Towards a model of group-based cyberbullying: combining verbal aggression and manipulation approaches with perception data to investigate the portrayal of transgender people in seven newspaper articles

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Abstract

This article proposes a two-step analysis of group-based cyberbullying that combines a) features of verbal aggression (incl. impoliteness components and speech acts) and manipulation analysis, and b) an analysis of the targeted group's perception and evaluation of the investigated texts. The group focused on in this cases study are transgender people. In comparison to other LGBTIQA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning, asexual) groups, transgender issues and the portrayal of transgender people have been rarely focused on in linguistic studies. The analysis of seven articles published in British mainstream media between 2001 and 2015 by two authors, shows that they employed a wide variety of pragmatic and manipulation strategies to influence the opinion of the public on trans people and to cause offence to transgender individuals. The analysis of reactions to one of these articles by members of a transgender charity will show the impact these verbal aggression and manipulation strategies had on targeted individuals.

Keywords: impoliteness, verbal aggression, manipulation, perception, cyberbullying, bullying, transgender

1.   Introduction

In this article, I propose a two-step analysis of group-based cyberbullying that combines features of verbal aggression and manipulation. The two steps are: 1) analysing the verbal aggression and manipulation strategies of the selected texts that are considered to belong to the category of group-based bullying and 2) analysing how the texts were perceived by members of the attacked group. In the discipline of psychology, a number of single-item or multiple-item measures that investigate bullying exist (cf. the meta study by Kowalski et al. 2014). These elicitation methods aim to investigate a number of issues, such as whether individuals have experienced cyberbullying, how they would/have react(ed) to cyberbullying, what impact cyberbullying can have on individuals' health, etc. While the proposed model also incorporates a perception component that aims to examine how targeted group members feel after a cyberbullying incident has occurred, it primarily provides a detailed multi-facetted linguistic analysis of the text(s) that constitute the cyberbullying event.

The aim of the model is to provide researchers and targeted groups with a toolkit that can be used to show how individuals legitimized by powerful groups, such as political parties, or institutions, such as media corporations, bully vulnerable groups by manipulating the view of the general public towards them, and by verbally attacking and threatening members of these vulnerable groups.

Bullying has been defined as

> a specific type of aggression in which (1) the behavior is intended to harm or disturb, (2) the behavior occurs repeatedly over time, and (3) there is an imbalance of power, with a more powerful person or group attacking a less powerful one. This asymmetry of power may be physical or psychological, and the aggressive behavior may be verbal (eg, name-calling, threats), physical (eg, hitting), or psychological (eg, rumors, shunning/exclusion). (Nansel et al. 2001, p. 2094)

While the above definition refers to bullying in general (i.e. whether face-to-face, or in some other mode), the focus of this article will be on a specific form of bullying, namely that of cyberbullying which has been defined by Kowalski et al (2014, p. 1109) as "(a) intentional aggressive behavior that (b) is carried out repeatedly, (c) occurs between a perpetrator and victim who are unequal in power, and (d) occurs through electronic technologies".

To date research in this field tends to focus on a) attacks made by individuals or group of individuals whose views are not closely linked to powerful media institutions (e.g. Selkie, Kota, Chan and Moreno 2015), and b) attacks made mainly on individuals rather than groups, who may or may not know the attacker (e.g. Smith et al. 2008; Vandebusch and Van Cleemput 2009). Also, as Kowalski et al (2014, p. 1107) note in their meta study on cyberbullying,

> [p]erpetrators of cyberbullying often perceive themselves to be anonymous. Research on deindividuation (Diener 1980, Postmes and Spears, 1998) shows that people will say and do things anonymously that they would not say or do in face-to-face interactions.

I propose that the focus of current cyberbullying research should be expanded to also include repeated online attacks by powerful individuals or groups that are implicitly legitimized by groups or institutions, and that are openly (i.e. non-anonymously) made against groups that are less powerful, and therefore cannot easily defend themselves.

The less powerful group focused on in the present paper are transgender people. As not all readers may be familiar with terminology and issues regarding transgender people that are relevant for the present investigation, I will first address those in a background section on transgender issues. This will be followed by a theoretical linguistic discussion of the proposed model and its components.

2.   Transgender People: Terminology and Issues

The term transgender is generally used to refer to "an individual whose gender identity does not match the assigned birth gender" (Brill & Pepper 2008, p. 19). Transgender individuals may start to inform their environment at a very young age about the perceived mismatch of their assigned and self-identified gender: e.g. at 18-month (Brill and Pepper 2008), three years (Nutt 2015), or around age four (Kennedy and Hellen 2010; Menvielle 2009).

It should be noted that in recent years the terms *gender creative* and *gender fluid* (e.g. Ehrensaft 2011; Duron 2013) have been introduced to account for the fact that not all gender non-conforming children may indeed identify as transgender in adult life. Whether gender fluid, gender creative or transgender, it is important to stress that issues regarding gender variance or non-conformity, such as, for example, bills regarding the use of public conveniences in the United States or verbal attacks in schools, are not restricted to post-pubescent teenagers and adults, but may affected young children as well.

Unfortunately, attacks, verbal or otherwise, are frequently experienced by transgender individuals. From January 1st 2008 to October 1st 2014, 1612 killings of transgender people were reported worldwide and in the period from 1st October 2013 to 30th September 2014 alone, 224 transgender individuals were reported murdered (TGEU 2014). The number of unreported or unassigned homicides may be even higher. In England and Wales, hate crimes against trans individuals have increased in recent years from 310 instances (2011/12) to 361 instances (2012/13) and most recently to 555 instances (2013/2014). As the authors of the Home Office report on hate crimes note

> [t]ransgender identity hate crime saw the biggest percentage increase of the five strands [i.e. race & ethnicity, religion & beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, transgender identity] between 2012/13 and 2013/14 (54%) while disability and sexual orientation hate crime increased by similar proportions to race hate crime (both by 8%). (Creese and Lader 2014, p. 9).

A European survey on being trans in the European Union conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published in 2014 found that 34 % of the 6579 trans participants reported "experiences of violence or threats of violence in the five years preceding the survey" (51) in the EU countries where they lived. Out of the 24 EU countries for which data on the question were available, the UK is in fourth place for hate motivated violence against transgender individuals in the last 12-month period of the survey (places 1-3 were held by Lithuania, Ireland and Belgium). Regarding hate motivated harassment of trans individuals (including the categories name calling, bullying, ridiculing, other verbal assault/abuse/humiliation, excessive & constant negative comments, aggressive gestures, isolation & ignoring, non-verbal insults /abuse / humiliation), the UK is in second place.

The results of a survey conducted by the British LGBT+ mental health charity Pace in 2014 showed that

> [o]f the 485 survey participants under the age of 26 (…), young trans people were nearly two times more likely (48.1% of all young trans participants) to have attempted suicide in their life compared to non-transgender peers in the study (26.2%)

In addition, young transgender individuals were also more likely to self-harm (59.3 %) than young non-transgender people (22.1 %) in the UK.

