampling technique for this second study was much more straight-forward, so it will be discussed in a relatively brief section at the conclusion of the chapter. By scrutinising punctuation in two genres of digital discourse, general patterns of punctuation mark usage may be discovered, and thus answers to the first three research questions may be arrived at. Answers to the fourth research question will

come from the first study, which was designed in such a way as to elicit both social and task-based text-messages.

This chapter is laid out in the following manner. In section 4.2, the methodology of the text-messaging study is discussed. In section 4.2.1, the challenges of collecting data related to emotional and relational punctuation usage in text-messages are described. It is also shown how many of the methodologies used in the past for studying text-messaging are not optimal for this study. Then it is shown how a digital Discourse Completion Task (DCT) can provide answers to this thesis's research questions while to a great extent overcoming the aforementioned challenges. There is then a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the DCT, especially as they relate to the current project. In section 4.2.2, the four DCTs employed in this study are discussed, and the elicitation instrument on which the DCTs were written is described; furthermore, the particulars of the administration of the instrument are explained, and the method by which the collected data was organised is discussed. In section 4.2.3, the study's analytical framework is described. In section 4.2.4, a discussion is offered concerning how the various aspects of this methodology could be used and adapted for other research purposes.

In section 4.3, which is considerably briefer that section 4.2, the more simple methodology of the second study is described.

4.2 The Text-Message Study

4.2.1 The Digital DCT

In the quest to analyse punctuation usage in text-messages, there are a number of challenges. In the first place, there is a difficulty related to text-message context. In order to understand punctuation marks' functions in text-messages – and, in particular, in order to understand how punctuation marks are used in an emotional and relational capacity – a researcher requires not only text-messages to study, but also information concerning the situations in which those text-messages were sent. If the researcher does not have this contextual information, certain inferences may be possible, but no rigorous conclusions can be drawn.

In the second place, there is a challenge related to the confidentiality of people's text-messages. The text-message medium, as was established in the literature review that constituted Chapter 2, is often used for interpersonal and emotive purposes. Sometimes, it is used as a way to share private or sensitive information. Lenhart et al. (2010) found that

> Three-quarters of texting teens use text messaging to exchange information privately – with more than a quarter doing this daily or several times a day. Another three-quarters of text-using teens also say they have long message exchanges by text to discuss important personal matters. (online, p. 5, "Why teens text", para. 3)

Most people understand that text-messages are not absolutely private, since they can potentially be seen by people other than the intended recipient(s). Kelly et al. (2012) reported that the college students who participated in their focus groups

recognised the fact that records of text-message exchanges could potentially be shown to other people; the students viewed this as a way that their privacy could be invaded. However, notwithstanding the semi-privacy of the medium, text-messages are still used as a way to communicate intimate messages that are intended only for a single person (or a limited group of people). For this reason, people will often be hesitant to share their messages with a researcher, even if they understand that the collected data will not be connected to them in the researcher's final report.

In the third place, there is a challenge related to the way that text-messages can be submitted to the researcher. When a person is willing to give his or her text-messages to a researcher such that they can be analysed, it is important that those messages be transmitted and saved in such a way that they can be seen as they were composed on the mobile phone. Having research respondents transcribe past text-messages by hand onto paper is clearly not the best method for gathering data: In projects where such a method is used, there could be transcription errors as a result of oversight; or the respondent might intentionally change certain elements of the transcribed text-messages in order to make them less personally impeaching, or more orthographically and grammatically standard – or, contrarily, they may be inclined to oblige the researcher with florid uses of non-standard orthography. Furthermore, transcriptions of messages containing emoji – which, it has been established, are devices that are growing in popularity – would be problematic, in that respondents would be required to sketch the emoji. In methods such as the one adopted for this study, in which hypothetical text-

messages are composed and sent, inscribing messages by hand is still not the best option; indeed, it is not a very good one at all. De Jonge and Kemp (2012), in a study of the "textisms" (or text-message abbreviations) of Australian young people, had students transpose sentences into "textese" (the language of text-messaging, as characterised by the features of orthographic inventiveness described in Chapter 2). The scholars had one group of students type their textese messages into their phones and then handwrite exactly what they had typed, and had another group simply handwrite the textese transpositions without typing them into their phones. The authors found that the use of textisms was similar in both groups, indicating that young people can indeed write in valid textese by hand – or at least can write textisms as they normally would type them. However, even though De Jonge and Kemp's (2012) typing-then-handwriting method is an interesting idea, and even though their conclusions point towards an ability on the part of young people to handwrite the textisms of textese, there is no doubt that the collection of text-messages actually typed into mobile phones and sent from mobile phones is preferable to the collection of text-messages written by hand. People cannot be expected to write with a pencil or pen exactly what they would type with a keyboard. And, furthermore, in research settings in which respondents are asked to handwrite what they would normally type, the respondents may be discouraged from using emoticons and emoji (since they would have to draw them), when in normal circumstances they would readily insert such pictographs into their text-messages. In order to obtain text-message data of the best quality, the text-messages collected should be written on the respondents' mobile phones

and should be sent digitally, such that they can be read as originally composed. This thesis, as shall be discussed below, proposes a relatively easy and cost-effective process by which such digitally written and digitally transmitted messages can be accumulated for analysis.

Previous text-message studies have used a number of methodologies. Here, these methodologies will be briefly discussed, and it will be shown how they are not the best approaches for this thesis's study. Focus groups have been used as a means of better understanding text-messaging in several investigations, including those of Grinter and Eldridge (2001), Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002), Ling and Yttri (2002), Harkin (2003), Oksman and Turtiainen (2004), Lenhart et al. (2010), and Kelly et al. (2012). Similarly, individual interviews have been used as a way to examine text-messaging practices: Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002) and Oksman and Turtiainen (2004) used data collected via this method. Questionnaires and surveys have also been utilised in the investigation of text-messaging; data collected via these methods was used by Grinter and Eldridge (2001), Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002), Faulkner and Culwin (2005), Lenhart et al. (2010), Harrison and Gilmore (2012), and Morrill, Jones, and Vaterlaus (2013). The methodologies of focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires/surveys can be very helpful in understanding what people think about their text-messaging practices and the text-messaging practices of others. But in this study, we are seeking for respondents not to tell us about their (or others') punctuation practices, but to show us their punctuation practices. This is not, of course, to say that self-reporting methods would not help in better

understanding the meanings attached to punctuation in text-messages. The studies listed above nicely complement this study – and similar future studies would as well – by helping us to attain a more thorough picture of the meanings people personally attach to punctuation marks. But here, the concern is with punctuation in use, and what it can demonstrate about punctuation mark meaning.

Diary and logging studies have also been used by text-messaging researchers. When this type of methodology is employed, respondents transcribe some or all of the text-messages they transmit and/or receive during a given period of time, while also notating information concerning those text-messages, such as the times when they were sent or received. Data collected by means of this method was used by Grinter and Eldridge (2001) (who did not, for whatever reason, actually elicit transcriptions of the text-messages), Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002), Faulkner and Culwin (2005), and Baron and Ling (2011). The diary or logging method is one in which the context of messages can, to some degree, be established. However, in most cases, it would not be practicable for respondents to give particularly detailed descriptions of the emotional and relational contexts of the text-messages they wrote down. Further, now that many people are sending copious text-messages on a daily basis, asking a person to keep track of all of his or her text-messages – or even a majority of them – in a diary or log is probably not reasonable. Another shortcoming of the diary/log method is that people have the ability to alter or omit their messages. As was mentioned above, many text-messages contain personal and sensitive material, some of which (or, indeed, much of which) the participant in the study may not

desire for the researcher to see. Moreover, because in diary studies the messages are being written down (or potentially typed into a computer), there could be transcription errors. So, while this method provides more context for individual text-messages, it still possesses weaknesses related to transposition inaccuracies and the modification and exclusion of messages.

Other text-messaging studies have used text-message corpora. In some cases – such as in the studies of Thurlow and Brown (2003), Baron and Ling (2011), and Lyddy et al. (2014) – relatively small corpora have been constructed by asking respondents to transcribe text-messages; it need not be further elaborated that such transcription is not ideal, even when respondents are exhorted strongly to give faithful transpositions. Some scholars have built much larger corpora. Tagg (2009) made a corpus of 11,067 text-messages. She collected the text-messages from friends, family, and an online message board. The text-messages that were taken from friends and family were written by hand or were typed into a template in an Excel spreadsheet, while those collected online were typed onto the message board. How (2004) constructed a corpus of 10,117 text-messages using volunteers, the Internet, and email solicitation. Work on How's (2004) corpus was recommenced in 2010 (Kan & Chen, 2013), and people from around the world may contribute their English or Mandarin text-messages to this corpus in different ways: Users of Android mobile phones can use an app to upload their messages; users of Nokia mobile phones can create .csv files of their sent messages and then email those files; and users of other types of phones can go to a webpage and type their text-messages into fields. It is requested, for

ethical reasons, that people who volunteer their text-messages for this corpus send only text-messages they have personally written and transmitted; volunteers should not, in other words, submit text-messages that other people have sent to them. Fairon and Paumier (2006) sent out public requests that people send copies of their text-messages to a toll-free number; using this method, they built a corpus of 30,000 French text-messages. Treurniet, et al. (2012) made a corpus of Dutch text-messages. Their collection methods were similar to those of Kan and Chen (2013) in that they allowed people to submit messages in the following ways: Android users could send their text-messages with an app; Nokia and iPhone users could upload sent-message back-up files to an online mailbox or dropbox; and people could also go online and type their messages into fields on a webpage.

In the construction of the corpora cited in the previous paragraph, a number of collection methodologies were employed. It is patently clear that the superior methods were those that did not require any transcription, but rather allowed people to transmit their text-messages directly from their phones to the people who were building the corpora. For, even when transcription is done on a keyboard there is the possibility of error or intentional alteration on the part of the submitter; and even if the messages are copied and pasted, there is still the opportunity for volitional modification of the message. No matter the collection method, however, all of these corpora demonstrate a shared weakness – the lack of context. This is not to say that corpora such as these cannot be put to many salutary scholastic purposes. They have allowed for linguistic patterns of note to be analysed; and, furthermore, it should be observed that some contextual

elements naturally become evident because of the semantic content of text-messages. However, context is of vital importance in evaluating many aspects of language use, and the more that can be known about the communicative context of a message, the better.

All of the methods discussed in the preceding paragraphs can be used to gather excellent and helpful data. And yet, in regards to the investigative aims of this thesis, they all evince certain shortcomings that disqualify them from implementation. Self-reporting methods, while they can provide good data concerning how people think and feel about text-messages, do not provide any actual text-messages to study and evaluate; and there is always the possibility, in such studies, that people may tell the researcher one thing about their behavior, while doing something else. Diary and logging methods, while they can provide transcripts of text-messages and contextual information about those text-messages, lend themselves to transcription infelicities, and can put an unrealistic burden on prolific senders of text-messages; and, importantly, the contextual information contained within diaries or logs can be impoverished or altered. Text-message corpora, while they can help to illumine linguistic patterns of note, do not provide contextual information beyond what is inferable from the semantic content of the text-messages.

For the present study, actual text-messages are desirable, as well as at least some information concerning the emotional and relational contexts of those messages. In order to obtain such data, the DCT data collection technique was employed; and it will be shown that this technique could, with some greater or

lesser adaptation, be utilised in many different types of studies concerning digital discourse. The operationalisation of the DCT data collection method is simple: Hypothetical circumstances are given to respondents, who are then asked to send the text-messages they would send in those given circumstances to an email address set up by the researcher. The DCT was previously used in a study of text-messaging by Plester, Wood, and Joshi (2009), who, although they did not use the term DCT in their article, did employ the basic DCT technique, in conjunction with a questionnaire, for the purpose of examining correlations between children's literacy levels and uses of non-standard spelling in text-messages. Plester, Wood, and Joshi's (2009) study is, as far as I can tell, the first use of a DCT in a digital context. It is worth mentioning that although it is not stated explicitly, it is evident that these researchers had the students handwrite on paper their text-messages. The research project presented in this thesis will carry this digital DCT idea forward, and, hopefully, will contribute further knowledge concerning how the DCT can be used fruitfully in the digital domain.

The DCT, in general, is an elicitation technique in which investigators present participants with a certain social circumstance and ask the participants to record what they would say in that circumstance. The method thus allows for the researcher to exert control over both the type of utterance that is elicited and the context of that utterance. A researcher using the DCT is able not only to obtain, for instance, general examples of expressions of gratitude (i.e., the speech act – or illocutionary force – of thanking), but is able to obtain examples of expressions of gratitude in highly controlled hypothetical communicative contexts, thereby

enabling the attainment of more refined understandings of how gratitude is articulated. For this reason, DCTs "have been widely and successfully used in the study of speech acts…and speech events (e.g. asking the time)" (O'Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011, p. 21). The DCT method was first developed by Blum-Kulka (1982) in a study that investigated the speech act production of language learners as compared to native speakers. Since then, DCTs have often been used in studies concerning language learning and interlanguage pragmatics. Beebe and Waring (2004), for example, used a DCT to investigate the differences in the ways that lower-level learners and more proficient learners of English used adverbials to create tone. They found that the more proficient students created more tones with adverbials than the less proficient students. Because the less proficient students used adverbials frequently as a means of conveying sarcasm and intensity, Beebe and Waring (2004) asserted that these types of tones may be easier to understand and implement for English learners than other tones. Tanck (2002) used a DCT to compare the ways in which English speakers and English learners produce refusals and complaints. She found that while the structures of the refusals and complaints of the native speakers and the learners were similar, the learners' refusals and complaints often lacked certain elements that would make their speech acts seem more socially appropriate. Other scholars who have implemented DCTs to investigate interlanguage pragmatics include Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Chen (1996), and Eisenstein and Bodman (1986). One vital point that runs through the DCT literature is the notion that learners of a new language must be instructed not merely in the vocabulary and grammar of the

language, but also in the pragmatics of the language, such that their utterances are both grammatically and communicatively competent. DCTs can, amongst many other potential functions, operate to show where students of certain languages are lacking in their understandings of the pragmatics of a new language, and these weaknesses can then be addressed by scholars and educators.

Some scholars have investigated the DCT method itself. Billmyer and Varghese (2000) found that DCT respondents who are given more detailed prompts reply with more robust responses. Sasaki (1998) compared role-playing exercises with DCTs and found that role-plays led to responses that were lengthier and more diverse in formulation than those obtained through DCTs. Beebe and Cummings (1995) evaluated how language gathered through DCTs is different than naturally occurring language. They found that the language data collected by means of DCTs is usually lacking in the richness and variety of naturally occurring language, but they also concluded that DCTs are an excellent way to illuminate general patterns in language usage. Schauer and Adolphs (2006) looked at DCT data as compared with corpus data, and contended that, while corpora can provide abundant and sundry examples of language usage, DCTs can provide examples from very specific circumstances; they make the point that corpora, although they are frequently gargantuan in size, may not always have the specific examples of language formulas a researcher is searching for. In those cases when examples of a very specific type of linguistic behavior are being sought, DCTs are an excellent methodological option. Furthermore, Schauer and Adolphs (2006), who were concerned with how data from DCTs and corpora

could be used in the language-learning context, pointed out that DCT data can demonstrate newer word meanings and patterns that may not have emerged so clearly in corpus data – especially if the corpus being used is dated, even in the slightest degree. But Schauer and Adolphs (2006) did warn that DCTs are sorely lacking when it comes to issues of conversation analysis. The DCT does not provide actual language from an exchange between people, and data from DCTs is therefore necessarily one-sided and lacking in the conversational nuances that are produced in interpersonal interactions. Tanck (2002), who, as mentioned above, put the DCT to excellent usage in a study of the linguistic patterns of refusals and complaints among native English speakers and English learners, offered a similar critique of the DCT:

> The Discourse Completion Test, while a time-efficient instrument, may not be the best way to obtain authentic data. Subjects are writing, not speaking, and have the opportunity to contemplate and change their responses, something that is less possible in a naturalistic spoken setting. (p. 14)

It should be noted that Tanck (2002) here brings up a methodological deficiency intrinsically entailed in having people respond in a medium different than the one they would normally respond in – and different than the one being studied. Traditionally, DCTs have required respondents to write what they would say. This is a primary weakness of the method, but one, it seems, that could be at least to some extent overcome if respondents were asked to actually speak aloud their response; these responses could be recorded – perhaps both aurally and visually –

and the method would thereby increase in validity. It is also worth highlighting Tanck's (2002) assertion that in normal conversation there is less time to think about responses than when participating in a DCT. Moreover, when engaging in in-person discourse, a person is faced with another human being in all of his or her complexity. In engaging in a DCT exercise, a person is faced with a piece of paper. DCTs – in their normal, paper-based presentation – cannot fully provide the paralinguistic and nonverbal cues that are such an integral part of human relations.

Given this literature, a number of general conclusions can be drawn concerning how best to implement DCTs. First, it should be realised that the DCT is a method by which certain general patterns can be investigated; the full variety and irregularity of language in use is avowedly not seen in DCT data. In addition, data obtained through the DCT method will not (in most cases) have a great deal of information concerning how language operates to mediate conversation. With these limitations in mind, however, the DCT can certainly be put to efficacious use: It can be used as a way to look at the common patterns of language as it occurs in specific contexts.

The DCT method was chosen to use in this study because, quite simply, it meets the needs of this project in ways that other methodologies do not. It not only allows for an understanding of the context of the text-messages that are collected, but it also allows for the researcher to fabricate those contexts him or herself. Moreover, the concern over the privacy of respondents is bypassed using this method. The messages, while most evince emotional and relational meanings, are not messages that could disclose any actual personal information. Some of the

weaknesses of the DCT method will admittedly persist in this study. Primarily, the digital DCT will suffer from a lack of full discussions, which means that the data collected will not exhibit the richness of forms and the bounty of conversational information that would normally be seen in naturally occurring text-messages. However, since this study is concerned with how punctuation marks contribute to the construction of meaning, full text-message discussions are not necessary; general patterns of punctuation usage, as they occur in certain predefined situations, are sufficient. It is worth mentioning that some of the weaknesses of the DCT method will be insignificant in the present study. As Tanck (2002) pointed out in her criticism of the method, the rapid-fire, intuitive nature of in-person conversation is lacking in a traditional DCT; but these characteristics of in-person conversation are always absent in text-messaging, even in those conversations in which messages are flying back and forth with relative quickness. In the realm of text-messaging, people are not (usually) in the presence of their digital interlocutor, so they always have some time to formulate a response, and they are not on the spot to try and come up with responses immediately. (These points hearken to the theoretical work of Walther [2007], discussed in the Chapter 2). Any concerns regarding inter-media discrepancies are likewise allayed, since the method, as it was operationalised here, allows for the study of actual text-messages that were composed and sent from a mobile phone.

4.2.2 The DCTs and the Instrument

The instrument of this study (Appendix 1) presented participants with four DCTs: One to elicit a message for a positive affective circumstance – in this case, a

congratulatory message; one to elicit a message for a negative affective circumstance – in this case, a consolatory message; one to elicit a message for a more dubious affective circumstance; and finally, one to elicit a message that is more task-based and less emotive. It was decided that the DCTs should not simply elicit expressions of the sender's affective state (e.g., messages stating a propitious – or deleterious – circumstance for the sender). This decision was made for two principle reasons. First, people may be less likely to voluntarily express feelings related to their own situations – they may not desire to appear boastful in happy circumstances, sullen in sad circumstances, etc. In other words, respondents might not normally consider texting someone else to share with them felicitous or melancholy news; and even if they did, they may be more apt in a personal circumstance to temper or hide their feelings in some way, especially in a single text-message. Second, we are here concerned not only with emotional meanings, but also relational meanings; this is a study that is concerned not only with how people can express emotion with punctuation marks, but also with the ways that people can express empathetic emotion with punctuation marks – with the ways, that is, that people can use non-verbal textual means to rhetorically identify on a personal level with their interlocutors. It is probable, furthermore, that the ways that people would express happiness for someone else would be analogous to the ways they would express happiness generally. For these reasons, the use of situations in which people express emotion for other people was adopted.

The first DCT on the instrument read, "You just heard that a good friend got a job he or she had been wanting. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch1@gmail.com." Starting with the bare phrase "You just heard" creates a bit of ambiguity and allows respondents to imagine how these happy tidings came to them. It is possible that they heard the news from another person, or that they were apprised of it via a Facebook or Twitter update, or that they heard it through some other channel. Importantly, some respondents wrote text-message responses which seem to indicate that they were responding to a text-message from the friend in question; that is, the respondents, because of the vagueness of the opening of the DCT, assumed that they had actually received the news by means of a text-message from the hypothetical friend who had secured new employment. This fact does not present any problems to the study – whether or not the message is primary or secondary in the given exchange, it can still be used to analyse how meaning is conveyed with punctuation marks. However, the point is worth bringing up, since in future studies it may, in certain circumstances, be best to make clear whether the elicited text-message is a first or second message in an exchange. If it is a second message, the first message should probably be given in the DCT. In this first DCT, it was specified that the person who got a new job was "a good friend." It was important that the person receiving the message from the respondent be a person of sufficient personal closeness to merit both a congratulatory missive and a display of emotion within that missive. The news about the friend in question is related to the acquisition of a job. Occupation-related news was chosen for this

DCT, and for the other two DCTs related to emotion (the consolatory and dubious messages) for a number of reasons. It was known that the instrument would be circulated in university classrooms (which means that it would go to many young people), and the job hunt is something that is a common part of young people's lives. The employment market in the United States, at the time of the composition of this thesis, is such that jobs can be hard to come by, and the topic of securing employment is one that is common in conversation. Further, and importantly, job-related news is important, and merits emotional responses, but is not earth-shaking. It was important that situations be created within the DCTs which would be emotional and yet would not be too emotional. Situations that have the potential to cause extreme affective responses (e.g., the birth of a child or a marriage on the positive side of the spectrum, and deaths and divorces on the negative side) would in many cases lead to actual conversations in person or over the phone; and, moreover, such extreme situations could bring up exaggerated responses. For this study, a more modest form of news was used so that text-messages would be elicited that were realistic and not exaggerated. The phrase "he or she had been wanting" was added to the DCT prompt so that it was abundantly clear that the acquisition of the new job was in fact good news. After this description of the situation, the instructions for response were given. They were kept short and clear: The question "What would you text your friend?" was posed and it was requested that the response be sent to a certain email address. The second DCT on the instrument read, "You just heard that your friend did not get a job he or she had applied for. What would you text your friend? Please text

your message to textresearch2@gmail.com." This message was patterned after the first one, but was tailored to elicit a consolatory, as opposed to congratulatory, response. The third DCT on the instrument read, "You just heard that your friend got a new job, but you're not sure what he or she thinks about it. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch3@gmail.com." This DCT was formulated to create a more affectively nebulous communicative situation. The achievement of a new job would, in most circumstances, be viewed positively, but the wording here served as a way to inject a bit of uncertainty – it was a way of reminding the respondent obliquely that it was possible that the friend in question may harbor apathy or perhaps even antipathy towards the new position. In this way, it was hoped that the emotions in the responses of the study's participants would be mitigated in some way; this DCT would then provide information concerning how people might convey emotion – or refrain from conveying emotion – when they have some uncertainty about the emotions of the person to whom they are sending their text-message. The responses from this DCT can then be compared with the responses to the former two DCTs and certain conclusions may be possible concerning the ways that people rhetorically identify with one another using punctuation in their text-messages. The fourth DCT on the instrument read, "You are part of a small group working on a project for a class. You think the group should have a meeting. What would you text the group's leader? Please text your message to textresearch4@gmail.com." This DCT diverges from the others in the sense that it creates a situation in which the communicative act elicited is less emotive and more task-based. That is not to

say, it bears mentioning, that there would be no emotion in the messages elicited by this DCT, or that there are no "tasks" being accomplished in the more emotional messages; but it is to say that this message is one in which there is a less emotional purpose – the business at hand being the convening of a group for the purposes of academic work. The group project situation is one that is fairly common in American education, so it was hoped that this DCT would be presenting a familiar context to at least some of the students; in reality, it was probably a situation that was familiar to many, if not all of them. This different type of situation was composed for the purposes of answering the project's fourth research question, "In what ways do people vary their text-message punctuation between more social and more task-based messages?"; the answers to this question will naturally be arrived at by contrasting the messages elicited by the more task-based DCT with the messages elicited by the more emotional DCTs. There is a fifth text-message that is requested of the respondents on the instrument, although it is not a DCT; it is, rather, an elicitation of basic demographic information. This fifth part reads, "Please text your age and gender to textresearch5@gmail.com."

The first DCT elicits what Searle (1979) termed Expressives: It calls, that is, for messages that display affect concerning an understood, though unstated, proposition. In particular, the first DCT calls for congratulations. These DCTs could of course elicit other speech acts – and they did – such as Assertives (e.g., messages that claim that the sender is happy for the receiver). The second DCT elicits sorrowful and comforting Assertives. The third DCT is a bit touchy in this

regard, since it does not necessarily call for any particular type of speech act; it could lead to congratulatory Expressives or happy Assertives, certainly, but it could also lead to Directives in the form of questions. The fourth DCT calls for requests, and, in particular, a more formal sort of request to a leader concerning a group composed of people who would probably be passing acquaintances. In looking at the punctuation of the different speech acts elicited by the four DCTs, conclusions can be drawn concerning how those punctuation marks influence the speech acts, thereby supplying answers to research question three; conclusions can moreover be drawn concerning how people may vary their punctuation between emotional messages and less emotional messages.

The instrument was printed on a single sheet of white, eight-and-a-half-by-eleven-inch paper and was titled "Text Message Study." My name was given, as well as my Missouri State University email address, in case any students wanted to contact me about the study. The top section of the instrument was an informed consent form. The bottom section presented the instructions for participation and the DCTs. On the top of the instrument, in the informed consent section, the first paragraph thanked students for considering taking part in the study, and introduced them to the study. This introductory paragraph told potential participants that the study is about text-messaging language, but did not make mention of punctuation, so as not to put participants in a state of mind which might result in them using punctuation in more standard or grandiose ways than normal. Potential respondents were additionally informed in this initial paragraph that the study also concerned novel methods for collecting text-

messages for academic study. The instrument then notified potential respondents that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary, that participation should take about ten minutes, and that they could stop at any time and choose not to complete any of the items on the instrument. The instrument furthermore told them that their responses and phone numbers would be kept strictly confidential. The first paragraph terminated with an emboldened and italicised request for respondents not to take part in the study if they were under the age of 18 years old.

The second paragraph informed the potential respondents about the general mechanics of the study: They were told that they would be asked to send five text-messages to five respective email accounts. It was explained that text-messages can be sent to an email address simply by typing the email address into the field where you would normally type a number or a person's name. Then there was an emboldened and italicised sentence reading, "Standard text messaging rates do apply." It was thus made abundantly clear that if respondents chose to participate in the study, the text-messages they would send would cost the normal price. After this sentence, potential respondents were kindly asked not to participate if their texting plan required them to pay for text-messages and they did not wish to do so to take part in the study. After this second paragraph, there was a one-sentence paragraph that requested potential respondents who were willing to participate to sign their name and write the date.

Below the informed consent portion of the instrument, there was a paragraph that explained the DCT procedure. Respondents were told that they

would be given made-up situations and would be asked to send the text-messages they would send in those situations. The participants were exhorted to type the messages just as they normally would. They were also informed that if they would ordinarily include the recipient's name in the message, they could do so by using a name of their choice. Following this paragraph, the DCTs and the demographics request were given. Finally, below the DCTs and the demographics request, there was a paragraph that offered gratitude to the participants and told them that if they had any questions about the study, they could contact me via my Missouri State University email address, which was given once more.

This instrument thus ensured that participants were fully aware of how the study operated. The only real risks to the students, since they were not sharing actual personal messages, were those related to monetary expenditure and the revelation, to me, of their mobile phone numbers. In the case of the former risk, students were made aware of the potential for pecuniary expense; and in any case, the amount a person typically pays per text-message is negligible – the cost of five messages would, in many cases, be less than the cost to procure transportation to participate in an interview or focus group. And many people, indeed, have mobile plans that allow for them to send unlimited text-messages. In the case of the latter risk, the phone numbers would only be seen within the email inboxes of the accounts created for the receipt of the messages. These email accounts were – and are – password protected, and I am the only person who knew – and knows – the passwords. Because, at the time the study was conducted, I was a student of the University of Nottingham, and because I was performing

the study in classrooms at Missouri State University, where I was employed, I received ethics approval for the study from both universities (see Appendix 2 for the University of Nottingham ethics approval form, and Appendix 3 for the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board paperwork.)

The instrument was distributed in two introductory computer classes at Missouri State University. I was the instructor of both classes. Students were not given any incentives to participate. I passed out the instruments, read through them with the classes, and fielded questions, after which those students who chose to participate started composing and sending their text-messages. When they were done taking part in the study, I collected the instruments.

The collected text-messages were organised into two Microsoft Word files in the following manner. In the first document, the text-messages were organised according to DCT. Each DCT served as the heading of a section of the document, and under each of these headings the appropriate text-messages were copied in the order that they appeared in their respective inboxes. In the second document, I ordered the text-messages according to respondent. Constructing this document was somewhat more complicated than constructing the first one. I began the process by going into the first DCT's email address and labeling the person who sent the message at the top of the inbox "Respondent 1." Under this heading in the Word document, I then pasted the person's text-message from the first inbox next to a number 1, indicating that the message was sent in response to the first DCT. I copied the phone number of Respondent 1 and pasted it into the search fields of each of the other email accounts, and through this process discovered the other

messages that the person had sent. Each message was numbered according to the DCT to which it responded; and, of course, the fifth, demographic request was labeled with a numeral 5. (I also searched for the phone number of Respondent 1 in the first DCT's email account to make sure that the person had not sent more than one message to that address.) I worked through the other phone numbers in the first DCT's inbox in the same way. As can be imagined, not all of the respondents who replied to the first DCT continued on and replied to all of the remaining ones. After I had labeled all of the people who had responded to the first DCT, and had found their responses to subsequent DCTs, I compared the list of messages in the first document (that is, the document arranged by DCT, which was exhaustive) to the list compiled in the second document (that is, the document arranged by respondent). In performing this comparison, I discovered that there were some people who had not written responses to the first DCT but had written responses to others. The first such message that I found was under the heading of DCT 2, so I went to the second DCT's inbox, found the message, added the respondent to the bottom of the list in the second Word document, then searched for the respondent's phone number in the other accounts – including the first DCT's inbox, to ensure I had made no oversight, and the second DCT's inbox, to ensure that the respondent had not sent multiple messages to that email address. In this way, this respondent's messages were discovered, as were those of similar respondents who had not responded to the first DCT but had responded to other ones; there were only three such respondents, so the process of seeking them out was not too troublesome or time-consuming. After all of the respondents had been

accounted for, the two documents were compared, and the exact same text-messages were found in both of them. See Appendix 4 for the complete dataset organised by DCT and Appendix 5 for the complete dataset organised by respondent.

There were some irregularities in the collection of this data that should be reported. Respondent 1 had what appeared to be a typo in his or her message. The message reads, "Congratulations on your new job, that is a good.blessing". Because the full stop between the words "good" and "blessing" is almost certainly a mistake, it will not be considered in the full-stop analysis. Respondent 3 sent all of his or her text-messages to the email address set up for DCT 1. However, the content of each of these text-messages, as well as the order in which they were received, made it abundantly obvious that the messages were intended as responses to each of the respective DCTs. Accordingly, the messages were assigned to what appear to be, with a high degree of certainty, the correct sections of the first document and the correct numbers in the second document. Respondent 6 sent his or her only response to the email address set up for DCT 1, but based upon its content, it was patently intended to be a response to DCT 2 (it read, "Awhh:-/ you can find a better job anyway!"); this text-message was hence filed under DCT 2's heading in the first document and as number 2 under Respondent 6's heading in the second document. Two respondents (11 and 20) had typos in a message and sent a follow-up correction; in each of the corrective text-messages, the amended word was written and accompanied by an asterisk. (For a discussion of this method of typographical correction see Chapter 3, and to

see the actual corrections, see Chapter 5.) Respondent 13 had a text-message that was delivered in two emails, presumably because he or she was sending the message via SMS and the number of characters in the message exceeded the 160-character limit; these two messages were combined into one message in the Word documents. Respondent 31's message in response to DCT 4 seems to have been cut off prematurely. The message reads, "Hey I know this project isn't due for a bit but I would like for us all to meet up and get things rolling as soon as possible. No". This message was probably accidentally sent before the respondent was finished typing it; accordingly, the full-stop in the message will be regarded as a transmission-medial full-stop. Finally, there were two messages in the data that had emoji in them. Emoji are supported by Word, but they do not appear in the Word document exactly as they appear on the screen of a mobile phone equipped with an emoji keyboard. Within the two documents that were created to organise the study's data, the Word versions of the emoji were kept to indicate their presence in the messages in question, but in the analyses of those messages presented in Chapter 5, screenshots of transcriptions of the messages (taken from an emoji-equipped mobile device) are used so that the reader will be able to see the images as they were originally intended by the sender.

4.2.3 Analytical Framework

The data collected via the digital DCTs will be explored using two distinct but related analytical techniques. The first technique involves some simple arithmetic work: The occurrences of each punctuation mark will be counted as they appear in the responses to each DCT. This technique is a basic form of content analysis,

an analytical method in which certain aspects of texts are tallied and examined. (See Krippendorff [1980] for an introductory text on content analysis; and Herring [2004a] and Herring [2004b] for discussions about potential uses of content analysis in the study of digital discourse.) Two tables will be constructed to present the tabulations. The first table will display the number of times each punctuation mark appears in each DCT, and the second table will include a similar count of marks, but, in it, punctuation strings will be tallied as single marks, and the constituent marks within the strings will not be counted as individual marks; having this secondary table will allow for the study of punctuation strings as a discrete linguistic phenomenon. In order to more fully understand how terminal full-stops may function as bearers of negative affect, full-stops will be distinguished as transmission-final or transmission-medial, following the terminology set forth by Baron and Ling (2007). (A total number of full-stops in each DCT will also be recorded.) Full-stops after which there are emoticons will be treated as transmission-medial. Emoticons and emoji will be treated as individual punctuation marks, although for this tabular analysis they will not be subcategorised by form, which is to say they will be sorted into either the emoticon or the emoji category, but will not be distinguished as smiling or sad or what have you. The forms of the emoticons and emoji will be explored and discussed using the second analytical technique, which will be explained below. In the one case in the dataset where emoji are presented in a sequence, they will be counted discretely in the first table, and as a string in the second table. Ellipses, while they are technically strings of full-stops, will not be treated as strings. There

are some instances in the data in which standard message-final punctuation (e.g., a full-stop or an exclamation point) is followed by an emoticon or emoji. This form of punctuation sequence is without a doubt interesting, but it will not be treated as a punctuation string, since strings seem to form amalgamated wholes, whereas in the sequences in question here, the punctuation marks seem to be operating discretely. To more fully elucidate this point, the "!?!?" sequence can be compared with the ". :)" sequence. In the former sequence there are four marks, but they work together to demonstrate a unified sense of excited questioning, or perhaps a sense of consternation. In the latter sequence, one of the marks signals the end of a sentence while the other signals a form of positive affect; it seems clear that these two marks are not working together in the same way as those of the former sequence – hence the differentiation in the tables. However, those instances in which standard message-final punctuation is followed by an emoticon will be analysed and discussed according to the second analytical technique employed in this study, which, again, will be explained below. Moreover, it should be noted that a full-stop that comes at the end of a message but is followed by an emoticon will not be counted as a transmission-final full-stop. Such a full-stop does come at the end of the wording of the message, but it does not come at the end of the transmission, since another form of punctuation follows it. The numeric findings resultant from this content analysis, while they are simple, will yet provide some broad answers to the study's research questions. Using the tables, the frequency of the occurrences of punctuation marks can be compared across DCTs, such that conclusions can be reached concerning how these marks

can function in affective and relational capacities, and how the usage of the marks can vary between emotive and task-based contexts.

