KNITTING AS POLITICS: HOW ONE TRADITIONALLY NON-POLITICAL COMMUNITY ENGAGES WITH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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By

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ABSTRACT

This discursive linguistic study examines how indie yarn dyers in a knitting community on Instagram position themselves in relation to a political ban. In June of 2019, a popular knitting pattern website, Ravelry, released a ban on all pro-Trump rhetoric on the site, including in patterns and in forums. Members of the knitting community flocked to Instagram to support or protest this ban. In this study, I explore how small business owners (specifically yarn dyers) reacted to this Ravelry ban on Instagram. This study examines how these yarn dyers navigate multiple positions (Harre and van Lagenhove 1999), and intertextually reference (Bakhtin 1981) the Ravelry ban in their Instagram posts. I also study how these dyers use entextualization, or the placement of source text within a new context (Bauman & Briggs 1990), to place aspects of the Ravelry ban in their own posts, and ultimately reframe discourse on the larger political ban onto a more personal level through stance, position, and entextualization.

This study is guided by the following questions: how do the members of non-political community position themselves when addressing political concerns? Furthermore, how do yarn dyers use entextualization to respond to and reframe a political ban? By exploring these questions, this research aims to contribute to understanding how political issues are negotiated on a public social media platform, and concludes by
proposing that in this context, politics may be discussed through a personal moral discourse lens.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to my family, thesis advisor, Professor Hamilton, MLC advisor Professor Johnston, and all my friends who helped along the way.

Many thanks,
Jordana Bickel
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INTRODUCTION: When Knitting Converges with Politics

In January of 2019, a woman named Karen Templer, the owner of a knitting supply shop called Fringe Association Co., published a blogpost about an upcoming trip to India. In her post, she wrote that when a friend’s parents offered to bring her on their family trip, it was like “…being offered a seat on a flight to Mars” (Saxena 2019). Templer has long been a well-known pillar of the knitting community, which is comprised of people who practice knitting, crocheting, and yarn dying, due to her supply shop. However, despite Templer’s community status, backlash to her post occurred almost immediately, with members of the knitting community commenting on the racist and colonial mindset it portrayed. Soon, numerous knitters were speaking up against marginalization and encouraging increased diversity in the community on the social media site, Instagram (Ibid). This blogpost sparked discussions on fostering inclusivity in the community, ranging from discussions of fat-phobia and writing more size inclusive patterns and supporting businesses run by people of color. People tagged their Instagram posts with hashtags such as “#diversity” and “#diversknitty” to indicate support of continuing conversations on inclusivity within the community (@La Bien Aimee 2019).

While knitting has long been used in social and political movements, rarely have politics been a topic of conversation within the community itself -- a change catalyzed by Templer’s article (Romano 2019).

After January, discussion within the community on Instagram about inclusivity seemed to dwindle, giving way to regular talk about new patterns and yarn. However,

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1 Since Instagram is an image-heavy social media website, many businesses use it to showcase patterns, and yarn combinations, while knitters use it to display pictures of finished knitted objects, such as sweaters, and to talk with other knitters and designers. This means that Instagram is frequently the site of knitting-based discussions, debates, and thought-pieces.
political and ideological discourse again rocked the knitting community in June of 2019, when the popular knitting social media website, Ravelry, known primarily for its database of patterns with over eight million users (Chan 2019), released a pro-Trump rhetoric ban across its platform. This new policy banned users from engaging in pro-Trump speech on the website, through patterns and on forums. This time, politics was the focal point of the knitting community, and Instagram was flooded with knitters posting their opinions on the ban.

In this day and age, it is commonplace for political discourse to appear not only in newspapers and on television, but also on social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter. With news constantly accessible by computer and iPhone, more people now are not only able to read the news at any time of day, but are able to share their own opinions on the news easily. With this increased prevalence of political rhetoric, it can be argued that there is also an increase in the types of communities that take part in this discourse.

As we can see from these discussions that occurred on Instagram, political discourse may occur in communities of practice not generally associated with politics, such as arts and crafts. One traditionally non-political community that has increasingly engaged with political discourse is what I call the “knitting community”. The knitting community, as I define it, is a community of practice; a member of the knitting community is thus someone who knits, crochets, makes or buys knitting/crochet patterns, or is someone who dyes yarn for similar craft purposes. Many participants within this community are also members of the knitting website, Ravelry, which is a social media website created for the buying and selling of yarns and patterns. With over eight million users (Chan 2019), Ravelry is easily one of the most common sites people in the knitting
community frequent, and is a hub for project help and design ideas. Though the Ravelry platform did not release formal comments during diversity discussions in January of 2019, they would soon release a political ban that would spark months of controversy within the knitting community (Noor 2020).

The Ravelry Ban

On June 23rd, 2019, Ravelry suddenly released a pro-Trump rhetoric ban, effective immediately, across its platform. This ban, which was modelled off a similar political rhetoric ban on a website called RPG.net, a role-playing forum, took the position that any pro-Trump rhetoric was negative and harmful, and decided to moderate the website in a political manner by banning pro-Trump speech within patterns and in the website forums. The beginning of it reads:

“We are banning support of Donald Trump and his administration on Ravelry.

This includes support in the form of forum posts, projects, patterns, profiles, and all other content. Note that your project data will never be deleted. We will never delete your Ravelry project data for any reason and if a project needs to be removed from the site, we will make sure that you have access to your data. Even if you are permanently banned from Ravelry, you will still be able to access any patterns that you purchased. Also, we will make sure that you receive a copy of your data.

We cannot provide a space that is inclusive of all and also allow support for open white supremacy. Support of the Trump administration is undeniably support for white supremacy.

The Community Guidelines have been updated with the following language: “Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or
individual policies that harm marginalized groups, all constitute hate speech.””

Through this ban, the platform positioned itself against Donald Trump and his administration, among other wording, suggesting that they “…cannot provide a space that is inclusive of all and also allow support for open white supremacy” (Ravelry 2019). The policy continues to note that they are endorsing neither Democrats nor Republicans, but that they view hate groups as “different” from other types of political positions (Ibid).

The site also states how they plan to handle pro-Trump rhetoric on their website going forward; this website policy is what will be referred to in this study as the “prior text” (Becker 1994), which is term that refers to the primary text that later texts (in this case, Instagram posts) draw from or reference.

Based on Instagram’s hashtag search function, over one thousand posts in the wake of this policy release were tagged in conversation with the Ravelry ban. These posts were made by small business owners and knitting hobbyists alike. While many members of the knitting community likely voiced their opinions on the ban to assert themselves as “in the know” community participants, it soon appeared that small business owners who used Ravelry, such as yarn dyers and pattern writers, also felt obligated to respond to the new Ravelry policy (Romano 2019). Because their businesses are tied to Ravelry, these small business owners would not only have felt pressured to respond publicly to the Ravelry ban, but would have known their posts would impact their number of followers, and thus their income and livelihood.

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2 To read the full ban, please see Appendix A, at the end of this paper.
This system of accountability left knitting community members in a powerful position over small business owners, where the success or failure of those businesses hung in the balance. Through this use of civic consumerism (Gerodimos 2012), or the spending of money on entities that align with one’s values, each knitter was able to extend their support to whichever business’s personal and ethical platform they agree with – causing heightened importance in how dyers and pattern writers framed their views on Ravelry’s ban.