The studies thus show that individuals identifying as transgender in the EU, and especially in the UK, are often faced with violence and harassment, and are also more likely to suffer from severe mental health issues leading to self-harm and even suicide attempts than non-transgender people. That this also applies to other countries, such as the US, and the wider LBGT community is shown by Nadal (2013, 18) who after reviewing the literature concludes that

> it is evident that a large number of LGBT youths and adults are victims of hate crimes and harassment; it is also clear that when individuals do experience such

discrimination, their mental health, physical health and overall well-being are affected significantly.

Relatively little research has been done on the representation of trans individuals in the media to date. In 2011, the British organization Trans Media Watch submitted a report on the British press and the transgender community to the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practice and ethics of the press. In this report, Trans Media Watch presented the results of a questionnaire study involving 250 respondents which showed that 95 % "did not believe that the [British] media cared how transgender people were portrayed", 78 % did consider the "portrayal of transgender people to be inaccurate or very inaccurate" and 70 % were of the opinion that the "portrayal of transgender people in the [British] media [was] negative or very negative" (Trans Media Watch 2011, p. 8). In addition, the results of the study showed that affective responses to the media were negative ranging from anger and unhappiness to feelings of exclusion and fear.

Focusing on British newspapers, Baker (2014) conducted a corpus based critical discourse analysis on the representation of trans individuals in newspaper articles published in the year 2012. He summarized his findings as follows (2014, p. 233)

> (…) the analysis did find a great deal of evidence to support the view that trans people are regularly represented in reasonably large sections of the press as receiving special treatment lest they be offended, as victims or villains, as involved in transient relationships or sex scandals, as the object of jokes about their appearance or sexual organs or as attention-seeking freakish objects. There were a scattering of more positive representations but they were not as easy to locate and tended to appear as isolated cases rather than occurring repeatedly as trends.

As mentioned above, in this paper, I propose a new combined framework for the analysis of group-based cyberbullying, which I will introduce in the next section.

3. Combined manipulation and pragmatic model of cyberbullying

The proposed model (illustrated in Figure 1) consists of three components: 1) manipulative strategies that are intended to influence the opinion of others (i.e. not members of the targeted group), 2) verbal aggression strategies (incl. impoliteness features and speech acts) against the targeted group and 3) a perception study.

MANIPULATION –
positive self-presentation and negative presentation of another group that intends to influence members of the non-targeted group to see the targeted group negatively

VERBAL AGGRESSION -
negative presentation of a particular group that denies empathy, equity & respect, and intends to hurt members of the group

PERCEPTION

Aimed (mainly) at non-targeted individuals / groups
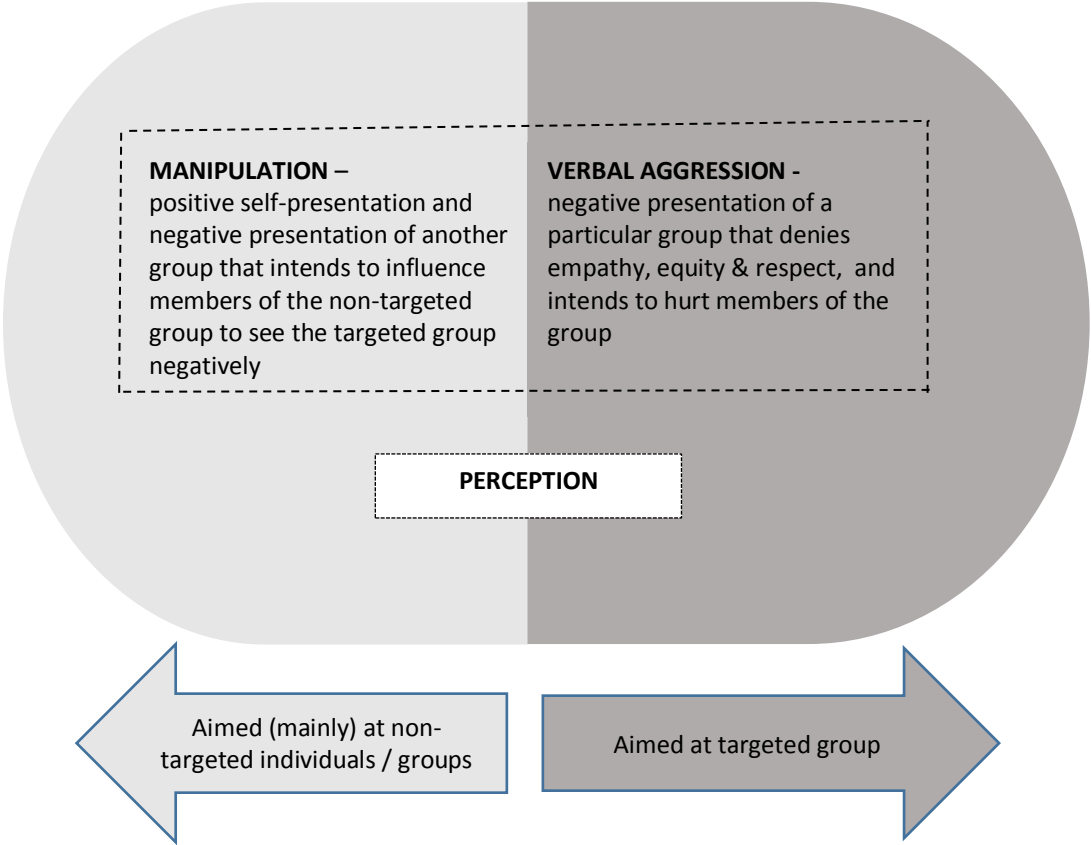
Aimed at targeted group

Figure 1. Proposed cyberbullying model

The dashed lines in darker colour around *manipulation* and *verbal aggression* indicate that these features can be examined by researchers conducting a detailed discourse analysis. *Perception* extends across both manipulation and verbal aggression, as the interplay between both, manipulation strategies intending to negatively influence the opinion of other people against the targeted group, and verbal aggression strategies that explicitly attack the group, is likely to result in the targeted individuals' overall perception of the text. An overview of the manipulation and verbal aggression components of the proposed group bullying framework

is presented in table 1. A more detailed discussion of all three components of the model (manipulation, verbal aggression, perception) will be provided below.

Table 1. Group bullying framework

Manipulation: positive self-presentation and negative presentation of another group that intends to influence members of the non-targeted group to see the targeted group negatively	Verbal aggression: negative presentation of a particular group that denies empathy, equity & respect, and intends to hurt members of the group
• Positive self-presentation (van Dijk, 2006, 2011): a) Positive facts for attacker b) Positive stylistic choices for attacker and own in-group (e.g. lexical choices, alliterations, assonance, hyperboles) c) Emphasizing positive actions d) De-emphasizing / omitting negative actions e) Positive visual and order structures	• Using hurtful group nouns
• Negative topics & Accusations (any overall discourse topic describing them as breaching our norms and values: deviance, threat, insecurity, criminality, inability, etc.) (van Dijk, 2011, p. 499) • Denomination, Demonstratives and Pronouns (van Dijk, 2011) • Victim-perpetrator reversal (Wodak, 2006) • Unlikely & unproven statements about others / Lies	• Using hurtful rhetorical moves (e.g. alliteration, assonance, metaphors, repetitions, rhymes, similes and metaphors) (van Dijk, 2011) • Frightening (i.e. threats, Garcia-Pastor 2008) • Issuing commands and warnings (i.e. sociality rights, Spencer-Oatey 2005) • Belittling / diminishing /not recognizing the importance of and victims things, actions, values and opinions, experiences, identities and denying empathy (Garcia-Pastor, 2008; Spencer-Oatey 2008)
• Generalizations & assigning of negative characteristics • Pseudo justification • (Pseudo) Intertextuality (e.g. Fairclough, 2003) • Negative visual and order structures for others (van Dijk 2011) • Misrepresentation	• Denying in group-status (Garcia-Pastor 2008, van Dijk 2006) • Ridiculing group members (Spencer-Oatey 2005)

