Norms of Behavior and Emotions in the Discourse Structure

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Abstract: There are many ways in which a speaker might convey offensive or derogatory social norms of how it is permissible or required to behave or feel. Some argue that speakers thereby include derogatory or offensive content into the conversational context, and appeal to the influential pragmatic frameworks by Stalnaker and Lewis for how to model the structure of this context. However, since these theories are primarily designed to model mutual belief, they seem ill-equipped to accommodate the action-guiding or affective dimensions of derogatory speech. The challenge is to show how these frameworks can be expanded in a way that enables them to explain the way derogatory and offensive language presupposes norms accepted among interlocutors about what actions or attitudes are appropriate. In the first part of this paper, I propose an account that meets this challenge by offering a theory of how the shared conversational background can be updated to include norms of mistreatment that are represented as items on to-do lists (inspired by Portner's work on the pragmatics of imperatives). In the second part of the paper, I consider whether we should also say that the conversational context includes emotions. I argue that there are ways to accommodate the impact of emotions without assuming that there is a distinct section within the context that represents mutually accepted emotions.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

There are many ways in which a speaker might convey offensive or derogatory social norms of how it is permissible or required to behave or feel. Some have argued that when speakers make derogatory utterances, they thereby include derogatory or offensive contents into the contextual background that is shared among interlocutors in conversation (Langton, 1993, 2012; Langton and West, 1999; McGowan, 2019; Marques and García-Carpintero, 2020). Defenders of this claim have primarily appealed to the influential pragmatic frameworks by Stalnaker (1999, 2002) and Lewis (1979b) for how to model the structure of the conversational background.

However, because these frameworks are primarily designed to model mutual belief, they seem ill-equipped to accommodate the action-guiding or emotive dimensions of derogatory speech. The challenge is to show how these frameworks can be expanded, such that they can do justice to the way that derogatory and offensive language affect assumptions of what actions or emotions are appropriate. In this paper, I propose an account that meets this challenge by offering a theory of how the shared conversational background can be updated to include norms of mistreatment.

In section 2, I present the challenge of how to account for the way that derogatory speech affects the conversational background in more detail. In section 3, I present the theoretical framework that I appeal to and my account of how it can be used to explain the way that derogative utterances enforce norms of mistreatment. In section 4, I discuss the objection that the account presented does not fully solve the challenge since it does not provide a story of how to represent emotions in a conversational context. I argue that there are ways to accommodate the emotive aspect of derogatory claims without postulating that there is a separate emotive dimension within the conversational context.

2.   THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICAL CONTENTS IN THE
        CONVERSATIONAL BACKGROUND

The pragmatic frameworks by Lewis and Stalnaker have been used to model how assertions affect the contextual background that is shared among

interlocutors in conversations. Lewis compares linguistic interaction to a baseball game, where the moves that the speakers/players make are represented in the conversational *score.* In much the same way as in a baseball game, the language game is governed by rules, and what is considered correct play will be influenced by these rules and by what is already included in the score (Lewis, 1979b). Stalnaker's Common Ground framework assumes that when interlocutors engage in conversation, they make *pragmatic presuppositions* about what is mutually believed among themselves and the other interlocutors. The set of propositions that are mutually believed to be accepted by all interlocutors form the *Common Ground.*

According to these frameworks, interlocutors aim to adjust the score or Common Ground when they utter sentences, and their utterances will be interpreted against the background of the information contained in this body of shared information. An interlocutor aims to add a proposition to the score or Common Ground, either by asserting it or by presupposing it. When an interlocutor utters a sentence which carries a presupposition, she speaks *as if* the presupposed content is already part of the score or Common Ground even though it has not already previously been added. For instance, a speaker might say "Even Jenny passed the test," thus presupposing that Jenny was unlikely to do so. The other interlocutors may *accommodate* this presupposed content as part of the score or Common Ground, or they might try to block it from entering—for instance, by saying something like "What do you mean *even* Jenny?" (Lewis, 1979a; von Fintel, 2008).

Interlocutors will often take for granted that some propositions are already in the score or Common Ground, even if these propositions have not been asserted, implicated, or presupposed.[1] For example, at the start of most conversations, interlocutors are likely to believe that they all accept that they are on Earth, that gravity exists, and so on (Clark 1996, 107). In some conversations, interlocutors infer more specific sets of propositions to be Common Ground based on knowledge of things such as their interlocutors' hobbies, interests, religion, political commitments, or profession (Clark 1996, 100). I will call these "default presuppositions" in the score or Common Ground.[2] The thought that interlocutors make such default presuppositions is very intuitive, and immensely helpful to accomplish efficient communication since interlocutors are therefore not required to explicitly establish all background assumptions every time that they start a conversation.

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1   See Clark (1996, ch.4) for a deeper discussion of this topic.

