University of Warsaw

Institute of Applied Linguistics

Ewa Żukowska

Record book number: 424262

"Cancel Culture":
The discourse of American
digital war

Master's thesis
in the field of Linguistics

Warsaw, September 2024

Uniwersytet Warszawski

Wydział Lingwistyki Stosowanej

Ewa Żukowska

Numer albumu: 424262

„Cancel Culture": dyskurs amerykańskiej wojny internetowej

Praca magisterska

Na kierunku: lingwistyka stosowana

Praca wykonana pod kierunkiem:

dr Urszuli Okulskiej-Łukawskiej

Instytut Lingwistyki Stosowanej

Warszawa, wrzesień 2024

Streszczenie

Celem pracy jest zaprezentowanie zjawiska jakim jest Cancel Culture, jak wpłynęło ono na komunikację oraz jak zmienia realia społeczne. Cancel Cuture rozwija się prężnie przede wszystkim w Stanach Zjednoczonych i mimo że temat ten nie jest nowy, jest on stosunkowo rzadko opisywany przez badaczy dyskursu. Cancelowanie odbywa się głównie w sferze internetowej poprzez szczególnego rodzaju posty, komentarze czy inne formy publikacji na platformach społecznościowych. Służy to reagowaniu na zachowanie innych, w szczególności osób publicznych, które naruszają schematy norm przyjętych przez większość. W ten sposób możliwe jest „ukaranie" winowajcy i doprowadzenie do realnych zmian w społeczeństwie. Mimo, że zjawisko to przyczynia się do wielu pozytywnych aspektów, takich jak uwzględnianie perspektyw osób ze zmarginalizowanych grup społecznych, niesie ono za sobą wiele negatywnych konsekwencji, jak na przykład wykluczanie i uciszanie osób na podstawie fałszywych wiadomości. Analiza dyskursu cancelowania pozwala na zbadanie jakie tożsamości, relacje oraz konteksty pojawiają się w trakcie jego trwania, oraz jak język wykluczenia tworzy podziały prowadzące do nieskończonej wojny cyfrowej pomiędzy grupami cancelujących i scancelowanych. Binarny podział skłóconych stron budzi skojarzenie z wojną, gdzie wojska ścierają się, w celu chronienia swoich „przestrzeni", które odzwierciedlają wyznawane normy społeczne.

Słowa klucze: język wykluczenia, Cancel Culture, komunikacja cyfrowa, reakcje wobec kryzysu cancelowania, dystrybucja siły, hierarchia społeczna w Internecie, dyskurs Cancel Culture.

Spis treści

Acknowledgements

Introduction

2024 started with a potentially historic movement – Blockout 2024, which shook celebrity culture online. #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #IsOverParty and many other hashtags which serve to tag one's message are used on a daily basis. Hate speech and accusations have been present in the online diaspora for a long time and were usually directed at celebrities for doing something wrong. However, now, due to Blockout 2024, celebrities are boycotted because they are simply celebrities. Still, some may not realise that these simple statements and movements may have real repercussions for people standing both behind them as well as for those to whom they were aimed. Spreading hate online has never been easier and more developed than it is now, especially with the supposed 'freeing' of *X* (previously named *Twitter*). While some time ago, the Internet and social platforms served many to mainly communicate, nowadays we can do much more, and with social media at their peak, people take more and more interest in the Internet realm, spending more and more hours watching content online, following celebrities, connecting with people, etc.

Such widespread access to the Internet and social media gives an excellent platform for Cancel Culture (henceforth CC), a movement which consists in cancelling, boycotting, blocking, and even verbally attacking those who made or said something unacceptable. It may be done in various forms, and due to its complexity and vagueness, many actions may be counted as cancelling. Usually, it requires social media users to share their opinions and accusations for others to join in order for the matter to gain publicity and reach not only the target audience but also the individual at fault so that they get to know they have done something wrong and through various methods of image repair react to it accordingly. The cancellers acting as social justice advocates may need to receive an apology and see the remorse as well as a change in one's actions and them taking responsibility.

