

POLITENESS IN INCREASING DEGREES OF IMPOSITION:  
A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF POLITENESS  
IN POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS

by

Katherine Matsumoto-Gray

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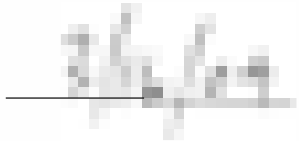
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Patricia Hanna", positioned above a horizontal line.




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Patricia Hanna



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "K. Matsumoto-Gray", positioned above a horizontal line.



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Randall Eggert", positioned above a horizontal line.

Randall Eggert

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Marianna Di Paolo  
Chair: Supervisory Committee

Approved for the Major Department



Edward Rubin  
Chair/Dean

Approved for the Graduate Council



David S. Chapman  
Dean of The Graduate School

## ABSTRACT

This study examines politeness as a face-threat mitigating strategy in increasingly imposing questions. Brown and Levinson (B&L) established politeness as socially determined by rank of imposition, social distance, and relative power. The hypothesis that politeness forms used by respondents will reflect the B&L social factors of rank of imposition, social distance, and relative power, is tested. B&L's model predicts that increasing rank of imposition will lead to increased politeness; decreased social distance will lead to decreased politeness; greater power of interviewee will lead to decreased politeness. I designed a series of political questions concerning the speaker's reaction to Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson's protest of President Bush; both the question and the answers would be viewed as face-threatening acts (FTAs) that increased in imposition as they progressed. Generally, as degree of imposition increased politeness increased. The other social factors examined resulted in a variety of surprising results, which can be attributed to the interactions in the complex factors that contribute to evaluation of relative investment of the speaker. The study suggests that politeness may be better understood as being directly related to the investment of the speaker, where investment is determined by a combination of social and situational factors.

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## TRANSCRIPTION KEY

- JB: ..... indicates speaker
- (.), (..) ..... indicates pauses, each period represents one second
- [laughter] .....square brackets indicate a non speech sound
- //JB: xxxx// ..... double slashes indicates a speech turn overlap
- thew- ..... hyphen indicates part of a word or false start



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

To the extent that participants aim to successfully communicate, politeness crucially exists in all interpersonal communications. Politeness<sup>1</sup> is a primarily linguistic phenomenon that interacts with social and cultural expectations or norms. The foremost work on politeness theory is Brown and Levinson (1987) (henceforth B&L), which is the most thorough, methodological outline of the phenomena contributing to politeness. It is thorough in that it aimed to describe politeness in a universal way considering exhaustively the choices and motivations for the Speaker (S) and Hearer (H). It is methodological in that it defined specific linguistic types and speech acts that contribute to the goal of a quantifiable theory of politeness. Their framework approaches politeness as primarily a function of face-threat mitigation and takes into account the social factors - rank of imposition, social distance, and power.

The study of politeness falls within the domain of many subdisciplines of the study of language: sociolinguistics, pragmatics, philosophy of language, discourse, and communication. This paper focuses on politeness from a sociolinguistic perspective. This means it is primarily concerned with the social variables that contribute to politeness and how groups of people use politeness in different ways. People utilize different

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the term politeness to denote linguistic politeness, the object of investigation in this study. This is opposed to socio-cultural politeness, which is a broader contextual behavior. The conflation of these two terms has led to some debate in the study of politeness, which I refer to in later sections.

strategies for communication depending on their membership in relevant social groups. Who we are cannot be separated from linguistic data; it is an important part of how we communicate and interact with certain linguistic phenomena. Politeness is one such linguistic phenomenon. In this view, politeness is a social strategy that is rationally calculated by conversational participants on an act by act basis, based on their conversational goals and relationships with the other participants.

This study is an attempt to experimentally verify B&L's proposed relationships between social phenomena and the use of linguistic politeness. Such verification is one area where B&L's model of politeness has been lacking. There are similar experimental trends in other areas of pragmatics (cf. Papafragou 2003). B&L (1987, p. 76) initially proposed the social variables of imposition, social distance, and power as empirically motivated. This study further examines the proposed relationships with a quantitative analysis of their effects.

This study looks at political conversations, specifically dealing with the increased polarization of American political parties during the 2000s. B&L's social factors are of primary importance for a complete understanding of politeness in such political discussions. A theory of the interactions between politeness and social groups will add a great deal to our understanding of a large range of political communications including, diplomacy, debates, policy, and discussions, for example. This study adds to the theory of politeness by experimentally examining B&L's social factors in order to better understand how different social groups communicate during the culturally taboo situation of political conversations.

## 2. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO POLITENESS

### 2.1 Brown and Levinson's Model

B&L, and others who have discussed politeness from related views, built on Goffman's concept of Face and Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP). The CP is a basic understanding between participants in a conversation which states, "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange" (Grice 1989, p. 26). The CP is further divided into four maxims:

- Maxim of Quality: Be truthful
- Maxim of Quantity: Be as informative, and not more than is necessary
- Maxim of Relation: Be relevant
- Maxim of Manner: Be clear

Grice (1989) claimed that cooperation is a vital part of every interaction. As participants, cooperation is necessary to achieve conversational goals without exhaustive explicitness. Grice describes the Cooperative Principle as "quasi-contractual" in that it is a basic agreement in conversation. Politeness, according to B&L, is one major reason for violation of these maxims. Others have proposed that politeness is another maxim or the result of a collection of maxims (Lakoff 2004; Leech 1973).

Face is one's public self image that is mutually constructed and maintained by S and H. Goffman (1967, p. 5) described it as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact." That is, face is essentially one's image or identity that one aims to develop.

This characterization includes both participants in the creation of S's face: S as the actor and H as the interpreter of those actions. H will also be invested in the role of contributing to S's face. Face is constantly negotiated between S and H; it is not static but "located in the events in the encounter" (Goffman 1967, p. 7). This mutually negotiated process requires cooperation on the part of the participants. Face is understood as a universal desire and in accordance with Goffman, participants in a conversation work to preserve each other's face. B&L echoed this point, "everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained" (1987, p. 61). This requires both participants to be aware of and protective of each other's face through cooperation.

This joint cooperation toward preservation of face is central to B&L's model of politeness. Face-Threatening Acts (FTA) are acts that by their nature go against the face-wants of H; they are acts that threaten H's social image. When face-threats must occur, participants are expected to take appropriate action to mitigate the threat. Goffman stated that in such a situation "he replies with careful ambiguity so that the other's face is preserved even if their welfare is not" (1967, p. 17). B&L (1987, p. 60) further defined Goffman's notion of *careful ambiguity* into specific strategies that one uses when faced with doing a Face-Threatening Act.

- (1) Don't do the FTA
- (2) Do the FTA
  - a. on record
    - i. without redressive action, baldly
    - ii. with redressive action
      1. positive politeness
      2. negative politeness
  - b. off record

On record FTAs, (2a), are required by the CP. For example, *open the window* is sufficiently short and clear to satisfy the CP as a bald, on record FTA.

However, politeness comes in conflict with the CP, in B&L's view. Politeness requires additional action to mitigate the FTA as in (ii), the *with redressive action* strategy. Any number of politeness strategies of two categories can be used to mitigate an FTA: positive politeness and negative politeness (B&L 1987, p. 70). Positive politeness appeals to the positive-face, the want for one's own wants to be recognized as desirable or approved (B&L 1987, p. 62). This includes being recognized as part of a group, being complimented, and giving gifts. Positive politeness strengthens H's positive face through a number of strategies. Possible strategies include acknowledging similar values, agreeing with H's opinions, complimenting, and sympathizing with H. For example, one may ask for the window to be opened but do so with positive politeness: *you're a good friend, so could you open the window.*

Negative politeness appeals to the negative-face, the desire not to have one's freedoms imposed upon. Negative face is associated with one's individuality and freedom. Negative politeness strategies include giving options to H, apologizing for imposing, and not assuming H's position. The same illocutionary force of asking for the window to be opened can be accomplished with negative politeness, for example, *I'm awfully sorry to bother you, but could you open the window.*

The same request can be made entirely off record, which affords the speaker total deniability in committing the FTA. For example, *It's hot in here* spoken to the person nearest to the window is, again, the same illocutionary request. The off record strategy is entirely indirect.

B&L (1987, p. 4) held that "politeness is socially controlled." In other words, it is a factor of the participants and the context of a conversation. There are three social

factors that contribute to politeness: (i) the ranking of the imposition involved in doing the Face-Threatening Act (R), (ii) the social distance between H and S (D), and (iii) the relative power of H over S (P) (B&L 1987, pp. 74-76). Rank of imposition is culturally determined by the particular norms and sensitivities of a culture. Social distance is a measure of the social similarity and familiarity between participants. This factor is also socially determined by the particular structure of a society, i.e., a strict caste system or family structure. Relative power is also socially determined by the ability of one participant to impose their will over the other. Factors contributing to power can be institutional, such as employer – employee or larger social traditions, such as gender.

## **2.2 Criticism of B&L's Model**

B&L's model has encountered some criticisms as it has been subjected to empirical testing and philosophical scrutiny. These criticisms can be grouped into three main categories: (a) Failure to account for cultural variation; (b) quantifiability of politeness versus a broader social conception; and (c) problems with their characterization of underlying principles, such as the conception of Face and the social variables. Each of these lines of argument has a place in expanding and specifying our understanding of politeness but none of them is fatal to B&L's basic arguments. In this section I outline the debates surrounding these criticisms to B&L and their implications for this study.

### **2.2.1 Failure to Account for Cultural Variation**

One of the primary criticisms of B&L has been that their model failed to account for cross-cultural variation in spite of their claim to be providing a universal account of

politeness in their analysis. Although most of the examples in B&L are English, they also employed extensive examples from Tamil and Tzeltal, as well as other languages and cultures. However, it has been argued that the model fails to account for non-Western cultures, specifically Asian cultures. Central to this attack is the claim that the notion of face in B&L's model is reflective of a highly individualistic culture (Wierzbicka 1991). Mao (1994) concluded that the Chinese conception of face differs significantly from B&L's notion. Mao (1994) and Matsumoto (1988) argued that in Japanese culture the distinction between positive and negative face with equal weight does not hold. In Eastern cultures, the social or group self is more highly valued than the individual so equal weighting of negative and positive face is not appropriate.

Leech (2007) considered these proposed difficulties for a cross-cultural theory of politeness. He discussed some typical examples of Eastern and Western politeness and concludes that there is no concrete divide between the factors that drive politeness in Eastern cultures versus Western ones. The same constraints determine the politeness necessary in an utterance. Leech proposed one super constraint, the Grand Strategy of Politeness (GSP) (Leech 2007, p. 181). "In order to be polite, S expresses or implies meanings which associate a high value with what pertains to O (O = other person(s), mainly the addressee or associates a low value with what pertains to S (S = self, speaker)."

The GSP consists of constraints including generosity/tact, approbation/modesty, obligation, opinion, and feeling. These are largely comparable to B&L's positive and negative politeness strategies. Leech proposed that these variables are manipulated



differently by varying cultures to reflect the particular concepts of face and cultural norms of a society.

B&L similarly provided for cultural variation in the relative importance of contributing factors to politeness and in evaluation of the severity of FTAs. They claimed that in terms of cultural differences, "we consider that our framework provides a primary descriptive format within which, or in contrast to which, such differences can be described" (1987, p. 15). Future work on specific cultural variation in politeness should add to, not detract from, B&L's model as long as the general factors at play are consistent with what they proposed, i.e., positive and negative face, imposition, social distance, and power. Such cultural variation can be described by using the tools and framework set out originally by B&L. Leech's (2007) work accounted for some of the phenomena that have been reported as problematic for a universal account. Further work on the systems of politeness in specific cultures will lead to a better understanding of the range of cultural variation in politeness. Such studies will refine B&L's model as it applies to cultural variation.

This topic will undoubtedly continue to be a disputed question in politeness research and it will become clearer as more work is done. Although cultural variation may prove to be a valid criticism of B&L as research in politeness continues, it is not relevant for this study since it focuses on one cultural group, Northern Utahns, which subscribes to the Western notions of face and high individuality. So, the criticisms of Mao, Matsumoto, and others do not apply to this group. The focus of this study on one cultural group will test B&L's model for this one group. The question of its universality or within culture reliability will be partially addressed by the results of this study.

### 2.2.2 Politeness Cannot Be Quantified

Another productive line of criticism of B&L's model is the claim of post-modernists that politeness cannot be quantified and should not be measured as the sum of particular linguistic tokens. This claim is misguided in that the opposing sides of this argument refer to largely different behaviors when using the term politeness, that is, they do not distinguish between linguistic and nonlinguistic politeness. Fraser (1990, p. 234) pointed out that there is rarely a distinction drawn between the two, stemming from a failure to define politeness in the literature. The nonlinguistic postmodernists (Locher & Watts 2005; Meier 1995; Watts 2003) argue for politeness as appropriateness. Watts (2003) set the aim of his description as the folk interpretation of politeness and claims that it is the "only valid means of developing a social theory of politeness" (2003, p. 9). In their view, gauging appropriateness is highly dependent on a particular situation and therefore should be examined only in the entire context.

The linguistic politeness camp (B&L; Leech 1983; 2007) acknowledges the existence of a more contextual social politeness, but focuses on linguistic politeness as their object of study and concludes that quantitative studies based on their model should be possible. In fact, successful quantitative studies of politeness are a test of the model (Terkourafi 2004; Usami 2002). Surely, most sentence meanings can be better understood by taking into account the entire context of the utterance. However, just as well accepted is the notion that some level of abstraction is necessary for the purposes of the theory-driven study of language. In the goal of the study of language, quantifiable theories are desired. We often grant that some meaning or contextual features of language are lost in the abstraction of the token for the purposes of study. Whether or not

the linguistic politeness abstracted from folk politeness by B&L is a valid object of study is an empirical question; one that this study will explore. Studies where the basic starting model of B&L is assumed and in which systematic, replicable results are achieved suggest that linguistic politeness is quantifiable. This study follows the approach of the linguistic politeness camp and assumes that for the scientific study of politeness, abstraction and theoretical constructs are necessary and desirable.

