“YOU’RE NOT LIKE OTHER” HATE SPEECH

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	3
Introduction	5
“I know it when I see it” – Defining Hate Speech	8
How has Hate Speech been treated so far?/ Speaker’s intention models	11
Politeness	11
Truth Conditional Approaches	11
An extended mental spaces model	17
Mental Spaces Background	17
A basic picture of the situation	19
Frames	21
ICMS	23
Common Ground	25
Clashing Speech Acts	31
Pragmatics	32
Final Mental Spaces Analysis	34
Conclusion	38
Appendix	39
Bibliography	42

List of Figures

1. Figure 1 Mutual Common Ground	26
2. Figure 2 “You’re not like other black people” when taken as a compliment	37
3. Figure 3 “You’re not like other black people” when taken as an insult	37

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Abstract

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Traditional semantic and pragmatic accounts of hate speech do not account for the simultaneity of certain phrases being both complimentary and incredibly offensive. My account seeks to operationalize perlocutionary-based theories of hate speech in terms of cognitive linguistics, through mental spaces theory and common ground. My thesis concerns some curious cases which show how using intention alone as a basis for interpreting the semantics and pragmatics of speech fails to account for certain speech acts which are simultaneously complimentary and offensive. My analysis shall focus on the cognitive linguistic aspects of the construction “You’re not like other X,” where X is a sociological category (Black people, Women, Muslims, etc.). This analysis will show that previous methods of semantically and pragmatically analyzing hate speech are inadequate in capturing the full contextual features and mental states of the interlocutors, and that my interpretation is more representative of reality.

Introduction

“Offensive term” or conventions-of-offense models

When was the last time someone offended you? For many people this is a hard thing to pinpoint as offense is something that happens to everyone almost every day. Certain smells and sights can be offensive and displeasing, even morally repulsive, but is there something that lies beyond offense? What of an offense which creates a culture of hatred and derision surrounding the afflicted? Such “offense” serves only to devalue identity and dehumanize groups of people. Some people call that hate speech.

Academics have studied hate speech and offense primarily through politeness and more specifically, Impoliteness studies. Although being offended can definitely be a part of reacting to hate speech, so can being disappointed (e.g. at a racist grandfather) or being fearful. As such it does not seem correct to place hate speech solely in the domain of merely being offended with some subject speech/act. Hate speech is something more insidious than impolite or even downright offensive speech. Hate speech attacks the very notion that everyone is entitled to equal treatment through the denigration of identity. People seem to agree that hate speech is a bad thing, but few people would ever go so far as to say that no one should ever be offended. While there are laws in various countries against hate speech there are few laws in western society against people merely being offended. Offense is something that one can shrug off. Hate speech is malignant and cumulative in that each instance adds to a culture of denigration and systemic oppression. Clearly, though related, the concepts of offense and hate speech can and should be delineated further. The focus of this paper is on hate speech proper.

Why is “hate speech” hate speech? Hate speech is praxis. Hate speech is that which perpetuates structural inequalities. Because hate speech is defined by its relation to these structural inequalities, and those inequalities change with society, it is fundamentally something which is hard to pin down and define without context. In fact, as part of my argument, it is something that absolutely cannot be examined without its contextual features. Many scholars and legislatures have attempted to define hate speech in terms that are immutable and do not change with the times. These have ultimately and utterly failed to achieve their goal; though that is not to say that the goal of having a more inclusive and less discriminatory society is not one worth striving for. It just becomes something of praxis rather than something one can just “do” and move on from. One can no more tell people to stop saying things which perpetuate structural inequality than one can tell people to just “get along.” Life and language are difficult and amorphous, though one can think about their actions and the implications behind what they are saying. It is in this way that I propose change through praxis. First however, an analysis must take place in order to understand how hate speech works and weaves its insidious web. Part of how hate speech works is silent, and embedded within the implicatures and pragmatics of our everyday language.

While no one seems to be implying that deciphering the semantic/pragmatic content of hate speech is easy, the position I am taking is that it is even more complex than previously imagined. For instance, take a phrase that even to most racially conscious people is thought of as a compliment. The phrase is, “You’re not like other black people.” The phrase could be said in many contexts and that indeed is a major determinant of the meaning extracted from the phrase. There is also the common ground that precedes the

utterance and the lack of shared common ground in racial experience when it is said of a black person from, typically, a white person. The fact that this phrase can be interpreted in many different ways is not new information. What is new is that so much of how this comes across depends on there being a shared basis of experience between the interlocutors.

I am looking into the conceptual semantics grounding the construction “You’re not like X” or “You’re not like other X.” Where in the case of the latter the primary construction is that of, “You’re not like other black people” and “black people” is what is being construed as negative while the intention was to deliver a compliment. There are other forms where this is not so. For instance, “You’re not like other applicants”, or “You’re not like other gamers,” which are generally thought of as being compliments. The reason these are not thought of as “bad” per se is because of the conceptual semantic frame for GAMER and APPLICANT, both instances have neutral to negative exemplars associated with them that do not constitute special classes of people writ large. The gamer stereotype typically does not have a positive connotation but it does not index a particular ethnic or racial group, whereas the applicant exemplar references the fact that most applicants for a specific coveted job are not thought of as being exceptional. The reason for the phrase in question being considered a bad thing is that there is first and foremost the description of black people/black culture at large being something deserving of pejoration or otherwise negative appraisal. Therefore, distancing one’s self from this group has the ambivalent meaning of both being a good and bad thing but on different levels of analysis and interpretation. The first level of analysis is that the construction “you’re not like other black people” is intended on the part of the speaker to be a

compliment as it is rarely said conventionally to mean the opposite (i.e. you're worse/you're not as good etc.). This "compliment" is the positive interpretation of this construction, as the intended meaning is that of i.e. 'You're better/cleaner/literate /articulate/etc for racial stereotypes of black people.' The negative interpretation is that "You're not like other black people, You're Worse/Vile/Repugnant." These are two possible outcomes on the speaker's end of interpretation, though the interpretation constituting the implied compliment is far preferred in frequency¹. The problem is that for the interpreter on the receiving end of this (i.e., the black person) the interpretation of the compliment requires assent to racist assumptions. The curious happening that I will be studying is that time and time again when this is said to people of color about their specified ingroup they take this as a compliment almost without thought as to the interpretative connotations required. These are the things that haunt you years later when you think to yourself late at night, "wait a minute, I was insulted, but neither of us knew it at the time." What an interesting occurrence it is when one can insult another and have neither party be immediately conscious of it.

