

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO

Pragmatic Features of Heroic and Villainous Speech in Professional Wrestling Promotions

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract			
<p>Tutkielma käsittelee World Wrestling Entertainmentin tv-ohjelmien, Monday Night Rawn ja Smackdown Liven, hahmojen puhetta promotio-osuuksissa John Searlen puheaktiteorian, Paul Gricen keskustelun maksimien sekä Penelope Brownin ja Stephen Levinsonin kohteliaisuusteorian näkökulmasta. Showpainiohjelmien hahmot käyttäytyvät sankarillisesti tai roistomaisesti hahmojen välisissä dramaattisissa konflikteissa. Tutkielma tarkastelee kymmentä promotio-osuutta ja pyrkii selvittämään, miten sankareiden ja roistojen puheen pragmaattiset ominaisuudet edesauttavat heidän roolinsa kuvausta.</p> <p>Kuten aikaisemmassa tutkimuksessa, kohteliaisuusstrategioiden käyttö erottaa sankarit ja roistot selvästi toisistaan. Sankarit käyttävät positiivista kohteliaisuutta luodakseen yhteishenkeä yleisön kanssa, kun taas roistot käyttävät paljon positiivisia kasvoja ja melko paljon negatiivisia kasvoja uhkaavia akteja luodakseen eripuraa ja ilmaistakseen, että he eivät välitä yleisön mielipiteestä. Kuitenkin sankaritkin voivat käyttää epäkohteliaita strategioita, jos roisto on itse ensin toiminut epäkohteliaasti, eli itsensä puolustamista aggressiivisellakin tavalla ei pidätä epäsankarillisena. Vastaavasti roistot käyttävät kohteliaisuusstrategioita epärehellisesti pettääkseen sankarin ja yleisön odotukset.</p> <p>Sankarit ja roistot käyttävät implikaatiivista kieltä samassa määrin. Kummankinlaiset hahmot vihjailevat aika ajoin, että heidän sanomallaan on jokin epäkirjaimellinen merkitys ilmaistakseen esimerkiksi huvittuneisuutta, pelkoa tai väkivallan uhkaa. Kuitenkin roistot yhdistävät implikaation epäkohteliaaseen kielenkäyttöön sankareita useammin ja käyttävät keskustelun maksimeja esimerkiksi sarkastisten solvausten tekemiseen. Lisäksi vain roistot rikkovat tahallaan laadun maksimia. Roistot valehtelevat sankareille vakuuttaakseen, että heidän hetkenaikainen hyvä käytöksensä on luottamuksen arvoista, ja käyttävät sankarin luottamusta hyväkseen.</p> <p>Sankarilliset hahmot eivät eroa merkittävästi roistoista puheaktiteorian kannalta. Vaikka otannasta löytyykin yksittäisiä hetkiä, joissa esimerkiksi sankari käyttää osuvaa kommissiivaa saadakseen yleisön puolelleen, tai roisto ilmaisee ylimielisesti epävarman asian tylynä representatiivina, näitä tapauksia ei esiinny tarpeeksi, jotta niistä voisi tehdä varmoja johtopäätöksiä. Aikaisemman tutkimuksen havainnot tiettyjen puheaktien yleisyydestä sankaruuden kuvaamisessa eivät näytä toistuvan tämän tutkimuksen materiaalissa.</p> <p>Tutkielma vahvistaa kohteliaisuuden suhdetta sankarilliseen kuvaukseen ja kehottaa laajentamaan tutkimusta amerikkalaisesta mediasta muihinkin kulttuureihin.</p>			
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1. Introduction

In this thesis I research language used by the performers of the World Wrestling Entertainment shows *SmackDown Live* and *Monday Night Raw* during promotional segments. *SmackDown* and *Raw* are professional wrestling shows that tour the world to perform in front of live audiences, and also broadcast their shows on television. Professional wrestling is a form of sports entertainment that has more commonalities with theater than competitive sports. In wrestling, performers come together to tell a physical but fictitious story about a competitive sport, where the fights mostly follow rehearsed choreographies and the end results are predetermined, barring accidents (Gabranowski 2006; Mazer 1998, 3). These sports dramas star characters whose motivations are informed by the competitive setting. When the plot of a show has the characters compete for prestigious championships and the favor of the audience, conflicts arise, and characters end up taking heroic and villainous roles.

Wrestlers express their role as much in matches as outside of them. While a heroic character in a match exhibits sportsmanship and perseverance in the face of a challenge, a villainous character can show over-confidence or cowardice and cheat their way to victory. However, the focus of my thesis is in verbal interactions that happen outside of matches. Matches get their context from promotional segments, where wrestlers interact with each other and the audience, and much of this is verbal. These segments establish who are involved in a conflict, what is at stake and what roles the wrestlers are expected to take. During these segments, a heroic wrestler may, for example, express gratitude for the support of the audience, affirm their drive to be the best competitor they can be and call out unsportsmanlike behavior. A villainous wrestler may, among other things, try to provoke aggressive reactions from their competitors, boast about their superiority compared to others and show disregard or disdain for the audience's opinion.

I intend to do a qualitative analysis of the heroic and villainous speech of wrestlers from a pragmatic perspective, utilizing John Searle's speech act theory (1975), Paul

Grice's theory of conversational maxims (1975) and Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's politeness theory (1987). I will analyze and compare heroic and villainous wrestlers' verbal performances in terms of the speech acts they commit, the conversational maxims they break and flout, moments of character-defining implicature and the kinds of politeness or face-threatening acts they use. I will try to see if heroic performances can be distinguished from villainous ones in pragmatic terms, and if so, how that manifests.

While descriptive exploration is the focus of the study, I have particular trends in mind that I expect to see. The results of my BA thesis, *Pragmatic phenomena in heroic and anti-heroic behavior in Dragon Age: Origins* indicated that heroic figures are more likely to use commissive and expressive speech acts as well as both positive and negative politeness. However, in that study I compared heroism against anti-heroism, not villainy. While I expect heroic performances to incorporate distinctly more politeness and villainous ones more face-threatening acts and violations of the maxim of quality, it will be interesting to see if villains use less commissives and expressives than heroes or not. On the one hand, these speech acts are good for depicting someone as caring, empathetic and responsible, and the lack of them can make a character seem cold and uncaring, which works for villainous characters as well as anti-heroic ones. On the other hand, villainous characters could also make use of commissives and expressives to show that they are passionate about things that cast them in a villainous light.

Should this study find significant trends regarding the relationship of heroic depiction and pragmatic categorizations, the field of pragmatics would take its first step towards systematically describing heroism, as previous research on the topic does not seem to have been published. The results of this study could enhance our understanding of non-fictional language use as well. If certain pragmatic features show themselves to be associated with heroic or villainous behavior, positive and negative reactions to those features could be understood more robustly, at the very least within the cultural framework of an American audience.

2. Theoretical background

In this section I go over previous research on the topic, or the lack thereof, give some context for the genre of wrestling promos, have a brief discussion on the vague concepts of heroism and villainy, and finally introduce the theories I base my analysis on.

2.1 Previous research

Pragmatic analysis of heroism in fiction still seems to be a largely unexplored topic. This study expands on aspects of my BA thesis, *Pragmatic phenomena in heroic and anti-heroic behavior in Dragon Age: Origins*, which at the time of writing (2016) could not draw on any prior research on the topic. However, the results of the thesis study show promising leads that I intend to follow up on. In the thesis I concluded that in the 2009 video game *Dragon Age: Origins* the dialogue options of the player character show trends of being pragmatically weighted according to their moral leaning. A heroic player character was shown to be slightly more likely to use commissive and expressive speech acts in order to appear compassionate and willing to help, and significantly more likely to use positive and negative politeness than an anti-heroic player character in order to get on other characters' good side. An anti-heroic character was shown to be slightly more likely to violate the conversational maxim of quality to deceive others and significantly more likely to use face-threatening acts in order to intimidate other characters. The motivation for my research questions is seeing whether my observations can be used to make predictions in a different medium of fiction. Also, in the present study I intend to expand the application of Searle, Grice and Brown and Levinson's pragmatic categorizations from different forms of heroism to villainy.

2.2 Professional wrestling: some context

Professional wrestling is a suitable medium to explore from the viewpoint of heroism and villainy, as the stories told in wrestling tend to be performed with soap opera levels of pathos. Even though the setting is grounded in reality and not overly

fantastical, the performers convey a sense that the sport is larger than life, and that brave antics, heinous deeds and the making and breaking of alliances are to be expected. Wrestling also presents an interesting linguistic setting, where a script guides the performers to differing extents, live performances may turn out different than intended and interactions with a live audience can steer the performance. The line between scripted fiction writing and a performer's wit and intuition gets often blurred, and the feedback to heroic and villainous depiction is immediate and vigorous.

I will focus my research on recent episodes of WWE's SmackDown Live and Monday Night Raw, which represent the most modern iteration of western professional wrestling. Scott Beekman's book *Ringside: A History of Professional Wrestling in America* (2006) explains how modern wrestling developed its many idiosyncrasies. Wrestling became a popular pastime in America during the Civil War, where it was used to keep the troops fit and stave of boredom (Beekman 2006, 11). After the war, industrialization and urbanization created business opportunities for spectator sports. Baseball, boxing and wrestling drew crowds and gained media coverage (Beekman 2006, 13-27). The American wrestling scene consisted of local, legitimate competitions until the end of the 19th century, when promoters from carnival backgrounds began to seize the business and introduced the practice of "hippodroming", or predetermining match outcomes while marketing them as legitimate competition. Promoters and athletes strove to keep the business-end a secret by maintaining "kayfabe", or the illusion that the matches were legitimate. American wrestling was shifting towards showmanship and adopted the less restrictive and more fast-paced catch style over the Greco-Roman style, which was gaining popularity and legitimacy in Europe at the time (Beekman 2006, 25-39; Shoemaker 2013, 14-17).

After World War I, wrestling began to resemble a competitive sport less and less, and promoters began using the predetermined nature of matches to generate interest by choreographing dramatic and unconventional finishes to matches (Beekman 2006, 51-57). The legitimacy of the sport was declining, but promoters made money

through spectacle instead. For athletes, charisma became more important than actual wrestling ability. The sports press created images of larger-than-life figures, the popularity of which encouraged promoters to create personas for wrestlers. In the 1930s, wrestling saw its first heroes and villains: the rule-abiding "babyfaces" and the treacherous "heels" (Beekman 2006, 58-64). When television had established itself as a dominant medium by 1945, promoters felt the pressure to increase the spectacle of wrestling to maintain viewer interest. Wrestlers had to know how to carry an interview, mock violence was common and gimmicky personas and match types began to crop up (Beekman 2006, 81-82; Shoemaker 2013, 47-48).

In the tail-end of the 20th century, the WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) of today began to take shape. The promotion formerly known as World Wide Wrestling Federation (and later simply World Wrestling Federation) out-maneuvered its competition by going all out on marketing, cross-promotion and merchandising. WWF turned up the spectacle to its peak with pyrotechnics, outright brawls in place of technical wrestling, dangerous matches and stunts, and edgy, adult-oriented storylines (Beekman 2006, 117-125; Shoemaker 2013, 233). In 1989 any illusions to the legitimacy of wrestling as a sport were shed when the head of WWF Vince K. McMahon broke kayfabe and declared that his product is not a sport, but "sports entertainment" to avoid paying state licensing fees (Beekman 2006, 131-138; Mazer 1998, 3; Shoemaker 2013, 30). Nowadays the unreality of American professional wrestling is acknowledged by performers and audiences alike, and discussion of the product has shifted to what makes for entertaining fiction ([reddit.com/r/squaredcircle](https://www.reddit.com/r/squaredcircle) is an example of discussion forums dedicated to such topics). The tone of WWE shows has also shifted towards being more family-oriented.

2.3 On the promotional aspect of promos

The genre of promotional segments or 'promos' is named so, because early examples of promos were explicitly a channel used to market matches, which were considered to be the main draw of the product. The meaning of the word 'promo' has since expanded to any monologue or dialogue that advances the show's storyline, and while the modern day promo maintains the goal of generating hype for a match and

the characters in it, it can be appreciated on its own as a form of storytelling. Some professional wrestlers have built their careers more on their ability to be engaging during promos than any technical wrestling ability.

The connection to marketing remains strong, however, and in some sense I aim to study what linguistic devices are used to make a character seem compelling, which translates to profitable from a business perspective. It is my belief that in a live environment where the personas of the performers interact directly with the audience, and the audience discusses whether they buy the act, i.e. whether the performer is “over”, the co-operation of script writers and performers is one step removed from that of book or film characters and one step towards the kind of promotion celebrities engage in. David Marshall (2010) explains that celebrities produce and maintain a self as a cultural commodity (39). The kind of construction of self done in collaboration by celebrities and publicists can be found even in today's self-admittedly fictional wrestling shows in the script writers' efforts to present a performer's character as someone to form a parasocial relationship with. However, unlike ordinary parasocial relationships, where revealing the construction's design-by-committee nature can cause backlash (Marshall 2010, 42) (which is a phase professional wrestling admittedly underwent), the audience is expected to play along even with the knowledge of the show's scripted nature.