However, CC is such an undefined phenomenon that some even wonder if it even exists. One thing is certain: posts and comments containing hashtags and accusations get posted every day without a break, and the focus from one person to another ensures the continuity of the movement, which, in consequence, influences not only careers but also personal lives of many people, leading to serious repercussions and even fatality.

CC changes the discourse of online and real-life communications and enforces already existing phenomena like political correctness or call-out culture, further

modifying the way people behave and speak. Even though the movement is the most known in the USA, its omnipresence causes serious concerns towards free speech in the international arena. As of yet, no law regulates its dynamic. Thus, the popularity of CC is slowly reaching more and more people, forming an army of cancellers who become online activists ready to guard their norms through more or less aggressive behaviour. From these digital interactions emerge identities and relations that display power dynamics and voice distribution among contributors.

To learn more about the phenomena, a study is conducted to examine its linguistic, discursive, and social aspects. The study's aim is to see how cancellations affect identities and relations thus being formed, as well as to determine how people cancel and what image repair methods the cancelled use to regain their status. The analysis also examines what social constructs emerge around this phenomenon and how it influences our reality. The data include situations that caused cancellations as well as posts published in response to such events. The two sides of the issue allow us to examine in greater detail the discursive procedures of cancellation together with social identities, relations and contexts that are formed in the process.

Chapter 1. The cultural background of Cancel Culture

Introduction

Cancel Culture (henceforth CC) is a vast phenomenon, still in the process of development. The explicit definition of CC has not yet been determined, but all of the explanations come down to one objective: to show people what they had supposedly done 'wrong'. The CC has neither leaders nor membership, and those who contribute to its growth do not share a coherent ideology (Mishan, 2020). In general terms, to be cancelled means to get called out, deleted, boycotted, or ostracised. Usually, it happens after a person says or does something that is against the idea of the 'spectator', so every other person seeing the act. Then, 'spectators' use social media to digitally put sanctions to affect the cancelled person's personal and professional life (Saint-Louis, 2021). Cancelling condemns people to take accountability for their actions, to get reprimanded or even provokes getting revenge on the accused person (Burmah, 2021). While in theory, CC may sound correct, or to some even noble, because the culprits get punished for their deeds, the idea of cancelling is exceptionally subjective. Everyone can cancel anyone for anything. Hence, some people view it as a strike toward freedom of speech. Dershowitz (2020) mentions it in his book *Cancel Culture: The Latest Attack on Free Speech and Due Process* and describes that CC is a threat to democratic, fundamental rights:

The cancel culture eschews the need for due process or any process for reaching the truth through evidence and justice. Its advocates are impatient. They want what they want, and they want it now! Free speech and due process be damned as unnecessary barriers to their utopia. But the denial of free speech and due process is the sure throughway to dystopia and the tyranny of the right or left. (Dershowitz, 2020)

CC was thriving in becoming more and more influential mainly because the Internet became widespread and reached the mainstream, thanks to which anyone can write anything on their social media. The dialogue changed when more people who are not journalists, politicians, or other public figures started influencing public speech online (Young, 2021). The widespread access to the Internet has been occurring at a faster pace, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when in 2020, the number of Internet users grew by over 10% (*Facts and Figures 2021*, 2021). That was also the moment when people started 'living' more in a digital world; therefore, words and acts seen online started gaining more attention, and they started to be treated with greater importance. While some years ago, social media were a form of connecting with people, getting to know more perspectives, and maintaining contact with

those far away, nowadays, people have started using social platforms as a war arena. Various discussions, quarrels, and hate spreading created walls between users, due to which many people are scared to publicly speak their minds in fear of getting cancelled and ostracised (Dideriksen, 2023).

It has become an unstoppable Un-American digital war where one accuses the other of anything in the name of 'wokeness', defined by *Merriam-Webster* as "aware of and actively attentive to important societal facts and issues" (*Merriam-Webster*, n.d.). The term first appeared in the early to middle 2010s when it was used mainly by Black communities in America and was widely recognised, especially in the fight against systemic racism. Today, its usage is of greater range, referring to anyone who battles against any kind of social injustice (Gondringer, 2021). While some time ago, wokeness was praised as it made people notice discriminatory behaviours more, it has become an obsession for some, driving it to the moment where every aspect of people's lives must be inclusive and politically correct to its limits (e.g. advertisements, TV series, etc.). It leads to situations where even people of concern believe political correctness has gone too far and compare it to CC itself, calling those who are easily offended 'snowflakes' (an insulting way of referring to someone whom some people consider to be too easily upset and offended; [*Cambridge*, 2023]). Many also fear saying anything at all so as not to offend anyone (Greenwood, 2022).