"I know it when I see it" – Defining Hate Speech

In this section, examples will be presented with a general discussion of what makes them offensive, including but not limited to implicit stereotypes, implicit denigration, and structural inequality. There will be discussion of how people talk about sensitive topics in a way that is not "hateful" or predicated on denigrating inferences drawn about social groups.

1

See appendix

Hate speech is something that scholars, politicians, and laymen have fought over how to define for quite some time now. As it turns out, the battle about defining hate speech as an exact phenomenon is much like the history of the classical categorization of knowledge toward the prototype theory of how we, as humans, categorize things; that is to say, the definition is “fuzzy.” The simple fact of the matter is that languages change and any definition of hate speech must necessarily change with it. Also, that the nature of what hate speech is and why I believe it has been so difficult for people to define is precisely due to the context and common ground that surround such speech. As exemplified in the intended compliment, “You’re not like other black people”, the premise of the very compliment is the tacit acceptance of hateful racist ideals, but *prima facie* it has every appearance of a compliment.

Recently there was an incident where elected Kansas official Steve Roberts said the word “nigger” in a supposedly “clinical” manner. He was responding to a New York resolution which discouraged the use of the “N-word” and other offensive language. What is interesting here is that in his mind there is a “clinical” manner in which one can refer to words. Though he may be mentioning the right to merely quote offensive material in public the real crusade he appears to go on is against political correctness. Saying “I’m willing to be considered politically incorrect ... I don’t think that’s a bad thing,” he joins the ranks of many in conservative schools of thought that this thing called political correctness has run amok (Israel). Political correctness is closely related to slurs and hate speech in that it is often thought that the only reason we do not use certain references to people today (like calling African Americans “niggers” or more recently the transition from Black people to African Americans) is because of political correctness. Political

correctness has become one of those terms with a hazy definition that people refer to when calling others out for being too nice or conscientious. Those who vehemently oppose it tend to be the people who think they are merely calling a “spade a spade.” Like Kansas official Roberts, their misapprehension stems from the fact that they do not take the contextual nuances of language into account. Roberts thought he could say “nigger” in a clinical manner such that no one would be offended; the trouble with that is that he does not get to choose whether or not people get offended. To stand up against political correctness is to stand up against the right of the marginalized to acknowledge that hurtful speech, and more importantly stand up against the people who would say such things. Those who say things with the specific intention of not being “politically correct” are upset that people would call them out for saying things which many conscientious people find upsetting. Relating back to hate speech: how are we as language users to know what we are saying is upsetting? This seems infinitely more complicated, considering that you can be offensive even while trying to be complimentary. Much like the widely accepted sociological definition of racism, hate speech requires institutional power. This manifests itself as an asymmetrical power differential between interlocutors based on these sociologically institutionalized structures.

It may be that the only definition of hate speech that seems to stand the test of time is the same as what the Justice Potter Stewart said of pornography: “I know it when I see it.” (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*).

How has Hate Speech been treated so far?/ Speaker's intention models

Politeness

Within politeness studies, Jonathan Culpeper in his book titled *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offense*, says that intentionality is slightly positively correlated with offense, but also that the type of offense is important with respect to intentionality. Furthermore, he states he is unconvinced that intentionality is an essential condition for impoliteness, and there is a glossing over of some key complexities within hate speech in order to say that intention is an essential component (Culpeper 52).

Truth Conditional approaches

Classical philosophical/linguistic accounts try to treat hate speech as any other kind of speech, but even within their field there are fundamental problems with their approaches. These accounts are limited in several key areas regarding intent, limited to no context and relevance within a cognitive framework. As the tradition stands, hate speech is only hate speech if the speaker was 'hateful.' This is not merely a naïve way of examining the harms of hate speech on society, it is a woefully incomplete account of it, as it leaves sociological context to the wayside.

Truth Conditional Semantics argues that the meaning of a sentence is given by elaborating the conditions under which the sentence could be said to be true (Saka 4).

$$(TC) \Phi \text{ is true} \equiv P$$

That is to say, the proper meaning of a sentence is given if and only if certain necessary and sufficient conditions are met (Saka 4). Truth Conditional Semantics is a very prevalent (Saka 18-19) form of analysis in contemporary semantics and philosophy of language as well as having a history coming from traditions of Socrates, epistemologists, metaphysicians, and moral philosophers (Saka 4). David Lewis even goes as far as saying “semantics with no treatment of truth-conditions is not semantics” (Lewis 18).

There are many different types and instances of Truth Conditional Semantics, but what remains the same is the commonality of assuming that language’s primary purpose is to express states of the world (Saka Ch.5). These approaches to semantics not only elide the role of human thought in how meaning is brought about but also ignore beliefs and desires in shaping how humans acquire and use language. Thus, I will endeavor to explore the usage base of hate speech in its more ambiguous and, hence, insidious forms.

This approach depends on the common ground and beliefs of the interlocutors. All felicitous communication depends on common ground, but of equal importance to this study are the ways in which misalignment occurs, either during the heat of conversation or after the fact. There are many cases of hate speech whose effects occur *ex post facto*. In order to address an account of hate speech in a cognitive linguistic fashion one must do so in direct opposition to Truth Conditional Semantics. Being as it is that all of these theories in one way or another relate back to the truth conditions under which a sentence can be said to be true or false, and that the sentences that are being explored have connotative functioning that is reliant on a difference of understanding, the analysis of the sentences will yield an answer that is neither true nor false.

Jennifer Hornsby, a philosopher of language and mind, takes a truth centered approach to meaning and its derivation (2001). In detailing what a derogatory word means she says that a derogatory word is something which is "commonly understood" to convey hatred or contempt. Her second argument is that for each such word there exists a complementary "-phemism" to which the word could be described but without such negative content.