2   Cf. Roberts on *meta-presuppositions* (Roberts 2006, 215)

These ways of modeling the conversational background can be understood as rational reconstructions of conversation. When a proposition is included in the score or Common Ground, this means that the interlocutors believe that it is *accepted* by all interlocutors, where "acceptance" is understood as a sociolinguistic disposition to behave in conversation as if the proposition is mutually believed to be true. This means that interlocutors need not *actually* believe all propositions that are included in the score or Common Ground. But they can still accept these propositions *for the sake of conversation.*

The question addressed here is how the score or Common Ground is affected by *derogatory* and *offensive* claims that enforce or condone various forms of mistreatment. For instance, consider the following claim:

1. "I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the p****. You can do anything."

An utterance like this not only conveys *that* the speaker engages in this sort of behavior. In addition, it also seems to presuppose a norm according to which it is permissible or desirable for rich and powerful men (and perhaps other men too) to touch and treat women in whichever way they like.[3]

Similarly, it has been argued that utterances of slurs convey norms of mistreatment. For instance, Hom argues that the content conveyed by a slur is determined by social institutions of racism (or homophobia, transphobia, etc.) consisting of racist (or homophobic, transphobic, etc.) practices that "can range from impolite social treatment to genocide" (Hom 2008, 430–31). Similarly, Marques and García-Carpintero argue that a slur directed at a group *G* presupposes a norm according to which it is appropriate—or even required—to derogate people who are *G* (Marques and García-Carpintero 2020, 147).

A problem about appealing to the score or Common Ground to analyze the effect that such offensive language has on the conversational background is that these frameworks primarily focus on exchange of factual information. The complex ways that language can be derogatory, offensive, and discriminatory, or enforce harmful norms, goes beyond mutual belief or mutually accepted information, which the score and the Common Ground are designed to model. The problem is, in other words, that derogatory attitudes and behavioral

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3   From the recorded conversation with Donald Trump (Fahrenthold, 2016). I refrain here from speculating about what Trump actually intended to convey by this utterance in the context in which it was uttered. Rather, I take the utterance as an illustrative example of an utterance that in most contexts would convey the kind of derogatory content that I describe.

dispositions are postulated to figure in the shared conversational background, but the theories about the nature of this dimension of communication model mutual belief.

This problem is raised by Langton, who argues that although Lewis' and Stalnaker's pragmatic frameworks provide "an adequate story about how belief change can be achieved" they seem "inadequate to the task of addressing change in feeling and desire" (Langton 2012, 85). Although Langton formulates the objection as one of how to include emotions (especially hate) into the conversational score, her examples often include both emotion and action. For instance, she argues that "People who consume anti-Semitic propaganda don't just come to believe something about Jews: their desires also change—they want to avoid Jews, or destroy them" (Langton 2012, 86). Hence, the challenge concerns emotions (how propaganda influences what people want), but also actions (how propaganda influences how people behave, e.g., "avoiding" or "destroying").

Marques and García-Carpintero also raise this problem in response to the view that the derogatory content of slurs can be represented as propositions in the Common Ground. They argue that this approach fails to capture the *normative force* of the derogatory content conveyed by slurs. The thought is that the use of slurs signal that it is appropriate to *feel* and *treat* people of a certain group in discriminatory ways and an analysis which merely models common belief fails to capture this (Marques and García-Carpintero 2020, 142).

Finally, the problem is also acknowledged by McGowan (2019), but she argues that it constitutes a problem only for using Stalnaker's Common Ground framework to analyze derogatory speech. McGowan maintains that Lewis' scorekeeping is preferable precisely because it "captures all sorts of facts […] relevant to the conversation" (McGowan 2019, 44–45). As Lewis puts it, "the score is whatever [the] scoreboard registers" which consists of "*n*-tuples of suitable entities" (Lewis 1979b, 346).

However, even if we grant that the score might include all the suitable entities, it is still unclear on this account what these entities are, how they are represented, and how they interact. We want a pragmatic account that acknowledges how conversation is about more than just coordinating common belief, but we also want a theory of how the shared context can include these other things (and what these other things are). As Stalnaker argues, while theories in semantics are traditionally "more well-developed and the more rigorous" than theories in pragmatics, we can still strive for the same precision and rigor in our pragmatic theories (Stalnaker 1999, 62). By doing so, we avoid

the creation of a pragmatic "wastebasket," as it is sometimes called.[4]

The challenge for a theory that analyzes derogatory speech by appealing to conversational score or Common Ground is to offer a way to enrich these frameworks to include more than common belief while offering a theory of what else it includes. By doing so, we can capture the distinctively *practical* aspects of derogatory speech. I will now propose an account of how this challenge can be met.