The second analytical technique employed in this study will involve the examination of each type of punctuation mark that occurs in the data. The types of speech acts the individual marks accompany will be observed in each DCT, and inferences concerning their emotional and relational functions will be made. Observations will also be given concerning the ways these marks function to build or destroy writer credibility and to contribute to the greater clarity of the messages in which they appear. By analysing the punctuation marks gathered via the DCT in this way, it will be shown how the rhetorical model of punctuation mark function can be applied to data.

These two analytical techniques were adopted for this study because they will lead to both general and specific answers to the study's research questions. The first and primary research question of this study, it bears repeating, is this: "In what ways can punctuation provide emotional and relational meaning in text-messages?" By using the first technique, answers to this question may be drawn related to the types of punctuation marks that occur in certain emotional (or less emotional) contexts. High concentrations of certain marks in certain contexts (relative to the other contexts) can lead to conclusions about how these marks might bear certain connotations. Conclusions may also be arrived at concerning how punctuation usage is more diverse or more ebullient – or, contrarily, more Spartan – in certain circumstances. The second analytical technique, which examines how punctuation marks function locally, can provide some answers to

all of the research questions, in that it can lead to conclusions concerning how punctuation marks create emotional and relational meanings within single messages, how they operate more generally in single messages, how they influence speech acts, and how their uses vary between social and task-based messages.

Naturally, the more general findings of the first form of analysis can inform, and even help to guide, the second form of analysis. For example, if there are copious exclamation points in the responses to the first DCT (and there are), then we may justly conclude – in harmony with previous studies and common experience – that the exclamation point is readily associated with excitement and positive affect. Then, as the second form of analysis is pursued, we can explore some of the specific ways the exclamation point is deployed in the positive messages. Furthermore, the appearance of a noteworthy number of exclamation points in the consolatory message – that is, the message of negative affect – can lead us to legitimately conclude that the exclamation point is not merely a mark of excitement (for what normal person would be excited, and express that excitement, in response to the misfortune of a friend?), but could also function as a more nuanced way of conveying positivity to a friend. After arriving at this general conclusion from the first form of analysis we can then examine where specifically the exclamation marks are used in the consolatory messages, so that we can see to what degree they can function as conveyors of positivity or friendliness, as opposed to mere excitement. In these ways, the two facets of the

analytical framework complement one another in the pursuit of a better understanding of the ways punctuation marks make meaning in text-messages.

4.2.4 Future Uses of this Methodology

The digital DCT methodology was developed to meet the specific exigencies of the research project presented in this thesis; however, the various components of the methodology could be readily appropriated and used with success in other research projects. In this section, some of the potential alternative usages of the different facets of the method will be discussed.

DCTs could be used in a number of interesting ways to further explore text-messaging. They could be deployed in projects similar to this one – projects that are concerned with punctuation in text-messaging, affective displays in text-messaging, context-based differences in the formality of language in text-messaging, etc. Furthermore, it will be recalled that DCTs were first used to study speech acts, and they could easily be put to this purpose in the digital realm. For instance, it might be asked, how are certain speech acts in certain situations realised in text-messages? This and other similar queries could be answered using digital DCTs. DCTs could also be used in exploring interlanguage pragmatics in the digital sphere.

Digital DCTs need not be limited to the study of text-messages, however. DCTs could be used to collect emails and study how people construct these digital missives in different contexts; interesting studies could be accomplished using this method in which stylistic and structural aspects of emails are examined. DCTs could even be used to study IM chatting, although, admittedly, role-plays,

in which the researcher or other participants are active interlocutors, may be a better choice for these studies, given the normally more synchronous nature of IM conversation. And it is certainly worthy of note that, regardless of the purpose of the study or the genre of digital discourse under consideration, the digital DCT will always have the advantage of not invading the privacy of respondents.

The technique of having respondents send text-messages to email accounts could also be used in future studies. As was discussed above, when studying the text-messaging medium, it is best to have text-messages that were written and transmitted digitally. The email collection method allows for just that. This feature of this method, it should be observed, need not be used only in DCTs. Certain more experimental studies might use a similar method. Or, researchers could construct a minor corpus in which young people select some messages they have previously sent, and copy and paste those messages into a new transmissions which are then sent to email addresses; in cases such as these, even though respondents would be asked to copy and paste their messages, there would still be the possibility that respondents would not copy and paste their submissions or would alter the submissions in some way; all the same, there is no question that the email technique is better than the paper-based transcription technique. Furthermore, now that smartphones are so popular, it would be possible for research participants to take screenshots of past texting conversations and email those to researchers. If this screenshot collection technique were implemented, informed consent would need to be acquired from all of the people involved in the

texting exchange, since the screenshot would necessarily display both the sent and received messages.

4.3 The Message Board Study

In addition to the text-message study, this thesis includes a study of punctuation in message board posts. The message board study involves the examination of data that is naturally occurring and from a different genre of digital discourse – it therefore allows for the thesis to offer more varied and broad conclusions. If it is discovered that patterns of punctuation use are similar in both studies, we can then conclude that the usages we have uncovered to some degree transcend the boundaries of specific digital genres.

The message board posts for the second study were taken from Reddit.com, a popular message board website that distinguishes itself with its uncomplicated interface, vast array of conversation topics, and the opportunity for users to up-vote or down-vote comments and threads. The sampling procedure for the study was patterned after a corpus linguistics technique: Manageable samples were pulled from the website, and these were analysed individually until clear patterns became apparent. The samples were selected in the following way: I searched the term "job hunting" using the main search bar on Reddit.com, and, from the search results, took as my samples those threads that had between 30 and 50 comments. This range of comments was chosen because threads that had such a number of posts would be large enough to be substantive (and have plenty of punctuation marks), and would be small enough to allow for relatively easy contextualisation of the messages and their punctuation marks. I used the topic of

job hunting in order to maintain a sense of coherence with the previous study; people discussing the process of securing employment will naturally be inclined to engage in speech acts similar to those that were elicited by the DCTs – for instance, congratulating people on newly acquired jobs, consoling people about lost opportunities, etc. Each sample I took consisted of 5 threads. 3 such samples of 5 threads were analysed, meaning that 15 threads were analysed in total. (See Appendix 6 for the URLs of the threads.) While all of the threads relate to job hunting in some way, the discussions in the respective threads are varied in their content and tone. Some of the threads contain substantive, practical exchanges concerning how to obtain a job; others contain more social and ludic exchanges, such as comments concerning a humorous image. It is imperative to note that, because of the size of the dataset and the more corpus-oriented approach of this study, the messages will not be analysed according to the thread in which they occur, although the immediate contexts of the messages will of course be considered in their analyses. The punctuation marks will be analysed according to the second analytical technique used for the first study, which is to say they will be analysed according to the types of speech acts they accompany and according to their functions in terms of this thesis's rhetorical model of punctuation mark function. (A content analysis will not be performed, since the samples of message board posts do not correspond with specific socioemotional contexts, and thus comparisons between the tallies of marks would not allow for any sort of conclusion in this regard.) In this study, I chose not to analyse the full-stop, since further explorations of my tentative – and hesitant – conclusions concerning the

full-stop would probably not be possible in the message board milieu, where people often write more substantial, and potentially more standard, messages, and where, therefore, full-stops are very frequently used for their standard function. To elaborate on and confirm my previous conclusions related to full-stops, studies specifically tailored to analysing the full-stop will probably be necessary. I also chose not to analyse brackets, commas, colons, dashes, hyphens, or quotation marks in this study, because these marks seem to have fairly straight-forward uses; they do not, in any case, seem to have the newer or more robust uses that the other marks have.

4.4 Conclusion

This thesis presents two studies of digital discourse. The first is a study of punctuation mark usage in text-messaging. In order to gather text-messages for this study, digital DCTs were utilised. DCTs are a propitious method of data collection in the digital milieu: They allow for an understanding of the context in which messages are composed and sent, and yet they do not call for respondents to disclose personal or sensitive information. DCTs are elicitation instruments, and thus the data gathered via their implementation cannot be considered natural language; however, DCTs do allow for a careful control of the communicative context under consideration, and studies have shown that DCTs can bring forth general and conventional patterns of language use. The DCT is well-suited to this study, because it will aid in scrutinising the uses of punctuation in affective contexts such that conclusions can be drawn related to how punctuation functions as an orthographic resource of emotional and relational meaning-making. This

data collection method will also allow for more general conclusions about punctuation mark function, and it will facilitate the examination of differences in punctuation usage between task-based and socioemotional messages. The data collected for this study will be analysed in two ways. In the first place, it will be subject to a basic content analysis that will show trends in how punctuation marks are deployed in different affective contexts. In the second place, each individual type of punctuation mark will be analysed in terms of the speech acts they accompany and the rhetorical model explained in Chapter 3. Various facets of the methodology outlined in this chapter could be used in future studies.

The second study in this thesis concerns punctuation usage in message board posts. The message board posts used in the study were taken from Reddit.com. The punctuation marks found in the posts were analysed according to the speech acts they accompany and the rhetorical model found in Chapter 3. Conclusions will be drawn from both studies concerning how punctuation marks influence speech acts and how they operate in terms of the rhetorical model of punctuation mark function, with special attention being given to the potential emotional and relational meanings that punctuation can convey.

Chapter 5: Punctuation Practices in Text-Messages

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an analysis of this study's text-message data is presented. The chapter is divided into seven main sections. In the next section, section 5.2, the demographic information of the respondents is reported. In section 5.3, the dataset of text-messages is described. In section 5.4, a content analysis of the punctuation marks in the data is given. In section 5.5, each of the different kinds of punctuation marks that appear in the data are qualitatively analysed on a local level; the marks are evaluated based upon what speech acts they accompany and how they operate in terms of the rhetorical model of punctuation described in Chapter 3. In section 5.6, other linguistic phenomena of note in the data are discussed. In section 5.7 are summaries of the findings from this study concerning how punctuation marks can function to convey emotional and relational meaning, how they can function more generally, how they can influence speech acts, and how people can vary their punctuation between more social and more task-based messages; thus some of the potential answers to the thesis's research questions are explored.

5.2 The Respondents

As was discussed in Chapter 4, the respondents who provided the data for this project were students at Missouri State University who were enrolled in an introductory computer class. 41 students participated. 30 of the participants (approximately 73% of them) gave their age and gender. Of those 30 students, the average age was 20.03 years and the median age was 20 years. Of those same 30

students, 16 were male and 14 were female. Although these ages and genders will not be a part of the analysis in this project, it is worth noting that the data analysed in this chapter came primarily from young people; and it is furthermore worth noting that the numbers of males and females who participated are, as far can be seen from the responses, similar.

A few remarks should be offered concerning gender and text-messaging. Lenhart et al. (2010) found that teenage females (in America) were more likely than teenage males to send text-messages for social purposes. Morrill, Jones, and Vaterlaus (2013) found that females were more likely than males to send text-messages in order to develop existing relationships. If indeed women are more likely to use text-messaging for relational and emotional purposes, we would expect their language (and punctuation) to be more relational and emotive – and there are indications that that is just the case. Baron and Ling's (2011) work indicates that young women may be more prone to use exclamation points and emoticons when sending text-messages. Similarly, in Lyddy et al.'s (2014) sample of text-messages, 81% of the messages in which there were emoticons were transmitted by females. (And, on a related note, in a study of online discussion groups, Waseleski (2006) found that females used more exclamation marks than males). This study further corroborates the notion that females are more likely than males to transmit exclamation points and emoticons. The 14 participants in the study who identified themselves as females used a total of 74 exclamation points, whereas the 16 respondents who identified themselves as males used a total of 23 exclamation points. There were a total of 13 emoticons

used in this study; four of them came from senders who did not indicate their gender, one came from a male, and eight came from females. (The five emoji that were used in the data were sent by two respondents, and both of them refrained from specifying his or her gender.) It follows from the indications of this study and the above-cited papers that uses of emoticons and abundant uses of exclamation points may carry, in the minds of some, feminine connotations. While this study is principally interested in the general meanings punctuation marks can have in text-messages regardless of the gender of the sender and receiver, it should be kept in mind that women may have greater proclivities to use emotive and relational punctuation than men. (For a robust discussion of gender and linguistic pragmatics, see Mullany [2010].)

5.3 The Dataset

This study's dataset is composed of 136 text-messages (see Appendix 4 for the complete dataset organised by DCT and Appendix 5 for the complete dataset organised by respondent). Table 1 shows the number of messages elicited by each DCT, as well as the average and median numbers of words per message in each DCT's elicited data. A couple of items should be noted in regards to these tabulations. Constructions such as "lol", "haha", and "Ik" (an initialism for "I know") were counted as single words. The follow-up corrective messages – those in which a mistake in a previous message was rectified and the correction was marked with an asterisk – are special cases, so, while they will be considered in the analysis, they were not counted as individual messages; rather, they were regarded as a part of the message they corrected; the words in these corrective

messages, moreover, were not tallied in the word-counts that were used to calculate the means and medians, since they are corrected versions of words that appeared in the original message, and are not independently operating lexical items. On the few occasions when students put in something like "[student's name]" to stand in for an appellation, one word was counted as opposed to two, since all of the text-messages elicited in this study – even the one sent to a group leader – would be sent in situations in which the interlocutors would know each other on a first name basis. Although apostrophes are not being analysed in this study, they are a form of punctuation, and therefore in the counts of messages without punctuation, a message with only an apostrophe was counted as having punctuation.

	DCT 1	DCT 2	DCT 3	DCT 4
Number of messages received	37	34	34	31
Average number of words in each message	8.73	14.06	11.47	18.58
Median number of words in each message	9	11	11	17
Messages without punctuation	1	0	1	3

Table 1 – The Dataset

Several observations concerning this dataset should be made. The DCTs did not all receive the same number of text-message responses. Accordingly, in the content analysis below, bald tallies of the respective punctuation marks in each DCT's elicited data will be given, and the average number of times the respective marks appear per message in each DCT's elicited data will be given as well; these averages will allow for more precise comparisons of the respective punctuation marks' frequencies in the responses to the different DCTs. The shortest messages were those received in response to DCT 1, i.e., the congratulatory messages. This relatively lower number of words makes sense, in

that messages of felicitation do not necessarily call for copious verbiage. The longest messages were those received in response to DCT 4, i.e. the task-based messages. This relatively higher number of words is also readily understandable, in that in these messages, the senders were communicating with the leader of a group with whom they were working on an academic project, and they were requesting a meeting – this is a delicate task, and it to some degree calls not only for the request to be made, but for some justification of that request to be proffered as well; thus, this DCT called for a greater load of information per message. (The lower response rate for DCT 4 may indeed be a result of the fact that it called for a longer and more thoughtful text-message; or it may be because it was the last DCT on the instrument; or, indeed, it may be a function of both of these causes.) The average and median numbers of words per message received in response to DCT 2, which called for consolatory messages, and DCT 3, which called for messages of a more indeterminate affective nature, were similar. In the case of DCT 2, people were impelled to offer solace to a disappointed friend, and this communicative task calls for more words than an expression of congratulations, but does not necessarily call for the amount of information we would expect to see in responses to DCT 4. It will be noticed that the average number of words per message for DCT 2 is greater than the median number of words per message by a difference of more than three: This disparity is due largely to a very long message (comprised of sixty-two words) sent by one of the respondents. In the case of DCT 3, the situation posited to respondents was analogous to that of DCT 1 (a friend has acquired a new professional position),

but the emotional situation is more uncertain; hence the message called for more than simple congratulatory remarks, but did not necessarily call for a lot of information, as in the case of DCT 4. In sum, then, the respective average and median numbers of words per message in the four DCTs' elicited data are understandable. Moreover, only five of the collected messages lacked any punctuation, and this seems to be a testament to the importance of punctuation marks in constructing meaning in text-messages. The fact that DCT 4's elicited messages include a greater number of messages without punctuation may be attributable to respondent's desiring a neutral tone in these professional, and potentially importunate, communiqués – but that is merely a speculation, rather than a formal conclusion.

5.4 Content Analysis

In this section, a content analysis of the punctuation marks in the text-message data is offered. A content analysis is a simple form of evaluation in which certain elements in a text (broadly defined) are counted (Krippendorf, 1980; Herring, 2004a; Herring, 2004b). In the case of this study, we have four texts: The respective sets of messages elicited by the four DCTs. The results of the content analysis are delineated in the two tables below. Table 2 shows the number of times each punctuation mark occurred in each DCT's elicited data. Table 3 is similar to Table 2, but it shows the number of times punctuation strings (e.g., ?!?!, ??, !!!, etc.) occurred in each DCT's elicited data; and, in constructing Table 3, the constituent marks that make up the strings were not tallied as individual marks. In each cell of the tables, two figures are typed: The first is the number of

times the punctuation mark appeared in the DCT's elicited data, and the second (in brackets) is the average number of times that punctuation mark was used per message in the DCT's elicited data (i.e., the second number represents the number of times the punctuation mark appeared in the DCT's elicited data divided by the number of messages received in response to the DCT); this average number was given, as was mentioned above, since the DCTs did not all elicit the same number of messages, and thus averages allow for a better evaluation of the relative frequencies with which the different punctuation marks occurred in the responses to the different DCTs. Below the tables, there is a discussion of some of the conclusions that can be drawn from this content analysis.

	DCT 1	DCT 2	DCT 3	DCT 4
Exclamation Points	66 (1.78)	22 (0.65)	20 (0.59)	9 (0.29)
Question Marks	8 (0.22)	5 (0.15)	33 (0.97)	20 (0.65)
Transmission-Medial Full-Stops	7 (0.19)	22 (0.65)	10 (0.29)	12 (0.39)
Transmission-Final Full-Stops	3 (0.08)	11 (0.32)	1 (0.03)	4 (0.13)
Total Full-Stops	10 (0.27)	33 (0.97)	11 (0.32)	16 (0.52)
Emoticons	5 (0.14)	6 (0.18)	2 (0.06)	0 (0.00)
Emoji	5 (0.14)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Ellipses	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)
Commas	5 (0.14)	21 (0.62)	10 (0.29)	12 (0.39)
Quotation Marks	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)
Asterisks	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)
Slash	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)
XO	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

Table 2 – Content Analysis (Strings not Counted as Individual Marks)

	DCT 1	DCT 2	DCT 3	DCT 4
Exclamation Points	37 (1.00)	14 (0.41)	9 (0.26)	6 (0.19)
Question Marks	5 (0.14)	5 (0.15)	25 (0.74)	18 (0.58)
Transmission-Medial Full-Stops	7 (0.19)	22 (0.65)	10 (0.29)	12 (0.39)
Transmission-Final Full-Stops	3 (0.08)	11 (0.32)	1 (0.03)	4 (0.13)
Total Full-Stops	10 (0.27)	33 (0.97)	11 (0.32)	16 (0.52)
Emoticons	5 (0.14)	6 (0.18)	2 (0.06)	0 (0.00)
Emoji	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Strings	12 (0.32)	4 (0.12)	9 (0.26)	2 (0.06)
Ellipses	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)
Commas	5 (0.14)	21 (0.62)	10 (0.29)	12 (0.39)
Quotation Marks	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)
Asterisks	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)
Slash	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)
XO	0 (0.00)	1 (0.03)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

Table 3 – Content Analysis (Strings Counted as Individual Marks)

It should be made abundantly clear that this thesis is not presenting a quantitative, generalisable study. Rather, the study involves the rigorous and justifiable interpretation of the meanings and functions of punctuation marks as they occur in certain situations. However, a general numeric understanding of the frequency with which the different marks were deployed in the responses to the different DCTs will allow us to formulate some tentative conclusions regarding some of the punctuation marks' meanings; and these conclusions can, in turn, inform and guide the interpretations of the punctuation marks given in the following section.

5.4.1 Exclamation Points

Unsurprisingly, the exclamation point was used most frequently in the congratulatory messages. The occurrence of this mark in messages of felicitation is in keeping with the mark's traditional meaning and usage: It is a symbol that

signifies excitement – a symbol that allows writers to textually exclaim. It could be argued that the exclamation point is a nonverbal element that is analogous to the vocalic jubilance that would be commonly employed in bestowing congratulatory remarks in an in-person conversation. Thus, in using the exclamation point in a congratulatory text-message, the senders are showing their excitement for the recipient, who, in this case, is an hypothetical person who just got a job he or she had been wanting. The senders of such messages are, in other words, demonstrating a level of Burkean identification with the receiver of the message: The receiver would most probably be excited about the new job, and the sender of the message is showing that he or she is excited for the recipient. But the usage of the exclamation point is not limited to this congratulatory message; in fact, exclamation points were sent in response to every DCT – a point which is important in and of itself. It is fascinating to observe that, after the congratulatory message, the next highest use of exclamation points was not in the emotionally dubious message, nor was it in the task-based message: It was in the consolatory message. Now, if the only meaning associated with the exclamation point were excitement, it would be strange to see it utilised at all in a message intended to offer empathy to a saddened friend. And yet the data demonstrates that it is utilised in such cases, in considerable numbers; thus we can conclude that the exclamation point is not a mark that merely conveys excitement – it can have a more nuanced meaning than that. To further explore how it is used in these messages of succor, we will have to examine specific uses of the marks in the collected messages – and this will be done in the next section. The emotional

situation described in DCT 3 was ambiguous, and yet there are still many exclamation points in response; further explorations of how these were used will be accomplished in the subsequent section of this chapter. DCT 4 elicited messages that were primarily task-oriented (as opposed to primarily socially oriented), and, as might be expected, the number of exclamation points deployed in responses to this DCT was much smaller than in the responses to the other three DCTs. This relative paucity of exclamatory punctuation serves as initial evidence that, when writing text-messages that are task-based, people may use more formal or standard – and less diverse – punctuation styles. Notwithstanding the fact that exclamation point usage occurred less in DCT 4, the fact remains that all of the DCTs – including the fourth – elicited exclamation points, indicating that this punctuation device is an important symbol in the text-messaging of young people.

5.4.2 Question Marks

Question marks are less obviously laden with new and/or affective meanings than most of the other marks discussed in this study, a fact that is probably attributable to the mark's unmistakable pragmatic purpose. All the same, a discussion of where and why question marks were deployed in the data is appropriate. (And, incidentally, in the subsequent section it will be shown that the question mark, when standing in the queue of a punctuation string, can contribute to the meaning or meanings that the string conveys; so, in other words, the question mark can contribute towards new forms of punctuation usage.) Question marks were used with the greatest frequency in the responses to DCT 3. This DCT created in the

mind of the respondents a situation in which they were unsure of their friend's feelings concerning his or her new job; so, naturally, the respondents asked questions of their friend concerning the job and his or her feelings about it. The next highest frequency of question marks was found in the responses to DCT 4, the task-based DCT. In their responses to that DCT, participants in the study used questions as a means of being polite: Not wishing to impose upon the negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) of their group leader by demanding a meeting, some of the respondents softened the imperative nature of the message by deploying questions such as, "Hey, I was wondering about the project, did we all want to have a meeting or something?" (Respondent 12); "Can we organize a meeting soon for the project?" (Respondent 17); and "Group meet? TGI Fridays?" (Respondent 20). The question mark use in the responses to DCTs 1 and 2 was much sparer than in the responses to DCTs 3 and 4, presumably because the first two DCTs presented respondents with straightforward situations in which congratulations and consolations would normally be offered and questions were not necessary.

5.4.3 Full-Stops

First, it should be observed that full-stops were used in responses to all of the DCTs, although they were used somewhat parsimoniously. In all of the DCTs' responses, more transmission-medial full-stops were used than transmission final full-stops; it must be observed that it is at least possible that, in many cases, they were used in their normal capacity of breaking up ideas, and were not intended as conveying affect – this point will be explored in the next section. However, as

was mentioned in the Chapter 3, when a full-stop is placed at the end of a text-message, it is potentially put there for a reason other than the redundant signaling of the end of a transmission (as noted by Mark Liberman in Crair [2013]) – and some people have come to associate that reason not with conveying a sense of proper formality, but with conveying a sense of anger, terseness, or other forms of negative affect (Baron & Ling, 2011; Yagoda, 2012; Crair, 2013). The data collected for this study can shed some further light on this discussion. On the one hand, in the responses to DCTs 1, 3, and 4, terminal full-stops are very uncommon – in some of the messages, there is not final punctuation, and in others, a different punctuation mark is used; this scarcity of transmission-final full-stops is of course directly tied to the situations posited in the DCTs, but it can help us to formulate some conclusions. Looking at the responses to DCT 1 in particular, the prodigious number of exclamation points and the diminutive number of full-stops (especially transmission-final full-stops) does show how the full-stop might be construed as negative. In situations in which exclamations are commonly used, or in situation in which exclamatory tones would be expected, the use of a full-stop may feel overly formal, lacking in proper social enthusiasm, or, worse, actively inimical. On the other hand, the largest proportion of full-stops, both transmission-medial and transmission-final, were sent in response to DCT 2, the DCT calling for consolations. Here, we would not expect to see any signs of terseness, anger, harshness, or any other such form of negative affect; we would rather expect to see demonstrations of empathy and sincerity. The fact that there are more transmission-final full-stops in these consolatory messages than in

any of the other types of messages is of particular importance: If there were a general feeling amongst texters that terminal full-stops were only conveyors of harshness – or indeed that they were often conveyors of harshness – then the dot-like marks would probably have been omitted or supplanted with another mark in this context; and yet full-stops are included in many messages, which indicates that they are not simply signs of negativity. In these messages, people are offering multiple independent thoughts, and it understandable that they would frequently divvy those thoughts with the full-stop, as opposed to some other punctuation mark such as the exclamation point or the question mark. The relative frequency of transmission-final punctuation may point towards a certain thoughtfulness or decorum – or even earnestness – on the part of the sender.

5.4.4 Emoticons

Relatively few emoticons appear in the data; all the same, some do appear, and some things can be learned from them. These textual visages were used in response to the first three DCTs, but were not used at all in response to the fourth, a fact that serves as further evidence that in task-based situations, people may use more formal styles of punctuation. Five emoticons were used in response to DCT 1, six were used in response to DCT 2, and two were used in response to DCT 3. These relative frequencies are to be expected. DCTs 1 and 2 created patent emotional situations, so the respondents could be confident in the appropriateness of a given emoticon; such confidence would be lacking in the emotionally nebulous situation created by DCT 3 – hence the smaller number of emoticons sent in the responses it elicited. The stylised cousins of emoticons – emoji – also

make relatively few appearances in the data. They were only used in response to DCT 1; five in total were used, and one respondent sent four of them in an emoji string.

5.4.5 Strings

Punctuation strings were used in response to all of the DCTs, although they were used relatively infrequently in response to DCTs 2 and 4. The fact that they do not appear so much in DCT 2 may indicate that their non-standard and lavish nature is not, by some, deemed appropriate for somber contexts. Once again, it seems that more standard punctuation may be a way to convey seriousness. The relative scarcity of punctuation strings in the fourth, task-based DCT once again affirms the notion that people will use more standard punctuation in more task-based situations.

5.4.6 Commas

The comma is a mark that conveys a minimal level of disjunction, and seemingly little else. In neither the literature I have seen, nor in my personal observations, have I encountered any novel or affective meanings associated with the comma in digital discourse. All the same, some observations regarding the frequencies with which commas were used in this data may be helpful. First, the commas were used in response to every DCT; this point is important because the comma is rarely, if ever, an entirely necessary mark. It is a means to make distinctions between ideas by creating a relatively small measure of distinction between words, phrases, and clauses – but because of the minimal amount of disjunction it creates, it can, without huge losses to meaning, be omitted in many cases. The fact

that it is used in all of the DCTs indicates a certain amount of care in the text-messages that were submitted to be studied. It is apparent, in other words, that not all of the messages were simply rattled off with unthinking expeditiousness: Certain writing conventions were followed by the respondents, even when they might not have been required. The fewer commas in response to DCT 1 are surely a result of the nature of the messages, which were congratulatory and brief. The largest number of commas were elicited by DCT 2, a fact which may, again, be the result of the somber nature of the message; more serious messages could call for more standard – and/or more careful – sentence constructions; the validity of this inference is further strengthened by the fact that even the task-based situation of DCT 4, which elicited longer messages, did not elicit as many commas as the sad situation of DCT 2. The numbers of commas used in response to DCTs 3 and 4 were similar. They were greater than the number of commas sent in response to DCT 1, probably because DCTs 3 and 4's situations called for more complex messages than the situation described in DCT 1; and, the commas sent in response to DCTs 3 and 4 were fewer than those sent in response to DCT 2, a fact which, again, may be attributable to DCT 2 eliciting messages in which are evinced greater levels of formality, seriousness, and solicitude.

5.4.7 Other Marks

The other punctuation devices that appear in the data are as follows: Quotation marks, which appeared once, in response to DCT 3; asterisks, which appeared twice, once in response to DCT 1 and once in response to DCT 3; the slash, which appeared once, in response to DCT 4; and, finally, the xo (i.e., the kiss-hug),

which appeared once, in response to DCT 2. These marks will be examined in the following section, but because of their scarcity in the data, there are no substantive conclusions to be drawn here – with one important exception. The singular appearance of the xo underlines an important difference in the text-messaging practices of American people and British people. It is well-known that British people are fond of sending x's, or virtual kisses, in their messages (Tagg, 2009). However, in America, the x as a signifier of a kiss is less common in digital communiqués, as is demonstrated by its one-time appearance in this data.

5.4.8 General Conclusions of the Content Analysis

Before moving on to the detailed analyses of each mark, there are some general conclusions that can be drawn from the preceding discussions of this simple content analysis. Punctuation marks are common and varied in the data, indicating that, for those who responded to this study at least, punctuation is an important means of conveying information in text-messages. Further, certain obvious trends emerge from the numbers found in this content analysis. Exclamation points are certainly used as a means of conveying excitement, but the data indicates that they can convey more nuanced forms of social enthusiasm and positive emphasis as well. Question marks are frequently employed to signal queries; and, in some cases, these queries function as means of being polite. The message-final full-stop's reputation as a potential signifier of negative affect is, at least in some circumstances, unfounded; and the full-stop may be used more frequently in somber messages. Emoticons were not used extensively in response to the DCTs. They were sent in response only to the first three DCTs, indicating that using

them in task-based situations may not be seen as necessary or proper. (Emoji, likewise, were scarce in the data; these were only used in response to the first DCT.) Punctuation strings appeared in all of the DCTs, although fewer of them were used in DCTs 2 and 4, possibly because of the more serious nature of DCT 2 and the more task-based nature of DCT 4. Commas were used in response to all of the DCTs, a fact which shows that even the less important punctuation marks are not completely dismissed in the text-messaging practices of some of the respondents. The data, taken collectively, does indicate that in task-based situations in which the receiver of the text-message is an acquaintance, more standard punctuation is used by some people than in emotional situations in which the receiver of the message is a friend.

5.5 Local Analyses of Each Mark

In this section, local analyses of the punctuation marks in the data will be offered. Observations will be given concerning the types of speech acts that the respective marks accompany in the different DCTs. The speech acts will be discussed in terms of the taxonomy created by Searle (1979), who proposed that illocutionary forces can be sorted into five categories: Assertives, which are truth claims; Directives, which are imperative in some way; Commissives, which are commitments to future action; Expressives, which are demonstrations of emotion in regards to an understood and tacit proposition; and Declarations, which are utterances that accomplish a formal act (such as declaring two people husband and wife). A couple of important points need to be made concerning this classification system. First, in Searle's (1979) system, statements that a person is

feeling a given emotion are Assertives and not Expressives – Expressives demonstrate a person's affect without making a truth claim, although truth claims certainly underlie any such expressions of emotion; thus, "I'm sorry for missing your wedding" and "Congratulations on your marriage" are Expressives, and "I'm happy for your marriage" is an Assertive. The phrase "I'm sorry" can be an Expressive apology, or it can be an Assertive statement concerning the sadness that a person is feeling for someone else. In the data collected for this study, there are the latter type of "I'm sorry" phrases; they are accordingly classified as Assertives. Second, greetings, which are important in the data collected for this study, are usually a form of Expressive speech act, in that they are a way to signal some amiable affect in response to engaging with another person (Grzega, 2008). These are the types of greetings in the study's data, and thus they will be treated as Expressives in the discussion below. The five categories of speech acts that Searle (1979) articulated will be rendered in all cases with a capitalised first letter in order to maintain clarity. From the observations of the types of linguistic actions the punctuation marks accompany, in conjunction with an understanding of the traditional meaning(s) of the respective marks, some of the potential emotional and relational functions of the marks will be inferred. Furthermore, it will be shown that punctuation marks can play an important role in the construction of speech acts in text-messages. As written by Alrø and Skovsmose (2004), "Speech acts are more than words" (p. 127). Inputs other than words can affect the meaning of speech acts; these inputs can include nonverbal and

paralinguistic cues in in-person dialogue, and punctuation marks in written discourse. Indeed, on this topic, Vanderveken (1990) wrote:

> In English, as in most other natural languages, the mood of the main verb, word order, and intonation or punctuation signs (according to whether the utterance is oral or written) are the main syntactic features which play the semantic role of illocutionary force markers. (p. 9)

Punctuation marks can also influence the understanding of the felicity of speech acts. Felicity conditions, according to Searle (1979), are those elements related to a speech act which give the act legitimacy. One type of felicity condition is a sincerity condition, which, according to Searle (1979), is the proper psychological state accompanying a speech act. To give a couple of examples, if a speaker makes a claim, the sincerity condition is met when the person believes the claim to be true, and if a person says "I'm sorry," the sincerity condition is met when the person feels regret concerning the action being apologised for. Sanders (1987) points out that "the felicity conditions of a considerable number of acts include the desires, needs, intentions or interpersonal attitudes of the communicator and/or interpreter. These may be entered into the discourse or dialogue nonverbally" (p. 146). This is also the case, to some degree, with punctuation marks, such as, for instance, exclamation points and emoticons, which demonstrate psychological states. Such punctuation marks can show that the sender of a message has the psychological state appropriate for a given speech act and thus they function to display that the sincerity conditions of the speech act are being met. Because these types of punctuation marks demonstrate the genuineness

of the sender, they contribute to what in this thesis is being referred to as interpersonal credibility. In congratulatory Expressives and in Assertives in which the sender claims to be happy, exclamation points, punctuation strings, and happy emoticons and emoji can indicate that sincerity conditions are met. Similarly, in consolatory Assertive messages in which the sender claims to be sorrowful, sad-face emoticons can indicate that sincerity conditions are met. And in Directives – whether they be exhortations, questions, or orders – exclamation points and punctuation strings can demonstrate the eagerness of the desire felt by the sender, this desire being the sincerity condition of a Directive. It will be noticed that not all displays of feeling meet sincerity conditions: In many cases, displays of emotion inject feeling into acts that are not inherently emotional. In the concluding section of this chapter, remarks concerning some of the specific ways that punctuation marks can influence speech acts will be enumerated. And, finally, in keeping with this thesis's rhetorical model, observations will also be given concerning how the punctuation marks function to promote or hinder the credibility of the sender, and how they function to clarify the messages in which they are used. It should additionally be noted that in the discussions below, punctuation strings will be treated as singular punctuation entities, although they will be discussed in terms of the constituent marks from which they are constructed.

