

Impoliteness in Context - Piers Morgan Interviews Janet Mock: A Linguistic Analysis

1. Introduction and Data for Study

Cisnormativity and heteronormativity are two deeply embedded ideologies in our society today and are considered to be hegemonic truths (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009; Worthen, 2016). Cisnormativity is the assumption that all individuals have a gender identity which matches the sex they were assigned at birth (Worthen, 2016). The heteronormative phenomenon, on the other hand, organises identity into a hierarchal spectrum, whereby heterosexuality is the superior-oppositional to homosexuality, normalising the idea that sex, gender roles and sexual orientation are naturally and coherently fixed (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009). Such ideologies about sex and gender, which marginalise those who deviate from the norm, are often reproduced in spoken discourse (Van Dijk, 2006), both deliberately and unconsciously. They not only naturally offend members of the transgender community, but also legitimise the existing power relations between those who are cis gender and those who are transgender. As Fairclough (2013:33) reminds us, “In discourse, people can be legitimising or delegitimising particular power relations, without being conscious of doing so”.

The following study seeks to explore the relationship between discourse, ideology and power in a television interview between English journalist and television presenter, Piers Morgan, and transgender activist and author, Janet Mock. The data for the present study has been taken from an interview conducted by Piers Morgan on his American talk show, “*Piers Morgan Live*”. Piers Morgan hosts Janet Mock in this interview, a pivotal transgender advocate who began publicly identifying as transgender in 2011, and had recently prior to this interview published her critically acclaimed memoir, “*Redefining Realness*”. This memoir was published by Mock to empower other transgender women of colour to reveal their own stories and stand up against the pervasive discrimination they experience in society. This particular interview garnered much media attention and sparked twitter outrage, with many people criticising Piers for his insensitive handling of the interview. The primary motivation for the following study is thus to examine the communicative behaviour of the host in the following interview, to explore why the way Piers Morgan handled the interview with Janet Mock was considered insensitive by a large number of people.

2. Method of Analysis and Research Questions

In order to inquire into the relationship between discourse, ideology and power in the following television interview, a combined discourse-analytical and pragmatic approach is adopted, which grasps the intricacy of how Piers Morgan discursively reproduces power and ideology in his interview with Janet Mock. As X (2015:446) reminds us, “Discourse internalises all other elements of social action including values, beliefs, desires and institutionalised ways of doing and being”, and so adopting the following approach to analysis will allow us to demystify Piers’ communicative behaviour and its ideological dimensions. Drawing on concepts and tools of pragmatics, as well as other dimensions of talk such as genre and topic, the following research questions will be addressed sequentially in the present study.

- How are topics ideologically managed in the following interview and how does such topic management reflect Piers Morgan’s social and institutional power?
- How does Piers Morgan’s speech acts reflect and reproduce power and ideology?
- How is rapport (mis)managed in the following interview?

In order to explore how rapport is (mis)managed on a general level in the following interview, Spencer-Oatey's (2005) Rapport Management Model will be operationalised (See Section 3.2 for overview). Spencer-Oatey (2000) argues that rapport is managed across five domains: the illocutionary domain, discourse domain, participation domain, stylistic domain and non-verbal domain (See Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Due to word limit restrictions, one will focus on only two of these domains: the discourse domain – examining Piers' topic choices in this interview and the illocutionary domain – examining how Piers' speech acts and their underlying meanings affect rapport. A quantitative analysis of Piers Morgan's question turns will be conducted and a clarifying example of data transcription will be given to support the observations made in the quantitative analysis. Piers' speech acts will then be analysed qualitatively to determine how their underlying meanings affect rapport in this interview.

Hutchby (2006:35) argues that those conducting critical discourse studies should be cautious of "assuming linkages between the properties of talk and higher-level features of society and culture". To avoid the risk of critical bias, Wodak's (2007:211) triangulation approach based on a concept of context will be adopted in the present study. This approach takes four different levels into consideration: the-co-text of the utterance, the context in the macro-text, the socio-political/socio-cultural context and the intertextual relationships of the interview to other relevant events.

3. Analysis

3.1. Topic Management

It is often by means of the genre of a text that power can be exercised (Wodak, 2007). By the very nature of their role, interviewers typically have the ability to exert their institutional power through topic management. In the traditional news interview, power is operationalised in terms of unequal role relations (Ilie, 2001), whereby the interviewer asks questions and controls the topic and the interviewee is expected to simply answer those questions, in accordance with the subordinate relation of interviewer and interviewee. However, the dynamics within television talk shows are in some ways much more relaxed and spontaneous than the traditional news interview. Despite taking place in an institutional setting, the talk that takes place in these shows is much less regulated (Kamil Ali, 2018). Several scholars have thus defined television talk shows as a semi-institutional discourse (Ilie, 2001; Carnel, 2012; Rui and Ting, 2014), which is a discourse that mediates between conversational discourse and institutional discourse. This hybrid genre allows interviewees the opportunity to challenge pre-established asymmetrical power relations, to ask the interviewer their own questions and assert their own topical agendas (Ilie, 2001). Despite the semi-institutional character of the interview between Piers Morgan and Janet Mock, this interview does entail an asymmetrical power relation which consequently allows Piers to control and maintain his own preferred topics, thus sustaining and reproducing his power in this interview. Since this interview was Mock's first mainstream interview, she is appreciative of being given the opportunity to promote her new memoir across two segments of a mainstream television show and so would be less likely to deviate away from her expected role in this given frame.