### 2.2.3 Terminology and Definitions

There have been many attempts to clarify the different forces at play in B&L's concept of preserving face. Overall, there is a consensus that there are some relevant correlates to positive and negative politeness. Spencer-Oatey (2005) posited the *association principle* and the *equity principle* which are largely synonymous to positive and negative face. Others have suggested *ideal social identity* and *ideal individual autonomy*; *involvement face* and *independent face* (Mao 1994; Scollon & Scollon 1995). These notions focus on different aspects of a person's want for social connections and his or her need for independence. At most these are different conceptions of face that describe the same or similar concepts. This is symptomatic of a general tendency in politeness research to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Instead of creating new terminology to describe positive and negative face, specification of and modification to B&L's characterizations of positive and negative face should be adequate to describe the forces that are at play. The slight variations between the concepts may be indicative of further refinement of these terms, but overall there are clearly two contributing speaker wants – one that appeals to the sense of association and group and another that appeals to individuality. Few studies have focused at the edges of B&L's model, attempting to

further define the particular notions they proposed. However, such investigations into the refining the specifics of B&L should be the primary area of research as opposed to *ab initio* approaches (cf. Chilton 1990).

However, there is a terminological criticism that may prove to be relevant. Meier (1995) and Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) suggested that positive and negative face overlap and work together. They are both at play but there is no clear line delimiting the two. B&L acknowledged this possibility but its implications for the study of positive and negative politeness will not be addressed here.

A more general criticism of B&L's model has been against their emphasis on face as the primary motivator for politeness (Fraser 1990; Leech 2007; Locher & Watts 2005). Face-threat mitigating, intuitively, is not the entire purpose of politeness. Locher and Watts (2005) argued that B&L's theory is, in fact, a theory of facework and not of politeness. They situated B&L's model in a larger theory of relational work, which is composed of facework, politeness, and politic behavior. Leech (2007) was not as critical of B&L's theory of face-threat mitigation. However, he pointed out that the FTA based model has led to many attacks on B&L, those who argued that B&L do not account for Eastern versus Western cultural norms.

Another problem that some have raised is the model's lack of analysis and the simplicity of the social factors which B&L claimed, contribute to politeness (Fraser 1990; Kasper 1990). As mentioned above, B&L intentionally allowed for variation in these factors to allow for a universal theory of politeness. The culturally determined relevance of each social factor is shared by participants in this study. The specific valuations of R,

D, and P are of central importance in the sociolinguistic analysis as discussed in detail below, in section 3.1.

### 3. THE CURRENT STUDY

This study builds on B&L's model and explores the social factors which contribute to politeness. Politeness for the purposes of this study is *linguistic politeness*, that is the linguistic tokens described by B&L which mark an FTA mitigation. This is in contrast to a folk understanding of politeness discussed above.

#### 3.1 The Social Factors

B&L (1987, p. 74) stated that the factors contributing to politeness rank of imposition of the FTA, social distance between the participants, and relative power of the participants, are expected to have the following relationships, summarized in Figure 1:

- In high imposition situations, the number of politeness forms is expected to be high.
- In low social distance relationships, politeness should be low.
- If the power of the speaker is higher than the hearer, the politeness forms used are expected to be lower.

In their introduction to the revised edition, B&L (1987, pp. 34-35) discussed the relationships between the social factors and cultural differences. They left the specific effects of the social factors variable to reflect differences in specific cultures. They made little effort to elaborate on the specific elements that contribute to each of the factors because they wanted to be clear that every culture will evaluate them differently. In brief, rank of imposition (R) is ranked according to the cost of the FTA. B&L claimed that this cost is calculated based on the expenditure of goods and/or services that the FTA

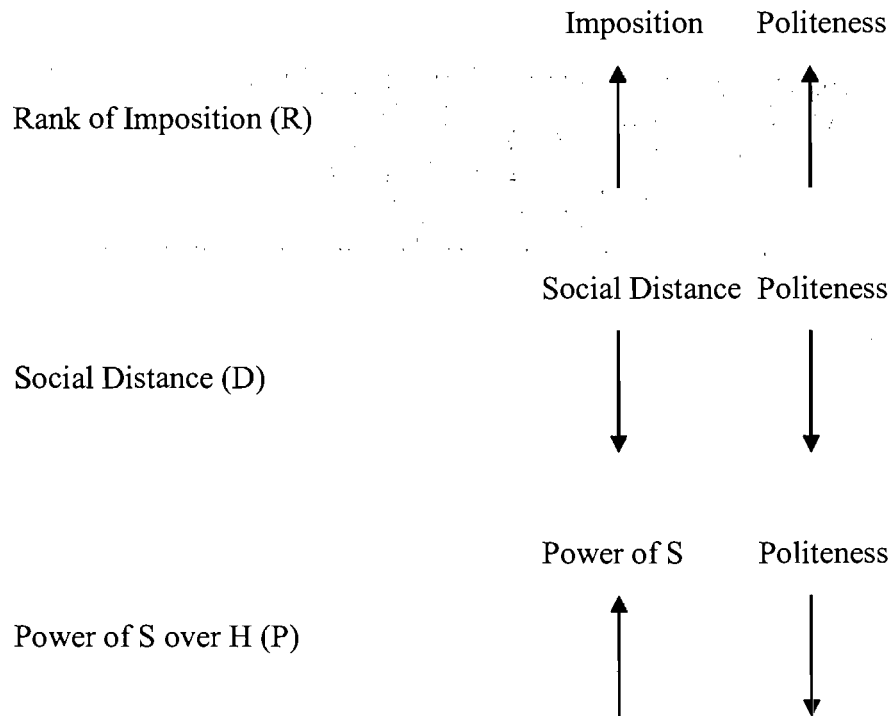


Figure 1: Three contributing factors to politeness

requires of the hearer. Social distance (D) is a function of similarity or differences between the participants often determined by the frequency with which they interact. Power (P) can be institutional, as in the relationship between employee and boss, or individually determined within a specific relationship. Generally, it is the degree to which one can impose things upon the other. Because this study focuses on a consistent cultural group, the culturally determined values for R, D, and P can be more specifically identified.

### 3.1.1 Rank of Imposition

Rank of imposition is the degree of threat associated with a particular FTA in the relevant culture. B&L gave examples of intrinsic FTAs that show S's lack of care about H's positive face. Included in those FTAs are, "mention (of) taboo topics, including those

that are inappropriate to the context,” and “raising of dangerously emotional or divisive topics, e.g., politics, race, religion, women’s liberation” (B&L 1987, p. 67). Politics has a variable role in American society. On one hand, it is a common topic of debate on television and in some individual’s private conversations. On the other hand, it is colloquially seen as inappropriate in formal situations with unfamiliar people, especially at the workplace or in an interview setting. Common knowledge in the United States is that two people who disagree about a political issue should not discuss it in a public or institutional setting, unless it is specified in the domain of the discussion. The experimental questions for this study deal with local politics. So, I will first discuss the political situation in Utah at the time of the study. Then, I will discuss the questions specifically.

Politeness and politics are constantly interacting. A handful of previous studies have looked at politeness in political discourse from a B&L perspective (Chilton 1990; Chilton & Schaffer 1997; Pastor 2001). They found a number of B&L politeness strategies at play. However, these studies primarily focused on politicians’ speech, not on how average Americans use politeness in political discussions. For politicians, although politeness is necessary, they are not experiencing the taboo topic FTA discussed above because, for them, politics is a necessary topic of conversation.

In stating a political opinion that would be viewed as controversial by H, S is not cooperating with protecting the positive face of H. For this study, the questions elicit answers that are viewed as negative FTAs that increased in imposition as they progress. B&L (1987, p. 77) defined imposition as, “a culturally and situationally defined ranking



of impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or approval (his negative- and positive-face wants)."

Questions that deal with politics would be seen as taboo in the context of a sociolinguistic interview. It is culturally imposing as it is viewed as a taboo topic generally and situationally imposing because it is even more taboo in a formal interview situation. The political topic that this study's questions referred to was expected to be especially divisive for the participants. During the time the interviews were conducted, there was a divide among Utahns on the support of Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson and President George W. Bush. The greater issue at play was the divide between conservatives and liberals in the latter years of President Bush's second term. Supporters of President Bush were defenders of the War on Terror and other hotly debated measures to promote American safety. Mayor Anderson, at the time, was an outspoken opponent of President Bush's war-related policies. Anderson, a Democrat, organized and led the largest antiwar demonstration in the center of downtown Salt Lake City when President Bush arrived to speak to a convention of the American Legion (Burr & May 2006). He also called for the president's impeachment and referred to his administration as war criminals (Johnson 2007). These two opposing letters to the editor from a local newspaper at the time summarize the opposing sides' arguments.

It's astounding to me to see how Utahns welcome President Bush, the worst president in this country's history, like he was some kind of rock star. It speaks volumes about what Mayor Rocky Anderson calls the "Culture of Obedience." At least some in this state, like the mayor and the protesters on Wednesday, have recognized that not only is this man incompetent, he is dangerous and completely insensitive to what is really going on in this country and the world. (Webb 2006)

I was so certain that I had seen the worst of Mayor Rocky Anderson's arrogance, rudeness and just plain blatant display of moronic behavior, but

this last one tops all so far. His latest little charade of urging residents to come out and protest President Bush only reinforces what another reader pointed out. There are no lengths that Salt Lake's dim-witted mayor won't stoop to in order to keep his name in print. (Smith 2005)

Salt Lake City is a Democratic area in a largely Republican state. Approximately 60% of Salt Lake City residents are Democrats in a state that voted 71% for President Bush in 2004 (Dobner 2005). The following letters to the editor of a local newspaper speak directly to the opposition between these two groups.

Salt Lake City voters truly deserve Rocky Anderson after voting him into office. The rest of the state doesn't know if we should laugh or cry. (Kuykendall 2006)

We (supporters) are not embarrassed of Rocky Anderson. The only thing we are embarrassed about is our neighbors still blindly follow President Bush and his policies despite overwhelming evidence supporting his fatuousness. (Clark 2006)

Opinions were very strong on both sides. Opinion polls of the time show that 33% of Salt Lake City residents *strongly* opposed Anderson's antiwar actions and 45% *strongly* supported it (Smeath 2007). Meanwhile, in 2006, the state had the highest approval rating in the country of President Bush (Bernick 2006). Many believed that Anderson was betraying his public post by speaking out so publicly against the president. Others were proud of their democratic mayor for speaking his mind.

This study's research questions Q1-Q4 would have been viewed as imposing because most Northern Utahns would have been aware of this clear divide in opinion and cautious about entering into this divisive topic.

Q1. Do you participate in local politics?

Q2. (a). Do you know anything about Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson?  
 {if no;} He's been the mayor of Salt Lake for six years. He's a really outspoken Democrat.

(b). What do you think about him?

Q3. What was your reaction to his protest of President Bush?

{If the interviewee is not familiar with this incident:} Do you remember when President Bush visited Salt Lake a few months ago? Mayor Anderson led the protest of his visit. He called Bush a liar.

Q4. Do you think Mayor Anderson's actions should be protected by the First Amendment guaranteeing free speech?

The questions were designed to test B&L's social factor rank of imposition (R) by increasing in imposition as they progressed. The design was such that each question was more pointed and more specifically referred to the controversial events described above. That is, Q1 is generally about a taboo subject but does not ask for a potentially divisive opinion. Q2 is more pointed; it is the first mention of Anderson, a key player in the divisive issue. Stating a positive or negative opinion about Anderson could be viewed as equivalent to taking a stance on the protest issue. However, Q2 is not as direct as Q3 is in asking specifically about the issue. This is the first explicit mention of the protest. Q4 is even more pointed at a specific opinion about Anderson's actions.

### **3.1.2 Social Distance**

B&L described social distance (D) in terms of similarity and frequency of exchange of goods or services. This is a reciprocal social measure, where the two participants should be mutually aware of their social distance. B&L claimed a direct relationship between D and politeness. The more distance between the two speakers, the more polite one is expected to be. Leech (2007, p. 189) supported their hypothesis, saying that, "when horizontal distance is reduced (e.g., in communication with familiars or intimates) the need for politeness is also reduced – until we move into the zone of nonpoliteness or impoliteness."

This understanding of the relationship between D and politeness implies that a high social distance adds to the FTA. B&L discussed the example of asking a stranger or a friend for the time.

- (3) Excuse me, would you by any chance have the time?
- (4) Got the time, mate?

In (3) and (4), (3) is seen as the more polite question where B&L said their intuitions are that (3) would be used when D is high and (4) when D is low.

However, Spencer-Oatey (2005) gave a more nuanced picture of the effect of D on politeness. She discussed politeness in terms of interactional goals and rapport management, where a speaker can have a number of goals in an interaction based on how she intends to affect the long-term rapport level between herself and the hearer. Spencer-Oatey (2005, p. 96) maintained that a speaker may have a number of rapport orientations in a relationship

... they can hold a rapport-enhancement orientation (a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors), rapport-maintenance orientation (a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations), rapport-neglect orientation (a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations, perhaps because of a focus on self), or rapport-challenge orientation (a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations.)

The expected politeness is highest in rapport-enhancement and decreases to rapport-challenge orientation as the least polite. This view suggests that the speakers' attitudes toward D will affect their politeness and it cannot be understood as a binary relationship. B&L, in their forward, discuss some further work on evaluation of the D variable which suggests that *liking* is an important factor as part of D (Baxter 1984; Slugoski 1985). Liking is similar to Spencer-Oatey's concept of rapport orientation.

In considering the relationship between rapport management and social distance, it is not clear that there is a direct correlation, but some plausible overlaps. For instance, it is not likely for S and H who have a high social distance, i.e., strangers, to have a rapport-maintenance orientation. They do not have an existing rapport and therefore there is little to maintain. Similarly, it is not likely for a high social distance dyad to have a rapport-challenging orientation. Aside from generally uncooperative Ss, an existing relationship is necessary to maintain this orientation. Spencer-Oatey (2000, p. 31) gave examples of possible motives for a rapport-challenging orientation: “to assert personal independence; to rebuff a romantic advance; to repay a previous offence.” Each of these motives requires an existing relationship not expected in high social distance dyads.

Low social distance dyads are expected to have a rapport-enhancement or maintenance orientation if the relationship is friendly and a rapport-neglect or challenge orientation if previous interactions have gone badly. However, the rapport-enhancement orientation may be less likely in extremely close relationships like family relationships. This is because the relationship is largely nonnegotiable in a family relationship. Family is the closest possible relationship from its inception.