3.   THE TO-DO LIST FUNCTION AND NORMS OF BEHAVIOR

When a speaker uses a slur to convey a norm of mistreatment, what is it that gets added to the score or Common Ground? And what does it mean to say that by uttering (1) a speaker adds, or aims to add, a norm of mistreatment towards women to the score or Common Ground? I will focus on the claim in (1) in this section. This is in part for reasons of simplicity, but also because I try to remain as neutral as possible when it comes to slurs. It is not only controversial exactly what derogatory content they convey (e.g., attitudes, norms, stereotypes), but also how they convey it (e.g., through implicature, presupposition, semantic content, or meta-linguistic factors).[5] Hence, I contend that the account presented for claims such as (1) can be applied to slurs *insofar* as they similarly convey norms of mistreatment—but I will not argue for the hypothesis that they do. I will also return to a more thorough discussion of slurs in section 4.

I will now argue that the effect that derogatory utterances have on the conversational background can be analyzed by appealing to Portner's (2004; 2007) expansion of Stalnaker's Common Ground framework. Portner's view is primarily designed to analyze the effect that utterances of *imperatives* have on the conversational background. To do so, he argues that the conversational background includes a *To-Do List function* that assigns actions—represented as properties—onto the individual interlocutors' To-Do Lists. When a speaker utters an imperative, such as "Close the door!", she aims to add the act of closing the door to the addressee's To-Do List.

The To-Do List function constitutes one of three sets within the *discourse structure,* where the other two are the Common Ground and the *Question Set.* Very roughly, the Question Set consists of questions under discussion

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4   The worry of creating pragmatic "wastebaskets," is roughly that we risk deferring linguistic phenomena to the area of pragmatics without offering a theory with a similar level of precision as is expected from our semantic theories. The phrase was coined by Bar-Hillel (1971), and is also discussed in Bach (1997, 36), Stalnaker (1999, 62) and Carston (2017, 453).
5   For overviews, see Jeshion (2021); Anderson and Barnes (2023); Stojnić and Lepore (2024).

(QUDs), that represents the questions that the interlocutors aim to resolve. Each set is typically updated by utterances of one of the three universal clause types: *declaratives* add propositions to the Common Ground; *interrogatives* add QUDs to the Question Set; and *imperatives* add properties onto To-Do Lists.

In much the same way as the Common Ground often includes default presuppositions that all interlocutors are assumed to accept at the start of the conversation, interlocutors also accept items on To-Do Lists by default.[6] The items assigned by default onto interlocutors' To-Do Lists are affected by pre-existing norms of sociolinguistic behavior among the interlocutors. For instance, since Grice's conversational maxims are imperatives (e.g., "Be Relevant"), they can be represented in the discourse structure as default properties on the interlocutors' To-Do Lists.[7] Moreover, as Grice acknowledges, there will also be "all sorts of *other* maxims (aesthetic, social or moral in character), such as 'Be polite,' that are also normally observed by participants in talk exchanges" (Grice 1989, 28). Hence, interlocutors may embrace a wide variety of norms for behavior and these norms can be represented as properties on To-Do Lists assigned by default.[8]

It is important to bear in mind that the properties on a To-Do List represent something other than mutual belief *about* what is permissible or required for an agent to do. There are at least two reasons why we should treat the effect that imperatives have on To-Do List and the effect that declarative deontic modal claims have on the Common Ground as distinct.

First, when an act is included on an interlocutor's To-Do List, she has thereby publicly *committed* to adjust her behavior accordingly, at least for the sake of conversation. If an interlocutor accepts the act of closing the door onto her To-Do List, then she and the other interlocutors henceforth take each other to accept that she will close the door. As Portner puts it, "at some point we have to form a commitment to act," and "the To-Do List models this aspect of conversation" (Portner 2007, 381).

Second, the To-Do List bears an important relationship to the semantic analysis of declarative sentences about what is permitted or required. According to Kratzer's (1977) account of deontic modals, sentences about what an agent "must" or "can" do are interpreted against a *modal base* and an *ordering source.*

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6   QUDs can also be part of the context by default. For instance, the *Big Question* of goal-oriented discourse is standardly be thought to be: "What is the way that things are?" (Stalnaker 1999, 88; Roberts 2012, 4), and can be understood as a default QUD of rational discourse.

7   Cf. Roberts on pragmatic guidelines as meta-presuppositions (Roberts 2006, 215–16).

8   Cf. Clark on social norms (Clark 1996, 108–9).

The modal base represents the background of facts compatible with what the world is like, whereas the ordering source ranks those worlds. A sentence such as "John must wear a smoking to the wedding" is true iff the highest ranked worlds are those in which John wears a smoking.