While cancelling requires stating one's opinion, it should not be mistaken with customer reviews because the latter seeks to inform about a product or a service and not to punish the whole organisation (Lim & Van Der Heide, 2015). The moralisation aspect of CC is what also differentiates the two. It is usually done due to norm-breaking events; therefore, behaviours which infringe social and moral norms widely accepted. Moral norms may be violated when someone posts or says something harmful to a broad spectrum of people, e.g. posting a video of an assault performed by one individual against another, as in the George Floyd case. Social norms are violated when an individual performs a joke on another person or posts something disagreeable. However, social and moral norms are difficult to describe since especially social norms are constantly changing, and the views on the same thing may be diverse among different users (Saint-Louis, 2021).

Due to the progressing celebrity culture, cancelling and online shaming seem unstoppable (Zarkov & Davis, 2018). However, some object to the CC, stating that it does not exist or, if it does, it is not as dangerous as the right-wing, anti-'woke' version (*The Atlantic*, 2023). They think that the cancelled person rarely stays cancelled and that cancellations contribute to a never-ending event spiralling itself into a loop. In fact, cancellations in various

forms have been present in our society for a long time, but it has never been as apparent and widespread as it is now.

1.1. The history of Cancel Culture

The origins of CC are as vague as its definition. The term 'cancel culture' is relatively new, as it appeared around the 2010s, but cancelling has been present in our culture for some time now. Some specialists say its roots are in doxxing, a kind of online activism popular around the 1990s and later, which consists of revealing secret information by hackers. The name derives from 'dropping docs (documents)'. It has first occurred in China and then became a worldwide revelation and 'a due justice served.' The targets of doxxing were usually public figures who had supposedly done something 'wrong' (Mishan, 2020). It consists of three main actions: deanonymisation, targeting and delegitimisation. While hackers mainly use it for personal needs or to serve justice online, it may also be a weapon of some governments, i.e. in Hong Kong, to hold their citizens accountable when disobeying the law (Lee, 2022).

Then, doxxing billowed into call-out culture, which was still a lighter version of cancelling since people were satisfied with stating the 'wrongdoings' so that the culprits knew what they had done. It is usually done in a lighter manner as its aim is not to cancel but to educate (Inglis, 2021). It started in the early 2010s on Tumblr, mainly on blogs like Your Fave Is Problematic (now inactive since many users switched to X), where people discussed questionable actions of public figures. Over time, simple underlying and talking about destructive behaviours became not powerful enough as this act was not backed with any results for the called-out person (Owens, 2023). Therefore, call-out culture gave way to CC, which required even bolder statements and expectations from the cancellers.

The actual term "cancelling" has its origin not anywhere else but in a misogynistic joke. A *Vox* journalist, Aja Romano, found in her article (2020) the roots of the term to be first used in the 1991 film *New Jack City*, but the meaning was slightly different than nowadays'. In one scene, the leading actor playing the role of a gangster tosses his girlfriend on the table and says, 'Cancel that bitch. I'll buy another one' (Van Peebles, 1991). This usage connotes more a meaning of breaking up with someone, thus erasing that person from one's life. The phrase from the film was prevalent and was mentioned a few times in a few songs, such as *I'm Single* by Lil Wayne (2009) and 50 Cent's *Hustler's Ambition* (2005); however, the meaning stayed the same as they were just referring to the words said by the character.