To put it in simpler terms, I think that wrestlers want to impress the audience in terms that the cast of a “normal” serial would not while maintaining the fiction of the show. A season of a serial will end up having characters that the audience likes or dislikes, but outside of the director's guidance, the actors do not set out to make a case for themselves within the show as to why they are interesting. Promos, on the other hand, are opportunities for performers to do just that; prove to the audience that they are a hero worth rooting for or a villain that deserves a strong emotional reaction. However, the focus of this study is on dramatic depiction, not advertising, so I will not pursue the promotional angle in my analysis.

2.4 Defining heroism and villainy

“Hero” is a broad term that encompasses both real individuals who have acted in supererogatory ways as well as fictional characters who represent noble ideals.¹ The term “villain” appears to be more closely associated with fiction and storytelling in general than real individuals, and is used of characters who oppose the heroes and the qualities they represent.² This study uses these terms in their fictional and narrative meanings only.

Heroes in fiction have been defined to be a lot of things, from the ancient mythic hero who possessed superhuman qualities (see: Campbell 1949) to the modern uses that may equate heroes with the protagonists of a story (see: Sprague de Camp 1976). The range of possible qualities associated with heroes is so wide that the terms “babyface” and “heel” mentioned in 2.2 have only very general agreed upon definitions: Babyfaces are supposed to be cheered by fans, and heels are supposed to be booed (Shoemaker 2013, 19; For an in-depth look at the contentious nature of these labels, see eg. Foley 1999, p.108). This gets complicated in the self-aware era of professional wrestling, because the audience may show their support to what they think is entertaining storytelling, rather than the nobler side of the conflict; a hero who never loses can be perceived as boring rather than inspirational, and a villain who hatches a masterful plot can be cheered for their ingenuity rather than booed for their treachery.

In my analysis, I assume a working definition, in which a hero is defined as a character with stake in the scene's conflict who represents and champions values the audience would reasonably be expected to rally behind. A villain is defined as a character with equal and opposing stake in the conflict, but who represents values the audience is expected to reject. Lacking an absolute authority on the characters' heroism, I must motivate the positioning of each character in a conflict subjectively on an individual basis.

1 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hero>

2 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/villain>

2.5 Pragmatics: The overarching theories

2.5.1 Speech Acts

In the article *A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts* (1975) John Searle formulates a categorization for all the different kinds of speech acts available to language users. Searle does this largely as a reaction to J.L. Austin's categorization. He claims that Austin's categories are not defined by a unifying principle, which leads to confusion when identifying which speech act is being employed: some utterances seem to belong to multiple categories, while others do not seem to fit anywhere (Searle 1975, 352-353). Searle's reasoning is convincing, and I am confident that his categorization will prove useful and unambiguous when applied to my research question. Searle identifies 12 criteria that determine the nature of a speech act, of which three are essential to their definitions. The criteria are *illocutionary point*, or the purpose of making the act in the first place; *direction of fit*, that is whether the purpose of the utterance is to change or emulate the world; and *psychological expression*, or more specifically the *sincerity condition* of the utterance, which tells what state of mind the speaker expresses and thus must have for communication to be successful (Searle 1975, 345-350).

Using these criteria Searle arrives at a taxonomy of five categories. *Representatives* are used to state what the speaker believes to be the case. Their direction of fit is words-to-world, ie. the speaker wants to formulate their words in a way that corresponds to the way things are in the world. Their sincerity condition is simply belief in the state of affairs that is being communicated (Searle 1975, 355).

Directives are speakers' attempts to get the addressee to do something. Their direction of fit is world-to-words, ie. the speaker's words are intended to alter the world in a way that satisfies the words. Their sincerity condition is that the speaker desires the successful completion of the directive (Searle 1975, 355-356).

Commissives are used by speakers to commit themselves to a future action. Like directives, their direction of fit is world-to-words, and their sincerity condition is

having the intention to complete the future action. Searle notes that commissives are similar to directives in that both have the speaker assign *someone* to a future task, but he claims that they should be considered separate categories, as obligating oneself is not reducible to making a request to oneself, and conversely making a request to someone does not necessarily obligate them to comply (Searle 1975, 356).

Expressives are used to convey psychological states in the internal sense. While other speech acts convey partly external states, eg. *wants to have something done* or *beliefs in something*, expressives do not necessarily have a bind between the psychological state and a certain state of affairs. Being detached from the outside world in this way, expressives do not have a direction of fit. They do not report on a state of affairs in the outside world, nor do they directly alter the world. It follows that the sincerity condition is completely internal: the truth of the expressed proposition is not measured against the world like in the other categories, but rather presupposed (Searle 1975, 357).

Declaratives are speech acts that, if completed successfully, alter the world immediately. Usually they require the speaker to have some institutional capacity or follow a recognized procedure to make these alterations. When done successfully, declaratives create fit simultaneously from words to world and from world to words. The declared, and only the declared state of affairs becomes actual as the appropriate words are said. Again the truth of the proposition is not measured against the world, and in fact declaratives do not have a sincerity condition at all. If the community around you deems your declaration successful, it holds, no matter how insincere you were (Searle 1975, 358-361).

In my BA thesis *Pragmatic phenomena in heroic and anti-heroic behavior in Dragon Age: Origins* (2016) I concluded that the protagonist of the video game *Dragon Age: Origins* used certain kinds of speech acts more often depending on whether they were taking a heroic or an anti-heroic stance. A heroic protagonist was slightly more likely to use commissives to take on supererogatory responsibilities, as well as expressives to sympathize with multiple, even conflicting viewpoints. An

anti-heroic protagonist used these speech acts more seldom in order to seem selfish and uncaring. While I expect heroic wrestlers to use speech acts in much the same way as the game's protagonist, it will be interesting to see what kinds of patterns villainous wrestlers will exhibit. On the one hand, using little expressives is a good way to appear cold and uncaring, which suits some villains as well as anti-heroes. On the other hand, villains could use commissives to threaten others with unpleasant actions, as well as expressives to show that they care about something that casts them in a villainous light.

2.5.2 Conversational maxims

Paul Grice introduced the co-operative principle and the four conversational maxims in the article *Logic and Conversation* (1975) to act as a theoretical framework for conversational implicature, which itself was a concept set to settle a debate about a divergence between ideal and natural language and the preference of having one as the basis for the other. Grice claims that such a divergence does not exist, and proceeds to give his theory of the underlying mechanics of conversation that would explain the misconception. By assuming the existence of a principle that urges the participants of a conversation to contribute true and relevant propositions perspicuously and as thoroughly as needed, Grice could present his theory on conversational implicature, where more is communicated than explicitly said thanks to the participants' mutual understanding of the principle (Grice 1975, 41-45).

The maxim of *quality* states that you should always try to make your contribution to the conversation one that is true, ie. do not lie or claim something you do not have adequate evidence for. The maxim of *quantity* states that you should make your contribution as informative as required, not more or less so, ie. do not ramble, but do not leave critical information out either.. The maxim of *relevance* states that you should make your contribution one that is relevant to the topic at hand, and the maxim of *manner* states that you should be perspicuous, ie. avoid obscurity and ambiguity as well as be brief and orderly. When a speaker runs the risk of not following a maxim, they can *flaunt* the maxim and show that they understand that what they are saying is not to be interpreted at face value; they imply that what they

say may not be entirely accurate, or that they are not saying everything, or that what they said was a sidetrack from the main conversation, or that they were not as clear as possible. *Breaking* a maxim runs the risk of miscommunication, and can be done quite intentionally in the case of the maxim of quality by lying (Grice 1975, 45-46).

In my BA thesis I analyzed breaking of maxims and concluded that an anti-heroic protagonist was more free to intentionally break the maxim of quality in order to deceive others, and I expect this trait to come up with villainous wrestlers as well. Here, I intend to expand my analysis to include flouting of maxims and implicature. In my experience from watching the shows before collecting data, playing with implicature has shown to be an interesting way to showcase wit and cunning. I intend to see whether heroic and villainous wrestlers end up using implicature in distinct ways.

2.5.3 Politeness

Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson make a case for the rationality of using markedly polite expressions over strictly efficient ones in *Politeness: Some universals in language use* (1987). Brown and Levinson build a framework for politeness that is meant to be applicable across cultures, with each context filling in what actually counts as an instance of the theoretical concept they have presented. This makes me confident in the theory's applicability in my research question as well. The framework centers around the concept of *face*, an image of the self that needs to be maintained in social interactions. The face manifests itself in *positive* and *negative face wants*, or roughly the want to have one's self-image appreciated and approved of, and the want to be unimpeded and have claim to personal territory, respectively. It is usually in the best interest of speakers to take their addressees' face wants into account if they want their own face wants respected in return. These face wants can be met or disregarded in different, marked expressions (Brown & Levinson 1987, 55-61).

Brown and Levinson present a model of the speaker's options for uttering a *face-threatening act* (FTA). The speaker needs to decide between wanting to do the act at

all, redressing the act with markers of politeness or doing the act baldly, without redress (Brown & Levinson 1987, 60). A *bald on-record* utterance strips away the considerations of face in order to get the message across as efficiently as possible. These kinds of expression leave no way out of the imposition for the addressee and are often threatening to their negative face (Brown & Levinson 1987, 69).

Conversely, *off-record* utterances respect the addressee's negative face by merely hinting at the possibility of the addressee having to respond in kind. These utterances leave the addressee's options open, and the speaker can divert possible clashes by claiming that the addressee's interpretation of the utterance was wrong (Brown & Levinson 1987, 69).

FTAs can be redressed by employing different politeness strategies. *Positive politeness* targets the addressee's positive face wants by appealing to group identity and interest in the addressee's point of view, closing the social distance between the speaker and the addressee. *Negative politeness*, on the other hand, targets the addressee's negative face wants by respecting their boundaries and hindering their freedom to act as little as possible (Brown & Levinson 1987, 70).

When an FTA is not redressed, it threatens to clash with the addressee's face wants. A speaker can threaten the addressee's positive face by using out-grouping expressions as opposed to in-grouping ones, and by showing that they do not care about the addressee's self-image. The addressee's negative face can be threatened by placing expectations of future actions onto them and otherwise restricting their freedom to act (Brown & Levinson 1987, 66-67).

In my BA thesis I concluded that in *Dragon Age: Origins* a heroic protagonist used politeness strategies significantly more often than an anti-heroic protagonist, and that an anti-heroic protagonist used unredressed face-threatening acts significantly more often than a heroic protagonist. While this trend looks promising and I expect to see heroic wrestlers use politeness strategies more often and villains not to, there is the possibility that wrestling as a setting may steer even heroic wrestlers to be less overtly polite in order to appear tough.

2.5.4 Impoliteness

Jonathan Culpeper explores the flipside of Brown & Levinson's politeness principle in his article *Towards an anatomy of impoliteness* (1995). While Brown & Levinson offer politeness strategies to be used when an FTA needs to be redressed, Culpeper identifies situations where speakers purposefully leave redress out to achieve a distinct communicative goal. One use case is mock impoliteness, where the surface-level impoliteness of the speech act is stated insincerely. Speakers use implicature to communicate a meaning that is opposite to the words themselves, and thus foster social closeness. Another use case is attacking the interlocutor's face deliberately to achieve some long-term goal (Culpeper 1995, 350-354). Examples include lawyers provoking hostile reactions from defendants to make them seem guilty, army officers shaming subordinates to mold their behavior and fictional characters inciting disequilibrium to be overcome (Culpeper 1995, 345, 359-365).

Culpeper's impoliteness strategies are mirror images of Brown & Levinson's politeness strategies. *Bald on-record impoliteness* refers specifically to cases where the imposition of the speech act is noticeable and the balance of power does not favor the speaker so significantly that the interlocutor could expect the imposition. *Indirect impoliteness* or mock politeness refers to using politeness strategies insincerely so that the interlocutor takes offense through implicature. *Positive impoliteness* strategies are intended to damage the interlocutor's positive face and include e.g. excluding, namecalling and taboo words. *Negative impoliteness* strategies are intended to damage the interlocutor's negative face and include e.g. frightening, belittling and denying speaking rights. A speaker can also communicate impolite beliefs by withholding politeness in places where it is expected, e.g. by refusing to thank a gift giver (Culpeper 1995, 355-358).

I expect impoliteness strategies to be used primarily by villainous wrestlers, but it is possible that even wrestlers who the audience is supposed to root for may use impoliteness strategies to stand up for themselves and confront antagonistic behavior. Table 1 summarizes the theories used in my analysis.