One of the talk show's most noticeable characteristics is its intertextuality (Munson, 1993). Intertextuality refers to the interrelationship between texts, where each text exists in relation to other texts (Fairclough, 1992). Since Janet was invited onto this mainstream show to promote her new memoir and to discuss issues that she lays out within the book, such as her journey and advocate work, we would thus expect Piers to initiate a variety of different topics

that coincide with the issues she discusses in depth within her book. Television talk shows are “constrained by the scheduling requirements of broadcasting” (Clayman and Heritage, 2002:73), however, and so the topics covered by Piers within this particular interview subjectively define the information he considers to be the most important. This therefore means that topic choice may be subject to ideological management. Figure 1 below provides a visual representation of Piers Morgan’s question turns in this interview, which allows us to observe which topics his questions are centred on most frequently¹. As can be observed in Figure 1, the topics initiated by Piers almost exclusively relate to the more sensational aspect of Mock’s story – her physical transition and the gender she was assigned at birth. 70% of Piers’ question turns in this interview were questions related to Janet’s gender assigned at birth, whilst 15% of his question turns were questions related to Janet’s plans to get married to her partner in the future. Both of these topics are emphasised at the expense of other topics such as modern America’s tolerance of individuals who challenge the “norm”.

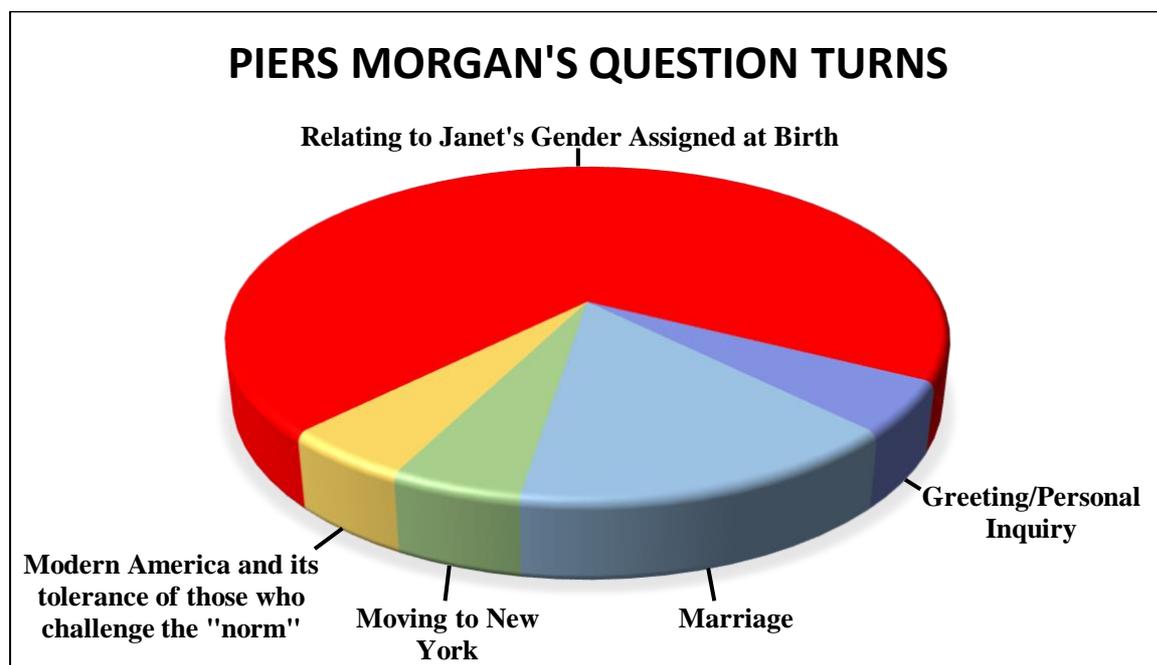


Figure 1: Piers Morgan’s question turns in his interview with Janet Mock (N=20)

Piers’ ability to control the narrative through topic management in this interview serves to reflect his social and institutional power in this setting. Since the interview is bound by time constraints, it appears that Piers does not wish to devote too much time to discussing Janet’s work as a transgender advocate or the trans issues that this community face, as both of these topics are not considered relevant to his goals. It can be argued that Piers’ almost exclusive focus on Janet’s birth gender is strategic to his extralinguistic goal of sensationalising her story for the viewing pleasure of the overhearing audience (Tolson, 2006). This seems plausible when considering the significantly low viewing figures *Piers Morgan Live* was receiving prior to this interview taking place (Willis, 2012). In emphasising the topic of Janet’s birth gender at the expense of other important topics discussed in Janet’s memoir, Piers not only sensationalises Janet’s story, but also frames her narrative in such a way as to portray her as unusual and deviant from the norm. As Cameron (2001:129) states, “It is not