There is almost certainly something wrong with the way this is defined as it depends upon the common ground that the interlocutors share; more precisely, if something is common ground as a negative word or phrase for one person but is unknown to be negative to another, her definition holds that that words suddenly loses its negative association. However, this is not the case. The word is still offensive to the first person with whom other people share a common ground; in this analysis there should be no catering toward those who do not know better than to say offensive things, because those things are not inoffensive simply through the speaker's ignorance. Secondly, I find the argument that there is some innate characteristic of insults in being offensive somewhat problematic; not that anyone would go about calling people not of a certain group that "group's" dysphemic name (Calling someone who is not Jewish a "kike," for instance) but rather that it is possible with language to do so (that is, calling someone a "Sand Nigger" or "White Nigger"). Are they then calling upon the racial characteristics of the group with the dysphemic name to be applied to the target group? Or perhaps are they signaling a new form of insulting/hateful expression that can only be applied to that group. Take, for instance, the word, "wigger" which would mean something entirely different if it were said to a black person (possibly that that person was not "really"

black). Basically I think that an analysis which claims that hateful speech or derogatory words are only derogatory based solely on the speaker's intentions is flawed, both intellectually and morally. Finally, there is no neutral counterpart to "nigger": to assume so is to take the speaker's intention into account that they could have said something else but chose to go for this for some reason or another.

Hornsby (2003) argues that the libertarian tradition takes a view of language that holds that any ill effects of the speaker to the hearer of such language is not the fault of the speaker (4). This is to ask; how could they be held accountable for their actions when the tenets of language itself are outside of the domains of any single person? I disagree with this interpretation, in that even though it may seem like language is outside of any one of our individual control, one can influence one's immediate environment and that practicing this line of thought ensures over time that such prejudiced thoughts and biases are defeated. Taking actions at the local level, between speakers, is effective; one telling the other that what they said is offensive can change attitudes and minds about certain ideas.

In the first part of his essay, Croom (2011) makes the distinction between how linguists and philosophers of language have come to analyze slurs as either being semantic types for the former and without semantic types and in a more analytical language for the latter. Though some (Potts) say that there is a sharp distinction between expressives and descriptives in semantic types and there can be no in between, Croom ventures to explain how there in fact can be an in between, and that it supersedes the distinction between these two types; he proposes a system that better illustrates the semantic content behind slurs/hate speech. For instance, instead of using descriptive vs.

expressive or mixed type and involving a “derogatory force” on the part of the speaker, my theory rather focuses on the impact and understanding of the slur on the part of the hearer as speakers can sometimes make racial slurs/hateful speech toward persons without even knowing it, thus accounts that take into account the speaker’s intention are only halfway to a whole understanding of meaning.

Contextualism is a premature surrender in the search for a principled analysis of epithets, and should be left as a last resort.”

(From, page 6, Hom).

Hom defines the Derogatory Force saying that epithets forcefully convey hatred and contempt of their targets. He also goes on to explain the derogatory autonomy that epithets carry stating that the derogatory force for any epithet is independent of the attitudes of any of its particular speakers. Somehow this is not at odds with saying that the speaker must have hatred or contempt for the receiver. This is the basis for what may be called the pejorative force of an epithet, something Hom claims is the reason for his semantic account of combinatorial externalism. Rather, I see this as a great motivator for common ground guiding the usage of certain words/phrases with the pejorative force coming from that grounded experience of the receiver (Hom).

Hom speaks on the truth-conditions of epithets, stating how epithets make a determinate contribution to the truth-conditions of assertoric sentences in which they occur. These contributions are meaningful in his assessment but ultimately false. “Racist claims are wrong, and incorrectly track the world” (Hom 12) is something which I *prima facie* agree with but which is made under the auspices of truth-conditional semantics, meaning that it is meant to report on the objective truth of the matter. This is all well and good, but it does not actually mean anything because there are racists and they will

continue to be racist regardless of what the objective reality states, and so one must gain an account of how these people think about the world around them. I believe mental spaces is well suited to this endeavor as it explores the mental states of the people engaged in dialogue, and not merely whether what was said was “true”; that is to say, racist claims need not be false in order to be wrong. One need not explore the absolute veridicality of statements that any non-racist person can see are false to pass judgment on the racist in question and say he is morally wrong (Hom).

Hom states that an institution of racism can be modeled as the composition of an ideology and a set of practices. He then goes on to explain his view of combinatorial externalism which I will not detail here. His main argument is that epithets both insult and threaten the intended targets, through both predicating negative properties to them and invoking the threat of discriminatory practice towards them. This is where my argument is made: by bridging semantics with pragmatics, by bridging ideology with practice, and by bridging external societally constructing racist realities (common ground for some) with mental spaces and context so one gets a fuller account of what hate speech represents (Hom). ²

Attitudinal Semantics

Paul Saka describes what he calls “attitudinal semantics” and proposes it as an alternative to truth-conditional semantics (6). He goes on to detail in Chapter 5 how truth-conditional semantics is inadequate for explaining hate speech. He cites Fauconnier and

2

Hom gives a good account of exactly what the theories are that are competing in explaining hate speech through truth conditional semantics. However Saka gives a great tidbit on just how prevalent the usage of truth-conditional semantics is in the field of linguistics.

Turner both, but does not seem to mention mental spaces or conceptual integration theory at all. I believe he is mainly advancing his own theory within the realm of cognitive semantics and it may stand to compete with Fauconnier's treatment.

An extended mental spaces model

In this section, I will demonstrate the utility of the mental spaces approach to natural language as applied to hate speech. This approach offers a more complete understanding of speaker's intention, audience's interpretation, and offense within a cultural community.

Mental Spaces Background

Fauconnier states that mental spaces are set up not just by explicit space builders but by other more indirect grammatical means and also by nonlinguistic pragmatic, cultural, and contextual factors (Fauconnier, "Mental Spaces" XXXIV).

At its most basic level mental spaces theory attempts to "explain how the addressee might encode information at the referential level by dividing it into concepts relevant to different aspects of the scenario" (Oakley 3).