5.5.1 Exclamation Points

5.5.1.1 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 1

In the responses to the first DCT, the exclamation point was deployed relatively frequently. Twenty-nine exclamation points were used with Assertives and congratulatory Expressives; for example, “Congrats on your new job! Hope you like it and I hope everything works out well!” (Respondent 4); “Just heard that you got the job you have been wanting! I am so proud of you! I knew you would get it!! Congratulations!” (Respondent 16); “Nice!” (Respondent 35); and “Hey congrats on the new job!” (Respondent 36). These marks, both those following Expressives and Assertives, demonstrate excitement about the recipient’s new job; they show that the sender is affectively identifying (in the Burkean sense) with the recipient, in that the recipient is excited to have a new job, and the sender is excited for him or her. Such identification naturally demonstrates a certain level of closeness in the relationship between the sender and the receiver. Furthermore, these marks can be viewed from the perspective of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory as cultivators of positive face, since they contribute to the recipient’s sense of self-worth. Six exclamation points were used following Expressive greetings, as is demonstrated in the following examples: “Hey! Heard you got the job, congrats! When do you start?” (Respondent 19); “Hey doll! I heard you got the job! CONGRATS!!!🎉” (Respondent 22); “Hi! Congrats on your new job :)” (Respondent 23); “Heyy girl! Heard you got that job you’ve been wanting! Congrats babe!:)” (Respondent 29). These marks seem to fill in for the paralinguistic excitement that some people exhibit when they greet someone else;

the marks show social enthusiasm – greeting someone excitedly does, after all, usually demonstrate that the greeter is happy to be socially engaged with the person to whom the greeting is addressed; and the marks could be demonstrations of the excitement engendered by the happy situation. Thus these marks that are coupled with greetings, in addition to functioning in the same ways as the other exclamation points, demonstrate an added level of social involvement (and maybe happiness) on the part of the sender to be communicating with the receiver. Respondent 14 used the exclamation point with the Expressive interjection "omg" to show excitement and enthusiasm. Respondent 27 used the exclamation point in conjunction with a Directive: "You got the job!?!? Congrats girl!! Call me when you can! Wanna hear about it". This exclamation point demonstrates excitement to hear from the message's recipient, and in this way demonstrates care for, and interest in, the recipient's life. The exclamation marks used in response to DCT 1 could be viewed as conveying a degree of interpersonal credibility, since they evince an appropriate emotional involvement with the interlocutor. Further, they can function in a clarifying capacity in a couple of ways. Those exclamation points that are message-medial (including, of course, those that follow salutations) perform the function of creating disjunction between ideas, and they therefore clarify structurally; and, because, as has been shown, they convey emotional and relational information in conjunction with Expressive, Assertive, and Directive speech acts, they can be seen as clarifying the tone of the messages.

5.5.1.2 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 2

The uses of the exclamation point in the responses to the second DCT are very interesting. In normal circumstances, most people would not express happy excitement – or really any species of excitement – when consoling a friend. But, as was shown in the content analysis above, the exclamation point was used in considerable numbers in the responses to DCT 2. Eight of these exclamation points came after kind and encouraging Assertives, as in the following examples: "Awhh:-/ you can find a better job anyway!" (Respondent 6); "Hey sweetheart, heard you didn't get the job. But here's the thing, everything happens for a reason! I know you probably don't see it that way right now, but this may lead you to different opportunities that you may have not seen before. Keep your head up! I mean it when I say that they are missing out on a fabulous employee" (Respondent 16); "Hey I'm really sorry about the job. I know you wanted it, but you'll find a different one!" (Respondent 23); and "Hey I'm sorry to hear that you didn't get it :(just keep working hard and all your hard work will pay off!" (Respondent 41). (Also, notice that Respondent 16, in the relatively extended message cited above, included an exclamation point with an encouraging Directive: "Keep your head up!"). In these messages, and the others in which similar encouragements are bestowed, the exclamation point seems to reinforce the positive sentiment; it functions as an emphasiser of positive thoughts. The mark gives added force to the sentiments expressed. This type of usage is divergent from the usage in the congratulatory messages, in which the mark is a way of identifying with excited feelings of the recipient; here, the mark seems to

help reinforce positive thoughts for the purpose of buoying the dejected spirits of the recipient. When the exclamation point is used for such a purpose, it is clearly operating not only to exert some influence upon the emotional state of the receiver, but it is also demonstrating a degree of social care and closeness between the sender and the receiver. The exclamation point was used with other types of thoughts in the responses to DCT 2 as well. It was used in conjunction with the empathetic Assertive phrase "I'm sorry" in two instances: "I'm sorry! I'm sure you'll find a job soon!" (Respondent 14); and "Aww I'm sorry! No worries you'll find a better one!" (Respondent 38). In these two messages, the exclamation point seems to give emphasis to the statement of sorrow on the part of the sender; it shows the earnestness, or power, of the sender's feeling, and thus it could be viewed as a means of Burkean identification, and as a means of demonstrating sincerity. In one of the more humorous messages, a sender wrote "Screw em! Drinks?" (Respondent 20). This exclamation point is worthy of note because it is used with a more hostile Expressive phrase, and thus it could be construed as emphasising negative affect – and so it does, in that it gives emphasis to the hostile sentiment expressed in regards to the person(s) who did not give the recipient of the message a job. So, in this message, there is another example of a form of Burkean identification, since it may be presumed that the receiver of the messages would probably harbor some negative feelings towards those who had not given him or her the job. And it is worth showing that even though the exclamation point is here used to give emphasis to a negative Expressive, the negative sentiment is not directed at the recipient of the message, and the mark's

greater purpose is to aid in offering some succor, in the form of empathy, to the recipient. Respondent 31 gave an Expressive wish for good luck: "Hey, sorry to hear about you not getting the job. Better luck next time though!" This exclamation point emphasises the well-wishing of the sender. In one message, the sender put the exclamation point after an invitation (which is a form of Directive that allows for a cooperative decision to be made): "Sorry to hear that :(Let's go out tonight anyways!" (Respondent 37). This exclamation point demonstrates some eagerness in regards to the invitation, and it might, therefore, be understood as a way to give emphasis, and to show some hopeful excitement about the potential evening's activities; this mark would then be similar to those following the encouraging remarks, since it would, we would hope, function to help in ameliorating the sadness of the recipient; and it would furthermore show some closeness between the interlocutors. This is the only DCT, it should be noted, that did not elicit any messages in which the greeting "Hey" was sent with an exclamation point; in fact, all of the other DCTs elicited more than one such excited greeting. (The greeting "Hey" was in fact used in response to this DCT – it was just not marked with an exclamatory device.) The absence of such an excited Expressive salutation is no doubt the result of the more subdued tone that would be called for in the context dictated by DCT 2; and it indicates that the "Hey!" greeting is one that is perhaps not deemed appropriate in all situations; it would seem, that is, that the "Hey!" is too positive an Expressive for certain situations. In the messages elicited by the second DCT, like in those that were

transmitted in response to the first DCT, the exclamation point engenders a level of interpersonal credibility, and clarifies structurally and tonally.

5.5.1.3 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 3

The exclamation point was used less frequently in the responses to the third DCT than in the responses to the first two DCTs. Exclamation points in the responses to this DCT were used after the Expressive greeting "Hey" four times: "Hey! I heard you got a new job. How do you like it?" (Respondent 9); "Hey! Heard you got the job, what're your thoughts so far?" (Respondent 19); "Hey! I heard you got a new job, how's that goin for ya???" (Respondent 28); and "Heyy girl! Congrats on the new job:)" (Respondent 29). Here, like in the similar responses to DCT 1, the exclamation point shows some enthusiasm for socially engaging with the message's recipient, and it could be demonstrating some excitement about the news of the new job. Respondent 16 sent the following message: "Hey I heard you got a new job! Are you excited, nervous, unsure... Tell me what's going on!" In this missive, the first exclamation point, which follows an Expressive greeting and an Assertive statement, expresses the sender's excitement concerning the news of the new job; and the second exclamation point, which follows a Directive, demonstrates the sender's eagerness to know more about the recipient's situation. Similarly, Respondent 17 used the exclamation point after an Expressive greeting and Assertive statement to demonstrate excitement in regards to the new job: "Hey, I heard you got a new job! How's that going for you?"; and Respondent 25 used the exclamation point after a Directive to show some eagerness to know more: "You'll have to tell me more about it later!" Finally,

Respondent 20 sent an amusing message, and one that it is tempting to not take too seriously: “Let’s go fly fishing!” This jocular sender may have intended this message as a Directive invitation to engage in an activity in which conversations about the new job could be had; in any case, the exclamation point here is used in conjunction with an invitation, and as such, it shows excitement at the prospect of spending time with the recipient. Once again, these exclamation points, in addition to helping in the conveyance of emotional and relational meaning, can also be viewed as building social credibility, and as clarifying messages structurally and tonally.

5.5.1.4 Exclamation Points in the Responses to DCT 4

Exclamation points were relatively few in the responses to DCT 4. Three respondents used them with the popular “Hey” greeting: “Hey! I really think we ALL need to get together for this project soon. Text or call me about a time that works and we'll round up the group.” (Respondent 9); “Hey! I think we should meet up soon this project due date is coming around the corner real fast!!!” (Respondent 14); and “Hey! Is there a convenient time our group can all get together soon?” (Respondent 19). Here, once again, the exclamation points following the “Hey” greeting are probably operating to show friendly social enthusiasm. Respondent 28 sent, “Hey is it possible if we could all meet up for our group project? Let me know!” The exclamation point at the conclusion of this Directive demonstrates some eagerness about further interaction concerning a group meeting. It could be viewed as giving some strength to the imperative “Let me know”, and perhaps it does. All the same, this would probably not be an

overly negative or imperious strength, since that would make the last sentence an FTA; moreover, given the often-positive nature of the exclamation point, this usage might actually be a means of softening the imperative by showing friendliness. Perhaps, in the case of this message, the exclamation point demonstrates both strength and friendliness. Respondent 29 sent, "Heyy I think the project is coming along well for our class, but I think itd be great if we could have a group meeting soon!" The exclamation point at the end of this Assertive gives emphasis to the sender's belief that a meeting would be appropriate, and thus demonstrates some eagerness for the meeting. Respondent 23 sent, "Hi if everyone is free I think we should get together for the project!" In this message, once again, the inclusion of the exclamation point after an Assertive gives emphasis to the sender's notion that a meeting is a good idea, and thus some eagerness on the part of the sender seems apparent. These demonstrations of readiness using the exclamation point are quite nuanced and interesting: They are a way to give emphasis to the indirect imperative idea "We should have a meeting" while also giving a sense of positivity and enthusiasm – this latter sense stemming from the generally amiable connotations the exclamation point seems to have in the milieu of digital discourse. It is possible, however, that some recipients would feel that the force of the exclamation point was undue – they might, in other words, feel that the emphasis is infringing upon their autonomy (in which case their negative face would be threatened), or that the sender of the message is excessively excitable; thus these could damage the credibility of the sender. Although the hypothetical circumstances sketched in DCT 4 are less

emotive and more task-based, they are not rigidly formal, and so the use of the exclamation point in this situation would probably not damage the credibility of the sender because of its informality. In more official circumstances, an exclamation point might seem unduly nonstandard or improper, but not here. It is furthermore doubtful that there would be a gain in social credibility through the use of these exclamation points, since there is no identification or expression of interpersonal emotion. In terms of clarity, these exclamation points clarify structurally and tonally.

5.5.1.5 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points

The exclamation point has been shown to carry a number of meanings, and thereby to function in a number of capacities, in the messages elicited by the four DCTs. In the congratulatory messages, we see exclamation points conveying excitement after Expressives, Assertives, and a Directive. In the consolatory messages, we see exclamation points giving emphasis to kind and encouraging Assertives, and, in doing so, demonstrating the earnestness of feeling of the message's sender; we also observe the exclamation point showing excitement in regard to a friendly Directive in the form of an invitation and an exclamation point giving emphasis to a hostile Expressive phrase. In the emotionally questionable messages, we see the exclamation point helping to show, in Assertives, excitement about the new job; and, in Directives, we see it helping to show an eagerness on the part of the sender to hear more about the receiver's employment situation. In the task-based messages, we see the exclamation point demonstrating a certain form of readiness for a meeting in Assertives, and, in one

case, in a Directive. In DCTs 1, 3, and 4, the exclamation point is coupled with the Expressive greeting “Hey” to show social enthusiasm. On that note, in some cases, it would seem that the exclamation point does actually stand in for vocalic effect: The “Hey!” greeting is an example of such a use, as are the congratulatory sentences. But, on the other hand – and this is important – the exclamation point most certainly does not always operate to signal literal vocal exclamations: The uses in the consolatory messages hints at the correctness of this point; further, the uses in the messages elicited by the fourth DCT in which the sender calls for a meeting would probably not signify actual exclamations. The exclamation point, in short, can mean a number of things, and so can function in a number of ways, in text-messages. It can accompany different speech acts for different purposes – and yet its presence, no matter the import, has a pronounced effect on the speech act being performed. Finally, the exclamation point’s prevalence in the collected messages demonstrates its importance as a punctuation mark in the messages of young people.

5.5.2 Question Marks

The question mark, when it appears singly – which is to say, when it is not a part of a string of marks – does not seem to carry any novel or affective meanings in digital discourse. (When it appears standing in a queue of a punctuation, as in the case of ?!?!, it does carry affective and relational imports, a point that will be explained in the section below in which punctuation strings are analysed.) The stand-alone question marks that appear in this study’s dataset serve their traditional function: They distinguish a sequence of words as a query, which is a

form of Directive. Sometimes queries are used as a means of being polite, and as a means of asking questions that demonstrate care and affection, as shall be explored below. But, the question mark does not seem to be a mark of politeness and affect in and of itself. It can simply be used to aid in the accomplishment of courteous and affective speech acts. The question mark functions moreover as a clarifier of illocutionary force (i.e., it signals the Directive act of questioning); and, in this clarifying capacity, the question mark is a provider of conversational implicature in sequences of words that would not normally be read as a question. The question mark can also probably aid in maintaining the credibility of the writer, as shall be discussed below.

5.5.2.1 Questions Marks in the Responses to DCT 1

In the responses to DCT 1, question marks punctuated questions about the new job in four cases; for example, "Hey hey Sarah! Congrats on the new job! When do you start?" (Respondent 13), and "Congrats! Where are you going to be working at?" (Respondent 15); and in one case, a sender sent a laconic invitation to imbibe some beverages: "Contests bud! Drinks?" (Respondent 20). (This latter message was one of the messages that has a follow-up corrective marked by an asterisk – the follow-up reads, "Congrats*".)

5.5.2.2 Question Marks in the Responses to DCT 2

In the responses to DCT 2, two senders asked about how the recipient of the message is doing: "Hey, you okay?" (Respondent 12), and "Hey sorry bout not getting the job. You will find a better one. How you feelin?" (Respondent 36). These types of messages show that the sender is concerned for the receiver, and

the question mark helps in sending the meaning of care, even if it does not stand as a sign for care. Two senders sent invitations in response to the second DCT: “Screw em! Drinks?” (Respondent 20) and “Hey, do you want to go get some ice cream later or hang out and talk? I heard you had a bad day.” (Respondent 26). One sender simply inquired as to what transpired: “That sucks. What happened?” (Respondent 35).

5.5.2.3 Question Marks in the Responses to DCT 3

DCT 3 elicited twenty-three queries about the recipient’s new job and the recipient’s feelings about the job. Here are a handful of examples: “Congrats on the job, how do u like it?” (Respondent 3); “So how do you think you'll like your job?” (Respondent 7); “Hey how's your new job going? What kind of stuff do you do?” (Respondent 23); and “What's up? Heard you got a new job. How's that going?” (Respondent 32). Here, the question mark helps in constructing messages that show that the sender possesses a courteous interest in the life and feelings of the message’s receiver. Two respondents put question marks at the end of interrogative greetings: “What's up man? I heard you have a new job now. You pretty excited or are you just feeling "meh" about it?” (Respondent 26), and “What's up? Heard you got a new job. How's that going?” (Respondent 32).

5.5.2.4 Question Marks in the Responses to DCT 4

In the responses to DCT 4, which were to some degree remarked upon in the previous section, some respondents used questions as a means to soften the imperative nature of their request for a meeting. Using questions in such a way is a method of mollifying FTAs that would infringe upon the negative face of the

hypothetical group leader. These questions are Directive speech acts, and yet there are two types of indirect speech acts (Searle, 1979) that seem to underlie them: The first is the Assertive that a meeting is appropriate, and the second is the Directive that the leader should convene a meeting. There are seventeen instances of such questions in the sample; examples include, “Hey, I was wondering about the project, did we all want to have a meeting or something?” (Respondent 12); “Hey, what do you think about having a meeting tonight to go over the project again?” (Respondent 15); “Can we organize a meeting soon for the project?” (Respondent 17); “Do you think we should have a meeting with the rest of the small group for this project?” (Respondent 26); and “Yo, can we meet up? I wanna get this thing done together so I'm not freaking out about it” (Respondent 30). One respondent sent an interrogative greeting: “Hey how's it goin? I think we need to get the group together for a meeting to go over some stuff with the project. What do you think?” (Respondent 36).

5.5.2.5 The Question Mark as a Clarifier

In most cases, the question marks we see in the data follow questions that are phrased as such, and thus for clarity’s sake they would not be absolutely necessary – although they are certainly helpful. However, there are several messages in the dataset for which the question mark operates as an important clarifier; in particular, in several instances, the question mark clarifies the illocutionary force of a message which, without the mark, would not necessarily be read as a question. In addition to clarifying the speech act of the messages in which they appear, these question marks can be viewed as providing

conversational implicature by showing that a sequence of words that would not necessarily be read as an inquiry is in fact an inquiry: Without the question mark, such messages would violate the Maxims of Quantity and Manner – with it, the messages are cooperative in the Gricean sense and understandable (or, at the very least, more understandable). In Respondent 20's messages in response to DCTs 1 and 2, both of which are given in their entirety above, a simple invitation to go out for drinks is offered: At the conclusion of both of the messages, the respondent writes, "Drinks?" This message is comparable to the "lunch" example given in Chapter 3, in which it was illustrated that a question mark can transform a single word into a Directive in the form of an interrogative invitation; indeed, that is exactly what is happening here. To be honest, the absence of the question mark in these messages from Respondent 20 would not obliterate the meaning of the message. Most people could probably infer what the sender is getting at – namely, an invitation to have some drinks. All the same, if the question mark were absent, and the message therefore ended with just the word "Drinks", the message might feel somewhat prescriptive or peremptory – as if the sender were saying "You need drinks" or "You are going with me to drinks"; either of these potential tacit meanings could be seen as FTAs, and even if they are not, they are not expressive of the intended meaning of the sender. The addition of the question mark makes the polite and invitational aspect of the message abundantly clear, and allows the recipient to decide whether or not to accept the offer to spend time with the sender. Therefore, although the question mark itself does not demonstrate kindness, it clarifies the message as a kind one. Respondent 12, in response to

DCT 2, wrote, “Hey, you okay?” If the question mark were omitted from this message, the intended meaning, once again, would probably be clear, but the message might be read to mean not “Are you okay?” but “You are okay.” It might seem to say, that is, “You are alright” or “You will be alright”. In response to DCT 3, Respondent 39 sent, “Hey bro I heard you just got a new job? Congrats man are you looking forward to it?” In this message’s first sentence, we read an Assertive statement; the question mark, however, introduces an interrogative (i.e. Directive) element into the statement – it serves as a means by which to ask for confirmation of the news the sender heard. It might be said that this particular piece of punctuation introduces a new illocutionary force into the message’s initial sentence, such that the message would contain two independent, though related, speech acts: The first, of course, is the Assertive statement of a fact, and the second is the Directive question asking if what is expressed in the stated fact is correct. There is much more on this type of question mark usage in the following chapter. Respondent 37, in response to DCT 3, wrote simply, “Congrats?” Here, the sender uses a question mark to ask whether congratulations are truly in order. In this way, the sender of the message asks how the recipient of the message feels about the new job he or she has obtained. The question mark is obviously vital for conveying this meaning. If the mark were absent, the message would be one of mere congratulations (an Expressive), while with the mark present, the message becomes one that asks a question (a Directive). (There are a couple of other messages sent in response to DCT 3 in which the question mark could be seen to offer clarity, although it is extremely unlikely that the messages

would be misinterpreted if the mark were not there. The first of these messages comes from Respondent 36, who wrote “Hey heard about the new job. Congrats. You excited?” This last part of the message could, without the question mark, be read as “You are excited.” The second of these messages comes from Respondent 38, who wrote, “Congrats on the new job!! You excited for it?”; again, the last part of the message could, without the mark, be read as “You are excited for it.” It seems improbable that anyone would misinterpret these messages without the question mark, but, because in these messages the mark does clarify the interrogative illocutionary force, they are worth mentioning.) In response to DCT 4, Respondent 8 wrote, “Hello, we need to get the group together for a meeting this week. Lets set up a time and place?” The use of the question mark shows that the sender is not simply making a demand, but is asking the group leader if he or she will agree to setting up a time and place for a group meeting. In other words, the addition of the question mark transforms the message from one in which the group leader is told what to do into one in which a request is made of the group leader. The addition of the question mark here thus clarifies the illocutionary force in such a way that the message becomes more polite: Requests in the form of questions are usually seen as less face threatening – and therefore more polite – than demands (although both are forms of Directive). Respondent 20, whose responses are of the jocund variety, wrote in response to DCT 4, “Group meet? TGI Fridays?” If this message were lacking the question marks, it could be read as either Directive or Assertive: The message could be read as Directive in the sense that it could be seen as demanding a meeting; or, it could be read as an

Assertive in the sense that it could be seen as informing the group leader that there was going to be a group meeting – one that was planned without him or her. With the question marks, it becomes clear that the group leader is being asked what he or she thinks about a proposed meeting (and the eatery, of course, where the said meeting could transpire). Respondent 37, in response to DCT 4, sent a message reading, "Hey, I was thinking about what time we should have this meeting. Maybe we could get together this weekend?" This question mark takes an Assertive statement and introduces a Directive inquiry concerning what the group leader has to say about a meeting over the weekend. Once again, the question mark takes a non-question message and injects a question, thereby making the message more polite, and showing due deference to the group leader. In all of the cases set forth in this paragraph, question marks function in such a way as to clarify the illocutionary force of the messages in which they appear: More specifically, they make it clear that messages are interrogative in some way. These question marks – these that come at the end of sentences that are not overtly inquiries – are indispensable in the same way that the raised pitch is indispensable to the speaker who wishes to demonstrate that an utterance that is not explicitly a question is intended to be taken as one.

5.5.2.6 The Question Mark's Influence on Writer Credibility

That leaves the issue of credibility. Almost all of the respondents used question marks after questions. (In an exception to this rule in the data, a question mark was replaced by an ellipsis, a point that will be further discussed below.) In interpersonal messages that are written as questions (e.g., in transmissions in

which interrogative pronouns are used), the absence of the question mark would usually not be a defeater of understanding, but, since the question mark is often used in questions, it's nonappearance might be viewed as negligent; and, if it were viewed as such, it might hurt the credibility of the sender. In more task-based circumstances, the same would be true: The meaning of the message would probably be clear, but the sender might be viewed as inattentive. If the question marks were absent in the situations in which the words are not sequenced as questions (e.g., in messages which, without the question mark, would not necessarily be viewed as queries), then, as has been established, clarity will be lost, and the ambiguity of the message could be deleterious to the credibility of the sender. It is worth reiterating the fact that the absence of question marks may or may not hurt the credibility of the sender – whether or not it would do so would depend on any number of contextual variables.

5.5.2.7 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks

The question mark, in and of itself, does not appear to carry any intrinsic emotional or relational meanings, although it can be put towards the affective and relational purposes of demonstrating kindness and making polite inquiries and requests. The question mark can, furthermore, be a very important clarifier in constructions that are not obviously questions. They can signal, that is, the Directive speech act of questioning, and can introduce an interrogative element into messages that have other speech acts in them. And, the use of the question mark can potentially help to maintain the ethos of the writer, depending on the circumstances surrounding the message.

5.5.3 Full-Stops

5.5.3.1 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 1

In the responses to the first DCT, three respondents used full-stops after their Expressive congratulatory remarks: “Congrats on the job man. I’m going to come bother you at work ;)” (Respondent 2); “Congrats dude.” (Respondent 30); and “Heard you got a new job. Congrats.” (Respondent 32). While it is true that these congratulatory remarks may carry less buoyancy than the congratulatory remarks that are punctuated with exclamation marks, it would be wrong to argue that these messages are in some way inimical or sarcastic. The senders of these messages, rather, are sticking with more formal writing practices or are simply being less emotive, either by choice or by nature. Given the social context that was described in the DCT that elicited these messages, there is no reason to believe that these full-stops are mean-spirited in any way. However, their relative emotional flatness could potentially have adverse effects on interpersonal credibility, a point that will be discussed later in this paragraph. The full-stop punctuated Assertives in which the senders affirmed that they had heard about the new job in three cases: “I heard you just got that job you wanted. Congratulations!” (Respondent 26); “Hey! Heard you got the job. Congrats! Glad everything worked out for you. :)” (Respondent 31); and “Heard you got a new job. Congrats.” (Respondent 32); Respondent 31, in the cited message, also used a full-stop with a kind Assertive. Respondent 8 used the full-stop with an Expressive benediction: “Congrats dude! Good luck on yours first day.” Respondent 34 placed a full-stop after a complimentary Assertive (and offered a

bit of advice): “Good work on getting the job man. Don't fuck it up”. Respondent 9 used the full-stop with an Expressive greeting: “Hey dude. I heard you got the job! That's awesome!” The full-stops in these messages, like those above, may, in the minds of some readers, seem flat relative to constructions that include more excited punctuation; but, once again, such an interpretation is not a given, and it does not seem to be the case that these messages are in any way mean-spirited. (The profane counsel given in the latter message is clearly ludic and not unkind; in its own way, since it demonstrates a jocular tone, it would probably be viewed as friendly.)

Three respondents, it will be noticed, used the full-stop and the exclamation point in the same message. The messages produced by these respondents are of particular interest, because in them the exclamation mark and the full-stop are contrasted. The first comes from Respondent 8, who wrote, “Congrats dude! Good luck on your first day.”. This respondent shows enthusiasm in his felicitations, and a bit more restraint in the offer of good fortune that follows; both speech acts are Expressives. Perhaps this restraint shows some seriousness and earnestness in regards to the wish for good luck – or perhaps it is simply a way to standardly end a sentence that is not meant as an exclamation. In any case, there is a contrast here between the first and second sentences of the message – and the contrast could be viewed as mimicking vocal expression. The second example comes from Respondent 9, who wrote, “Hey dude. I heard you got the job! That’s awesome!”. This respondent’s Expressive greeting has a full-stop, while the following Assertive statements about the new job are exclaimed.

Thus Respondent 9 offers a less excited greeting, but evinces excitement in regards to the new job the message's receiver has acquired. The third comes from Respondent 31, who wrote, "Hey! Heard you got the job. Congrats! Glad everything worked out for you. :)". In this message, the greeting and congratulatory remarks (both Expressives) are rendered as exclamations; and the statement of fact about hearing about the new job (an Assertive), and the remark concerning the sender's happiness for the receiver (also an Assertive), are punctuated with the more sober full-stop; the latter remark (the one about being happy for the recipient of the message), may be an example of a standard usage of the full-stop, or it may, through its formality, show some seriousness on the part of the sender. These three messages hint at the potential vocal element of the full-stop: It can demonstrate to the mind of readers a less exclamatory tone, especially when it stands in a text with an exclamation mark. The fact that it can carry this vocalic meaning has no doubt contributed to the feeling that it can seem to be flat or harsh. However, it is worth remembering that serious and earnest vocal tones are often flatter than exclamatory ones, and the full-stop above could very well be a way of showing earnestness of sentiment. Even if, in the mind of the sender, the contrasted exclamation point and full-stop are not meant to signify disparate levels of vocal excitement, these marks at the very least do evince differing levels of emphasis or cognitive excitement in regards to the things being written in the message. In other words, even if these marks are not expressly meant to stand in for vocal performance, they do stand for what vocal performance would demonstrate if the messages were spoken aloud – namely, differing levels of

emphasis and excitement on the part of the sender. In regards to credibility, it must be observed that the full-stop, when it is used in these excited situations – and especially when it is used in a message without an accompanying exclamation point – could hurt the interpersonal credibility of the sender. Even though the senders of such messages are not meaning to be unenthusiastic in their punctuation practices, they may, all the same, be viewed as being improperly apathetic by some people. The messages could be seen as insincere (or, in the parlance of Speech Act Theory, could be seen as lacking sincerity conditions). Of course, many people will not be overly concerned with the lack of exuberant punctuation, but the point is worth making that this lack might cause some recipients to think less of the sender. The point is vindicated by the work of Baron and Ling (2011), who found that some young women viewed the full-stop in a negative light. From the perspective of clarification, the full-stops used in these congratulatory messages clarify the messages in which they appear structurally, by creating a high level of disjunction between ideas.

5.5.3.2 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 2

In the responses to the second DCT, the full-stop was used relatively frequently. It was used twenty-eight times to punctuate different kinds of consoling and encouraging Assertives and Directives. To give some examples: “I’m sorry buddy, hang in there. There’s better jobs any way.” (Respondent 3); “Dang, that sucks. I’m sorry. Keep your head up, and keep looking.” (Respondent 15); “I’m sorry friend. Ik GOD has sum better in-store for you.” (Respondent 11); and “Awe :(I’m sorry. They suck anyway.” (Respondent 33). Four respondents

punctuated Assertives about hearing the news with a full-stop; for example, “Hey girl, I heard that you didn't get the job. I'm sorry. :(Lets get together soon though and forget about it.” (Respondent 40). Respondent 9 punctuated an Expressive greeting with a full-stop: “Hey man. Sorry about the job. It’ll work out.” The medial full-stops in these examples are performing their normal structural function of creating a high level of disjunction between ideas. The fact that they are used more frequently here is not surprising, since, in the context created by the second DCT, a more solemn tone, and fewer questions, would be expected: People wanted to send multiple thoughts in their messages, and they used the standard method of separating those thoughts – the full-stop. The transmission-final full-stops that are used in these and the other messages that were sent in response to DCT 2 are certainly not caustic or terse. Their frequency in these somber messages – when they could easily have been omitted – shows that the senders are making an effort to be grammatically standard. Perhaps they are doing this out of habit, or perhaps they are demonstrating formality, which could, in turn, demonstrate their seriousness. There were, it will be recalled, also a substantial number of exclamation points sent in response to the second DCT. In the previous section, it was concluded that the exclamation point can emphasise positive sentiments and show enthusiasm for positive ideas, even in the midst of somber circumstances. The full-stop, on the other hand, may show less enthusiasm, but its relative flatness of tone may be suitable in conjunction with certain ideas and speech acts.

In some messages, one or more full-stops were used as well as one or more exclamation points; these messages with both punctuation marks in them, like those discussed previously, show some distinction between the meanings of the two marks, so they are worthy of some special attention. Respondent 13 wrote, “Hey Alexis, I heard about the job mishap. Its their loss though haha. You’ll definitely get the next one!!” In this message, after the “job mishap” is mentioned in the Assertive of the opening sentence, the full-stop is used. It creates the normal disjunction between the first and second chunks of text, and, following this remark concerning an unpropitious turn of events, an exclamation point would be out of place – the full-stop, however, is appropriate. In the second sentence, the sender introduces some levity, writing a friendly Assertive sentiment followed by a simulated laugh and concluding with a full-stop. In this sentence, an exclamation mark after the “haha” might indicate a more boisterous laugh, which, in this situation, would be uncalled for. The full-stop could be viewed as mitigating the force of the laugh, which was meant in the first place just to show some good feeling toward the recipient of the message, and not outright hilarity. The final sentence of the message presents an Assertive, and, more specifically, a positive prognostication regarding the recipient’s future opportunities, followed by a string of two exclamation marks, thereby showing enthusiasm for the potential of the recipient and the recipient’s forthcoming professional prospects. Respondent 16 wrote, “Hey sweetheart, heard you didn't get the job. But here's the thing, everything happens for a reason! I know you probably don't see it that way right now, but this may lead you to different opportunities that you may have

not seen before. Keep your head up! I mean it when I say that they are missing out on a fabulous employee". Here, the exclamation point is used to give emphasis, or force, to certain thoughts, while the full-stop is used as a punctuation device to separate ideas that do not require the same force. The Assertive notification that the sender heard the bad news about the job doesn't need to be emphasised in any way, but the Assertive ancient aphorism "everything happens for a reason" is given emphasis, since it could help the person to put things into a broader perspective and feel better. The sentence following the aphorism is an explanatory Assertive, in that it expounds upon how the aphorism applies to the situation in question, and it is concluded with a full-stop, a natural punctuation mark for a more content-rich sentence. Then there is the Directive appeal to maintain a positive attitude ("Keep your head up!"); the exclamation mark following this sentence gives added emphasis to the sender's exhortation. The final sentence is not punctuated; perhaps the mark was excluded because of its superfluity, or perhaps it was left out because of its reputation of harshness, or perhaps it was forgotten. This rather extended message shows us once more that the exclamation point can be used to give emphasis to ideas, and the full-stop, when used in the same message, can give less force, or less emphasis. Respondent 28, it should be noted, sent a similar message: "Hey girl I'm sorry about the job, just remember everything happens for a reason. You'll get the next one!". This respondent chose to punctuate the aphorism with a full-stop, and then gave the encouraging remark an exclamation point; this message, when compared with the one sent by Respondent 16, serves as a reminder that people will not always use the same

punctuation marks with the same types of phrases – they will not always choose to emphasise the same types of thoughts or express the same levels of emotion, even if they do compose similar messages. In the messages in response to DCT 2, the full-stop's formality could help credibility or have no effect on credibility, and it clarifies structurally.

5.5.3.3 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 3

In the responses to DCT 3, six full-stops were used after Assertive sentences in which respondents claimed to have heard about the recipient's new job; for example, "Hey! I heard you got a new job. How do you like it?" (Respondent 9); "Hey Sarah, I heard you got a new job. I hope the first day goes well!!" (Respondent 13); and "Hey, i just heard that you got a new job. How do you like it?" (Respondent 35). These full-stops seem to serve simply as a means of separating ideas within the messages. In two cases, the full-stop was used after Expressive congratulatory remarks: "Congrats on it new job. How r u feelin about it??" (Respondent 11) (this message was followed by a corrective reading "*Ur" that is meant to replace the "it" in the original message); and "Hey heard about the new job. Congrats. You excited?" (Respondent 36). These full-stops separate ideas, and they, like those sent in the purely congratulatory messages elicited by DCT 1, might be read by some as somewhat flat – but, again, most people would probably be gratified to receive the congratulatory remark, no matter the punctuation. One person used full-stops in a message that used Assertives to inquire indirectly about the new job and express a hope that things were going well: "Hey, just wondering how the new job is going. Hopefully everything is

falling into place." (Respondent 31). Another respondent – who it would seem misunderstood the DCT and read it as meaning that the new job was not really being enjoyed by the hypothetical friend in question – used the full-stop to punctuate a Directive sentence encouraging the receiver of the message to keep working at the job to see if things would improve: "Just stay in it and see how everything goes for awhile and if its not getting better than quit. But just try to keep an open mind" (Respondent 27). The full-stops used in response to this DCT do not evince any patent affective meanings. They seem to perform their normal function of divvying ideas. They clarify structurally, and they probably, in most cases, would not have any profound impact on the credibility of the sender.