Portner argues that the Common Ground and To-Do Lists play a similar role as the modal base and the ordering source, but "at the public, mutually presupposed discourse level" (Portner 2007, 359). Moreover, he argues that in much the same way as the Common Ground affects the modal base when we analyze epistemic modals, To-Do List affect the ordering source when we analyze deontic modals. To see how, consider a bossy manager who commands his employee: "Do not leave this office before you finish these files!" When the employee then calls her friends to cancel after work drinks, she might say: "I must stay and finish some files." What happens in this case is that the addition of the act of *staying late* that the manager added to the employee's To-Do List affects the ordering source for the deontic modal claim that the employee asserts to her friends. The deontic modal claim is true iff the ordering source highly ranks worlds in which the employee stays late and finishes the files; and the ordering source will highly rank these worlds since the act of finishing the files has been added onto her To-Do List.

One way of understanding this relation is to say that whereas utterances of imperatives *add* properties to To-Do Lists, utterances of deontic modal claims instead *presuppose* that a property is already on an interlocutor's To-Do List (Björkholm, forthcoming). If the property is not already part of the interlocutors' To-Do List, it may become accommodated through presupposition accommodation.

One might object to this picture by pointing out that according to many views about the content of imperatives, there is no semantic difference between imperatives and declaratives in the sense that the semantic contents of imperatives are propositions (Kaufmann, 2012; Kaufmann and Schwager, 2009; Schwager, 2006; Aloni, 2007). But if imperatives and declaratives have the same content, one might argue imperatives will just simply add propositions to the discourse structure and thus only update the Common Ground.

Although there is a lot to be said about the semantic contents of imperatives, this issue is orthogonal to the main point of this paper. The reason is that regardless of whether there is a difference in semantic content between declaratives and imperatives, we can nevertheless maintain that they make different impacts on the discourse structure. Suppose, for instance, that the semantic content of the imperative "Sit down right now!" as addressed to A

is the proposition *that A sits down right now.* We can still contend that this sentence impacts the discourse structure not by adding this proposition to the Common Ground, but rather by adding the property of sitting down onto A's To-Do List.[9] Upon acting in accordance with his To-Do List, A will make the proposition true.

The crucial part of Portner's view that I adopt is not that imperatives and declaratives have different semantic contents. Rather, the important resource from Portner's view is the idea that the discourse structure includes a dimension that puts pressure on action and that this dimension is characteristically updated by the utterance of imperatives. However, I can remain neutral about what the content of imperatives are, exactly.

Now, let us turn to the claim in (1). There is a lot going on in this sentence, but the thing to emphasize is the phrase "you *can* do anything" (where grabbing women "by the p****" is one such action). Declarative sentences about what is permissible or required presuppose that there is a norm of behavior that is represented as default items on To-Do Lists. Hence, an utterance of (1) presupposes that "doing anything," such as "grabbing women by the p****," are default items on (at least some of) the interlocutors' To-Do List.

Permissions and requirements impose different constraints on how the interlocutors are expected to act. When an act is required, then not performing that act is automatically precluded from also being on a To-Do List (Portner, 2018). For instance, since interlocutors are rationally required to follow the maxim of relevance, the property "Be relevant" will be on their To-Do Lists, but "Don't be relevant" cannot simultaneously be on their To-Do Lists. By contrast, if an act is permitted, it does not preclude that not performing that act is also on the interlocutor's To-Do List. For instance, by uttering "Have a cookie," a speaker will normally not be interpreted as imposing a requirement on her addressee to have a cookie. Rather, the addressee is permitted to either have a cookie or not. Hence, we can illustrate the To-Do List of agent *A*, who is permitted to have a cookie and required to follow the Gricean maxim of relevance, as shown in Table 1.

Moving on to (1), by conveying that (rich and powerful) men *can* do anything with women, we should not interpret this as imposing a requirement

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9   One option is also to follow Ninan (2005) and represent a To-Do list as a list of propositions (e.g., "*S* opens the door") that the interlocutor is committed to making true. If so, the content of the imperative is a proposition that is added to the discourse structure, but it puts different constraints on the agent by being added to the To-Do List rather than the Common Ground.

Table 1. A's To-Do List

Have a cookie	Don't have a cookie
Be relevant	
…	…

on men to behave like this. Instead, the utterance presupposes that "doing anything" to women is an option among the set of alternative actions that are permitted. This, of course, is bad enough considering that it should be *impermissible* for a man to take advantage of his social and economic positions to touch women however he likes.

We now have an answer for how an utterance such as (1) updates the conversational background. By uttering (1) the speaker presupposes that there is a norm according to which men are permitted to "do anything" with women. If this norm is not already represented on the interlocutors' To-Do Lists as permitted, it may be accommodated. For instance, consider again the agent A (who, let us assume, is a rich and powerful man) participates in a conversation in which (1) is uttered. His To-Do List is thus further affected as shown in Table 2 .