Mental spaces enable the analyst to take the speaker's intentions and beliefs into account, while accounting for discrepancies in common ground between them. Mental spaces have representations of relationships and scenarios perceived, imagined, or remembered by interlocutors. Using mental spaces one is able to illustrate the elements of discourse (Oakley 3).

Mental spaces are not possible worlds because they are only partially configured whereas possible worlds are fully configured. This is part of the theory and not a

shortcoming because such a partitioning does not exist in the brain cognitively. The spaces also undergo continuous modification. The mental space constructions are cognitive; they are not something that is being referred to, but rather something that itself can be used to refer to real, and perhaps imaginary, worlds. Importantly this includes elements (roles) that do not, and cannot, have direct reference in the world (Fauconnier, “Mental Spaces” XXXVI).

Fauconnier also states that work in cognitive and construction grammar suggests that syntactic configurations are a means of accessing very general frames (discussed below). These frames in turn map on to more specified frames via lexical specification. Through lexical specification those frames in turn map on to even more specific ones determined by local context, local space connections, and relevant cultural and background knowledge. The frames provide the abstract-induced schemas that drive mapping across mental spaces (Fauconnier, “Mental Spaces” XXXIX).

Through the varied syntactic configurations of “You’re not like other X”, one accesses frames via lexical specification, which in turn access even more specific frames determined by relevant local and cultural context and background knowledge (Fauconnier, “Mental Spaces” XXXIX).

Mental spaces contain representations of entities and relationships as they are “perceived, imagined, or remembered by discourse participants” (Oakley 3). Through the course of conversation, mental spaces are built up, as the construction of meaning fundamentally relies on being able to have these shared structures in place for understanding (Fauconnier, “Mental Spaces” 110). The frames that are the background to

mental spaces give insight into just how common ground functions in miscommunication to produce humorous and sometimes disastrous results (Oakley 3).

Fauconnier states that “A language expression E does not have meaning in itself; rather it has a meaning potential, and it is only within a complete discourse and context that meaning will actually be produced” (Mappings 37). In seeing that one cannot separate the sentence from the contextual features about that sentence it is demonstrated that most, if not all, current models of how hate speech works semantically and pragmatically fail to produce truly meaningful results. Going back to examples where X could be an applicant or a gamer, or contexts in which X = black people is not always a negative construal (e.g., in a geneticist’s office), the vast capacity for meaning potential this construction wields is further illustrated.

A basic picture of the situation

Pre-Utterance – What prompts the utterance

Utterance – the utterance itself, “You’re not like other black people”

Post-Utterance – How the utterance is taken/received –possibly the conceptualization on the receivers end

Take a conversation between two people in which one responds with, “You’re not like other X”; in this case in particular, “You’re not like other black people.” It is usually in response to something said/done that is thought to be atypical for that person based on the assumptions of their group (i.e. black people). For instance, it could be saying something “smart” or using big words, or being articulate, this prompts the speaker to say the construction. Notice that the conversation would never go, “You’re not like other

niggers” or “You’re not black?” or “Oh, I thought you were black/blacker.” These may more obviously go in the direction of being more explicitly racist in their overtones, and also are not necessarily intended to be a compliment.

I do not believe that the speaker is referencing an in-group out-group bias in the sense that he or she believes that the receiver is different from other members of that out-group, or that he or she is different because that member is referencing something from the speaker’s in-group. Rather I believe that there are prototypical characteristics thought of as being associated with black people and characteristics which are thought of as being associated with other races or peoples. These prototypical features are represented in such a way that some are more salient than others (i.e., the stereotype that black people are stupid is more salient to black people than the fact that black people are statistically taller). This of course is determined by the speaker and receiver’s common ground and what they know about black people, meaning that the receiver’s view about black people will almost certainly be different than the speaker’s view of black people because of the lived experience in being a black person in society. Whereas the speaker must rely on what they have witnessed in black people, ranging from something as intimate as having a close friend to as distant as only knowing black people through what the television shows them. The receiver must necessarily take the stance of the speaker’s knowledge about black people, and the perceived stereotypes about them being more salient to them in their prototypical knowledge structure, in order to understand that there is distance from the receiver and that group’s stereotypical characteristics.

Frames

Common ground evokes conceptual structure in many forms. One such form that is directly relevant to the understanding of “You’re not like other X” is that of how frames are developed (Croft and Cruse 8-28).

Frame semantics keeps in mind that there must be relevant contextual features to language in order for felicitous understanding to occur (Fillmore 222). Frames come in numerous forms but all function similarly in organizing knowledge toward an associative understanding of words (Fillmore 224). Take for instance the relationship between the words *father* and *son*. There is a presupposed nature to this relationship such that “we can know the meanings of the individual words only by first understanding the factual basis for the relationship which they identify” (Fillmore 224). Frame semantics is a way to account for a need that developed in cognitive psychology, linguistics, and artificial intelligence, in expressing continuities between language and experience through organization of concepts based on experience (Croft and Cruse 8-28). Frames evoke understanding of attitudes in ways that Truth Conditional Semantics (TCS) cannot access. A typical example is the distinction between the usages of boy/man and girl/woman where girl is used for females far older than similarly aged males who could conceivably be called boys (Croft and Cruse 8-28). In the frame semantic analysis account of these differences, all of these words evoke frames that include not just a gender distinction but also differences in behavior and attitudes toward these different gendered terms. Such a distinction could also be determined along lines of societally determined institutions of power and hegemony, such that when one hypercorrects in a situation to call someone a young woman instead of a girl.