5.5.3.4 Full-Stops in the Responses to DCT 4

In the messages elicited by DCT 4, the full-stop was used twelve times in conjunction with Assertive statements of the sender's belief that a meeting should be convened. Here are some examples: "Hello, we need to get the group together for a meeting this week. Lets set up a time and place?" (Respondent 8); "Hey! I really think we ALL need to get together for this project soon. Text or call me about a time that works and we'll round up the group." (Respondent 9); "Hey group leader, I think we need to get together and discuss some things about the project." (Respondent 10); "Hey I think we should have a meeting soon." (Respondent 11); "Hey, so I know we really need to start getting stuff done on this research project and I think we should try setting up a time/place for a group meeting. Can you text everyone else and see whatll work best for them?" (Respondent 13); "Hey I was thinking that we should probably meet up as a

group. If you need help figuring out when and where to meet, let me know and ill help you" (Respondent 16); "Hey we need to get together for this project. Does right after class work for everyone?" (Respondent 33); "Hey, i think we should meet up sometime so we can work on the project." (Respondent 35); and "Hey how's it goin? I think we need to get the group together for a meeting to go over some stuff with the project. What do you think?" (Respondent 36). Respondent 9 used a full-stop with a different type of Assertive: "Hey! I really think we ALL need to get together for this project soon. Text or call me about a time that works and we'll round up the group." This message's final full-stop punctuates a sentence that has two independent clauses, the first of which is Directive and the second of which is Assertive. The Assertive, the speech act directly punctuated by the full-stop, is about a future action predicated upon the completion of the imperative of the sentence's first independent clause. And the future action, moreover, is an action the message-recipient will take (along with the message-sender, meaning that there is an implied Commissive speech act here as well). Thus the ultimate thrust of the sentence is imperative. One writer used a full-stop with a greeting: "Hey you guys. I believe that we need to have a meeting about this project" (Respondent 34). Two respondents coupled full-stops with Assertives that claimed their identity; for example, "Hey it's [student's name] from the cis class. Do you think our group should try to meet up sometime to talk about the project??" (Respondent 38). As was discussed in the previous section, the punctuation style in the responses to this fourth DCT were more standard and less emotive, which is to say, there were relatively fewer exclamation points and

punctuation strings in the messages, and there were no emoticons or emoji. In the above examples, we see that the respondents frequently stated what they were thinking, and they used full-stops to punctuate these ideas. The DCT called for a task to be accomplished – a task lacking any heavy emotional weight – and people sent text-messages that were less emotive and more task-based, and thus they used these full-stops. All of this is not, of course, surprising – but it is worthy of remark, because it shows that the medium of text-messaging is not one of incessant pictographs, exclamations, and non-standard symbols and constructions. In certain situations, some people will change their style of composition. These full-stops might be viewed as assisting to engender credibility, since they exhibit a more formal style of writing and the task at hand is more formal. There is, conversely, also the possibility that these full-stops might be seen as contributing to FTAs in those cases where people baldly state that a meeting is imperative or in the case where the person issued an imperative followed by an Assertive about future action building upon the imperative. In these cases the full-stop may feel as if it is communicating a certain terseness or finality that could trespass upon the negative face of the recipient. These full-stops furthermore serve to demonstrate disjunction between ideas, and they therefore clarify the messages structurally.

5.5.3.5 Conclusions Concerning Full-Stops

The full-stop is, admittedly, somewhat difficult to interpret in this study's data. Literally every single message-medial usage of this punctuation device could be viewed simply as separating ideas standardly and in a non-exclamatory and non-interrogative way, just as every message-final full-stop could be viewed as ending

the message standardly and in a non-exclamatory and non-interrogative way. There is not, in other words, any necessary or abundantly obvious emotional meaning attached to the full-stop that can be inferred. However, there are some conclusions that can be drawn. The full-stop does contrast with the exclamation point in a fairly clear manner, in that it shows less excitement and less emphasis. It may also be concluded that the full-stop is not a mark that is singularly hostile; while it is possible that it can be used to convey enmity, this study's data shows that it is used in messages to friends that are intended to be congratulatory and consoling. It is possible that the formality of the full-stop may be employed by certain writers as a way to show seriousness, thoughtfulness, or earnestness. In recognising these disparate ways in which the full-stop might be read, we are reminded that the art of interpretation, even in respect to punctuation marks, can be tricky. Across contexts, some people will read certain punctuation marks one way, and some people will read them another. But even this point is important, because it illumines the fact that punctuation marks are not entities of discrete and concrete meaning – they vary in their connotations from context to context and from person to person. They possess core meanings, but these meanings can bend, depending upon the situation and the interlocutors. A full-stop may in fact be used as a means of communicating terseness or an end to a conversation, or it might be used as a means of ending a message standardly or formally; and it can be read in either way – a vital point, since writers must be aware of the potential meanings they are constructing, and must endeavor to ensure that the meaning they wish to send is the one that is most evident in a message. One way to accomplish this aim

would be to use lucid language that makes the intent of the sender clear – the sender could, for instance, simply state their emotional state, and then the punctuation mark would not bear the entire burden of carrying the emotional meaning, but would reinforce it.

5.5.4 Emoticons

There are a relatively small number of emoticons in the data. Other text-messaging studies have likewise reported a paucity of these facial icons (Thurlow & Brown, 2003; Baron & Ling, 2011; Lyddy et al., 2014). But emoticons are a part of the language of text-messaging, even if they are not quite as ubiquitous as might be popularly believed, and they are therefore deserving of scrutiny.

5.5.4.1 Emoticons in the Responses to DCT 1

Five of the 13 total emoticons were used in response to DCT 1. Respondent 2 wrote, "Congrats on the job man. I'm gonna come bother you at work ;)". This emoticon clarifies the illocutionary force of the message, in keeping with the assertions of Dresner and Herring (2010). More specifically, this winkey shows that the final sentence of the message is a joke, a form of Expressive. Now, it is true that, if the interlocutors here were good friends, this final sentence would probably not need the emoticon to demonstrate the jocular nature of the message; the emoticon does, however, make the joke clear (and it thereby also provides conversational implicature). Further, a smile and a wink are nonverbal expressions that would in the minds of most be associated with positive affect, and so some sense of happy emotion might be signified in this emoticon as well. The actual joke in this message would certainly demonstrate a level of closeness

between the interlocutors, and the winkey, by contributing to the clarity of the joke, helps to show this interpersonal familiarity. The pictograph's very usage could, because of its informality, be seen as signifying closeness between the message-sender and message-recipient. This latter point stands for all of the uses of emoticons: Because they are not part of the standard set of punctuation devices, but rather are informal, their very use could evince a casualness and relaxedness on the part of the sender, which in turn would demonstrate a certain level of perceived intimacy. The winkey used here by Respondent 2 could additionally be seen as building interpersonal credibility: It potentially shows some positive affect (and it clarifies that the sender is probably not going to show up and be a nuisance at the receiver's new place of employment). Respondent 23 wrote, "Hi! Congrats on your new job :)". In this message, the smiley is used in conjunction with an Expressive statement of congratulation, and it is clearly a means of signifying positive affect – in particular, happiness for the receiver of the message. By showing this happiness, the sender is identifying, in the Burkean sense of the term, with the receiver. This emoticon reinforces and accentuates the message's congratulatory character; it does not clarify the fact that congratulations are being transmitted, but it does bring into sharper focus the positive affect of the message, and for this reason it could be seen as a tonal clarifier that makes lucid the affective state of the sender (or at least the affective state that the sender wishes to be perceived as having). This emoticon could furthermore be seen as contributing to interpersonal credibility. Notice that in these last two messages, the emoticons have been used as a form of final punctuation. They were deployed at the end of

the message, and, for these senders, no other form of punctuation was deemed necessary; and, indeed, for clarity's sake, no other punctuation would be necessary. The other respondents that used emoticons in their responses to DCT 1 used them in a way similar to Respondent 23, which is to say that they used them to demonstrate happiness for the receiver; however, unlike Respondent 23, these respondents coupled their emoticons with other punctuation marks. Respondent 29 wrote, "Heyy girl! Heard you got that job you've been wanting! Congrats babe!:)" and Respondent 33 wrote, "Awesome!!! I'm so proud of you boothang! :)". In these messages, the exclamation point and the emoticon go hand-in-hand to seemingly show both excitement and happiness. (In the former message, the exclamation point and emoticon accompany an Expressive, and in the latter, they accompany a friendly Assertive.) These cases are particularly interesting, because, in them, the exclamation point could be viewed as a stand-in for an excited tone of voice, and the emoticon could be seen as a stand-in for the actual facial expression of the sender. Thus, in these messages, we potentially observe linguistic, paralinguistic, and kinemic significations. Even if, when we read these message, we do not, in our minds, think of the message as having an excited tone, and we do not imagine the sender smiling at us, all the same, it is understood that the exclamation point and the smiley stand in for what an actual excited tone and an actual smile themselves would signify, namely, excitement and happiness. Respondent 31, on the other hand, coupled an emoticon with a full-stop after a kind Assertive: "Hey! Heard you got the job. Congrats! Glad everything worked out for you. :)". This message was discussed in the previous section because of

the alternating usage of exclamation points and full-stops. It was posited there that the full-stop may have been used to show a measure of earnestness of sentiment; if that surmise is true, then in this message, we would observe both earnestness and happiness; if we go a step further and understand the full-stop as signifying paralinguistic earnestness (i.e., as signifying a more serious tone), then once again we are looking at a message which is potentially conveying, in the textual medium, linguistic, paralinguistic, and kinemic information. In this case, the tone of voice would be more somber, but would be accompanied by a smile – when taken together, these two significations could be contributing to a very nuanced message, one in which there is a happy sincerity.

5.5.4.2 Emoticons in the Responses to DCT 2

In the responses to DCT 2, we find six emoticons. Interestingly, only one of these emoticons comes at the end of a message: “Sorry about the job. :(” (Respondent 17). This emoticon comes after the Assertive sentence’s full-stop, either by design or out of custom, and shows that the sender is sad for the receiver. The sender placed the emoticon after the linguistic expression of sorrow – thus the sender expresses sorrow for the other person with words and with a virtual facial expression, and the sender’s commiseration is thereby potentially strengthened. The other emoticons used in response to DCT 2 all appear mid-message. Two people sent messages in which they opened with an interjection that is (in this case) expressive of friendly pity, followed by an emoticon, followed by a words of encouragement: “Awhh:-/ you can find a better job anyway!” (Respondent 6) and “Awe :(I'm sorry. They suck anyway.” (Respondent 33). In these messages,

the emotions come first, literally. And such an initial deployment of emotional meaning, in the forms of an interjection and an emoticon, is reasonable. The recipient of the message will know, moving forward into the text, the prevailing affect behind the message. At this juncture it is worth mentioning, in a brief tangent, that Poyatos (2002) argued that it would be worthwhile to adopt into other languages the Spanish method of placing inverted exclamation points and question marks at the beginning of messages, so that readers could know, going in, that the messages in question are intended as an exclamatory or interrogative; a similar argument was put forth by Frumkes (2000), in his insightful and comedic volume titled *Metapunctuation*. In spoken discourse, people's nonverbal behavior is concurrent with the words. In written discourse, punctuation devices – even those that are expressive of affect – exist in a given place in the text. It does make sense to lead with the expression of emotion, such that the message would then be imbued, in the mind of the reader, with the intended affect. To return to the two messages under consideration: In Respondent 6's message, a face with a crooked mouth is displayed. This type of emoticon could demonstrate a number of different sentiments or states of mind (from dubiousness to embarrassment), but, in this message, the intended meaning is probably disappointment. Both of the emoticons show that the sender is empathising with the receiver. Importantly, these two emoticons also function to separate, in traditional punctuation fashion, the initial interjection from the message of encouragement that follows. Respondent 40 wrote, "Hey girl, I heard that you didn't get the job. I'm sorry. :(Lets get together soon though and forget about it." It will be noticed that this

sender used a full-stop, in the standard manner, after writing the Assertive “I’m sorry”, and then deployed the emoticon. Two other respondents used emoticons mid-message, but, in their messages, the emoticon, rather than a traditional device, serves to punctuate the text: “Sorry to hear that :(Let's go out tonight anyways!” (Respondent 37) and “Hey I'm sorry to hear that you didn't get it :(just keep working hard and all your hard work will pay off!” (Respondent 41). In these two messages, the emoticons operate in conjunction with Assertive statements of sorrow (thereby accentuating the emotion of the message), and they separate ideas. Thus, in these messages and in those discussed above in which the emoticon appeared with an interjection, we have evidence of emoticons functioning not only to convey affect and therefore tonal lucidity, but also to divvy thoughts. These emoticons can also be viewed as a way for the sender to build interpersonal credibility, since they accentuate the commiserating tone of the messages. Of the three DCTs that elicited messages in which emoticons were used, only DCT 2 elicited these mid-message emoticons. Although explaining precisely why this DCT led to more mid-message emoticons is a task beyond the scope of this exploratory study, the following conjecture can at least be offered as a potential aid to any future researchers who might take up the banner of emoticon and text-message investigation. First of all, it seems that some people desire to put the emoticon with the statement that they are sorry for the recipient – probably, as was noted above, as a means of emphasising the sad sentiment; moreover, these people do not wish to end their messages with sad statements, but with encouraging remarks or invitations; therefore, the emoticons are seen mid-

message. Because the emoticons are special devices and not words, they can function as a means by which to separate ideas, and full-stops, or other standard marks, are not strictly necessary.

5.5.4.3 Emoticons in the Responses to DCT 3

Two emoticons were used in the responses to DCT 3. One came from Respondent 2, who wrote, "Just give it a try and if you don't like it you can always quit :)". This smiley seems to signal an encouraging and perhaps joking tone – the notion that quitting is an option may be an Assertive or, in the case of a joke, an Expressive – but, in any case, the emoticon emphasises, in effect, the happy idea that things will be okay in this situation one way or another. The other emoticon in the data elicited by DCT 3 was from Respondent 29, who wrote, "Heyy girl! Congrats on the new job:)". This emoticon functions with the Expressive felicitations in the same way as those that were sent in response to DCT 1: It shows that the sender is happy for the recipient.

5.5.4.4 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons

This data demonstrates that emoticons can perform a number of functions. They can provide emotional meaning (and this clarifies the tone of the messages in which they appear). They can strengthen the Expressives of a message, as in the case of the congratulations. And their very presence reflects on any non-Expressive speech acts in a given message, such that these other acts operate in light of the emotion signified by the emoticon. When emoticons signify an emotion appropriate to the situation at hand, they can cultivate interpersonal credibility, and perhaps even can deepen a relationship via the display of

empathy; their informality is perhaps in and of itself a demonstration of interpersonal closeness. They can clarify illocutionary force. And, interestingly, emoticons can also serve as disjunctive devices, in that they can be used in texts to create separation between sets of linguistically expressed ideas; when they do this, they are serving to clarify structurally.

5.5.5 Emoji

There are only five total emoji in the data collected for this study. All were sent in response to DCT 1. Four of them appear in a string in a single message. In this subsection, both the single emoji and the emoji string will be discussed. It may be remembered that the emoji string was counted as a punctuation string in the second table in the previous section, but because it is a very special type of string (in that it is a string of pictograms), it will be discussed in this subsection devoted to these novel devices. The other strings, those composed of the traditional punctuation marks, will be examined in the next section. Also, as was noted in the previous chapter, emoji are supported by Word, but Word's emoji are not the exact same in appearance as the emoji used on a phone; therefore, screenshots of the actual text-messages, with their accompanying emoji, will be given in this section, such that the reader may see exactly what the message, and in particular the emoji, would look like on the screen of a phone.

5.5.5.1 The Single Emoji

The first emoji, the one that was deployed by itself, came after an Expressive, and was employed by Respondent 22, who wrote the following:

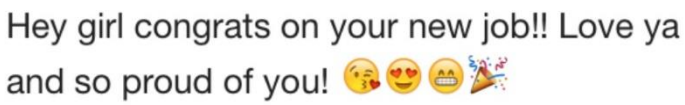


I chose not to count this emoji as a punctuation string in the tabulations above, since there does seem to be disparateness between the exclamatory (i.e. paralinguistic) nature of the queue of exclamation points and the illustrative nature of the pictographic emoji. However, one could admittedly denominate this series of characters as a string since technically the emoji immediately follows the other punctuation marks. In either case, this emoji, which is a party popper from which colourful confetti is erupting, serves to add visual interest to the message and to display an attitude of celebration. Although we will be principally concerned with the latter function, the former function is not one to be summarily dismissed: Aesthetic adornment, in the form of an emoji, indicates some creative cogitation by the sender of the message, which, in turn, may point to a sense of fun and pleasure in the composition of the message; moreover, emoji, by injecting colour and other visual elements into a text, may well lead to messages that some people find more engaging and stimulating. In demonstrating an attitude of celebration, this emoji shows that the sender is, in a sense, rejoicing with the recipient of the message. The recipient in this circumstance would in all likelihood be in a celebratory mood about his or her new job, and the sender celebrates with the recipient by virtually discharging some confetti into the ether. Thus the sender affectively identifies with the recipient. The emoji in this way contributes to interpersonal credibility, and it is possible, as in the case of emoticons, that, because emoji are such informal characters, the mere use of them may show that the sender is at ease with the recipient of the message; it may suggest, in other words, a relationship with a certain degree of socioemotional

proximity, at least in the mind of the sender. This emoji also strengthens, and so clarifies, the message's euphoric tone.

5.5.5.2 The Emoji String

The string of emoji, which followed two friendly Assertives, was sent by Respondent 28, who wrote:



The first emoji in the string here employed is a face with puckered lips, which are offering a kiss. Via this emoji, the sender offers a virtual smooch of congratulations; and such a gesture, even if it is not performed in-person, is an unequivocal demonstration of nonverbal immediacy (Anderson, 2008). The next emoji is smiling, and its eyes are hearts. It seems probable that Respondent 28 is, with the hearts-for-eyes emoji, conveying that he or she is enamored with the tidings of the recipient's new job; or it is possible that this emoji is simply a way to communicate affection in general. The next emoji exhibits nonverbal behaviors indexing excitement – namely, gritted teeth and tightly shut eyelids. And the final emoji in Respondent 28's sequence, the party popper, is the one discussed above. Thus, in this message, we have a series of pictograms, each of which conveys a certain meaning. As a whole, this message has words of felicitation, followed by a statement of affection and pride for the recipient, followed by emoji, which seem, in the following order, to say, roughly, "Here's a kiss; I love that you have a new job; I am excited for you; and I am celebrating with you." Such a series of pictographic signifiers could even be viewed as commensurate with a string of

speech acts. And, moreover, such strings have, as is seen in this example, the power to convey numerous meanings – some of them nuanced – in a relatively small area of space.

5.5.5.3 Conclusions Concerning Emoji

Though the emoji specimens in this collection of data are few, some conclusions may yet be drawn. Emoji can be used to identify emotionally with other people. They can reinforce Expressive speech acts and emotional Assertives, and, as in the case of emoticons, we may safely surmise that they can introduce emotional meanings into messages that are not, in their words, intrinsically emotional. They can demonstrate, albeit virtually, certain forms of interpersonal intimacy, as in the case of the kissing face; their very use may, because of their informality, show some closeness between interlocutors. They can clarify the tone of messages. Their use may indirectly show a certain thoughtfulness on the part of the sender, in that selecting appropriate pictures (from a myriad of options) involves some creative deliberation. And finally, and not unimportantly, emoji can add a sense of visual interest and fun to messages. In performing all of these functions, the emoji could also be viewed, in communicative contexts in which the interlocutors are friends, as cultivator of interpersonal credibility. The absence of emoji in the responses to the other DCTs may indicate that in some circumstances, emoji may be too informal – and in such cases as these, the emoji might damage the credibility of the sender.

5.5.6 Punctuation Strings

5.5.6.1 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 1

In the responses elicited by the first DCT, one may observe three types of punctuation string. One of them, the emoji string, occurred once, and has already been discussed. The most common type of string in DCT 1, occurring nine times, is a sequence of exclamation points. These strings were used after congratulatory Expressives and Assertives. The number of exclamation points in the respective strings ranged from two to five. Here are some examples: "That's wssp bro!! Now we can go out on yo expense lol" (Respondent 5); "Congrats on ur New job!!!!!" (Respondent 11); "Congrats!!!!!" (Respondent 37); and "YAYY that's awesome!!" (Respondent 38). These exclamation point queues are, in this context, clearly a means of emphasising the positive excitement behind the message. Some respondents used both exclamation point strings and single exclamation points in the same message – for example: "Just heard that you got the job you have been wanting! I am so proud of you! I knew you would get it!! Congratulations!" (Respondent 16). In this message, the duo of exclamation points seem to give an added accentuation to the Assertive act they punctuate, as opposed to merely an added excitement. The sender of the message, with the dual marks, has highlighted her confidence in the other person – this confidence would not really be something she was excited about per se, but rather something that she wished to emphasise; in other words, she is not showing excitement about being right, but rather highlighting her positive attitudes concerning the recipient of the message. Not only, then, has this respondent shown her happy excitement for her friend by

using the exclamation marks throughout the message, but she has shown, with special attention, that she believes in the abilities and prowess of the recipient of the message. The exclamation points reinforce the emotional element underlying the Assertive statement. To give another example of a message in which there are both exclamation strings and singular exclamatory devices, Respondent 33 wrote, “Awesome!!! I'm so proud of you boothang! :)”. In this message, the initial, single-word Assertive is given with the added excitement, and then the follow-up Assertive has less emphasis, although it too is marked with an exclamation point. This usage may be an emulation of a paralinguistic pattern – an initial cry of delight followed by a more sober, though still excited, statement. These strings of exclamation marks can demonstrate excitement and emphasis of positive sentiments, and in doing so, can show that the sender is identifying with the recipient, and therefore feels some closeness with the recipient; in this way they provide for interpersonal credibility and clarify tonally. Those strings that come mid-message also clarify structurally. The third type of string that is observable in the responses to the first DCT are strings in which there is a combination of one or more exclamation points with one or more question marks. These are less common in the data elicited by DCT 1 – there are in total only two – but are all the same quite interesting. Respondent 12 wrote, “Omg did you get the job?!” and Respondent 27 wrote, “You got the job!?!? Congrats girl!! Call me when you can! Wanna hear about it”. In these cases, the question marks indicate that the sender is seeking confirmation of the news he or she has encountered, while the exclamation points show excitement about the possibility of a new job for the

recipient; so, these strings demonstrate that the words they follow are intended to be Directives, and excitedly happy ones at that. These strings provide affective and relational information by showing that the sender is identifying with the (potential) excitement of the recipient, and also clarify the interrogative illocutionary force of the first sentences of the messages. (It will be noticed that this clarity is especially helpful in Respondent 27's message.) These combo strings could also be viewed as clarifying the structure of the messages and as building interpersonal credibility.

5.5.6.2 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 2

Four strings were used in response to the second DCT. All of the strings that were used were composed of two exclamation points. Respondent 13 wrote, "Hey Alexis, I heard about the job mishap. Its their loss though haha. You'll definitely get the next one!!". In this message, the dual exclamation points follow a friendly Assertive. Respondent 29 wrote, "Heyy, I know you didn't get the job you wanted but that just means there are bigger and better things waiting for you!! Keep your head up!!". In this message, the first pair of exclamation points follows an Assertive that better things are coming, while the second follow a friendly Directive instructing the recipient to not lose confidence. After examining the single exclamation points that were used in the responses to DCT 2, it was concluded that exclamation points could be a way to give emphasis to positive sentiments, even in social contexts in which excitement would not be appropriate. In these messages, similar usages are observed, with the exception that in these mini missives, two exclamation points are deployed, and, because of the

additional mark, additional emphasis is conveyed. These marks function to emphasise ideas that demonstrate friendliness, and so they can contribute to interpersonal credibility. Respondent 22 wrote, “Hey darling, heard about the job, call me!! Xo”. In this message, the dual exclamation points give emphasis not to a form of positive sentiment, but rather to a Directive. In some circumstances, it might be tempting to view such punctuation as importune; but here, it would seem that the sender is using the string to evince a certain alacrity to speak with the recipient of the message; and it may be reasonably inferred that the conversation that is desired on the part of the sender would be one in which the sender would offer encouragement and commiseration to the person who has lost out on the job opportunity. Additionally, the follow-up kiss and hug validate the sense of interpersonal care in this message. This string, in sum, is a way to show that the sender is very ready and very willing to talk to the recipient; by doing this, the marks show that the sender cares about the recipient. The fact that there are limited strings in the responses to DCT 2 indicates that strings may be viewed by some people as not particularly appropriate in somber or serious circumstances. The fact that even those strings that we do observe are limited to two marks indicates that lavish strings could be deemed as inappropriate. However, when they are employed in such a way as to give emphasis to appropriate thoughts, certain limited punctuation strings might, even in sad situations, build credibility, and not harm it. In those cases in which the strings are mid-message, they clarify structurally.

5.5.6.3 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 3

In the responses to the third DCT, there are three types of punctuation string. The first is the exclamation string. Five of these were used. They were used, as in the responses to the first DCT, as a way to give special emphasis to Expressives and Assertives and to show great excitement for the recipient: “Hey Sarah, I heard you got a new job. I hope the first day goes well!!” (Respondent 13); “That's cool!!” (Respondent 14); “Congratulations on the job!! I hope it's exactly what you were hoping it would be!!” (Respondent 41); and “Congrats on the new job!! You excited for it?” (Respondent 38). The second type of punctuation string observable in the data elicited by DCT 3 is the combination of exclamation point and question mark; this type of string was used only once: “How's the new job going?!” (Respondent 10). This string shows excitement for the recipient, or perhaps eagerness to know how the job is going, or perhaps both; and, of course, it indicates the interrogatory (i.e., Directive) nature of the message. The third type of punctuation string that is in the data elicited by the third DCT is one as yet not discussed – the question mark string. These were deployed three times, and followed Directive questions. Respondent 11 wrote, “Congrats on it new job. How r u feelin about it??” and then sent a follow-up corrective reading, “*Ur”. The double question mark, in addition to clarifying the structure of the message, gives emphasis to the query being posed, and, in this case, demonstrates an active curiosity on the part of the sender to know how the recipient is feeling about the new job. Respondent 12 wrote, “Hey, I heard you got a job??”. In this message, the question marks serve together as an important pragmatic tool, in that they

make it clear that the sender is not making an Assertive statement, but is seeking confirmation of news that she heard, and is therefore giving a Directive; these marks clarify, in other words, the sender's illocutionary force and the structure of the message. Further, with the two question marks, the sender seems to be conveying a special eagerness to have the intelligence she received confirmed. In this message, the eagerness demonstrated in the question mark string may also show some tentative excitement on the part of the sender. Respondent 28 wrote, "Hey! I heard you got a new job, how's that goin for ya???". Once again, in this message, the series of question marks seems to operate to clarify the structure and illocutionary force of the message as well as to show an eagerness to know more about the new professional situation of the message's receiver.

5.5.6.4 Punctuation Strings in the Responses to DCT 4

Only two punctuation strings were used in response to DCT 4. Respondent 14 wrote, "Hey! I think we should meet up soon this project due date is coming around the corner real fast!!!". This string of exclamation points follows and emphasises an Assertive concerning the celeritously approaching due date of the project. It is interesting to note that the indirect request written after the greeting in this message is not punctuated at all – perhaps this was a way to avoid a punctuation-based FTA: A full-stop may have, in the mind of this sender, seemed too terse and an exclamation point may have seemed too forceful; maybe, though, this omission was simply an oversight. In any case, the approaching due date is emphasised, and it is possible that, with this string, the sender is showing, in addition to emphasis, a measure of a form of excitement not yet mentioned in my

interpretations – anxiety. Perhaps the sender intended not merely to give emphasis to the notion of the impending due date, but also to represent a form of agitated excitement. This emotional expression could be a way to encourage a meeting, but it might hurt the credibility of the sender. Respondent 38 wrote, “Hey it's [student’s name] from the cis class. Do you think our group should try to meet up sometime to talk about the project??”. The string of question marks deployed in this message, similarly to those discussed in the previous paragraph, shows eagerness on the part of the sender – in this case, eagerness for a meeting, or at least for a discussion of a potential meeting with the group leader. The relative paucity of punctuation strings in the responses to the fourth DCT indicates that strings may not be appropriate in the minds of some people in more task-based situations. Strings might, moreover, be regarded as particularly unsuitable in situations in which message senders are engaging in social acts, such as making requests, that could be construed as FTAs; the emphatic nature of strings may seem too demanding. Thus, strings may damage credibility in certain task-based situations.

5.5.6.5 Conclusions Concerning Punctuation Strings

In the data collected for this study, punctuation strings are seen as functioning in a number of ways. To generalise, they can give extra emphasis to, and show extra excitement in conjunction with, Expressives and Assertives and Directives, and they can demonstrate exceptional excitement and eagerness (which is to say, excitement and eagerness beyond what would be expressed with singular marks) when coupled with interrogative Directives. They can clarify structurally and

tonally. And, they can build interpersonal credibility in certain informal situations, while in other, more formal contexts, they could hurt credibility. This study's findings are in accord with those of Kalman and Gergle (2009), who found that punctuation repeats can function to give emphasis, and who also made the important observation that while punctuation strings may or may not convey to the minds of readers certain paralinguistic effects, they do certainly operate to give "visual emphasis" (p. 21).

5.5.7 Ellipses

There are two ellipses in the data collected for this study. One of the ellipses was used in response to DCT 3; it came from Respondent 16, who wrote, "Hey I heard you got a new job! Are you excited, nervous, unsure... Tell me what's going on!" This ellipsis does a couple of things. First, it stands in for other, unmentioned possible emotions that the recipient might be feeling; the sender, rather than extensively listing possible emotions, enumerates three likely ones, and then inserts the ellipsis as a stand-in for other potential feelings. Because the list comes at the conclusion of a query, the ellipsis also stands in for the question mark. Baron (2008), in a study of text-messaging and IM, likewise found that people used ellipses to stand in for question marks. (She also found that people use ellipses as stand-ins for full-stops and commas.) The substitution of the ellipsis for the question mark makes sense, given the history of the mark: Traditionally, ellipses have stood for omitted material, and for things being left tantalisingly unsaid at the end of a text – and they have been used to signify that more information is forthcoming. Using an ellipsis at the end of a question could be

viewed as a way to indicate the desire for a forthcoming answer. The ellipsis used by Respondent 16 also creates disjunction between the question that is asked and the exhortation to get in touch, and therefore accomplishes a certain structural clarification. The other ellipsis in this study's dataset was used in response to DCT 2; it came from Respondent 24, who wrote, "Sorry you didn't get the job I know how bad you wanted it....hopefully a better opportunity will arise". It is probably worth mentioning that this ellipsis is composed of four full-stops, rather than the customary three; even so, it is most certainly a form of ellipsis. The mark used in this message makes a distinction between the initial remarks of the message and the final kind comment. And because the ellipsis can stand for a pause in dialogue, this particular ellipsis might have a paralinguistic element in it, in that it could stand for a thoughtful silence between friendly remarks. The ellipsis seems to be a way to create a sort of informal, conversational pause in writing. It does not have the finality of a full-stop, nor does it have the enthusiasm of an exclamation point, nor the patent pragmatic purpose of the question mark. It is a mark with which ideas can be separated, but not with too great a distinction; ideas, when they are divvied by ellipses, do not seem to be discrete units, but rather seem to be notions in a connected ideational flow.

5.5.8 Commas

Commas appear frequently in the data. As was mentioned in the previous section, they do not seem to carry any obvious new meanings or functions. They are used to create minimal disjunction between ideas within the text-messages. It is, however, worth reiterating that the frequency with which commas appear in the

data does indicate some thoughtfulness and/or a respect for standard forms of writing on the part of the respondents.

5.5.9 Quotations Marks

Quotation marks appeared once in this study's dataset. They were used in response to DCT 3 by Respondent 26, who wrote, "What's up man? I heard you have a new job now. You pretty excited or are you just feeling "meh" about it?". The quotation marks appear on either side of a word – "meh" – that is relatively new to the English lexicon. *Merriam-Webster's* online dictionary gives three definitions of the word "meh": the word can be an interjection "used to express indifference or mild disappointment"; or it can be an adjective that means "not impressive" or "apathetic, indifferent" ("Meh", online, Definition). The respondent appears to be using the term in the sense of this latter definition – that is, he is asking if the recipient is feeling apathetic – in which case, quotation marks are perhaps used because the word is a colloquialism; it is also possible, however, that the sender used quotation marks because he is asking, indirectly, if the recipient would literally say "meh", in the interjectional sense, about the job.

5.5.10 Asterisks

Asterisks appear twice in this study's data. In both cases they were used in follow-up messages to mark a correction. Respondent 11, in response to DCT 3, wrote, initially, "Congrats on it new job. How r u feelin about it??". Then, the respondent sent a follow-up message reading, "*Ur". It is apparent that the "Ur" is meant to take the place of the incongruous "it" in the first message. Respondent 20 wrote, in response to DCT 1, "Contests bud! Drinks?". Although this

respondent exhibited a pronounced proclivity for lightheartedness in his messages, in his response to this DCT he also showed a certain thoughtfulness by sending a follow-up corrective to the message reading “Congrats*”. (It needs scarcely be written, but the “Congrats” corrects the “Contests” of the first message). The asterisk is thus shown to be a mark that signifies a correction in a follow-up message – and, although this data is meager, we can discern that it can be placed either before or after the correction it accompanies.

5.5.11 Slashes

There was only one slash used in the text-messages collected for this study. It came from Respondent 13, who wrote, in response to DCT 4, “Hey, so I know we really need to start getting stuff done on this research project and I think we should try setting up a time/place for a group meeting. Can you text everyone else and see whatll work best for them?”. It is clear that, in this message, the slash is equivalent to the conjunction “and.”

5.5.12 XOs

In one instance, an “Xo” was used in the data. The “X” here signifies a kiss, and the “o” signifies a hug. The message in which these symbols appear was sent by Respondent 22 in response to DCT 2: “Hey darling, heard about the job, call me!! Xo”. These marks stand in for nonverbal immediacy behaviors that, in this context, would probably be intended to offer the recipient a form of comfort. The sender, via these symbols, is showing intimacy, solicitude, and care. Once more, I will proffer the observation that the singular kiss in this data is illustrative of a

stark contrast between American and British text-messaging practices: The British are fond of sending virtual kisses (Tagg, 2009), and Americans are less so.

5.6 Other Linguistic Items of Note in the Data

Although our primary concern here is punctuation marks, several other linguistic phenomena of note in the data should be mentioned. First and foremost, the punctuation practices on display here seem to be the most nonstandard feature of the data. Otherwise, the messages are written, for the most part, in a fairly standard style. Although, in the data, there are abbreviations, all-caps spellings, letter repeats, places mid-message where punctuation is omitted, etc., these are somewhat limited. Thurlow and Brown (2003) also found that the writing style of text-messages was at least somewhat standard, even back in the early days of text-messaging, when people had to use numeric keypads to type out their messages. Second, the greeting “Hey” is extraordinarily common as a conversational opener in the data. On that note, in future studies, it would be interesting to see studies analysing actual text-messaging exchanges from a conversation analysis perspective. Much can be learned from single messages, especially when those messages are contextualised, but it would be interesting and beneficial to see how text-message exchanges are initiated and concluded, and even, perhaps, how text-messaging turns are negotiated. Third, both male and female terms of endearment are used in the data. Examples of such terms of address include “bro” (used by Respondents 3, 5, and 39), “girl” (used by Respondents 14, 27, 28, 29, and 40), “man” (used by Respondents 2, 7, 8, 9, 19, 26, 34, and 39), “dude” (used by

Respondents 8, 9, and 30), and “doll” and “darling” (both used by Respondent 22).