Table 2. A's To-Do List

Have a cookie	Don't have a cookie
Be relevant	
Touch women however you like	Don't touch women however you like
…	…

Note that the claim in (1) need not necessarily update the relevant interlocutor's To-Do List in each context that it might be uttered. In much the same way as other utterances, there are two conditions under which the context is not successfully updated: if the proposed addition is either incompatible with the items already in the context, or if any of the interlocutors block it from entering.

Moreover, there may be factors about the broader context of utterance that determine whether an utterance such as (1) adds acts of mistreatment to To-Do Lists. Although (1) is likely to enforce misogynist mistreatment in most contexts it would be uttered, we can imagine a situation in which it might not. For instance, consider a speaker who attends a "sex addicts anonymous" meeting and with sincere regret and tears in his eyes confesses about the appalling ways in which the treats women. When this speaker utters (1), he

will not be interpreted as aiming to influence men's To-Do Lists to include touching women however they like. Hence, the context of utterance might play a role in determining how a sentence affects the conversational background.[10]

In short, I have presented an account of how norms of mistreatment are represented in the discourse structure. An utterance that conveys a norm of mistreatment of an individual or group aims to add properties onto the interlocutors' To-Do Lists and, by successfully doing so, influences how the interlocutors expect each other to behave. In the next section, I will discuss the objection that this proposal does not meet the challenge presented in section 2, since we still lack an account of the dimension of the discourse structure that represents emotion.

4.   THE NEED FOR AN EMOTIVE DIMENSION

One might object that the proposal presented above does not *fully* capture the practical dimensions of derogatory language. Although the account presents a plausible way to include norms of *behavior* as items on To-Do Lists, it does not address the role of derogatory *attitudes* and *emotions* in the discourse structure. Since doing so is a crucial part of the original challenge posed by both Langton, and Marques and García-Carpintero, the challenge has not yet been met. To do so, we need something more: we must add an emotive section of the discourse structure.

Before I turn to discuss the question of whether an emotive part of the discourse structure is required, it must be noted that the account presented in section 3 can be accepted regardless of how we answer this question. The account can thus be understood as saying that to explain the effect that derogatory language has on the discourse structure, we need to *at least* include a To-Do list function that represents norms of how it is appropriate or permissible to act. This is compatible with the claim that we *also* need an emotive dimension to account for the way that derogatory language conveys emotions and puts pressure on how it is appropriate to feel.

I will now spend the remainder of the paper discussing what the options are if we want to resist adding an emotive dimension, noting that more work is needed to reach a conclusive answer to this issue.[11] A prima facie reason to avoid the addition of an emotive dimension is parsimony. It is important

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10 See Saul (2006) and Mikkola (2008) for related discussion of how the context affects whether pornographic speech acts subordinate women.
11 For instance, one would need to survey a wider range of data by considering different types of utterances that intuitively express or convey affective contents.

to be careful with what we add to the discourse structure and to refrain from adding further structure to it without motivating those additions. The additions made to the theoretical framework defended here should be well-founded and independently motivated.

So far, I have conceived of the discourse structure as consisting of three sections. This tripartite division between the sections of a discourse structure elegantly mirrors the division between the three clause types. Hence, we have declaratives and the Common Ground, interrogatives and the Question Set, and imperatives[12] and the To-Do List function. Each clause type has its distinctive conventional purpose, corresponding to its distinctive conventional impact on the discourse structure—of course, allowing exceptions and more fine grained speech acts in any given language (see García-Carpintero 2021, 414–18 for critical discussion).

Moreover, the Common Ground, the Question Set and the To-Do List function are independently presented elsewhere and motivated by other considerations than the ones treated in this specific paper on the impact of derogatory claims. There is, however, no such independently developed account of an emotive part of the discourse structure that gives us a rigorous and detailed picture of how such a dimension is structured and updated.

Still, if the tripartite division of the discourse structure is insufficient to explain the effect that derogatory utterances have on the discourse structure, then this would provide good reason to add an emotive dimension and develop a rigorous account of how it works. The view that an emotive dimension of the discourse structure is needed is defended by Langton (2012), García-Carpintero (2015) and Marques and García-Carpintero (2020). As Langton puts it:

> Stalnaker's common ground can perhaps be extended to include not just common beliefs, and other belief-like attitudes, but common desires, and common feelings, as well. Speakers invite hearers not only to join in a shared belief world, but also a shared desire world, and a shared hate world. (Langton 2012, 86)

However, Langton's own proposal is—as she herself proclaims—exploratory (Langton 2012, 86). She does not provide a rigorous picture of what the emotive dimension of the discourse structure is like.[13] Rather, she contends

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12 Or more broadly, the *jussive* clause type, including imperatives, promissives and exhortatives (Pak et al., 2008).