3.1 The manipulation component

Van Dijk (2006, p. 364, author's emphasis) points out that

> if manipulation is a form of domination or power abuse, it needs to be defined in terms
> of *social groups, institutions* or *organizations*, and not at the individual level of
> personal interaction. This means that it only makes sense to speak of manipulation, as
> defined, when speakers or writers are manipulating others in their role as a member
> of a dominant collectivity […], this is especially the case for the symbolic elites in
> politics, the media, education, scholarship, the bureaucracy, as well as in business
> enterprises, on the one hand, and their various kinds of 'clients' (voters, readers,
> students, customers, the general public, etc.) on the other.

Particularly relevant for the present paper and the proposed bullying framework is the notion
of symbolic elites, and the power elites, such as the media, have in today's society, as power
imbalance is one of the key components of bullying frameworks.

Van Dijk's (2011, 498) ideological square according to which the authors of manipulative
discourse aim to "emphasize the good things" and "de-emphasize the bad things" of their own
group, while "de-emphasizing the good things" and "emphasizing the bad things" of the other
group is highly important for the proposed model. Van Dijk (2006, 2011) suggests that
negative other and positive self-representation is typically achieved with a variety of linguistic
strategies, of which the following are the most relevant for the cyberbullying framework:

- **Lexicon**: using positive words for own group, using negative words for other group
- **Expressions: sounds and visuals**
  - Emphasize (loud, etc.; large, bold, etc.) positive [own group] /negative [other group] meanings
  - Order (first, last; top, bottom, etc.) positive [own group] /negative [other group] meanings

(Van Dijk 2006, p. 373)

- **Negative topics:** any overall discourse topic describing Them as breaching our norms and values: deviance, threat, insecurity, criminality, inability, etc.

- **Level of description (generality vs. specificity):** Their negative properties or actions tend to be described in more specific (lower level) detail than Ours.

- **Denomination (of propositions: participant description):** They tend to be named or identified as different from Us (precisely as Them) – strangers, immigrants, Others, opponents, enemies, etc.

- **Pronouns:** May signal in-group and out-group membership, as in Us vs. Them, and in general different degrees of power, solidarity, intimacy, etc. when speaking to Us vs. Them.

- **Demonstratives:** May signal closeness or distance to people being described, e.g. those people.

- **Rhetorical moves:** Repetitions, enumerations, rhymes, alliterations to emphasize and hence draw attention to emphasize negative meanings about them. (Van Dijk 2011, pp. 397-398)

In addition to the van Dijk's positive self and negative other representation strategies, intertextuality (Fairclough, 2003) or pseudo intertextuality can also be employed to manipulate readers. According to Fairclough (2003, p. 39) "[i]n its most obvious sense, intertextuality is the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text – quotations", but it can also take other forms, such as parodies or retellings (Baker & Ellece, 2011). As Fairclough (2003, p. 55) notes "intertextuality is inevitably selective with respect to what is included and what is excluded from the events and texts represented". Thus, skilled and experienced writers deliberately select other texts/voices and include them in their own texts to strengthen their own argument and increase the impact of their writing. Intertextuality can be used to reinforce the impression that the author's views and opinions are in-line with a number of other individuals, a powerful group or the general public.

Pseudo-intertextuality - the attribution of certain parts of an author's text to an unspecified group or individual – can be used to for the same purpose as intertextuality, but may also be used to obscure the origins or authorship of certain expressions, utterances, etc. It therefore

allows the author to hide behind an/other unidentified individual(s) and enables the author to blame others for the use of negative / hurtful expressions by suggesting that the author is merely reporting language that someone else has used first.

Also relevant for the proposed bullying framework is the notion of victim-perpetrator reversal or victim-victimiser reversal (Wodak & Reisigl 2001, Wodak 2006) which is defined as "projecting the notion that the former [perpetrators / victimisers] are persecuted by vindictive and avaricious [victims]" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 13).

3.2 The verbal aggression component

This component includes impoliteness strategies and speech acts that are intended to either attack the targeted group and frighten them, or to make them feel bad, or a combination of all three. By employing these strategies and speech acts, their producers are either violating what Spencer-Oatey (2005) calls sociality rights, which consist of association rights (involving respect and empathy) and equity rights (involving fair treatment and the absence of commands), or are making use of strategies that are intending to attack face as described by Garcia (2008) and presented in table 2.

Table 2. Garcia-Pastor's (2008, p. 108) Impoliteness strategy framework

Positive face-oriented strategies	Negative face-oriented strategies
• Convey dislike for, and disagreement with hearer and close others (his/her/their things, actions, values and opinions)	• State that communicative act(s) as common or shared knowledge
• Use aggressive punning	• Indebt hearer
• Be ironic / sarcastic	• Refer to rights, duties and rules not respected, fulfilled or complied with respectively
• Deny in-group status	• Increase imposition weight
• Dissociate, distance from hearer	• Refuse hearer and hearer's things, actions, values and opinions
• Ignore hearer	• Challenge
• Belittle or diminish the importance of hearer and hearer's things, actions, values and opinions	• Frighten
	• Dare

Also relevant for the proposed bullying framework are three speech acts: threats, warnings and commands. Searle (1998) categorizes threats as commissive speech acts that commit the speaker to some course of action and writes that "but unlike the other examples [e.g. promises, pledges, guarantees] it is against the interest of the hearer and not for the benefit of the hearer" (p. 149). Commands, in contrast, are the most direct form of a request. They belong to the category of directives, which "are an expression of desire that the hearer should do the directed act" (Searle 1998, p. 148). Warnings may have various functions (cf. Searle 1969 or Thomas 1995). In the present model they have been combined with threats, as in the data the intention seemed to be to frighten.

Bousfield (2008) and Limberg (2008) demonstrated in their studies on impoliteness in the military and police force that threats and commands are typical in these institutional contexts, and noted the important role of institutional power attached to the institutional representative in charge of the conversation. Limberg argues that "one would expect that the target of a threat would be likely to assess the exploitation of institutional power through the use of verbal threats as face-threatening (i.e. impolite or rude) because his/her action environment is severely restricted" (2008, p. 166).

Commands executed by using an imperative are generally not considered appropriate and polite outside of certain institutional hierarchical contexts, such as the police or the military or certain situations, e.g. accidents or other emergencies, as interviews with native speakers of British English showed (e.g. Schauer, 2009).