### **3.1.3 Power**

B&L gave the relative power of the participants as the third determining factor of politeness. In B&L’s view, power (P) is culture specific and difficult to map to certain social factors; each relationship has many levels contributing to the perceived power differential between two people. P is a complex social variable that is composed of various socially and individually determined factors. I have selected some properties of P from Van Dijk (1989) that are useful in evaluating P for this study:

- A and B must both be aware of the power differential between them
- Relationships between groups, classes, or other social formations and members of those groups
- The ability for A to control B's actions, where A and B are individuals or groups
- Power needs a basis, e.g. wealth, position, privileges, or membership in a majority group
- Power may be domain specific, i.e., teacher – student in a school setting

B&L pointed out that evaluations of P will vary across cultures. Gender and age are social groups which are traditionally associated with power in the Western society.

Gender and age fit the above properties of power – participants will be aware of these differences; the traditional understanding of these social continua is one of power and privilege between the groups: men more powerful than women and elders more privileged than youth. There may also be domain specific power like that of interviewer to interviewee. This difference, however, is constant in a controlled experiment like the present study.

Women are generally understood to be less powerful than men in Western society. B&L (1987, p. 30) cited evidence that such a view of women and power is simplified. Status of other sorts, such as institutional status as the boss, will affect women's politeness. But they also acknowledged differences between high status men and high status women's speech, suggesting that gender is a source of variation.

Lakoff (2004) agreed that women are generally more polite. She discussed women's language as powerless. She listed a number of attributes of women's language, including the politeness tokens hedges and tag questions. Importantly, Lakoff discussed *women's talk* from the perspective that such stereotypes are based on outdated, social expectations and not on some innate tendencies. Nonetheless, women use more polite language and men are expected to use more polite language around women.

Mills (2003) argued against women as the more polite gender, claiming that such associations are untested assumptions based on stereotypes. She argued that greater politeness among women does not exist but is assumed to exist by members of a community with such stereotypes.

Gender can also be examined by looking at the gender dyads of a conversation, i.e. men speaking to men, women to men, etc. In this view, gender is seen as an interaction between S and H. This may be a better representation of power as it looks at the difference between S and H. Brown (1998) discussed the effect of gender dyads on politeness forms in Tenejapa, a Mayan area in Mexico. She looked at positive and negative politeness particles. The women were found to be more polite than men, overall. There was no total politeness difference between women's speech towards women versus men. However, women used more negative politeness tokens when speaking to women and more positive politeness when speaking to men. Men were more polite in the cross-gender dyads than within their gender. Brown (1998) supported B&L's earlier claim that women are more polite and suggests that there may be important differences in how the gender of H affects this trend.

Some research has focused on use of specific politeness tokens in same-gender and cross-gender dyads. Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann, and Gibson (1988) looked at linguistic tokens traditionally understood to be 'male traits' and 'female traits'. They found that in same-gender dyads males displayed a greater number of 'male traits' and females displayed a greater number of 'female traits' than they did in cross-gender dyads, e.g., if politeness is a female trait, as suggested by Lakoff and B&L, females would be more polite in same-gender dyads. This hypothesis is supported by Martin and Craig

(1983) who examined a number of linguistic tokens by gender dyads. They found that women and men used more hedges and false starts when speaking someone of their same sex than in cross-gender dyads. Hedges and false starts are often judged as politeness tokens suggesting that same-gender dyads are more polite. However, Dixon and Foster (1997) found no differences between gender dyads in the use of the hedges *sort of* and *you know*, suggesting that no politeness difference exists.

The tendency for same-gender dyads to enhance gender associated traits is discussed by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999; 2003) as an instance of community of practice. Community of practice is a group corresponding to social order, in which members' roles and behaviors determine their place within that group and across groups. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet view gender groups as a particular type of community of practice and the specific types of communication within a same-gender group are gender practice. Gender practices reinforce gender associated behavior to define group identity.

Age is less commonly discussed in the literature as a contributor to power and politeness. Axia and Baroni (1985) studied the acquisition of politeness forms in children. They showed that children developed appropriate politeness usage by around age nine. Children, at an early age, recognized age-appropriate politeness. When asked to match utterances with adult or child speakers, nine year olds consistently judged less polite utterances to be adult speakers talking to a child. This showed that children were connecting the notions of politeness, power, and age. Some even made explicit references to power. For example, when one child was asked why he responded that a child must have uttered the impolite command, he replied, *because you can't ask parents*,



*because parents are grown-ups, and you must be respectful* (Axia & Baroni 1985, p. 925).

In an intuitive understanding of power, younger people are less powerful and thus should be more polite. This view is supported by McMann, Dailey, Giles and Ota (2005). They conducted a self-reporting study with three age groups: young, middle aged, and older. When asked how much respect or politeness one would show when communicating with older individuals, younger speakers responded that they would use the most polite language, followed by middle aged speakers, then the older age group. Similarly, Cao (2007) found that, in Chinese, older people received more respect in their address forms from younger speakers.<sup>2</sup>

However, there has been some evidence that does not support this trend. SturtzSreetharan (2006) found that young Japanese men used the fewest polite forms, followed by seniors, then by middle-aged men as the most polite. The study looked at Japanese men's usage of polite verbal forms. SturtzSreetharan (2006) reasoned that young and middle age men were the two extremes because these groups spend the most time in their age groups, reinforcing the age group practices in their community of practice, similar to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's gender practice reasoning. Young men reinforced the norm of impoliteness. Middle aged men reinforced high politeness because of workplace constraints and expectations.

Sankoff and Laberge (1978) suggested a plausible explanation for the middle age group's high participation in such social norms. This group's involvement in the

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<sup>2</sup> Cao (2007) examined use of honorifics as opposed to less grammaticalized forms of politeness. There is some desire to separate study of the two, since the rules for honorifics in some cultures are overt and highly structured. See Leech (2007) for some discussion.

workplace means that they are highly invested in the linguistic market. The linguistic market is described as,

How speakers' economic activity, taken in the widest sense requires or is necessarily associated with, competence in the legitimized language (or standard, elite, educated, etc. language). (Sankoff and Leberge 1978, p. 239)

The linguistic market is the workplace force which requires the middle age group to be more polite and use the more standard language.

### 3.1.4 Additive Calculation of Politeness

B&L claimed that these social factors R, D, and P, taken together, result in a cumulative calculation of the weightiness of an FTA and therefore the politeness necessary to mitigate it. They gave the formula for calculating weight of an FTA

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

Where  $W_x$  is the numerical value that measures the weightiness of the FTA  $x$ ,  $D(S,H)$  is the value that measures the social distance between S and H,  $P(H,S)$  is a measure of the power that H has over S, and  $R_x$  is a value that measures the degree to which the FTA  $x$  is rated an imposition in that culture. (1987, p. 76)

This equation was given in B&L with the knowledge that numerical values of these variables would vary across cultures and be context dependent. They also considered that the total effect of R, P, and D may not include all of the factors that contribute to weight of an FTA, but some underlying force for politeness as a whole is desired.

#### 4. HYPOTHESES

This study tests the proposed relationships of the three B&L social factors, R, P, and D on politeness forms used in increasingly imposing questions. This study experimentally tests the relationships outlined by B&L (1987, p. 74) between politeness and the social factors. Additionally, these factors will work together to influence an overall strategy for politeness. This hypothesis consists of four subhypotheses.

H1: As the R increases in the four questions, the number of politeness is expected to increase.

H2: In low D relationships, politeness should be low.

H3: If P(S) is greater than P(H), politeness is expected to be low.

- P(S) is expected to be high when the speaker is of male gender and older age group

H4: The interactions found between politeness and R, D, and P will be additive resulting in a total politeness strategy.

## 5. METHODS

### 5.1 Data Collection

The dependent variables are tested by first, testing politeness in a series of questions designed to be increasing in imposition and second, by examining social factors D and P which may contribute to the occurrence of polite forms. The questions examined in this study ask the interviewee to state a political opinion that is considered a taboo topic.

- Q1. Do you participate in local politics?
- Q2. Do you know about Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson?
- Q3. How did you feel about his protest of President Bush?
- Q4. Do you think his actions are protected under the First Amendment guaranteeing free speech?

The questions were designed to meet five primary requirements: (1) fit into the design of a linguistic interview (2) deal with Utahn speech, as the stated goal of the interview was the language of Utahns, (3) elicit a response that would be an FTA to the interviewer, (4) elicit an open-ended response and (5) be respectful of the subject's comfort during the interview. The questions follow design of a sociolinguistic interview (Labov 1984; Wofram & Fasold 1974). The sociolinguistic interview was used to reduce the effects of observation and closely approximate casual speech.

Questions Q1-Q4 are negative face-threats. The answers are also FTAs. In responding to the questions, the interviewee is committing an FTA to the negative face of the interviewer by imposing her opinion on the interviewer. Negative politeness in the

response serves to mitigate this threat. For this reason, I focused analysis on negative politeness forms in the responses to four questions. Each question increased in imposition, which is expected to correspond to increased politeness. I then examined the effects of the other social variables, social distance, gender, and age.

The data analyzed in this study were collected in the Introduction to Sociolinguistics classes of fall 2006 and fall 2007 at the University of Utah. Students received course credit for participating in the interview and were instructed on sociolinguistic interview techniques in the class. The students were naïve interviewers, this study being the first sociolinguistic interview for most of them. They were instructed specifically to ask this study's questions, Q1-Q4 as written and to maintain a conversational style with the interviewee. Because they were learning the interview style as part of the project, some interviewers were more natural at this task than others. This may have affected the results. In general, the register of the interview was between formal and every day conversation.

Students met with their subject for two separate interviews. The first interview consisted of background questions to elicit spontaneous speech and reading of a word list. The second interview was also designed to elicit spontaneous speech and to target specific linguistic variables. Q1-Q4 appeared in the middle of the second interview, usually about 15 to 20 minutes into the approximately hour long interview. At this point, the dyads had developed a rapport and the subjects were familiarized with the sociolinguistic interview format.

There were 28 dyads of one student interviewer and one native Utah speaker. The interviewees had lived in the same area of Utah for most of their lives. The subjects

were chosen to reflect three age groups: 18-25, 35-45 and over 60 years old. These age groups were structured with large gaps between each category to give the most distinct differences between the groups. There were 9 participants in group 1, age 18-25. Group 2 consisted of 10 participants age 35-45. Group 3 was 9 participants age 60 and older. Each subject was given a numerical code representing their age group. The speaker codes are in the form X.X, with the first digit representing age group 1-3 and the number after the decimal assigned numerically. For example, Speaker 1.1 is the first speaker in age group 1, 18-25 years old. Students chose a speaker code randomly and were responsible for finding a representative of that age group who also met the Utah residency requirement.

Some students chose a close friend or relative who was a Utah native. Others did not know anyone who fit the requirements and were introduced to a subject. For this study, each interviewer gave self-evaluations of the solidarity level between him/herself and the interviewee on a scale of 1 – 7, 7 being the closest solidarity. In the instructions a solidarity ranking of 1 was defined as, *we were strangers until the interview*. A solidarity ranking of 7 was: *we know each other extremely well*. These self-evaluations are probably reflective of numerous social variables that the interviewer believes to contribute to D. It is unclear what each individual based this rating on, but it is probably a reliable method for evaluating their shared understanding of D. Some relevant biographical information is given for each speaker in Appendix B.

Speakers who did not answer one of the four questions were excluded from the analysis. This usually occurred because the speakers anticipated the following question and answered it without being explicitly asked. The politeness in these responses could

not be included as responses to the question and compared with speakers who were explicitly asked the question because the same imposition of the FTA was never uttered. These speakers were not under the same imposing conditions as those who were asked all four questions. This excluded Speakers 2.2 and 3.7, who did not answer Q3 and Speakers 2.5, 2.10, 3.3, and 3.8, who did not answer Q4. This resulted in 20 speaker dyads, 9 males and 11 females. There were 8 participants in age group 1, 6 participants in age group 2, and 6 participants in age group 3. The social distance groups of high, middle, and low had 5, 6, and 9 participants, respectively. No speakers gave a solidarity rating of 1, indicating that there were no dyads of strangers in the subject pool.

Each interviewer provided a transcription of a portion of their interview. Two reviewers checked the transcriptions for a reliability check of the data. The reliability checks were done from the existing transcriptions with audio recordings, making any corrections and additions to the transcriptions. The two transcribers checked work against each others' transcriptions and discussed discrepancies.

Q1-Q4 were designed to increase in imposition, as discussed in section 3.1, by targeting a taboo topic for the participants. Because of the topicality of the questions, there are some potentially relevant differences between the 2 years the surveys took place. The political situation had changed somewhat between 2006 and 2007. Utah was still overwhelmingly supportive of President Bush, 61% approval compared to just 30% nationwide (Bernick 2007). Mayor Anderson was still an outspoken opponent of his (Smeath 2007). However, there were new political developments in the issue between fall of 2006 and fall of 2007. Mayor Anderson participated in a very public debate with conservative pundit Sean Hannity at the University of Utah on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007. This

further divided Utahns by bringing the issue to a more public, national stage. The 2007 interviews were conducted in the fall semester, just months after the debate.

Another difference was that Q1-Q4 were preceded by different questions in the two surveys. The interviewers were instructed to ask the survey questions in a natural order and explicitly told that the questions could be reordered to do so. In general though, the questions were asked in the following orders. In 2006, Q1-Q4 followed some relatively conversational questions about seeing the Olympics in Salt Lake City and the fall leaves changing color. In 2007, they followed the questions asking interviewees to list 10 bodies of water and 10 geographical features in Utah from North to South. This disparity could have effects on the politeness forms used in Q1-Q4 because of the different levels of FTAs in the previous line of questions. In the 2006 group, the subjects were engaged in an exchange that was an expected topic for a casual conversation. The 2007 group was challenged by the geographical questions in a test-like format. This request for information is a negative face-threat to H because it requires an answer. It is also a positive face-threat because it is unlikely that the participant will be able to answer confidently. In this situation the interviewee will be in a face saving position at the time Q1-Q4 are asked. This may have an effect on their politeness because it sets the frame for their expectations for the following questions.