13 While Langton discusses both Stalnaker's and Lewis's frameworks, she often focuses on conversational score rather than Common Ground.

that the discourse structure "can be thought of as containing propositions (among other things)" (Langton 2012, 87). But the pressing concern here is: what are these other things?[14] We have a pretty clear idea of how beliefs are represented as propositions in the Common Ground, how questions are represented as sets of propositions in the Question Set, and how actions are represented as properties on to-do lists—but Langton does not provide a parallel story of emotions.

Moreover, Langton's focus is not so much on how emotions are represented in the discourse structure, but rather how the emotions that are accepted influence the actual emotions that interlocutors have (Langton 2012, 86). Recall that content accepted in the discourse structure need not correspond to the actual beliefs and intentions that interlocutors have since one might accept something for the sake of conversation (cf. section 2). Still, once something is accepted in the discourse structure, there seems to be at least some pressure for interlocutors to form beliefs or intentions corresponding to the content accepted. Langton argues that once a belief, attitude, or emotion has been accepted into the discourse structure, this invokes an *attitudinal appeal* such as "Believe P!", "Avoid P!" or "Hate P!". The thought is thus that there is pressure on interlocutors to acquire the beliefs, attitudes or emotions represented in the discourse structure. The question that I focus on here precedes this issue, since it concerns whether emotions are represented in the discourse structure at all, and if so, how.

Still, one might object that if Langton is correct that the content within a discourse structure affects the interlocutor's emotions, there simply must be an emotive dimension within it.[15] However, this claim is resisted by Rinner (2024), who argues that although emotions can be presupposed, and might affect the emotions that interlocutors have, this does not require that the discourse structure includes mutually presupposed emotions. Instead, Rinner argues that such emotions can be represented as beliefs in the discourse structure and that those beliefs influence emotions (Rinner 2024, 116–17).[16] For instance, a claim such as "What do you want from your partner?" presupposes that the addressee wants something from their partner.

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14 Cf. discussion in section 2 of McGowan's claim that a Lewis style Score includes all suitable entities.

15 One might also resist this claim by insisting that utterances can affect people's emotions directly, that is, not *via* the discourse structure.

16 In much the same way as Langton, Rinner also mainly works with a Lewis style conversational score, rather than Stalnakeraian version of conversational dynamics that I work with. Still, the arguments made still hold.

If accommodated by the addressee, this utterance introduces a belief in the discourse structure that the addressee wants something from her partner, which puts pressure on her to not only form this belief but also to have the relevant emotion (Rinner 2024, 117). While I will not be defending Rinner's view here, it provides at least one way to see how the content of the discourse structure can influence people's emotions, even if there is no separate emotional dimension within the discourse structure.

I will now move on to discuss Marques and García-Carpintero's claim that an emotive section of the discourse structure should be assumed to accommodate the impact of slurs. The point of this fourth dimension is to harbor norms that indicate that it is permissible or required to derogate certain people by making "fitting emotional and reactive attitudes shared by interlocutors" (Marques and García-Carpintero 2020, 141).

Since they focus on slurs, I will do so as well for most of this section, noting that my discussion of slurs here will not do justice to the wide range of important work that has been done on this topic. As I mentioned in section 3, there are many different views about slurs, and I wish to remain relatively neutral. But I will consider three main alternatives for what slurs convey and what each alternative requires of the discourse structure. Bear in mind that I will not discuss here *how* the derogatory content is conveyed (i.e., by means of which pragmatic or semantic mechanism), but rather what kind of content and, importantly, with what force (directive, assertive, or expressive) the derogatory content is conveyed.

First, according to *directive* accounts, utterances of slurs convey directives. For instance, according to a view presented by Kirk-Giannini (2019), slurs contribute to the conversation "a directive to adopt the perspective towards the targeted group which is lexically associated with the slur" (2019, 8). If a view such as this is true, the derogatory content conveyed by slurs can straightforwardly be accommodated by the To-Do List function, which is designed precisely to account for the conversational effect of directives. Hence, there would be no reason to add an emotive dimension to the discourse structure, at least on account of explaining the conversational contribution of slurs, if this view of slurs is correct.

Second, *assertive* accounts maintain that utterances of slurs convey a derogatory content that is truth-evaluable. For instance, Hom maintains that a slur ascribes a property with a necessarily empty extension roughly of the form: "ought to be subject to such-and-such discriminatory practices for having such-and-such stereotypical properties all because of belonging to such-and-such group" (Hom 2012, 394). According to this view, a speaker who utters "X is

an S" (where S is a slur) asserts (roughly) *that X belongs to such-and-such group and ought to be subject to such-and-such discriminatory practices for having such-and-such stereotypical properties all because of belonging to such-and-such group.*

At a first glance, it seems that a view like this would simply say that the derogatory content conveyed by slurs affects the Common Ground by adding a derogatory proposition. Hence, nothing more is needed over and above mutual belief. However, since the derogatory proposition in question is *normative*, a view such as this might nonetheless require that assertions of slurs have an effect on To-Do Lists. As I argued in section 3, utterances of deontic modal claims (such as "*ought* to be subjected to …") presuppose that a property is already on an interlocutor To-Do List. Hence, if an assertive account of the derogatory content of slurs is correct, the discourse structure must include at least the Common Ground and the To-Do List-function, but not necessarily an additional emotive dimension.