Theory	Category	Explanation
Speech act	Representative	A statement of a belief or state of affairs
	Directive	An attempt to get someone to act in a certain way
	Commissive	An announcement of future intentions
	Expressive	An expression of emotion
	Declarative	An act that changes the state of the world
Conversational maxims	Quality	Do not make a statement you do not believe to be true
	Quantity	Do not omit information, but do not ramble either
	Relevance	Stay on topic
	Manner	Be perspicuous
Politeness	Bald on-record	An FTA that omits considerations of politeness
	Off-record	An FTA that only implies a course of action
	Positive politeness	A strategy that promotes social closeness
	Negative politeness	A strategy that promotes social distance
Impoliteness	Bald on-record impoliteness	An FTA that omits considerations of politeness when the speaker's difference in power requires it
	Indirect impoliteness	Mock or insincere politeness
	Positive impoliteness	An attack on positive face wants
	Negative impoliteness	An attack on negative face wants

Table 1: Pragmatic theories

3. Methods and materials

This is a qualitative study, where the speech of promotional segments is analyzed with the help of categorizations from pragmatic theories. Rising trends within heroic depiction are compared against those of villainous depiction. Although my results cannot necessarily be generalized over different wrestling promotions or different eras of wrestling, I believe that the exploratory nature (see: Dörnyei 2007, 39-41) of a qualitative method is paramount when studying the cross section of heroism and pragmatics, which is so far uncharted.

Full episodes are available with closed captions on the WWE Network, WWE's subscription streaming service. There is no comprehensive resource for text-based transcripts of shows, so I need to manually transport lines from captions to a text document. While there are advantages to working with the actual, audiovisual show, such as hearing the audience's response to heroic and villainous performances, this does mean that collecting large amounts of data would be challenging. I will need to focus on close reading and qualitative analysis of the data, as opposed to my BA where statistical analysis was viable.

To mitigate bias on data selection, I introduced randomness to the episode selection process. Any episode following the 2016 brand split was fair game, and I rolled a 20-sided die to see how many episodes to skip before selecting an episode from which to transcribe. A typical episode contains around 4-6 matches interspersed with one or more promotional segments per match. Having selected an episode, I selected a promo based on whether there was a conflict around which heroes and villains could be situated; while conflict is one of, if not the most common theme of promos, occasionally the shows run promos that center around information or comedy, and those kinds of promos I deem unsuitable for my research. A single promo may feature one or several heroes and villains. I ended up with a data set of ten promotional segments, five from Monday Night Raw and five from Smackdown Live, which contain 590 sentences of dialogue, 230 of which represent heroic

depiction, 327 villainous and 33 neither, being outsiders to the scene's conflict in some fashion as explained in chapter 4.1.

4. Analysis

First I will briefly go over some key figures in the data to see how well they line up against my expectations. Then I will proceed to the qualitative analysis one promo at a time.

4.1 Quantitative overview

The distribution of pragmatic features in heroic speech compared to villainous is notably different only in select few categories. The notion of speech acts being favored by one over the other was a minor trend in my BA, but here there does not appear to be any significant trends. In all of the following tables, the “Total” column refers to the number of sentences in the dataset. Because of the uneven amount of heroic and villainous sentences, the distribution of pragmatic features are shown in percentages. The “Neither” category refers to characters who are positioned as not participating in the conflict of the scene, such as interviewers or other third parties.

	Total	Representative %	Directive %	Commissive %	Expressive %	Declarative %
Heroic	230	49%	23%	6%	24%	0%
Villainous	327	44%	31%	7%	21%	0%
Neither	33	67%	15%	0%	18%	0%

Table 2: Speech act distribution

The numbers alone indicate that heroes do not favor commissives or expressives any more than villains. These speech acts are good for depicting someone as passionate, and heroes and villains alike are expected to champion their beliefs with conviction. There are virtually no declaratives, as they are a highly situational act that requires institutional power.

Heroes and villains' interaction with Gricean maxims is slightly more revealing.

When inspecting which maxims the parties tend to flaunt or outright break, it appears that the maxims of quantity, relevance and manner are treated similarly by both parties, but the maxim of quality is broken or flaunted by villains more often.

	Total	Quality %		Quantity %		Relevance %		Manner %	
Heroic	230	B 0%	F 1%	B 2%	F 4%	B 1%	F 1%	B 0%	F 0%
Villainous	327	B 6%	F 6%	B 0%	F 9%	B 0%	F 3%	B 0%	F 0%
Neither	33	B 0%	F 0%	B 0%	F 3%	B 0%	F 0%	B 0%	F 0%

Table 3: Maxim break and flaunt distribution (B=Break, F=Flaunt)

Overall, both heroes and villains occasionally engage in playing with language in ways that hide meaning and imply more than is said, but it is notable that heroes never outright lie, whereas villains bend the truth more freely. Maxims of relevance and manner are barely ever deviated from. This is likely because the shows are a rehearsed medium, and getting sidetracked or speaking incoherently would usually not serve the scene. As realistic as occasionally having the characters break these maxims might be, understandability between the work and the consumer is a priority in consumer-oriented texts (See: Axelsson 2011, 11-28).

The figures on politeness and impoliteness reveal the clearest signals. Heroes favor positive politeness strategies more than villains, and villains use positive impoliteness strategies more than heroes.

	Total	Bald on-record %	Off-record %	Positive politeness %	Negative politeness %
Heroic	230	3%	0%	19%	3%
Villainous	327	2%	0%	7%	5%
Neither	33	0%	0%	9%	9%

Table 4: Politeness strategy distribution

	Total	Bald on-record impoliteness %	Indirect impoliteness %	Positive impoliteness %	Negative impoliteness %
Heroic	230	0%	5%	9%	5%
Villainous	327	1%	10%	26%	8%
Neither	33	0%	6%	24%	0%

Table 5: Impoliteness strategy distribution

In the analysis to come it should become clear that villains often employ politeness strategies duplicitously and follow up with actions that are not consistent with what they say. Also, while heroes do not completely shy away from impolite behavior, villains take a clear lead in volume. The amount of impoliteness used by characters in the “Neither” category is skewed by one promo in particular in the 29.5.2017 episode of Monday Night Raw, in which a villain eggs third parties on to slander a hero, which means that the “Neither” category unfortunately cannot be used to establish a reliable baseline to compare heroes and villains to.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

In the following I will break each scene down, highlighting particular lines that emphasize the characters' heroism or villainy and analyzing the contribution of pragmatic features to the effect.

Monday Night Raw 18.7.2016

At the beginning of the broadcast, the co-commissioner and to-be exclusive commissioner of Raw, Stephanie McMahon is set to kick off the show, as the to-be commissioner of Smackdown and her brother (in real life and in story) Shane McMahon interrupts. They perform a scene that establishes things about the splitting of WWE programming into two shows and the rivalry the shows are about to embark on. Stephanie's character is best described as a ruthless businesswoman that puts corporate matters before the enjoyment of fans and fair treatment of talent, and she is positioned as a villain here. Shane's character acts as her foil by exhibiting a friendly habitus and communicating his care for the viewers and performers.

(1) **Stephanie McMahon:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Monday...

[Shane enters dancing, entrance music blaring]

Stephanie McMahon: Now, Shane, I've got to say, I'm really not gonna miss you pandering to all of these people. Oh, I worship you. Oh, I love you.

Stephanie communicates her disaffection for her brother's behavior in a frank, face-threatening way, directly attacking his positive face. She takes on a sarcastic tone in the last two sentences, flaunting the maxim of quality in a way that makes it clear she implies the opposite of what she says.

(2) **Shane McMahon:** Steph, I think, I think what you were about to say was, welcome everyone to Monday Night Raw. I had – I had to get that last one out. Sorry, just – I had to get that one more.

Stephanie McMahon: All right, it's fine. Enjoy it. Soak it up because this will be your very, very last night on Raw since you were named the commissioner of Smackdown Live and I, of course, am the exclusive commissioner of Monday Night Raw. And Shane, I will not miss working with you.

Shane McMahon: Well, the feeling is mutual, Stephanie, I have to say.

The sibling rivalry has both sides making quips against each other with Shane flaunting the maxim of quantity and doing what Stephanie was doing but better, but note that Shane is quick to apologize for upstaging Stephanie, making an attempt to mitigate harm to her negative face. Stephanie, on the other hand, makes a seemingly polite act by forgiving Shane, but then uses the social currency gained from forgiving to put Shane down some more. She can forgive him without a cost to her face by belittling the meaningfulness of the act, chalking it up as mercy for the undeserving. When Shane attacks Stephanie's positive face, it is only in reaction to being attacked first. Now that the attack lines are established, however, Shane feels he can get more personal.

(3) **Shane McMahon:** And I know, every morning you wake up and you wish you were born with testicles but since you weren't, just wanted to remind you that if you were my brother, that little slap that happened last week, would be definitely some ramifications to that.

Stephanie McMahon: Oh, okay, is that a veiled threat? And Shane, let me just tell you that lady balls are a hell of a lot bigger than testicles, okay?

Shane McMahon: Gross.

Positive faces are threatened all around. Note again that Shane's threat of violence is made in a euphemistic way and is justified as a response to Stephanie's actions, although at the same time Shane demeans Stephanie for her gender by implying that being a man was preferable to her. Stephanie disregards the threat to Shane's and the audience's face by being less euphemistic and using taboo words.

(4) **Stephanie McMahon:** And Shane, yes I did slap you clear across the face and there's nothing you can do about it. Just like you're gonna do nothing on Smackdown Live as commissioner.

Shane McMahon: That's actually, you know, it's actually, what's gonna happen with Smackdown Live is tomorrow, when you wake up Wednesday morning and the draft is all over...

Stephanie McMahon: Yeah, see the thing is Shane, this isn't about you okay?

Here Stephanie threatens Shane's negative face for a change, not only by turning the accusation leveled at her into a demonstration of Shane's powerlessness, but also by denying him speaking rights. Power is a popular source of conflict in this show, whose main demographic is the working class (Beekman 2006, vii, 87, 105-110), as further exemplified here.

(5) **Stephanie McMahon:** But, really, because Shane, it's only fair. I mean, Raw is three hours long, and as I think you were about to say, it gives us a clear advantage. I mean, we get the first draft pick tomorrow. For every two draft picks you get, I get three.

Shane McMahon: Yes, exactly.

Stephanie McMahon: It's just the way it goes.

Shane McMahon: Right, exactly, daddy's little girl gets exactly what she wants once again.

Stephanie McMahon: Because I've earned it.

Stephanie maintains a mocking tone throughout so that even when she speaks only about logistic facts, she manages to imply that Smackdown will be worse than Raw. Stephanie emphasizes the inevitability of Raw's supremacy by using factual representatives to make her position harder to challenge. Here Shane taps into the working class's dislike of favoritism by referencing the fact that they are given the reigns of the shows by their father, WWE's chairman Vince McMahon. By belittling

her as he does so, he takes the side of the audience in the conflict. Shane gets away with attacking Stephanie's positive face by indirectly defending the audience.

Stephanie and Shane then take to introducing the general managers they have picked to arrange matches in their respective shows. Both are former WWE wrestlers, and both are positioned as heroes in that they assure the audience that matches do not come from a boardroom full of suits that do not understand wrestling, but rather from people the audience has idolized before. First in line is Raw's general manager Mick Foley, a grizzled veteran who was known for putting his body at great risk while performing exciting stunts.

- (6) **Mick Foley:** Thank you for that amazing response and thank you Stephanie for this incredible opportunity and thank you for naming me the general manager of Monday Night Raw right here, in Providence, Rhode Island.

Mick begins by politely addressing the negative face wants of Stephanie and goes on to embrace the crowd's positive face by acknowledging the location in a self-aware entertainment industry cliché. Making a big deal about the town you are in is an easy way to get a positive reaction, and Mick leans into it by making a cheesy thumbs-up gesture. The particular phrasing, “right here in...” is something of a catchphrase of Mick's, so echoing it here promotes unity and gives the audience a moment of recognition as wrestling fans.

- (7) **Mick Foley:** It's a huge opportunity for me because the new era – being part of the beginning of the new era reminds me of the atmosphere of what we called the Attitude Era. And the climate here tonight reminds me of the Monday Night Wars. Back when it was WWE, entertaining in the name of competition and in the name of survival.

Mick relates his appointment to an era in wrestling remembered fondly by a large section of the audience, sharing in their interests and so tending to their positive face wants.

- (8) **Mick Foley:** --- a little ember started to glow within me. A little ember and then, Stephanie, with your phone call offering me the job of general manager, that little ember became a five-alarm fire. --- And so the same ruthlessness, the same recklessness I showed as a competitor in the attitude era, I'm gonna put on display as your general manager of Raw, because I am looking and

willing to take Raw to the future and beyond.

Mick uses evocative, relatable description of mental states to finally arrive at what seems to me quite a prototypically heroic use of the commissive act: Mick promises that he is willing to work for a positive change. Stephanie has the crowd's favor for the moment, and Shane reacts in a sportsmanlike way.