Aims of This Study

In this study, I focus on four of these public Instagram posts made in June of 2019 by yarn-dying small business owners within the knitting community, because of their economic ties to Ravelry. In the following sections, I qualitatively analyze how these small business owners responded similarly on Instagram to the political Ravelry ban, utilizing both a framework of positioning theory (Harre and van Lagemhove 1999) and an intertextual framework of entextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990). To clarify, I examine how the dyers orient, or position, themselves toward this ban, as well as how they take key terms from the ban and incorporate them into their own Instagram posts, a form of entextualization.

The overarching questions I address are how do members of a non-political community position themselves when addressing political concerns? Furthermore, how do these small business owners use entextualization to respond to and reframe a political ban? By exploring these questions, this study analyzes how these yarn dyers utilize entextualization and positioning to reframe a political ban into a discussion of ethics and
personal morals. In sum, it aims to contribute both to literature on political discourse in non-political communities, as well as political discourse on social media websites in an effort to shed light on how people make political arguments in traditionally non-political spaces online.

Central to the argument that these dyers utilized a rhetoric steeped in ethics rather than politics is, of course, the nuanced difference between political discourse and moral discourse. Following Van Dijk (1998), I argue that there is in fact a difference between political discourse and moral discourse, though they can frequently overlap. Van Dijk addresses that political discourse occurs through its participants: it is characterized by its actors (such as politicians), and the recipients of such actions (such as voters). He states that most broadly political discourse occurs by “…all participants in the political process” (Ibid: 13, emphasis his own), something that these dyers, within the context of responding to their followers, are not. Van Dijk then addresses that he believes certain values may be co-opted by political groups, such as equality or independence (Ibid: 16), indicating that these values do not originate from these groups. While political discourse may include ethical discourse, for the purposes of this study I maintain that ethical discourse is a separate concept – one with which the dyers appear to engage more frequently than with individual political platforms or politicians. I identify “moral discourse and/or schema” as discussion based on one’s personal values and ethics, which they may gain from family, friends, work, etc. Therefore, while morals may be represented in political discourse, they are not established from it and may be separate from political party values.
In what follows, I conduct a review of relevant prior literature on communication in social media, intertextuality (as defined by Kristeva 1986), and positioning theory (Harre and van Lagenhove 1999) as they relate to my study. This is followed by my methodology section, where I explain how I obtained my data and how I analyzed the Instagram posts selected. In my analysis section, I analyze four selected Instagram posts, two of which are pro-Ravelry ban (meaning they supported Ravelry’s pro-Trump rhetoric ban), one of which is anti-Ravelry ban (against Ravelry’s rhetoric ban), and one that is ambiguous. I examine how all four posters use similar positioning and intertextual strategies to share their personal beliefs before concluding and discussing the implications of the study.
Theoretical Background

This study utilizes the linguistic frameworks of intertextuality (Kristeva 1986) and positioning theory (Harre and van Lagenhove 1999) to analyze social media discourse and highlight how these two frameworks lend a valuable understanding to examining how a group of small business yarn dyers respond to political rhetoric online. This section is divided into four parts; I begin with this introduction, summarizing why I chose these frameworks; I then foreground my analysis in prominent social media discourse literature, and review current gaps within that field. The third section focuses on studies in intertextuality, and the fourth and final section discusses positioning work in linguistic literature.

In the past twenty years, the rise of the internet as well as social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, have come to have a profound impact on everyday life and how people communicate. With the growth of social media platforms, many, such as Facebook, increasingly host and are sites of political debate (Nutter 2017). In fact, in a study conducted on the 2012 U.S. presidential election, researchers found that 86% of Facebook users and 77% of Twitter users encounter political content on such platform (Haridakis et al. 2017). While Instagram does not have the same social commentary and share-ability function as Facebook and Twitter have, it is likely that Instagram users also encounter such political content. This study aims to analyze how members of traditionally non-political social media communities respond to a politically charged ban through the social media site Instagram.

For this analysis, I utilize the frameworks of intertextuality and positioning to understand how this group of yarn-dying small business owners wrote about Ravelry’s
political rhetoric ban. Intertextuality, which is the study of how texts create references to each other in order to create meaning, helps us analyze what aspects of the Ravelry ban the small business owners engaged with, to better understand how the small business owners decided to discuss and reference the Ravelry ban in their own Instagram posts. Positioning work, or practice of how someone places themselves (or others) in relation to an issue or other person, assists us in understanding where the dyers stood in relation not only to the Ravelry ban, but their own fellow business owners. Together, these two frameworks aid us in understanding 1) how these dyers address the Ravelry ban – do they focus on certain aspects of the ban? And 2) how do they orient themselves in relation to the ban? By examining how these dyers decided to address the Ravelry ban through the lenses of intertextuality and positioning, I conclude that a reframing of the topic occurred across these posts – that the posts the dyers wrote were less political in nature than could be expected (when writing about a political ban), and instead addressed their personal values and belief systems, and whether this ban was in accordance with them.

Communication on Social Media

Most interactions on social media can be categorized as “computer-mediated discourse”, or CMD. This discourse style focuses on communication between people over any sort of network or mobile device; essentially any sort of digital communication (Herring and Androutsopoulos 2015). Many other discourse types may fit into computer-mediated discourse, such as conversational discourse between friends using a messaging app, or a narrative style when sharing a personal anecdote on Facebook, and can thus give insight into author identities (Ibid). Herring and Androutsopoulos argue that
computer-mediated discourse is almost entirely negotiated through verbal interactions, and intertextuality in such interactions is embedded in these interactions through quotes, cultural references, paraphrasing, linking, and more (Ibid). Even more examples of intertextuality could include conversational references in a forum, or reviews on a product. This intertextual chain created through computer-mediated discourse allows for any number of participants join a text, either consciously or not. As computer-mediated discourse grows, the number of interconnected references grow in online communities, increasingly allowing for participation in any given interaction.

Users of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, interact in what is called a “participatory culture” (Jenkins 2008 in Demata et al. 2018: III), allowing people who would not normally get the opportunity to interact the ability to engage. This “culture of connectivity” has been said to promote sharing and free use of content without gatekeepers (Demata et al. 2018: iii). However, Demata et al. argue that this narrative of participation is a myth, with gatekeepers of information and connection appearing in a variety of forms, such as political leaders (Ibid). Increasingly on social media, I would argue, we are also seeing gatekeepers in the form of social leaders, such as “social justice warriors”, who seek to raise awareness of inequality between people of different racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, etc., backgrounds.

As we can see, due to the increased interactivity of social media, participation across multiple topics may increase, ranging from niche topics such as knitting or celebrity fans, to much broader topics such as politics. This study addresses connectivity culture, in particular how intertextuality is used online by a traditionally non-political community interacting with politics -- a subject that currently has spurred few studies.
This research seeks to assist in filling this gap in social media discourse literature by utilizing intertextual techniques to highlight just how community members participate and engage in political discourse.