5.7 Conclusion

5.7.1 General Emotional and Relational Functions of the Analysed Marks

This data demonstrates that punctuation marks can operate as integral components of text-messages. They can help in the conveyance of emotional and relational meanings in a number of ways. The exclamation point can show excitement – and, if that excitement is for another person, it can demonstrate emotional identification. This exclamatory mark can furthermore show social enthusiasm, and it can give emphasis to different kinds of interpersonal sentiments. The question mark has a straightforward meaning and purpose – to signal questions. It can be deployed in situations in which questions are more polite or appropriate, and it can clarify that a given message is intended to be taken as a question, even if the words of the sentence do not make the query obvious. In these ways the question mark can serve as a means of maintaining positive social relations with others. The full-stop’s meanings and purposes are a bit more turbid. It does seem clear that the full-stop is used for its normal purpose of marking the end of a sentence in text-messages. And, moreover, we have seen that the popular notion that the full-stop is harsh or terse cannot be taken as categorically true, since we have good empirical evidence that the full-stop is used in situations in which people would definitely not want to be rude in any way. All the same, there probably are times when a full-stop would seem to be too formal or flat, and people’s interpretations will, of course, to some degree differ. But what other

emotional and relational meanings might the full-stop carry? It is possible, although further investigation is necessary to corroborate this point, that the full-stop can, because of its relative decorousness, placidity, and finality, be used as a means of demonstrating earnestness in text-messages. (It will be recalled that this inference was prompted by the relatively large number of transmission-final full-stops at the end of the consolatory messages.) Emoticons and emoji can, in addition to displaying the emotion(s) of the sender, serve as a way for senders to identify themselves emotionally with another person; and they can clarify the illocutionary force of messages. Furthermore, in certain circumstances, emoticons and emoji can, because of their informal (and at times ludic) nature, be a tacit demonstration of a sense of comfort, familiarity, and/or intimacy between interlocutors. Strings of punctuation marks can also convey emotional and relational meanings. Strings of exclamation points can function like a single exclamation point, but with additional force, and, once again, because of their informality, these strings may show a certain implied closeness between the sender and the receiver(s). Strings of one or more exclamation points with one or more question marks can show an eagerness to receive an answer to a question or a confirmation of a tentative statement. Similarly, strings of question marks can show an eagerness for a response to a question – and this eagerness could show personal interest and care for the recipient of the message, or, contrarily, it could, in other contexts, show some level of importunity.

5.7.2 Punctuation's Influence on Speech Acts

It is clear that punctuation marks do impact the speech acts that people perform in their text-messages; they therefore must be understood not simply as orthographic expedients, but rather as some of the semiotic means by which interlocutors perform social acts in virtual conversations. From this perspective, punctuation marks are not simple clarifiers of meaning and conveyors of meaning – they are devices with which social actions are performed. Scholars have noted that non-word cues can influence speech acts (Kendon, 1995; Key, 1973; Sanders, 1987). (Gass and Houck [1999] even found that certain speech acts, such as expressing agreement and requesting information, could be performed entirely with nonverbal cues.) Similarly, punctuation marks, we have seen, can have an impact on how speech acts are understood. Exclamation points can signify the happy excitement of Expressive messages of congratulation; they therefore directly signify the sincerity condition of the speech act. When they appear with Expressive greetings, they can show social enthusiasm. They can also demonstrate excitement in Assertives that would not necessarily be read as conveying excitement in and of themselves. Exclamation points can furthermore give emphasis to consolatory Assertives (and this emphasis shows social solicitude on the part of the sender), and they can demonstrate eagerness in regards to kind, invitational Directives. Question marks can clarify that, in a given message, the speech act being performed is a question, a form of Directive. The full-stop may be, in the view of some, a mark that can rob some speech acts of the proper level of engagement or enthusiasm – that can, in other words, undercut the

sincerity condition of certain speech acts; while it might also be a mark that imbues speech acts such as Expressives and Assertives with a form of earnestness. Emoticons can clarify the speech act that is being performed in a message (especially in the case of jokes), and can function as demonstrations of feeling in conjunction with other speech acts. Emoji, being, like emoticons, pictographs, can function in much the same way. Exclamation point strings can function like exclamation points in their relations with speech acts – they simply have a more potent meaning. Combinations of one or more exclamation points with one or more question marks can show, or clarify, the Directive nature of a message, while also demonstrating an excitement on the part of the sender. And strings of question marks can demonstrate that the sender of a message is eager for a response, or excited about the topic of the question. In conclusion, punctuation marks can do at least three things in relation to speech acts: They can give added strength or emphasis to the implicit or explicit psychological states associated with speech acts; they can introduce emotional elements into speech acts; and they can clarify speech acts. The general conclusions, it should be observed, fit in nicely with this thesis's rhetorical model of punctuation mark function: Those punctuation marks that strengthen socioemotional meanings and those that introduce socioemotional elements into messages are conveyors of emotional and relational meaning; those that clarify speech acts serve in a clarifying capacity; and those that are emphasisers of messages without emotion could be viewed as structural clarifiers. By reinforcing or conveying psychological meanings, punctuation marks can highlight that sincerity conditions

are being met in speech acts, and the acts could therefore be viewed as more credible; such punctuation marks, then, contribute to interpersonal credibility. Punctuation marks are an important element in the performance of speech acts in written discourse, and must be treated as such in studies of digitally mediated social interaction.

5.7.3 Punctuation in Task-Based Contexts

In the study's data, there is evidence that people use more formal styles of punctuation in task-based contexts. However, it must be repeated that even in the responses to the task-based DCT, there are uses of nonstandard punctuation.

5.7.4 Further Contributions

Finally, this chapter, in addition to positing a number of conclusions in regards to the ways punctuation marks can convey emotional and relational meaning in text-messages, also practically demonstrates the validity of the rhetorical model delineated in Chapter 3, and it shows how that model can be put to use in examining punctuation marks. Beyond this rhetorical model, this thesis offers yet another theoretical contribution to the understanding of punctuation marks: The notion of semiotic elasticity. Punctuation marks, because they are signs that convey meanings, can be understood as semiotic devices. As in the case of words, the meanings associated with punctuation marks are not perfectly demarked. The analysis of the marks given in this chapter has hopefully made it abundantly clear that the context of a given mark can have an important influence on the mark's meaning and its consequent function within a given discourse. For example, an exclamation point in a message of congratulation can carry a meaning of

excitement, and it would therefore function to reinforce the excitement inherent in the Expressive speech act of congratulating; and an exclamation point in a consolatory Assertive would carry a meaning of emphasis and it would therefore function to strengthen the assertion being made in the message, without demonstrating excitement. These are two disparate meanings and functions that are context-dependent – the mark thus demonstrates a malleability in its meaning-making potential. Other marks also demonstrate such semiotic elasticity, and because of this, punctuation marks must be understood as dynamic devices in informal written discourse.

Chapter 6: Punctuation Practices on Message Boards

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the results of a very controlled study were detailed. In this chapter, language-in-use will be examined. In particular, punctuation practices in online message boards will be scrutinised. In the next section, section 6.2, there is a discussion of the message board study's dataset. In-depth analyses of punctuation marks used in the three samples taken from Reddit message boards are offered in sections 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5. In section 6.6, concluding remarks are given.

6.2 The Dataset

Table 4 displays basic information about the dataset used for this study. The numbers of contributors in the table are necessarily approximate, because some users deleted their usernames, and it is impossible to know if these people posted only once or multiple times in a thread in which multiple user names have been deleted. In a couple of circumstances, I inferred with a high degree of confidence that a deleted account had posted twice, and, accordingly, I attributed both posts to the single person with a deleted username; however, in the majority of cases it was not possible to know with certitude if the deleted accounts were all independent contributors. It is, moreover, possible that some of the deleted accounts posted in more than one thread.

The word counts in the tables are also approximations, since I used Microsoft Word's counting feature to expedite the tabulation process, and Word's counting mechanism tallies certain non-lexical typographical marks (such as compound punctuation, including emoticons, as well as stand-alone punctuation,

such as hyphens with a space on either side) as words. The numbers are mildly inflated for this reason. This caveat notwithstanding, the numbers given in the table give a good idea of the dataset. Tallied posts include both initial posts and the subsequent comments in the threads. (In some threads the initial post was an image of some kind, and these were not counted.) The titles of the threads were not analysed unless they were written in a post. Also, there were two individuals who posted in two different threads, so two was subtracted from the total number of contributors in the table below. Posts that had no punctuation except for marks serving technical functions (e.g., full-stops in URLs) were counted as having no punctuation for the tallies in the table.

	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Total
Posts	194	181	196	571
Contributors	106	130	113	347
Posts without Punctuation	2	14	2	18
Words	12,245	6,472	16,994	35,711
Average Words per Post	63.12	35.76	86.70	62.54

Table 4 – The Dataset

A couple of observations concerning this dataset should be made. First and foremost, it should be noted that only 18 out of 571 posts (or roughly 3% of the posts in the dataset) were devoid of punctuation, indicating that punctuation devices are an important part of people's orthographic repertoires in message board posts. Second, the posts collected for this study are, on average, much longer than the text-messages collected for the previous study. However, one point not reflected in this table is the wide range of word counts in the sampled posts: There were several posts that consisted of only a single word, while there

were others that were veritable essays – the longest post was composed of 1,681 words.

At the beginning of each sample's analysis section, tables showing the number of times each punctuation mark occurred in the sample are given (Tables 5-7).

6.3 Analysis of Sample 1

Exclamation points	73
Question Marks	54
Emoticons	13
Strings	8
Ellipses	26
Asterisks	0
XO	0
Slashes	19

Table 5 – Counts of Analysed Marks in Sample 1

It would be best to state at the outset that any of the punctuation marks analysed can serve as disjunctive devices when they appear mid-post, and can therefore operate to clarify the structure of posts. Furthermore, in the examples given in the analyses below, I sometimes give a full post, and at other times I only give a portion of a post; this pruning was to some degree necessary to keep the chapter streamlined; however, I attempted in all cases to ensure that the examples are comprehensible for the purpose at hand, even if each of them is not given in its entirety.

6.3.1 Exclamation Points

The exclamation point was deployed seventy-three times, and in a number of different ways, in the first sample.

6.3.1.1 Exclamation Points with Assertives

Forty-one of the exclamation points in this sample accompany Assertives. Some of the Assertives were directed at another person and were of the excited, happy, and encouraging variety; examples include, “Oh wow, I'm so happy for you!”; “I hope you LOVE it!”; “That's awesome!”; “Yay that is awesome!”; “that sounds absolutely ideal!”; “So happy you got one! especially from home!”; “This is wonderful news!”; and so on. These marks show excitement and reinforce the (explicit or implicit) positive affect of these utterances, and, in doing so, demonstrate Burkean identification between the writer and the person whom they address. They clarify tonally. Even though the message board posters may not be friends outside of the virtual realm – and even though they may not have interacted previously within the virtual realm – these marks could nevertheless be said to cultivate interpersonal credibility, since they show that the writer is actively engaged with the person being addressed. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, Reddit can be a virtual place of social interaction and community (About Reddit, 2015), so socioemotional interactions are not surprising, even if interlocutors are not intimate real life acquaintances. One person wrote the following message to a person looking for a job: “Wishing you the very best! Stay the course. Don't lose patience and don't lose your focus. Keeping you in my thoughts!” The exclamation points in this message do not show happiness or excitement, but rather give emphasis to the friendly and encouraging Assertives being offered. Their emphasis seems to demonstrate a form of sincerity of sentiment, so they could be viewed as contributing to interpersonal credibility.

Other exclamation points accompanied less positive Assertives; for instance, “That's terrible!” [this message was written in reply to a poster who had shared an unhappy anecdote]; “I am currently job hunting myself, my barista gig is just too much these days!”; “That being said, I've never been so drained as when I get back home!”; and “I can't imagine taking current approach in one city, expanding it out to the country, and then maintaining that for six months -- it would be exhausting!”. These marks are emphasisers – and more specifically, they emphasise the tacit emotions associated with the Assertives they are coupled with. They do not introduce a positive form of enthusiasm or excitement or a happy element into the messages. These exclamation points could wield some influence on perceived interpersonal credibility. The first example in particular could build interpersonal credibility since it shows that the writer empathetically and emphatically feels that the situation described in the anecdote is a bad one; and in the cases of the other three posts, it is possible that some readers may find the expressive nature of the punctuation mark eloquent. Some exclamation points in the sample seem to introduce an excited or enthused element into Assertive acts that would not necessary be read as particularly exciting or enthusiastic otherwise. One poster wrote, “I'll find something soon!” This exclamation point demonstrates enthusiasm about the future, thereby clarifying that the poster is not downbeat, but is hopeful about forthcoming prospects; it probably would not affect the writer’s credibility, although readers may admire his or her undefeated attitude. Another poster, writing in response to a post describing a certain way of writing resumes, posted, “I’m doing the same!” This mark is probably expressing

a form of pleasurable excitement at having encountered someone with a similar job-hunting strategy, and thus it clarifies tonally. Another poster wrote, “Fridays are when I focus on pimping out my LinkedIn account and tweak little things, go over my interview wardrobe and make sure everything is clean and ready for the next interview (can't hurt to pick out outfits before there even is one, helps with anxiety if someone schedules an interview for the next week!).” This exclamation point could be expressing excitement about the prospect of future, as-yet unscheduled job interviews, or it could be giving emphasis to the notion that such preparedness helps alleviate feelings of apprehension. Perhaps it performs both functions. It clarifies the tone of the sentence. One poster used numerous exclamation points in describing his or her successful method of job hunting; for instance, “So [here’s] what I've learned or at least what's worked for me!”; “The places I applied to fresh out of college that ignored me now answered me!”; and “I have yet to work somewhere that posted an opening! That's right!”. These marks seem to show both excitement and emphasis – they accompany Assertives related to a topic that would naturally be exciting to the writer, and they give emphasis, much in the way of the vocal tones of an enthused salesperson, to the remarks such that the reader will potentially take notice and use some of the enumerated strategies in obtaining a job for him or herself. This person’s exclamation points could be viewed as clarifying the enthusiastic tone of the messages.

6.3.1.2 Exclamation Points with Expressives

Exclamation points punctuate Expressives twenty-eight times in this sample. These Expressives are of four kinds: Felicitations, benedictions, expressions of gratitude, and interjections. Exclamation points were used with fourteen messages of felicitation (e.g., “Congratulations!”; “Congrats!”; “High five bro!”; and “Congrats on the progress!”); here, the exclamation point is a way to identify with the emotions of the other person; it indicates, moreover, that the sincerity condition of the Expressive (in this case, happy excitement) is being met. It could build interpersonal credibility by demonstrating Burkean identification, and it clarifies the tone of the message. Exclamation points were used with seven messages of benediction (e.g., “Best of luck!”; “Good luck!”; and “Glad to hear its working out for someone, power to you!”); in these messages, the exclamation point seems to show that the well-wishes are given with enthusiasm – and therefore the mark gives emphasis to the fact that the sincerity condition (in this case, a desire for a good outcome of some kind for the message’s recipient) is being met. These exclamation points could build credibility and clarify tonally. In the messages of gratitude, of which there were three (“Thank you!”; “Thanks man!”; and “THANK YOU!”), the exclamation point shows that the writer’s appreciation (which is, in these cases, the sincerity condition) is enthusiastic. These exclamation points also could build interpersonal credibility and clarify tonally.

Exclamation points were used in conjunction with the following four Expressive interjections in this sample: “Hurray!”; “Wooooooooot!”;

"Yayyyyy!"; and "Holy moly!" The first three interjections obviously mimic vocal cries of delight, and the exclamation point could therefore be understood as conveying excitement; these exclamation points, perhaps more than others, clearly stand in for a form of paralinguistic exuberance, since they attend words that are usually uttered excitedly. The "Holy moly!", like the other interjections, was written in a positive context, and its exclamation point is therefore likely to have a similar meaning – one that conveys a sense of excitement. The writer of the "Wooooooooooot!" used the interjection to convey excitement for him or herself, but the other interjections were expressions of excitement for someone else; these latter marks would establish Burkean identification by showing that the writer is happy and excited for the person being addressed, and these marks could, therefore, help build interpersonal credibility.

6.3.1.3 Exclamation Points with Directives

Exclamation points accompany Directives in four cases in this sample. One person wrote, "Hang in there!" This exclamation point emphasises the encouraging exhortation, and it could contribute to interpersonal credibility since it demonstrates a sense of solicitude on the part of the writer. Two posters used exclamation points to emphasise advice they gave in the form of Directives: "Stalk their employees on Linkedin!" and "Follow up a week later!". These exclamation points could be viewed as emphasisers, but not importunate emphasisers demanding that the advice be taken; rather, they signify an enthusiasm concerning the proffered advice, which is itself a demonstration of a strong belief in the effectiveness of the advice. These marks might be said to

contribute to interpersonal credibility, since they too show some concern on the part of the writer for potential readers who need help in the job hunt. There was another Directive in Sample 1 that was accompanied by an exclamation point, but it was unusual – in a number of ways. It comes in the form of something that might hypothetically be spoken aloud, and reads, "YOU CAN TAKE THAT JOB AND RAM IT UP YOUR RECTUM!" (Technically, because of the inclusion of the modal auxiliary "can", this sentence is an Assertive, but the Directive nature of the utterance, although it is indirect, is so clear that I am making an exception and counting it as a Directive.) This sentence was written to be humorous, but all the same, it is probably worth observing that this is an example of an exclamation point performing what could be viewed as its most basic function: Demonstrating a vocal exclamation in written text. The capital letters go along with the exclamation point in such a way as to signify a raised – and probably, in this case, hostile – tone.

6.3.1.4 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points in Sample 1

This sample provides us with varied exclamation point uses, many of them rather nuanced, and all of them context-dependent. In general, exclamation points in the sample are seen reinforcing the enthusiasm expressed explicitly or implicitly in Assertives, introducing an enthused element into Assertives, and giving emphasis to Assertives and Directives; they could be said, in some situations, to show excitement and to give emphasis concurrently. In those cases in which exclamation points give emphasis, they could be viewed as accentuating the sincerity condition of the speech acts they accompany; for example, in an

Assertive with an exclamation point, the mark emphasises the truth of the claim, and in a Directive, the exclamation point emphasises the desire on the part of the writer for something to be done by the reader(s). In conjunction with congratulatory Expressives, exclamation points demonstrate the sincerity condition of happy excitement; with other Expressives, they serve as emphasisers which indicate that the Expressives in question are sincere – that is, that the underlying sincerity conditions are met. The exclamation point, given these findings, is a mark that, in its capacities as an emphasiser and token of excitement, can influence speech acts in such a way as to clarify tone, accentuate meanings, and introduce or reinforce emotional and relational meanings. These conclusions are analogous to those drawn from the text-message study. Examples of using exclamation points to show excitement solely for oneself are only seen in this study, and this is of course because the DCTs used to gather data in the first study described situations in which one would be happy for someone else and not for oneself. Further, because of the nature of this study, there are, in this data, more diverse forms of Expressive speech acts. Aside from these differences, the conclusions of the two studies are essentially the same.

6.3.2 Question Marks

Fifty-four question marks were used in this sample. As mentioned in the previous study, question marks, when they appear singly, do not seem to carry any intrinsic affective content. But they can be important clarifiers. Question marks in this sample function in three different ways: First, they punctuate explicit questions;

second, they punctuate implicit questions; and third, they introduce interrogative or uncertain elements into sentences that have other speech acts in them.

6.3.2.1 Question Marks with Explicit Questions

In this sample, there are forty-one question marks accompanying explicit questions; for example, “How did you bring it up?”; “What company?”; “Are you being discriminated against?”; “When you say a generic cover letter, do you mean one where you change a couple sentences to fit the description of the job or one where you literally swap out Company X with Company Y and press send?”; “Where are you looking to find jobs?”; and “How did it go?”. These interrogative sentences (which are a form of Directive, according to Searle’s [1979] speech act taxonomy) are straightforward and require little analysis. The question marks could be viewed as clarifying the illocutionary force and structure by demonstrating the interrogative mood, but they would probably not be entirely necessary to do so, since interrogative pronouns are used and the sentences are arranged syntactically as questions. It could be said that the inclusion of these question marks, as opposed to their exclusion, promotes credibility, since they show that the writer is ably composing in a standard manner.

6.3.2.2 Question Marks with Implicit Questions

The second type of sentence that question marks accompany is the implicit question. There are six of these uses in the sample: “Your husband works in an oil rig?”; “There are tech writing jobs that are work from home?”; “Can't get a company to talk to you?”; “Or, if you could recommend anyone else to speak to?”; and “Please give an example of what you write. Pretty please? With

unicorns and sprinkles?". In syntax alone, these sentences would not appear to be questions, but the question marks make it clear that they are intended as queries, in much the way a raised tone at the end of an utterance indicates a query in in-person discourse. One question mark was used with a tag-question: "All you awkward penguins can at least email right?" The tag-question obviates the need for the question mark as a clarifier – but the mark helps, all the same. There is one question mark that punctuates a discourse marker: "Be polite, be pleasant, don't be a judgemental downer, you know?" This query, because of its conventional function as a discourse marker, does not necessarily demand a reply, but, for our purposes, it could be viewed as an implicit question, since the words "you know" do not in and of themselves convey an interrogative mood.

These question marks therefore clarify illocutionary force (and structure) in an important way: They show that the words are intended as questions. They also, by keeping the meaning of the message clear, could help maintain writer credibility.

6.3.2.3 Question Marks that Introduce an Interrogative or Uncertain Element

In addition to punctuating explicit and implicit questions, question marks in this sample were also used to introduce an interrogative or uncertain element into messages that had other speech acts in them. There are five such question marks in the sample. One poster wrote, "Also, I'm curious as to what you were doing before that tech writing is your dream job?" This person states that he or she is curious (and therefore performs an Assertive speech act), but finishes the sentence

with a question mark, which indicates that he or she is asking for a response that would sate his or her curiosity. Similarly, another poster wrote, “I am assuming you are trying to get jobs where you will have to deal with customers on a fairly regular basis?” Once again, we have here an Assertive that is accompanied by a question mark; but this mark seems to be one that signifies that the writer is seeking confirmation that his or her assumption is correct. One person used a question mark similarly in an hypothetical quotation: “I usually call them and say something along the lines of, "Hey there, my name is [user name], I sent ya'll a resume last week, and I was wondering if anyone had a moment to look it over?"”. Here, once again, we see an Assertive accompanied by a question mark that indicates that the speaker is seeking some response that would satisfy his or her curiosity about the situation; this question mark, moreover, because it is included in a quotation of (hypothetical) spoken-aloud dialogue, may itself be a symbol of a raised pitch at the end of the utterance. These uses of the question mark do not clarify a sentence as a question, but rather introduce a question – one which seeks confirmation or clarification of an assertion made by the writer (or hypothetical speaker, in the case of the latter example). These question marks could be seen, therefore, as vehicles for the conveyance of indirect speech acts. In each of the examples, then, there is an explicit speech act (an Assertive) and an indirect speech act (a Directive question). Hence they clarify the existence of secondary illocutionary forces. In this sample, there were also two examples of question marks that seem to demonstrate uncertainty on the part of the writer: “Maybe the phone number is from a different area code than the jobs you're

applying for?" and "So... maybe take some E?". These question marks merely show that the writer is dubious about something; more specifically, the question marks show that these writers are questioning whether or not what they are saying is correct or apposite, respectively.

6.3.2.4 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks in Sample 1

In this sample, we see question marks indicating explicit and implicit questions, and introducing indirect interrogative speech acts and uncertainty into texts. These conclusions are comparable to the conclusions reached in the previous study, except for the conclusion regarding the question mark as a signifier of uncertainty, which is unique to this study.

6.3.3 Emoticons

Thirteen emoticons appear in this sample, all of them with Assertives.

6.3.3.1 Smileys

Eight of the emoticons are smileys. One person, in response to a jocular statement about a happy situation, wrote "Quite :)". This smiley shows amusement at the joke, or perhaps happiness about the situation, or maybe both; it therefore clarifies the tone of the response as happy or amused or both, and it could build interpersonal credibility in the eyes of the person being responded to by displaying an appropriate and positive response to a comment. One person wrote, "Plus, I put off buying maternity clothes for a long time and pretty much lived in my husband's sweatpants. :)"; this smiley seems to signify amusement at the writer's own clothing choices during pregnancy. And this smiley, perhaps more than the others in this sample, could also aid in credibility, since it shows that the

poster's unconventional choice in trousers was understood as unconventional and funny; without the smiley, the poster might be thought of as peculiar. Another poster wrote, "I'm more excited that I will have "office pets" :)"; this smiley seems to signify happiness, and possibly amusement as well. Another person wrote, "This gives me hope :)"; this one, of course, seems to signify the happiness associated with hope. Another wrote, "Makes it super easy for people just to hit the forward button and forward to HR. Some did without even responding to me, which was fine when I got an email for HR for a phone interview :)"; this smiley shows happiness about receiving an interview for a job, and perhaps amusement at the fact that even though an employer did not confirm receipt of application materials, an interview was secured all the same. These five smileys convey affect and clarify tone. They might also promote interpersonal credibility by showing affective engagement and increasing the communicative lucidity and vibrancy of posts. Three smileys were used in more nuanced ways. One poster, in response to a person who had written an encouraging post that mentioned jobs that prefer naturally introverted people, wrote, "thanks. And lately, I have been wondering if there are jobs that prefer shy people. :) That would be useful knowledge." This smiley could be taken a number of ways: It could be interpreted as showing happiness in response to the other person's post; it could be viewed as a means of softening an FTA since this message might be seen to question the existence of jobs that the previous poster had mentioned; it might be seen as a way to textually smile about the seeming absence of such jobs for introverts, in the way that people smile – seemingly paradoxically – in the face of misfortune; it could be

interpreted as signifying amusement at the statement that it precedes (it would in that case be a preemptive smiley), since the statement that it precedes is one whose meaning is somewhat obvious; and it may, of course, be a mix of these things. In any case, some affective meaning is shared by this smiley, and if clarifies tone. It could contribute to interpersonal credibility by showing affective engagement and by avoiding a potential FTA; and, the evasion of the FTA could be viewed to show a positive attitude towards the other interlocutor and the exchange itself. In another post, we read, "(and I sorry if it sounded like i thought that you thought my complaint was invalid. I didnt at all and it was an example of bad sentence phrasing on my part. :)"; in the text of this extract, we read the writer apologising and attempting to ameliorate a possible misunderstanding that has arisen in the discourse. The smiley that follows this text thus may be used as a display of amiability to demonstrate the writer's positive feelings towards the interaction and towards the person being addressed, or it might be intended to show amusement at the writer's lapse in compositional prowess. In any case, it is clear that this particular smiley underlines the writer's desire to maintain a positive, harmonious interaction and avoid any discord. The smiley thus clarifies the positive tone of the message, and could in doing so promote interpersonal credibility. One writer, encouraging a demoralised shy person who was looking for work, typed out the following message: "Most likely, they just don't want a miser who will bring down the morale of the office. Be polite, be pleasant, don't be a judgemental downer, you know? Plenty of introverts have plenty of jobs. :) [line break] Good luck!" This smiley is what might be termed a "smiley of

encouragement": It accompanies a positive statement (one about introverts having jobs), and it seems to accentuate the positivity of the statement. Also, this smiley, like the one mentioned above, might be intended as aiding in the avoidance of an FTA. The writer of this extract stated that if people avoid a negative comportment, shyness should not be a problem in finding a job; there is, within this statement, an oblique exhortation not to be unpleasant, and the smiley may be a way of balancing that shadowy imperative with a bit of sunshine – it may, in other words, be a demonstration that the writer desires to be edifying and not insulting. Once again, the use of a smiley to avoid FTAs can help to maintain credibility and it can demonstrate positive emotional and relational meaning.

6.3.3.2 A Winkey

A single winkey was used in this sample: "I dunno man, getting from my bed to the sofa takes a long time. ;)"; this winkey signals that the sentence is intended as a joke; it therefore clarifies illocutionary force and tone; and it could reinforce credibility, by ensuring that readers understand that the writer is demonstrating wit, as opposed to inanity or strangeness.

6.3.3.3 Sad Faces

Two sad faces were used in this sample, both to display negative affect. One poster wrote, "I am doing the same thing and I'm incredibly nervous that nobody will want to hire me :("; this emoticon may symbolise the writer's apprehension about not finding a job, or sadness about that apprehension, or sadness at the thought of not having a job, or some mixture of these affective states; there isn't any doubt, in any case, that the emoticon is a display of negative affect. It clarifies

tone, and it is doubtful whether it would have any effect on interpersonal credibility. Another poster wrote, “I had to give up on dancing at clubs and restaurants because I didn't stay after my gig drinking and smoking with the owners and patrons and couldn't compete with the dancers who did. :(”; this sad face seems to signify sadness stemming from the loss of a job that the writer enjoyed and/or was well compensated for. Once again, this emoticon clarifies tone and would not probably have any profound effect on the credibility of the writer.

6.3.3.4 A Crooked-Mouth Emoticon

The crooked-mouth emoticon is to be found a single time in this sample. It comes from yet another post about introverted people looking for jobs. A relatively sizeable portion of this post is being given for context:

> However, during one interview, at about 5 minutes in, the guy interviewing me flat out said "So, I see you're an introvert." I wanted to hide under the table for the last 40 minutes of the interview. It was pretty awful. Needless to say, I didn't get the job. I think it can be a form of discrimination, but I don't think there's much we can do about it. :\

The crooked-mouth emoticon, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, could represent a variety of affective states. In the last chapter, this emoticon was interpreted as signifying disappointment. This appears to be a similar usage – the crooked mouth seems to show an unhappy dissatisfaction with a state of affairs.

6.3.3.5 An Asian Emoticon

One of the emoticons in this sample is unique. It occurs in this message: “Edit: I personally have an English major proof read my email "templates". They sound so much better that way >.> (is not a writer)”. This emoticon is written in the Asian style, in that it is right-side-up instead of sideways (Kavanagh, 2010; LaPointe, Greysen, & Barrett, 2004). The two greater-than signs indicate smiling eyes, and the full-stop indicates pursed lips. This is a fairly complex expression, and I interpret it as showing amusement at the writer’s own inabilities as a writer.

6.3.3.6 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons in Sample 1

In this sample, emoticons punctuate Assertives; they display affect, in some cases conveying complex emotional meanings; they can possibly serve as ameliorators of FTAs, and in this respect they could be understood as politeness tools; and they clarify illocutionary force. In some cases they may increase the credibility of the writer, since they show emotional engagement and aid in clarity of expression. These conclusions are similar to those reached in the text-message study, although there is a salient distinction that should be highlighted: In the text-message study, it was inferred that emoticons can, because of their informality, show familiarity between interlocutors. In these message board posts, the emoticons do not necessarily display familiarity in the way they would between two friends communicating via text-message; but, the informality of emoticons may promote a sense of relaxation and geniality between interlocutors in message boards, and this could lead to more effective and positive communication; so, even in this regard, the conclusions of the two studies are comparable.

6.3.4 Punctuation Strings

There are a total of eight strings in this sample.

6.3.4.1 Exclamation Point Strings

Strings of exclamation points punctuate congratulatory Expressives in four cases (e.g., “Congratulations!!!” and “Congrats!!”) and happy and excited Assertives in three cases (“How awesome! !”; “Good for you!!!”; and “Wonderful!!”). These strings, like an individual mark, show happy excitement, but the additional marks lend the sentiments additional emphasis; in doing so, they demonstrate affect and clarify tone; and they could build interpersonal credibility by showing emotional engagement.

6.3.4.2 Question Mark Strings

In one case, a string of question marks was used to punctuate a (Directive) question: “Unemployment classes??” The comment was written in response to someone who had mentioned such classes, and, in that context, it seems that the person who wrote the string was using it not only to clarify the illocutionary force (since these word are not phrased overtly as a question), but also to emphasise the question and thereby demonstrate a keenness to know more about the classes in question; this keenness to be better informed might in turn indicate some confusion or surprise about the existence of unemployment classes. Thus this string shows affective meaning and clarifies illocutionary force. It probably would not have any major impact on credibility.

6.3.4.3 Conclusions Concerning Punctuation Strings in Sample 1

In this study, it may be observed, like in the text-message study, that strings are used, generally speaking, as emphasisers. But it is important to note that, depending on context, the way they give emphasis can vary considerably.

6.3.5 Ellipses

I mentioned in the previous chapter that I was somewhat surprised, as a result of my own anecdotal experience, by the scarcity of ellipses in the text-messages collected by means of the DCTs. In the message board samples, there were many more ellipses. In this first sample, there were twenty-six of them. Before looking at examples, it should be noted that I counted any succession of full-stops as an ellipsis – thus two full-stops in a row or ten in a row were counted as a single instance of one mark. Further, it may be stated at the outset that ellipses do not appear to have, in and of themselves, any emotional or relational meaning, although they could be put to emotional and relational use when handled dexterously.

6.3.5.1 Ellipses that Signify Things Left to the Mind of the Reader

In seven cases, ellipses were used with Assertives to signify things left to the mind of the reader, as in the following examples: “I would make sure that my resume contained specifics, numbers, equipment worked....etc.”; “The last thing is that i would spend 5-6 hours a day on job hunting. This is rewriting resumes and cover letters, searching for jobs, job fairs....etc.”; “The ball is in the employers court and it my job to do the convincing that I am a good fit. yadda, yadda..... Perhaps using the word discrimination was far fetched.”; “Meet people for lunch

or coffee, get involved in social activities that help you meet people, or even (the old standby) volunteer..."; and "(Clearly I've been surfing Reddit too much...)". In the preceding extracts, writers use ellipses as a means of saying, essentially, "There's more that could be written here, but it need not be – you get the idea." These ellipses provide conversational implicature by showing that not everything that could be written is being written and by showing that the omissions are intentional and are of nonessential information. These marks would probably not affect the writer's credibility too much in the context of Reddit, but, insofar as they do provide conversational implicature, they could help credibility.

6.3.5.2 Ellipses that Create Disjunction

In fifteen cases, ellipses accompanied Assertives and served as a generic form of disjunctive device. These could be said to mimic pauses in spoken dialogue. Here are some examples: "Say they only interview 10 candidates... I likely only landed that interview because of my gender."; "And being unemployed (counter-intuitively) hinders your prospects of becoming employed... companies like to hire people who are already working... for some reason or another."; "You have to seem interested in the customer...it's just business."; "You apply for jobs.. and you're chosen among a slew of other candidates."; and "Recently I moved for my wife to another state, I've been unemployed (again) since feb 1st...but start a ne job on Monday....and I only applied to maybe 10-15 jobs during that time." These ellipses probably do not carry significant emotional meaning, nor would they probably affect credibility, but they do serve an important purpose as a structural clarifier (albeit a nonstandard one): Because of their association with pauses, the

ellipses are a way to divvy notions up without entirely separating them. Ellipses do somewhat resemble, it will be noticed, a linking device such as a chain or rope, and this may be more than a coincidence. Moreover, based on the above examples, it seems probable that the ellipsis signifies in a way roughly analogous to the semi-colon, a mark which has fallen out of fashion with many. Both the ellipsis and the semi-colon indicate disjunction, while also indicating that the words on either side of the mark have some connection. Now, according to most style guides, the semi-colon is supposed to be used to separate independent clauses or complex items in a list, whereas the ellipses observed for this study were used to separate a variety of clauses, phrases, and words; all the same, the level of disjunction created by the ellipsis seems similar to that created by the semi-colon. Another interesting facet of these ellipses is the fact that they come in varying lengths: Some ellipses are composed of two or three full-stops, while others are composed of strings of five or more. These variations may be a way of showing a greater or lesser degree of disjunction (if only subconsciously), or they may have little or no rhyme or reason at all, as in the case of a person who idly taps the full-stop key while thinking about the next words he or she is going to write. When they operate as signifiers of disjunction, it will be noticed that ellipses can create a sense of drama, and can give emphasis to certain notions by setting them apart.