- (9) **Shane McMahon:** Mick, I wanna say congratulations, okay. I have utmost respect for you. And Stephanie, I got to give you kudos.

Stephanie McMahon: Thank you.

Shane McMahon: WWE hall-of-famer, Mick Foley, as a general manager of Raw. That's something everybody can get behind. Actually, yours included. Now I got actually a little intrigued of watching Raw instead of seeing you bury it into the ground so good move, good move.

Shane gives glowing praise to Mick, but maintains the sibling rivalry with a backhanded compliment that implies Stephanie would do bad work without Mick. Shane then introduces Smackdown's general manager, Daniel Bryan, a wrestler whose interrupted, and at the time of writing recently revived in-ring career was a true Cinderella story. Daniel was the underdog who showed everyone that nice guys do not have to finish last.

- (10) **Daniel Bryan:** Man, did you guys miss me or something? Trust me, you guys haven't missed me half as much as I've missed you guys.

Stephanie McMahon: Daniel, why don't you just bow like Shane does? Just bow to them, you know, what you guys do best.

Daniel Bryan: Stephanie doesn't understand the meaning of the word "pandering", because you guys have never actually cheered for her, so...

Stephanie McMahon: They have. Once, they did.

As Daniel receives a thunderous reception, he gently takes control of the arena with a joke that flaunts the maxim of quality. He pretends that the audience's reaction is unclear to him for humorous effect. He goes on to embrace the audience's positive face with pleasantries, until Stephanie attempts to undermine him by implying that he is too eager to please. Once again, the villain makes the first move before it is acceptable for the hero to respond in kind. Daniel keeps addressing the crowd instead

of Stephanie not only to prioritize the crowd's feelings over hers, but also to let Stephanie see that her insults are not affecting him. Stephanie's correction only makes the audience's perception of her worse, since not even she can present a more flattering version of history, hanging on to technicalities instead.

- (11) **Daniel Bryan:** For a long time I wasn't sure that I'd ever be able to come back and be in the ring, because I loved wrestling too much. But then Shane called me. And Shane told me about his new ideas for Smackdown, about putting the superstars first instead of putting the managements first, about making Smackdown Live something awesome for the WWE universe. He told me about the battle lines being drawn between Smackdown Live and Raw, and how we had a huge fight ahead of us, and how Smackdown Live was the underdog, and then all of a sudden I thought I can come back. And I need to come back, because Smackdown Live is the underdog in this fight, just like I was the underdog.

Daniel goes into a rather lengthy monologue that is full of rhetorical moves that serve to endear him to the audience. He values the audience's interest in wrestling, meeting their positive face wants. He prioritizes the audience's, or “the WWE universe's” wants over the management's. He connects his appointment to another era the audience remembers fondly, again sharing their interests.

- (12) **Daniel Bryan:** Just like we were all the underdog. --- When I beat Stephanie's husband Triple H at Wrestlemania 30, I didn't do that on my own, we did that. And if we all join together, Smackdown Live will beat Raw every single week, because we have beaten the authority before and we will do it again.

Daniel promotes unity and lets the audience share in his accomplishments by referring to them with the inclusive “we”, which reduces the social distance and targets the audience's positive face. He finishes with a rallying cry, another commissive that I consider impactful to Daniel's status as a hero that takes action. Stephanie interrupts the positive feelings again.

- (13) **Stephanie McMahon:** Daniel, Daniel, Daniel, where did the underdogs ultimately wind up? Certainly not on top, do they? That's the story all of these losers know all of their life. That's why they cheer for you. That's why they chant your name and go crazy because on one night, you, the underdog, were able to make them feel like winners, but that's a fantasy land. And congratulations, Daniel, it really is good to have your back. Congratulations, Shane. A B plus player for a B plus show. Good for you.

Stephanie fully embraces her role as the villain of the scene by unambiguously insulting both Daniel and the entire audience, attacking their interests and positive face. She finishes with flaunting the maxim of quality by making compliments that are easily understood to be insincere because of the context. The sibling rivalry reaches something of a climax.

(14) **Stephanie McMahon:** Am I getting you nervous, because you're sweating an awful lot?

Shane McMahon: No, I'm just excited. It's very exciting.

Stephanie McMahon: Yeah, it's like, a *lot*, a lot.

Shane McMahon: Give me a hug.

Stephanie McMahon: No, thank you, yeah, thank you, thank you. Careful, I'll slap you again.

Shane McMahon: Two things will be always the same, and just remember this: You will always be my little sister.

Stephanie McMahon: True.

Shane McMahon: And you had to marry a WWE superstar to stay relevant.

Stephanie McMahon: Oh, yeah, okay, I'll take a little love. It's all you got, that's why you got to do that.

Stephanie is getting very efficient with her insults. Her initial question here is an attack on Shane's negative face – an insincere show of caring that only serves to highlight that she has power over Shane. At the same time Stephanie attacks Shane's positive face by revealing embarrassing physical details to the audience. Shane retaliates with comparatively soft, brotherly teasing with an offer to hug, which in context is understood not as a show of affection, but as an attempt to get the sweat she so hates all over her. Stephanie escalates the teasing to a threat of physical violence, so Shane fires back with a far more personal, positive face attacking insult. Stephanie returns to the tactic of only seemingly forgiving Shane to reassert herself as the one with social power. Daniel Bryan puts a positive button on the segment by starting his signature chant "Yes, yes, yes" so that the crowd can join in defying the villain.

The first main finding of this promo I would like to highlight is that empathizing with the audience's frame of reference and including them into the proceedings with

positive politeness is an effective way to be seen as a heroic figure, which conversely means that villains should show disregard to the audience's wants. Another pattern can be seen when heroes engage in impoliteness: they always let the villain make the first move. Following up with an attack of one's own is not seen as too objectionable when the hero has been attacked first. Finally, the heroes of this scene vary the severity of their attacks, getting more personal once it is clear that the villain will not relent, while the villain seems to attack everyone at a personal level from the start.

Smackdown Live 4.10.2016

The ring is set with chairs and decorations for a recurring segment in which the wrestler known as The Miz hosts a talk show. The character of The Miz is an arrogant movie star who thinks everything he touches turns to gold, and that he is unquestionably better and deserves to lead a better life than the riffraff in the audience and the other performers. He is the primary villain of the scene, yet initially he takes on a polite tone when introducing his guest, wrestler Dolph Ziggler.

(15) **The Miz:** Welcome to a very special edition of the most must-see WWE talk show in history. Welcome to "Miz TV: A Dolphumentary". And I'm not gonna waste any time. I wanna bring out the guest of honor because this could be his final appearance on Smackdown Live. Ladies and gentlemen, please give it up for Dolph Ziggler!

[Dolph enters with reserved body language, unlike when entering a match]

The Miz: Dolph, tonight is not about me. It's about you, because the stakes could not be higher. At No Mercy, it is my intercontinental championship versus your career.

Although The Miz is sure to boast how his own show is "must-see", so far he does not seem too antagonistic. He uses ceremonial expressives to gently command the attention of the audience, and he refers to Dolph in seemingly glowing terms, using negative politeness to elevate Dolph. However, things change quickly, as The Miz summarizes the conflict between the wrestlers: Dolph has challenged The Miz for his championship with the condition that if he loses, he quits wrestling on the show. The Miz points the audience and his guest to watch as an insultingly biased mockumentary of Dolph's WWE career plays on the screens of the arena. The video highlights Dolph's failures and embarrassments while ignoring his significant

victories, making it an audiovisual demonstration on how to break the maxim of quantity. After the video The Miz takes on a decidedly more hostile tone.

(16) **The Miz:** I gotta say, you can not take a hint. If my career was as embarrassing as yours, I would have quit years ago.

Dolph Ziggler: I'm not going yet, ass-face. Say that again, I'll slap the hell out of you.

The Miz has lured the hero into an embarrassing situation by acting polite until it was time to spring the trap, revealing all previous politeness to be insincere. He quickly switches from being formal and polite to attacking Dolph's positive face, intentionally breaking the maxim of quality to let the audience see that he is not to be trusted. Dolph, who at this point in time is best described as a performer who straddles the line between confidence and cockiness, and who believes that through hard work and determination he can achieve anything, fires back in such a strong way that it even catches The Miz off guard. While he makes two successive attacks on The Miz's positive and negative faces, he maintains his status as a hero by only acting when provoked, and he even emphasizes this by saying he will only escalate to violence if The Miz goes out of line. Dolph then goes on a lengthy tirade about his drive to succeed.

(17) **Dolph Ziggler:** At any point if I wasn't happy, if I didn't like what was going on, I could've walked away, I could've quit, but I couldn't. You know why? Because for every ten embarrassing moments like you just showed in that video there'd be one magic moment with maybe a kid in the front row wearing a Dolph Ziggler t-shirt who high-fives me and says he'll never forget it. And I'll say, "no, I'll never forget that". That's what keeps me going. Or even backstage or with Make-a-Wish, and you're granting a wish and a little kid says they look up to me, and that I'm their hero, and I say "no, you're my hero."

Dolph's speech runs like a sports movie where the underdog finds the strength to win at his darkest hour. He overflows with positive politeness towards the audience and its each individual member, and he extols the virtue of perseverance to give the audience a common cause to root for. He gets the crowd to rally behind charity and the happiness of children, and in those moments he makes sure to make the children the focus rather than himself, which shows that he has a humble side in the midst of all his boasting.

- (18) **Dolph Ziggler:** That is real emotion and you can't take that away from me, you can't handpick it, you can't force it, that is a real moment that stays with me and even... and even a couple of years ago, the night after Wrestlemania, I cashed in the Money in the Bank contract and I became world champion. You know why that was so magical, do you know why the hair is standing up in my arms right now? Because everyone in that arena and everyone at home was a part of it, they were the reason why I became champion and that, that is why... That's why I can't walk away, man. That's why I can't walk away, but I came to a crossroads, Miz. And I knew I had to put my career on the line, because if I can't deliver, I don't belong here. But what you forgot, Miz, that there's one last shred of dignity that burns in my guts every day that tells me I will deliver on Sunday, I will beat you and I will become intercontinental champion.

Dolph shows vulnerability by narrating the low points along with the high, which in contrast to The Miz's selective presentation makes him seem more sympathetic. With the crowd on his side, he makes a passionate commissive to oppose the villain.

- (19) **Dolph Ziggler:** Miz, you're not taking my career from me, not today, not tomorrow, not the week after, not Sunday, not the week after that, not ever, because through all the hard work, all the sacrifice, all the crap, all the ups and the downs, and the highs and the lows and the way down lows, and all the love and the hate it's been a hell of a ride and a damn good time and I know all bad things must end, but damn it, I'm not done yet!

Dolph's speech goes on even further to the point where he is screaming about never giving up until he is blue in the face, so overcome with emotion that he can hardly form coherent sentences. Out of all the scenes in my analysis, I want to highlight this speech as a prototypically heroic moment where the audience rallies behind the virtues the character represents. The Miz will not let Dolph have the last word, however.

- (20) **The Miz:** Yes, you are. You wanna talk about emotions? You wanna talk about moments? You wanna talk about a five-year-old in the front row? Well say goodbye to them, because this Sunday, your career will end, and it will end because of me. But don't worry, I have just the thing to raise your spirits.

In contrast to Dolph reaching a fever pitch, The Miz comes back with a slow, measured pace. He emphasizes his first clause with long pauses to make the inevitability of his representative act sink in. He then takes the main points of Dolph's speech, which the audience has gotten behind, and threatens them with a

villainous commissive of his own, attacking Dolph and the audience's shared interests and positive face. He then makes an insincere offer to cheer Dolph up, at the same time snarkily flaunting the maxim of quantity by only alluding to the name of Dolph's old wrestling team that competed in the WWE's tag team division, Spirit Squad. Mikey and Kenny of Spirit Squad, a pair of male cheerleaders whose overeagerness is played for comedy, arrive to serve as secondary villains on command, and perform a routine that in the context of The Miz wanting to humiliate Dolph comes across as patronizing rather than supportive. As they spell out Dolph's name with much fanfare, they flaunt the maxim of quantity by going so over the top that the routine is better understood as teasing, even if they do not directly attack Dolph's face wants. The fact that the duo used work with Dolph but now work with his opponent adds another layer of irony to the situation. The Miz adds the finishing touches to rile Dolph up.

- (21) **The Miz:** You know, I wish there could be more of them, but believe it or not, two of them got lost in transit when you guys got sent back to OVW. But hey, this just means a spot opened up for you after you lose this Sunday. Just think, I can see it now, Nikki reunites with the Spirit Squad! Just think of all the podcasts and five-dollar autograph signings that you all can do together!