## **5.2 Data Coding**

People have argued the politeness is difficult to quantitatively measure. This section gives specific examples to demonstrate of how this study's coding decisions were made. B&L listed a number of strategies that speakers utilize to mitigate face-threats. Since the answers to Q1-Q4 are anticipated to be negative face-threats, I based my



analysis of negative politeness forms on B&L's (1987, pp. 129-212) strategies for negative politeness. B&L gave ten possible strategies which correspond more or less to particular linguistic types, listed in Table 1.

Some of B&L's negative politeness strategies correspond to particular linguistic types. For example DON'T PRESUME/ASSUME is accomplished by QUESTION/HEDGE. This strategy-type correlation is a conventionalized instance of politeness. Such usages are analogous to short-circuited implicatures, which Morgan (1978) argued do not require a series of inference to arrive at the implicated meaning, but instead are used frequently enough to result in a shortcut to the conventional meaning.

Other of B&L's negative politeness strategies do not have a conventionalized usage. For example, DISSOCIATE S,H FROM THE PARTICULAR INFRINGEMENT has three possible linguistic manifestations: IMPERSONALIZE S AND H: AVOID THE PRONOUNS 'I' AND 'YOU', STATE THE FTA AS A GENERAL RULE, and NOMINALIZE. These types are clearly not conventionalized to correspond to specific linguistic tokens. Because of this, they are more difficult to quantify.

Table 1: Negative politeness strategies, adapted from B&L (1987)

<b>Negative Politeness Strategy</b>	<b>Linguistic Politeness Type</b>
Don't presume/assume	1. Question, hedge
Give H option not to do act	2. Be pessimistic
Minimize threat	3. Minimize the imposition
	4. Give deference
Communicate S's want to not impinge on H	5. Apologize
Be direct + Give H options	6. Be conventionally indirect
Dissociate S, H from the particular infringement	7. Impersonalize S and H: Avoid the pronouns 'I' and 'you'
	8. State the FTA as a general rule
	9. Nominalize
Redress other wants of H's, derivative from negative face	10. Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H

Using B&L's description of the 10 linguistic politeness types, I selected five of those types that have conventionalized linguistic correlates and omitted those that were nonconventional and therefore difficult to quantify. I will first discuss the conventionalized, discrete types which were counted in the politeness calculations for this study, 1-5. Then I will turn to discussion of types 6-10 and discuss why they were not easily quantifiable for the purposes of this study. The five easily quantifiable politeness types analyzed in this study and examples of each are given below.

1. QUESTION/HEDGE<sup>3</sup>: This type achieves the illocutionary goal of making minimal assumptions about H's wants (B&L 1987, p. 131). A hedge minimizes the degree of the claim. It is a negative politeness type because it protects against the obligation of H to bear the unmitigated claim. For this study, I included tokens such as *to a degree*, *sort of*, *kind of*, *in a way*, *seem to*, and so on as examples of hedges. For example, Speaker 2.4's response, *to a degree*, *I agreed with him*.<sup>4</sup> This example was coded as one politeness token.
2. BE PESSIMISTIC/CHALLENGE FELICITY CONDITIONS: Challenging of felicity conditions is partially under the heading of being pessimistic, but B&L also discussed it as a hedge and as conventionally indirect.<sup>5</sup> Felicity is the degree to which the claim is a valid speech act. For example, to fire someone for being late to work is only a felicitous utterance if the firer is the boss. In these data, I

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<sup>3</sup> B&L (1987, p. 146) pointed out that hedges are used for more reasons than just politeness. They cited the example of hedges in the Watergate transcripts (*New York Times* 1973, 1974) as nonpoliteness related hedges. It is safe to say that most of the negative politeness types 1-5 and others not analyzed here can be used for nonpoliteness related reasons. For example, Clark and Fox Tree (2002) gave a discourse pause marker motivation for the use of *um* and *uh*. However, in the context of this controlled study, it is probable that politeness is the primary factor motivating uses of these tokens.

<sup>4</sup> To indicate tokens that were coded as politeness tokens in examples throughout the paper, I have underlined politeness tokens in all examples.

<sup>5</sup> This overlap is not a problem for the analysis of this study because the particular strategy used is not as relevant as the use of any polite token.

analyzed *I (don't) think, I feel (like), and In my opinion* as challenges of felicity.

This type of negative politeness functions to give H the option of not agreeing with S's felicitous position on this topic. For example, *I think it was bad manners* was coded as one politeness token in Speaker 1.4's data.

3. MINIMIZE THE IMPOSITION (R): This type minimizes the threat of the FTA (B&L). By minimizing the imposition, S is intentionally manipulating the rank of imposition, R. The imposition in this case is the expression of an opinion on the taboo subject. For this study, I included utterances of *just, only, and a little* as instances of minimizing the imposition. For example, Speaker 2.5's response, *just, only, well, what I've heard* was coded as two politeness tokens for the two minimizing words. By using this type, she minimizes the imposition of her opinion.
4. GIVE DEFERENCE: Giving deference also appeals explicitly to the social factors; this type appeals to P. It gives H increased power over S because it humbles S. For this study, I counted any instance of acknowledgement of the opposing view as giving deference. For example, Speaker 3.3 said *they like that, an' I can see where they would*, referring to holders of the opposing view. This is counted as one politeness token. This type gives their view some credence and acts to mitigate 3.3's opinion by showing that she can understand that some see it differently. This act allows H to disagree without feeling pressure from S's opinion.
5. APOLOGIZE/SHOW RELUCTANCE: Explicit apologies are not expected in these data because the speakers are responding to a question. However, showing reluctance

is a type by which the speaker can indicate that they do not want to threaten H's negative face. B&L stated that "the deferential use of hesitation and bumbliness... is one way of showing this reluctance," (1987, p. 187). For this study, I counted pauses (of one second or more), false starts, *ya know*, and laughing as examples of such reluctance. For example, *it's, it's, it is perfectly appropriate* is coded as two politeness tokens (Speaker 1.1)

Now, I turn to discussion of politeness types 6-10, which were not calculated in this study. Coding for these types was judged to be highly problematic as there was no conventionalized linguistic form associated with each type. These types are also important in the overall calculation of politeness, but are outside of the scope of this study. This study's approach gives an estimation of linguistic politeness based on occurrence of conventionalized politeness types. The results do not give a complete analysis of all politeness, but conventionalized politeness taken to be part of an entire politeness strategy should give an accurate estimation of the factors involved in overall politeness.

Linguistic politeness types 6-10 were problematic for analysis for the following reasons: difficulty in reliable identification of nonconventionalized forms and required knowledge of speaker intentions. Examples (5) – (7) show examples of these difficulties.

(5) 2.2: He's not my favorite

(6) 1.4: I'm not a pro-war kind of a fellow

Example (5) is a conventionally indirect response in that it implies not only that Anderson is not the speaker's favorite, but is closer to being his least favorite. Example (6) is a similar structure, but does not contain the conventionally indirect meaning. This statement cannot be taken to mean that the speaker is *antiwar* analogously to the

implicature in (5). Although in some instances structures like (5) and (6) are conventional indirectness, such tokens would be difficult to reliably identify because more context is necessary to determine the implied meaning.

(7) 1.4: First off, don't get me wrong, I am not a pro-war kind of a fellow.  
 //MS: Uh-huh.// Alright. Not a war monger. // MS: Uh-huh. // Didn't want to go into Iraq, think we should come out. // MS: Uh-huh.// Actually I am pro-partition, if, if, if all truth be told.

Example (7) shows a show a possible instance of type 7, IMPERSONALIZE S AND H. This utterance was counted as two instances of type 4, GIVE DEFERENCE. However, 1.4 does not use the pronoun *I* in the three assertions which follow his initial use of 'I' in *I am not a pro-war kind of a fellow*. It is clear that he is attributing these claims to himself, but he uses no overt subject. However, knowledge of speaker intentions would be necessary to identify *avoidance* of pronouns as opposed to other nonpoliteness related absences of pronouns.

Similar problems existed in coding types 8-10. These examples show the rationale for not coding types 6-10. The specific types coded as politeness were limited to give a reliable judgment of politeness across many speakers. Admittedly, some types may be better analyzed in a qualitative approach. The scope of this study will not include such an analysis. I hope to return to these in later studies.

I tallied each instance of the politeness forms 1-5 listed above and separated responses into the four questions. In order to create comparable scores across speakers, the total occurrences of politeness tokens was normalized. This process reduces the possibility of confounds between talkativeness and politeness. Normalization was done by calculating proportion of polite tokens to total words uttered during the four questions for each speaker. For example, for Speaker 2.5, there were 21 tokens and 151 words

total. So by a simple calculation in (8), the normalized politeness score for Speaker 2.5 is 13.9.

$$(8) \text{ (polite tokens / total words uttered) } * 100 = \text{normalized politeness score}$$

$$(21 / 151) * 100 = 13.9$$

One undesirable side effect of normalization resulted. The effect of normalization is roughly the following. Each instance of a polite token, defined above in 1-5, was counted as one polite form. I then, counted the total amount of words uttered in the response. The normalized data show this percentage of polite forms to total words. The complication in this process is that some polite forms require many words to state while others are just one word, or zero words in the case of pauses. This could have possibly affected the outcome of the normalized results.

For example, the politeness types GIVE DEFERENCE and CHALLENGE FELICITY CONDITIONS require more than one word to use. For example, Speaker 2.6 uses the DEFERENCE type using 14 words in (9). This was counted as one politeness form

(9) he and many other people felt like it was their right of free speech

The opposite is true for the other politeness types. HEDGES, MINIMIZATION OF R, and SHOWING RELUCTANCE can be expressed in one or zero words, as in (10), Speaker 1.8's response to Q1.

(10) um, sometimes, not very much, I know, but (.) yeah

The underlined tokens were counted as one polite form each, two displays of reluctance, *um* and a one second pause, and one hedge, *not very much*. This is counted as three polite forms in nine words. So, the difference in politeness between these two utterances (9) and (10) is drastically different between the normalized and nonnormalized

calculations. (9) has one polite token, with a normalized score of 7.14. (10) has three polite tokens with a normalized score of 33.3. The normalization process results in sometimes skewed scores and it is not clear that it is a better way to judge politeness.

This complication resulted in some extreme outliers in the data. For example, Speaker 1.12's normalized politeness score for her Q1 response in (11) was 100.

(11) [sigh] not really

Because of this outlier, Speaker 1.12's data were not considered in the normalized results below. This points to a shortfall in the quantitative approach that I take in this paper. Assigning numerical scores to politeness can result in such counterintuitive evaluations, as seen in (11). (11) gets a score of 100 for normalized politeness but, qualitatively it does not seem extremely polite.

An additional drawback of normalization is that instead of a gross number of particular polite tokens, the normalized score results in a percentage of polite forms to total words. This causes a potential problem because the methodology used in this study does not claim to count all of the possibly polite tokens in an utterance. That is, the normalized score creates a situation in which the polite tokens and types that were not analyzed in this study may ultimately count against the politeness score because they are part of the total word count. Nonetheless, the normalization gets to a more directly comparable politeness score across speakers by controlling for relative talkativeness. For these reasons, I report both the nonnormalized and normalized scores for all variables below. More work needs to be done to determine which is a better approach to measuring politeness.

After the process of coding politeness tokens, I evaluated the data with respect to the power variables, age and gender and the social distance between the interviewer and interviewee. This study looks only at interviewee politeness and not at the ongoing, negotiable (im)polite interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Importantly, there are expected to be effects on politeness from the interviewer's politeness and speech patterns. I did not look at this factor in this study but, surely it would have some relevance.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, I compared the social groups to the politeness types 1-5, above. I looked for any trends in which groups preferred which types. This calculation was done for all variables: rank of imposition, age, gender, and social distance.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the following are examples of interviewers' utterances of the questions:

Q3 to 1.6: Right, OK, um, well what do you – then in that case, what was your reaction to his protest of President Bush last year?

Q3 to 1.10: um, did you know that he actually, when Bush visited Salt Lake City last year, Rocky Anderson led the protest against him and called him a liar?

Q1 to 2.10: Quick, probably a jarring change of subject, um (..) do you participate in local politics?



## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of each social factor, R, D, and P on politeness.

I, then, turn to an analysis of the additive effect of the three factors.

### 6.1 Rank of Imposition

As described above rank of imposition was manipulated within the interview questions which were designed to increase in imposition from Q1-Q4. Table 2 shows the average polite tokens used by all speakers, listed by question number. Table 3 gives the politeness forms normalized for talkativeness.

Both the average total and normalized measurements display the same pattern, an increase in politeness forms used from Q1-Q3 and an unexpected decrease in Q4. The increase is less drastic with normalization, but the trend is the same. The average number of politeness forms increased from 5.5 in Q1 to 8.4 in Q2. Then, increases in Q3 to 11.6 average tokens. Excluding Q4, the general increasing pattern supports the hypothesis that more politeness is used as rank of imposition increases. I return to discussion of Q4 below.

Table 2: Average politeness forms by question

Question #	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Politeness forms (N=21)	5.5	8.4	11.6	5.3

Table 3: Normalized politeness forms by question

Question #	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Politeness forms (N=20)	11.3	12.5	14.7	9.1

Q1-Q3 displayed the expected relationship with politeness, increasing as the questions and responses became more face-threatening. For example, Speaker 2.5 shows a typical increase in politeness as the questions progress in (12). 2.5 was ultimately not included in the quantitative analysis because she was not asked Q4. However, the increasing politeness trend associated with increase in imposition in Q1-Q3 is still apparent.