A frame semantic account of “You’re not like other X” employs not just an understanding that, for example, “black people” is a racial distinction also an understanding of the sociological implications of black people and their “place” in societal standing with regards to privilege and denigrating attitudes. It is sometimes difficult to see how one makes this distinction in society if one is a member of the hegemonically empowered. It could be argued that in America there is a frame that is culturally developed to see certain situations in regards to race relations and its shortcomings. This frame profiles different parts of what is said and enables a construal toward a certain understanding that may not take place if not for this frame. Take, for instance, reporting on what is seen in an image. If the image is of a white person in American society, they will be called a person and a neutral frame will be evoked. The profiling done is in absence of any racial background because people who are white in the United States are seen as being the norm. On the other hand, if the image is of a black person the viewer will report that it is of a black person rather than just a person, even though the label of person could apply to both (Croft and Cruse 8-28). Here the profiling is done with regard to the context of racial categories and distinctions in contrast to what is seen as normal or typical. An important note here is that all of this is done unconsciously and without volition; it is a product of how one has built up these race-based frames in our conceptual structure. Through that example, it is easy to see that a truth conditional account fails to access these nuances which are only accessed through a societal understanding.

In the examined construction, there are mixtures of clashing frames to be analyzed. Those frames are: first, the societally constructed frame of “black people”, and

second, the frame of a single person being held against that frame and noticing an incongruity of expected behavior. A second set of clashing frames consists of the compliment frame of address (e.g. “You look lovely in that dress”) and the insult frame of address being mixed together to produce something which come across *prima facie* as a compliment but relies upon the backgrounded frame of an insult. This adds crucial contextual elements to the mental spaces model through providing background information. This background information is intuitively drawn upon in meaning production. There could be no insult on which to form the “compliment” if there was no frame for black people, compliments, or insults.

ICMs

Based on our recent account of the frames involved it becomes necessary to discuss how certain frames work. George Lakoff calls these manifestations of frames Idealized Cognitive Models or ICMs (Croft and Cruse 28-32). ICMs represent an idealized version of certain frames in that there are certain prototypical accounts of how they typically function. An example of one such ICM is the BACHELOR frame where instead of simply being defined as an ADULT UNMARRIED MALE, as classical accounts of categorization suggest, the definition is more representative of the encyclopedic knowledge of the social reality behind the use of the term. So instead of the Pope technically fitting into the category of an adult unmarried male but being ill-suited to actually ever being labeled as a “bachelor,” for there are more prototypical accounts.

In the structuring of knowledge about stereotypes there is a prototypical account of certain groups and their characteristics/behaviors. It is my proposition that this is how analysts should examine some qualities of hate speech and what it relies on for

understanding. In “You’re not like other X”, where X is some social group, what one is basing knowledge of that social group on is related to how that group is represented prototypically or stereotypically in one’s mind. An example of this phenomenon is the ICM for *mother* where there is a cluster of several different ICMs (Lakoff 74-76; 79):

BIRTH: the person giving birth is the mother

GENETIC: the female who contributed the genetic material is the mother

NURTURANCE: the female adult who nurtures and raises a child is the mother of that child

MARITAL: the wife of the father is the mother

GENEALOGICAL: the closest female ancestor is the mother

This also manifests itself in the phrase “Working mother”; societally this is seen as a non-prototypical account of what *mother* means. Expressions that focus on the non-prototypical accounts, or “less-good” exemplars, in ICMs are called radial categories (Lakoff 91). The *Working Mother* example is one such instance of radial categories, where the ICM for mother is activated in reaction to the activation of the “noncentral extension” (radial category) (Lakoff 91).

This relates to hate speech and the construction “You’re not like other X” in several ways. It is possible, from the presuppositions of the sentence, that there is the rejection to the entire idea that someone is like other X, but usually such accusations take the form of “You’re not X” or “You’re no X” (Oakley 10; Lakoff 134). Examples of such would be “You’re no black person” or “You’re not a black person”, although such uses seem awkward and likely they would never be uttered except under specific circumstances. This is akin to rejecting the very notion that someone could be a member of a category vs. merely rejecting that they are an extension of that category; that is to say, rejecting the ICM versus the extensions.

Another facet is the multiple ICMs at work and identifying them. For time's sake, I will stick with the instance of "You're not like other black people" for X. Here are some possible ICMs at work.

BLACKNESS: This is an ICM for the social/racial identity of being a black person; the degree to which this varies is dependent on how society stereotypes black people.

For example: the "blacker" you are (in regard to fulfilling certain stereotypical traits: inarticulate/uneducated/etc.) the more you resemble society's ICM for blackness.

PEOPLE: This may seem somewhat obvious, but the traits of the group are relayed to the individual members of that group such that one can stand for the whole and the whole for the actions of one.

These ICMs form the basis of what kind of conversational implicatures to draw from the utterance, "You're not like other black people." Social stereotypes are metonymic cases where the subcategory within the ICM stands for the ICM as the whole; this is typical for making quick judgments about people which can rely on certain biases against race/gender/etc (cf., Lakoff 79). As these are quick judgments about people, they can (and are) frequently wrong in the sense that they fail to capture the humanity of the person assessed. As ICMs can serve as direct input to mental spaces, they find themselves in a similar position to frames in the utility to meaning production which is mainly that they serve as developing the sociological context in which the meaning is derived, and thus providing the backdrop for one to make the comparisons and contrasts.

Common Ground

Crucial to the full understanding of hate speech is a proper analysis of the contextual features which accompany the utterance. A diagram below is included to

illustrate the differences that each speaker and receiver brings to the conversation in terms of their shared common ground.

Figure 1 – Mutual Common Ground

The Venn-like diagram in figure 1 will never entirely overlap each other. In fact, the degree to which they do overlap may be quite small if the participants speak different languages or are from wildly different cultures, but if the human condition has anything to say about experience, there should at least be a little overlap that every human shares with one another when trying to communicate. What it would mean if they overlapped completely is that the people speaking to each other were the exact same person - they would share every thought and contextual history, making for quite a boring conversation.

Common ground is the connective fiber in the muscle that strengthens meaning. Bridging the gap between sociolinguistic, semantic, and pragmatic accounts of hate speech and pejoration is the mutual understanding, or lack thereof, between interlocutors.

According to Clark, Common Ground is "...the sum of [the speakers] mutual, common, or joint knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions" (Clark 93).

Sociocultural aspects of communication and cognition are sparsely explored in cognitive linguistic approaches to meaning. This is a yet to be explored aspect of the field, and an extremely important one at that, as the pragmatic function and meaning can vary drastically depending on which person is saying something and the social infrastructure and context surrounding the interlocutors.