The Miz references the rest of the Spirit Squad and veils an insult by oversharing and flaunting the maxim of quantity, when he mentions Dolph's time in Ohio Valley Wrestling, implying that Dolph was not good enough to compete in WWE and had to return to the local scene. The Miz boasts by phrasing his prediction of the coming match as a foregone conclusion. He flaunts the maxim of quality as he feigns excitement for Dolph and forecasts his future with activities associated with failed celebrity, at which point Dolph stands up for himself physically, only to be overpowered three to one.

This promo showed that villains can use politeness strategies to help in their villainous depiction by using them insincerely. Such a betrayal of expectations is an effective way to get an emotional response and get the audience to mistrust the character. The hero in this scene gained the support of the audience by referencing broad cultural values that most anyone can get behind, such as determination, charity

and the happiness of children, and he communicated his devotion to these ideals in a passionate way that contrasted with the villain's coldness. He also followed along with the earlier observation that heroes may fire back only when provoked. Interestingly, the secondary villains did not need to broadcast their villainy much, because the primary villain had set the context to be such that their actions were perceived ironically.

Monday Night Raw 5.12.2016

Wrestler Charlotte Flair faces the audience alone in the ring. In contrast to her usual persona, a majestic diva who presents herself ostentatiously and considers herself "genetically superior" to the rest of the women's roster (a reference to her father, WWE hall-of-famer Ric Flair), her demeanor is subdued. It appears that the villain may be turning a new leaf.

- (22) **Charlotte Flair:** Last Monday night at Raw, it dawned on me that six months ago I made the biggest mistake of my life. I am ashamed for what I did. I'm ashamed for what I said. And for some of you guys that don't remember what a cold-hearted bitch of a daughter I was... No, I agree with you, I was. But please let me remind you.

Charlotte shows remorse for her past actions and seemingly accepts the damage to her face, even using taboo words to demean herself and give the audience permission to think badly of her. She presents the arena with a video of her lambasting her father in the middle of the ring, showing just how different to then she seems now.

- (23) [Six months ago, Charlotte speaking to Ric, who does not have a microphone and so is not heard]

Charlotte Flair: Dad, you know what I remember growing up? You know what I remember mom saying that daddy is always with you. But you know what, you weren't ever there. And now I understand, because you know what it felt like to be The Man, I'm The Woman. That's why I finally have the courage to say it to you, dad. Get out of my ring. What are you, hard of hearing? I said get out.

The Charlotte of the past begins by reminding the audience of her and Ric's relationship: what makes her words even more hurtful and unexpected is that this is her father she is talking to. When she gives Ric a stern, unredressed directive to

leave, she acts from a social position that is typically not expected to have such power over Ric, making her command a rare example of bald on-record impoliteness. Not only does she disrespect their familial relationship, but she also mocks Ric for his old age and disrespects the elderly by commenting on his hearing.

- (24) **Charlotte Flair:** Everyone from your generation is all the same. They just never wanna leave the spotlight. I was compassionate enough to let you bask in mine. Do you know what it's like walking into a room and just say, "Hey look, that's Ric Flair's daughter." No, you know who you are? You're Charlotte's dad. Oh what, dad, are you gonna cry?

Charlotte displays another unattractive quality: a lack of self-awareness. She calls Ric out for hogging the spotlight, but it rings hollow when Charlotte herself wants to make the show all about her. When she rephrases their relationship, she flaunts the maxim of quantity to put herself at the center of attention. She then puts on a mocking tone, so that when she asks if Ric is going to cry, the audience understands that she does not truly care for him, but instead attacks his positive face by embarrassing him. The Charlotte in the video continues to insist that the devastated Ric leave the ring, singing an emotional song about departures in a sarcastic manner. The feed cuts to the present again.

- (25) **Charlotte Flair:** Last Monday night when I lost my title, it was hard. The WWE means everything to me. The title means everything to me.
[The audience chants "what" at her pauses]
No, that's fine, you can "what" me, but please give me a chance to explain. But you know what was harder than losing the title? What was harder was watching my dad walk to the ring, stand in the ring, put his arms around Sasha Banks and raise her hand.

Charlotte reveals what might have made her change her tune. She lost her championship to Sasha Banks, and having been chewed out previously, her father Ric Flair came in and endorsed Sasha's victory. As Charlotte seems to try and share in the audience's interest in wrestling, the audience is not receptive, but instead chants "what" at her, in a reference to WWE hall-of-famer "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, who would similarly interrupt those he got impatient with. A typical villain's reaction to the audience's chanting would likely be disdain, but Charlotte approaches the situation with negative politeness and remains calm. Charlotte gets teary-eyed as

she continues.

- (26) **Charlotte Flair:** All I've ever wanted from him was for him to be proud of me. No one knows what it's like being Ric Flair's daughter in this business. Every single day I'm like, am I good enough? Do any of you know what that's like? No, you don't!

This moment contains a clue that Charlotte may not have shed her old persona entirely. While the want to impress one's parents is something universal that Charlotte could use to get the audience on her side, she instead refuses to let the audience share in the emotion, which impacts against the audience's positive face wants. Finally, Charlotte welcomes Ric Flair in the ring for a “heartfelt apology.” After Ric enters, Charlotte wears the widest smile as she tearfully apologizes, and the two hug. However, when they are done hugging, Charlotte slaps Ric in the face, knocking him down on the canvas.

- (27) **Charlotte Flair:** You son of a bitch! I'm your daughter. I'm your flesh and your blood. Who is she to dedicate her victory to my father? My father! You turned your back on me? Really?

All the meekness, politeness and tears are rendered moot at this moment of betrayal. Charlotte broke the maxim of quality and used insincere politeness to trap Ric so that she could have her revenge. Now that the facade is removed, Charlotte lays into Ric, attacking both his and Sasha Banks's positive faces and using taboo words. While Charlotte references the core value of family, she does not earn the sympathy of the audience, because she reveals that her view of the value is one-sided: while fathers should respect their daughters, the reverse does not apply.

This promotion showed to what a large extent villains can use politeness duplicitously. Charlotte's politeness strategies are revealed to be cynical and wholly goal-oriented, and only serve to make her betrayal sting that much more. While following words with actions that are not consistent with them is the main tool used for villainous depiction in this scene, another kind of inconsistency is used here to great effect as well: Charlotte is shown to be a hypocrite when she accuses Ric of making the show all about him, as if that was not Charlotte's own goal all along.

Smackdown Live 21.3.2017

Sportscaster Renee Young is set to interview wrestler Randy Orton backstage. Recently, Randy has been tormented by wrestler Bray Wyatt, and while Randy's character has a history of being conniving and not always sportsmanlike, he is positioned as a hero in this rivalry. If anything, Bray Wyatt is the worse of two evils. Bray's persona is that of a mystical cult leader in the Appalachian horror genre. His presence demands an even more dedicated suspension of disbelief than wrestling shows usually do, because he is depicted as having dark magical powers.

(28) **Renee Young:** Randy, another impressive victory for you tonight, but I have to ask you, what's your response to Bray Wyatt's message he sent you last week?

Randy Orton: My response? Tell you what, Renee, I don't even know if I have a reaction. I don't know what to think. I don't know how to get rid of Bray Wyatt once and for all. I've tried everything. Last week when he bathed himself in Sister Abigail's ashes, that... let's just say that was the last thing that I expected from him.

There are not a lot of signals for the audience that would reinforce Randy's heroism. He only echoes the audience's bewilderment at Bray's strange antics, such as him pouring ash over himself in some depraved ritual. Rather than having a clear statement for the audience to rally behind, Randy seems confused and desperate, making him seem like more of an anti-hero. At this moment, the lights flicker suddenly, signaling Bray's magical influence. Randy is left floundering in the dark.

(29) **Randy Orton:** All right, Bray. Show your face! I know it's you. Where are you at?

[Wyatt's masked henchmen surround Randy. He defends himself but is outnumbered and restrained before Bray. Bray mutters inaudibly, seemingly performing some sort of ritual before Randy.]

Bray Wyatt: You changed me, Randy. You exposed my one flaw, Abigail. But what you didn't know is that one flaw would become my greatest strength. She is one with me now, Randy. And the power, it lives inside of me. By purging this one fatal flaw you made me stronger than I could have ever imagined. Thank you, Randy.

Randy gets more decisive at the moment of danger, at least showing fearlessness as a heroic characteristic. Even so he reserves no politeness for his enemy, bluntly

barking orders at Bray. While Randy does not have many signs pointing to his heroism, what is more interesting to me is that there are no signals to Bray's villainy in his speech. It is rather the context of having Randy restrained with an unfair advantage that makes Bray seem villainous. While Bray's dialogue uses tropes often heard from movie villains, such as revealing that the hero has played into the villain's hands, there are no markers of deceit or hostility in his speech. He even politely thanks Randy for his "help", which in this context comes across as unnerving.

This short promo showed ways to subvert the more common ways of depicting heroes and villains. Randy does not make many heroic moves, and can so be seen as an anti-hero that is to be rooted for only because he is up against something more sinister. Bray's words are not actively hostile, and he would come across as almost affable if not for the setting he created and the creepy allusions he makes in his speech. Not every hero and villain follows the trends noted in previous promos, but subverting those trends is done to achieve a specific effect, like the horror atmosphere in this scene, with a hero who cannot act as a beacon of hope and an unsettling villain.

Monday Night Raw 29.5.2017

Wrestler Alexa Bliss is in the ring with three other people who seem like ordinary bystanders, not performers or officials. Furniture is set to display a line of childish and girlish toys and knick-knacks. Alexa is set to clash against the heroic "girl next door" Bayley, and she demonstrates her villainous queen bee persona by digging into Bayley's history for embarrassing details and relishing in revealing them to an audience.

- (30) **Alexa Bliss:** This Sunday I defend my Raw women's championship in a Kendo Stick on a Pole Match. My opponent is everyone's favorite human sock puppet Bayley. Now, the first woman to climb up that pole and retrieve that kendo stick gets to legally use that thing to inflict pain on her opponent. Now, I know what you all are thinking, Bayley in a Kendo Stick on a Pole match? Really? I mean, we all know how it's gonna go. We all see Bayley trying to hug the kendo stick, right?

Alexa dedicates this promo to the message that Bayley is too sweet and innocent to

have what it takes to beat her in an unorthodox wrestling match. She begins with good old-fashioned name calling and continues to give a highly detailed description, to the point of flaunting the maxim of quantity, of the coming match. She stresses the word “pain” to send the message that the match takes the kind of mental fortitude that Bayley does not have. She then claims to state what the audience is already thinking in a rhetorical move that can make you seem persuasive if your audience is on your side, but here it makes her come off as presumptuous. She maintains this assumption of agreement as she accuses of Bayley behaving childishly and inappropriately, indirectly daring the audience to defy her, and she gets what she asks for.

(31) **Alexa Bliss:** I mean, we all saw last week when Bayley actually had the kendo stick, she couldn't pull the trigger.

[Crowd chants “what” at her pauses]

Alexa Bliss: That's what I said, I was like, ”what?”

The “what” chant that signals impatience mentioned in the chapter on Monday Night Raw 5.12.2016 is back. Alexa flaunts the maxim of relevance by purposefully and mockingly interpreting the chant as if the audience had participated in the dialogue meaningfully, ignoring their protests.

(32) **Alexa Bliss:** But with Bayley, here's the thing, as the goddess of WWE, I knew that if I really wanted to understand Bayley, I had to dig deep into her past. And once I found what I found I could not wait to show you guys. What did I find? I found – ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, WWE universe, Bayley, ”This Is Your Life!”

[Fanfare plays]

Alexa Bliss: I mean, look at all these Bayley artifacts. These are amazing.

Vanity seems to be a mainstay vice of most villains in my analysis. Alexa refers to herself as a “goddess”, placing herself above the rest of the competition. She adds pettiness to her list of unattractive characteristics by snooping into someone's personal life. She seems genuinely excited at the prospect of sharing her findings with the audience, though she has already established this to be a malevolent excitement; her demeanor is what you would expect from someone happy to host a segment, but her reasons for it are immoral. The politeness she shows towards the

audience and the praise she gives the wares in front of her are not so much insincere as they are revealing of Alexa's schadenfreude. Alexa is about to host a twisted take on a reality show concept.

- (33) **Alexa Bliss:** This is Bayley's first ever doll that she's had since she was two year – actually, I think she still plays with this one, never mind. --- Oh, look at this trophy. That is a beautiful trophy. I wonder what she won this in? Baseball, basketball, no, no. “Best in sportsmanship.” Sportsmanship? They give out trophies for that? Wow, she must've really won some scholarships with this one. --- Oh, would you look at that. Bayley's yearbook. Let's see what Bayley was voted most likely to do. --- ”Bayley, most likely to... apologize.”