*Intertextuality*

Intertextuality as part of a linguistic discourse tradition, was largely first discussed by Julia Kristeva, as a “mosaic of quotations”, where every utterance is part of a whole and connected back to some prior text (1986: 37). However, the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, a twentieth century literary critic, is foundational to Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality. In his essay, “Discourse in the Novel”, Bakhtin introduces his idea of dialogism, or how utterances and words are not neutral, but in fact may have cultural, social, and personal significance (Bakhtin 1981). These words then can make up what he calls the “living utterance”, which is given meaning based on the “…particular historical moment in a socially specific environment”, and is thus an “…active participant in social dialogue” (Ibid: 276). In essence, any given interaction is imbued with meaning based on its relation to not only the time and place in which it is said, but also in relation to other utterances that have been performed previously. Two of the most important intertextual concepts utilized in this study are Bauman and Briggs’ definition of “entextualization” (1990), and Becker’s conception of “languaging” (1994).

Bauman and Briggs (1990) coined the term “entextualization” in a piece about poetics and performance-based interactions. They analyze how studying performance can provide a lens through which to view any number of speech events and the contexts they are placed in, providing examples for how entextualization, decontextualization, and
recontextualization inform “modes of language” (Ibid: 80). This framework refers to the process whereby text is lifted from its original setting, placed into a new context, whereby it then may create new meaning and harken back to its prior context. This resultant text, in turn, still “…carries elements of its history of use within it” (Ibid: 73). In essence, this process takes prior texts and inserts them into new situations that then have an altered meaning based on the history they are recalling.

Becker’s 1994 article, wherein he coins the term “languaging”, analyzes how aspects of prior texts are brought into new contexts and thus alter in meaning. Languaging is the idea that by bringing past texts into a new environment, a person reshapes their situation’s present context (Becker 1994). Becker believes that in essence, people make use of prior texts, or previous discourse that is either public and private, and recontextualize these texts into a new situation and present discourse, thus imbuing their current setting with textual references and coherence (Ibid). He further makes the argument that “social groups seem to be bound primarily by a shared repertoire of prior texts…” (Ibid: 165). This community use of prior texts can lead to a shared framework of knowledge, understanding, and reference.

Tannen (2006) supports this argument of “languaging” proposed by Becker, in her study of family interactions. In this work, she proposes the intertextual tools of recycling, rekeying, and reframing, arguing that these three tools depict intertextuality in everyday conversation. Recycling is the process of “languaging”, or bringing text from a different context into the present, rekeying is changing the tenor of the recycled text (for example, using the prior text in a humorous manner), and reframing is then the resulting change in how a situation is discussed (Tannen, 2006). These tools of recycling, rekeying, and
reframing in familial interactions supports this idea of “languaging” or reference to prior texts being context-shaping, and can lead to the recontextualization of a conversation (Ibid). This analysis draws upon the topic of reframing, which is “…a change in what the discussion is about” (Ibid: 601). By utilizing reframing as a method of analysis, one can analyze how prior texts reshape the tenor of a conversation and refocus onto a new topic.

Not only can prior texts shape an interaction, but they can also shape the news. News frequently draws on quotations from reports and participants in the field, and their use or disuse (by way of paraphrasing) can have significant impacts on how a new context is molded. Sclafani’s 2008 study on intertextuality analyzes how different newspaper articles discussed the inclusion of Ebonics in an education movement in the 1990s. She explores how and why people decide to quote a source rather than paraphrase it, and how this decision to use either has ideological implications, and how these decisions are laden with biases (Sclafani 2008). The decision to use direct quotations of a source versus paraphrasing can display the partiality of an author citing a work, allowing authors to “…capitalize on certain voices while suppressing others…” (Ibid: 522). How authors pick prior texts (such as interviews and articles) as well as what parts of these texts they quote may in turn result in bias, as they cherry-pick aspects of prior utterances.

An intertextual lens may also be used in assessing how a text addresses multiple audiences or cultural standards. As Bhatia proposes in his study on intertextuality in professional documents, there are four different levels a text of professional communication can be analyzed on: “as a text, as a representation of genre, as realization of professional practice, and as expectation of professional culture” (2010:33). In sum, a text may have multiple goals in its creation and multiple levels on which it can be
analyzed. As business owners, many of these dyers on Instagram likely had multiple goals when writing their posts, such as addressing the Ravelry ban, justifying their own personal beliefs, and asserting their comfort with losing followers and business.

**Positioning**

This research makes use of Harre and van Lagenhove’s (1999) work on positioning theory, focusing on their concepts of deliberate positioning of self and others (23), as well as moral positioning (17). Positioning, which can occur in both speech and text, is the process whereby a person orients themselves or others toward a specific topic, issue, or person. Deliberate self-positioning stems from stressing one’s own agency, their unique point of view, and reference to prior events in one’s past (24). Similar to how one can deliberately position themselves on a topic, a person can deliberate position others, making them appear in agreement or disagreement on a topic. This positioning technique can be utilized by placing another in contrast or alignment to one’s own story and position.

Moral positioning, in turn, is how a person orients to certain values and prerogatives. People can thus orient themselves to certain “rights and duties” to say something (6), their “personal attributes” (17), and a compulsion to perform a social action (21). There are numerous types of moral orders, such as legal, cultural, institutional, conversational, and personal (van Lagenhove, 2017). The moral positioning I focus on in this analysis is a personal moral positioning, examining how a person aligns themselves with certain ethical or personal values.
Since there are numerous positioning orientations, it is only reasonable to state that people may use multiple positioning techniques at once, a technique called “parallel positioning” (Harre and van Lagenhove 1999: 77). This can be seen when a person calls upon multiple identities in a text at the same time, orienting to being a member of multiple communities, such as combining a political affiliation with a religious affiliation. People constantly negotiate multiple identities, community memberships, and relationships in their day-to-day lives, and in so doing, they position themselves and others (both deliberately or not) toward different ideas and people, making parallel positioning a constant occurrence.

Bamberg (1997) examines positioning within narratives, arguing that stories often serve more than one purpose, such as a moral or entertainment function (339). Bamberg discusses the three levels of narrative positioning in a text: the first level, which examines how the characters within the story world are positioned relative to one another; the second level, which analyzes how the speaker positions themselves to their audience (who are their readers); and the third level, which explores how a narrator decides to “…position themselves to themselves” (337). This study utilizes both first and second level positioning, focusing on how small business owners on social media deliberately position themselves in relation to other knitting community members within their posts, as well as how they self-position themselves to their audience. These frameworks are useful ways in which to view social media, since much of it is created and consumed by a targeted audience, such as a shared community.
Methods

This study is a qualitative discourse analysis, where I examine the text and pictures of posts collected on the social media website, Instagram, within an intertextual framework. My study focuses on how the authors of these posts position themselves relative to a political ban posted on Ravelry, as well as entextualize key terms from this ban. All data studied consists of posts from Instagram from the month of June 2019, as well as the text from the ban published on Ravelry at [www.ravelry.com](http://www.ravelry.com). All Instagram posts examined were taken from public accounts, which have been anonymized, and reference the Ravelry ban. Only the picture and text of the post are analyzed, not any comments made to the post.