6.3.5.3 Ellipses that Signify Thoughtful Pauses

Two of the ellipses in this sample patently represent thoughtful pauses in Assertives: “Might be more info than necessary, but my brain is running a bit

slow today. I can't be sure I could be... clear, with fewer words. lol" and "I share your reluctance toward Facebook (I have an account but do little there), but LinkedIn is... **useful**, at least from my perspective.". In both of these posts, the ellipsis functions to mimic a pause during which the writer searches for a correct word. This is an unequivocal example of writers mirroring spoken dialogue in writing. By using these marks in these posts, the writers show that they are thinking about what they are typing. These ellipses make the posts seem more conversational, and perhaps more thoughtful, and so they could build credibility. One person used an ellipsis to signify, seemingly, thoughtfulness or hesitancy or both in a jocund remark: "So... maybe take some E?" The poster who wrote this message was jokingly recommending the use of an illicit drug to another message board participant. The message, with this pause interjected, takes on a feeling of spoken dialogue, and the pause also gives a bit of added clout to the punchline by setting it apart. These things might increase interpersonal credibility.

6.3.5.4 An Ellipsis that Prompts a Reply

Finally, one poster used the ellipsis as a way to prompt a reply from another poster. One person had written that he or she had a Master's degree. Another person wrote, in response, "masters in...". This ellipsis signals that the writer wishes for the initial poster to finish the phrase. So, this ellipsis provides conversational implicature in showing why the sentence is composed of an incomplete phrase, and it clarifies the illocutionary force as an implicit Directive. This mark would not in all probability have an impact on credibility, unless the post were read as too blunt and demanding.

6.3.5.5 Conclusions Concerning Ellipses in Sample 1

In this sample, we see ellipses performing four functions: signifying additional, unnecessary information that need not be written; creating a mild form of disjunction between ideas; standing for a thoughtful, or hesitant, pause; and indicating a desire on the part of the writer for a reply.

6.3.6 Asterisks

There are no asterisks in this sample.

6.3.7 XOs

There are no kisses or hugs in this sample.

6.3.8 Slashes

There are nineteen slashes in this sample. In this sample and in the following samples, slashes in URLs were not counted, but slashes that made reference to subreddits were counted. One of the slashes in this sample appears to be a typo (“an interviewer just wants to know you're confident, aware of your faults to/improve them, willing to work (not likely to leave or get fired) and will be able to fit in with the others working there.”). The other uses of the slash are discussed below.

6.3.8.1 Slashes that Serve as Conjunctions

Twelve slashes were used as a form of conjunction; for example, “But it's like facebook in the sense that you can share articles, show your work/school history, your interests, and message other users.”; “My current job staffs experienced geologists with oil/gas companies in Houston.”; “I keep sending out resumes/cover letters to dozens of companies (I graduated this May), but it feels

like I'm sending it directly to the trash.”; “I usually do some digging on Google to find someone's email like the president/vp which is commonly easy to find.”; and “You want someone who would be the equivelant of your supervisor or whoever is the recruiter/hr.”.

6.3.8.2 Slashes that Serve in a Conventional Capacity

Two slashes were used with conventional terms: “If the email address for Craigslist is going to an HR company or an actual person, I get a 50/50 chance of getting a reply.” and “Did you A/B test certain subject lines and found a certain formula works best?”.

6.3.8.3 A Slash Used in a Not-Equal Symbol

One slash was used to create a not-equal symbol: “Introversion =/= social anxiety.”.

6.3.8.4 Slashes that Make Reference to Subreddits

Three slashes were also used in reference to certain subreddits, which are collections of threads related to a certain theme and which are indicated with slash: “Hi r/jobs.” and “I strongly suggest self posting on /r/GetEmployed.”.

6.3.8.5 Conclusions Concerning Slashes in Sample 1

These uses of the slash in this sample are in accord with usual practices.

6.4 Analysis of Sample 2

Exclamation points	29
Question Marks	49
Emoticons	4
Strings	2
Ellipses	20
Asterisks	1
XO	0
Slashes	37

Table 6 – Counts of Analysed Marks in Sample 2

In this and in the subsequent section, primary discussion will be given to novel findings, whereas repeated findings will be handled with less discussion so as to avoid repetitiveness.

6.4.1 Exclamation Points

In the second sample, twenty-nine exclamation points were used.

6.4.1.1 Exclamation Points with Assertives

Thirteen exclamation points accompany Assertives in this sample. Some were used with Assertives as a means of injecting forms of excitement and enthusiasm: “hmmmm, YES!” [this comment was written in response to a comment that humorously posed the hypothetical interview question, “do you want this job?”, and, it will be noticed, there is a clear paralinguistic element in this message]; “I always remember these things while I'm in the shower!”; “They're an excellent way to clarify some answers you gave AND it makes you stick out!”; and “I came to say the same thing!”. These marks clarify the tones of messages, and could have some positive influence on perceived credibility, since they show a level of enthusiasm and engagement. Some of the exclamatory marks were written with Assertives which have underlying Directives concerning things people should try

in the job hunt: “That’s what a follow up email is for!”; “That’s why you write thank you letters!”; and “(do your research on the company BEFORE your interview, google is your best friend!)”. In these examples, the exclamation points give emphasis to the propositions of the Assertives, thereby demonstrating enthusiasm for the indirect advice being bestowed. These could help credibility, because they exhibit a sense of care for the job hunters who might read the posts in which they occur. One exclamation point was written in accord with the mark’s more traditional function of demonstrating a spoken-aloud exclamation; the writer of this mark used it in the following funny anecdote: “I was once asked during an interview, "How would you describe the color red to a blind person?" My brain blurted to my mouth, "Purple!".”. In one case, an exclamation point was used to give emphasis to an Assertive claiming that a certain initial post had already been posted: “Repost Alert!” This exclamation point is an emphasiser, and it could be viewed as a way of demonstrating that the message is meant to be voiced in the mind as an actual alert would be heard – with paralinguistic force. It is doubtful that this would affect the credibility of the writer, although it occurs to me that such a mark used in such a message might be viewed as obnoxiously officious.

6.4.1.2 Exclamation Points with Expressives

The exclamation mark was used with ten Expressives in this sample. It was used with one congratulatory message (“Congrats!”) as a way to show excitement for another person, and it therefore directly signifies the sincerity condition of the Expressive. It was used with a message of gratitude (“Thanks for the advice!”) to show strength of gratitude – in other words, it indicates the strength of the

sincerity condition. It was used with a benediction ("good luck!") to demonstrate an eagerness for the success of another person – and again, this one indicates the strength of the sincerity condition. In one case, the exclamation point was used in an apologetic context: "Well firstly I apologise for getting back to you so late!". This exclamatory device seems to signal an earnestness, or sincerity, of remorse (which is, in this case, the sincerity condition). All of these exclamation points clarify tone and could help to promote interpersonal credibility on the part of the writer. In an interesting usage, one person used the exclamation point with an ironic (which is to say, insincere) exclamation of gratitude: "So thanks anyway, Brain!" This exclamation point, in context, is clearly sarcastic, so it does not indicate that the sincerity condition is being met with strength, as it would in a genuine expression of thanks; rather, it shows a mocking form of enthusiasm, or perhaps a sense of exasperation. This final exclamation point is important, because it demonstrates that it can be used, like paralinguistic and nonverbal cues, for ironic purposes. This mark would probably not affect the credibility of the writer.

Exclamation points were used with five Expressive interjections: "Then I decided to pick up the phone and find paying customers - wow! This was easier." This exclamation point reinforces the sense of excited surprise that the word "wow" would carry in this context. One of the interjections was written in response to a looping, moving image (popularly known as a GIF) of Daffy Duck, dressed as a Robin Hood, swinging from tree to tree and slamming into each trunk in turn: The comment in question reads, "Yoiks! and away!" and it signifies the

paralinguistic excitement of the words Daffy uses as he leaps into the ether. In two cases, people used exclamation points with ironic interjections: “By Odin!” and “Odin’s BEARD!”. These posters used these interjections humorously, and their usages reiterate the point made just above that the exclamation point can be used to display tongue-in-cheek forms of excitement. These marks, like those with the other interjections, would not in all probability have any profound effect on the credibility of the writer. And, because they all accompany a form of Expressive that normally would be uttered aloud with some excitement, they all have an undeniable paralinguistic element, even if the emphasis is heard only in the mind.

6.4.1.3 Exclamation Points with Directives

Exclamation points were used with six Directives. In each case, they were used to give strength to advice. Here are some examples: “Secondly, DRESS WELL!”; “Guys make sure you're shaven and your hair is done!”; and “If not, 'fake it til you make it'!”. These could promote credibility, since they show the writer is enthused about helping others.

6.4.1.4 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points in Sample 2

In this sample, exclamation points were used to do a number of things: To endow Assertives with excitement and enthusiasm; to demonstrate spoken aloud exclamations; to emphasise Assertives and Directives; to demonstrate happiness and excitement (the sincerity condition) in Expressives of felicitation; to give strength to the underlying felicity conditions in Expressives of gratitude,

benediction, and apology; to exhibit ironic enthusiasm; and to show excitement with interjections.

6.4.2 Question Marks

The forty-nine usages of question marks in Sample 2 can be categorised according to the triadic taxonomy explained in the preceding section.

6.4.2.1 Question Marks with Explicit Questions

Thirty-six question marks were used with explicit questions. For example, “What was the question?”; “What tips would you give for somebody who really wants this first job?”; “How?”; “How is it working for you?”; and “What are your thoughts?”. These clarify structure and illocutionary force, although they would not necessarily be needed in order for the queries to be understood.

6.4.2.2 Question Marks with Implicit Questions

Ten question marks were used with implicit questions; for example, “You an Art major too?”; “Hey, you know that beautiful girl you just talked to?”; and “You feel that selling to customers is easier than finding a job?”. These question marks clarify structure and illocutionary force. They could help credibility by maintaining clarity in the exchange.

6.4.2.3 Question Marks that Introduce an Interrogative Element

Three question marks were used to introduce an interrogative element, which is to say, an indirect Directive speech act, into the post: “I'm struggling to see how going unemployed for months is a good thing for him..?”; “I also would like to discuss further of your experiences and what you are moving into now?”; and “I love that example, but surely you don't attempt to solve every problem that you

come across?". These clarify the fact that the sentences contain a secondary illocutionary force. They would not probably have a substantial impact on credibility.

6.4.2.4 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks in Sample 2

Once more, in this data question marks are used to signal explicit and implicit questions; and they are used to introduce an indirect interrogative speech act (or Directive) in sentences that have other speech acts in them.

6.4.3 Emoticons

There are four emoticons in this sample.

6.4.3.1 A Smiley

One of the emoticons is a smiley, and it accompanies an Assertive: "Ah well grats dude. Just got hired for my first IT job too. start in a few weeks :)". This smiley clearly shows happiness in regards to the new job the writer has secured; it may also show happiness for the person being addressed whom just received a job him or herself. It could increase credibility by demonstrating affective engagement, but it might not influence credibility at all.

6.4.3.2 A Crooked-Mouth Emoticon

One writer used the crooked-mouth emoticon with an Assertive: "Better luck next time, I hope. It looks like it'll be substituting until August :-\". Based on the context of this comment, the writer is probably referring to substitute teaching in elementary, and possibly secondary, schools, and would prefer to have more steady employment in the education sector. Thus, once more, it seems that the

crooked-mouth is a sign of disappointment, or, more generally, some affective sense of dissatisfaction. I doubt that this emoticon would influence credibility.

6.4.3.3 Winkeys

There are two winkeys in this sample. One of them is in a message that reads, "You sure this wasn't in 1933? ;)". This message was posted in response to a picture of a man job hunting in the 1930s – in the image, the man is wearing a sign that says that he speaks three languages, knows three trades, fought for three years, etc; hence the post is a joke referencing the reiteration of the number three on the pictured man's sartorial resume, and the emoticon clarifies the illocutionary force and tone of the message. It will be noticed that on the surface, this message would be a Directive, but since it is a joke, and would not expect an answer, it is more in the line of an Expressive. The winkey might help build credibility by making it clear that the message is not intended to be taken seriously.

The other winkey in this sample evinces a bit more complexity in its usage. It accompanies as Assertive: "Development may be different, but in many jobs, knowing how to learn from your mistakes is one of the most useful real skills you can have ;)". In context, this winkey most certainly does not accompany a joke, but rather follows a piece of information that is intended to be helpful; hence, I conclude that this wink is one that indicates affability and kindness. Because it demonstrates goodwill and friendliness, the emoticon could build interpersonal credibility.

6.4.3.4 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons in Sample 2

From the emoticons in this sample we can conclude that emoticons can demonstrate affect associated with the content of Assertives, clarify the illocutionary force of joking, and show friendliness with Assertives.

6.4.4 Punctuation Strings

Only two strings were used in this sample. Both are composed of two exclamation points.

6.4.4.1 Two Exclamation Points with an Expressive

One of the exclamation point duos accompanies an Expressive benediction: "GOOD LUCK!!" This string (along with the use of only capital letters) gives strong emphasis to the wishes for good fortune (i.e., the sincerity condition). It clarifies tone and could build up interpersonal credibility, since it emphasises a friendly notion.

6.4.4.2 Two Exclamation Points with an Assertive

The other string of exclamation points accompanies an Assertive: "I've seen this gif before. Amazing caption, though!! Love it". This post requires some explanation. It is in response to the Daffy Duck GIF mentioned above. The GIF was the initial post, hence all subsequent posts were comments about the GIF, or about other comments. The caption to which the writer of the quoted text refers is the title of the thread, which reads, "Job hunting at the moment.." Hence the writer is using the exclamation point string to give emphasis to the expression of how much he or she appreciates the clever comparison of the image of the GIF

with the (seemingly endlessly punishing) experiences of job hunting. Again, this string clarifies tone and could help with credibility.

6.4.4.3 Conclusions Concerning Strings in Sample 2

Although the punctuation string data in this sample is limited, it does further support the proposition that strings are a form of orthographic emphasiser.

6.4.5 Ellipses

Twenty ellipses were used in this sample. In this and the following sample, ellipses occur with a variety of speech acts. In some cases, they form disjunction between two different speech acts or two of the same type of speech act. In other cases, they interrupt a single speech act. It is not necessary to incessantly explain each of the speech acts with which ellipses function disjunctively, as long as it is understood that the ellipsis does operate with heterogeneous speech acts as a basic form of mild disjunctive. The ellipses that come at the ends of posts, on the other hand, are more semiotically rich, and so they will be discussed in terms of the speech acts they accompany. Also, at the outset of this subsection, it can be claimed that the use of ellipses would not usually in this informal message board environment be a major boon or a threat to credibility; it might demonstrate a conversational tone, which could help credibility some, but it is hard to imagine credibility being strongly promoted or encumbered by ellipses on Reddit.

6.4.5.1 Ellipses that Signify Pauses in Spoken Dialogue

Three writers used ellipses as indicative of a pause in actual spoken dialogue. (In sum, these writers used seven such ellipses.) One of these writers made a joke about difficult questions at job interviews; he or she typed out a hypothetical

scene in which a person does not know how to answer an easy question: “"do you want this job" ....ah...shit”. Two writers, like another writer mentioned above, used ellipses in quotations tacitly attributed to Daffy Duck. One of the writers wrote, “Yoiks.... and away...” and the other wrote, in response, “... yoiksss... and awaaaaaaay...”. The ellipses at the ends of these posts accompany Assertives, and indicate that something more is coming; they probably signify further cries, or perhaps they simply signify that an action is about to occur – here, the action would be Daffy leaping from the tree limb.

6.4.5.2 Ellipses that Signify a Continuation

The introductory ellipsis in the second “yoiks and away” post above seems to signify a pause in addition to indicating that the post’s dialogue is serving as a continuation of the previous post’s dialogue. In a similar manner, another person wrote a post and used the ellipsis to indicate that his or her words are intended to be a continuation of a previous post; in this case, the poster added a thought to a previous poster’s encouraging comment about feeling bad about answers given on job interviews; the poster wrote, “...And no matter what, you can always come up with a better reply. It's why exams have time limits”. This comment is clearly meant as a follow-up to the previous post, since it was written as a reply to the first post (as indicated on Reddit by its indentation below the post to which it responded), and since the conjunction “And” is used. Once more, the ellipsis is seen as a way to indicate continuity between messages. Based on these examples, we can conclude that, when ellipses are used at the start of a message, they can

indicate that the message that they precede is following up on some previous communicative act.

6.4.5.3 Ellipses that Create Disjunction

As in the previous sample, ellipses in this sample were used for the purpose of creating a form of mild disjunction. In this sample, there are four such uses: “When they ask you where you see yourself in 5 years....[line break] Don't say doin your wife”; “Kind of curious to what trades they were but if it only dealt with marketing and finance... that sector was hit the hardest.”; “I try to trample my way through the HR process because it isn't a friendly process to applicants. There's never a guarantee of a face to face, or even if they'll look at your resume.[line break]...Then I started my own business and now its working, so whatever.”; and “Reposting in 2014...over and over again.”. In two of these uses, ellipses were deployed with line breaks, which are themselves a signifier of disjunction; so, the disjunctive element in those messages is compounded to some degree by the conjunction of the two forms of disjunction. In some of these examples, it is clear that the mild disjunction that ellipses signify can create a sense of drama – they can signify, in other words, not simply a pause, but a dramatic pause.

6.4.5.4 Ellipses that Signify Things Left to the Mind of the Reader

In four messages, a writer used an ellipsis with an Assertive at the end of a message to leave certain material to the mind of the reader, whether for dramatic purposes or because further words were superfluous: “Found an ad for something I would have really liked (was only a one week thing, but it paid $18 an hour for a

min of 30 hours), but it was the last day of the week it was needed when I found the posting ..."; "I would like to think they havent actually experienced the job market..."; "When I got home, I did a bit more research, and found the (very minor) mistake I made, so I retyped the test/project and sent it in explaining the mistake and why/how I made it..."; and "3 months [line break] If only..." [this last post was written in response to the image, mentioned above, of a man wearing a resume who had been out of work for three months].

6.4.5.5 An Ellipsis that Calls the Reader's Attention to Thread Content

In one post, the title of the thread, which contained an ellipsis composed of two full-stops, was rewritten: "Job hunting at the moment..". The subject of the thread was the humorous animated image of Daffy Duck, and thus the ellipsis seems to direct the reader to the moving picture.

6.4.5.6 Ellipses that Signify Future Actions

In two cases, an ellipsis at the end of a post seems to signify a specific future action. In one of these instances, an ellipsis was used with an Assertive: "I'll give another..."; in context, the poster was referring to another up-vote on the post, and the ellipsis indicates that the up-vote was forthcoming. In the other instance where an ellipsis seems to indicate a future action, the mark accompanies a Directive piece of advice: "If the job really interests you, or of course, you're just desperate, give them the answers after the interview..."; this ellipsis leaves the future action to the person or persons being advised.

6.4.5.7 An Ellipsis with a Question Mark

In one unique case, an ellipsis was paired with a question mark: “I'm struggling to see how going unemployed for months is a good thing for him..?” This particular question mark was categorised above as a mark that introduces an indirect interrogative speech act into this post that also has an Assertive element. And, in the previous sample, there was an ellipsis that was used as a means of soliciting a reply. This ellipsis is similar. In this post with compound punctuation, therefore, emphasis is given to the call for a reply: The ellipsis invites a response, and the question marks indicates that there is an underlying question being posed.

6.4.5.8 Conclusions Concerning Ellipses in Sample 2

In this sample, we see ellipses performing seven functions: Signifying a pause in actual spoken dialogue; indicating, when the mark comes before text, that the text is intended as a continuation of some previous communicative act; denoting a mild form of disjunction (which in some circumstances can introduce a dramatic element); signifying that certain content is left unstated; when used in the title of a thread, directing readers’ attention to the content of the initial post; indicating a future action of some kind; and, soliciting a response from another writer.

6.4.6 Asterisks

There is a single asterisk in this sample, and it was used to signify the arithmetic procedure of multiplication: “Don't go from making X to making X * 0.05.”. This is a conventional usage of this punctuation mark.

6.4.7 XOs

There are no kisses or hugs in this sample.

6.4.8 Slashes

In this sample, there are thirty-seven slashes.

6.4.8.1 Slashes that Serve as Conjunctions

Slashes were used as conjunctives twenty-nine times; for example, “I'm a developer, and I had a coding test on an interview ~8 ish years ago, where it was using tools/SDK's that I'd never used, so when my time was up, it wouldn't compile.”; “A key is being able to figure things out / be resourceful and not make excuses.”; “I thought to get a Starbucks coffee container, some baked goods, water, fruit, cream/sugar/cups/lids/etc and simply pop in at 10am into each office.”; “I'm about to have my first interview for a entry level position (waiter at food chain or cashier/re-stocker at clothing place)”; “If they ask what's your greatest weakness, say something like 'I can be too honest, like the time I found the wallet of my worst enemy/childhood bully and handed it back to him/in to the police'.”; and “Tell him/her that after you had some more normal time to think about the question, you came up with an answer that better represents your understanding of the question.”

6.4.8.2 Slashes that Serve in a Conventional Capacity

Slashes were used in more conventional constructions four times: A fraction (“Probably about 1/4 of the job ads I see specifically state that cover letters aren't necessary”); a description of pay per hour (“The job I have now still only pays $13/hr, but it's far better than nothing.”); in the shorthand for the word “because” (“The 6 person teams seem to fall apart though b/c IMO they get too top heavy and cannot support themselves.”); and in the numeric rendering of the phrase

“twenty-four-seven” (“I feel I am more of a biz dev person - I tried my hand at ecommerce, but realized I wasn't so hot at the constant-buzz thing to build an audience and promote 24/7.”).

6.4.8.3 A Slash that Indicates Nonverbal Behavior

The really interesting use of the slash in this sample, however, came from a user who wrote this: “I remember back in the 80's when HR droids were wanting people who were entrepreneurial. That was the buzzword of the day. Someone please get these HR clowns away from the hiring process. /facepalm”. This slash signals that the word it precedes is a description of a physical action that expresses the feelings of the writer. So, this slash does not have, in and of itself, an emotional meaning, but it can signal the description of physical actions that can express emotional meanings. Further, this slash serves a clarifying function by distinguishing the description of physical action; most readers would probably understand the word facepalm as such a description, but, all the same, the slash shows that there is something different about this word – it shows that it is something more than another word in the post. The literature on this topic shows that people have used asterisks (Crystal, 2001) and brackets (Shortis, 2007) to signal statements of physical action, but I have yet to encounter a report of the slash serving this function; perhaps this is a new development.

6.4.8.4 Slashes that Make Reference to a Subreddit

Three slashes were used in making reference to a subreddit: “feel free to xpost to //r/perfectloops”.

6.4.8.5 Conclusions Concerning Slashes in Sample 2

The slash can serve as a conjunctive, in conventional constructions, and as an indicator of a description of physical action.

6.5 Analysis of Sample 3

Exclamation points	20
Question Marks	72
Emoticons	26
Strings	3
Ellipses	35
Asterisks	0
XO	0
Slashes	41

Table 7 – Counts of Analysed Marks in Sample 3

6.5.1 Exclamation Points

Twenty exclamation points were used in this sample.

6.5.1.1 Exclamation Points with Assertives

Nine exclamation points were used in conjunction with Assertives. Five show excitement and enthusiasm with Assertives (some of which have content that indicates inherent excitement, and some of which do not): “Yes!” [this was an enthused agreement with a previous post]; “This is what I'm applying to be!”; “Great stuff!”; “Great post!”; “I was thinking about starting a novel myself, actually!”. These clarify the tone of the messages and could build credibility by demonstrating engagement. Similarly, one poster used an exclamation point to give emphasis to a jocund Assertive: “I had an interview, second interview was at the place, and the interview with said boss was over the phone. If I didn't worry about how I dressed for that, I wouldn't have gotten the job. We have to wear pants you know! :P”. In three cases, exclamation points were used as emphasisers

of Assertives, without signifying a positive form of excitement or enthusiasm; for instance, “I don't have anything about childfreedom on my resume (strictly business!), but it is an issue I have thought about quite a lot.” and “One thing I see a lot that really throws me is that recruiters I follow on twitter will sometimes tweet that they are looking for a "creative team"... I dont know what that means!”. (I am refraining from giving the third example out of respect for the person who wrote it, since the post contains information about depression-related difficulties.)

6.5.1.2 Exclamation Points with Expressives

In this sample, exclamation points accompany seven Expressives. Four are professions of gratitude (“Thanks!”; “Ahh okay sweet, this makes a lot of sense, thanks!”; “Thanks!”; and “Nice post, thanks man!”) and three are interjections (“Looks like everyone's as confused as me then? Yaaay!” and “Yay for post-secondary degree and working at McDonalds/Starbucks/Jamba Juice, etc! Yay, I say!”). In the former usages, the thankful ones, the exclamation points give emphasis to the underlying feelings of gratitude, which are the sincerity conditions of such Expressives; these could promote interpersonal credibility. In the latter usages, the ones with interjections, the exclamation points show an ironic form of excitement, and they mimic paralinguistic behavior.

6.5.1.3 Exclamation Points with Directives

Exclamation points were used with four Directives to give emphasis. “Make the mornings your work out time and get up at no later than 9am everyday and go for a run/lift weights/P90X/WHATEVER! But get your ass up and get to work on your self or something because that will get you started on the right foot every

morning to get doing what you have to do." This usage of the exclamation point is clearly an emphasiser, and it could be seen as an FTA (treading upon the negative face of the reader[s]) so it could possibly damage the writer's credibility, especially since it appears with a word written in all capital letters, a form of emphasis popularly understood to signify yelling (Arendholz, 2013), and with a mild profanity. Another poster wrote, "Here is the trick. Apply anyway!". And another wrote a hypothetical quotation: "hey you guys just came up with this totes brill idea. you guys take it from here and don't forget to give me the credit! ciao". These latter two examples do not seem to be FTAs, and so they would probably not hurt credibility. One person posted a comment that, even given the context, I do not understand in the slightest; in any case, it reads, "Go Cephalopods!". Even though I am ignorant of the higher-level import of this message, this Directive is a form of encouragement that could be termed a cheer. This exclamation point shows excitement and demonstrates that the cheer in question is in fact cheered, if only in writing; it thus stands for a paralinguistic excitement.

6.5.1.4 Conclusions Concerning Exclamation Points in Sample 3

In this sample, exclamation points function to demonstrate excitement with Assertives and a Directive, to give emphasis to Assertives and Directives, to give strength to the sincerity conditions underlying Expressives of gratitude, to show ironic excitement with sarcastic Expressive interjections, and to represent paralinguistic expression.

6.5.2 Question Marks

With one notable exception that will be discussed below, the seventy-two question marks in this sample can be categorised according to the three-pronged taxonomy previously explained.

6.5.2.1 Question Marks with Explicit Questions

Forty-eight question marks were used with explicit questions; for example, “What does copywriter mean?”; “Are you freelance?”; and “What do you think about LinkedIn?”.

6.5.2.2 Question Marks with Implicit Questions

Twelve question marks were used with implicit questions; for example, “You know what I'm planning on doing?”; “You get inspiration for ads from other ads?”; “what no friends?”; and “You just called the soup kitchen guy up, just like that?”. Two posters used a question mark with a tag question: “It's a double-edged sword, isn't it?” and “(the purpose of a cover letter, yes?)”. (The first tag question is itself phrased as an actual question, so the argument could be made that it should be categorised as an explicit question; even so, I am including it in this category since statements with tag-questions are very similar to these implicit questions; indeed, the question marks that accompany these implicit questions perform a function very similar to tag questions.) One poster used a question mark with a discourse marker: “I've been working on a novel, mostly, but it doesn't pay the bills, you know?”. These marks clarify structure and illocutionary force.

6.5.2.3 Question Marks that Introduce an Interrogative or Uncertain Element

Five question marks were used to signal an interrogative element in messages that had other speech acts in them. Examples of question marks that insert an indirect interrogative Directive include, “Sounds like you might be talking more about industrial design, landscaping or architecture?” and “So maybe you'll have to volunteer or something to get a reference, or just pretend you weren't working during that time?”. Three question marks were used to introduce an element of uncertainty: “Haha, thanks so much. I feel like I'm not alone, but... also scared?”; “I don't watch hockey, but there's a great quote that comes from it. "you miss 100 percent of the shots you never take" - wayne gretzky?”; and “Like project research...?” [this last example, in context, signals that the writer is not sure what he or she is talking about]. These marks that indicate uncertainty could be viewed as preservatives of credibility, in that they ensure that readers know that the writer is not entirely sure of what he or she is writing; this type of honesty could be perceived as admirable, and, in the case that the writer has written something false, the question mark could ameliorate the falsehood by removing the impression of intentional deceit and showing that the statement should be taken, in the first place, with a grain of salt.

6.5.2.4 A Stand-Alone Question Mark

There is one question mark in this sample that literally stands alone. Here is the post in which it appears, with the line break intact:

"?

You mean how do we come up with ideas?"

In this usage, the question mark signifies simply that the writer does not comprehend another person's post. Then, in the next line, the writer poses a specific query in order to elicit further explanation from the poster being questioned. This mark is obviously in the same vein as that used by the legendary author in the literary anecdote related a couple of times in this thesis: Wondering about book sales, the scribe in question wired his publisher a stand-alone question mark and received in reply a stand-alone exclamation point (Roberts, 2006). The question mark has such a powerful semiotic import that it can, in and of itself, demonstrate a general question, and, in certain contexts – such as the message board from which this extract was taken and the situation of the telegraph-using author – the general question can be immediately understood by the person or persons to whom the mark is addressed.

6.5.2.5 Conclusions Concerning Question Marks in Sample 3

The findings from this sample echo the findings of the previous samples: Question marks can mark explicit and implicit questions, and introduce an interrogative or uncertain element into messages that perform speech acts other than questions. And, moreover, it was seen in this sample that question marks can stand alone as signifiers of a general question.

6.5.3 Emoticons

There are 26 emoticons in this sample.

6.5.3.1 Crooked-Mouth and Blank Face Emoticons

One user in one thread used this emoticon =/ with Assertives sixteen times. The person in question discussed some serious troubles he or she was having. Out of respect for this person, I am not going to give any examples of the messages that were posted. I will simply say that this emoticon serves as a means of demonstrating disappointment, dissatisfaction, or sadness, or a mix of all of these, in conjunction with Assertives that state the problems facing the person. These significations are analogous to the significations of the other emoticons with crooked mouths that have been analysed. In one of this person's posts a different emoticon was used. The emoticon looks like this ._. and it represents a visage with a blank expression. In the context in which this emoticon was used, it probably signifies unhappiness about a given proposition. As was mentioned above, emoticons that, like this one, are right-side-up, as opposed to sideways, are frequently used by Asian writers (Kavanagh, 2010; LaPointe, Greysen, & Barrett, 2004), and they at times pop up in English messages, as is the case here. One other point should be made concerning this person: He or she initiated the thread in which he or she posted, and the initial post led with the crooked-mouth emoticon. As discussed in the previous study, using an emoticon at the start of a message ensures that readers will understand the affect behind the message from the first word onwards. On a related note, Frumkes (2000) and Poyatos (2002) asserted that having appropriate punctuation marks in front of sentences can aid in reader understanding. Some writers in the digital sphere obviously agree, and are

capitalising on the informality of social media to introduce this form of initial punctuation into English usage.

6.5.3.2 Sad Faces

There are three other examples in this sample of emoticons that were used to signify sadness with an Assertive. One post reads, “Feel sad for you bro :(My dream job cut me 1.5 months ago, but prior to that I was out for 11 months. You can only watch so much Price is Right...”. The writer of this post used the emoticon, along with words, to identify, in the Burkean sense, with the sadness of another person. This emoticon could, for this reason, promote interpersonal credibility. One poster wrote, “Obviously not everything is appropriate to everyone, but maybe if I knew what was on offer I could find something that interested me. :(”. This person used the sad face to show disappointment concerning difficulties in finding a job that was a good fit. In another post, we read, “But whenever you google "design research" it throws back ...well, proper researcher positions. Like analysts, and that's not what I mean. :C”. This sad face, by using a letter C for the mouth instead of an opening bracket, seems to display a more pronounced down turning of the corners of the mouth, and thus it perhaps displays a more emphatic form of negative affect; in any case, here, in this example, it shows dissatisfaction at having difficulty in finding opportunities for the type of employment the poster desires. All of these various sad emoticons would obviously clarify the tones of their messages.

6.5.3.3 Squiggly-Mouth Emoticons

There was one emoticon that was utilised twice in this sample, with Assertives, that I had some trouble deciphering. It looks like this :S and it seems to present a countenance with a mouth that is contorted some way. The two messages in which this emoticon were used, even in their contexts, did not very clearly demonstrate the meaning of the mark, so some research was necessary. Gill (2014), writing for an About.com page concerned with the meaning of emoticons, defined the :S as meaning “What?!”. Similarly, a wiki site devoted to the explication of emoticons defines this species of facial punctuation as meaning “confused” (Confused, n.d.). These definitions do seem to work in the context of the examples pulled from this sample. Here is the first message in which this mark was deployed: “You never turn to film, music, nature, illustration, novels... Crap you found on reddit? [line break] The first port of call when I start a project is to research. :S”. Given the exchange of posts leading to this post, it seems that the author of this post is confused about how the person being addressed seeks inspiration for design projects; without the emoticon, it will be noticed, the sense of perplexity would not necessarily be clear, since it might be read as merely a straight-forward question. Here is the other example in which this emoticon was used: “But I'm not sure... And I have seen "senior" artworker jobs advertised. :S”. Once again, this mark seems to be a way of showing confusion; the context is a discussion of kinds of designer jobs, and the writer has expressed some befuddlement in regards to what a certain job title entails. Now, confusion is not a form of affect – but any confusion that would cause a contortion of the mouth

would indeed be attended by some feeling, and thus it may be inferred that this emoticon demonstrates confusion and its associated affect.

6.5.3.4 A Winkey and a Tongue-Sticking-Out Emoticon

One poster used the winkey with an Assertive to demonstrate a joke: “I like the idea of being an art director, without the responsibility though. I just wanna make conceptual decisions. ;)”. Someone replied to this post with a post that began with, “doesn't everyone :P”. The words of this message indicate a Directive question; but the absence of a question mark, along with the presence of the emoticon, demonstrate that the question is rhetorical, and thus the underlying, indirect speech act is an Assertive stating that all people do indeed want positions such as those described in the former post. While the sentiments expressed in these posts are not untrue (in that the posters would legitimately like such jobs), it is reasonable to categorise these messages as jokes, since the posters clearly recognise, with good humor, that great jobs like those under discussion would be very hard – maybe impossible – to come by.

6.5.3.5 Other Tongue-Sticking-Out Emoticons

This sample has two other examples of the tongue-sticking-out emoticon. These were used with Assertives to signal the illocutionary force of joking: “The eye contact one is difficult if you're on speakerphone. :P” and “I had an interview, second interview was at the place, and the interview with said boss was over the phone. If I didn't worry about how I dressed for that, I wouldn't have gotten the job. We have to wear pants you know! :P”. Once again, these messages have statements that are true, but they are presented as humorous observations – hence

the categorisation as jokes. These emoticon could also be understood as giving conversational implicature: Since the observations they accompany are not necessary for cooperative communication, they technically violate the Maxim of Quantity by giving too much information – the emoticons, however, show that the unnecessary information is intended to be taken as humorous. By ensuring that readers know that these statements are jokes, as opposed to displays of strange communicative behavior, these emoticons contribute to the credibility of the people who write them. These emoticons also clarify the tone of the messages.

6.5.3.6 Conclusions Concerning Emoticons in Sample 3

In this sample emoticons were used for the following purposes: To demonstrate, or reinforce, affect in regards to Assertives; to demonstrate the illocutionary force of joking (and, in doing so, to provide conversational implicature and to maintain credibility); and to clarify the tone of messages.

6.5.4 Punctuation Strings

There are three strings in this sample. Two are exclamation point strings and one is a question mark string.