Alexa oozes sarcasm as she inspects the items on display. She maintains an exaggeratedly surprised tone as she presumptuously “empathizes” with the audience, who in her world would be shocked to discover Bayley to be a softie. The mock shock is set to an undertone of glee as Alexa relishes in embarrassing Bayley. As Alexa moves from one item to the next, she keeps attacking seemingly positive values, like sportsmanship and humility, not only to give a tough impression of herself but also to give the audience something to root and defy her for.

- (34) **Alexa Bliss:** But you know, let's get away from this stuff, let's get to the good stuff. Ladies and gentlemen, I've got some very very special guests with me tonight. I have people of Bayley's past.
- [The people in the ring clap along with the audience]
- Alexa Bliss:** Now – yes, clap for yourselves. Now, I have a very special guest, ladies and gentlemen, Bayley's fourth grade teacher Mrs. Flapper!

Alexa keeps up the giddy presentation that promotes positive politeness towards the guests and negative politeness to the audience, but lets her real intentions shine through here and there. From context as well as the way she stresses “good”, the audience understands that Alexa uses the word to describe the most juicy and embarrassing details, rather than actually good moments from Bayley's life. The way Alexa sarcastically reprimands her guests as they clap reminds the audience of her antagonism behind the smiles. Alexa begins interviewing her first guest, an older woman.

- (35) **Alexa Bliss:** Mrs. Flapper, what was Bayley like as a student?

Mrs. Flapper: Oh, Bailey was a really nice girl. Perfect attendance, always sat – always – at the front row. Right next to her father.

Alexa Bliss: Her father? In the same room – the same classroom – go on, go on, please.

Mrs. Flapper: Well, she couldn't be away from him that long. And Bayley would start to cry.

Alexa Bliss: Cry, like cry? Like, tears, cry? Oh, how embarrassing. That just takes daddy's girl to a whole new level.

Alexa, having screened what answers she would get beforehand, pretends to be flabbergasted in an exaggerated way. As Mrs. Flapper tells her story, Alexa enjoys the benefit of getting the dirt on Bayley in front of the audience from a seemingly impartial source, and she asks for clarifications at the moments when it would be the most inconvenient for Bayley's credibility. She even makes sure that no-one misinterprets Mrs. Flapper, leaving no room for doubt of misleading. Alexa is not content with accusations; she hunts for evidence before insulting Bayley. Alexa starts interviewing her next guest, a young woman.

(36) **Alexa Bliss:** Now Tracy, what was it like being Bayley's best friend?

Tracy Havalina: Oh my gosh, Bayley was the nicest girl ever. --- Unfortunately some people took advantage of that, like, her doing other people's homework, or you know, people get in trouble, she would take the blame for it. I mean, no one wanted to be her friend, but I was always nice to her, but we were pretty inseparable until that happened.

Alexa Bliss: Tracy, between us, you know, woman to woman, this is our safe zone, until what?

Tracy Havalina: Okay, well you know, when I wanted to hang out like friends usually do, like, you know, go to the mall or go to the pool or go rollerblading, guess what. She wanted to stay and watch Monday Night Raw or Smackdown.

Alexa continues with the tactic of letting a source that would not want to insult Bayley present an unflattering image of her and echoing the most damning moments. Alexa sets up the disappointment by highlighting Tracy's relationship in her initial question and coaxes details out of her in a way that would be friendly and polite, if it was not for the fact that the two are speaking into a microphone in the middle of an arena and broadcast onto TV. With that being the case, Alexa comes across as manipulative rather than caring. Tracy reveals that liking wrestling too much was the

reason for their divide, which flies into the face of the audience's interests, giving them another reason to defy her. Alexa interviews her final guest, a young man.

(37) **Alexa Bliss:** Phil, what was it like being Bayley's ex-boyfriend?

Phil Johnson: Bayley was a very nice girl.

Alexa Bliss: Phil, Phil, Philly, Big Phil, let's just cut to the chase. Everyone here is dying to know what was it like on your first date.

Phil Johnson: It was okay. Kinda strange. Like, she always brought her father along to everything we went to. --- But we almost had this one moment one night, thought we were gonna kiss, closed my eyes, nothing happened. And I opened them, and there he is, it's her freaking father. I almost kissed him.

Alexa Bliss: Oh my god, you – oh. Please tell me you're joking – I need to hear more, let's go on.

Again Alexa weasels her way in to her interviewer's comfort zone with chatty positive politeness and eggs him on until he reveals an embarrassing moment, appealing to Phil's sense of community by speaking presumptuously on the audience's behalf. Her mock shock is broken by her own insatiable want for more gossip. The final twist of the knife comes when the young man confesses his love for the young woman, and Bayley comes in to watch her childhood friend and ex-boyfriend kiss.

The audience got quite restless during the promo and showed with chants that instead of hating the villain as an antagonist but staying engaged, they did not enjoy the scene as a story. The response to the promo was negative on a meta-level, making it an example of a poor promo from a viewer retention standpoint. Blaming a fourth-grader for crying is a low-hanging fruit, claiming that wrestling fans make bad friends at a wrestling show feels like too personal an insult to the audience and the kiss at the end is simply tacky. However, there are multiple interconnected layers at work that make the promo worth analyzing. The fact that Alexa's character has a selfish reason to be polite and happy combined with expected speech patterns of a reality show host make for an ironic scene where Alexa's words are often technically sincere, but hide a malevolent intention. Also, whereas in previously analyzed scenes villains used lies to further their plans, Alexa relied on explicitly and painstakingly

exposing “the truth” (within storyline) of Bayley's character. In this scene, Alexa used impoliteness strategies relatively seldom, and instead had more credible mouthpieces use them instead, making her seem like a cunning manipulator.

Smackdown Live 20.6.2017

The United States championship has found its way into the hands of the Canadian Kevin Owens. A tradition of the championship is to declare an open challenge, so that rather than leaving it up to the general manager to arrange a challenger to the title, the champion takes on all comers, giving an opportunity for anyone to prove themselves. Kevin Owens's character is one that hangs on to technicalities when it is convenient for him and wants to discredit any attempt at bringing him hardship. Kevin hides a cowardly nature behind aggressive boasting.

- (38) **Kevin Owens:** The only reason I'm standing in this ring right now without the Money in the Bank contract is because Sunday night, the other five competitors in the ladder match conspired against me. Oh, and they all agreed to attack me, they ganged up on me because they knew I was the most dangerous man in that match. And they tried to end my career, and that was an absolute injustice.

Kevin cannot accept losing a fair free-for-all, so he fabricates a conspiracy to protect his ego, breaking the maxim of quality in full view of the audience. Any non-favorable outcome is twisted into an indication of Kevin's self-perceived dominance, further distancing himself from the audience. Not only does Kevin elevate himself above fault, he also attacks his opponents' positive faces by implying that none of them alone would be a close match. Kevin twists the commonly held value of justice into a contradiction that is effective in portraying him as lacking integrity; whatever his opponents receive from him is just the better man winning, and whatever obstacle faces him is undeserved.

- (39) **Kevin Owens:** What happened to me Sunday night was not fair, but I'm still here in this ring tonight unbroken, still the new face of America, and still your United States champion. You know, Shane McMahon loves to say that Smackdown Live is the land of opportunity. Well, you know what the original land of opportunity was? It was the United States of America. And that's why I take it as my duty as the United States champion to truly make Smackdown Live the land of opportunity, because tonight I'm going to give

one lucky individual from Dayton Ohio a chance at my title.

Kevin takes great joy in pointing out the irony of his status as a foreign United States champion. He sees himself as a better representative of the country than any native, declaring himself “the new face of America.” In this context, Kevin effectively flaunts the maxim of quantity by reframing what the audience is sure to already know. His lecturing the crowd about American values comes across as condescending rather than unifying. Just as it seems Kevin is about to show some spine, he deviates from the expected open challenge by restricting the challenge to Daytonians. As will soon become clear, Kevin expects no-one in the main roster to qualify and instead wants an easy match against local, inexperienced talent. Kevin wants to get credibility for only technically putting his title on the line. Wrestler AJ Styles enters, somewhat stepping on Kevin's lines.

(40) **Kevin Owens:** And if there's anyone in the back from Dayton...

AJ Styles: Oh, wow, how unfortunate for you, Kevin Owens. But you know what's better than being the United States champion? Is me beating you for the United States championship.

Kevin Owens: Oh, wait, no no no. Were you not listening? Typical rude American interrupting, sticking your nose where it doesn't belong. I said that this open challenge was for a local resident of Dayton Ohio. This isn't about you.

With Kevin's character firmly established, AJ can make a jab at him and maintain his status as a hero in the scene. Even so, AJ only makes an indirectly impolite implication that him answering the challenge is a bad omen for Kevin. Kevin doubles down on technicalities, showing his cowardice and insulting every American in the arena in the process, which again stings all the more because of his supposed representing thereof. Wrestler Chad Gable enters to resolve the conflict Kevin has presented.

(41) **Kevin Owens:** Hey, hey, cut this music, cut. Were you not listening? You're not from Dayton Ohio either, I know that. Why are you here?

Chad Gable: Well, I'm here to answer your challenge, Kevin. Actually, I just moved to Dayton.

Kevin Owens: Really? You just moved to – when, when?

Chad Gable: This morning.

Kevin Owens: This mor- okay, what's your address, buddy?

Chad Gable: 3640 Colonel Glenn Highway, Dayton, Ohio.

Kevin demands that Chad's spotlight is cut short, attacking his negative face. The most interesting character choice here to me is the completely nonchalant way Chad defies Kevin. Chad does not need to psyche himself up, get the crowd going or even put Kevin down, and so averts tripping any so far established signs of heroic depiction. He knows that merely calmly asserting the facts will send Kevin floundering as he is out of excuses, and representing the local area resonates with the crowd in its own right. Much to Kevin's chagrin, Chad gets his match.

Kevin Owens shows in this scene how to portray a coward in a way that maintains the high energy expected of the show. He projects his insecurities onto others so loudly and obviously that it does not take a deep understanding of psychology to realize the emptiness of his boasts. Kevin also plays with the audience's expectations of truth and honesty by only willing to stand behind specific, strategically considered words. Chad Gable's performance on the other hand shows that reaping the catharsis sown by the villain does not always require explicit heroic posturing. He communicated much of his defiance with an unconcerned tone of voice and body language instead of verbal confrontation.

Monday Night Raw 3.7.2017

Wrestler Apollo Crews meets colleague Titus O'Neil backstage. Titus has taken on a managerial relationship with Apollo and wants to figure out the next step that Apollo should take to benefit Titus's "brand". Whatever connotations such image-hunting may conjure, there are no real villains on camera in this scene. Titus is here to give the hero a morale boost before facing a tough opponent.

(42) **Titus O'Neil:** Apollo Crews, it's Apollo Crews, hey, Apollo Crews. Hey, what's up, man?

Apollo Crews: You look like you're in a great mood right now.

Titus O'Neil: Man, I'm in an excellent mood.

Apollo Crews: I see that.

Titus O'Neil: Now I know you heard Braun Strowman talking about he looking for some competition. I figured, what's more competitive out there right now than Titus Worldwide! [Apollo joins on "Worldwide"] Nothing. Now I'd go out there and I'd fight that man myself, but I feel like this is the perfect opportunity for you.

Apollo Crews: Titus, man, I just had a daughter.

The two of them exchange warm expressives to show their mutual care for each other's positive face, giving a likable impression. After espousing the effectiveness of their co-operation, however, when Titus suggests that Apollo challenge the off-camera villain Braun, Apollo's response is revealing of a number of things. Apollo flaunts the maxim of relevance by bringing up his daughter in the context of Braun, implying that challenging him is tantamount to suicide. This not only makes Braun seem chillingly threatening as a villain, but also shows that there may be a cynical side to Titus's coaxing. Beating Braun would be a huge accomplishment, but Titus does not want to be the one to put his body on the line. Braun has established himself as an utterly unstoppable behemoth of a competitor, so Titus needs to get Apollo's bravery to overtake his fear.

(43) **Apollo Crews:** Have you seen what this man's been doing to people lately?

Titus O'Neil: Yeah, I've been seeing, he's been making stars. --- Ain't nobody know who Kalisto was until Braun Strowman threw him in the garbage can. --- Just stick with me now, listen, picture this. You and your beautiful baby girl sitting on the couch. She looks up at you with those big bright eyes, shining like two 25-inch flat screen TVs, 4K, HD of course. And she says to you, she says, "Dad, how was it to defeat that big monster, Braun Strowman?" Just think about the feeling that you'll get when you get every time you hear that.

Apollo Crews: You know what, Titus, you're right, man. It's my job to protect her from monsters and that's exactly what I'm gonna do.