Constraints on the dataset being used are that: the owner must currently live in America; they must own a small business (single person/family) and dye yarn full-time; and they must identify as being a yarn dyer professionally. It is common for small business owners on Instagram to be open with their followers not just about their role in the community, but also in their daily lives. Many dyers post updates when they are traveling, events that are going on where they live, when it is a child’s birthday, and similar personal information. Based on this information, one can look through a dyer’s posts (as well as their website) to find the information to such questions as where they live, whether they have another full-time job, and are a small business. This study focuses on posts created by small business owners because they are more likely to utilize Ravelry for income than people who solely identify themselves as knitters, and are an easily definable knitting sub-community.
As of mid-November, 2019, there were over 1,000 posts on Instagram that contain hashtags supporting the Ravelry ban, such as #Istandwithravelry and #Isupportravelry. As of this same time, there were over 500 posts on Instagram that contained the hashtag against the Ravelry ban, #byeravelry. One caveat to these numbers is that there are numerous posts about the ban that do not have hashtags and are not tagged. This would make countless numbers of posts difficult to find without already following these accounts. Some people also used both hashtags in their posts, which makes the number of posts in each hashtag not necessarily equivalent to the number of people who support either opinion.

Challenges of collecting and categorizing data included: people uploading ambiguously worded posts, people who did not use any hashtags or tagging mechanisms, as well as members of the knitting community who did not post about the ban. Because of these constraints on finding and using hashtags and uncertainty as to the legitimacy of some small businesses, I have decided to focus on knitters I had followed on Instagram for several months before the ban was released, a total of thirty-one people.

While I began this study with thirty-one possible posts, based on the constraints I laid out above, I then narrowed the possible amount of posts that could be studied to eleven, or roughly a third of this original number. First, of these thirty-one posts, only twenty-five were written by yarn dyers (the rest having been business owners who perhaps sold “notions”, which are knitting supplies such as row counters or stitch holders, or pattern writers). Of these twenty-five posts, only eleven constituted a small business.

3 It is important to note that when reading through these hundreds of posts tagged with hashtags, the majority were by people who only seemed to identify as members of the knitting community, not as small business owners. It is unclear how many tagged posts were made by people who identify as full-time small business owners.
as the researcher defined it, and lived in America.⁴ In sum, only eleven out of the thirty-one originally selected posts had the possibility of being examined in this study. Of these eleven posts, nine were pro-Ravelry.

Of these eleven posts, four form the centerpiece for this analysis; two are pro-Ravelry, meaning they supported the ban, one was anti-ban, or did not support the Ravelry ban, and the final one is ambiguous.⁵ The source of the anti-Ravelry post is from a company called “Ancient Threads Fiber Co.”, the ambiguously oriented company, called “Seeded Thread Fiber Co.”, and the two companies that shared pro-Ravelry posts were, “Small Needles Studio” and “Fleece Blessing Fiber Co.”.⁶ Two pro-Ravelry posts were analyzed due to the large number of pro-Ravelry posts, whose posters frequently fell into two categories: those who felt a moral or political obligation to support the ban, and those who self-identified as a marginalized community and hoped the ban would foster inclusivity. The first pro-Ravelry post is an example of a typically politically engaged Instagram post.⁷ The other pro-Ravelry post analyzed falls into the latter category, with the poster including a short personal narrative that highlights the personal connection she felt to this ban.

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⁴ A small business, for the purposes of this study, is a business that is owned and run by a single person or a single family. There are multiple well-known yarn dying businesses that were created by a single person, but have since expanded to include other people who are employed to dye the yarn and help with business affairs. These businesses were not included.

⁵ Refer to Table 1.

⁶ All names have been anonymized.

⁷ It is important to acknowledge that while these four posts analyzed represent three sides of the ban, one side that is unable to be represented is by those dyers who remained silent about the ban. As stated in the methodology section, five out of twenty-five people selected made the decision not to post about the ban. This is the second largest category of people, behind the number of people who stated that they were pro-Ravelry. It is presumed that these dyers deciding not to comment was a conscious decision on their part to not engage in the political discussion either for fear of losing followers, or because they believed their opinion would not be one supported by fellow community members.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Dyer</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Needles Studio</td>
<td>Pro-Ravelry, an example of a politically engaged post.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleece Blessing Fiber Co.</td>
<td>Pro-Ravelry, utilizes a narrative to invoke their support of Ravelry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeded Thread Fiber Co.</td>
<td>Ambiguously oriented toward Ravelry due to lack of directly mentioning the site. Directly communicates with their audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Threads Fiber Co.</td>
<td>Anti-Ravelry, evokes their religious beliefs in their post.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Instagram Posts

In this section, the four selected Instagram posts are analyzed on their positioning work and use of entextualization. The four indie yarn dyers incorporated in this study appear to achieve multiple goals through their positioning work: the first is in asserting themselves as morally minded people with integrity; the second is moderating their space in a self-assured manner, which serves to de-emphasize the impact of people who decide to unfollow them. The dyers here do identity work as knitting community members and small business owners, to assert their knowledge of the ban as well as their capability to moderate their space in response to possible backlash to their posts.

While these four posts approach the Ravelry ban from different perspectives, they all similarly utilize self-positioning to frame themselves in a moral and self-assured light to their followers and client base. In addition, they all, to varying degrees, reframe the content of the Ravelry ban from a broad political text into a more personal topic to be considered by their viewers. Moral ground and personal sentiments are then attached to these posts to justify their perspectives, and preemptively assert comfortability with their belief schemas, even if this means their audience will no longer follow their page or buy from them.

In sum, these dyers appear to engage with political discourse less by discussing the political aspects written in the ban, but by framing the political content mentioned within a moral framework. By reframing the objectives of the ban within a moral framework, the dyers make their arguments difficult to contradict, since they are personal beliefs. While this study just provides a sampling from the larger knitting community, the
belief schemas that the studied dyers address are likely similar to those of small business owners that took similar positions to the ban.

This section contains four sub-sections, with each post analyzed separately, beginning with the pro-Ravelry texts. First, I examine the positioning strategies used by the small business owner, and how these strategies allow the dyer to create a sense of moral justification in response to the ban. This leads into an analysis of the entextualization occurring between the Ravelry text and the Instagram post, which highlights each dyer’s acute awareness of the ban’s text. Finally, each analysis closes by studying how the use of both positioning and entextualization strategies lead to a reframing of the political Ravelry ban into a moral dialogue that is supported or not supported by the dyers. At the end of each section there is a short discussion on the implications of the moral schemas each dyer has employed.
The first post analyzed is from a small company called Small Needles Studio, who identifies as pro-Ravelry. The picture Small Needles uses to accompany her text is a pile of yarn, on top of which is a large computer-generated text that says, “I Support Ravelry”. The background of yarn the dyer decided to use makes a direct connection from the role Small Needles plays in the community to the Ravelry ban. Small Needles further emphasizes this connection to Ravelry by explicitly tagging the site in her post (@hi.ravelry) and using the pro-Ravelry hashtags of #isupportravelry and #istandwithravelry, emphasizing her desire for visibility.

Through the text of her post, Small Needles does positioning work to portray herself as a confident supporter of the pro-Ravelry movement. Her post begins:
“If you want to unfollow [the account] that’s fine… you don’t need to announce your departure.”