(12)

- a. JB: Um, okay. Let's see. Moving on a little bit, um, do you participate in
- b. local politics at all? Probably don't have //a lot of time for that. [laughter].//
- c. 2.5: //Not really, no.//
- d. JB: Um, okay, um, what do you know about, um, Salt Lake City Mayor,
- e. Rocky Anderson? [baby sounds]
- f. 2.5: Um, just only, well, what I've heard on [sniffs] mostly KUER, just interviews
- g. with him and his staff and (.) just, um, [dog scratching himself] only what
- h. I've heard in the news. Nothing personally about him. ///JB: mm-hm/// on my own.
- i. JB: Okay.
- j. 2.5: So.
- k. JB: Um, and what do you think about him? How do you feel about him?
- l. 2.5: Well, I think he's been sort of a flamboyant mayor for Salt Lake. And I'm
- m. sure he represents, um, views of, of many people in Salt Lake, but I don't
- n. necessarily agree with the stance that he's taken on many issues. [baby
- o. sounds] So.
- p. JB: Yeah (..) And, um, what was your reaction to, um, his protest when
- q. President Bush came? What did you think of that?
- r. 2.5: Well, I was, I was mixed because I feel like, you know, he has the right of
- s. any citizen to (.) you know, make his (.) his opinion known and, and he has,
- t. you know freedom to assemble and (.) and to do those things, but I felt like,
- u. the role that he has as an administrator and a leader in the city, that it wasn't
- v. (.) an appropriate (.) way for him to (.) conduct himself.

This example shows all of the politeness types examined in this study and reflects the overall pattern well. Speaker 2.5's response to Q1 in line (12c) is mitigated but direct with one hedge followed by a direct answer.

In her response to Q2 she mitigates the FTA with multiple types (underlined).

- MINIMIZING THE IMPOSITION:

(12)f: 2.5: *Um, just only, well, what I've heard on [sniffs] mostly KUER, just interviews*

- SHOW RELUCTANCE: PAUSE:  
(12)g: 2.5: *with him and his staff and (.) just, um, only*
- CHALLENGE OF FELICITY CONDITIONS  
(12)l: 2.5: *Well, I think he's been sort of a flamboyant mayor for Salt Lake*
- HEDGING:  
(12)l: 2.5: *Well, I think he's been sort of a flamboyant mayor for Salt Lake.*
- SHOW RELUCTANCE: FALSE START  
(12)m: 2.5: *sure he represents, um, views of, of many people in Salt Lake,*
- GIVE DEFERENCE  
(12)m-n: 2.5: *sure he represents, um, views of, of many people in Salt Lake, but I don't necessarily agree with the stance that he's taken on many issues.*

When answering Q3, lines (12)r-v, Speaker 2.5 uses 10 pauses and false starts, indicating that she is showing reluctance to answering the question. She uses less of a variety of types but more total. This may indicate that reluctance is the primary feeling she wishes to communicate in answering Q3.

Nonconventionalized politeness types 6-10 are also apparent in 2.5's answers.

For example, her response to Q3 in lines (12)r-v, is conventionally indirect, Type 6 in Table 1.

(12)

- r. 2.5: Well, I was, I was mixed because I feel like, you know, he has the right of  
 s. 2.5: any citizen to (.) you know, make his (.) his opinion known and, and he has,  
 t. 2.5: you know freedom to assemble and (.) and to do those things, but I felt like,  
 u. 2.5: the role that he has as an administrator and a leader in the city, that it wasn't  
 v. 2.5: (.) an appropriate (.) way for him to (.) conduct himself.

Specifically, in lines (12)u-v, she states that *it wasn't (.) an appropriate (.) way for him to (.) conduct himself*. This utterance is condemns Anderson's behavior more than the surface interpretation suggests. This is a conventionally indirect way of stating that Anderson's behavior was *inappropriate*, as opposed to *not appropriate*, where the implied *inappropriate* is a negative evaluation instead of the less drastic nonpositive evaluation that 2.5 actually utters. Clearly, politeness types 6-10 are factors in the data.

However, the scope of this study does not include any more formal analysis of their occurrence.

Increase in imposition, as clearly demonstrated in (12), is a large factor in politeness. Q1-Q3 ask culturally and situationally conditioned inappropriate questions. In answering the questions, speakers are performing an FTA to the hearer's negative face. Although the speaker feels an obligation to answer, Speaker 2.5 and others use mitigating linguistic forms to communicate their desire to be polite in this situation and not threaten the interviewer's negative face with their answers. Now I return to the problematic Q4.

The unexpected decrease of politeness in Q4 to just 5.3 average tokens, 9.1 normalized, is possibly an artifact of the question design. A possible reason for the low politeness score in Q4 could be that this question was not as open ended as the previous question. Q4 is a yes/no question. However, Q1 was also a yes/no question and variation in talkativeness in a yes/no question should have been captured by the normalization. As Tables 2 and 3 show, the low politeness score for Q4 is not mitigated by normalization. Q4 still gets a relatively low score with the normalization.

Another possibility is that Q4 was not as imposing as it was intended to be. As discussed above, Q1-Q4 were designed to be more and more pointed toward the specific issue of the conflict between Anderson and Bush. Q4, restated here, may have not fit the pattern of increasing imposition.

Q4: Do you believe Mayor Anderson's actions should be protected by the First Amendment guaranteeing free speech?

It is possible that this question may not be as imposing as I designed it to be because the question refers to the Bill of Rights, which is widely accepted. My initial judgment of Q4 as highly imposing was motivated by what I viewed as an ongoing topic

of debate at the time of the data collection. This debate centered on the issue of whether public officials maintained the same rights as private citizens or whether their rights are somehow suspended when they are representing public office. In fact, some participants answered that his actions should not be protected by the First Amendment. For example, the following excerpt from Speaker 2.2 gives this response.

(13) TT: Uh, do you think that his actions are protected by the First Amendment guaranteeing free speech?

2.2: No, not when he's an, become an elected official.

However this response was in the minority. 2.2 and 1.12 (discussed below) were the only speakers who gave this answer referencing his public position's affect on his rights. Most speakers (17/20 in the quantitative analysis)<sup>7</sup> responded clearly in the affirmative to Q4. For example,

(14) 2.9: I believe they are. (...) I believe thew- set by the forefathers and those are rights

(15) 1.1: Yeah, I think that should all be protected

Speaker 1.12's response to Q4 gives an interesting insight to the rank of imposition at play in that question. 1.12 used the highest number of polite forms in Q4 out of all of the participants, 23 total tokens. This high degree of politeness appears to be reflective of the original intent of Q4's imposition. The interviewer, in this case, pushed 1.12 to explain her views on the public officials and free speech.

(16)

- a. JC: (.) hmm (.) kay (.) Well, uh do you believe that the that mayor Anderson's
- b. action, well I guess you've already answered that. [laughs] uh well, no actually
- c. um do you believe that the the An- Rocky Anderson's actions are protected by the

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<sup>7</sup> Speaker 2.2 was not included in the quantitative analysis because she did not answer Q3. 1.12 was included in the totals but not the normalized scores because her response to Q1 was an outlier once normalized. Speakers 1.10, 2.6, and 3.10 were the 3 speakers not evaluated as giving clear affirmative answers to Q4. Here, I give you excerpt of their answers to show how they responded neither affirmative nor negative to the question asked in Q4. 1.10 said, "I don't really have opinions on these type of things." 2.6 said, "I think people can abuse the freedoms that we have, um, to our detriment." 3.10 said, "I don't care whether they are or not he is not a nice man to, uh, to be so disrespectful to somebody else in office."

- d. first amendment guaranteeing freedom of speech?
- e. 1.12: (.) yes
- f. JC: so you think that //1.12: I don't think// he's protected by the freedom of
- g. speech but you don't agree with his actions
- h. 1.12: correct
- i. JC: (..) that's interesting
- j. 1.12: I don't agree with what he did but (.) ya know we do have freedom of
- k. speech everybody has the right to say what they want. I just don't think that he (.)
- l. should've done it
- m. JC: but if we have that (.) do you think that (..) I don't know (.) um that there
- n. should be some dissent? (.) dissenting opinions? I I think (.) wh- what's your take
- o. on that
- p. 1.12: I don't know. I'm not very political
- q. JC: ya, but you have an opinion
- r. 1.12: [laughs] (.....) I think if you're a government official (.) to act so
- s. inappropriately (.) um then I think that that kind of, (.) I don't think that should be
- t. allowed. I really think that he acted inappropriately and I don't think that should
- u. be allowed. I think that he should have had some reprimand for it.
- v. JC: kay, but what I mean what constitute eh as what constitutes as inappropriate
- w. behavior. I mean if if something's like uh protected by like freedom of speech
- and that's in the constitution. It's the first amendment right, right? Then, um (...)
- x. how is that inappropriate
- y. 1.12: (.) [sigh] because he's a government official, I mean he's
- z. JC: so government officials should blindly follow
- aa. 1.12: [sigh] no
- bb. JC: //without question//
- cc. 1.12: //that's not what// I said Jerry. [laugh]
- dd. JC: //well I'm just, I'm just trying to, just trying to get//
- ee. 1.12: I don't know. //JC: I don't know/// I'm not very political and I'm not very
- ff. good at arguing my point. That's why I'm not in debate.
- gg. JC: oh okay, okay [both laugh]

Speaker 1.12 initially gives a short, direct answer (.) yes in line (16)e. Then the interviewer, JC, pushes her to reconcile this view with her earlier assertion that Anderson's actions were inappropriate. This exchange gets more to the taboo nature of this topic. Speaker 1.12 illustrates the view that different interpretations of the right to free speech apply to public officials and it is clear that she is doing a lot of work to mitigate the face-threat of this view. For example, lines (16)r-u contain 13 politeness tokens, underlined below.

(16)

- r. 1.12: [laughs] (.....) I think if you're a government official (.) to act so
- s. inappropriately (.) um then I think that that kind of, (.) I don't think that should be
- t. allowed. I really think that he acted inappropriately and I don't think that should
- u. be allowed. I think that he should have had some reprimand for it.

This interaction between JC and 1.12 shows the potential for Q4 to be viewed as imposing. But, JC's response to 1.12's initial response is the reason they discuss this topic in depth. Most interviewers simply did not follow up on this type of response. 1.12 showed a large increase in polite forms in her response to Q4, mitigating it to a much larger degree than the previous questions. Her total politeness scores are given in Table 4.

Contrary to 1.12's response, it is likely that Q4 was not viewed as imposing by most speakers. The reference to the Bill of Rights was abstract and it allowed the speakers to separate themselves and their own views from the issue and agree with the more general notion of free speech. Speaker 1.12 showed the expected relationship between Q4 and politeness. However, this was not the typical response. Q1-Q3 were reliably increasing in politeness across speakers. This supports the hypothesis H1, restated here:

H1: As the R increases in the four questions, the number of politeness is expected to increase.

Those questions which were seen as increasing in R resulted in increased politeness. The issue of Q4 acts as supporting evidence to this hypothesis because politeness apparently varied as a function of how imposing the question was taken to be.

Table 4: Total politeness forms by Question: Speaker 1.12

Question #	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Politeness forms	2.0	11.0	10.0	21.0

Finally, another relevant factor in considering the effects of imposition on politeness is the difference between the two years the survey was conducted. Politeness for the two years are given in Tables 5 and 6 (normalized). Both Tables 5 and 6 show that the surveys conducted in 2007 had higher politeness. Both years display the same pattern between the questions, discussed above, generally increasing from Q1-Q3 and decreasing in Q4. The increase in politeness in 2007 suggests that some difference between the two years led to increased politeness. It is possible that the taboo topic of Anderson and Bush was viewed to be more imposing in 2007. As mentioned above, the dispute between Mayor Anderson and President Bush had come to a head just before the 2007 surveys were conducted. This dispute climaxed in the debate between Anderson and Sean Hannity in May 2007. This public event apparently polarized the state further and caused discussions about Anderson to be viewed as even more face-threatening. It is also possible that the preceding questions affected the politeness. In 2006, Q1-Q4 were preceded by conversational questions about recent local event. In 2007, Q1-Q4 followed a series of challenging questions about the local geography.

Another possibility is that the difference between the two years is an artifact in the data corresponding to other differences in the participant groups in those two years. For

Table 5: Politeness by Survey Year

<b>Year</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Average</b>
2006 (N=9)	5.8	5.3	11.3	3.3	6.4
2007 (N=12)	5.3	10.7	11.8	6.9	8.7

Table 6: Politeness by Survey Year (Normalized)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Average</b>
2006 (N=9)	7.9	9.6	10.4	5.8	8.4
2007 (N=11)	14.1	14.8	18.3	11.9	14.8



example, the middle social distance group, discussed below, was all interviewed in the 2007 surveys. In general, the interactions between variables are high and I hesitate to draw any conclusions for those variables which were not varied in a controlled way. The rank of imposition was the only variable whose value was controlled in the design of the study. Therefore, the results for this variable are most reliable and H1 was supported by this study's results. In addition to the variable of survey year, social distance, gender, and age varied within the sample group. Conclusions suggested by these data are discussed in section 6.2.

## 6.2 Other Social Factors

I now turn to analysis of the effect of social distance, gender, and age. This analysis is tentative because of the high interactions between the variables and confounds between the groups. At this point, trends suggested by the following analysis are places for future research to focus.

### 6.2.1 Social Distance

As described in section 5.1 in the methodology, each interviewer gave self-evaluations of the solidarity level between him/herself and the subject on a scale of 1 – 7, 7 being the lowest social distance. The participant-interviewer dyads in this study were divided into low, middle and high solidarity groups. The high social distance group gave scores of 1 – 3. The middle group scored 4 or 5.<sup>8</sup> The low social distance group was given 6 or 7. The social distance groups and average politeness forms by question are shown in Table 7. Table 8 gives the politeness forms normalized for talkativeness.

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<sup>8</sup> Speakers in the middle solidarity group were all interviewed in 2007, the second year of the surveys. Any correlation found between the middle solidarity group and politeness may be interacting with differences between the years surveyed discussed above.

Table 7: Politeness and Social Distance

<b>Social Distance</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Average</b>
High (1-3) (N=5)	7.8	11.2	15.6	5.8	10.1
Middle (4-5) (N=6)	5.1	8.9	10.7	8.7	8.4
Low (6-7) (N=9)	4.4	6.4	10.0	2.6	5.9

Table 8: Politeness and Social Distance (Normalized)

<b>Social Distance</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Average</b>
High (1-3) (N=5)	10.1	11.5	11.8	4.9	9.6
Middle (4-5) (N=7)	10.8	13.3	20.2	15.5	15.0
Low (6-7) (N=9)	12.3	12.5	12.7	7.2	11.2

Unlike the results for the rank of imposition variable, there are apparent differences between the average and normalized politeness tokens for social distance. Table 7, the average politeness, shows increased politeness from low to middle to high social distance. The average politeness over all four questions shows an increase from just 5.9 tokens in the low social distance, to 8.4 tokens in the middle group, and 10.1 tokens in the high social distance. Conflicting results occur when these scores were normalized for talkativeness, Table 8. The middle social distance group ranked the most polite with 15.0 normalized polite tokens. The low social distance group was less polite, with an average of 11.2 normalized polite tokens. The high social distance group fell to the least polite at 9.6 normalized polite tokens.