Clark says that if Austin is right, "to understand what speakers mean, we must look at the joint activity or social practice they are engaged in" (Clark 140).

How does one know that certain features of background knowledge are more relevant than other features? For example, when uttering "You're not like other black people," the speaker does not (usually) intend to say that the receiver isn't dark skinned, they do not mean to say that the receiver is not able to grow facial hair; they do not mean that the receiver does not speak English, or that they are not like other black people because the receiver is taller than average. What they mean to say is something constitutive of their assessment of the social aspects of black people and their racist assumptions about them. By distancing the receiver from those negative presupposed stereotypical aspects, they are able to assume that they are complimenting the receiver in saying they are not like them. This is akin to saying, "You know, you're not like most genocidal maniacs" or "You're not like other drug lords". It has to be something to compare and establish a contrasting relationship between that category and the individual they are speaking to. If one was to say, "You're not like most other applicants" this conveys the same sentiment in that they are saying (usually) that the applicant in question

is better in some way, more prepared/experienced/etc. Thus, there seems to be the establishment of a negative group to compare the individual against but there must also be some linkage between the individual and the group categorized. For instance, it would mean something altogether different for someone to say that someone else is "Not like a Vacuum cleaner," or "Not like a pen." The thing compared to, as far as group categories go, must contain something to which one can contrast social functions. To say of someone that "they are not boars" is one. Furthermore to say "You're no boar" is yet another way of construal. The first conveys that the receiver is not alike in character to that of a usually perceived as ill-tempered/angry boar. The second form seems like the speaker is dismissing the very notion that the receiver could be construed as a boar in characteristics.

Clark speaks of Stalnaker who argued that "the essential effect of an assertion is to change the presuppositions in the conversation by adding the content of what is asserted to what is presupposed"(1999). In this sense the act of asserting that "You're not like other black people" acts upon a presupposition that black people are all the same and that each of the interlocutors knows it and builds upon that presupposition to further claim that someone is in fact not like the other black people. This then becomes common ground for the interlocutors as well as everything in the conversation prior. (Clark 39).

Clark argues that at any moment the common ground of most activities can be broken down into three parts:

1. Initial Common Ground: This is the set of background facts, assumptions, and beliefs the participants presupposed when they entered the joint activity."

2. *Current State of the Joint Activity: This is what the participants presuppose to be the state of the activity at the moment*"

3. *Public Events so Far: These are the events the participants presuppose have occurred in the public leading up to the current state.*"

(From, page 43, Clark).

So it may be said that what I am studying in the case of the person taking offense to the statement, "You're not like other black people," is the discrepancy of common ground between the interlocutors, as one assumes there to be a common understanding of black people that the other does not share.

Communal Common Ground

Categorization in regards to communal common ground often occurs through grouping people by nationality, profession, hobbies, language, religion, or politics, says Clark (100). This grouping together enables certain assumptions about what the subjects know, believe, or assume. There are no hard and fast lines here, but to Clark's distinction in *Communal Common Ground* I would add that humans base certain assumptions about what people know, broadly speaking, on the basis of race and gender as well. It is through these assumptions that certain questions and statements are made more toward members of one *Cultural Community* than another. For instance, currently one is more likely to assume that women know more about caregiving or that Black people know more about rap music, and other such stereotypes. This leads to certain cultural communities having a distinction between what is *inside information* and what is *outside information*. Inside information pertains to that which is known by members of that community mutually, whereas outside information is what outsiders assume is inside information for that

community. There are many different kinds of cultural communities which have a shared expertise (Nationality, Residence, Education, Occupation, Employment, Hobby, Language, Religion, Politics, Ethnicity, Subculture, Cohort, Gender, etc.), as claimed by Clark (101-103). This distinction is made all the more clear when used in describing racial relations. For instance, the outside information is that which is assumed by everyone outside of a race about that race, including but not limited to stereotypes about that race. The inside information for a race would be how that race is treated according to societal norms, which, for instance, could exist along an axis of privilege (MacIntosh). This racial knowledge could be how they are treated and thus how they relate with members both within their race and outside of it, but also the language used in interactions. There may develop a certain lingo that only people “in the know” have access to.

Differences in common ground between what is inside information and outside information can and often do lead to misunderstandings. The construction “You’re not like other black people” is one such example of misunderstanding. Clark suggests the false consensus effect, expecting others to know what you know, as a possible mechanism for why someone would have started off saying such a thing (Clark 111). This could happen through the outside information of the speaker assuming that the receiver in question was initially just like other black people (a problematic assumption at best) until something prompted an incongruity with their outside knowledge about what commonalities are shared between black people.

Friends and strangers share different amounts of common ground. Thus someone who is well known to someone else shares a lot of common ground with them whereas a

stranger shares no personal common ground (Clark 115). The speaker in question in the case of strangers would have to be someone who did not share a lot of personal common ground with the receiving black person as these kinds of comments are usually said when getting to know someone better. It is my assumption that they are acquaintances bordering on becoming friends (barring this experience), and thus share a limited amount of personal common ground. On this basis the speaker is trying to establish a better relationship with the receiver by attempting to compliment them. Unfortunately, the common ground that is established can go in wildly different directions depending on the interpretation and surrounding context.

Clashing Speech Acts

There exists a clash, the clash between Speech Acts (cf. Austin & Searle). This clash is the attempt at expressing a compliment that is crucially based upon an insult. The speaker intends there to be the illocution of a compliment coming across to the receiver. This has a chance of being taken up in the perlocutionary effect of accepting the compliment and feeling complimented. Feeling insulted however, relies upon the subsequent negative perlocution which is in direct opposition with the first (if we are to assume that feeling complimented and insulted are opposite each other). According to Austin (98-164), there are three broad classes of speech act:

Locution: What is said

Illocution: What is intended to come across

*Perlocution: What becomes of the locution
(From, Austin 98-164)*

Illocution = compliment ➡ Perlocutionary effect (positive) Compliment ➡ Subsequent
Perlocutionary effect (negative) Insult

How exactly this unfolds is wrapped up in the pragmatics of the locution, “You’re not like other black people.”