With this statement, she firmly places her politics and beliefs over the potential for profit from people who disagree with her views. She continues by opining: “@hi.ravelry has taken a huge step forward…” and emphasizes her support of Ravelry as lining up with her political views saying,

“My political views happen to line up with the ones in their new policy, but even if they didn’t I would still support them.”

In this sentence, she positions herself politically in agreement with Ravelry’s ban. However, by saying that she would support Ravelry even if she did not politically agree with them, she places this post not just in the context of politics, but also personal morality. This is further demonstrated by her statement on the importance of “…the right of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people to feel safe and accepted” within the knitting community. In discussing the importance of making a space where BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people feel accepted, Small Needles uses second-level positioning to demonstrate to her readers that she feels a moral imperative as a community member to support marginalized people over personal politics. By placing this ban within a moral positioning schema, Small Needles deliberately positions herself as morally superior to other community members who do not support the Ravelry ban.

Small Needles intertextually harkens back to the Ravelry ban not just through her direct references to the ban, but also through her word choice. Small Needles utilizes
entextualization from the Ravelry ban in her post through the reproduction of key terms such as, “marginalized”, “administration”, “white supremacy”, “support”, and “politics”. These key words not only recall back to the ban as a prior text, but also reinforce the fact that Small Needles’ post is in direct conversation with the Ravelry’s ban; the dyer has read the ban, and is politically in support of the steps Ravelry is taking to make the space safer for different communities. Below is a chart to assist in comparing Small Needles’ post with the prior text:

**TABLE 2. Prior Text of the Ravelry Ban**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Needles</th>
<th>Ravelry Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“…helping protect some of the most marginalized members of our community”</td>
<td>“Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups, all constitute hate speech.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…harmful and threatening to those in said marginalized communities”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…the rhetoric of the current US administration is harmful and threatening…”</td>
<td>“Support of the Trump administration is undeniably support for white supremacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups all constitute hate speech.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…expanding the wording to focus on all instances of white supremacy…”</td>
<td>“Support of the Trump administration is undeniably support for white supremacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My political views happen to line up with the ones in their new policy, but even if they didn’t I would still support them.”</td>
<td>“We cannot provide a space that is inclusive of all and also allow support for open white supremacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Support of the Trump administration is undeniably support for white supremacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups all constitute hate speech.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My political views happen to line up with the ones in their new policy…”</td>
<td>“Hate groups and intolerance are different from other types of political positions.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much of the language Small Needles’ entextualizes is political in nature, such as the use of the terms, “administration” and “white supremacy”, which were likely utilized
as an umbrella term for all Trump-affiliated policymakers and their perceived racist rhetoric. By harkening back to the Ravelry ban, the dyer creates a direct line between her support of the policy by agreeing politically as well as socially with the structure of the ban. By utilizing such terminology, Small Needles indexes the current polarized political climate as a backbone to morally position herself as in support of people with fewer rights, and against a bigoted political movement.

Small Needles describes her alignment with Ravelry as one that would have occurred regardless of whether her politics agreed with the ban or not. Through this moral positioning of herself in relation to this ban, as well as the political terms she entextualized from Ravelry, Small Needles frames her response to the ban as a moral argument. By positioning herself as pro-Ravelry, emphasizing to her audience that support of this ban is irrelevant of political party membership, and entextualizing words such as “marginalized”, Small Needles reframes support of a political ban away from political leanings to a moral responsibility, where support of the disenfranchised is critical.
FIGURE 2. Post #2: Pro-Ravelry

The next post I analyze, by Fleece Blessing Fiber Co., is also a pro-Ravelry post. The picture chosen says little about the text it is paired with, the dyer simply having chosen to post a multicolored mural of flowers. However, in the first sentence of the text the dyer explicitly remarks,

“I shared our support for Ravelry the other day in our stories”.  

---

8 The stories function of Instagram allows users to share twenty-four-hour clips and pictures with their followers, before disappearing.
This first sentence displays that the dyer has been aware of the ban for at least two days and had previously shared vocal support (most likely the day of or day after the ban came out). Fleece Blessing then adds:

“…I support the voices behind the decision Ravelry made, those that pushed for change, those that were hurt in the process of it taking the time it took to get here, those that continue to hurt”.

Fleece Blessing thus creates a direct intertextual link between this post and the Ravelry ban by mentioning Ravelry by name. She also positions herself in support of the Ravelry ban, and through the use of emotional terms such as “hurt”, creates a sense of empathy with those who were suffered by the ban not being in place.

In the rest of her post, Fleece Blessing positions herself first and foremost as the daughter of a Puerto Rican woman. She narrates her mother’s story of being treated as “stupid” because of her accent, and how the dyer felt disassociated from her own Puerto Rican identity growing up, saying “I’ve always struggled with my culture… she [my mom] wanted to raise me WHITE” (emphasis hers).

By discussing her prior experience with marginalization and identity conflict, Fleece Blessing positions herself as someone who is knowledgeable of discrimination and harmful political rhetoric. By mentioning her Puerto Rican ancestry and her own identity struggles, Fleece Blessing further positions herself to her audience as one of the voices being bolstered by this Ravelry policy change, in addition to a voice that supports it. By utilizing her narrative to advocate for the Ravelry ban, Fleece Blessing is able to solicit empathy for the groups who have been negatively impacted by the prior lack of a

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9 At the end of her post, Fleece Blessing notes she will be continuing her story in the comments section, which I did not analyze for this study.
ban. By sharing a personal story, the dyer makes it difficult for others to challenge her point of view, since they cannot negate her previous personal experiences. The use of this story thus places people who are against the ban as people who are “toxic”, and either unaware or lacking in sympathy for other peoples’ racial and cultural situations.

There is a lack of entextualization in this post in comparison to the one previously examined. This is in large part due to the dyer behind Fleece Blessing seeming to use the Ravelry ban as a jumping off point for her own narrative to share her cultural struggles. This narrative is intertextually tied with the Ravelry post based on discussion of her “…support for Ravelry”. The entextualization in this post hinges upon Fleece Blessing’s use of the term “intolerant” which was also used in the source text, as well as the subtext that Fleece Blessing is a member of one of many “marginalized” groups the ban was intended to support.\(^\text{10}\)

**TABLE 3. Supported by This Ban**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fleece Blessing</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ravelry Text</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It’s not intolerant to cut toxicity out.”</td>
<td>“Hate groups and intolerance are different from other types of political positions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And the one thing that makes me so desperately angry is the way people have treated [my mother] because of her accent.”</td>
<td>“Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups, all constitute hate speech.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By creating a connection between her Instagram post and the Ravelry text, Fleece Blessing indexes the social (rather than political) aspects of the ban, and how it was created to serve as community support and foster inclusivity. These entextualized socio-political concepts reflect the turbulent mindset of the current political climate, and allow

\(^{10}\) The source text officially used the term "intolerance".
Fleece Blessing to morally position herself as both tolerant and sympathetic to the struggles of minority community members.