For the D variable, the hypothesis H2, restated below, is only partially supported; it is borne out in the nonnormalized politeness scored.

H2: In low D relationships, politeness should be low.

This result suggests that there is some interaction between social distance, politeness, and talkativeness, but the overlap between other social factors requires that this is a preliminary conclusion. The average politeness results in Table 7, support B&L

and Leech (2007) who predicted social distance to have a direct relationship with politeness. They claimed that in extremely close relationships politeness is not necessary to mitigate face-threats. This view is also consistent with Spencer-Oatey's (2005) theory of rapport-management because close relationships are not expected to have a rapport-enhancement orientation, the most polite orientation – the relationship is as close as it can be.

However, the normalized results in Table 8 show that the middle social distance is most polite. This result may be better explained by a rapport management account. As discussed above, Spencer-Oatey proposed that a speaker takes into account the goals she has in an interaction based on how she intends to affect the long-term rapport level between herself and the hearer. With this perspective, more politeness is necessary to preserve the face of both members of a relationship where neither participant is sure-footed in the relationship, best exemplified by the middle distance group.

In the high distance group, the participant-interviewer relationship is not established; the speaker has no previous rapport goals for the relationship. A rapport-neglect or rapport-challenge orientation is unlikely in the context of this study because the speakers have agreed to participate in the study. The expected default for a high social distance dyad is rapport-enhancement, excluding the possibility that a speaker is generally disinterested or uncooperative. However, if the high D group believed that this would be the pair's only interaction and they would never see each other again, it may be more likely that a rapport-neglect orientation would be expected. This is not likely in this study because there were no solidarity ratings of 1; the high D group consisted only of ratings 2 and 3.

It is, in fact, possible that the rapport-challenge or neglect orientation be present in the closer relationships because participation by the speaker in the study could have been coerced, like in the instance of a mother and child dyad.<sup>9</sup>

A rapport management approach predicts that politeness will be highest in relationships that are subject to change – those that are in the high and middle social distance group. These two groups are largely similar from a rapport management perspective. Both are in negotiable situations and are hoping to enhance their relationship.

Still, the contradictory results for the D variable between normalized and nonnormalized politeness lead to questioning the affect of the normalization process on the politeness data and what the appropriate method is for evaluating quantifiable politeness. As discussed above, there were some confounds in the normalization process. Particularly, some of the polite tokens are wordier than others, resulting in higher normalized politeness scores for use of the less wordy types, see 5.2. However, the conflicting results between average politeness and normalized politeness by D cannot be explained with this complication. The high social distance group was found to use a greater percentage of the less wordy types: HEDGES, MINIMIZATION OF R, and SHOWING RELUCTANCE, making their normalized score disproportionately higher. The middle social distance group used the greatest percentage of the more wordy types DEFERENCE and FELICITY CHALLENGES, as shown in Figure 2. This would lead to normalized politeness as disproportionately lower.

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<sup>9</sup> The data were collected as an assignment for a college course. Because of this, I imagine that some of the lowest social distance dyads may have been participating out of obligation, rather than interest.

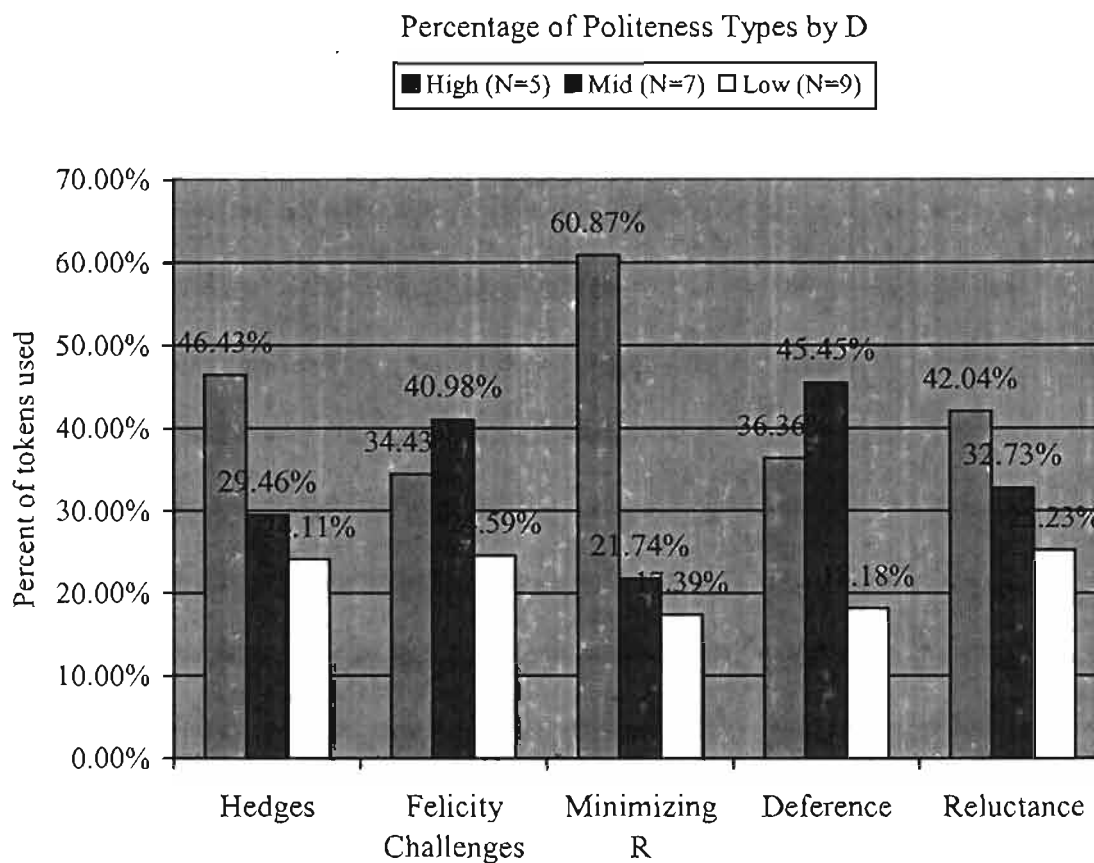


Figure 2: Percentage of Politeness Types Used by Social Distance Group

This trend suggests that there may be some interesting interactions between social groups and the types of polite strategies which are favored. However, it cannot account for the discrepancy between normalized and nonnormalized politeness and social distance.

Looking at talkativeness across the groups, the high social distance group was considerably more talkative, overall than the other two groups, as shown in Table 9.

Although the groups have a good deal of variation in talkativeness, this difference may be indicative of other politeness factors at play. Talkativeness, itself is not identified as a politeness strategy by B&L, but it is a violation of the Maxim of Manner. In order

Table 9: Talkativeness by Social Distance

	<b>Average words uttered Q1-Q4</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
High (1-3) (N=5)	464.6	234.6
Middle (4-5) (N=7)	254.8	126.1
Low (6-7) (N=9)	179.5	93.3

for this maxim violation to be justified, it must be motivated by some conversational goal. It is possible that the high social distance group was more talkative because they were using more nonconventionalized politeness types (6-10) that were not analyzed in this study. This analysis would be consistent with that group's high rank in the nonnormalized politeness score. Otherwise, the middle social distance group is the more polite in the normalized evaluation. In either case, this study supports hypothesis H2 and B&L and Leech's (2007) claim that low social distance relationships require less politeness. The differences in high and middle social distance groups may be better understood with Spencer-Oatey's concept of rapport management. Rapport management provides a better rationale for the similar behavior of these two groups. The specific rapport goals of high and middle solidarity group may lead to higher politeness, as they are in a relationship of negotiable social distance. Both of these groups are highly invested in developing a relationship.

### 6.2.2 Gender

This study looked at individual gender of S and the gender dyads: male S speaking to male H (M-M), male to female (M-F), female to male (F-M), and female to female (F-F). Tables 10 and 11 show that males in this study were slightly more polite than females, although this difference essentially disappeared in the normalized results. The same-gender dyads, M-M and F-F, were more polite than the mixed-gender dyads. I

Table 10: Gender Dyads and Politeness

Gender Dyad	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Average	Gender	Average
M-M (N=7)	9.7	7.9	13.3	5.3	9.0	Male	8.6
M-F (N=2)	3.0	6.0	20.5	3.0	8.1		
F-M (N=5)	1.6	6.6	3.2	2.6	3.5	Female	6.4
F-F (N=7)	4.7	10.9	13.3	8.0	9.2		

Table 11: Gender Dyads and Politeness (Normalized)

Gender Dyad	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Average	Gender	Average
M-M (N=7)	15.8	12.0	14.5	10.3	13.2	Male	11.5
M-F (N=2)	3.3	14.6	11.9	9.4	9.8		
F-M (N=4)	7.3	11.6	11.7	6.6	9.3	Female	11.3
F-F (N=7)	12.1	13.0	18.4	9.9	13.3		

will first discuss the speaker gender results, and then turn to a discussion of the gender dyads.

The nonnormalized results show males as slightly more polite, 8.6 to 6.46. This difference essentially disappears in the normalized results. The females used 11.3 normalized polite forms and the males averaged 11.5, normalized. There is little or no apparent difference between male speakers and female speakers, without taking the dyads into account. This result is counter to Lakoff's claim that women are more polite than men and does not support this study's hypothesis, H3:

H3: If P(S) is greater than P(H), politeness is expected to be low.

- P(S) is expected to be high when the speaker is of male gender

This study is possibly more supportive of Mills' (2003) view that suggestions that women are the more polite gender are influenced by stereotypes. More work is needed to further test this possible trend.

There was an interesting pattern found in which politeness types were preferred by males and females. See Figure 3. Males favored FELICITY CHALLENGES and SHOWING RELUCTANCE, using 66.28% and 79.22% of the tokens of these types, respectively.

Females favored MINIMIZING R, SHOWING DEFERENCE, and HEDGING using 63.95%, 88.03%, and 57.46%, respectively. This is an interesting pattern and more work is needed in this area to determine the reasoning behind these preferences. It is interesting that MINIMIZING R and SHOWING DEFERENCE are similar; they are both politeness types which accomplish the overall strategy of MINIMIZING THE THREAT. It is possible that MINIMIZING THE THREAT is the preferred negative politeness strategy of women. Considering Brown's (1998) conclusion for Tenejapa that women used more positive politeness with men and more negative politeness with women, further studies into gender preferences for particular strategies may prove to be interesting.

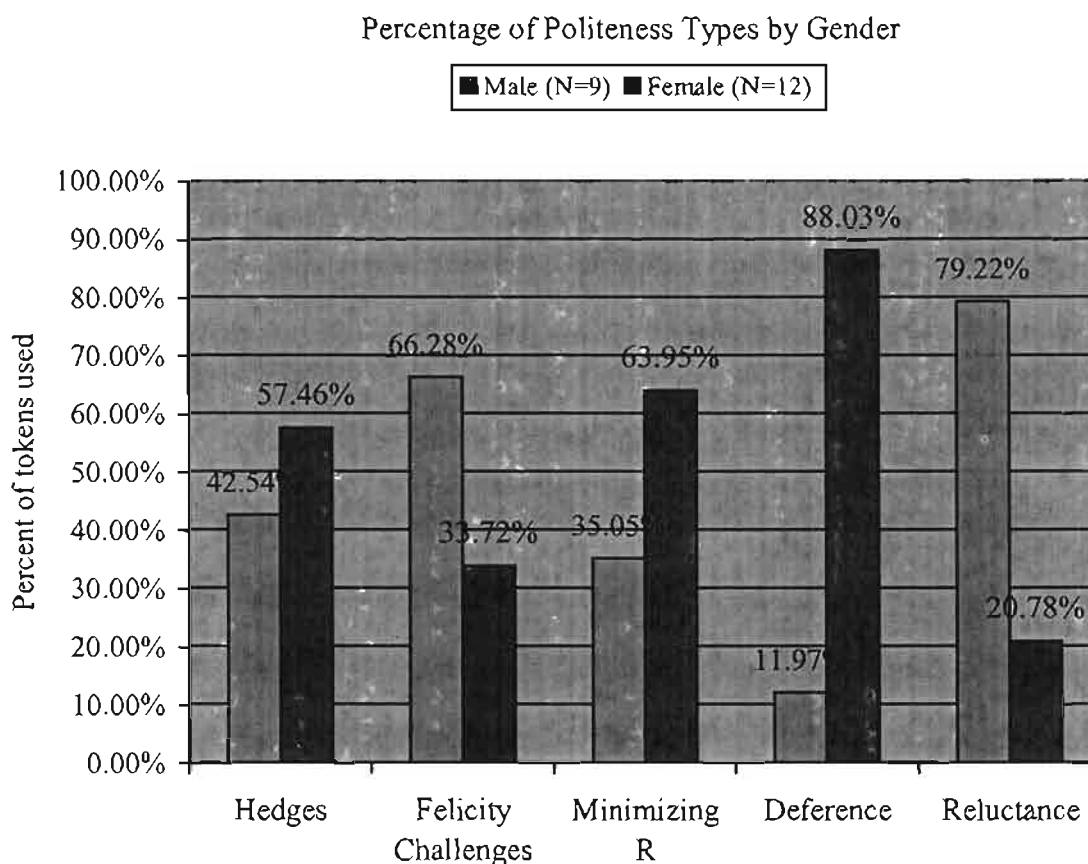


Figure 3: Percentage of Politeness Types Used by Gender



The gender dyads display a more interesting picture. Same-gender dyads were found to be more polite than cross-gender dyads.<sup>10</sup> The same trend is shown in Table 10 and Table 11; the same-gender dyads are more polite. The normalized results show a more distinct trend. This is consistent with Martin and Craig's (1983) finding that more hedges and false starts were used in same-gender dyads. These results taken in light of Mulac et al. (1988) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) are interesting. These studies showed that particular gender associated linguistic traits occur more frequently in same-gender dyads. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet attributed this pattern to gender practice; same-gender groups are creating gender identity. However, both genders in this study displayed more politeness in same-gender dyads than in cross-gender ones. This may indicate that both genders identify politeness as gender associated.