Pragmatics

What is pragmatics? Levinson says that there is a difference between sentence and utterance meaning and that semantics is the study of sentence meaning while pragmatics is the study of utterance meaning (Levinson 19). So the utterance could be said to have certain implications beyond what the mere sentence meaning conveys. Essential to the understanding of these utterance implications, however, is the context that surrounds them. In one interpretation, context could be taken to be the sum of human knowledge, or that knowledge which is relevant to the production and interpretation of utterances (Levinson 22).

Conversational implicature bridges the gap between the stable senses of the semantics of expressions and the often unstable and context-specific pragmatic meaning through a set of implicatures (Levinson 99). Implicatures are inferences drawn from, among other things, utterances in conversation and basic Gricean assumptions about the cooperative nature of communication (Levinson 104).

Grice’s maxims of conversation can be thought of as a set of guidelines for effective use of language in conversation, generally engaging a cooperative principle (Levinson 101). Participants in conversations, in order to communicate as effectively as possible, follow this set of maxims such that they are communicating in an efficient, rational, and cooperative fashion. It is not the point that these maxims are always

followed to the letter, but rather that these are a set of guiding assumptions such that when they are violated one takes notice (Levinson 102).

Those inferences that come from following the maxims are standard implicatures that do not need particular contextual information in order to be inferred (Levinson 104).

In the construction, “You’re not like other X,” the inferences that one draws about X depend, in part, on their knowledge of what X is being contrasted against. This contrast is drawn from both societally relevant knowledge about what X is and the immediate context preceding the construction that is uttered. The preceding context following the Grecian principle of relevance is what prompts the utterance to be said in the first place.

In the specific sense of “You’re not like other black people” being uttered by a medical professional in the situation of a genetics lab gives the relevant contrast of genetic information about a specific group of people from which an individual stands “not like other black people” which is starkly different from the racist implications of “You’re not like other black people” being said by someone after something anomalous compared to their background knowledge and stereotypes about black people and their behaviors. The implication that is drawn from the utterance in the case of the racist remark is that the person is better than other black people. The implication that is drawn from the case of genetic testing is simply that the person has a different DNA makeup. It is through the principle of quality that the black person in question differentiates which implication is intended. That is to say, when the utterance happens and there is no contextual information provided to the analyzer as to what is being contrasted against, the implication could be anything; i.e. could be relevant to any quality about the category black people.

It is through the interplay between the pragmatic and semantic functions of language that the ambiguity of hate speech is better understood. As we shall see in the next section, using mental spaces further elucidates this ambiguity by allowing for the complex contextual information necessary for proper understanding.

Final Mental Spaces Analysis

So far, I have discussed how it is imperative to add phrases and remove intentions from the qualifications of hate speech. I will now go on to detail, in a mental spaces account of meaning, just how to account for the ambivalence in the construction, “You’re not like other X,” specifically focusing in on, “You’re not like other black people.”

First there exists a type/token distinction between Black People and a Black Person. Namely, black people in the distinction are a type while the individual instance of a black person is the token. A fundamental aspect of mental spaces is that the token may or may not carry properties of the type from which it is drawn. This is, humorously, a special case where the black person is logically and culturally the “token.”

There are two mental spaces set up in each scenario (taken as compliment vs. insult). When taken as a compliment, as seen in figure 2, the first space is that of the speaker’s reality and interaction with the Out-group. Within this space is the black person who is an individual and the group Black People at large. In this space there are black people who have the perceived characteristics as informed by society and the common ground between the speaker and receiver. Note that there is no pragmatic connection between token in the Speaker’s Reality space and any given token in the B. People space. This is because the speaker sees the receiver as not sharing those characteristics of the group B. People. The second space is the Out-group space. This space has the potential to

reference any group for which the speaker does not share some sociologically defined category (gender/race/ethnicity/sexual orientation/etc). In this space there is B. People as well, sharing a pragmatic connection to the Speaker's Reality space. This demonstrates the interaction between the speaker's perceived characteristics of black people and B. People. There is no counterpart to B. Person in the Out-group Space as the speaker, in making the "compliment," has projected an act of solidarity to the receiver. They mean to say that in the B. Person, not sharing characteristics with B. People the B. Person no longer has an out-group status. This person is now more like them or, put another way, less like the perceived out-group of black people. This can be a scalar assumption as well, since the degree of "blackness," as previously discussed in regards to ICMs, is well documented in a cultural stereotype of black people. For instance, President Barack Obama was called "not black enough," or "not black at all" by some people both within and outside the African American community. This can even have nothing to do with the skin pigmentation of blackness, as former President Clinton was once called the first black president for having what are perceived as "black characteristics." These are all interesting in that they depict the shifting of common ground that one must accept for the different instances of the same primer of "blackness" and "black people" at large. Through the discourse, the attitudinal focus within this scenario is on that of the speaker's reality and the interaction space and how it interacts with the Outgroup space.

In the negative interpretation, otherwise called the insult interpretation, relies upon the same model, but in this instance the common ground of the receiver is shifted toward there being less shared between them. Most importantly, the speaker is speaking with, usually, limited actual experience with black people, and thus relies upon a more

stereotyped view of the group. They may think they know black people from the media, or from casual conversations with colleagues at work. However, crucially, their understanding has not expanded enough to include the breadth of knowledge that black people represent a diverse group of individuals that come from all walks of life. This is both true and false of the person receiving such a “compliment,” for they must accept the same premise that the speaker does to accept the compliment. This is often done without overt knowledge of either the speaker or the receiver as neither in the moment would admit to harboring racist beliefs.

When taken as an insult, as shown in figure 3, the pragmatic connection between B. Person in the Speaker’s reality space and B. Person in the Outgroup space is made by the receiver’s conceptualization of the “compliment.” The receiver sees a connection between who they are and who B. People (or another outgroup) are. As such there is a pragmatic connection within the Outgroup Space from B. Person to B. People. A pragmatic connection is absent from B. People in the Outgroup Space to B. People in the Speaker’s reality Space because the receiver’s beliefs about black people are not the stereotyped beliefs about black people that the Speaker holds.