By writing a pro-Ravelry statement from her own experiences, Fleece Blessing’s post reframes the ban from a political act to a policy that can positively impact personal experiences. Fleece Blessing builds a moral schema for the ban, by espousing the opinion that, “it is not intolerant to cut toxicity out”. With this statement, Fleece Blessing, similarly to Small Needles, identifies the ban not as a political matter with party affiliations, but as a moral responsibility that supports not only minority groups, but is also imperative for the health of the entire community. Through her moral positioning as well as her entextualized struggle as identifying as marginalized, Fleece Blessing frames her post as a moral argument for equality, where the community became a safer space with the censoring of hate speech.
The third text I analyze is from Seeded Thread Fiber Co., who was more ambiguous in her conversation with Ravelry. The dyer focuses on the idea of community rather than politics, and the picture she chooses to accompany her text is of her family. The text of her post contains no direct mention of the terms “Ravelry” or “ban”.

However, one can infer that the post is about the Ravelry ban due both to the timing of the post in relation to the ban, as well as the entextualization of certain key terms from the ban that the dyer used in her post.

Seeded Thread states bluntly at the beginning of their post that she “…believe[s] in the beauty and power of diversity…”, engaging not directly with the political aspect of the Ravelry ban, but with the community-building aspect of the ban. She continues her
post by expressing that she hopes to use her platform as a space for “love, compassion, empathy, and creativity” before adding that “there will be no room for hate or exclusion here in our space.”

In this text, Seeded Thread positions herself as a supporter of the diversity of the knitting community, a trait that would ally her with the Ravelry ban. However, she does not state this support outright, as the two previously examined posts did. By positioning herself as a proponent of diversity in the knitting community by noting that she “…support[s] (and will always support) the marginalized community”, Seeded Thread is able to back the ban not from a political perspective, but from a perspective of social responsibility and care. This then positions people who are not of similar beliefs in a negative light, and in contrast could be seen as lacking in social awareness and responsibility.

Due to the lack of direct connection between this post and the Ravelry ban (since the terms “Ravelry” or “ban” were not used in the post) the entextualization of key words is the most illuminating way in which to look at how Seeded Thread’s text is in conversation with the Ravelry ban. The four key terms that were used in the ban that were used in Seeded Thread’s Instagram post are “marginalized”, “support”, “space”, and “hate”.

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TABLE 4. “Support”, “Space”, and “Hate”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seed Thread</th>
<th>Ravelry Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We support (and will always support) the marginalized community.”</td>
<td>“Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups, all constitute hate speech.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We support (and will always support) the marginalized community.” “…we do acknowledge that history has not rerated everyone equally and hope our space can help support this.”</td>
<td>“We cannot provide a space that is inclusive of all and also allow support for open white supremacy.” &quot;Support of the Trump administration is undeniably support for white supremacy.” “Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups all constitute hate speech.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This space will always be used to promote love, compassion, empathy, and creativity.” “…we do acknowledge that history has not treated everyone equally and hope our space can support this.” “There will be no room for hate or exclusion here in our space.”</td>
<td>“We cannot provide a space that is inclusive of all and also allow support for open white supremacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There will be no room for hate or exclusion here in our space.”</td>
<td>“Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups, all constitute hate speech.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Seeded Thread may not have blatantly expressed affiliation with the Ravelry ban, the use of terms such as “hate” and “space” are used in similar capacities in both texts. This reveals a subtle agreement by Seeded Thread to the justification of the ban, which is to make the site safer for marginalized communities. In addition, the entextualization of these four terms together, while having strong political connotations, also have strong social connections, as they address people who may feel inferior or targeted based on personal factors out of their control. By entextualizing these specific words from the ban, Seeded Thread brings less politically oriented language and ideology.
from the ban into the new context of their post, allowing the post to instead focus on the social discrimination being addressed in the community. By addressing problems of social inequalities and offering a space of “empathy” and “love”, Seeded Thread’s more socially entextualized words display one of the moral values that the company is focused on, which is inclusivity.

Through their self-positioning and entextualization, Seeded Thread reframes the Ravelry ban from a political position to a moral position, or even imperative. By suggesting their own moral and societal obligation and desire to support marginalized group members, Seeded Thread emphasizes the social aspects of the ban, in how they envision a supportive space. They do not, however, make any sort of claims or suppositions of people leaving their space, or unfollowing their account. Based on the idea that these dyers utilize moral rationale for explaining their perspective on the political Ravelry ban, it is possible that the dyers thus do not view their statement as political in nature, but in fact ethical. This lack of a clear voicing on the ban itself has led me to assume these dyers desire to be uncontroversial, and led to my categorization of this post as ambiguous.
Post #4, Anti-Ravelry

The last post analyzed in this study is an anti-Ravelry post by the dyer Ancient Threads Fiber Co. The picture Ancient Threads used with her post depicts a person facing away from the viewer, staring at the sky. Above their head is a quote from Ephesians, a book in the Bible. The quote reads:

“put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to STAND AGAINST the schemes of the devil”.

While this image does not directly reference the Ravelry ban, it does prepare the reader for what could be a controversial opinion in the accompanying text.

Ancient Threads, similar to the pro-Ravelry dyers, directly references Ravelry in the text of her post. The dyer positions herself as against the Ravelry ban from a religious
sense of purpose (as displayed by the image) as well as a moral alignment on the side of those censored by the platform. The dyer begins her post by asserting:

“God placed the courage on my heart this morning…. To stand in faith and say that I do NOT support ravelry.”

By bringing God into her post, the dyer brings in authority from a higher power, who gives her the strength to speak out against what she perceives is injustice against pro-Trump community members. Ancient Threads then makes the argument that she does not support Ravelry due to their,

“…poorly worded policy, divisively broad assumptions, partisan censorship, and discrimination [that] does not align with my values…”.

By using terms such as, “poorly-worded”, “censorship”, and “discrimination”, the dyer deliberately positions Ravelry in a negative light, indicating she believes that the site policy thoughtlessly stigmatizes certain political groups -- a targeted bias that she positions herself against. Then, by juxtaposing these unfavorable qualities of “censorship” and “discrimination” with the statement that the dyer herself does not align with those values, the writer of this post positions herself as an ethical person in that she does not agree with these practices.

Through the use of such divisive language as calling the ban “poorly-worded” and a method of “partisan censorship”, Ancient Threads deliberately positions Ravelry supporters as hypocritical, insinuating that they are proponents of a policy that is
politically discriminatory in nature. Furthermore, by writing, “God placed the courage on my heart…” and that she “stand[s] in faith”, Ancient Threads also positions herself as morally superior from other Ravelry dissenters, who she insinuates refuse to speak up against Ravelry’s policy as lacking courage, which she claims she received from a higher religious authority.

Ancient Threads also utilizes entextualization from the Ravelry ban in the text of her post, helping establish a direct reference between the two. Similar to the previously analyzed posts, Ancient Threads does not directly quote from the text of the ban, so she can focus on critiquing the ban for being discriminatory along political divides. The most obvious use of entextualization in this post is the use of the term “space”.

**TABLE 5. Utilize the Term “Space”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient Threads</th>
<th>Ravelry Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“If you do not agree I do respect that and you may leave my space with no hard feelings on my end.”</td>
<td>“We cannot provide a space that is inclusive of all and also allow support for open white supremacy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“By please, be mindful that this is in fact my space and I will moderate it as I see fit.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, while Ravelry uses the term “space” to mean the creation of an inclusive and safe platform for people who feel marginalized, Ancient Threads takes this use of the term “space” and recontextualizes it so that it references making her platform safe herself, so she is not harassed for her views on the ban. “Space”, then in this context, is used to the same ends – protection, of people who may feel unsafe. With the entextualization of this term, Ancient Threads depicts the duality of space; for both her and Ravelry, space is intended to mean safety, however, for Ancient Threads space also
means her ability to dissent despite possibly losing business. By purposefully creating a space that focuses on placing her personal beliefs above the need for followers (especially when they contradict her own values), Ancient Threads angles her post away from politics and more toward the value of her moral conscience.