¹ In order to calculate the total number of question turns, questions were evaluated not only by their grammatical function but also on the basis of their functional value (Clayman and Heritage, 2002). Utterances that expressed a request for information were counted as questions.

one instance, but the repetition of the same pattern in many instances and on many occasions that does the work of naturalising a particular view of reality". Thus, the importance Piers places on the topic of Janet's assigned birth gender in this interview serves to naturalise the view of transgender individuals as unnatural and therefore contributes to the systematic othering of trans people. Such portrayal feeds society's dismissal of trans individuals and legitimises the existing power relations between those who are cis gender and those who are transgender, despite Piers not consciously meaning to do so (Fairclough, 2013).

- 100 **JM** I think w-New York was a part – the third part of my dream I had three dreams
101 which was (.) number one was to become a writer to live my life as myself and three
102 was to move to New York City and New York City was (.) huge part of that dream
103 it's where I was able to (.) find myself and my voice as a writer and then also develop
104 my mission which is to speak out and speak up alongside many erm girls that grew
105 up like myself
- 106 **PM** in 2009 you meet a **man** (2) and you fall in love with this man (2) but there's
107 something you have to tell him (.) something pretty big you have to tell him that he
108 doesn't know (.) which is that you used to be (.) yourself a man

In the above excerpt, we can see how Piers exercises his control over the narrative through topic management. There is an evident conflict between the interlocutor's intended goals in this interview. Janet wants to discuss the changes she is working to make in the world fighting trans discrimination, whilst Piers seeks to discuss the more sensational aspects of Janet's story, in order to attract more viewers. Such mis-match between the interlocutor's goals thus results in a case of mismanaged rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). As we can see in lines 100-105, Janet responds to a question that Piers has asked regarding her move to New York. In lines 103-105, Janet ends her response by referring to her work as a transgender advocate, an issue which is largely what her memoir is about. This therefore allows Piers the perfect opportunity to address this topic, which is integral to the story she seeks to tell. As can be observed in lines 106-108, through boundaried topical movement, Piers redirects the course of the interview back to a more sensational aspect of Janet's story – her meeting her current partner and having to disclose her identity to him. According to Heritage and Atkinson (1984:165), boundaried topical movement means that "the closure of one topic is followed by the initiation of another". In this instance, Piers has the opportunity to be a cooperative interlocutor and adhere to the story that Janet seeks to tell, but instead he abruptly changes the topic to Janet's relationship. This rather abrupt change serves to reflect the time constraints of the show; Piers does not want to waste time talking about Janet's advocacy work, since it is not relevant to his goals. Piers introducing this new topic just before the commercial break is strategic to his extralinguistic goal of sensationalising Janet's story, to arouse the audience's interest in the ensuing topic and keep them tuned in to the show (Ekström, 2002).

As we can observe in line 106, Piers emphatically stresses the word 'man', which serves to boost the illocutionary force of the utterance and is thus another strategy Piers adopts to sensationalise Janet's story. He then goes on to comment in line 108 that Janet used to be herself a man. This not only serves to sensationalise Janet's story for viewing pleasure, but also serves to reflect a heteronormative view of the world, whereby relationships are only fitting between people of opposite sex. Piers frames the narrative here in such a way as to imply that Janet has deceived this man by failing to tell him straight away that she was

assigned male gender at birth, thus reinforcing the myth of trans women deceiving and emasculating straight men. By framing her narrative in such a way and commenting that Janet herself used to be a man, such portrayal feeds society's dismissal of trans individuals because it suggests that they are both unnatural and deceptive. His proposition in line 107 that Janet "used to be [herself] a man" threatens Janet's social identity face (Spencer-Oatey, 2005), as Mock has never self-identified as a man. This is an issue we will discuss in further detail in the next section.

3.2. Speech Acts and Rapport (Mis)management

Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management Model (2005)

It is an undisputed fact that Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness is seminal and remains an important reference point for analysts (Eelen, 2001; Leech, 2005; Fedyna, 2016). In contradistinction to Goffman's (1967:5) concept of 'face', Brown and Levinson (1987:62) redefine 'face' as the basic wants "which every member knows every other member desires, and which in general it is in the interests of every member to partially satisfy". They dichotomise 'face' into two distinct categories: positive face – "the want of every member that their wants are desirable to at least some others" and negative face – "the wants of every member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:62). In the context of the mutual vulnerability of 'face', there is a need for interlocutors to maintain the faces of each other. Nevertheless, face threatening acts (FTAs) frequently occur in social interaction. According to Brown and Levinson (1987:62), a FTA is an act that impinges in some degree upon the addressee/speaker's face, by running contrary to the wants and desires of the other. Their model thus focuses on the amount of verbal work which individuals have to perform in their utterances in order to redress face.