3.3 Perception

In addition to a linguistic analysis based on the aforementioned manipulation and verbal aggression components, the proposed framework also includes a third component, the perception study. I consider this third component to be essential, as it gives targeted groups a voice. In an ideal research set-up[1], tailor-made data collection instruments (such as questionnaires, interviews, or a combination of both) should be used to examine the impact

of the texts under investigation on the targeted group. The meta-study by Kowalski et al. (2014) provides a good overview of methodological approaches from the field of psychology. In the field of linguistics and more precisely in the area of pragmatics and impoliteness research, a number of perception studies have been conducted in the last years (e.g. Schauer 2009; Culpeper, Marti, Mei, Nevala & Schauer 2010; Schauer in press) that employ questionnaires, or a combination of questionnaires and interviews, to learn more about the impact of verbal aggression on victims. As Culpeper (2011, p. xii) notes "Impoliteness is, in fact, of great social importance. […] [It] is involved in aggression, abuse, bullying and harassment. Minimally it results in emotional pain but can even end in suicide." Reviewing the literature on aggression, he points out that "[f]rom the outset, with classics such as Buss (1961), verbal acts of aggression were considered alongside physical acts" (Culpeper 2011, p. 3) and quotes Baron and Richardson (1994 in Culpeper 2011, p. 3, original emphasis) "The notion that aggression involves either *harm* or injury to the victim implies that *physical* damage to the recipient is not essential. So long as the person has experienced some type of aversive consequence, aggression has occurred". This clearly shows that a thorough investigation of linguistic impoliteness / verbal aggression has to include an examination of how the impoliteness event was perceived by the targeted individual(s).

This is closely related to Eelen's (2001, p. 116) emphasis on the "evaluative moment" in impoliteness research, when he writes

> [i]n everyday practice impoliteness occurs not so much when the speaker produces behaviour but rather when the hearer evaluates that behaviour. I will go even further to say that the very essence of impoliteness lies in that evaluative moment.

The perception component should aim to elicit more detailed information about the impact of the cyberbullying incident on the targeted individuals. By doing so it help to establish what kind of consequences have resulted from the cyberbullying event (such as mental health concerns, fear for own personal safety, etc.). These results can then be used to inform institutions or powerful groups supporting those who have committed cyberbullying, as well

as the cyberbullies themselves, to make them aware of the impact their actions can have and thus may be able to prevent similar attacks in the future.

4. Methodology

4.1 Context & Authors

Seven newspaper articles written by Julie Burchill and Julie Bindel, and published by mainstream British online and print media between 2001 and 2015, will be analysed within the proposed cyberbullying framework. Articles by these two authors were selected for the following reasons: a) both authors are well known columnists who have worked for major British newspapers across the political spectrum (see below) for more than one decade and thus have been given the opportunity to reach a large number of readers by mainstream media, b) both writers have commented on transgender issues on multiple occasions over the years, and c) both authors received public feedback on how the wording of their articles were received by their readers and members of the trans community since they published their articles on this topic.

As providing a wider context for the publication of these articles is particularly important for the subsequent analysis, I will first present some background information on the authors and relevant events surrounding the publication of the articles, before giving information on the perception data and the new framework.

Julie Burchill: Julie Burchill is a British columnist who since 1999 has written for several British print and online media such as The Guardian, The Independent, The Observer, The Times and the Spectator. She is also the author of several books. As she states in her 2013 article, she is friends with columnists Julie Bindel and Suzanne Moore.

Although Julie Burchill had written on transgender issues prior to her 2013 Observer article, this article attracted the most media attention of all of her articles investigated here. It was written as a response to an article by Suzanne Moore, published in the New Statesman on 8 January 2013, which included the sentence "We are angry with ourselves for not being

happier, not being loved properly and not having the ideal body shape – that of a Brazilian transsexual". The reference to transgender individuals in Brazil was then criticised by some individuals on social media platforms, as Brazil is the country with the highest reported numbers of transgender homicides in the world (644 in the recorded period from 2008 to 2013, TGEU 2014). Made aware of this criticism, Suzanne Moore (2013) responded on Twitter "!) People can just fuck off really. Cut their dicks off and be more feminist than me. Good for them."

This reply generated negative comments expressed towards Suzanne Moore on social media. In response to this, Julie Burchill wrote an article that appeared on Sunday, 13 January 2013, in the Observer. As a result of considerable criticism, the Observer editor James Mullholand withdrew the article on 14 January 2013 stating ''On this occasion we got it wrong and in light of the hurt and offence caused I apologise and have made the decision to withdraw the piece" (Sweney 2013). The article was republished by the Telegraph on the same day[2].

Julie Bindel: Julie Bindel is also a British columnist, who like Julie Burchill, has written for several of the main British print and online newspapers and magazine, such as the Guardian, the New Statesmen and the Spectator. In 2004 her article "Gender benders, beware" was published in the Guardian, which forms part of the data analysed in this study. The content and tone of the article lead to protests, which resulted in the Guardian's reader editor, Ian Mayes (2004) writing a response in which he stated that

> The column attracted about 200 letters, nearly all of which I have read. There was clearly an international lobby at work but this by no means accounted for all the mail. All but four or five of the letters were condemnatory of the views expressed in the column. Many of them condemned the Guardian for publishing the piece. The Guardian was also criticised for the caricature illustration used with the column - a hairy-chested tattooed figure in a dress with a badge reading "I'm a lady".

While Bindel subsequently indicated regret for some of the expressions she used in the 2004 article (Bindel 2007, 2008), she continued to voice opposition towards gender reassignment

surgery in newspaper articles (Bindel 2007) and radio panel shows (Jacques 2014). In 2008 she was nominated for the Stonewall Journalist of the Year award for her writings on lesbian issues (Boynton 2008), which lead to protests from individuals and LGBT organizations (Grew 2008). As a response, Bindel wrote an article in 2008 entitled "It's not me. It's you" which was published in the Guardian. This articles was subsequently criticized for including transphobic statements (Garcia 2010).

4.2 Data

The data for the analysis consist of 7 articles that appeared in British mainstream online and print media in the period from 2001 to 2015 written by Julie Burchill and Julie Bindel. Table 3 provides further information on the articles.

Table 3. Overview of articles analysed

Date of publication	Author	Title	Published by
20 January 2001	Julie Burchill	Gender Bending	Guardian
31 January 2004	Julie Bindel	Gender benders, beware	Guardian
1 August 2007	Julie Bindel	My trans mission	Guardian
8 November 2008	Julie Bindel	It's not me. It's you	Guardian
13 January 2013 Republished 14 January 2013	Julie Burchill	Transsexuals should cut it out[1]	The Observer, reprinted by The Telegraph
22 February 2014	Julie Burchill	Don't you dare tell me to check my privilege	The Spectator
7 June 2015	Julie Burchill	Put your kit back on, Caitlyn. Changing sex is vain, not brave The former Bruce Jenner is just another reality TV strumpet. Why treat her like a cross between Mother Teresa and Diana	Sunday Times

Note: [1]'Transsexuals should cut it out' was originally published on 13 January 2013 by the Observer, withdrawn by the Observer on Monday 14th 2013 due to a high number of public complaints and then reprinted by The Telegraph on the same day but without the headline and with a different photo of Julie Burchill.