Third, and finally, *emotive* accounts contend that the derogatory content conveyed by slurs express emotions. Roughly, the thought is that slurs express "that a certain emotional state is […] *fitting* or *appropriate*" (García-Carpintero 2015, 8). If this is correct, it appears to provide *prima facie* reason to postulate an emotive dimension of the discourse structure. Note that I will not defend or criticize this view of slurs here. Rather, the purpose is to consider what it would require of the discourse structure if it were true.

What an emotive account requires of the discourse structure depends on how we understand emotive meanings (García-Carpintero 2015, 8). According to some views, emotions are evaluative *judgments* (Rorty, 1980; Lyons, 1980; Gordon, 1987; Greenspan, 1998; Nussbaum, 2001). Very roughly, fear of flying is understood as the judgment that flying is dangerous (Todd 2014, 703). Without going into much detail, we can just roughly sketch an emotive account of slurs that accepts this view. According to such an account, an utterance of a slur S expresses an emotive state of contempt, which is further understood as an evaluative judgment that individuals of the group referred to by S are contemptable. If this is correct, slurs update only the Common Ground with evaluative propositions.

Marques and García-Carpintero contend that this way of modeling the practical import of derogatory claims as just propositions added to the Common Ground is insufficient. They reject the view that emotions are evaluative judgments and argue instead that emotions are *sui generis* normative states and that utterances of slurs express such states (Mulligan, 1998; Deonna and Teroni, 2015; D'Arms and Jacobson, 2000). García-Carpintero further argues that "[o]n the suggested view of emotions and the speech acts expressing

them, the additional 'emotive' structure of contexts should be assumed"
(García-Carpintero 2015, 9).

It is this final claim that an emotive structure of contexts should be
assumed which is called into question here. Even if we accept the proposed
view of slurs and the emotive states that they express, we can make sense of
their practical or normative effect on the discourse structure by maintaining the
tripartite division of the discourse structure. I will now present two options for
how to represent emotions in the discourse structure without adding a fourth
emotive dimension to it.

The first option is to accommodate emotive utterances within the
tripartite division of the discourse structure by incorporating an emotive
section into the To-Do List function. If we, as I have suggested here, think of
the To-Do List Function as representing not just the actions that interlocutors
have explicitly committed to, but also as representing implicit norms as default
items on To-Do Lists, we find ourselves with a very large set of properties on
our To-Do Lists. This calls for a need to add further *structure* to To-Do Lists.
To see how this might be done, we can build on the thought from Portner that
To-Do Lists are organized into sections.

> I would like to suggest that To-Do Lists also come in a variety of flavors
> in the same way that ordering sources do. We can think of this in terms
> of each participant in a conversation having multiple To-Do Lists or
> (as I prefer) in terms of To-Do Lists being organized into sections.
> (Portner 2007, 360)

The sections of To-Do Lists can be understood as representing different kinds
of norms for behavior. For instance, the Gricean maxims will belong to a
section of the To-Do List representing norms *of conversation.* Similarly, we can
think of moral maxims belonging to a section of the To-Do List that represent
norms *of morality.* This section might include both "give to charity" and "do
not give to charity" representing that the interlocutor is permitted to give to
charity, but only "do not murder," representing a moral requirement to refrain
from committing murder. Finally, the permission expressed by (1) belongs to
a section of the To-Do List representing norms *of social interaction.*

To accommodate the effect of emotive utterances on the discourse
structure, we might further want to say that there is a section of To-Do Lists
that represent norms of what to feel—a "To-Feel" List, so to say. For instance,
the utterance of a slur can be understood as adding not only permission to
mis*treat* people to the section of social norms, but that it also adds permission

to *feel* contempt towards the group to which the slur refers (and perhaps other emotions, such as disgust, anger, or fear). This could be represented in the discourse structure as a property on the emotive section of To-Do Lists.

In short, according to this first option for how to accommodate emotive utterances, the emotive dimension is *incorporated* into the To-Do List function, thus maintaining the tripartite distinction between the divisions of the discourse structure.

The second, more parsimonious, option is to argue that emotions can be represented on To-Do Lists as the characteristic behaviors and actions that they are associated with. To exemplify, the emotions conveyed by slurs are, according to Marques and García-Carpintero, described as *reactive* attitudes. These are thus understood largely in terms of the actions or behaviors they legitimize. Their effect on the discourse structure can therefore be captured by the To-Do List function: an utterance that conveys an emotions updates To-Do Lists by adding to it the acts associated with having that emotion.