Whilst Brown and Levinson's (1987) model is arguably the most influential politeness model to date, it nevertheless suffers from various shortcomings². This particular model adopts an a priori approach to face sensitivity, suggesting that certain illocutionary acts are intrinsically face-threatening to the speaker or the hearer. Such an a priori approach ignores the dynamic aspect of interlocutor's face sensitivities as they emerge in interaction (Spencer-Oatey, 2009). Refining Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model, Spencer-Oatey (2005) coins the term 'rapport management', which moves away from Brown and Levinson's (1987) individualistic emphasis on self-needs and crystallises the relational and collective aspect of interaction. She challenges Brown and Levinson's (1987) distinction between positive and negative face, noting that their "conception of positive face has been underspecified, and that the concerns that they identify as negative face issues are not necessarily face concerns at all" (Spencer-Oatey, 2000:13). Spencer-Oatey (2005) proposes that the Rapport Management Model entails three bases of rapport – the management of face, the management of sociality rights and obligations and the management of interactional goals, which can be either transactional and/or interactional (See Figure 2 for illustration). As can be observed in Figure 2, Spencer-Oatey's (2005) Rapport Management Model is a much broader framework than Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, accounting for the full range of face-work, which is fitting for an analysis of the following data.

² See Watts (2003), Culpeper (1996, 2005), Bousfield (2008) and Al-Hindawi and Alkhazaali (2016) for a more comprehensive critique.

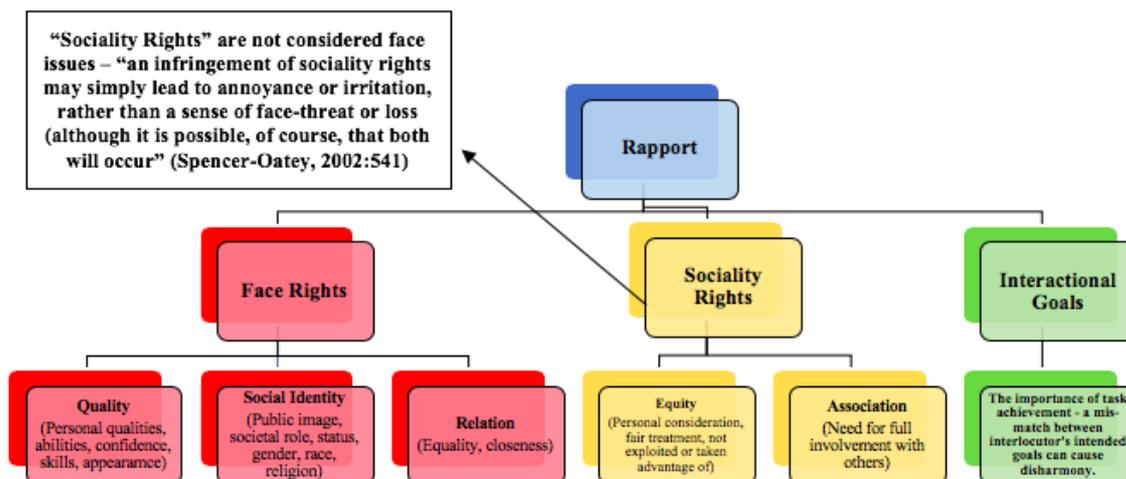


Figure 2: An illustrative overview of Spencer-Oatey’s (2005) Rapport Management Model

Analysis

Rapport threat is a subjective evaluation, which depends not simply on what an interlocutor says, but on an individual’s interpretation and reaction to what has been said under what circumstances (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). One does not believe that Piers communicates face-attack intentionally in the following interview, nor does one believe Mock perceives Piers’ communicative behaviour as intentionally face-attacking. Rather, it is a case of mismanaged relations (Spencer-Oatey, 2005), whereby Piers lacks understanding of how to communicate with a transgender individual in a manner that is deemed respectful.

As can be observed in lines 56, 58 and 60, Piers develops rapport with Mock by commending her for her courage in choosing to live authentically at a young age and overcoming the barriers she faced at school because of this choice. His assertions, “takes a lot of courage this” and “you’ve coped with all the teasing and the bullying you’ve come through” in lines 56 and 58, and the emphatic stress he places on the adjective “huge” in line 60, all cumulatively serve to satisfy Janet’s quality face rights. Piers’ evaluates Janet positively in terms of her courage in order to reduce the social distance between them and to create a friendly atmosphere so that Janet will be more inclined to open up about her experiences. Thus, such strategies employed by Piers are all strategic to his extralinguistic goal of having a good interview.