6.5.4.1 Exclamation Point Strings

One appeared in the following message, which was written in response to someone asking if it is appropriate to include the fact that you do not intend to have children in the near future in a cover letter for a job: “No, No, No!!! [line break] I can't speak for all employers, but if this cover letter came across my desk, I would think "why is this person telling me all this?" and consider it a red flag.” In this message, there is no playfulness or positive affect in the string – it was

clearly used as a means of giving strong emphasis to the Assertive speech act it accompanies. One poster, in response to a joke about the fact that many jobs require an immense and unrealistic level of expertise and experience, wrote, "THIS JOKE HAS BEEN MADE 10,000 TIMES. ENOUGH!!!". Once again, there is no fun or jollity in this string; it is a strong emphasiser of an Assertive (with an indirect Directive for people to stop making such jests). Either of the two preceding strings could actually damage credibility, since they are so forceful as to be potentially FTAs; the first could be read as an attack on positive face and negative face, since it could hurt the person's self-image and tell them, harshly if implicitly, what they should do; and the second could trespass upon negative face by being demanding of other reader(s).

6.5.4.2 A Question Mark String

Another user wrote the following, in response to a joke that I do not, I will admit, fully understand: "Lol HOW???" This string, less strident than the other two, demonstrates an eagerness for an answer; and, given the context, it may indicate some form enthusiasm engendered by the joke. It also clarifies the illocutionary force of asking, but it would probably not be necessary in order for readers to know a question was being asked.

6.5.5 Ellipses

The thirty-five ellipses in this sample function in much the same way they do in the other samples.

6.5.5.1 Ellipses that Signify Things Left to the Mind of the Reader

In eight cases, ellipses indicate information left to the mind of the reader with Assertives; for instance, “Maybe it's because you're looking for a job in java...”; “I think you can have your pokemon stolen, it's been awhile...”; and “Half the trouble when I'm job hunting is that I don't know what the hell I'm looking for...”.

6.5.5.2 Ellipses that Signify Thoughtful Pauses

Ellipses were used to indicate thoughtful pauses in five cases; for example, “But whenever you google "design research" it throws back ...well, proper researcher positions. Like analysts, and that's not what I mean.”; “Haha, thanks so much. I feel like I'm not alone, but... also scared?”; “I... don't understand.”; and “Yes! But some large companies do actually hire people who are essentially.... well, mood board creators.”. These uses of the mark inject the messages with a conversational and thoughtful quality and they might, therefore, be boosters of interpersonal credibility.

6.5.5.3 Ellipses that Create Disjunction

Nineteen ellipses in this sample perform the function of creating a mild form of disjunction with different types of speech acts; for example, “I know these people exist, because I've seen them work at Sky and in the attractions industry, but I don't know what the title is... Or how common they are.”; “So, at places you've worked, when you start a project... Where do you get the conceptual content?”; “I see job hunting as a long, dark hallway, walls covered in portraits, their eyes cut out, you begin to walk down the hallway, eyes begin to peer at you from behind the paintings, through the eyeholes... Judging you.”; “Yes I have a Bachelor's in

Marketing...been wanting to go back for the MBA but I keep getting laid of from jobs downsizing my departments.”.

6.5.5.4 Ellipses with Question Marks

In two cases, an ellipsis was used in conjunction with a question mark: “edit: does the fact that the OP has loads of upvotes and no replies with answers mean we're all as confused as each other...?” and “Like project research...?”. In the former message, the ellipsis probably was intended to solicit a reply. In the latter message, the ellipsis and question mark, in context, demonstrate a level of uncertainty, but they might also be soliciting further discussion.

6.5.5.5 An Ellipsis that Signifies a Pause in Spoken Dialogue

One poster used the ellipsis as a sign of a pause in hypothetical spoken dialogue. The post in which that ellipsis appeared was composed in response to someone who said that, during the job hunt, he or she had encountered an employer seeking an assistant party planner with a Master’s degree; the post reads, “"I'm sorry, sir. You'll need a masters degree..." /takes off shades/ "In partying."”

6.5.5.6 Conclusions Concerning Ellipses in Sample 3

In this sample, we see that ellipses can be used to signify thoughtful textual pauses as well as pauses in spoken dialogue. They can demonstrate that certain things are being left to the mind of the reader, and can serve a disjunctive function. When coupled with question marks, ellipses can show uncertainty or they can solicit a response.

6.5.6 Asterisks

There are no asterisks in this sample.

6.5.7 XOs

There are neither kisses nor hugs in this sample.

6.5.8 Slashes

The slash, in this sample, was used forty-one times.

6.5.8.1 Slashes that Serve as Conjunctions

The slash was used for its conjunctive purpose thirty-six times; for example, “Or, go to a McDonalds/Starbucks/Jamba Juice, etc. and fill out a job application form.”; “Another thing I did a lot of was volunteer at places like my local libraries, food banks, and YMCA/BOys and Girls clubs.”; “I've been on the hiring side of things before and I agree there are definitely bonus points for having your own registered domain name/mail server but I don't think Gmail is frowned upon.”; “You don't want/need to include previous salaries or specific company information as it just clutters the whole page.”.

6.5.8.2 A Slash that Shows Two Words Being Used at Once

The slash was also used in one instance to demonstrate that two words were being used at once: “As much as your future employer may or may not agree with y/our views on children, a job interview is not the time to discuss them.”.

6.5.8.3 A Slash that Makes Reference to a Subreddit

In another case, the slash was used to refer to a subreddit (“i wanted to post on /resumes but nervous of the responses of what I might get.”).

6.5.8.4 Slashes that Indicate Explanatory Texts

More interestingly, the slash was, in this sample, like in the previous sample, used to signal nonverbal information; I refer to this post: “"I'm sorry, sir. You'll need a

masters degree..." /takes off shades/ "In partying."". Similarly, another user used the slash to precede a lexical description of the tone of the message: "Except when I apply to jobs in the Deep South, because unmarried young woman with short hair equal lesbian, and that is just as bad. /sarcasm". Although there is very limited evidence in this study, it does seem that the slash has become a means by which to set apart descriptive texts; the asterisk has been observed serving a similar function in the past (Crystal, 2001).

6.5.8.5 Conclusions Concerning Slashes in Sample 3

In this sample, we see that the slash can function as a conjunction. It be used to show that two words are being used simultaneously, and to signal a subreddit. And, finally, the slash can be used as a means of demonstrating an explanatory text.

6.6 Conclusion

In the next and final chapter, the conclusions of this study will be summarised and discussed in light of the results of the text-message study. Here, though, a general summary will be given. It is clear that punctuation marks are important signifiers in the texts of message boards. They demonstrate emotional and relational meanings, they clarify texts, and they can contribute to or hurt the credibility of the poster. Exclamation points are a means of signifying enthusiasm and sincerity, and they are a way to give emphasis to different types of notions; they can also be used to fulfill their traditional function of demonstrating actual spoken-aloud exclamations. Question marks are used to signal explicit and implicit questions, and they are used to introduce interrogative and uncertain elements into texts that

have within them other speech acts; they can also be used on their own, without accompanying words, as a sign of a general query. Emoticons are used to communicate both positive and negative emotion, to show friendliness and politeness, and to clarify speech acts. Strings are used as a tool to indicate varying forms of emphasis. Ellipses are a versatile species of punctuation that can create mild disjunction, show that some things are left to the mind of the reader, indicate a thoughtful pause on the part of the writer, show that a post is a continuation of a previous post, demonstrate the desire for a reply, reference a future event of some kind, and, when used in a thread's title, direct the attention of readers to the content of the thread. It would seem that the asterisk and the XO are not as popular on message boards as other forms of punctuation; and this is the only conclusion that can be drawn from this study concerning these typographical marks. And, finally, slashes are conjunction symbols that can also function to signal explanatory texts such as descriptions of bodily actions or statements of tone.

Punctuation marks accompany different types of speech acts, and influence those speech acts significantly by imbuing them with affective meaning, bolstering their content, demonstrating (either directly or indirectly) the fulfillment of their sincerity conditions, emphasising them, and clarifying them and their relationship with other speech acts; and, moreover, question marks can signify indirect interrogative speech acts, and can stand for general queries. As Alrø & Skovsmose (2004) observed, "Speech acts are more than words" (p. 127). In writing, speech acts are composed of words and orthographic features such as

punctuation marks. Once more, we may conclude that punctuation marks are an important means of increasing the efficacy of social interaction in digital realms.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Results

In the following subsections, the general conclusions of the message board study are reiterated and discussed in light of the conclusions of the text-message study, such that the respective conclusions from both studies are given and compared with one another. In the final section of this subsection, more general conclusions are given concerning how punctuation operates in digital discourse. In the following sections, the thesis's limitations, original contributions, and applications are discussed. Finally, paths for future research and final remarks are given.

In the subsections immediately below (7.1.1 – 7.1.8), the conclusions concerning individual punctuation marks are given and answers are thereby provided to the thesis's first two research questions: (1) "In what ways can punctuation provide emotional and relational meaning in digital discourse?" and (2) "In what novel ways do punctuation marks function in digital discourse?". In subsection 7.1.9, in which final remarks concerning these studies' conclusions are offered, the third and fourth research questions are restated and addressed.

7.1.1 Exclamation Points

In the message board study, it was observed that exclamation points can perform numerous functions. They can reinforce the excitement and enthusiasm expressed explicitly or implicitly in Assertives. When they show excitement in Assertives that claim excitement, they demonstrate the truth of the statement, and hence the fulfillment of the sincerity condition. They can introduce an excited and enthused element into Assertives that would not seem to have one otherwise. They can give

emphasis to Directives and Assertives; when they serve in this capacity of giving emphasis, they can be viewed as highlighting the fulfilment of sincerity conditions, since they demonstrate a commitment on the part of the writer. With Expressives of congratulation, they can demonstrate the sincerity condition of positive affect; and, with Expressives of benediction, gratitude, and apology, they can emphasise the underlying sincerity condition, even if they do not directly signify it. When exclamation points accompany interjections, they show excitement and mimic a paralinguistic element. Exclamation points in the message board study were also seen to signify ironic forms of excitement, meaning, importantly, that they are not always a means of establishing a sense of unalloyed authenticity. Moreover, in the message board study, it was shown that, in digital discourse as it is manifested on message boards, exclamation points can be used for one of their more traditional functions: Signifying an exclamation in spoken dialogue. The exclamation point can then be said to be a mark that can, depending on context, demonstrate positive affect, give emphasis to different kinds of notions, show sincerity, display ironic excitement, and represent that a written text is intended to be understood as being exclaimed aloud.

The conclusions of the message board study are more numerous than those obtained in the text-message study, which is not surprising, given the more random nature of the data and the much larger size of the dataset of the message board study. All the same, the conclusions of the two studies do seem to be nicely complementary. In the text-message study, it was shown that exclamation points can show excitement with Assertives and can give emphasis to non-excited

Assertives. (This does not exclude the possibility, of course, that they can give emphasis and show excitement simultaneously). It was shown that they can demonstrate the sincerity condition of Expressives of felicitation. And, there were even a couple of things in the text-message study that were not seen in the message board study: Namely, exclamation points can be a way to show social enthusiasm in Expressive greetings, and they can show eagerness in regards to invitational Directives; the nature of message board communication explains why we would not see such speech acts in the second study – greetings may be less likely in this more asynchronous, and at times less conversational, medium, and invitations to get together would of course be much less likely in the message board milieu.

Exclamation points can function to promote credibility by demonstrating proper forms of enthusiasm and happiness in cheerful circumstances (in some cases directly signifying the fulfillment of the sincerity condition of a speech act); by exhibiting the engagement and solicitude of the writer in both happy and sad circumstances (in the latter case, by giving emphasis to encouraging or empathetic remarks); and by demonstrating the strength of underlying sincerity conditions. It is conceivable, however, that with certain forms of Directive speech acts, and perhaps with other speech acts in other circumstances, the exclamation point could hurt credibility, by making messages too imperious or harsh; or they might be viewed as too excited or happy if they were used incessantly, or with inappropriate words, or in somber circumstances. The exclamation point can clarify structurally and tonally. And the exclamation mark can demonstrate

positive affect and give emphasis to other forms of affect as well. The conclusions of this study corroborate the work of Waseleski (2006), who showed that exclamation points show friendliness and give emphasis, and delineate some of the specific ways that exclamation points can show friendliness (along with other relational meanings).

7.1.2 Question Marks

The question marks in the message board study were used to mark explicit questions, to clarify implicit questions as queries, and to introduce interrogative elements into messages that had other speech acts in them. The exact same uses were seen in the text-messages study. In the message board study, but not in the text-message study, the question mark was also used as a way to demonstrate uncertainty on the part of the writer and as a means of signifying, with no accompanying words, a general question.

Question marks can promote credibility by keeping messages clear. They can clarify structure and illocutionary force, and they can provide conversational implicature. They do not carry any intrinsic emotional or relational meanings, but, as was seen in the text-message study, they can be used to indicate polite questions.

7.1.3 Emoticons

In the message board study, it was shown that emoticons can be used with Assertives as a means of demonstrating positive or negative affect, showing friendliness, and avoiding FTAs. They can, moreover, be used to signal jokes (as asserted by Dresner & Herring, 2010). The findings of the text-message study

similarly indicated that emoticons can be used to show emotional and relational information and to clarify tone. In particular, it was demonstrated in the text-message study that emoticons can reinforce Expressives.

Emoticons can build credibility by showing appropriate emotional and relational meanings, by keeping messages clear, and by contributing to the vivacity and playfulness of communicative exchanges. Contrarily, emoticons could, in formal contexts, be viewed as inappropriate; or, if the emotions they signify are used in inappropriate situations, they could damage credibility. Emoticons can clarify tone and illocutionary force, and they can provide conversational implicature. And, obviously, they can supply emotional and relational meanings of various types.

7.1.4 Strings

Strings, in the message board study, were used as emphasisers. Exclamation point strings were used to emphasise excitement with Assertives and Expressives. They were also used to give strong emphasis to Assertives and Expressives, whether or not these acts demonstrated intrinsic excitement. Question mark strings clarified illocutionary force and demonstrated an eagerness to know the answer to the query they accompanied. In the text-message study, similarly, strings of exclamation points were found to show excitement and give emphasis with Assertives and Expressives, and strings of question marks were found to clarify questions and demonstrate an eagerness to know the answers to them. In the text-message study, additionally, there were also examples of marks that were composed of one or more exclamation points with one or more question marks;

such marks clarified the interrogative nature of their messages and showed surprise, excitement, and/or an eagerness to know the answer to the queries being posed. There were not any examples of this type of string in the message board study.

Strings could edify credibility in those relatively informal circumstances in which special emphases or exuberances are appropriate. In other, more proper situations they might hurt credibility because of their non-standard nature. They could also at times be viewed as unduly forceful. Strings with exclamation points can clarify tone, and strings with questions marks can clarify illocutionary force; strings with both marks can perform both functions. Strings, moreover, can demonstrate excitement, enthusiasm, and happiness, in addition to eagerness to know something, and they can give emphasis to other forms of underlying affect – and to sincerity conditions. The work of this thesis agrees with the work of Kalman and Gergle (2009), who showed that punctuation strings serve as emphasisers, and gives some of the specific ways that they can emphasise.

7.1.5 Ellipses

Ellipses were used for various purposes in the data gathered for the message board study: To provide a mild form of disjunction between different kinds of speech acts; to indicate a pause in words spoken aloud; to signify information left to the mind of the reader; to point to a future action of some kind; to represent thoughtful or uncertain pauses; to show the desire for a reply; to point to the content of an initial post, when used in the title of a thread; and, when used at the beginning of a post, to show that the post in which it appears is intended as a

continuation, of some kind, of the post to which it responded. In the text-message study, there were limited examples of ellipses, so no strong conclusions could be drawn; however, it was noted that the ellipses can seem to create a flow of ideas, and this conclusion, tentative though it was, gels nicely with the notion that ellipses are a form of mild disjunction device.

Ellipses, in informal circumstances, would probably not affect credibility in any way; although sometimes they may seem to cultivate a conversational tone, and that could promote credibility to some degree. Ellipses, as disjunctive devices, clarify structurally; and when they leave things to the minds of readers, they provide conversational implicature (in the sense that they show that the omitted content is omitted intentionally, and thus the Maxim of Quantity is not flouted). They do not seem to have any inherent affective or relational meanings. Raclaw (2006) posited that ellipses are a form of conjoining marker used instead of other marks or conjunctions (an assertion similar to my point about ellipses as mild disjunctives), and Baron (2008) also found that ellipses were used in place of other punctuation marks and signified forms varied forms of pause. The message boards study presented in this thesis agree with these studies and illuminate even more ways that ellipses can function in digital discourse.

7.1.6 Asterisks

In digital discourse, asterisks can signal descriptions of physical actions (e.g., *high-five*) (Crystal, 2001). There are no examples of such usage in the data collected for either study; as will be discussed in the slash subsection below, it is possible this sort of asterisk is being supplanted by the slash on Reddit message

boards. In the text-message study, the asterisk was a sign that marked a corrective text-message; this type of corrective would not be likely on Reddit, since posts can be edited by the writer who posted them. Reddit, however, does mark edited posts with an asterisk, a fact that indicates that this mark is becoming a general symbol of the act of editing.

Asterisks could help credibility when they serve in their corrective function. And, such rectifying asterisks could clarify messages. Asterisks do not seem to have any intrinsic affective meanings.

7.1.7 XOs

There were no kisses or hugs in the message board study. This is probably because many of the people who interact on message boards are not close enough, in an interpersonal sense, to exchange such signs of emotional intimacy and affection. In the text-message study, there was only a single hug and kiss, and they were used by one respondent in a single message.

7.1.8 Slashes

The vast majority of slashes in the message board study were used for their conventional functions. However, the slash was also used to mark descriptive text: In one case, it marked the word “sarcasm” to clarify the tone of the message in which it appeared; and in two cases, it signaled a description of physical action. This mark may be a newer way to indicate such descriptive texts, and it could be taking the place of the asterisk, although further, more minutely tailored studies will be necessary to find out if this supposition is valid. In the text-message study, there was only one slash, and it functioned as a conjunction.

Slashes would not, in most informal circumstances, have any effect on credibility, although in certain formal situations they may be viewed as improper. They clarify structurally when they function conventionally. When they mark a descriptive text of some kind, they could be said to provide conversational implicature: The descriptions they mark off could, in the absence of the slash, be perplexing, and violate the Maxim of Relation; with the slash, the meaning becomes clearer, at least among those readers versed in this usage of the slash.

7.1.9 Final Remarks Concerning the Studies' Results

The results of the two studies presented in this thesis are largely corroborative. The differences in the two studies are easily attributable to the differences between text-messages and Reddit posts, and to the much larger Reddit sample. Because the patterns of punctuation mark usage observed on message boards are similar to those observed in the DCT study, we can conclude that these patterns do to some degree reflect the ways that punctuation marks are functioning in digital discourse at large. It is abundantly clear that punctuation marks are important parts of people's communication in digital discourse.

The third research question of this thesis is, "How do punctuation marks influence speech acts?" According to the findings of these studies, punctuation marks can influence speech acts by adding emotional and relational meanings, reinforcing content, signaling (directly or indirectly) sincerity, giving emphasis, showing the relationships between speech acts (insofar as they create disjunction and perform their other traditional functions), and giving clarification; and a given mark could, in the right circumstances, influence speech acts in a number of these

ways. It should be noted that these ways that punctuation marks can influence speech acts fit with the larger rhetorical framework described in this thesis: The clarifying influence and the injection of emotional and relational meanings are in direct accord with the rhetorical model. In cases of reinforcement and emphasis in socioemotional messages, punctuation marks would function to share emotional and relational meaning and to clarify tone, while in more informational messages, these marks would, by giving emphasis to ideas, be structural clarifiers. Those punctuation marks that signal sincerity, in socioemotional contexts, convey emotional and relational meaning, and those in more informational contexts would clarify tone; in either case, sincerity would be a boon to credibility. And those marks that show the relationships between speech acts are structural clarifiers.

The fourth research question of this thesis is, "In what ways do people vary their punctuation between more social and more task-based digital messages?" The findings of the text-message study indicate that people use punctuation in less creative and more standard ways in task-based situations.

Punctuation marks, according the above-enumerated conclusions, are not simply helpful orthographic devices – they are rather integral components of human communication in digital media.

7.2 Limitations

There are three primary limitations to this thesis. The first is that the study's findings are not generalisable to a certain population. When taken together, the findings of the studies do serve as indicators of trends in punctuation use in digital

discourse, but no conclusions can be drawn concerning how a given group of people punctuates. This limitation is justified for this project because the primary purpose of the thesis was to explore the qualitative dimension of punctuation marks in digital discourse: Their general meanings and functions, their influences on speech acts, etc. The second limitation is that the functions of the marks that were discovered in the two studies are not exhaustive – the punctuation marks studied without a doubt have functions beyond those that have been explained in this thesis. Many studies would have to be done to attain a more categorical list of functions for each mark; and, even if a more categorical list were made, it would be subject to change as the language and orthography of digital discourse changed – as it most certainly will continue to do. These studies, however, do at the very least offer some preliminary understanding of the uses of punctuation marks in digital discourse. The third limitation of the thesis is that only two genres of digital discourse are represented in the studies. Because the studies explained in this thesis are exploratory, there was not a need to extend the studies beyond the genres of text-messages and message boards. Future studies, however, could, and should, be enacted in the genres of email, IM, and in the various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr); more on this topic will be given in the section below concerning paths for future research.

7.3 Contributions

This thesis has four main contributions to knowledge. The first is the rhetorical model for understanding how punctuation marks function in digital discourse. Such a model is, I believe, unprecedented, and it explains many of the ways that

punctuation marks contribute towards the effectiveness of digital messages. The second contribution is the method for collecting text-messages that was used in the first study. This method, in which email addresses are used to collect text-messages which are written in response to DCTs, can be used for many different types of text-message studies in the future – not only studies of punctuation marks. The third contribution of the thesis is the explication of some of the ways speech acts can be influenced by punctuation marks. This contribution furthers our understanding and application of Speech Act Theory by confirming that speech acts are composed of both words and nonverbal devices, and it shows some of the specific ways that nonverbal devices – in this case, punctuation marks – can contribute to the performance of speech acts. And, fourth and finally, the studies in this thesis demonstrate some of the novel, along with some of the more traditional, functions of punctuation marks in digital discourse.

7.4 Applications

This thesis has four main academic applications. First, the rhetorical model of punctuation mark function, in addition to its explanatory and heuristic purposes, can also serve as a guide for analysis: The punctuation found in a given message in a digital discourse dataset can be evaluated based on how it might influence the credibility of the writer, how it might help clarify the message, and how it might convey emotional and relational meaning. Examining punctuation marks from this perspective could allow for more robust analyses of digital messages. Second, the text-message DCT methodology developed for the first study could be used in future studies of various kinds; it could be used, to give some examples, to study

differences in text-messaging practices between different demographic groups, to examine orthographic practices in text-messages, to investigate speech act performance in text-messages, or to study politeness strategies in text-messages. Third, the functions of punctuation marks discovered and explained in this thesis's studies can be kept in mind by researchers who analyse digital messages; doing so may well help such scholars in understanding the construction of the messages they investigate. It is hoped that the work presented in this thesis amply demonstrates that punctuation marks should, in any case, be included in the analysis of messages in digital discourse. Fourth, the findings of this research could inform English Language Teaching (ELT), since digital platforms are now such an important means of communication across cultural and regional boundaries: In particular, the functions of the marks elucidated in the thesis could be discussed in classrooms such that English language learners have some idea of how the English system of punctuation can be used in digital discourse.

This thesis also has applications outside of academia. In particular, the findings of this thesis can be used by individuals to help them compose more effective digital messages. The rhetorical model can be used by people to evaluate how their punctuation may contribute to – or detract from – communicative efficacy. And the functions of the marks that have been shown in the thesis can contribute to the orthographic repertoires of writers operating in the digital sphere. Moreover, there are even certain moral applications that can potentially be drawn from this thesis. Punctuation marks can, in performing their clarifying and socioemotional functions, help to ensure that messages are forthright and

conscientious. And, when punctuation marks are put to socioemotional purposes, they can also encourage and show empathy – and in doing so, they can potentially contribute towards making a major difference for good in people's lives. Punctuation marks are thus a means of engaging not merely in effective communication, but in virtuous communication.

7.5 Paths for Future Research

In future academic research, these studies could be replicated with similar sampling techniques such that the conclusions could be better refined and expanded upon, especially with a view to understanding the generalizability of the findings. In other future studies, similar analyses could be performed on data collected by means of different sampling techniques. For example, text-message DCTs with other emotional situations could be administered to respondents and more randomised sampling techniques could be adopted in the collection of Reddit data; for the latter purpose, a Reddit corpus released in July of 2015 could be used ("Complete Public Reddit Comments Corpus", 2015). Moreover, studies analogous to these could be performed in different genres of digital discourse. DCTs could be used to collect email data; in this type of study, respondents would be given social contexts and asked to send the emails they would send in those respective contexts. To give another example, public record chat logs could be sampled and the punctuation usage in them could be analysed in terms of the rhetorical model of punctuation mark function. Data from social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter could be analysed in the same way.

The study of punctuation marks could also be accomplished in a quantitative manner. In statistical studies, punctuation data could be collected in larger samples from different types of people (people of varied sexes, regions, ages, etc.) and their punctuation practices could be compared using inferential statistics. Studies like these could of course be accompanied by complementary interpretive work as well.

And finally, the findings of these and other similar studies could be compared with scholarship concerning the historical uses of punctuation marks. There is, surprisingly, relatively little work in this area, so more would have to be done. Studies of punctuation mark usage in the past would naturally use the resources and methods of historical linguistics. Old grammar handbooks, letters, novels, and so on, would be consulted, and the conclusions drawn from these sources would be compared with the conclusions of digital discourse studies. The findings of the comparisons could in turn elucidate how punctuation marks change over time.

7.6 Closing Remarks

Punctuation marks can be very important meaning-making devices in digital discourse. In general, they can be a means of making communication more effective; they can, that is, help people better share their ideas and feelings, and help them better connect with each other.

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Appendix 1 – The Research Instrument from the Text-Message Study

Text Message Study

Conducted by Andrew Albritton
andrewalbritton@missouristate.edu

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in my study. This study is being conducted as part of my research for a Phd degree from the University of Nottingham. My research is about the language of text messages. I am also investigating new ways to collect text message data. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participation should take about ten minutes. You do not have to complete all of the tasks, and you may stop participating at any time. Your answers and phone numbers will be kept strictly confidential. ***If you are under the age of 18, please do not participate.***

This study will ask you to send a total of five text messages to five respective email addresses. (Text messages can be sent to email addresses just as they are sent to another phone – just type the email address in place of a phone number.) ***Standard text messaging rates do apply.*** If your phone plan requires you to pay for individual text messages and you do not wish to do so, please do not participate.

If you are willing to participate, please sign this form, then continue on to the instructions below.

Participant Signature

_____

Date

_____

Below you will be given made-up situations and will be asked to send the text message you would normally send in that given situation. Please write the text messages just as you would in the given situation. If you would normally use the recipient's name in the message, feel free to use a name of your choice.

1. You just heard that a good friend got a job he or she had been wanting. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch1@gmail.com.
2. You just heard that your friend did not get a job he or she had applied for. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch2@gmail.com.
3. You just heard that your friend got a new job, but you're not sure what he or she thinks about it. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch3@gmail.com.

4. You are part of a small group working on a project for a class. You think the group should have a meeting. What would you text the group's leader? Please text your message to textresearch4@gmail.com.
5. Please text your age and gender to textresearch5@gmail.com.

Thank you very much for your participation. If you have questions about this study or are interested in the study's findings, please feel free to contact me at andrewalbritton@missouristate.edu.

Appendix 2 – University of Nottingham Ethics Forms

Text-Message Study

Faculty of Arts Ethics Approval Form

Researcher	M Andrew Albritton
School/Division	English
Project title	What's the Point? Punctuation in the Digital Era
Date	14/6/2013
E-mail	Aexmaalb1@nottingham.ac.uk or andrewalbritton@missouristate.edu

(1) Researcher Information. Please tick as appropriate.

YES ☐ NO X Member of staff conducting research project

If ticked *YES* above, is the research funded by a RC that needs proof of ethics approval? And what is the funding body?

YES ☐ funding body _____ NO ☐

YES X NO ☐ Postgraduate Researcher

If ticked *YES* above, indicate level of studies and supervisor.

PhD X MA ☐ Supervisor _____Svenja Adolphs_____

YES ☐ NO X Member of staff obtaining approval for data collected by students on a module.

If ticked *YES* above, indicate level of studies.

PhD ☐ MA ☐ UG ☐

Module Code and Module Name

_____

If obtaining approval for a module, in the sections below provide an overview of the type of projects the students will do. Attached with your paperwork the guidelines given to the students about the type of data they will collect, as well as the information about the relevant areas of the ethics protocol that they will need to follow. Students need to provide signed informed consent forms from ALL participants with their submitted work, as well as the tick sheet signed by them.

(2) Provide a brief summary of the research aims/questions [max 500 characters & spaces].

I am studying the new meanings and functions of punctuation marks in the digital era. The three questions addressed by this study are: (1) How do university-aged students use punctuation to convey relational information in text messages? (2) How do university-aged students vary their punctuation between social and task-based text messages? (3) How do the new forms of punctuation fit within the broader history of writing and punctuation?

Students will be asked to send five text messages to five respective email accounts I have created. One of the messages will contain the age and gender of the participant and the other four will be text messages they would send in hypothetical situations. (These hypothetical situations will not be of a personal nature.) This method is a new type of discourse completion task - one in which digital utterances are elicited.

(3) Methods – tick as appropriate and provide an explanation as indicated below.

Part A YES ☐ NO X psychophysiological measures (e.g. response times, eyetracking, ERP, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X prolonged visual and/or auditory stimuli

YES ☐ NO X interviews (focus groups)

YES ☐ NO X questionnaires

YES X NO ☐ other ___A discourse completion task asking students to send the text messages they would in certain hypothetical circumstances__

Part B YES X NO ☐ using data produced by students (e.g. their essays)

YES ☐ NO X using data freely available on-line

YES ☐ NO X using data available on-line only available to members of the group

YES X NO ☐ were the participants aware that work would be used for research purposes

Part C YES ☐ NO X procedures likely to change participants' mood, be aversive or stressful

YES ☐ NO X misleading participants about an experiment or withholding information

YES ☐ NO X information-gathering on sensitive issues (e.g. sexual, racial, religious or political attitudes, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X procedures which might be harmful or distressing to people in a specially vulnerable state (e.g. depressed, anxious, bereaved, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X discussion or investigation of personal topics (e.g. relationships, feelings of success and failure) or any other procedure in which participants may have an emotional investment

For anything ticked YES, please provide more detailed information. Indicate any potential risks to participants and justify this risk. For interviews, please be clear whether the interviews are being recorded, how the identities' of participants are being protected, and who will have access to the data (e.g. will participants' recordings be presented at conference presentations). For Part B, for any data not publically available, indicate how you will obtain permission from participants to use their data.

(4) Location of data collection.

YES X NO ☐ Will the task be performed outside of campus.

If data collection is occurring on campus please give the location. If data collection is occurring off campus, please provide information about the location.

Data collection will take place on the campus of Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri, USA. More info can be provided if necessary.

(5) Participants, access, and inducements.

YES ☐ NO X participants under 16 (if so, you may need to undergo a CRB check)

YES ☐ NO X participants recruited from special sources (e.g. prisons, hospitals, schools. etc.)

YES ☐ NO X participants whose capacity to give consent may be in doubt (e.g. learning disability, confusion, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X participants who have received medical, psychiatric, clinical psychological or other similar attention

YES ☐ NO X participants being investigated in connection with a performance deficit (e.g. dyslexia)

For anything ticked YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

YES ☐ NO X are there any inducements for taking part

If YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

(6) Data storage and anonymity.

YES ☐ NO X is there a possibility of disclosure of confidential information (e.g. to other participants)

YES ☐ NO X is there a possibility of identification of participants (e.g. when reporting results)

If YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

(7) Awareness of ethical behavior when collecting data.

Researchers must indicate awareness of ethical behavior when collecting data from human participants by submitting the completed *Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection* (next pg) with this application. For students on a module, this form must be submitted with their work.

(8) Informed Consent Form

Provide an informed consent form for approval. The final page gives guidelines for producing one.

For Office Use Only

YES ☐ The form Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection has been included and ticked appropriately.

YES ☐ An appropriate consent form has been provided.

Approved By: _____ Date: _____ Agreed By: _____ Date: _____

Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection

☐ X Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.

☐ X The purpose and procedures of the project, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective participants at the outset.
☐ X My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.
☐ X Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.
☐ X All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant. These consent forms should be submitted as an Appendix, along with this form.
☐ X In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily'.
☐ X Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in project activities.
☐ X The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.
☐ X I will provide participants with my contact details (and details of the module convenor) in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the project, should they wish to do so.
☐ X Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.
☐ X Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants.
☐ X At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.
☐ X The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.
☐ X The views of all participants in the research will be respected and special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.
☐ X Data generated by the research will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than markers and examiners will have access to any of the data collected.
☐ X Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.
☐ X All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants.

☐ X Where possible, participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.
☐ X If working with children 16 and under for a prolonged period of time, I have received Advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure.

Signed_____M. Andrew Albritton_____
Date___14/6/2013_____

Guidelines for Producing an Informed Consent Form

Provide a project title and brief description of the study for participants.

Participants should be given the opportunity to indicate their understanding of points like the following. Starred (**) information should be included as part of online surveys.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I confirm that the purpose of the study has been explained and that I have understood it.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been successfully answered.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence. **

YES ☐ NO ☐ I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data. **

YES ☐ NO ☐ I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study. **

YES ☐ NO ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and that I agree to participate in this study. **

For recorded interviews, additional levels of consent may be appropriate. For example:

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to my data being transcribed and wish to be referred to anonymously.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to an audio file of my participation to be used, but would like identifying factors (e.g. my name to be removed) from any presentation of my data.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to a video file of my participation to be used, but would like identifying factors (e.g. face covered and name removed) from any presentation of my data.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to an audio/video file of my participation to be used with any available identifying factors.

Participant's Name AND Signature

Researcher's Signature

Date

When collecting data from participants **under 16** years of age, a **parent's signature is required**.

Online Surveys/Questionnaires

A goal of ethical research is to protect the identity of participants.

When a researcher is in the room with a participant, interviews him/her face-to-face, digitally, etc., anonymity cannot be completely preserved. Thus, full informed consent with a signature is required. When collecting data using online tools like Bristol Online Survey participants can remain completely anonymous. In this case asking participants to provide their name and signature, would introduce identifying information. Thus we do not ask for names and signatures in this type of research. However, we still need to ensure that participants have understood the goals of the research and their 'rights'. Thus online questionnaires must begin with a set of informed consent questions. Further, because we cannot completely control who the survey goes to, we need to ensure that only participants who can legally agree on their behalf take part in the study. Finally, participants should be aware of what information the survey provider (e.g. SurveyMoneky, LimeSurvey, etc.) may keep about them.

In online studies, provide information like the following:

All data collected in this survey will be held anonymously and securely. No personal data is asked for or retained. Cookies, personal data stored by your Web browser, are not used in this survey. (This information will vary depending on the survey provider.) Then participants should indicate whether they are over 16 or not. If they are not over 16 they should be asked not to take part in the study. Finally, include informed consent questions like the starred (**) from above.

Message Board Study

Faculty of Arts Ethics Approval Form

Researcher	M. Andrew Albritton
School/Division	English
Project title	What's the Point? Punctuation in Text-Messages
Date	5/12/2014
E-mail	Aexmaalb1@nottingham.ac.uk; AndrewAlbritton@MissouriState.Edu

(1) Researcher Information. Please tick as appropriate.

YES ☐ NO X Member of staff conducting research project

If ticked *YES* above, is the research funded by a RC that needs proof of ethics approval? And what is the funding body?