In fact, this approach appears to chime quite well with the way Marques and García-Carpintero understand emotive content. They argue that according to their view of slurs, the additional structure of the context needs to capture that the intentional object of a slur (e.g., people of Jewish faith in the case of "kike" or Chinese people in the case of "chink") are instantiated as having traits that make contempt a fitting emotional attitude. They further argue that the intentional objects of the slur "hence become regarded as adequate recipients of mistreatment" (Marques and García-Carpintero 2020, 146). The reason is that resentment and contempt, which are the emotive attitudes that they focus on in the case of slurs, are the kind of reactive attitudes that *guide our behavior* towards others. In short, "slurs are expressive of emotions that present their targets as worthy of derogation, a form of putting the target group of persons down and exclude them" (Marques and García-Carpintero 2020, 146–47).[17]

We can accept this view of slurs and the emotive states that they convey and maintain that their impact on the discourse structure is captured as propositions in the Common Ground and norms of mistreatment on To-Do Lists. Hence, the utterance of a slur has a double effect on the discourse structure, adding both propositions in the Common Ground to the effect that the intentional objects of the emotion have such-and-such features and a norm represented as items on To-Do Lists by default representing them as recipients of mistreatment.

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17 Marques and García-Carpintero appeal to the views on emotions or reactive attitudes by Mulligan (1998); D'Arms and Jacobson (2000); Deonna and Teroni (2015); Mason (2003).

To see how, let us consider again the representation of our interlocutor A from section 3, whose To-Do List represented A as being: permitted to have a cookie (added by virtue of an utterance of "Have a cookie, if you'd like!"), required to follow the maxim of relevance (added by default), and permitted to touch however he likes (added by virtue of an utterance of (1)). Now, let us also assume that after uttering (1), A utters a sentence containing the slur "kike" which represents the target group as having certain features and thus adds a proposition with this content to the Common Ground. In addition, the emotive state expressed not only adds this propositional content to the Common Ground, but also affects A's To-Do List by adding the acts associated with the reactive attitude of contempt, such as permitting exclusion of the target group. This can be represented as in Table 3.

Table 3. A's To-Do List

Have a cookie	Don't have a cookie
Be relevant	
Touch women however you like	Don't touch women however you like
Exclude people of Jewish faith	Don't exclude people of Jewish faith
…	…

This is of course a very simplified example, and we can imagine that To-Do Lists are updated by a complex series of acts of derogation associated with the slur, such as permitting name-calling, bullying and physical violence. But the crucial point is that we can capture the effect of the emotion expressed on the discourse structure as making a dual impact on the Common Ground and To-Do Lists. The target group is represented as having a series of characteristics, and the norm that they therefore deserve mistreatment is represented as items on To-Do Lists. This is largely similar to how I argued that an utterance of (1) presupposes a norm represented as properties on To-Do Lists that warrants mistreatment of women.

Note that this account of how utterances of slurs impact the discourse structure does not amount to saying that slurs convey directives. Rather, the thought is that we can say that they convey reactive attitudes that affect To-Do Lists. Although the To-Do List is the dimension of the discourse structure that is conventionally updated by imperatives, it is also more broadly the part of the discourse structure that has the conversational function of keeping track of actions interlocutors are committed to—and this can be achieved by means of

other types of utterances than those of the directive clause type.[18]

In short, the purpose of this section has not been to argue against Marques and García-Carpintero's view that utterances of slurs express derogatory emotions, nor against the view that emotions should be understood as *sui generis* normative states that warrant mistreatment. Rather, the purpose has been to argue that we can accept this without having to postulate an additional dimension of the discourse structure. The impact of slurs—and other expressions that convey derogatory emotions—on the discourse structure can be accommodated by the tripartite division of Common Ground, Question Set, and To-Do List function. Emotions can either be represented as items on an emotive section of To-Do Lists, or as the behavioral dispositions that are characteristic of them, registered in the contextual background as actions on To-Do Lists.

5.   CONCLUSION

The account presented here provides a way to model how derogatory utterances impact the discourse structure in ways that go beyond the effect on mutually accepted beliefs. I have argued that norms of behavior can figure in the conversational background, with an emphasis on cases when the norms in question warrant mistreatment—where (1) has been used as an illustrative example. Derogatory utterances can affect the norms that interlocutors mutually accept about how certain people are permitted to be treated and this is represented as actions on interlocutors' To-Do Lists.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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18 Just consider how an interrogative such as "Could you pass the salt?" intuitively has the function of influencing the addressee's behavior, rather than to ask a genuine question.

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