55 **PM** (laughs) so here
56 you go (xxx) takes a lot of courage this (.) you're going through school you've gone
57 from Charles to Janet (.) from boys clothes to girls school (.) er clothes (1) and
58 you've coped with all the teasing and the bullying you've come through and its made
59 you I guess strong in your head enough to say (.) I'm gonna go through properly with
60 this and become a woman and have a transgender operation which is a **huge** thing
61 to do at 18 (1) tell me how you felt when you when you actually (1) were approaching
62 the operation
63 **JM** (looks visibly unhappy) well that was a (.) that was a big step and a **long::**
64 journey [right]
65 **PM** [right]=

Despite expressing a positive intention at first sight, Piers' speech acts in the following excerpt are interpreted by Janet as intrinsically face-threatening. As can be observed in lines 56-60, Piers asserts that Janet went 'from Charles to Janet, from boys clothes to girls clothes' and 'coped with all the teasing and the bullying' which made her strong enough mentally to say that she was going 'to go through properly with this and become a woman and have a transgender operation'. Such account of Janet's transition is a vast oversimplification, which diminishes the significance of Janet's struggle to become who she is today. As we can see in line 63, Janet's verbal and paralinguistic response displays up-take of Piers' impoliteness. Here, Janet emphatically stresses the adjective 'long' and lengthens the syllable to emphasise that her transition was not a straightforward process and that she has overcome many challenges, both physically and mentally, to become the person she is today.

It is not just simply Piers' oversimplification of her transition which Janet perceives as face-threatening. As illustrated by Janet's paralinguistic response in line 63, Janet also takes offence to the implied meaning behind Piers' utterance in lines 59-60. Here, Piers asserts that Janet was finally mentally strong enough to say that she was 'gonna go through properly with this and become a woman and have a transgender operation'. His discourse embodies a naturalised view of sex and gender, whereby you can only be considered a 'proper' woman if you have the corresponding female body parts. The assertion 'gonna go through properly with this and become a woman and have a transgender operation' threatens Janet's social identity rights, since it implies that Janet was not a 'proper' woman prior to her gender reassignment surgery, even though Janet had been living as a woman for years prior. There is an evident mis-match between the social identity qualities that Janet is claiming and those that Piers attributes to her, which results in mismanaged rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2005).

72 **PM** what was the moment after you had it (1) when you looked in the mirror (1)
 73 and were finally able to think (1) wow (.) >that is who I'm supposed to be<
 74 **JM** it felt validating and affirming=
 75 **PM** =but was there a moment (.) was it immediately
 76 afterwards or was it (.) a month a year?=
 77 **JM** =I think it actually came before it (.) I think
 78 the road coming up to that was actually a bigger journey for me [a bigger sense of
 79 validation yes]

The following excerpt above is yet another example from the interview where Piers' discourse embodies a naturalised view of sex and gender. As can be observed in lines 72-73, Piers asks Janet what the moment was after she had gender reassignment surgery, when she could look in the mirror and think 'wow this is who I'm supposed to be'. Here, Piers' speech act primarily functions as a question, inviting Janet to share her story. Taking a closer look at Piers' question in lines 72-73, we can see that whilst Piers' speech act does function as a question, it also contains a presupposition. Piers tacitly assumes that it was only 'after' undergoing gender reassignment surgery that Janet knew she was a woman, despite the fact that Janet felt she was a woman and was living as a woman for many years prior. This presupposition thus serves to reinforce a naturalised view of sex and gender, whereby Janet could only possibly feel like a woman now she has corresponding female body parts.

In order to demonstrate how the following assumption has quite clearly threatened Janet's social identity rights, we turn to Gricean pragmatics. Grice (1975) argues that in communication, we assume that speakers are behaving co-operatively and will co-operate to achieve mutual conversational ends. Grice (1975) thus formulated the 'Co-operative Principle', which he divides into four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Manner and Relation (See Figure 3 for illustration). If a speaker flouts a maxim, this means the speaker is deliberately not following a maxim in order to generate an instance of conversational implicature.

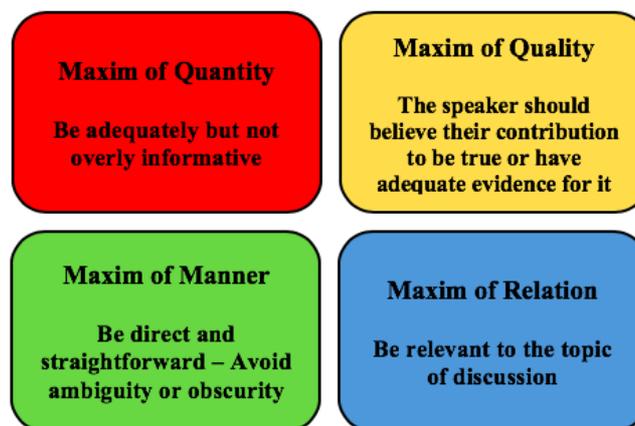


Figure 3: An illustrative overview of Grice's (1975) Co-operative Principle

In lines 72-73, Piers' question forms the first part of an adjacency pair (Schegloff, 2007), which requires Janet to provide a response. As we can see in line 74, Janet provides what is termed a dispreferred response (Yule, 1996), a structurally unexpected response to Piers' question. Rather than provide a directly relevant answer to Piers' question, Janet instead

asserts that ‘it felt validating and affirming’. In this instance, she flouts Grice’s maxim of relevance in order to generate an implicature. By flouting Grice’s maxim of relevance, this enables us to observe Janet’s uptake of Piers’ unintentional impoliteness. She generates the implied meaning that she has always felt she was a woman and that the transgender operation simply ‘validated’ and ‘affirmed’ what she already knew. Piers’ tacit assumption that it was only ‘after’ undergoing gender reassignment surgery that Janet knew she was a woman has clearly threatened Janet’s social identity rights and results in a case of mismanaged rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2005).