The first case of cancellation, as we know it now, was in early 2014. It was a response to the post made on the official Twitter account of the Comedy Central show *The Colbert Report*, in which there was a joke that could be offensive towards Asians. The post was: "I am willing to show #Asian community I care by introducing the Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals or Whatever." As a response, a few hours later, an activist and writer Suey Park posted on her Twitter: "I used to respect and enjoy your work, @ColbertReport. Fuck you. The Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals has decided to call for #CancelColbert. Trend it" (Bruenig, 2023). And in fact, it has become a trend quickly, with the hashtag #CancelColbert becoming one of Twitter's trending topics in the United States (Kang, 2014). The first act of cancellation was not so successful for the originator herself. Even though she has reached the point by educating people and instigating their rage against the joke, having also Comedy Central delete the post, and thus clearing Colbert's name by stating that it had been posted by the corporate account that Colbert did not use, she has also been an aim of cancellation.

The term 'cancel culture' first reached mainstream by the end of 2014, after an episode of the show *Love & Hip Hop: New York*, in which one of the participants said "You're cancelled" (Wolfgang & Richards, 2014). The situation in which the words were said was a discussion between partners, which showed that one disapproved of the lies of another. The wronged partner himself admits that the previous day, he had watched *New Jack City*, but after the emission of the episode, the slang word had been widely adopted, especially by 'Black Twitter'. A day after the episode premiere, a Black Twitter user @keepthebaddie (The Boujie Hippie., 2014) showed interest in the expression.

Imma say that to someone 😭😭😭 'you're canceled' bloop!

Screen 1. The Boujie Hippie. [@keepthebaddie] (December 23, 2014). Retrieved from X on 15th November 2023

However, it was in 2016 and 2017 when the term boomed and slightly changed its meaning. It was the time of the activist movement #MeToo, which consisted of women sharing their hurtful memories of sexual harassment. The aim was to break the silence of the tormented ones and call out and cancel the perpetrators. It was first used in the since-deleted post on MySpace by Tarana Burke in 2006. However, it was in 2017 when it really became popular, thanks to the Twitter post made by Alyssa Milano, which instigated many high-figures as well as other people to come out of the shadow and join the movement.

Many women, up to this day, write #MeToo in their posts, which has immensely influenced how people tackle problems connected to those of power. As a result of the movement, many public figures were cancelled, i.e., Harvey Weinstein, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump. Thanks to the movement, many people realised that anyone can be an 'activist,' and anyone can cancel people for what they have done. The power of the movement was so great that on New Year's Eve, the creator of the #MeToo hashtag herself pushed the ceremonial Waterford crystal button to signal the ball drop, which shows just how great an impression it had on society (Harwood, 2017).

Around 2020 and 2021, when many people were stuck in their homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CC skyrocketed in popularity. In 2019, the phrase "cancel culture" was even renowned Australian Macquarie Dictionary's word of the year (*The Committee's Choice & People's Choice Word of the Year 2019*, 2019). It is also when it gained the meaning that it has now: boycott, teach a lesson and delete from society. It has become an essential part of many people's lives and transformed into an immensely influencing movement. The phenomenon has amplified with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement after a black man, George Floyd, had been killed by a police officer. It has primarily contributed to the trend of

relieving one's frustration online; however, the pandemic was the actual moment of 'cancellation', both digitally and in real life.

However, some critics think that CC is just a natural preservation of the phenomenon that has been around humankind for many centuries. Ranging from colonisation and literal 'cancelling' people from their homelands to the Jacobins of the French Revolution in the 18th century or the Red Guards of the Chinese Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 (Mishan, 2020). Even though, the disparities between the cancelling and the cancelled were different than they are now, the idea was the same: teach, boycott and delete from society. Hence, proving that cancellations are not new at all, but the digitalisation and the changes in society have adjusted the movement to its recipients, making yet another trend for people to follow.