The politeness types which are gender associated may be further clarified by looking at the particular politeness types used by males in same and cross-gender dyads and females in same and cross-gender dyads. The overall gender and politeness results suggested that men prefer FELICITY CHALLENGES and SHOWING RELUCTANCE while women prefer MINIMIZING R, DEFERENCE, and HEDGING. If preference for these types by the respective genders was increased in same-gender dyads, this would support Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's concept of gender practice. These results are shown in Figure 4.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's conclusions appear to be borne out for the female same-gender dyads, with F-F dyads using 52.33% of MINIMIZING R tokens, 70.94% of the instances of DEFERENCE, and 48.51% of HEDGING. The results for M-M dyads are not as

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<sup>10</sup> There are potential confound in these data, specifically with the interaction between social distance and gender dyads. The cross-gender dyads had a very low average social distance, with an average solidarity rating of 6.21 compared to 4.39 in the same-gender dyads. Earlier low social distance was found to indicate lower politeness. Other possible confounds of this nature may be present in these data – this problem may be eclipsed in the additive evaluation of total politeness below.

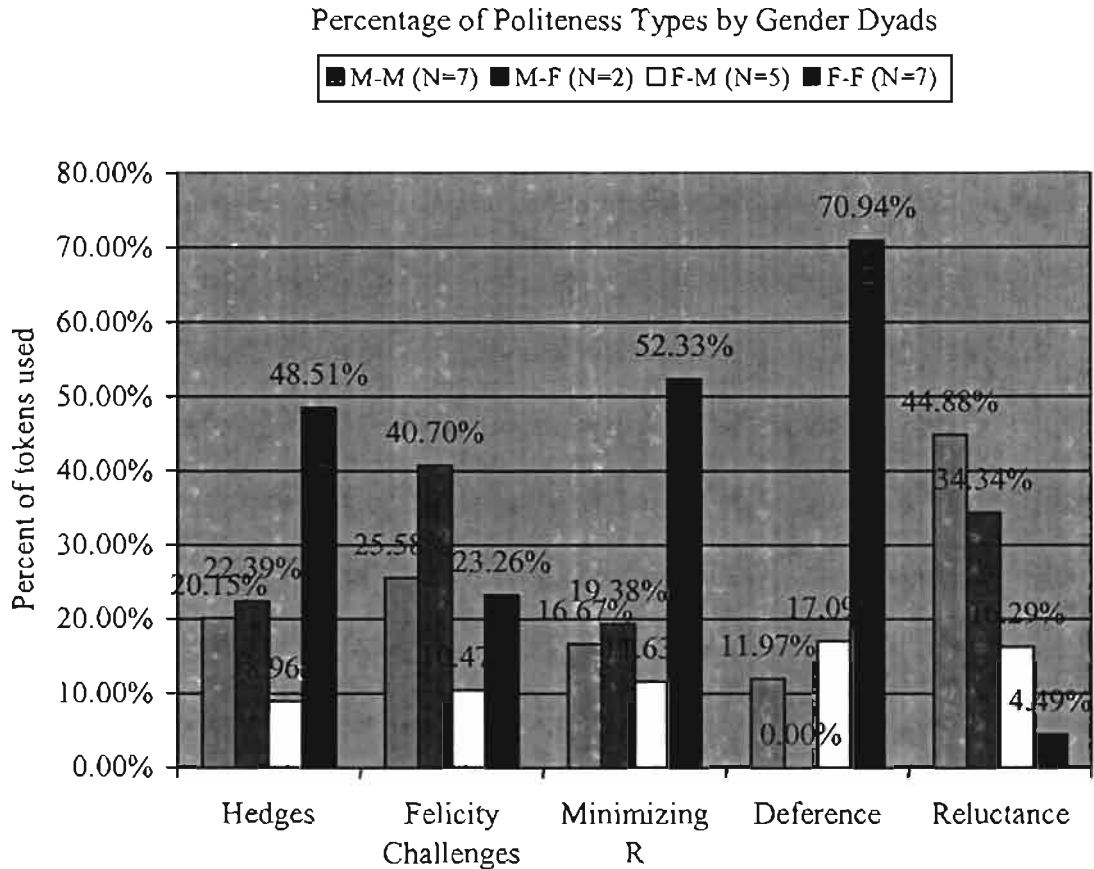


Figure 4: Percentage of Politeness Types Used by Gender Dyads

clear. Males clearly increased in use of SHOWING RELUCTANCE from 34.34% in M-F dyads to 44.88% in M-M dyads. But the majority of FELICITY CHALLENGES were done by males in M-F dyads, 40.70% to just 25.58% by males in M-M dyads. I hesitate to draw any broad conclusions because of the possible interactions between the other factors and gender, but these results may suggest that particular linguistic politeness types are associated with male and female gender and that these associations are more frequent in same-gender dyads during a gender practice situation. More research is needed to further test this hypothesis.

### 6.2.3 Age

As the review of the literature showed, B&L expected age and politeness to have an inverse relationship. In the current study, the middle age group was the somewhat more polite as shown in Table 12, and the difference is amplified with normalization, Table 13.

Age groups 1 and 2 are comparable in the average polite forms with 8.2 and 8.9 average polite forms, respectively. Group 3 participates far less in use of politeness. The normalized results increase the difference between the young and middle age group, with the middle group clearly the most polite. This result only partially supports the hypothesis H3 in that group 3 was the least polite in the average politeness.

H3: If P(S) is greater than P(H), politeness is expected to be low.

- P(S) is expected to be high when the speaker is of the older age group

Contrary to H3, the younger age group was not the most polite, instead, the middle age group was. This supports SturtzSreetharan's (2006) findings that the middle age group is the most polite and Sankoff and Leberge's (1978) notion of the linguistic market. The middle age group has the most invested in the linguistic market; their ability to communicate politely and successfully is fundamental to their success in the

Table 12: Age and Politeness

Age Group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Average
1. 18-25	6.1	8.0	12.4	6.4	8.2
2. 35-45	6.2	9.7	13.5	6	8.9
3. Over 60	3.8	7.7	8.3	3.2	5.8

Table 13: Age and Politeness (Normalized)

Age Group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Average
1. 18-25	11.4	9.6	10.8	7.8	9.9
2. 35-45	10.9	14.8	20.8	12.9	14.9
3. Over 60	11.6	14.0	13.8	7.2	11.7

workplace. As active members in the workplace, this age group succeeds or fails based on their ability to communicate effectively. The younger age group in this study is 18-25 years old. This group may not have invested in the linguistic market strategy. However, speakers in their early twenties are likely to be at the beginning stages of their career and family. Some members of the age range 18-25 are probably invested in the linguistic market. This can account for their similar average politeness to the middle age group. The older age group is typically out of the workplace and therefore out of the linguistic market.

Politeness is expected to be part of the standard, elite language necessary in the linguistic market. Politeness is a face-threat mitigating strategy therefore, it is central to use of the *legitimized language*. Aside from workplace involvement, there are other elements of economic activity that the middle age group may be more highly involved in, such as raising a family and involvement in social clubs and organizations. The relationship between investment in the linguistic market and politeness is possibly a productive correspondence.

Age may also be evaluated better as dyads between the interviewer and interviewee. Because of the design of this study, the interviewers were all university students. As a result, most of the interviewers were in age group 1, 18-25, with only a few exceptions. So, analysis of the dyads would mostly result in the same comparison with group 1 as Hs. The dyad based age analysis was not an available comparison in this study. I also looked at the linguistic politeness types used by each age group, but there was no apparent pattern found.

### 6.3 Additive Calculation of Politeness

Taking the above results to indicate how each variable is evaluated in the culture and context relevant to this study, it is possible to approximate the additive value for B&L's  $W_x$  and measure its relationship to politeness. Although the results for the social factors in 6.2 are tentative, the cumulative effect of the factors provides an analysis that can avoid these confounds by combining the social factors of each speaker.

B&L proposed the formula for calculating the weight of an FTA ( $W_x$ ), restated here as (17).

$$(17) W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

This attempt at an additive calculation has been criticized as simplistic and for having too much emphasis on FTA mitigation as the motivating factor behind politeness. I agree that B&L's emphasis on FTAs was misguided. This study suggests that a more socially motivated conception of politeness is necessary.

This study suggests the following for the three social factors' influence on evaluation of politeness. (i) The relationship between  $R_x$  and politeness is a direct relationship,  $R_x$  increases in Q1-Q3 (excluding Q4) as does politeness. (ii) The relationship between  $D(S,H)$  and politeness is a direct relationship, higher  $D$ 's were found to correspond with higher politeness.<sup>11</sup> (iii) The relationship between  $P(S,H)$ , as a function of age and gender dyads and politeness is that the middle age group and the same-gender dyads were found to increase politeness in these groups.

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<sup>11</sup> This is taking the nonnormalized results as indicative that the high social distance group is most polite. The normalized results indicated the middle social distance group to be most polite. Because of the differences in total words uttered discussed in section 6.2, I tentatively conclude that the effect of social distance on politeness is a general increase in politeness when social distance is greater.

The underlying factor in determining politeness is a commonality between these relationships. Weight of the FTA, as B&L proposed, does not capture the common force behind each of these social influences on politeness. Building from Sankoff and Leberge's concept of linguistic market, I suggest SPEAKER INVESTMENT, as the commonality between these high politeness groups. SPEAKER INVESTMENT (SI) may in fact be what underlies the model better than  $W_x$ . This explanation assuages some criticisms on which B&L's FTA based model has been attacked. SPEAKER INVESTMENT is a more socially motivated explanation; it addresses Locher and Watts' (2005) criticism that B&L's model is too focused on facework. It also allows for more cultural variation in what particular cultures evaluate as investment.

SPEAKER INVESTMENT relates to R, D, and P in the following ways: Increase in R requires an investment in mitigating the FTA. The more specific the taboo opinion stated in this study, for example, it is more likely that the speaker will have to defend her statement. She is invested in that stated controversial opinion and invested in successfully mitigating it. This is where B&L's  $W_x$  is probably an appropriate measure. Where  $W_x$  falls short is in the influence of more social factors.

In high D relationships, participants are invested in creating a relationship. The rapport-enhancement and rapport-maintenance orientations are expected to be the most polite. This presupposes investment in the relationship by the speaker. She has a desire to be a part of and grow the relationship.

Same-gender dyads were seen to be invested in maintaining gender-based group identity. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) discussed how communities of practice

develop and reinforce identity attributes associated with those communities. For same-gender dyads, it is gender norms that they are invested in creating.

Investment in the linguistic market is the degree to which the speaker's economic activity requires her to communicate in the standard, elite language. The middle age group, and the young age group to a lesser extent, are invested in using the legitimized, polite language to increase success in their business.

Overall, *SPEAKER INVESTMENT* may be a better characterization of the cumulative effect of the social factors, in this study. Figure 5 shows how these factors combine to create an overall politeness strategy for a speaker. In order to test the additive nature of *SPEAKER INVESTMENT* as the determiner of overall politeness, I developed a scalar evaluation for the social factors. Each of the three factors influence on SI is an estimation, but for this controlled study it seems to be motivated. For  $R_x$ , Q3 received a rating of 3, Q2 a 2, and Q1 a 1. For  $D(S,H)$ , high social distance received a rating of 3, middle received a 2, and low received a 1. For  $P(H,S)$ , same-gendered middle age group dyads received a rating of 3, either middle age group or same-gender dyad (but not both) received a 2, cross-gender young or older dyads received a 1. The additive results are given in Figure 6 (nonnormalized) and Figure 7 (normalized). In Figures 6 and 7, the N values refer to individual responses to questions Q1-Q3, so that there are three responses per speaker.

These figures show the expected trend, as *SPEAKER INVESTMENT* (SI) increases, politeness increases. Figure 7, which shows the normalized politeness tokens, shows a less drastic but nevertheless consistent trend, generally increasing as investment increases. These additive results provide support for B&L's claim that such a cumulative