82 JM =yes because at 18 I could finally make the decision to do it on
83 my own [without having to] consult anyone
84 PM [I mean] it takes such guts Janet (.) that's the
85 thing that strikes me about your book and having met you is you're obviously just (.)
86 incredibly gutsy but very determined (.) because there must have been so many
87 people (.) I guess I'm I'm surmising here (.) trying to persuade you that this was not a
88 good idea (.) that you should stick to nature's plan (.) you'd have heard all the clichés

Although Piers threatens Janet’s face rights on numerous occasions in this interview, he does so unintentionally, without recognition that his speech could potentially be interpreted as offensive by a member of the transgender community. There are nevertheless instances within the interview where Piers does acknowledge that his conversational behaviour could potentially threaten rapport, and so he adopts various linguistic strategies in order to prevent this. As we can see in line 84, Piers interrupts Janet mid-utterance, initiating his turn before a recognisable transition relevance place. Transition relevance places are points at which the turn at talk could legitimately pass from one speaker to another (Sacks et al, 1974). He clearly recognises that interrupting Janet could potentially affect rapport, since it threatens Janet’s sociality rights – i.e. her entitlement not to be imposed upon by others (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). In order to demonstrate his reluctance to impinge on Janet’s sociality rights and thus redress that impingement, he adopts the hedging device ‘I mean’, which serves to minimise the size of the imposition. He then goes on to attend to Janet’s quality face rights in lines 84-86, in order to develop rapport, evaluating Janet as ‘incredibly gutsy’ and ‘very determined’. Such evaluations of Janet’s character not only satisfy Janet’s quality face rights, but also more importantly, serve to reduce the social distance between himself and Janet, which his prior interruption may have reinforced.

4. Conclusion

Adopting a combined discourse-analytical and pragmatic approach, the following study sought to examine the relationship between discourse, ideology and power in Piers Morgan’s interview with Janet Mock. Although narrow in scope due to word limit restrictions, the following study nevertheless reveals some of the reasons as to why people found Piers’ handling of the interview insensitive. Piers sensationalised Janet’s story in this interview, focusing almost exclusively on the gender she was assigned at birth, rather than the changes she is working to make in the world fighting trans discrimination. His almost exclusive focus on Janet’s birth gender in this interview naturalises the view of transgender people as unnatural, and thus contributes to the systematic othering of trans people. Throughout the interview, his discourse implicitly embodies a naturalised view of sex and gender, whereby a

trans person can only be considered the gender they purport to be if they have the corresponding body parts. One does not believe that Piers communicates face-attack intentionally in this interview, nor does one believe Mock perceives his communicative behaviour as intentionally face-attacking. Piers simply lacks understanding of how to communicate with a transgender individual in a manner that is deemed respectful. This study thus aims to raise people's self-consciousness that you can be completely kind, but say something completely offensive at the same time - the two things are not mutually exclusive.

Word Count: 3,993

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Appendix

Piers Morgan interviews Janet Mock

1 **PM** Janet Mock has a remarkable life story (.) Janet was born a **boy** and at the
2 age 18 she took an extraordinary step to become the woman she is today (.) but
3 Janet went even further in 2011 (.) revealing her secret to the world in a profile in
4 Marie Claire magazine (.) Janet is now a fierce advocate for the transgender
5 community (.) and is telling her story in the new memoir Redefining Realness: My
6 Path to Womanhood (.) Identity (.) Love and So Much More and Janet Mock joins me
7 now (.) exclusively (.) how are you Janet?

8 **JM** very good=

9 **PM** =so this is the (1) the amazing thing about you (1) had I not known
10 anything about your story (.) I would've >had **absolutely** not a clue (1) that you had
11 ever been (1) a boy (.) a male< (2) which makes me absolutely believe you s-should
12 always have been a woman (.) and that must have been what you felt (1) when you
13 were young

14 **PM** take me back to when you first thought (1) this is not right I'm not Charles
15 which was (.) the name you were given you were born in Hawaii (1) I'm a woman (.)
16 I'm a girl

17 **JM** (laughs) I think for me it was just (.) I always knew that I was me (.) I didn't
18 know that it was about gender or that it was about (.) erm anything other than just (1)
19 the inclinations that I just kind of naturally had (.) the things that I was drawn to

20 **JM** my mother loves to say that I was a very vocal and adamant child she
21 remembers that when I was (.) 3 years old I erm (.) landed in the emergency room
22 for putting one of her earring backings into my ear and it went down (.) I don't really
23 remember the memory but I do remember the vanilla ice cream that I got to have
24 afterward erm

25 **PM** (laughs)

26 **PM** did you ever feel like (1) saying I can't deal with this I'm gonna have to go
back to (.) being (.) a boy Charles (1) at what point did you change your name?