It needs to be noted that the focus of this investigation is on articles published in online newspapers that could be accessed free of charge at the time – with one exception, the article by Julie Burchill published in The Sunday Times in 2015. Although the three authors also wrote about transgender issues on social media platforms such as twitter, or commented on other articles on transgender issues in the comment sections of these articles, none of these texts will be considered here. The main reason for excluding these social media or comment posts is that some of these posts were subsequently deleted and although the wording was recorded by other media organizations, the original posts can no longer be verified (e.g. McCormick 2014). The only tweet that is included in the present analysis was made by Suzanne Moore and quoted by Julie Burchill in her 2013 article.

In addition to the seven articles, I will also refer to perception data. These data are based on videos recorded by the Equality Charity Scottish Transgender Alliance and show reactions by 14 transgender individuals and their allies to Julie Burchill's article that was published in 2013. The data are available via the pinknews.co.uk website: http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/01/22/video-trans-community-speak-of-their-hurt-at-julie-burchills-observer-article/ . Names of the contributors to the video were not provided and I will therefore use 'contributor', 'individual' or 'person' when referring to people featured in this video.

4.3 Framework

As mentioned above, I will be using a combined impoliteness and manipulation framework for the investigation of group based bullying of transgender people in the seven articles. The framework is mainly based on Garcia-Pastor (2008), Spencer-Oatey (2008), van Dijk (2006, 2011), but also includes some new additions. The framework was explicated in table 1 in section 3 above.

5. Results

I will first analyse and discuss the manipulation strategies used in the articles. This will be followed by a discussion of the verbal aggression strategies and the perception data.

5.1 Manipulation Strategies in the seven articles

An overview of the manipulation strategies used by the two authors in the seven articles is provided in table 5. Since including a complete list of all features of manipulation used by Julie Bindel and Julie Burchill in their seven articles would have taken up too much page count, I have included representative examples that also provide insights into the individual strategy preferences of the two writers. The author's initials and year of publication for the respective strategy are included in brackets following the quote from the article.

Table 5. Overview of manipulation strategies used in the articles

MANIPULATION STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Positive self-presentation (van Dijk, 2006, 2011): a) Positive facts for attacker	when I worked on an advice line for lesbians (JBi 2004) When I was told a few weeks ago that I had been shortlisted for a journalist of the year award by the gay rights organisation Stonewall (JBi2008) my novel Ambition (re-published by Corvus Books this spring, since you ask) (JBu2013); 'Sod that, we're having lobster and champagne at Frederick's, and I'm paying,' I told her (JBu2013); Godmother (JBu2013);
b) Positive facts about attacker's group (members)	brilliant writer Suzanne Moore (JBu2013); three brilliant, beautiful daughters (SM, JBu2013);

		woman of such style and substance (SM, JBu2013, 2014)
		veteran women's rights and anti-domestic violence activist Julie Bindel (JBu2013)
c)	Facts about attacker or group member's intended to garner sympathy (and make them seem unthreatening)	the hundreds of angry emails I received, and the levels of vitriol contained within them (JBi 2007)
		As a result of the article I was firmly branded "transphobic" by the community (JBi 2007)
		despite apologising publicly three times about the tone and inappropriate humour in the column, I have never been allowed to forget it (JBi2008)
		young single mother living in a council flat (SM, JBu2013);
		Suzanne was, like myself, born into the English working class, and therefore marginally less likely to have beaten the odds than a dancing dog or busker's cat to have become a public figure (JBu2014)
		When I was vilified for standing up for a friend who had been monstered by the transgender cheerleaders for inadvertently offending them (JBu2015)
d)	Positive stylistic choices for attacker and own in-group (e.g. lexical choices, alliterations, assonance, hyperboles, similes)	brilliant, beautiful daughters (SM, JBu2013)
		my friend (SM, JBu2013);
		woman of such style and substance (SM, JBu2013)
		Suze (SM, JBu2013)
		amica (SM, JBu2014)
		my girl (SM, JBu2014)
e)	De-emphasing / omitting negative actions	Reasons for negative sentiment towards Julie Bindel by some transgender individuals (JBu2013)
f)	Positive visual and order structures	Photo chosen by the Telegraph of Julie Burchill for the 2013 reprint;

	JBu2013 and 2014 articles begin with positive self-presentation
Negative topics and Accusations (any overall discourse topic describing Them as breaching our norms and values: deviance, threat, insecurity, criminality, inability, etc.) (van Dijk, 2011, p. 499)	their sexual depravity (JBu2001) and I've certainly never expected the taxpayer to hand over more than £8,000 in order to set me up in a love nest with my new squeeze (JBu2001) [transgender people] picketing events where she [Julie Bindel] is speaking about such minor issues as the rape of children and the trafficking of women (JBu2013) Suzanne Moore was being 'monstered' (JBu2013, JBu2014, JBu2015) The idea that a person can chose their gender — in a world where millions of people, especially 'cis-gendered' women, are not free to choose who they marry, what they eat or whether or not their genitals are cut off and sewn up with barbed wire when they are still babies — and have their major beautification operations paid for by the National Health Service seems the ultimate privilege. (JBu2014)
Denomination, Demonstratives and Pronouns (van Dijk, 2011)	Men - for all transgender people (JBu2001); man in a dress – for trans woman (JBi2004); 'she' – emphasized with quotation marks for trans woman (JBi2004); man wanting to get into nightclubs free on Ladies' Nights – for transwoman (JBi2004); 'woman' – for trans woman (JBi2004)
Victim-perpetrator reversal (Wodak, 2006)	I waited for the transsexual community to kick up a fuss. They did, and organised a massive campaign against me and Stonewall (JBi2008) I just want to be left alone. (JBi2008) I must say that my only experience of the trans lobby thus far was hearing about the vile way they have persecuted another of my friends, the veteran women's rights and anti-domestic violence activist Julie Bindel picketing events where she is speaking about such minor issues as the rape of children and the trafficking of

	women just because she refuses to accept that their relationship with their phantom limb is the most pressing problem that women – real and imagined – are facing right now. (JBu2013) When I was vilified for standing up for a friend who had been monstered by the transgender cheerleaders for inadvertently offending them (JBu2015)
Unlikely & unproven statements about others / Lies	But they'd rather argue over semantics. To be fair, after having one's nuts taken off (see what I did there?) by endless decades in academia, it's all most of them are fit to do. (JBu2013) Educated beyond all common sense and honesty, it was a hoot to see the screaming-mimis (JBu2013) We may not have as many lovely big swinging Phds as you (JBu2013)
Generalizations & assigning of negative characteristics	are the ultimate example of a particularly middle-class, middle-aged male arrogance (JBu2001) yet, thoughtfully, they go ahead and marry blissfully ignorant women and father children (JBu2001) those who 'transition' seem to become stereotypical in their appearance - fuck-me shoes and birds'-nest hair for the boys; beards, muscles and tattoos for the girls (JBi2004)
Pseudo justification	Repelled by the filthy threats which were flying fierce and fast at my friend (JBu2014) It was an instinctive desire to defend the socialism of my dead father (JBu2014)
(Pseudo) Intertextuality	"Oh, but I'm a woman trapped in a man's body!" (JBu 2001) a person's wish "doesn't determine what he is" (JBi 2004) "man in a dress" (JBi 2007) "Sex change surgery is unnecessary mutilation" (JBi 2007)

	Shims, shemales, whatever you are calling yourself these days. (JBu2013) A gay male friend commented to me: "When I see conservative white males like Maloney and Jenner transition, I think of Iran, where sex changes are common and accepted but where gay men are frequently executed. […]." (JBu2015) the splendid veteran transsexual rocker Jayne County […] post[ed] the wonderfully inclusive Facebook status: "I am having a party tonight and all my breeder, fag, dyke, tranny and shemale friends are invited!" (JBu2015)
Negative visual and order structures for others (2011)	Transgender individuals occur as aggressors after positive facts have been provided for Julie Burchill, Julie Bindel and Suzanne Moore (JBu2013, 2014)
Misrepresentation	Transsexualism is, basically, just another, more drastic twist on the male menopause, which in turn is just another excuse for men to do as they please (JBu2001)

Note: The author's initials and year of publication for the respective strategy are included in brackets following the quote from the article. Where necessary the initials of the person that the linguistic choices refer to are provided as well, e.g. 'brilliant, beautiful daughters (SM, JBu2013)' which means that the positive alliteration here concerns Suzanne Moore and was used in the 2013 article by Julie Burchill.