In sum, Ancient Threads reframes the Ravelry ban in a negative light, using the schema of morality to make the ban a personal subject with which she does not agree. In her post, Ancient Threads mentions how the policy does not align with her “values”. By using this term, she acknowledges that the ban does not just address politics, but also moral beliefs and priorities. By focusing on how the political ban clashes with her own values, Ancient Threads reframes the political discussion in terms of her own personal rather than political beliefs, a topic she does not address at all. This view is further emphasized by the entextualization of the term “space”, used both in the Ravelry ban and the dyer’s post, which emphasizes the importance for both platforms to cultivate safer spaces – just with different people in mind.
Discussion, Returning to the Politics of Knitting

Art and politics being intertextually linked has been posited before, such as by Frank Möller (2018), who analyzes how art may be “complicating” and “reinterpreting” political understandings (2). Möller argues that art is inherently political, and that artists may be political without supporting a movement (Ibid: 2). In this vein, while this study has classified knitters as a whole as being a traditionally non-political community, one could argue that people using knitting to engage politically is far from a new idea.

This study, as discussed above, deals with political discourse in a traditionally non-political community. It is important to note that the use of knitting towards political ends is not an uncommon act, and is differentiated from this study on discourse. In the Vox news article, “‘Everyone Uses Ravelry’”, Romano explores why the Ravelry ban is a significant political step for social media platforms, and discusses the history of knitting as part of the production of political acts (2019). In her article, Romano quotes people who are both for and against the Ravelry ban, and studies how knitting has been used to signal political action through “craftivism” (Ibid). Combining the ideas of “craft” and “activism”, “craftivism” is when people use arts to promote political and social change, such as people who used knitting to make pussy hats to protest the election of Trump -- a reference to his past of sexual assault (Hartocallis and Alcindor 2017), and The Yarn Mission collective, which was created to support protests in Ferguson, Missouri (Ibid). More recently, other artistic communities such as the quilting community have become embroiled in political discourse as well, attempting to use the craft as a medium to discuss racism and injustice (McGlone 2020). In these situations, people brought their crafting knowledge to spheres of political discussion and turmoil – such as protests. What
distinguishes this study from any previous work on craftivism is that instead of analyzing how individual knitters bring their craft to a political situation, this paper examines how political discussion occurs within the community itself, thus making it the site itself a political sphere.

It is also important to note that Ravelry’s policy, while political in nature, came from the moral standpoint that pro-Trump rhetoric is white supremacist language, and that the platform must act to protect its more vulnerable members (Ravelry 2019). It is, in turn, easier for one to say that because the Ravelry policy has these moral as well as political undertones, it makes sense that the dyers could then also respond within a moralistic framework. I believe that this moral and political positioning is not unique to Ravelry’s statement, but is a commonplace occurrence that goes hand-in-hand with political commentary and support – what was unique were the decisions made by the small business yarn dyers studied here, who all predominantly engaged just within the moral framework.

Further research on online political discussion could include a more wide-ranging and encompassing analysis of Instagram posts referencing the Ravelry ban. Next steps could include searching Instagram hashtags, and categorize posters based on community sub-membership (small business owner, knitter, etc.) to explore more broadly how people used entextualization in their response posts to Ravelry. The researcher could then cross-reference these Instagram accounts with the poster’s Ravelry account, to ensure that they are knowledgeable of the site and its policies. Cross-referencing accounts with Ravelry could also assist in finding further anti-Ravelry posts from reputable yarn dyers, a task that proved a challenge during this research process.
Alternatively, one could broaden the scope of this study to observe how other non-political communities have interacted with similar political rhetoric bans. According to the Ravelry policy, much of the original text of the ban they posted originated from a different social media site, called RPG.net (Ravelry 2019). This website, which focuses on role-playing games (RPG), is a forum-like space where people take on roles as different characters in a story and act them out. While parts of the ban posted appear to be heavily copied, such as the policy notes, the reasons for imposing the ban appear to vary between the two websites.\(^\text{11}\) RPG.net compares the Trump presidency to “evil”, that his administration is incompatible with their “values”, and that they recognize the administration as in support of white supremacy (RPG.net 2018). However, they also use strict language in their policy notes to protect conservative role-playing members, saying they will not allow “purges”, “witch hunts”, “progressive loyalty testing”, or “revenge policies”.

In contrast, Ravelry used no such terms as “evil” nor website “values” when relating the political nature of the ban. In fact, the first paragraph of the ban Ravelry shares focuses on the loss of data and patterns a banned person may face. This is likely due to the fiscal nature of Ravelry as opposed to RPG.net, since individuals conduct business on Ravelry whereas RPG.net appears to be completely cost-free to use. The more conservative wording of the Ravelry ban versus the RPG.net ban could lead to differences in how members of each website respond. It could be worthwhile to study RPG.net’s members’ commentary on the ban, whether on the website platform itself or through a different media site such as Instagram or Reddit. A similar subgroup of RPG

\(^{11}\) The full text of the RPG.net ban can be read in Appendix B at the end of this paper. The portions that appear to have been copied by Ravelry have been highlighted.
users, such as website moderators, could be identified and their posts could be examined as a comparable group to the yarn dyers used in this study. This new data could contribute to research into how non-political communities use positioning and intertextuality to express their political opinions online.

In sum, in this study I found that there was a surprising lack of personal political opinions espoused by small business owners when faced with a political discourse ban. These yarn dyers instead focused on the morals espoused by the ban, whether they themselves stood for these principles, and what values they do hold in high regard. Put another way, while we can almost assuredly say that a pro-Trump rhetoric ban is divisive along political party lines, dyers did not post partisan sentiments, but personal ethical sentiments in relation to political action. It is possible this lack of partisan commentary is due to the prior political conversations that occurred in January of 2019, when the topics of racism and inclusivity were topics of concern. This previous dialogue on inclusivity not only likely informed the creation of the Ravelry ban, but it is probable that the dyers sought to focus this new political discussion within the context of this earlier conversation.

This research aims to contribute knowledge in two fields: the first is in how political discussions are held on social media. As politics further pervades social media settings and becomes more polarized, it is critical to see how people decide to engage (or not engage) with such discourse online, to understand how people make arguments, connect with some people, and blacklist others. The second area this paper aims to contribute to is intertextuality—specifically entextualization, and how it may be used in conjunction with other frameworks such as positioning theory when examining
participation in social media data. By utilizing more than one methodology in the analysis of social media content, I believe one can not only see the prior text relationships and “linguaging” occurring between users and policies, but they can also, through analyzing the choice of entextualized words, learn more about the moral and personal positions the poster takes.