27 **JM** I think from – it was still it was a series of little-bitty steps which I do detail in
28 the book (.) erm but for me there was never any turning back (.) it was always
29 moving forward (.) [for me]

30 **PM** [but when you began] wearing the girl's clothes at school was
31 that when you began calling yourself Janet or was it after you had the (.) operation
32 when you were 18?

33 **JM** erm it was way before that (.) I was named Janet because of my love for Janet

34 Jackson because of our shared cheekbones and smile=
35 **PM** =you do look a bit like Janet
36 Jackson I didn't wanna say anything now but you've raised the spectre
37 **JM** (laughs) well I was
38 very [much...]
39 **PM** [I've interviewed Janet] you look very like her
40 **JM** I was very much obsessed with the velvet rope [at high] school
41 **PM** [right]=
42 **JM** =and I was very
43 emotional at that time (.) and that album just spoke to me (.) and it was erm
44 something that I think it spoke to a lot of people who felt different Janet was fierce
45 on that cover (.) she was fierce and then she talked about her sexual (.) orientation
46 and her sexual fluidity and you know domestic violence and all these dark things
47 within that album (.) which empowered me growing up=
48 **PM** =so I'm seeing a bit of Janet
49 and a bit of Beyonce (.) especially with the hair
50 **JM** oh I live for Beyonce [(xxx)]
51 **PM** [and the dress] because this is very like the dress
52 Beyonce wore (.) when I interviewed her (.) not that I can remember every second of
53 that day
54 **JM** well I live for Beyonce so that's a very great compliment (.) thank you
55 **PM** (laughs) so here
56 you go (xxx) takes a lot of courage this (.) you're going through school you've gone
57 from Charles to Janet (.) from boys clothes to girls school (.) er clothes (1) and
58 you've coped with all the teasing and the bullying you've come through and its made
59 you I guess strong in your head enough to say (.) I'm gonna go through properly with
60 this and become a woman and have a transgender operation which is a **huge** thing
61 to do at 18 (1) tell me how you felt when you when you actually (1) were approaching
62 the operation
63 **JM** (looks visibly unhappy) well that was a (.) that was a big step and a **long::**
64 journey [right]
65 **PM** [right]=
66 **JM** =I-I-it my (.) i-i
67 -it took 18 years to come to that journey and it may seem very young to a lot of
68 people but for me those matters were very urgent and they were also a very long::
69 process (.) and so for me it was (.) erm (.) it was a step for me to move closer to me
70 (.) it was a recol- reconciliation with myself (.) it was kind of a stamp of personal

71 approval of my own womanhood

72 **PM** what was the moment after you had it (1) when you looked in the mirror (1)

73 and were finally able to think (1) wow (.) >that is who I'm supposed to be<

74 **JM** it felt validating and affirming=

75 **PM** =but was there a moment (.) was it immediately

76 afterwards or was it (.) a month a year?=
77 **JM** =I think it actually came before it (.) I think

78 the road coming up to that was actually a bigger journey for me [a bigger sense of

79 validation yes]

80 **PM** [as you approached

81 a proper adulthood]=

82 **JM** =yes because at 18 I could finally make the decision to do it on

83 my own [without having to] consult anyone

84 **PM** [I mean] it takes such guts Janet (.) that's the

85 thing that strikes me about your book and having met you is you're obviously just (.)

86 incredibly gutsy but very determined (.) because there must have been so many

87 people (.) I guess I'm I'm surmising here (.) trying to persuade you that this was not a

88 good idea (.) that you should stick to nature's plan (.) you'd have heard all the clichés

89 **JM** yeah I'm sur-I er er yeah it's (1) I guess I-I don't marvel at it that much

90 because for me there was no other choice but to be myself (1) you know I was a

91 young trans-girl growing up in Honolulu Hawaii who had parents that were (.) very ill-

92 equipped but super loving (.) they were super accepting of me and for me it- I had no

93 other choice I needed to be myself I knew that by **choosing** to live my life for me and

94 cut out all the noise from other people then it would enable me to live a life that was

95 full and affirming and happy

96 **PM** you come to New York about eight years ago (.) erm:: you got a scholarship

97 to college moved to New York you want to earn a Master's degree (2) when you first

98 got to New York City (1) what was that for you (.) after all you've been through to get

99 to this (.) thriving hub of (.) all types of people

100 **JM** I think w-New York was a part – the third part of my dream I had three dreams

101 which was (.) number one was to become a writer to live my life as myself and three

102 was to move to New York City and New York City was (.) huge part of that dream

103 it's where I was able to (.) find myself and my voice as a writer and then also develop

104 my mission which is to speak out and speak up alongside many erm girls that grew

105 up like myself

106 **PM** in 2009 you meet a **man** (2) and you fall in love with this man (2) but there's

107 something you have to tell him (.) something pretty big you have to tell him that he

108 doesn't know (.) which is that you used to be (.) yourself a man
109 **JM** (looks visibly unhappy)
110 **PM** after the break (.) we'll find out (.) how you told him that news and how he
took it (laughs)

(Commercial Break)