It is interesting to note that the positive self-presentation seems more marked and elaborate in the later articles, whereas in the 2001 and 2004 articles the authors begin with human rights concerns that are not considered necessary for transgender individuals, and a long comparison of the Ugly Sisters in Christmas pantomimes in 2004 which are then indirectly equated with transgender people. The shift to more prolonged positive self-presentation at the beginning of the articles published in 2008, 2013 and 2014 may be the result of the authors' assessment that following negative responses to their earlier articles swift and unprovoked attacks on a vulnerable group may no longer be tolerated by readers and editors.

Thus, to manipulate readers into agreeing with her representation of transgender individuals, Julie Burchill had to spend more word count on presenting herself as a successful author (JBu2013), good, generous and protective friend (JBu2013, 2014), Suzanne Moore as mother

of 'three brilliant and beautiful daughters' (JBu2013), and a 'woman of such style and substance' (JBu2013, JBu2014), and Julie Bindel as 'veteran women's rights and anti-domestic violence activist' (JBu2013). This and the use of first names and diminutives (Suzanne, Suze) and positive denominations (my friend, my amica, my girl) combined with the frequent references to health issues like periods and menopause and elaborate references to the authors' working class background are intended to evoke the impression that the authors are powerless women engaged in long struggle with female biology and the British class system. This impression is then also reinforced by the choice of image of Julie Burchill in the 2013 article reprint where she is presented in a stereotypically submissive and unthreatening pose lying on a beach, looking into the distance and wearing distinctly female clothes. This is in stark contrast to the Observer photo that accompanied her articles at the time which showed her sternly looking at the camera in front of a neutral background.

In contrast, transgender individuals are portrayed as highly educated middle class men who cost British taxpayers large amounts of money for operations that are compared to skin whitening, and who are powerful as a group assisted by equally powerful allies that threaten Julie Burchill, Julie Bindel and Suzanne Moore. The 2013 and 2014 texts in particular are examples of classic victim perpetrator reversal and leave out or deemphasize necessary background information that shows the history of attacks on transgender individuals by the authors such as the previous articles written by Julie Burchill and Julie Bindell.

Compared to Julie Burchill's articles, the 2007 and 2008 articles by Julie Bindel acknowledge more of the preceding history and could therefore be considered more moderate. However, she continues to present herself as the victim "who just wants to be left alone" (2008) and has campaigns organized against her by the trans community (2008).

The use of intertextuality in the authors' articles is also very interesting. Julie Burchill's 2013 article includes an instance of pseudo intertextuality "Shims, shemales, whatever you are calling yourself these days" whereby she seems to be suggesting that members of the trans community use these terms themselves. That argument is not coherently presented, however, since in the same article she also writes "They are lucky I am not calling them shemales. Or

shims", thus acknowledging that these terms are problematic (see also 5.2 for a discussion on verbal aggression regarding "trannies" and "shemales"). Following the criticism of her 2013 article, the use of intertextuality in her 2015 article is particularly interesting. In this article, she includes several quotes that are intended to support her point of view of what constitutes a woman (e.g. a quote by the actress Alice Eve) and legitimize her lexical choices in the past by presenting them as being in general use in the trans community (e.g. quotes including the words "tranny" and "shemale" by RuPaul and Jayne County). She implies that her use of "shemale" and "tranny" in her earlier articles is acceptable, because members of the trans community are using these terms themselves. As in her previous articles, she portrays the trans community as being aggressive, since they appear to attack their own members for the use of these terms.

However, this legitimization strategy is only successful if readers are unfamiliar with discussions about the use of taboo words in other communities. Focusing on the n word in the African American community, Rahman (2012) illustrates the use of terms of self-reference by in-group members and discussions about whether or not certain terms should be used or not. Thus, disagreements about the use of certain terms of self-reference within a community are not unusual. Differences in the acceptability of using derogatory terms / taboo words, such as the n word, by in-group and out-group members (c.f. Croom, 2013) are also widely known, and therefore Burchill's attempts to legitimize her use of "tranny" and "shemale" will ultimately not be successful with readers familiar with these debates.

The discussion of the manipulation strategies by the authors has illustrated that it is essential to take the history of the authors' writing on transgender people into consideration. The analysis has shown that utterances made about transgender individuals by members of this group of authors in recent years cannot have been innocent mistakes and single incidents, but should rather be seen as part of a long-term bullying strategy.

5.2 Verbal aggression strategies

Tables 6 presents an overview of the verbal aggression strategies used in the articles by Julie Burchill and Julie Bindel. Again, the table does not contain a complete list of all features found in the seven articles, but instead includes a selection of representative examples.

Table 6. Overview of verbal aggression strategies used in the articles

VERBAL AGGRESSION STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Using hurtful group nouns	trannies (JBu2001, JBu2013), gender benders (JBi2004) bunch of dicks in chick's clothing (JBu2013, 2014); shims (JBu2013); shemales (JBu2013); bunch of bed-wetters in bad wigs (JBu2013); monstrous regiment of bellicose transsexuals (JBu2014); bunch of gender-benders (JBu2014); bunch of middle-class seat-sniffers, educated beyond all instinct and honesty (JBu2014)
Using hurtful rhetorical moves (e.g. alliteration, assonance, metaphors, parallelism, repetitions, rhymes, similes and metaphors) (van Dijk, 2011)	Male to female transsexuals are Michael Jackson to the transvestites Ali G (JBu2001) frilly, docile smilers who always wear make-up and never the trousers (JBu2001) gender bender (JBi 2004) [I]f you are unhappy with the constraints of your gender, don't challenge them. If you are tired of being stared at for snogging your same-sex partner in the street, have a sex change. (JBi 2004) I don't have a problem with men disposing of their genitals, but it does not make them