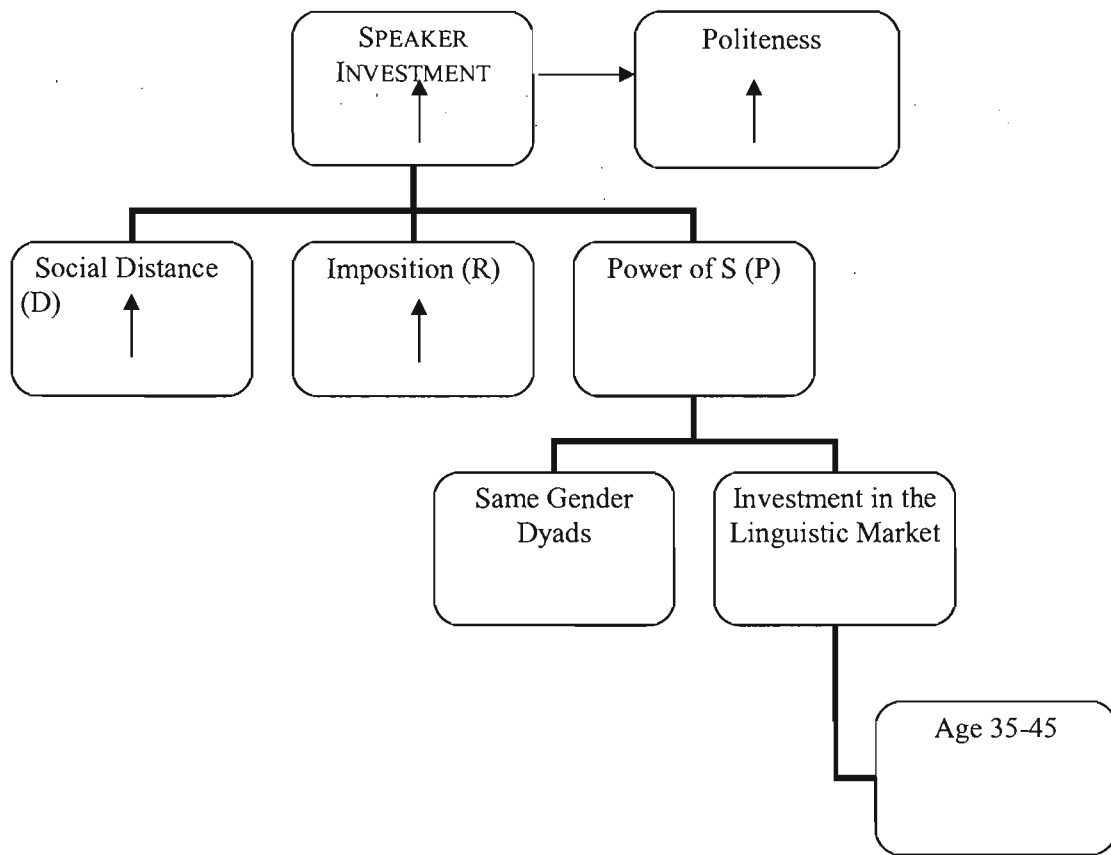


Figure 5: Social Factors contribution to SPEAKER INVESTMENT



## Average Politeness by Speaker Investment (SI)

$$SI = D(S,H) + P(S,H) + Rx$$

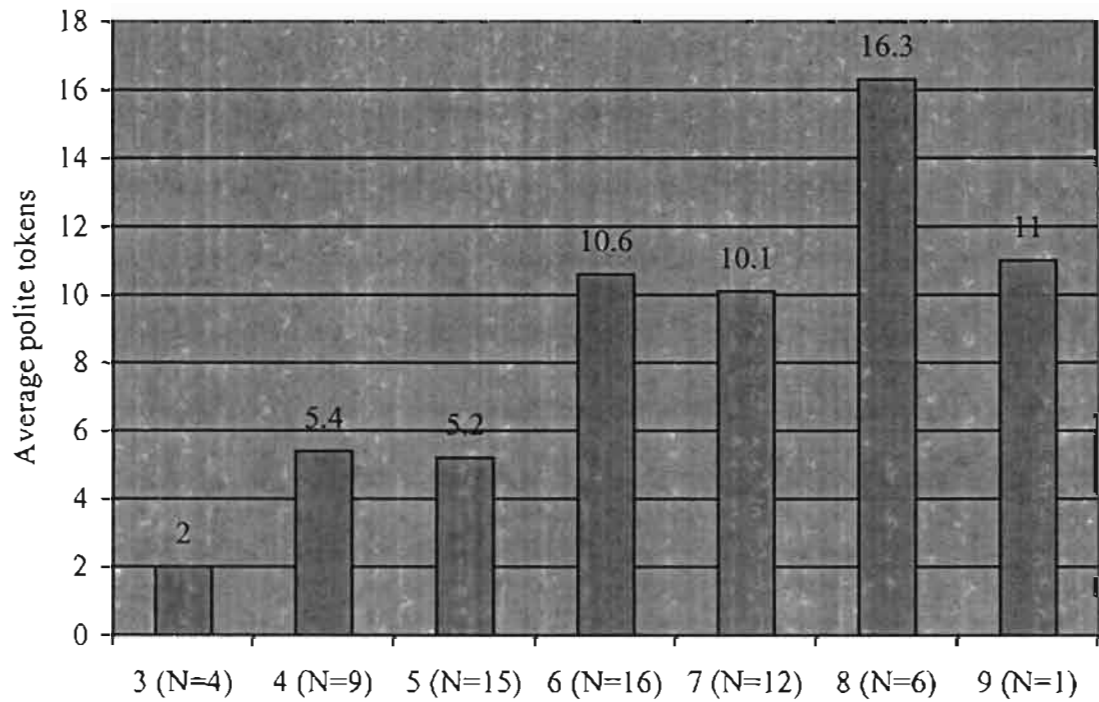


Figure 6: Politeness by SPEAKER INVESTMENT

### Normalized Politeness by Speaker Investment (SI)

$$SI = D(S,H) + P(S,H) + Rx$$

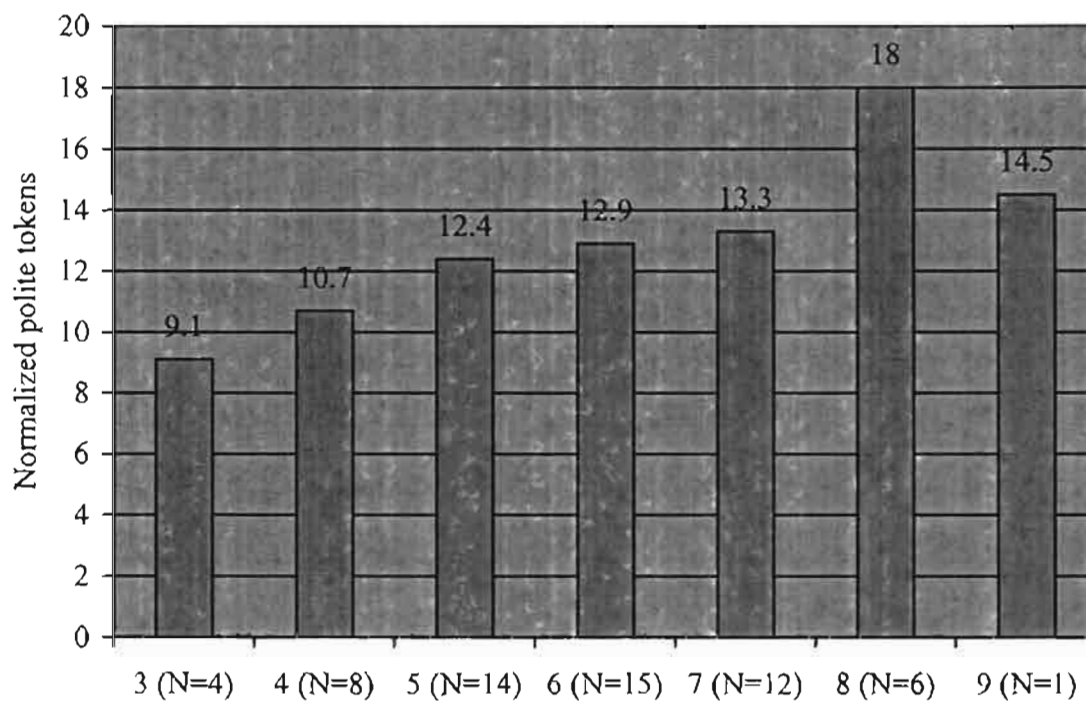


Figure 7: Politeness by SPEAKER INVESTMENT (Normalized)

effect of the social factors corresponds to total politeness. However, SPEAKER INVESTMENT seems to characterize the relevant aspects of the three social factors better than B&L's FTA mitigation approach.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This paper explores the effects of B&L's three contributing factors to politeness: rank of imposition, social distance, and power. It aims to demonstrate that an increase in imposition leads to more polite forms.

This study found that questions about taboo political topics are an intrinsic FTA in Western culture. In answering a question about such a political topic honestly, the speaker is also committing an FTA. B&L (1987, p. 83) argued that "rational face-bearing agents will choose ways of doing face-threatening acts that minimize those threats." This study greatly supports the variable of rank of imposition as a large contributing factor to politeness. The questions, designed to increase in imposition from Q1-Q4, increased in politeness from Q1-Q3. Q4 did not follow the trend, but the unexpected low politeness in Q4 is consistent with an imposition related explanation. As B&L suggested, greater imposition led to greater use of polite forms.

The effects of social distance were consistent with B&L's expectations. They suggest that in high social distance relationships, politeness is more important as an FTA mitigating strategy. Spencer-Oatey's (2000; 2005) notion of rapport management may be relevant in understanding why this is the case. Building a relationship requires more politeness than maintaining an existing one, especially if it is a difficult relationship to renegotiate, such as a family relationship. Speakers in high and middle social distance situations are invested in creating relationships.

Two contributors to power were studied, age and gender. B&L (1987, p. 76) understood power “as *actor's* assumptions of such ratings, assumed to be mutually assumed”. The middle age group was found to be most polite. Investment in the linguistic market is a likely motivator for this pattern. Same-gender dyads were found to use more politeness. This is attributed to investment in gender practice because gender associated behaviors are enhanced in same-gender dyads, having an effect on politeness.

This study suggests that an additive valuation of the social factors which contribute to politeness may be a judgment of the *SPEAKER INVESTMENT* in successful communication. Political questions elicit politeness as a mitigating strategy of face-threatening acts. As the imposition of the questions increased, polite forms also increase. This is due to investment in mitigating the FTA. High and middle social distance relationships have a higher need for politeness, possibly because they are invested in a rapport-enhancing orientation. Same-gender dyads had higher politeness proposed to be a result of investment in gender identity. Members of the middle age group participate more in politeness, maybe as a result of their investment in the linguistic market. *SPEAKER INVESTMENT* is possibly a productive correlate with politeness. Future work is necessary to refine this proposed relationship.

This study looked at a small sample of native Utah speakers. Future studies are necessary in order to determine more specifically how and why these social factors interact and to determine politeness and how the concept of *SPEAKER INVESTMENT* applied to other cultural groups and situations. The effects of the

interviewer politeness may also shed more light on the conclusions of this study. I plan to look at this interaction in future studies.

## APPENDIX A

### POLITENESS FORMS IN Q1-Q4 AND SOCIAL VARIABLES

Speaker #	Solidarity	Gender dyad	Age	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	total words
1.1	6	M-M	23	15	6	26	1	304
1.2	7	M-M	24	2	8	6	2	181
1.4	3	M-M	23	14	0	15	6	727
1.5	7	F-M	19	2	3	2	0	92
1.6	4	M-M	19	3	8	7	3	166
1.7	4.5	M-F	23	0	10	13	3	228
1.8	2	F-F	24	10	17	24	11	652
1.10	4	F-F	25	7	9	9	11	476
1.12	5	F-M	21	2	11	10	21	271
2.3	3	M-M	43	12	19	11	11	481
2.4	6	M-F	44	6	2	28	3	359
2.6	4	F-F	36	10	10	12	8	185
2.7	7	F-F	37	1	9	10	5	204
2.9	6	M-M	37	8	9	12	4	190
2.11	5	F-M	34	0	9	8	5	142
3.1	3	F-F	85+	1	2	12	1	292
3.2	7	F-M	78	0	7	2	6	113
3.4	7	F-M	63	0	1	0	0	53
3.9	3	F-F	70	2	18	16	0	171
3.10	7	F-M	77	6	13	4	2	157
3.11	5	M-M	82	14	5	16	10	219

APPENDIX B

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF SPEAKERS

Code	Home-town	Education	Occupation	Relation-ship	Interview I date	Interview I venue
1.9	Ogden	College freshman	Full-time student	Stranger	9/19/2007	University of Utah
1.8	Salt Lake	University	Student	Classmates	9/14/2007	School library
3.8	Orem	Technical school	Steel worker	Member of my ward LDS Church	9/9/2007	Interviewees home
1.4	Murray	University student	Waiter/student	Roommate	9/25/2006	Dining room of our house
2.3	Price	B.A. + ongoing course work	High school teacher	Interviewer's high school teacher	9/22/2006	In speaker's classroom, Carbon High School: Price
2.8	Highland	1 year of technical college	Owns a cleaning service	Friend	9/14/2007	Highland
3.1	Park City	High school graduate		Members of Park City Historical Society	9/22/2006	At speaker's home in Park City
3.5	Sandy, Sugarhouse	High school graduate	Sales clerk	Neighbor	9/22/2006	The subject's house
3.9	Cottonwood	High school graduate	Secretary, stay-at-home mom	Interviewer's parents' neighbor	9/14/2007	Home of interviewee
1.6	Price	College student	Student	Roommate		My room
1.10	Centerville	Bachelor's in economics	Office manager	Married to my husband's friend.	9/12/2007	House where the informant grew up.
2.6	Sandy	Bachelor degree	Accounts receivable	Roommate	9/19/2007	Our apartment
1.7	Springville	College Student	Student	Friend from church	9/10/2007	Home of speaker
1.12	Salt Lake	Some college	Organizational assistant	Friend	9/21/2007	Lutheran church

Code	Home-town	Education	Occupation	Relation-ship	Interview I date	Interview I venue
2.11	Kamas	High school degree	Retail	Employee	9/16/2007	Interviewees home
3.11	Salt Lake	B.S. business, U of U	Insurance agent	Grandfather	9/15/2007	Speaker's home
1.1	Salt Lake/ Sugar-house	U of U junior	Internet support, student	Friend, former co-worker	9/23/2006	Living room
1.3	Provo/ Utah County	3 semesters at UVSC	Works with mentally occupied people	Friend	9/24/2006	At my parent's house
2.4	Murray	1.5 years of college	Realtor	Friend	9/22/2006	At my house
2.5	Taylor-ville	Bachelor degree	Kindergarten teacher	Neighbor and friend	9/22/2006	In my living room
2.9	Kearns	Associate	Unemployed	Friend	9/14/2007	My home
1.2	Salt Lake			Close friend	9/21/2006	My home
1.11	Kearns	College Senior	Student	Close friend	9/07	Her house
2.1	Midvale /Sandy		Massage therapy school	Long-time friend	10/3/2006	Speaker's apartment
2.2	Bountiful	A.A.	Daycare business owner	Sister	9/24/2006	My home
2.7	Salt Lake	11th grade	Server	Co-worker	9/16/2007	In my living room
3.3	Salt Lake	Bachelor degree	Special Ed teacher	Mother-In-Law-to-be	9/28/2006	Speaker's home
3.2	Salt Lake	B.A	Teacher and x-ray tech	Grandmother	9/21/2006	Speaker's home
3.4	Holladay	Masters of social work	Social worker (retired)	Spouse	9/20/2006	Home (Holladay)
3.7	Salt Lake	Masters degree	Retired high school teacher	Friend	9/17/2007	Speaker's den
3.10	Sugar-house	Some college	Housewife	Grandma	9/18/2007	Speaker's home
2.10	West Valley	BA	Realtor	Friend	9/14/2007	Salt Lake Masonic Temple
1.5	Sandy	Senior in high school	student	Niece	9/24/2006	Speakers home



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## ERRATUM

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