Apollo is understandably reticent to face Braun, who has used the roster of wrestlers as his personal collection of stress toys to maim and mutilate how and when he pleases. Titus attempts to appeal to Apollo's desire for recognition to not much effect, since the only example he can give Apollo is Kalisto, who managed to use his quickness to basically trick Braun into technically losing against him in a special match. Kalisto may have had won the match, but Braun in a fit of frustration beat

him up afterwards so one-sidedly that there was no room for doubt who the more formidable opponent actually was. Titus then switches tactics to more effect. He appeals to Apollo's love for family, which is universally recognized by the audience as well, so when Apollo comes around and delivers a heroic commissive, the audience has an ideal to rally behind. Titus then invents the catchphrase "Crews can't lose", which the two chant until the scene ends, inviting the audience to share in the rallying cry.

This short scene was useful in pointing out that some heroic values may be intrinsically more preferable than others. Apollo rejected stardom as a reason to risk injury, but protecting his family was important enough for him to shake his fear. In addition, while both Apollo and Titus maintained the kind of positive and polite way of speaking expected of heroes, Titus showed that a character can speak consistently in a seemingly heroic way and still show a hint of cynicism in the right context.

Smackdown Live 31.10.2017

This scene shows the confrontation of teams rather than individuals. The New Day, the team of Big E, Xavier Woods and Kofi Kingston are backstage, dressed up as figures from WWE's history, handing out candy to the crew to celebrate Halloween. The New Day are always sure to bring a dose of humor and silliness to the show with their brightly colored costumes and a downright cartoonish way of conducting themselves. Their celebration of all things fun and wacky has drawn some ire from a section of the audience who would rather keep the tone of the show more grounded, but their unflinching positivity makes them effective, if slightly unconventional, heroic figures.

(44) **Rusev:** What are you doing?

Xavier Woods: Baby, baby, baby, relax. You have to celebrate the happiest day of the year. Today is Halloween.

Kofi Kingston: That's right. It's the one day of the year when you can go to your neighbor's house and knock on the door in your favorite costume and they give you candy. And I love candy.

Big E: Hahaha, and you jive soul brothers look like you could use some delicious, nutritious treats.

New Day greet Rusev and Aiden English with expectedly warm and positive politeness and generous gestures, and they appeal to the audience's shared tradition of holidays. Rusev and Aiden are a team whose antics are also a source of humor, but usually for different reasons. Unlike the New Day, Rusev and Aiden take themselves exaggeratedly seriously, which is then contrasted against the melodrama of wrestling and played for laughs. Rusev's character leans into his Bulgarian background and criticizes America for its “inferior” culture, casting him in the role of the villain. Interestingly, Rusev is a good example of a villain whom the audience has grown to love so much, that their reaction to him is seemingly identical to that of a heroic character even when he actively disparages Americans, but that alone is not enough for me to consider him a hero or even an anti-hero. While deeply entertaining, Rusev is still a disruptive character and the driving force of conflict in the scene.

(45) **Big E:** Yeah, yeah, reach in, get some. Trick or treat?

Rusev: What's wrong with you? Raw could be in our front steps any second. You're giving out candy to strangers? They can be spies from Raw. What's the matter with you?

Rusev may be a buzzkill, but he backs up his positive impoliteness with reasonable concerns. Smackdown's roster had previously invaded Monday Night Raw, assaulting the show's wrestlers and setting up the conflict to an upcoming cross-show event. At this point, Rusev is merely advocating for those in the audience that want to take the show seriously. However, Rusev is about to commit to his role as a villain even more.

(46) **Xavier Woods:** Rusev, we led the charge against Raw. We went through the whole roster. Just because we're dressed like this doesn't mean we're not ready to fight. Chill.

Rusev: Halloween is a dumb little holiday. For dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb little children. There's only one day that matters now.

Aiden English: [singing] Rusev Day!

The New Day attempt to de-escalate the situation by reminding Rusev that despite their appearance, they were ready to throw down when it mattered. Although this was a case of “tell, don't show”, the New Day communicate their heroic qualities in spite

of their flippant demeanor. Rusev is not having it, however, and vehemently belittles American culture and its participants with direct positive impoliteness. He even proceeds to spill the New Day's candy and stomp on it as Aiden makes the day that was supposed to be a community event all about Rusev, intruding on the New Day's message of coming together. Stomping on the candy was the last straw for Big E.

(47) **Big E:** Did this sucker just pour out my candy? Did this sucker just step on my candy? Oh no, you dun done it now, sucker. You and me tonight in that ring, sucker!

Rusev: I'll be elated to, sucker.

Just as before, the villain needs to push things too far for the heroes to get aggressive. Even so, Big E's reaction is so animated and obviously exaggerated that the audience does not lose sight of the usually positive character. The scene is written and performed in a self-aware style in general. That the conflict is about candy is humorous by itself, and Big E's insults are ones you could hear at recess in kindergarten. Even though Big E attacks Rusev's positive face, he does so in a way that does not make him seem too aggressive or mean-spirited to be a heroic figure. Rusev's response is equally juvenile, which may contribute to the audience's perception that Rusev is funny and entertaining first and a villain second.

This scene was rare in its inclusion of both conflict and abundant humor. Promos from New Day are at times simply funny skits without much conflict, and at other times such that the conflict supersedes the humor and we see the New Day get serious. While humor contains the risk of watering down dramatic moments, this scene provides an example of using humor to maintain a character's heroism while acting aggressively. The silly context softens Big E's aggressive behavior, allowing a hero to get away with using impoliteness.

Monday Night Raw 25.12.2017

Wrestler John Cena is in the middle of the ring, ready to welcome the crowd to the show on Christmas Day. John has been the poster boy for WWE for many years now, and his titanic presence has only recently started to show signs of fading. Surging to

popularity with an edgy rapper persona, John's character was eventually shaped into a kid-friendly all-American superhero of sorts, who stands for patriotic values and never, ever gives up. John is a divisive character whom, generally speaking, the younger members in the audience idolize and whom the older audience has grown to hate for trivializing dramatic conflicts. The negative feedback has had ample time to reach John and the WWE as a whole, leading to somewhat self-aware promos where the performers acknowledge that a boyscout who always wins is a persona that gets boring after a while.

- (48) **John Cena:** You're gonna have to excuse me for one second. There's something wrong with this picture. I gotta fix this. There is a young man over here who's wearing a wrong color of hat and a wrong color of shirt. And I'd like to give to him the right color of hat and the right color of shirt for Christmas.

Right from the get-go John tugs at the audience's heartstrings. A kid in the audience is dressed in John Cena -branded clothing, but its color scheme is out of date and does not match John's current get-up. John gives his own hat and shirt to the kid in a generous and positively polite gesture, and he even prefaces this with negative politeness, apologizing for taking the audience's time. Also, John's use of commissives portrays him as taking initiative in times of need. John is hero incarnate, as further examples will make evident.

- (49) **John Cena:** And on that note, merry Christmas, Chicago!

[Crowd chants "Merry Christmas"]

You know, since we've never done a television broadcast on Christmas Day, that's the first time we've ever heard that chant. So thank you, Chicago. I love the holidays, because the holidays is about togetherness. And no matter where I go, no matter what I do, I let everybody know that WWE is my home and you are my family. And like a typical family we've had some ups, we've had some downs, so I just wanna say cheers. Cheers to the good times, to the bad times, but cheers on a special day like today. I can look around and see us all be together.

John gives an outpouring of mushy expressives that all target the positive face wants of the audience. He promotes unity through shared culture and interests. He even softly alludes to the part of the audience who are tired of him, but only in an effort to build bridges and let bygones be bygones. However, it would not be much of a

wrestling promo if someone did not show up to interrupt the wholesomeness.

(50) **John Cena:** I couldn't think of a better place than right here, right now, to tell you...

[Elias enters, strumming his guitar]

Elias: Hello, I am Elias. John, do you even know what WWE stands for? "Walk With Elias." So right now I have one question for everybody here. Who wants to walk with Elias?

Elias as a character is a rock star diva who fancies himself to be the next Bruce Springsteen and gets angry if everything fails to revolve around him for a second. Despite his pettiness, he has charisma to spare. Like Rusev in the 31.10.2017 episode of Smackdown, he is another example of a villain whom a vocal majority of the audience finds so entertaining, that they may cheer him even when he actively disparages them, although this dynamic is not absolute, as further examples will show. Here, Elias invokes his catchphrase "Walk With Elias", which the audience resounds emphatically, creating a moment of unity and positive politeness despite Elias's incontrovertible villainy. Elias benefits further from facing such a divisive hero. This scene is an interesting reversal of the usual hero-villain dynamic, because the largest and most vocal part of the audience wants the villain to shut the hero up.

(51) **John Cena:** The guys just started a Christmas chant too. I guess so do I. Yeah, I'll walk with Elias.

Elias: Well that's the smartest decision you're ever gonna make, okay. See, for months now I've been getting interrupted every time I'm out here. I've had enough of it. So I figured, I come out here, interrupt you.

[The crowd chants "CM Punk", the name of a local wrestler no longer in the WWE]

Elias: Well, I'll tell you one thing, John. It's for damn sure that CM Punk ain't gonna interrupt me.

John Cena: Hey, hey man, hey man, hey man. It's Christmas, it's the holidays. Chicago loves their fellow Chicagoans, it's all right. For once, let them have some fun, man, right?

John is not phased by Elias's interruption, and instead displays the virtue of patience by continuing amicably. Elias, however, is on the warpath. He flaunts the maxim of quantity, making the hostile implication that challenging him now would end in violence. He declares that his intention is to disrupt John's moment, but the crowd is

not feeling him right now. Chanting the name of former WWE wrestler CM Punk has been established by WWE fans as a form of protest during dull moments or shaky line delivery. In effect, the audience is saying: “This is boring, we want CM Punk back.” The chant is especially strong in Punk's hometown. Unlike John, Elias is not here to build bridges, so he uses negative politeness to dash the audience's hopes with some light taboo words thrown in for good measure. John continues his promotion of unity and uses positive politeness to not appear threatening to Elias. He sides with the crowd as heroes are usually expected to, although there is a cheeky side to John's permissiveness. Getting the audience to chant over Elias's lines is a victory for him, so John's seemingly peaceful approach can be argued to contain some competitiveness.

(52) **Elias:** Let me get down to it, John. I'm gonna perform tonight.

[“CM Punk” chant continues]

John Cena: Welcome to Chicago, Elias.

Elias: Oh, I'm gonna perform no matter how often you wanna chant that. And I'm gonna do it uninterrupted.

John Cena: Listen, man, if you're gonna perform tonight – and I like listening to music – but if you're gonna perform, please, whatever you...

[The two bicker, Elias insisting on not being interrupted and John insisting on giving friendly advice]

Elias: Shh. Right now I need everybody to silence their cell phones, hold your applause, and shut your mouths.

Here is a prominent example of a villain using commissives to sow discord. Elias stubbornly stays the course even as the audience rails against him. After Elias draws further chants from the crowd, John makes a light jab at Elias for being new and not seeing how a Chicago audience would react, but even then his tone is warm and reconciliatory. John keeps up the positive politeness when addressing Elias, complimenting his music, but Elias does not like being told what to do and responds with negative impoliteness, interrupting John and revoking his right to speak. Elias's last line is another one of his catchphrases, one that communicates his diva persona succinctly. It contains not only a vain assumption that he will be applauded, but direct negative impoliteness in form of an unredressed directive targeted at the crowd. The audience's reaction is as layered as expected from context: They want to

respond loudly to show their recognition of a catchphrase. which is supportive of Elias in a roundabout way, but they also want to defy the villain for being rude. Elias interrupting boyscout John adds another layer of wanting to support Elias, resulting in a loud mix of boos and cheers. Elias has concocted a dynamic with the audience that is difficult to summarize. John concedes and fetches a stool for Elias in an exaggeratedly courteous motion, and Elias begins to perform.

(53) **Elias:** [singing] Well it's Christmas time in Chicago / Yes, it's Christmas today / I couldn't imagine a worse place to spend my holidays.

John Cena: No, no, no, stop, stop, stop playing, stop it. Turn on the lights, turn on the lights. You know, I was willing to give you a chance, man, and I was trying to tell you before you started playing your song not to say anything bad about Chicago. This isn't a bad place to spend your holidays. Look around you, man. People as far as I can see, they're dressed for the occasion, they're excited, they're making noise, they're chanting at the top of their lungs. And you actually play okay, but every single song you play, you get to a point where you call people in the audience jerks.

Elias: I admit it. I just feel like I speak the truth, you know, I speak the truth.

John Cena: No man, no, they're just trying to tell you how they feel. They're not the jerks. You're being a jerk.

As has been noted in earlier promos, invoking the city the show is in is a surefire way to get a reaction. Sure enough, when Elias targets all of Chicago with positive impoliteness, the audience plays along and reacts vigorously, prompting Elias to pause. John has been quite accommodating so far, but directly insulting the audience sets him off on a heroic rant. Once again, John is free to use negatively impolite commands and positively impolite name-calling only after Elias steps over a line. Even when he confronts Elias, he is sure to compliment Elias's ability and make the audience and their interests a focus. Also, note how optimistic it is of John to not say: “You *are* a jerk”, but to instead say: “You're *being* a jerk.” John does not want to incite further conflict by name-calling, but rather defuse the situation by getting the villain to change his behavior. Unexpectedly, it looks like John might be getting through to Elias.