Why Online Political Discourse Matters

In this paper I have examined how a sub-group of the knitting community utilized the social media website Instagram to display their positions to a pro-Trump rhetoric ban on Ravelry. I aimed to demonstrate that this traditionally non-political community utilized intertextual methods such as entextualization and reframing to emphasize a self-positioned moral schema when addressing the ban. The intersection of politics and personal beliefs espoused by these dyers in the posts, as I have argued, is that they tended to incorporate their personal moral beliefs into a broader conversation about politics. In summary, by focusing on the subject of morality within the broader topic of politics, these dyers commented on the Ravelry ban with a sense of self-confidence and knowledge, since their own personal beliefs became the subject of their posts. By studying these posts from an intertextual linguistic perspective, I propose that these knitting community members seek to create compelling personal arguments that not only use political language to harken back to prior texts but also use moral and emotional language that are meant to engage their reader one-on-one.

As political discussions continue to occur in social media spaces, it is worthwhile to study how people decide to interact with news, and how sites may release censorship policies in response to political agendas. This study delves into the question of how
politics is mediated in a traditionally non-political space by analyzing how yarn dyers interact with a political policy, and immersed the Ravelry ban within personal moral frameworks. As political discourse continues to pervade traditionally non-political spaces, it could be of interest to study how people decide to respond and adapt to these new conversations. By making personal connections with policies, not only can people more frequently engage in political discourse despite a lack of extensive political knowledge, but also deter others from learning more about political problems and hearing other points of view. As the current tumultuous political climate grows polarized and shows few signs of abating, people deciding to take part in political discourse will likely become more prevalent. It is perhaps because of this increase in political discourse that we may no longer want to categorize the knitting community as non-political, but instead as increasingly political. By examining how such communities of practice become more political, researchers may be able to gain insight not only into how this shift between political and non-political discussion emerges, but also how individuals in these liminal groups validate their political thoughts by using their own personal values.
APPENDIX A: Full Ravelry Ban Text

New Policy: Do Not Post In Support of Trump or his Administration

Sunday, June 23rd 2019

We are banning support of Donald Trump and his administration on Ravelry.

This includes support in the form of forum posts, projects, patterns, profiles, and all other content. Note that your project data will never be deleted. We will never delete your Ravelry project data for any reason and if a project needs to be removed from the site, we will make sure that you have access to your data. Even if you are permanently banned from Ravelry, you will still be able to access any patterns that you purchased. Also, we will make sure that you receive a copy of your data.

We cannot provide a space that is inclusive of all and also allow support for open white supremacy. Support of the Trump administration is undeniably support for white supremacy.

The Community Guidelines have been updated with the following language: “Note that support of President Trump, his administration, or individual policies that harm marginalized groups, all constitute hate speech.”

Policy notes:

- You can still participate if you do in fact support the administration, you just can’t talk about it here.
- We are not endorsing the Democrats nor banning Republicans.
- We are definitely not banning conservative politics. Hate groups and intolerance are different from other types of political positions.
- We are not banning people for past support.
- Do not try to weaponize this policy by entrapping people who do support the Trump administration into voicing their support.
- Similarly, antagonizing conservative members for their unstated positions is not acceptable.

You can help by flagging any of the following items if they constitute support for Trump or his administration:

- Projects: Unacceptable projects will be provided to the member or made invisible to others.
- Patterns: Unacceptable patterns will be returned to drafts.
- Forum posts: Unacceptable posts will be removed
- Profiles: Unacceptable avatars or profile text will be hidden or removed.

Much of this policy was first written by a roleplaying game site, not unlike Ravelry but for RPGs, named RPG.net. We thank them for their thoughtful work. For citations/references, see this post on RPG.net: https://forum.rpg.net/index.php?threads/new-ban-do-not-po...
Update history

• Sunday, June 23rd @ 8:00 AM Eastern: First version
• Sunday, June 23rd @ 8:12 AM Eastern: Clarify that if you are permanently banned from Ravelry you will receive a copy of your data including any purchased patterns.
• Tuesday, June 25th @ 10:11 PM Eastern: added “Unacceptable avatars or profile text will be removed.”
• Sunday, June 30th @ 5:56 PM Eastern: noted that the Community Guidelines have been updated
Appendix B: Full RPG.net Ban Text

The following policy announcement is the result of over a year of serious debate by the moderation team. The decision is as close to unanimous as we ever get. It will not be the subject of further debate. We have fully considered the downsides and ultimately decided we have to stay true to our values. We will not pretend that evil isn’t evil, or that it becomes a legitimate difference of political opinion if you put a suit and tie on it.

**We are banning support of Donald Trump or his administration on the RPGnet forums.**
This is because his public comments, policies, and the makeup of his administration are so wholly incompatible with our values that formal political neutrality is not tenable. We can be welcoming to (for example) persons of every ethnicity who want to talk about games, or we can allow support for open white supremacy. Not both. Below will be an outline of the policy and a very incomplete set of citations.

We have a community here that we’ve built carefully over time, and support for elected hate groups aren’t welcome here. We can’t save the world, but we can protect and care for the small patch that is this board.

**Policy outline:**
1. We are banning support of the administration of President Trump. You can still post on RPG.net even if you do in fact support the administration — you just can't talk about it here.
2. We are absolutely not endorsing the Democrats nor are we banning all Republicans.
3. We are certainly not banning conservative politics, or anything on the spectrum of reasonable political viewpoints. We assert that hate groups and intolerance are categorically different from other types of political positions, and that confusing the two legitimizes bigotry and hatred.
4. We are not going to have a purge — we will not be banning people for past support. Though if your profile picture is yourself in a MAGA hat, this might be a good time to change it.
5. We will not permit witch-hunts, progressive loyalty-testing, or attempting to bait another into admitting support for President Trump in order to get them banned. The mod staff will deal harshly with attempts to weaponize this policy.
6. It is not open season on conservatives, and revenge fantasies against Trump and Trump supporters are still against the rules.

**Policy Citations:**
1. Racism and rhetorical alliance with white supremacist groups. This is a fairly thorough collection of citations in itself, not just a single tweet. [https://twitter.com/JuliusGoat/status/1054669092764966912?s=19](https://twitter.com/JuliusGoat/status/1054669092764966912?s=19)
4. He is personally hostile to both individual reporters and the very idea of a free press.
5. He mocks the disabled. [ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PX9reO3QnUA ]
6. He mocked a sexual assault victim, to applause from his supporters.
   [ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2m00qAeFHaQ ]
7. For the record, “Globalists” is almost always code for “Jews,” particularly if it’s in concert with anything about Soros.
   [ https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/413356-trump-says-lock-em-up-after-calling-for-unity ]
8. When confronted with the fact that his rhetoric may be encouraging domestic terrorism, he has indicated he should maybe encourage it more, and has implied the press has it coming. [ https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-tone-down-bomb-threats-1190263 ]
9. He is attempting to stoke fear and violence in other arenas, as well.
10. It is clear from context that his embrace of “nationalism” is a dog-whistled love note to white nationalists.
11. There are components of his immigration policy that cannot be supported by persons of good conscience.
   [ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trump_administration_family_separation_policy ]
12. Further reading on this and all of the above topics are freely available from any reputable news site. [ https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/i-am-trash-migrant-children-reveal-stories-detention-separation-n895006 ]
BIBLIOGRAPHY