111 **PM** back now with Janet Mock the author of the revealing new memoir
112 Redefining Realness (1) so come on then y-y-you meet this guy (3) what are your
113 thoughts (1) this is a big moment for you
114 **JM** (2) for me I was just in love with another person and I think that he was also
115 falling in love with me (.) erm I had many – much history I was – I've been dating
116 since I was 16 years old and I have exclusively dated men and I've told many men (.)
117 throughout my journey and a lot of that is covered within Redefining Realness [and
118 I think]
119 **PM** [a-a-
120 and] just to rewind there (.) when you have told these men the news (.) did some of
121 them run a mile did others surprise you by being (.) very supportive I mean how did
122 men react=
123 **JM** =they were all very mixed (1) I think disclosure is frightening for anyone
124 that's telling anyone about their past (1) and for me I think that the through line
125 there is that we're all looking for someone to love us for fully who we are (.) not
126 despite of ourselves but because of ourselves and for me I was incredibly lucky that I
127 found someone that wanted to just love me and also he's lucky to also be with me
128 and that's something that must be also stated
129 **PM** see of course (.) listen he's the lucky one here lets be under no illusion but (1)
130 there you are this guy is called Aaron he's a photographer designer in fact he
131 designed the cover of (1) of your book your beautiful cover (.) he's a very talented
132 guy obviously (1) and you know you've got strong feelings for him and he has for you
133 (.) and you've gotta tell him this this news (1) it must be a big moment because you
134 really care for him
135 **JM** hm hm it was major
136 **PM** how [did he react?]
137 **JM** [it was it was] it was a – it was a pivotal moment for for me I was the
138 emotional one (.) erm Aaron was (1) he's a very steady stable erm (1)
139 even-tempered loving man (.) and so he asked to give me a hug and that's
140 something that is talked about in the book I don't wanna give away too much but we

141 are still together and I'm very happy (.) with our dog Cleo

142 **PM** would you like to (.) to get married

143 **JM** (2) /yeah I would/ (.) you know one day (.) yes (laughs)

144 **PM** (3) so that – that suggests to me that maybe there's something going on that I

145 don't know about

146 **JM** no nothing at all [it's just]

147 **PM** [has he] has he popped the question yet

148 **JM** not yet (.) no (1) but I would say yes

149 **PM** er obviously when you – when you did all this and then y-you wrote the Marie

150 Claire piece and now you've got the book and stuff (.) not many people have come

151 out and been quite so brave and frank and honest about being transgender (.) er you

152 can see now people like Laverne Cox and others (.) you know appearing now in a

153 more mainstream way and (.) I guess helping (1) the American people and other

154 countries (.) er come to terms with this as being a perfectly normal thing

155 **PM** (2) for you it's been a real struggle (.) that you talk about very honest in the

156 book (1) to those watching here who might be (1) like a young Charles (2) and still

157 feel they can't go through with this (.) but feel desperately they wanna be a woman

158 (.) what's the best advice you would give them

159 **JM** I think the hardest battle that any of us can fight as E.E Cummings says is the

160 battle of being yourself in a world that tells us that we are wrong that we should be

161 silent and that we shouldn't be ourselves (.) and I think that there's nothing that I

162 can tell a young person besides tap into yourself (.) know your truth and surround

163 yourself with people (.) who affirm you and love you for exactly who you are (.) and

164 sometimes the people that you need to shut out are often the ones that love you

165 because often at times (.) their expectations of you can be a lot of pressure and

166 burden

167 **PM** when you're seeing issues like erm (.) gay marriage in particular (.) moving

168 **very fast** in America (1) faster than many people imagined was possible (.) what

169 does that tell you about modern America and its ability perhaps to (.) to become

170 much more accepting and tolerant than may have been even 20 years ago

171 **JM** I think that that movement has been going on for a very long time I think that

172 it's a (.) it's erm a product of much hard work and movement and organising it's

173 been going on since the 1960s (.) and erm trans people are also very much a part of

174 that movement I think of Sylvia Rivera (.) Marsha P. Johnsons (.) erm (.) Miss Major

175 Griffin-Gracy (.) these trans women were also on the streets (.) they are fighting for

176 their lives that night and so for me I think that America is about self-determination

177 (1) and erm exceptionalism (.) and exerting who your identity is in a world that

178 hopefully becomes more and more safe to express yourself and be very open about
179 who you are
180 **PM** well I can't think of anyone better to be out there promoting (.) er all this than
181 you (.) Janet Mock it's been a delight to meet you (.) the book is called Redefining
182 Realness: My Path to Womanhood Identity Love and So Much More and if I'm Aaron
183 (.) I would be getting down the jewellers (1) just a little word of advice mate
184 **JM** thank you so much
185 **PM** good to see you

Transcription Key

(.) = micro pause (less than one second)

(1) = pause \geq 1 second

[] = overlapping speech

= = latch (next speaker's turn follows immediately without a discernible break)

- = self-repair

Example = words with more emphasis

(laughs) = paralinguistic and non-verbal information

(xxx) = inaudible

> < = slower pace

:: = next syllable is lengthened

// = rising tone