(54) **Elias:** You know, I never thought of it that way. I mean, it is Christmas, and uh, maybe you're right. Maybe I am a jerk. But you know what, I would love to do that song again if Chicago would give me a second chance.

John Cena: Elias, you just said this is a bad place to spend the holidays. Chicago is a very, very tough city. But I'll tell you what, man, it's Christmas, it is. Hit it one more time.

Elias: For sure, for sure. [singing] Well it's Christmas time in Chicago / Oh, it's Christmas Day / I can't imagine a *better* place to spend my holidays. [talking] Why don't you take it away John, you feeling good?

John Cena: [singing] So have yourself a merry little...

[Elias punches the distracted John and kicks him while he is down]

Elias: [points at John] I don't play for you. [points at audience] I don't play for you. Christmas is overrated and so is Chicago.

It would be a Christmas miracle if Elias's words turned out to be sincere. Elias breaks the maxim of quality to lull John into a false sense of security. He compliments Chicago only as a means to an end. There does not seem to be a cynical bone in John's body, so he takes Elias's words in good faith and falls into his trap. To top his cowardly assault off, Elias makes sure that the audience knows he does not care for them or their interests. Although the villain won the scene, a majority of the audience got what they wanted. The hero threatened the viewers with a boring time, and the villain saved them by making something exciting happen.

What was observed in this lengthy scene fell neatly with my previous observations about archetypal heroic and villainous behavior. The hero promotes unity and sheds politeness only when the villain disrupts the status quo. The villain uses politeness only to deceive the hero, and is otherwise outspoken about dismissing the audience. However, the reversal of audience expectations warrants further scrutiny. John is by all accounts a heroic figure who represents self-evidently good values, but he may not be the kind of hero a wrestling show needs. I argue that John's lines are intentionally filled to the brim with pragmatic strategies that are antithetical to conflict, one of the show's main draws, so that he purposely comes off as a bit of a bore. When the villain finally delivers conflict to the viewers, they have the villain to thank for giving them what they paid for. In previous promos it was seen that the absence of archetypal characteristics creates a distinct, subversive mood to a scene. Conversely, here an overabundance of politeness made the hero seem distasteful.

Smackdown Live 16.1.2018

In this short backstage segment, the team of twin brothers Jimmy and Jey Uso, or The Usos, are interviewed by sportscaster Dasha Fuentes. The Usos have undergone major changes in their in-ring personas and hero-villain roles in a relatively short period of time. In 2016, The Usos underwent a face-heel turn, rejecting their role as a fun distraction and creating opportunities for themselves by force if necessary. Their flashy, colorful aesthetic that incorporated themes from their Samoan heritage, which made them especially popular with the younger crowd, changed into a tougher street thug aesthetic. However, with the new villainous role came a surge in popularity, which has resulted in an incremental shift in The Usos' characters towards a more merchandisable (and heroic) direction. The Usos face the challenge of maintaining tough and disruptive personas despite their role as heroes in this scene. A disclaimer for the following transcription: Given that Jimmy and Jey are identical twins, it is entirely possible I have misidentified who is talking at any one time.

(55) **Dasha Fuentes:** Gentlemen, last week Daniel Bryan announced that the two of you will be defending your Smackdown tag team titles in a two out of three falls match in the Royal Rumble. Do you agree with Daniel Bryan's decision?

Jimmy Uso: Hey, Dasha, let me ask you a question right quick. Tell me, how did these two fools become a tag team in the first place?

Jey Uso: I got this, *us* ["brother"]. Tag team Tinder.

Jimmy Uso: I feel you, I feel you. Hey, but Chad Gable been playing rebound ever since his boy Jason Jordan went to Raw. Now Jason Jordan is one half of the Raw tag team champions.

Jey Uso: Chad took over here, trying to play catch-up, hey, but ain't gonna be no champion on our watch, *us*.

The Uso's opponents, Chad Gable and Shelton Benjamin, have teamed up very recently relative to the time of the episode. From the get-go, The Usos poke fun at their opponents' unfamiliarity with each other as teammates. This unprovoked positive impoliteness does not match the so far established pattern that heroes only get aggressive after the villains provoke them. However, there are some softening elements to their rudeness that should result in The Usos seeming tough, but likable enough to root for. First, the brothers exchange expressives and familial monikers that promote positive politeness, at least between the two of them. Second,

their use of humor softens the dramatic impact of their words. The Usos flaunt the maxim of relevance and liken Chad Gable losing his tag team partner Jason Jordan to Raw and quickly getting a replacement to using a dating app, which is easier to take in jest than a direct claim that the two do not know how to work together. The two continue with humorous banter to cement this image.

(56) **Jimmy Uso:** Uh-uh, I mean, those two chumps can't even tell us apart, it is real simple. I'm Jimmy, this Jey, this Jey, I'm Jimmy.

Jey Uso: No, I'm Jimmy, you're Jey.

Jimmy Uso: No, no, no, last time I checked, you were Jimmy, I'm Jey.

Jey Uso: I thought you was big Jey, I was little Jey, but it don't even matter because at the Royal Rumble, they gonna know exactly who we are. Chad Gable and Shelton Benjamin...

Jimmy Uso: Let's go.

Jey Uso: On the real.

Jimmy and Jey: Welcome to the Uso...

[Shelton and Chad assault The Usos from behind, interrupting their catchphrase and knocking them on the floor.]

Chad Gable: Boys, don't worry, we know exactly who you are.

Shelton Benjamin: Former champions.

The Usos use their identical looks to joke around with Dasha, making them seem approachable even as they call out their opponents with insults. As The Usos belt out their thug-themed catchphrase, "Welcome to the Uso Penitentiary", which itself is an opportunity for the audience to join in a shared moment, Chad and Shelton ambush them from behind, making it clear who the villains of the scene are. As a contrast to the high energy and jokey banter of The Usos, Chad and Shelton deliver their lines with a deadpan coldness. They use a technically false representative speech act to make the threatening implication that the match will end in their victory.

Chad Gable appeared a previously analyzed promo on the 20.6.2017 episode of Smackdown Live in a heroic role, which makes it even more apparent that characters switching from heroes to villains and back is a common occurrence. Executing a radical change to a character in a way that feels natural in the narrative is an unenviable task, but The Usos have managed to stay true to their tough personas

while feuding with other teams, intermittently taking heroic, anti-heroic and villainous roles. Humor may risk softening drama, but here the intention is precisely to soften the heroes' villain-like behavior, which The Usos achieve admirably in my estimation. This combined with at least some positive politeness, even if it is not targeted at the audience or their opponents, and the fact that the villains resort to even harsher, not to mention cowardly, behavior, lets The Usos insult their opponents unprovoked and still appear heroic.

5. Discussion

A primary purpose of this exploration was to see to what extent the different arching pragmatic theories can be used to make contingent analysis of heroic and villainous speech in fictional media. The viability and predicting power of the different pragmatic theories was variable even in my BA, and this study has corroborated the BA's concerns about the viability of Gricean maxims and speech act theory. The clearest trend across all the scenes was that politeness seems to be strongly associated with heroism and impoliteness with villainy, but other theories for the most part could only be used to deepen the understanding of how particular moments are executed, rather than establishing trends. Grice's maxims only differentiate between heroes and villains in the case of intentional lying, and the speech act theory is not able to differentiate between heroes and villains at all. It seems that the minor trends found in my BA relating to antiheroes cannot be transferred to villains, and that different speech acts are not perceived as more or less objectionable, but rather the contextual content and the kinds of politeness strategies used are the ways heroes curry favor over the villains. There may be no future for speech acts in the linguistic study of heroic depiction, but the field of politeness on the other hand looks ripe with opportunities.

Brown & Levinson's politeness theory gave the framework to an often recurring phenomenon, which had to do with the timing of impoliteness strategies. The heroes do not lose the favor of the audience by using impoliteness strategies as long as the villain is the first to be impolite. The context of defending oneself makes hurling

insults less objectionable. In fact, in a show whose drama is driven by conflict, not firing back and constantly attempting to de-escalate the situation made at least one character seem lame instead of heroic. Heroes have a few tools at their disposal when using impoliteness to dial their rudeness back. While villains often get personal to start with, heroes have room to escalate the severity of their insults as needed. Heroes can also use humor to communicate that their outburst is a little out of character and not to be taken too seriously.

Just as heroes use impoliteness sparingly to dramatic effect, villains have ways to use politeness while remaining thoroughly antagonistic. Villains can flaunt the Gricean maxims of quality and quantity in conjunction with politeness strategies to imply the opposite of what they say. Implicature is employed frequently enough by heroes that it by itself does not appear to be morally colored. The characters flaunt the different maxims in a versatile way to imply anything from sarcasm to fear. The key to the villains' use of implicature is the conjunction with politeness strategies. The maxim of quality can also be thoroughly and intentionally broken, which the villains make frequent use of, and heroes almost never: villains often outright lie and follow up their polite gestures with inconsistent actions.

Searle's speech act theory had some intuitively appealing categorizations that did not show themselves to be all that effective in analyzing the data. I approached the data with an intuitively held notion of the heroic commissive, where bravely committing to a future action makes a character seem as taking initiative, but examples of this were too infrequent to draw conclusions from. Another interesting configuration with too little instances to support its existence is the villainous representative, where the confident villain calls his shot by asserting that an uncertain future event is already set to go one way. The problem with both of these nonexistent patterns is that the speech acts by themselves are not the main contributor to the perception of heroism or villainy. In fact, both can be categorized better by using the other theories: when a hero commits to something positive, he is seen as heroic because of the usually polite content of his promise, and the villain calling his shot is better categorized as flaunting the maxim of quality.

The established pattern that heroes are usually polite and the villains are impolite has created an opportunity for the show to subvert this expectation. Characters can simply avert from using the usual politeness strategies, or even completely reverse the scene by adopting politeness when impoliteness is expected and vice versa. Doing so can create an unsettling effect and alter the mood from that of a morality play to horror, for example, as was seen in one scene. Another interesting reversal is the villain whom the audience wants to win. Although these villains use impoliteness as any other villain would, they also incorporate positive politeness in their promos, usually by using catchphrases that the audience can share in. There is an additional quality to these kinds of promos that I have a hard time describing and categorizing properly. Whereas usually the audience would play along and unite in hating what the villain stands for, with villains like Elias and Rusev it is more the case that the audience shows its approval that the villain provides them with entertaining drama, which then leads to promos that reference the performer's distinct kind of popularity.

Going forward, I feel confident that the baseline that heroes are polite and villains are impolite can be used as a starting point in studying depictions of heroism in other media. Reversal of this paradigm may well prove to be not at all rare, but it is done to achieve a distinct effect on the characters. Unfortunately, the other two theories' viability is now in even more doubt than in my BA. However, this study indicates mainly that the politeness/impoliteness dichotomy can be seen in more media than just fantasy role-playing games. I expect that if similar studies were to be undertaken in different western fictional media, similar patterns would emerge, but considering that this study's working definition of heroes and villains was tied to values, it would be interesting to see if a study of a work form a culture that is far removed from western traditions produced similar observations. For example, it could be that the hero standing up for himself with such aggression as seen in the WWE would be frowned upon in a different culture. Another inquiry of a smaller scale could be to focus on a particular aspect of professional wrestling that this thesis only mentioned in passing. Studying the changes that occur when a character undergoes a reversal from heroism to villainy and vice versa would confirm whether these trends are specific to a kind of depiction, or just idiosyncrasies of a character or actor.

6. Conclusion

This study compared the pragmatic features of heroic and villainous characters' speech in WWE's professional wrestling shows' promotional segments. While differences in the use of speech acts were not detected, villains seem to have more of a permission to break Grice's maxim of quality in order to deliberately deceive the audience, and the heroes' use of politeness strategies and the villains' use of impoliteness strategies is diametrically opposed. Heroes appear to use impoliteness only in special circumstances, and the same goes for villains and politeness. These trends corroborate the findings in my BA thesis, and show promise of not being limited to only the medium of wrestling promotions.

Less definitively but just as importantly, this study has attempted to show in detail how layered the depiction of heroism and villainy through dialogue can be in professional wrestling. The bedrock of the politeness/impoliteness dichotomy is one that can be exploited for communicating tremendous amounts of character detail in a short period of time, as well as interesting reversals of the norm. Although Grice's maxims did not yield more than stated in quantity, the scenes showed numerous instances where implicature was used to create moments that were more cerebral and multivalent than perhaps stereotypically expected of the working class entertainment form.

Further research into how stable this trend of heroic depiction is in different cultures or across the career of a wrestler and their role as a hero and a villain is encouraged.

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