Figure 2 - Here is, "You're not like other black people" when taken as a compliment

Bolded circles indicate attentional focus

Figure 3 - Here is, "You're not like other black people" when taken as an insult

Implementing Coulson and Oakley's "grounding box" (Coulson and Oakley 1517) with the addition of perlocutionary effect, one has a more contextually representative understanding of just how clashing frames come into play in determining the meaning of this *insult-iment/compli-sult*. As Coulson and Oakley state, the "grounding box" is not a mental space and may not in fact be representational like mental spaces (Coulson and Oakley 1517). What is contained within the grounding box for them is the analyst's list of important contextual assumptions. These assumptions guide how the meaning of the constructions is taken with respect to context.

Conclusion

I do not believe in regulating free speech per se, but rather in creating a culture where hate speech is immediately addressed and definitively disempowered. This could be done through moral imperatives such as posters around campus, though I do not think that that would be very effective. Rather, I think that a harm-reduction model of hate speech should be adopted, where people are trying to be kept aware of their effect on others through their speech. Just like how one tries to treat others as they would like to be treated, this should extend to speech as well as speech can harm just like any fist. More than that, when certain things are said and not addressed, a culture of acceptance is created. The creation of a less harmful society is our goal here. Lofty, sure. However, the alternative is suffering for those whom are already oppressed structurally, and relying upon them to "not get offended" rather than on the perpetrators of such harmful speech.

Appendix

“You’re not like other Black People” Sources in Corpus

“Not like other black girls”

<http://articles.latimes.com/2003/feb/09/books/bk-reynolds9>

“Not like other black Americans”

<http://jamaica-star.com/thestar/20081212/pastor/pastor1.html>

“not like other black people”

<http://m.voices.yahoo.com/are-black-people-preoccupied-race-516721.html>

“Not like other black guys, black and of Caribbean descent”

<https://mobile.twitter.com/dejonpiere/status/261423427380989952>

“Not like other black people” as mentioned on twitter

<https://twitter.com/search?q=%22not%20like%20other%20black%22%20include%3Aretweets&src=typd>

“You’re not like other black people”

<http://www.thehomelessgirl.com/2012/07/how-i-went-from-a-conservative-to-a-liberal/>

“You’re not like other black people”

<http://blackfeminists.org/2012/10/12/caitlin-moran-lena-dunham-girls-im-all-too-familiar-with/>

“Occasionally, African American students get a glimpse into the world of unconscious racism as demonstrated in comments such as those related to us by students who participated in the study described in this article: “When I [a White person] talk about those Blacks, I really wasn’t talking about you,” “You [a Black person] are not like the rest of them. You’re different,” “If only there were more of them [Black people] like you [a Black person],” and “I don’t think of you [a Black person] as Black.”

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/2696265>

“You are not like other black women”

<http://thecharlottepost.com/index.php?src=news&srctype=detail&category=Life%20and%20Religion&refno=5024>

“I don’t have a problem hiring blacks. You can ask them [pointing to Jerome and the other Latinos]. I hire black men, too. Right now I have one man from Trinidad who’s going to tell them [pointing to the Jerome and Louis] what to do. But these young men are not like other black men, I mean they are different from blacks from other countries.

Well, you can say that about all Americans, too. Look I have no problem, so long as they do good work. He has to know what he is doing. He has to want to work. Like these men.”

<http://ccis.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/wrkg98.pdf>

On an individual level they sometime try to console us by assuring us that we are not like other Black people i.e. the ones they don't know so well. Those of us with lighter complexions are sometimes granted the dubious privilege of being told we are not Black, but 'half-caste'.

<http://www.diversemag.co.uk/race-detail>

I would hear things like, “You're not like other black people,” but it wouldn't mean a thing to me back then, because I didn't identify with that side of myself, so what they were saying didn't seem applicable to myself.

<http://pattybees.tumblr.com/post/35367502073/biracist>

Raising African American Youth in a Racially Unjust Society: A Message for All Parents
Oronde A. Miller

“These micro-aggressions, as they are frequently called, include being followed around and watched in stores, being asked to represent the “black perspective” in classroom discussions, having people move away from you on the sidewalk, having women clutch their handbags when you get near them, being told you are “not like the rest of them” because of your mastery of the “formal” English language”

http://www.familyandchildwellbeing.com/images/Adoptalk_Article_-_Extended_Version_-_September_12_2012_-_Final_PDF.pdf

Racial Microaggressions in the Life Experience of Black Americans

<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/pro/39/3/329.html>

<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/aap/S/1/88/>

Racial microaggressions and the Asian American experience.

<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/aap/S/1/88/>

“You are not like the rest of those south Asians”

http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?men_tab=srchresults&handle=hein.journals/asiapalj10&size=2&collection=journals&set_as_cursor=&id=73

“dangerous form of white racism occurs when white people treat a few black people as special”

http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/ucinlr63&g_sent=1&collection=journals&id=289

“because you are not like the rest of them”

<http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3009&context=mlr>

Stereotypes and prejudice see page 9, 10, 11. Says that these remarks are often heard by POC good source for frequency of these phrases.

http://www.teqjournal.org/backvols/1997/24_3/1997v24n302.PDF

“The Selective Endorsement of Ethnicity: Individuals who may act like your best friend (who are usually racists whom you only see every ten years), always patting you on the back, telling all their friends how you are “not like the rest of them,” and that you are a “good (Indian) minority.” This individual reinforces tokenism and quickly reverts back to being a racist as soon as you leave the room. Contributed by Richard Williams, American Indian College Fund.”

http://www.oregonname.org/pdf/100_Defensive_Tactics_Pewewardy.pdf

“They’re not like other niggers”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOxOR3x8FBQ&feature=youtu.be>

Recent twitter hashtag #strugglesofbeingblack , good source of common grievances.

*<https://twitter.com/CalllMeLilly/status/300626483603456000> “You’re black? You don’t sound like you’re black.”

* https://twitter.com/_xKeyandraa/status/300626734217310208 “hearing, ‘you’re pretty for a black girl’”

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