	women, in the same way that shoving a bit of vacuum hose down your 501s does not make you a man. (JBi 2004)
	very vociferous transsexual lobby and their grim groupies (JBu2013);
	bunch of bed-wetters in bad wigs (JBu2013);
	their bed-wetting 'cheerleaders' (JBu2014)
	their snivelling suck-ups (JBu2014)
	the very cross cross-dressing lobby and their grim groupies (JBu2014)
	they have something lopped off (JBu2015)
	their monstrous regiments of cyberfans (JBu2015)
	like divorce and drug-taking, transitioning is nothing more than something people do in the pursuit of happiness via extreme selfishness (JBu2015)
Frightening (i.e. threats, Garcia-Pastor 2008)	Trust me, you ain't seen nothing yet. You *really* won't like us when we're angry. (JBu2013)
Issuing commands and warnings	Gender benders, beware (JBi2004)
	Shims, shemales, whatever you're calling yourselves these days – *don't* threaten or bully we lowly natural-born women, I warn you. (JBu2013)
	Don't you dare tell me to check my privilege (JBu2014)
Belittling / diminishing /not recognizing the importance of and victims things, actions, values and opinions, experiences, identities and denying empathy (Garcia-Pastor, 2008; Spencer-Oatey 2008)	trannies, though, is that they are woefully conventional souls (typical Mail readers, in fact) who seem unable to exist alongside any sort of ambiguity (JBu2001)
	Transsexualism is, basically, just another, more drastic twist on the male menopause, which in turn is just another excuse for men to do as they please (JBu2001)
	Injury to her 'dignity' (JBi2004);
	five male to female transsexuals, only one of whom had disposed of his meat and two veg (JBi2004)

	to have their breasts sliced off and a penis made out of their beer bellies (JBi2004)
	sex change surgery is modern-day aversion therapy treatment for homosexuals. The highest number of sex change operations take place in Iran, where homosexuality is punishable by death. Sex change surgery, therefore, renders gays and lesbians "heterosexual". (JBi2007)
	women – real and imagined (JBu2013);
Denying in group-status (Garcia-Pastor 2008, van Dijk 2006)	a man in a dress (JBi2004);
	man wanting to get into nightclubs free on Ladies' Nights (JBi2004);
	But I for one do not wish to be lumped in with an ever-increasing list of folk defined by "odd" sexual habits or characteristics. (JBi2008)
Ridiculing group members and supporters	Think about a world inhabited just by transsexuals. It would look like the set of Grease. (JBi2004)
	a hybrid of Mother Teresa and Diana, Princess of Wales, created to lead us lesser mortals on the radiant way (JBu2015)

Of the 7 suggested impoliteness strategies for group bullying, the strategies *using hurtful group nouns*, *using hurtful rhetorical moves* and *belittling / diminishing /not recognizing the importance of and victims things, actions, values and opinions, experiences, identities and denying empathy* were used most frequently in data. The clear majority of *hurtful group nouns* appear in Julie Burchill's 2013 article. In this article she reuses the pejorative word "trannies" from her 2001 article, and seven terms that she has had not used in 2001 (e.g. shims, shemales, screaming mimis). Some of these expressions also form part of hurtful rhetorical moves, since the pejorative term is emphasized by the use of alliteration (e.g. very vociferous transsexual lobby) or rhyme and metaphors (e.g. bunch of dicks in chick's clothing).

In impoliteness research, the question of intentionality is often considered to be highly important, as listeners'/readers' perceptions about the severity of the impoliteness event may differ according to whether they think that the offense was deliberate or not (cf. Schauer 2009 on different perceptions based on the proficiency level of speakers).

Since Julie Burchill had been writing for major newspapers for several years by the time the 2013 article was published, and was aware of the controversies her and Julie Bindel's articles had caused in the past, it is very likely that she also would have been made aware of GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation, founded in 1985) and their media reference guides for appropriate terminology regarding LGBTIQ. The entry on trannies and shemales in the 2007 edition of the GLAAD media reference guide states that "[t]he criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to hate words for other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted" (p. 12), while the 2014 edition is even clearer stating that "[t]hese words dehumanize transgender people and should not be used in mainstream media" (p. 21). Thus, the use of these group nouns chosen in the latter two articles suggest that their employment was an intentional impoliteness attack on transgender individuals.

Similar to hurtful group nouns, the highest number and variety of *hurtful rhetorical moves* can be found in Julie Burchill's articles from 2013 and 2014. The stylistic features used are mainly alliteration (e.g. 'grim groupies', JBu2013, 2014), rhymes and metaphors ('bunch of bed wetters in bad wigs', JBu2013) and similes ('like an oven-ready porn star', JBu2013). What is particularly noticeable is the emphasis on bodily fluids (e.g. 'bed wetters in bad wigs'(JBu2013), 'bed wetting cheerleaders'(JBu2014), 'snivelling suck-ups'(JBu2014)) and the use of the word 'dick' in the expression 'bunch of dicks in chick's clothing' in the 2013 and 2014 articles. The latter term could be perceived to be particularly hurtful due to its two possible meanings here: a) a slang/taboo[3] word for a man's penis and b) 'a stupid or contemptible person' (Oxford English Dictionary 2010, p. 486).

The focus on and preoccupation with genitals is also evident in the category *belittling / diminishing /not recognizing the importance of and victims things, actions, values and opinions, experiences, identities and denying empathy*. The choice of expression here with regard to genitals and parts of the body indicating a person's sex are often rather violent, aggressive and lacking respect, e.g. 'had disposed of his meat and two veg' (JBi2004),' to have their breasts sliced off and a penis made out of their beer bellies'(JBi2004), 'after having one's

nuts taken off' (JBu2013). Similar to the use of hurtful group nouns and hurtful rhetoric moves, the use of these expressions should be classified as intentionally hurtful and impolite, as authors writing on these issues that are employed by major newspapers or magazine should be aware of relevant publications by transgender individuals, such as Julia Serano who wrote in 2007 "The media objectifies our bodies by sensationalizing sex reassignment surgery and openly discussing our 'man-made vaginas' without any of the discretion that normally accompanies discussions about genitals" (p. 15). Nadal (2013) notes that frequent and direct comments or questions regarding transgender individuals' genitals seems to be a form of aggression that "appears to be unique to transgender people" and classifies this verbal behaviour as "denial of bodily privacy" (p. 96). Based on his research of trans individuals' perceptions regarding denial of bodily privacy he argues that "being on display and susceptible to public commentary is invalidating, dehumanizing and belittling for transgender people" (2013, p. 97).

In contrast to the articles by Julie Burchill, Julie Bindel's 2007 and 2008 article may at first glance seem to be less overtly hurtful, but the content of her 2007 article and her refusal to accept that trans individuals have a right to their own experiences and decisions regarding their bodies by arguing that "sex change surgery is modern-day aversion therapy treatment for homosexuals" (JBi2007) shows that she is clearly not recognizing the experiences of trans individuals as valid.

In addition to the impoliteness features so far, Julie Burchill's articles also include *threats* and *warnings* in the articles, such as 'Shims, shemales, whatever you're calling yourselves these days – *don't* threaten or bully we lowly natural-born women, I warn you' (JBu2013, original emphasis) or 'Trust me, you ain't seen nothing yet. You *really* won't like us when we're angry' (JBu2013, original emphasis).