YES ☐ funding body _____ NO ☐

YES X NO ☐ Postgraduate Researcher

If ticked *YES* above, indicate level of studies and supervisor.

PhD X MA ☐ Supervisor Svenja Adolphs _____

YES ☐ NO X Member of staff obtaining approval for data collected by students on a module.

If ticked *YES* above, indicate level of studies.

PhD ☐ MA ☐ UG ☐

Module Code and Module Name _____

If obtaining approval for a module, in the sections below provide an overview of the type of projects the students will do. Attached with your paperwork the guidelines given to the students about the type of data they will collect, as well as the information about the relevant areas of the ethics protocol that they will need to follow. Students need to provide signed informed consent forms from ALL participants with their submitted work, as well as the tick sheet signed by them.

(2) Provide a brief summary of the research aims/questions [max 500 characters & spaces].

This is a final study for my PhD thesis. In previous work, I have investigated some of the functions of punctuation marks in text-messages. I am now wanting to see if my conclusions are valid in a larger dataset and in a different genre of digital discourse. I will be investigating posts from Reddit.com, which is an online message board website that allows people to textually discuss numerous topics; Reddit distinguishes itself from other message board websites both with the great variety of topics people can discuss (within subtopic groups called subreddits), and with the feature that allows users to vote threads and comments up or down to dictate where the threads and comments will appear on the site. Because my previous research involved Discourse Completion Tests in which participants were asked how they would respond with text-messages in certain contexts related to job-hunting, I am going to use data from Reddit threads related to job hunting. I chose these threads by searching Reddit for the terms "job hunting". I took down the URLs of the first 15 threads in the search results that had between 30 and 50 comments. I will analyse them by looking at the punctuation in the first 5 threads, then looking at the punctuation in the second 5 threads - if the patterns are stable, I may not use the final five. No registration or password is needed to access the content of these threads.

(3) Methods – tick as appropriate and provide an explanation as indicated below.

Part A YES ☐ NO X psychophysiological measures (e.g. response times, eyetracking, ERP, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X prolonged visual and/or auditory stimuli

YES ☐ NO X interviews (focus groups)

YES ☐ NO X questionnaires

YES X NO ☐ other message board posts from the Internet

Part B YES ☐ NO X using data produced by students (e.g. their essays)

YES X NO ☐ using data freely available on-line

YES ☐ NO X using data available on-line only available to members of the group

YES ☐ NO X were the participants aware that work would be used for research purposes

Part C YES ☐ NO X procedures likely to change participants' mood, be aversive or stressful

YES ☐ NO X misleading participants about an experiment or withholding information

YES ☐ NO X information-gathering on sensitive issues (e.g. sexual, racial, religious or political attitudes, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X procedures which might be harmful or distressing to people in a specially vulnerable state (e.g. depressed, anxious, bereaved, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X discussion or investigation of personal topics (e.g. relationships, feelings of success and failure) or any other procedure in which participants may have an emotional investment

For anything ticked YES, please provide more detailed information. Indicate any potential risks to participants and justify this risk. For interviews, please be clear whether the interviews are being recorded, how the identities' of participants are being protected, and who will have access to the data (e.g. will participants' recordings be presented at conference presentations). For Part B, for any data not publically available, indicate how you will obtain permission from participants to use their data.

I will be using publically available data from the Internet – anyone with Internet access can go to Reddit.com and see the messages in the threads I am using. No registration or password is needed to view these threads. Even so, I will not include the user names of participants in my report.

(4) Location of data collection.

YES X NO ☐ Will the task be performed outside of campus.

If data collection is occurring on campus please give the location. If data collection is occurring off campus, please provide information about the location.

I will be gathering my data from my computer both at my office (at Missouri State University in the USA), and, potentially, from my home computer.

(5) Participants, access, and inducements.

YES ☐ NO X participants under 16 (if so, you may need to undergo a CRB check)

YES ☐ NO X participants recruited from special sources (e.g. prisons, hospitals, schools. etc.)

YES ☐ NO X participants whose capacity to give consent may be in doubt (e.g. learning disability, confusion, etc.)

YES ☐ NO X participants who have received medical, psychiatric, clinical psychological or other similar attention

YES ☐ NO X participants being investigated in connection with a performance deficit (e.g. dyslexia)

For anything ticked YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

Because of the nature of the study, it is difficult to know the age, psychological status, etc. of the participants. It is probably worth mentioning, however, that, because I will be looking at threads related to job hunting, most people who posted on the threads will be adults.

YES ☐ NO X are there any inducements for taking part

If YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

(6) Data storage and anonymity.

YES ☐ NO X is there a possibility of disclosure of confidential information (e.g. to other participants)

YES ☐ NO X is there a possibility of identification of participants (e.g. when reporting results)

If YES, please provide more detailed information and justification.

All data that is exported from the threads will be temporarily saved on password protected computers. All data will be retained for the duration of the project and upon completion of the project will be securely archived and kept by the researcher for the

required period of time (seven years from the date of publication of the results). Following this, the data will be destroyed.

(7) Awareness of ethical behavior when collecting data.

Researchers must indicate awareness of ethical behavior when collecting data from human participants by submitting the completed *Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection* (next pg) with this application. For students on a module, this form must be submitted with their work.

(8) Informed Consent Form

Provide an informed consent form for approval. The final page gives guidelines for producing one.

For Office Use Only

YES ☐ The form Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection has been included and ticked appropriately.

YES ☐ An appropriate consent form has been provided.

Approved By: _____ Date: _____ Agreed By: _____ Date: _____

Awareness of Ethical Behavior for Data Collection

☐ Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.
☐ The purpose and procedures of the project, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective participants at the outset.
☐ My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.
☐ Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.
☐ All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant. These consent forms should be submitted as an Appendix, along with this form.
☐ In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily'.
☐ Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in project activities.
☐ The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.
☐ I will provide participants with my contact details (and details of the module convenor) in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the project, should they wish to do so.
☐ Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.
☐ Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants.
☐ X At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.
☐ X The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.
☐ The views of all participants in the research will be respected and special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.

☐ X Data generated by the research will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than markers and examiners will have access to any of the data collected.
☐ Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.
☐ X All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants.
☐ Where possible, participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.
☐ If working with children 16 and under for a prolonged period of time, I have received Advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure.

Signed___M. Andrew Albritton_____
Date___1/12/2014_____

Guidelines for Producing an Informed Consent Form

Provide a project title and brief description of the study for participants.

Participants should be given the opportunity to indicate their understanding of points like the following. Starred (**) information should be included as part of online surveys.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I confirm that the purpose of the study has been explained and that I have understood it.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been successfully answered.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence. **

YES ☐ NO ☐ I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data. **

YES ☐ NO ☐ I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study. **

YES ☐ NO ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the above information and that I agree to participate in this study. **

For recorded interviews, additional levels of consent may be appropriate. For example:

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to my data being transcribed and wish to be referred to anonymously.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to an audio file of my participation to be used, but would like identifying factors (e.g. my name to be removed) from any presentation of my data.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to a video file of my participation to be used, but would like identifying factors (e.g. face covered and name removed) from any presentation of my data.

YES ☐ NO ☐ I consent to an audio/video file of my participation to be used with any available identifying factors.

Participant's Name AND Signature

Researcher's Signature

Date

When collecting data from participants **under 16** years of age, a **parent's signature is required**.

Online Surveys/Questionnaires

A goal of ethical research is to protect the identity of participants.

When a researcher is in the room with a participant, interviews him/her face-to-face, digitally, etc., anonymity cannot be completely preserved. Thus, full informed consent with a signature is required. When collecting data using online tools like Bristol Online Survey participants can remain completely anonymous. In this case asking participants to provide their name and signature, would introduce identifying information. Thus we do not ask for names and signatures in this type of research. However, we still need to ensure that participants have understood the goals of the research and their 'rights'. Thus online questionnaires must begin with a set of informed consent questions. Further, because we cannot completely control who the survey goes to, we need to ensure that only participants who can legally agree on their behalf take part in the study. Finally, participants should be aware of what information the survey provider (e.g. SurveyMoneky, LimeSurvey, etc.) may keep about them.

In online studies, provide information like the following:

All data collected in this survey will be held anonymously and securely. No personal data is asked for or retained. Cookies, personal data stored by your Web browser, are not used in this survey. (This information will vary depending on the survey provider.) Then participants should indicate whether they are over 16 or not. If they are not over 16 they should be asked not to take part in the study. Finally, include informed consent questions like the starred (**) from above.

Appendix 3 – Missouri State University Ethics Forms

Institutional Review Board

Missouri State University

JUL 1 2013

Missouri State University Human Subjects Review Application Cover Sheet

(Revised 09/03/08)

14-0006

A. INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

Principal Investigator: M. Andrew Albritton **College:** Business **Department:** CIS

Human Subjects Training has been completed: ☒ yes ☐ no **Email:** andrewalbritton@missouristate.edu

Project involves Proctected Health Information: ☐ yes ☒ no If yes, has HIPAA training been completed?: ☐ yes ☐ no

Co-Worker: **College:** **Department:**

Human Subjects Training has been completed: ☐ yes ☐ no **Email:**

Project involves Proctected Health Information: ☐ yes ☐ no If yes, has HIPAA training been completed?: ☐ yes ☐ no

Co-Worker: **College:** **Department:**

Human Subjects Training has been completed: ☐ yes ☐ no **Email:**

Project involves Proctected Health Information: ☐ yes ☐ no If yes, has HIPAA training been completed?: ☐ yes ☐ no

Co-Worker: **College:** **Department:**

Human Subjects Training has been completed: ☐ yes ☐ no **Email:**

Project involves Proctected Health Information: ☐ yes ☐ no If yes, has HIPAA training been completed?: ☐ yes ☐ no

Co-Worker: **College:** **Department:**

Human Subjects Training has been completed: ☐ yes ☐ no **Email:**

Project involves Proctected Health Information: ☐ yes ☐ no If yes, has HIPAA training been completed?: ☐ yes ☐ no

B. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: What's the Point? Punctuation in the Digital Era

Project Type: ☒ New Project ☐ Renewal or Continuation ☐ Resubmission

☐ Change in Procedure for Previously Approved Project

Proposed Project Dates (up to one year): **From:** 07 / 08 / 2013 **To:** 12 / 06 / 2013

Funding Agency or Research Sponsor: This project is part of a dissertation for a Phd from the University of Nottingham

C. IRB RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of College IRB Representative:

☒ Category I, Exempt, Sub-part A, Section 45.101 45 CFR 46, exempt category 2

☐ Category II, Expedited Approval, Sub-part A, Section 46.110; expedited category

☐ Category III, Full Committee Review

IRB College Representative: Phillip D. Harshaw **Date:** 07/16/2013

Action of the IRB Chairman:

☐ Approved as Exempt

☐ Expedited Approval

☐ Recommended for Full Review

Results of Full IRB Review:

☐ Approved

☐ Deferred (see attached comments)

☐ Disapproved (see attached comments)

Chairman of IRB: **Date:**

Missouri State University Human Subjects Protection Application

Description

I am studying the new meanings and functions of punctuation marks in the digital era. The three questions addressed by this study are: (1) How do university-aged students use punctuation to convey relational information in text messages? (2) How do university-aged students vary their punctuation between social and task-based text messages? (3) How do the new forms of punctuation fit within the broader history of writing and punctuation?

The first question is the principle question. I am interested in how young people use punctuation such as exclamation points and emoticons to construct relational meaning.

Research Protocol

I will be using a handout to elicit text messages from university students in Missouri State University classrooms. I have received permission to administer the handout in the CIS 201 classes of Richard Burton this summer if approval is received in time. I also plan to administer the handout to my own two CIS 101 classes this fall. I hope for a sample size of 30 to 50 students.

The handout includes an informed consent section for students to sign. Each student is requested to send five text messages; the messages will be sent to five respective email addresses I have created. One of the messages will contain the age and gender of the participant and the other four will be text messages the student would send in hypothetical situations. (See the attached handout for the specific hypothetical situations). This method is essentially a new type of discourse completion task - one in which digital utterances are elicited. The procedure should take a student ten to fifteen minutes to complete.

Students' responses will be anonymous. The text messages elicited will not be of a personal nature. The phone numbers of the students will be kept strictly confidential. The email addresses to which the text messages will be sent are, of course, password protected, and I alone know the passwords. Once the data is obtained, I will organize it in secure Word and/or Excel documents without the phone numbers.

There is the potential for very slight monetary expenditure on the part of students, depending on students' phone plans. It is made abundantly clear in the handout that standard rates do apply, and students whose plans would require them to pay for the messages and who do not want to do so should not participate.

I am a Phd student in the Department of English at the University of Nottingham. I will be using this anonymous data and my analysis of it in my Phd dissertation. I would be happy to provide more information if it is required.

Benefits

This project seeks to explore the new ways that punctuation is being used in the era of digital communication. It will thus be of historical benefit, in that it illuminates a unique area of linguistic evolution. It will also be of benefit to users of digital media in that it will demonstrate how punctuation can be used to communicate more effectively.

Risks

There are virtually no risks associated with this study. As mentioned above, there is the possibility for very minimal monetary expenditure on the part of participants, but it has been made clear that such expenditure is a possibility, and students who do not wish to spend the money are instructed not to participate.

Risk/Benefit Ratio

Not applicable.

Procedures for Minimizing Risk

Students will be informed of the possibility of monetary expenditure, depending on their phone plans, and will be told that they should not participate if their plans require them to pay for individual messages and they do not wish to do so.

Procedures for Obtaining Informed Consent

Each handout has an informed consent section for students to sign. To see the wording of the informed consent section, please see the attached handout.

Signatures

I hereby agree to conduct this study in accordance with the procedures set forth in my project description, to uphold the ethical guidelines as set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46, 45 CFR 160 and 164, and the Missouri State University HIPAA Policy, and to report to the IRB any outcomes or reactions to the experiment which were not anticipated in the risks description which might influence the IRBs decision to sustain approval of the project.

Department Head	Principal Investigator (Faculty)
Other Investigators	Other Investigators
Date: 7-8-13	Date: 7/8/2013

Appendix 4 – Text-Message Data Organised by DCT

DCT 1:

You just heard that a good friend got a job he or she had been wanting. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch1@gmail.com.

Responses*:*

1. Congratulations on your new job, that is a good.blessing

2. Congrats on the job man. I'm gonna come bother you at work ;)

3. Congrats on your new job! Hope you like it and I hope everything works out well!

4. That's wssp bro!! Now we can go out on yo expense lol

5. Hey man congratulations on the job!

6. Congrats dude! Good luck on yours first day.

7. Congrats bro!

8. Hey dude. I heard you got the job! That's awesome!

9. Hey (friends name), CONGRADULATIONS on the job!

10. Congrats on ur New job!!!!!

11. Omg did you get the job?!

12. Hey hey Sarah! Congrats on the new job! When do you start?

13. Omg! Congratulations girl! I'm so happy for you!

14. Congrats! Where are you going to be working at?

15. Just heard that you got the job you have been wanting! I am so proud of you! I knew you would get it!! Congratulations!

16. Congrats on the new job!

17. Aye turn up, heard yu jus got that gig, trap gon b boomn

18. Hey! Heard you got the job, congrats! When do you start?

19. Contests bud! Drinks?

[Follow up:] Congrats*

20. Congratulations on the job

21. Hey doll! I heard you got the job! CONGRATS!!!🎉

22. Hi! Congrats on your new job :)

23. Congratulations when will you be working? Lets celebrate tonight

24. Congrats on getting that job! I knew you'd get it! I'm so excited for you

25. I heard you just got that job you wanted. Congratulations!

26. You got the job!?!? Congrats girl!! Call me when you can! Wanna hear about it

27. Hey girl congrats on your new job!! Love ya and so proud of you! 😳😍😁🎉

28. Heyy girl! Heard you got that job you've been wanting! Congrats babe!:)

29. Congrats dude.

30. Hey! Heard you got the job. Congrats! Glad everything worked out for you. :)

31. Heard you got a new job. Congrats.

32. Awesome!!! I'm so proud of you boothang! :)

33. Good work on getting the job man. Don't fuck it up

34. Nice!

35. Hey congrats on the new job!

36. Congrats!!!!!

37. YAYY that's awesome!!

DCT 2:

You just heard that your friend did not get a job he or she had applied for. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch2@gmail.com.

Responses:

1. Sorry about that let's blow it off after work with some stiff drinks

2. I'm sorry you didn't get that job bro but it probably wasn't meant to be because there's even better opportunities out there for you and I know you'll find the perfect job soon enough.

3. Hey girl, I heard that you didn't get the job. I'm sorry. :(Lets get together soon though and forget about it.

4. You'll get another one, don't worry

5. Hey Alexis, I heard about the job mishap. Its their loss though haha. You'll definitely get the next one!!

6. I'm sorry friend. Ik GOD has sumn better in-store for you.

7. Dont worrie man, the management there is bad anyway.

8. Hey sweetheart, heard you didn't get the job. But here's the thing, everything happens for a reason! I know you probably don't see it that way right now, but this may lead you to different opportunities that you may have not seen before. Keep your head up! I mean it when I say that they are missing out on a fabulous employee

9. Hey man. Sorry about the job. It'll work out.

10. Hey, you okay?

11. Dang, that sucks. I'm sorry. Keep your head up, and keep looking.

12. Sorry about the job. :(

13. I'm sorry! I'm sure you'll find a job soon!

14. Hey, sorry to hear about you not getting the job. Better luck next time though!

15. Sorry you didn't get the job, man. Plenty more out there, no worries.

16. Screw em! Drinks?

17. Hey I'm sorry to hear that you didn't get it :(just keep working hard and all your hard work will pay off!

18. That's a bummer but oh well there will be plenty of other opportunities!

19. Hey darling, heard about the job, call me!! Xo

20. Hey, do you want to go get some ice cream later or hang out and talk? I heard you had a bad day.

21. Heyy, I know you didn't get the job you wanted but that just means there are bigger and better things waiting for you!! Keep your head up!!

22. Heard you didn't get the job, sorry

23. Hey girl I'm sorry about the job, just remember everything happens for a reason. You'll get the next one!

24. Hey I'm really sorry about the job. I know you wanted it, but you'll find a different one!

25. Sorry you didn't get the job I know how bad you wanted it....hopefully a better opportunity will arise

26. The Job was probably shitty anyway.

27. That sucks. What happened?

28. Awe :(I'm sorry. They suck anyway.

29. Sorry to hear that :(Let's go out tonight anyways!

30. Hey sorry bout not getting the job. You will find a better one. How you feelin?

31. It's all good. Plenty of other jobs out there

32. Aww I'm sorry! No worries you'll find a better one!

33. I'm sorry buddy, hang in there. There's better jobs anyway. [sent to the email address for DCT 1]

34. Awhh:-/ you can find a better job anyway! [sent to the email address for DCT 1]

DCT 3:

You just heard that your friend got a new job, but you're not sure what he or she thinks about it. What would you text your friend? Please text your message to textresearch3@gmail.com.

Responses:

1. Hey bro I heard you just got a new job? Congrats man are you looking forward to it?

2. Just give it a try and if you don't like it you can always quit :)

3. Hey Sarah, I heard you got a new job. I hope the first day goes well!!

4. Your new job will open your eyes to new fields

5. Congrats on it new job. How r u feelin about it??

    [Follow up:] *Ur

6. Hey I heard you got a new job! Are you excited, nervous, unsure... Tell me what's going on!

7. Hey! I heard you got a new job. How do you like it?

8. So how do you think you'll like your job?

9. Hey, I heard you got a job??

10. How's the new job? How do you like it? What are you doing?

11. Hey, I heard you got a new job! How's that going for you?

12. How's the new job going?!

13. That's cool!!

14. Do yu lik how da new gig treatn u?

15. Hey, just wondering how the new job is going. Hopefully everything is falling into place.

16. Hey! Heard you got the job, what're your thoughts so far?

17. Let's go fly fishing!

18. Just stay in it and see how everything goes for awhile and if its not getting better than quit. But just try to keep an open mind

19. What's up man? I heard you have a new job now. You pretty excited or are you just feeling "meh" about it?

20. You'll have to tell me more about it later!

21. Congratulations on the job!! I hope it's exactly what you were hoping it would be!!

22. Heyy girl! Congrats on the new job:)

23. Hey, i just heard that you got a new job. How do you like it?

24. What's up? Heard you got a new job. How's that going?

25. Hey how's your new job going? What kind of stuff do you do?

26. Is that the job you have been talking about getting? I can't remember

27. Hey! I heard you got a new job, how's that goin for ya???

28. Congrats on the job what made you want that one so bad?

29. Congrats on the new job!! You excited for it?

30. I mean what kind of benefits do you get?

31. Congrats?

32. Hey heard about the new job. Congrats. You excited?

33. How are you feeling about that job?

34. Congrats on the job, how do u like it? [sent to the email address for DCT 1]

DCT 4:

You are part of a small group working on a project for a class. You think the group should have a meeting. What would you text the group's leader? Please text your message to textresearch4@gmail.com.

Reponses:

1. Hey, so I know we really need to start getting stuff done on this research project and I think we should try setting up a time/place for a group meeting. Can you text everyone else and see whatll work best for them? [came through as two messages]

2. Hello, we need to get the group together for a meeting this week. Lets set up a time and place?

3. Hey I think we should have a meeting soon.

4. Hey! I really think we ALL need to get together for this project soon. Text or call me about a time that works and we'll round up the group.

5. Lets plan on a time and place to meet that works for everyone

6. Hey I was thinking that we should probably meet up as a group. If you need help figuring out when and where to meet, let me know and ill help you

7. Hey, I was wondering about the project, did we all want to have a meeting or something?

8. Can we organize a meeting soon for the project?

9. Hey, what do you think about having a meeting tonight to go over the project again?

10. Hey group leader, I think we need to get together and discuss some things about the project.

11. Hey! I think we should meet up soon this project due date is coming around the corner real fast!!!

12. Can we all meet as a grp so we cn get wrk done?

13. Hey I know this project isn't due for a bit but I would like for us all to meet up and get things rolling as soon as possible. No

14. Hey! Is there a convenient time our group can all get together soon?

15. Group meet? TGI Fridays?

16. Do you think we should have a meeting with the rest of the small group for this project?

17. Hey i think we all need to figure this out together so lets meet up and talk

18. Hey, i think we should meet up sometime so we can work on the project.

19. Hey its [student's name] from your project group. I think it'd be a good idea to meet up soon. Would you be able to?

20. Hey it's [student's name] from the cis class. Do you think our group should try to meet up sometime to talk about the project??

21. Heyy I think the project is coming along well for our class, but I think itd be great if we could have a group meeting soon!

22. Hey we need to get together for this project. Does right after class work for everyone?

23. Hey is it possible if we could all meet up for our group project? Let me know!

24. Hey, when are we meeting for the project?

25. Hi if everyone is free I think we should get together for the project!

26. Hey how's it goin? I think we need to get the group together for a meeting to go over some stuff with the project. What do you think?

27. Hey, I was thinking about what time we should have this meeting. Maybe we could get together this weekend?

28. Yo, can we meet up? I wanna get this thing done together so I'm not freaking out about it

29. Lets all try to meet at the library sometime this week I think it'll be better for the project

30. Hey you guys. I believe that we need to have a meeting about this project

31. Hey I think it would be a good idea to meet as a group for the project [sent to the email address for DCT 1]

Appendix 5 – Text-Message Data Organised by Respondent

Respondent 1:

1. Congratulations on your new job, that is a good.blessing

2. Sorry about that let's blow it off after work with some stiff drinks

3.

4.

5.

Respondent 2:

1. Congrats on the job man. I'm gonna come bother you at work ;)

2. You'll get another one, don't worry

3. Just give it a try and if you don't like it you can always quit :)

4.

5.

Respondent 3 [Responded to the first email address four times; assigned to DCTs as appropriate, based on order of receipt and content]:

1. Congrats bro!

2. I'm sorry buddy, hang in there. There's better jobs anyway.

3. Congrats on the job, how do u like it?

4. Hey I think it would be a good idea to meet as a group for the project

5.

Respondent 4:

1. Congrats on your new job! Hope you like it and I hope everything works out well!

2.

3.

4.

5.

Respondent 5:

1. That's wssp bro!! Now we can go out on yo expense lol

2.

3.

4.

5.

Respondent 6:

1.

2. Awhh:-/ you can find a better job anyway! [came through in the inbox for DCT 1, but probably belongs here]

3.

4.

5.

Respondent 7:

1. Hey man congratulations on the job!

2.

3. So how do you think you'll like your job?

4. Lets plan on a time and place to meet that works for everyone

5.

Respondent 8:

1. Congrats dude! Good luck on yours first day.

2. Dont worrie man, the management there is bad anyway.

3. Your new job will open your eyes to new fields

4. Hello, we need to get the group together for a meeting this week. Lets set up a time and place?

5. 20 male

Respondent 9:

1. Hey dude. I heard you got the job! That's awesome!

2. Hey man. Sorry about the job. It'll work out.

3. Hey! I heard you got a new job. How do you like it?

4. Hey! I really think we ALL need to get together for this project soon. Text or call me about a time that works and we'll round up the group.

5. Age: 20 Gender: Male

Respondent 10:

1. Hey (friends name), CONGRADULATIONS on the job!

2.

3. How's the new job going?!

4. Hey group leader, I think we need to get together and discuss some things about the project.

5. 20. Male.

Respondent 11:

1. Congrats on ur New job!!!!!

2. I'm sorry friend. Ik GOD has sumn better in-store for you.

3. Congrats on it new job. How r u feelin about it??

[Follow up:] *Ur

4. Hey I think we should have a meeting soon.

5. 20 Female

Respondent 12:

1. Omg did you get the job?!

2. Hey, you okay?

3. Hey, I heard you got a job??

4. Hey, I was wondering about the project, did we all want to have a meeting or something?

5. 19; Female

Respondent 13:

1. Hey hey Sarah! Congrats on the new job! When do you start?

2. Hey Alexis, I heard about the job mishap. Its their loss though haha. You'll definitely get the next one!!

3. Hey Sarah, I heard you got a new job. I hope the first day goes well!!

4. Hey, so I know we really need to start getting stuff done on this research project and I think we should try setting up a time/place for a group meeting. Can you text everyone else and see whatll work best for them? [Came through as two messages.]

5. 19 female

Respondent 14:

1. Omg! Congratulations girl! I'm so happy for you!

2. I'm sorry! I'm sure you'll find a job soon!

3. That's cool!!

4. Hey! I think we should meet up soon this project due date is coming around the corner real fast!!!

5. 19 female

Respondent 15:

1. Congrats! Where are you going to be working at?

2. Dang, that sucks. I'm sorry. Keep your head up, and keep looking.

3. How's the new job? How do you like it? What are you doing?

4. Hey, what do you think about having a meeting tonight to go over the project again?

5. Male 23

Respondent 16:

1. Just heard that you got the job you have been wanting! I am so proud of you! I knew you would get it!! Congratulations!

2. Hey sweetheart, heard you didn't get the job. But here's the thing, everything happens for a reason! I know you probably don't see it that way right now, but this may lead you to different opportunities that you may have not seen before. Keep your head up! I mean it when I say that they are missing out on a fabulous employee

3. Hey I heard you got a new job! Are you excited, nervous, unsure... Tell me what's going on!

4. Hey I was thinking that we should probably meet up as a group. If you need help figuring out when and where to meet, let me know and ill help you

5. 19 female

Respondent 17:

1. Congrats on the new job!

2. Sorry about the job. :(

3. Hey, I heard you got a new job! How's that going for you?

4. Can we organize a meeting soon for the project?

5. 20 female

Respondent 18:

1. Aye turn up, heard yu jus got that gig, trap gon b boomn

2.

3. Do yu lik how da new gig treatn u?

4. Can we all meet as a grp so we cn get wrk done?

5. 20 male

Respondent 19:

1. Hey! Heard you got the job, congrats! When do you start?

2. Sorry you didn't get the job, man. Plenty more out there, no worries.

3. Hey! Heard you got the job, what're your thoughts so far?

4. Hey! Is there a convenient time our group can all get together soon?

5. 20. Male

Respondent 20:

1. Contests bud! Drinks?

    [Follow up:] Congrats*

2. Screw em! Drinks?

3. Let's go fly fishing!

4. Group meet? TGI Fridays?

5. 25, Male.

Respondent 21:

1. Congratulations on the job

2.

3.

4.

5.

Respondent 22:

1. Hey doll! I heard you got the job! CONGRATS!!!🎉

2. Hey darling, heard about the job, call me!! Xo

3.

4.

5.

Respondent 23:

1. Hi! Congrats on your new job :)

2. Hey I'm really sorry about the job. I know you wanted it, but you'll find a different one!

3. Hey how's your new job going? What kind of stuff do you do?

4. Hi if everyone is free I think we should get together for the project!

5. 20 female

Respondent 24:

1. Congratulations when will you be working? Lets celebrate tonight

2. Sorry you didn't get the job I know how bad you wanted it....hopefully a better opportunity will arise

3. Congrats on the job what made you want that one so bad?

4. Lets all try to meet at the library sometime this week I think it'll be better for the project

5. 22 male

Respondent 25:

1. Congrats on getting that job! I knew you'd get it! I'm so excited for you

2. That's a bummer but oh well there will be plenty of other opportunities!

3. You'll have to tell me more about it later!

4. Hey its [student's name] from your project group. I think it'd be a good idea to meet up soon. Would you be able to?

5. 19 female

Respondent 26:

1. I heard you just got that job you wanted. Congratulations!

2. Hey, do you want to go get some ice cream later or hang out and talk? I heard you had a bad day.

3. What's up man? I heard you have a new job now. You pretty excited or are you just feeling "meh" about it?

4. Do you think we should have a meeting with the rest of the small group for this project?

5. Male. 21.

Respondent 27:

1. You got the job!?!? Congrats girl!! Call me when you can! Wanna hear about it

2.

3. Just stay in it and see how everything goes for awhile and if its not getting better than quit. But just try to keep an open mind

4. Hey i think we all need to figure this out together so lets meet up and talk

5. 20 Female

Respondent 28:

1. Hey girl congrats on your new job!! Love ya and so proud of you! 😘😍😁🎉

2. Hey girl I'm sorry about the job, just remember everything happens for a reason. You'll get the next one!

3. Hey! I heard you got a new job, how's that goin for ya???

4. Hey is it possible if we could all meet up for our group project? Let me know!

5.

Respondent 29:

1. Heyy girl! Heard you got that job you've been wanting! Congrats babe!:)

2. Heyy, I know you didn't get the job you wanted but that just means there are bigger and better things waiting for you!! Keep your head up!!

3. Heyy girl! Congrats on the new job:)

4. Heyy I think the project is coming along well for our class, but I think itd be great if we could have a group meeting soon!

5. 20 female

Respondent 30:

1. Congrats dude.

2. The Job was probably shitty anyway.

3. I mean what kind of benefits do you get?

4. Yo, can we meet up? I wanna get this thing done together so I'm not freaking out about it

5. 21 male

Respondent 31:

1. Hey! Heard you got the job. Congrats! Glad everything worked out for you. :)

2. Hey, sorry to hear about you not getting the job. Better luck next time though!

3. Hey, just wondering how the new job is going. Hopefully everything is falling into place.

4. Hey I know this project isn't due for a bit but I would like for us all to meet up and get things rolling as soon as possible. No

5. 19, Female

Respondent 32:

1. Heard you got a new job. Congrats.

2. Heard you didn't get the job, sorry

3. What's up? Heard you got a new job. How's that going?

4. Hey, when are we meeting for the project?

5. 20 years old, male

Respondent 33:

1. Awesome!!! I'm so proud of you boothang! :)

2. Awe :(I'm sorry. They suck anyway.

3. Is that the job you have been talking about getting? I can't remember

4. Hey we need to get together for this project. Does right after class work for everyone?

5. 19 Female

Respondent 34:

1. Good work on getting the job man. Don't fuck it up

2. It's all good. Plenty of other jobs out there

3. How are you feeling about that job?

4. Hey you guys. I believe that we need to have a meeting about this project

5. 19 male

Respondent 35:

1. Nice!

2. That sucks. What happened?

3. Hey, i just heard that you got a new job. How do you like it?

4. Hey, i think we should meet up sometime so we can work on the project.

5. 19, male

Respondent 36:

1. Hey congrats on the new job!

2. Hey sorry bout not getting the job. You will find a better one. How you feelin?

3. Hey heard about the new job. Congrats. You excited?

4. Hey how's it goin? I think we need to get the group together for a meeting to go over some stuff with the project. What do you think?

5. 19. Male

Respondent 37:

1. Congrats!!!!!

2. Sorry to hear that :(Let's go out tonight anyways!

3. Congrats?

4. Hey, I was thinking about what time we should have this meeting. Maybe we could get together this weekend?

5. 19, female

Respondent 38:

1. YAYY that's awesome!!

2. Aww I'm sorry! No worries you'll find a better one!

3. Congrats on the new job!! You excited for it?

4. Hey it's [student's name] from the cis class. Do you think our group should try to meet up sometime to talk about the project??

5. 19 female

Respondent 39:

1.

2. I'm sorry you didn't get that job bro but it probably wasn't meant to be because there's even better opportunities out there for you and I know you'll find the perfect job soon enough.

3. Hey bro I heard you just got a new job? Congrats man are you looking forward to it?

4.

5. 21 Male

Respondent 40:

1.

2. Hey girl, I heard that you didn't get the job. I'm sorry. :(Lets get together soon though and forget about it.

3.

4.

5.

Respondent 41:

1.

2. Hey I'm sorry to hear that you didn't get it :(just keep working hard and all your hard work will pay off!

3. Congratulations on the job!! I hope it's exactly what you were hoping it would be!!

4.

5. 20 and male

Appendix 6 – URLs of Threads Used in Message Board Study

Sample 1

Thread 1

http://www.reddit.com/r/BabyBumps/comments/1dc8qb/update_job_hunting_while_pregnant/?sort=old

Thread 2

http://www.reddit.com/r/offmychest/comments/20coe1/job_hunting/?sort=old

Thread 3

http://www.reddit.com/r/introvert/comments/14l15q/does_anyone_ever_feel_discriminated_against_when/?sort=old

Thread 4

http://www.reddit.com/r/jobs/comments/yqh45/job_hunting_success_advice_inside_since_this_is/?sort=old

Thread 5

http://www.reddit.com/r/jobs/comments/1gceld/what_does_job_hunting_as_a_fultime_pursuit/?sort=old

Sample 2

Thread 6

http://www.reddit.com/r/AdviceAnimals/comments/1evclk/job_hunting_at_the_moment/?sort=old

Thread 7

http://www.reddit.com/r/gifs/comments/15c0c0/adventures_in_job_hunting/?sort=old

Thread 8

http://www.reddit.com/r/jobs/comments/25izsv/job_hunting_in_the_1930s/?sort=old

Thread 9

http://www.reddit.com/r/AdviceAnimals/comments/22abuf/as_someone_hunting_for_jobs_this_is_like_opening/?sort=old

Thread 10

http://www.reddit.com/r/Entrepreneur/comments/243wdo/go_from_resume_building_and_job_hunting_to_job/?sort=old

Sample 3

Thread 11

http://www.reddit.com/r/Design/comments/zbs1c/job_hunting_what_am_i_looking_for/?sort=old

Thread 12

http://www.reddit.com/r/sysadmin/comments/shb81/job_hunting_tips_for_sys_admins/?sort=old

Thread 13

http://www.reddit.com/r/childfree/comments/1aqxja/childfreedom_and_job_hunting/?sort=old

Thread 14

http://www.reddit.com/r/depression/comments/1khhdn/paralyzed_by_jobhunting/?sort=old

Thread 15

http://www.reddit.com/r/AdviceAnimals/comments/sg95p/how_an_unemployed_person_sees_job_hunting/?sort=old