5.3 Perception
As mentioned above, the targeted group members that provided the perception data were transgender individuals who are members of the charity Scottish Transgender Alliance. The analysis of the perception data is based on pre-existing data that was made available for

everyone wishing to access the link to the videotaped responses. While analysing pre-existing data that has not been elicited for a study on verbal aggression has the advantage that it was not influenced by the researcher in any way and is available to interested individuals (i.e. can be accessed by everyone and is not only available to the researcher), there are also obvious disadvantages. First, no detailed background information on the participants is available that might have provided helpful additional insights (e.g. are members of the targeted group that are teenagers or in their early twenties more concerned about particular issues than older group members). Secondly, no structured data collection was possible. Thus, no quantitative analysis could be conducted. These disadvantages of using pre-existing data need to be acknowledged. However, given the often very sensitive nature of group based bullying events, any research involving group members needs to be conducted very carefully and sensitively, and this may mean that in some circumstances resorting to pre-existing data may be the best option for researchers that do not have the necessary number of contacts willing to participate in a perception study.

The responses provided by the members of the Scottish Transgender Alliance towards Julie Burchill's 2013 article tended to touch on a combination of four main issues: anger, hurt & helplessness towards the media, feelings of resignation, mental health concerns, and safety concerns. The following statements are examples of the evaluations made by the 14 contributors to the video. The numbers following the individuals correspond to the sequence in which they first appear in the video.

Anger, hurt & helplessness towards the media
'At first I was just incredibly angry. I didn't really know what to do with all that anger. I couldn't believe that something so overtly hateful, offensive had been published in a national newspaper. And how people [had] not taken it seriously, not understanding the impact, just makes it all worse.' (person 6)

'I felt very helpless, because it wasn't just that this article was so transphobic and abusive, it was that most of the time in the press that's what you see when you see stories about trans people.' (person 10)

'I am angry and hurt, and angry at her editors and at anybody who says 'oh, just get over it'. It's like look you don't have to deal with this on a day to day basis. You don't have people thinking you are a joke or a punchline or a target.' (person 13)

Feelings of resignation

'I spend everyday fighting so that people don't have to hear that kind of abuse or deal with that kind of crap. And it makes me feel what's the point if it's alright for you to turn round and think that you can just say that.' (person 9)

'It's just when you read words that have such fury in them and such hate. It just makes you feel: what is the point. I am never going to get through this.' (person 12)

Mental health concerns

'People read your words and they take it seriously and by doing so it creates this culture where transphobia is normalized and it's ok to beat us up and it's ok to call us names, and it's ok to rape, and murder and assault us. Those things are the things that play on our minds and affect our mental health and drive many of us to suicide.' (person 3)

'I've been really low. Lower than I have been for a long long time over the past few days just because of this. Those words and phrasings were used purposely to belittle our identities.' (person 6)

'I really worry that as a direct result of that article there are fewer trans people around and its not an exaggeration if you look at the results from the trans mental health study.' (person 5)

Safety concerns

'I was furious and upset and I worry for a lot of my friends who are maybe more fragile or more obvious and stand out in a crowd and it's putting them at risk of abuse. It's dangerous, as well as rude.' (person 2)

'Offended does not cover how I feel. I am terrified. Too terrified to show you my face. And I've done nothing wrong.' (person 1, hiding behind a sheet of paper)

'This last year I've heard a lot of the words that were used in that article except they were shouted at me on the street. And I spent quite a few months being afraid to leave my flat. I still live with that fear of not knowing when is it going to be a day that people shout at me or follow me around.' (person 11)

The statements by members of the transgender community tie in with previous research on the effect of aggression towards individuals belonging to vulnerable / minority groups (e.g. Trans Watch 2011; Nadal, 2013). Trans Media Watch reported that 67 % of the 250 respondents in their study on media perceptions by members of the trans community felt angry about the portrayal of trans individuals, while 51 % were unhappy and 20 % felt frightened. Nadal's review of studies on the relation between aggression and LGBT individuals' health showed that "it is clear that experiencing any type of discrimination has an impact on mental health" (2013, p. 33).

The reactions by the contributors to the video clearly show that the 2013 article by Julie Burchill was perceived as hurtful and impolite. Their reactions in addition to the 800 complaints posted after her 2013 appeared and the subsequent withdrawal of the article by the Observer lead to the conclusion that it was impossible for Julie Burchill not to know that her article had caused offence. Given that Julie Bindel's 2004 article had resulted in 200 letters to the editor at the time, it is also clear that Julie Burchill must have known that her 2013 article would cause offence when she was writing it. The fact that she then repeated some of the strategies used in the 2013 article in the 2014 one and added further pejorative expressions suggest that a) she was aware of how these expressions would be received and b) that she used them deliberately to hurt and offend transgender people.

What remains unclear is why media organisations such as the Guardian/Observer group would continue publishing and then acknowledging problems with articles (Mayes 2004) or apologizing for and withdrawing articles (Mulholland 2013; Pritchard, 2013; Sweney 2013) on

vulnerable groups such as transgender individuals over a period of nearly 10 years. While writers may decide to ignore GLAAD's media reference guides or the submission to the Leveson inquiry by Trans Media Watch, ignorance of and/or deliberate disregard for the aforementioned documents on the part of the editors must to give rise to questions regarding editorial competence and/or institutional bias (cf. also Nadal 2013 on systemic microagressions trans individuals may be faced with).

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have proposed a new two-step analysis for group-based cyberbullying that comprises a new framework and a perception study. The framework for the analysis of group-based bullying is mainly based on earlier (im)politeness and manipulation models (Garcia-Pastor 2008, Spencer-Oatey 2008, van Dijk 2006, 2011). I believe that a model that combines categories which show the various ways in which verbal aggression can be achieved, and categories that show the various ways in which readers may be manipulated into agreeing with impoliteness attacks or accepting them as partly warranted based on the reasons given for the attacks, is necessary to highlight instances of group based bullying and raise awareness of bullying campaigns executed by powerful individuals or groups, such as writers for major media corporations.

The analysis of the seven articles investigated in this paper has shown the variety of verbal aggression and manipulation strategies that were used by the authors to attack transgender individuals and to try and present their attacks as the defensive actions of powerless individuals that are being persecuted by a powerful transgender lobby.

To understand the impact of group-based bullying on members of the targeted group I believe it is important to also include their voices and evaluations in the analysis. The reactions by transgender individuals to Julie Burchill's article published in 2013 reveal how devastating the effects of linguistic attacks on vulnerable groups can be.

It is hoped that the two-step approach for the analysis of group-based bullying could be used as a tool to establish if bullying is taking place and if so, to also show the impact of bulling on targeted people, and may therefore be helpful for those who are interested in highlighting instances of group-based bullying and those who are in positions where they need to decide if certain manuscripts should be published or not.

Endnotes

1) Alternatively, data from members of the targeted group that is made available in other forms (e.g. on personal websites, blogs, etc. that are openly accessible, i.e. not behind a privacy wall or password protected) could be used.

2) A detailed timeline of events as recorded by Transmedia Action, an organisation is available here http://transmediaaction.com/2013/01/18/moore-burchill-and-the-web-a-timeline/ .

3) The word 'dick' as a synonym for a man's penis is classified as 'vulgar slang' in the 3rd edition of the Oxford English Dictionary published in 2010. The 2014 Collins English Dictionary of English now classifies this word as 'slang' and has added the following explanation for this change in classification '[this] sense of this word was formerly considered to be taboo and it was labelled as such in older editions of Collins English Dictionary. However, it has now become acceptable in speech, although some older or more conservative people may object to its use'.

Acknowledgements

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