1.2. Cancel Culture in the international arena

CC has no limits and is not constrained to one country. In fact, it is a multicultural phenomenon where many people from diverse countries may cancel individuals both in their area but also on the other part of the globe. There are various theories and factors explaining why the dispersion of CC is done in such a way (e.g. modernisation theory, theory of silence and polarisation of society). Norris (2023) discusses that the distribution of cancelling cases is not accidental since the key factors are cross-cultural contextual differences and norms within a given society. She also argues that the modernisation theory divides cultures based on their development level. It hypothesises that in less affluent societies, the prevailing cultural norms tend to lean towards conservatism on various moral fronts, including religious significance, adherence to traditional sexual norms, gender roles, marital and familial values, and the maintenance of fixed social identities based on factors like gender, race, ethnicity, class, and nationalism. In contrast, cultures in advanced industrial societies have progressively embraced more liberal stances on moral issues, fostering fluidity in sexual and gender identities, advocating for LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage, embracing ethnic diversity, supporting racial justice, and promoting other progressive values. These perspectives are commonly observed among younger and highly educated demographics in Western societies, typifying college communities and active participants in online platforms. Public opinion helps society stay stable by resolving conflicts through the spiral of silence, where one opinion becomes dominant, leading to greater integration.

The linguist argues that silencing may be connected to the degree of a country's development, political beliefs and affiliation to liberal or marginalised groups. This theory,

however, is not explicit because it implies that, firstly, countries are of singular political choice and, secondly, that this is the main basis on which people decide if they should speak their minds or not. Even though the presence of such 'oppressed' groups may influence the way people view themselves in society as well as influence how they act, it is only when others join that the members of such groups gain higher status.

Noelle-Neumann (1984), on the other hand, discusses in her book *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion, Our Social Skin* that the silencing is more complex than what Norris (2023) covered. She breaks down her theory of silence into the following hypothesis: most people are afraid of social isolation, and that they observe each other's behaviour to find the acceptable one; people tend to be secretive when they think that they may face "isolation" for their opinion, but when they feel support, they express their opinion loud; mass media may influence the public opinion formation; public opinion may differ with time and in different places; public opinion stabilises and integrates society because conflicts will be resolved through spirals of silence in favour of one opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). This, again, underlines that CC is a phenomenon that involves the participation of more members of certain groups so that others can really feel the message conveyed by online activists and encourage the activists to speak their minds.

The omnipresence of CC is inevitable. People are more and more rebellious, and they seem more and more entitled to spread their opinions on public forums. Although CC may be represented in various forms and named differently, Google's engine Google Trends shows that the top five countries that search the phrase 'cancel culture' the most are the Philippines, Singapore, the United States of America, Canada and Australia (*Trendy Google*, 2024). Even though, the website is not perfectly balanced since not all countries' main search engine is Google, and there is only the possibility to write the phrase in one language, in this example, English, hence the majority of English-speaking countries. However, what is interesting is that the United States are not in the first place. This is mainly due to the recent developments in the matter of CC in the two preceding countries. The Philippines and Singapore are the first countries to address the issue of cancelling officially and are respectively forming laws which would ban CC.

In Singapore, the matter started to be discussed due to many protests whose aim was to repeal the Penal Code's section 377A, a law criminalising sex between gay men (Fong & Lim, 2023). However, the only concern of lawmakers in Singapore was the absence of a unified definition of cancelling, which, as an associate law professor, Eugene Tan, says seems problematic since the law would have to be polished and precisely worded (Chen, 2023).

Nevertheless, law formation on that matter is not impossible since there is already a law on fake news, cyberbullying, and doxxing in Singapore. In reality, though, these laws were not developed for the people's sake, but for the government, as their strategy is to silent activists, journalists and other people who they find in opposition to their strategies. Therefore, they are the ones cancelling their citizens by creating a law on cancelling cancel culture.

On the other hand, the Philippines has a gossip culture that is deeply rooted in its society. Recently, they have formed an online gossip culture called Marites. Not only do they gather information and spread it around for their own amusement, but they also do it to gain power and manipulate others to elevate their status. One can imagine how quickly fake news may escalate with such an influential group reigning the online society to that extent (Cuadra, 2023). Therefore, an act on CC, which may be taken as a form of gossiping, is somewhat surprising. However, it seems highly needed. In 2022, there were 89 million active social media users in the Philippines, which constitutes 80 per cent of the Filipino population (Kemp, 2022). In fact, in this country, cancelling is used in such high numbers that they even named a concept which refers to collective antagonism used in the form of tagging, which later concludes in aggression towards other users. The cancellation process usually starts on private chats, which later reach the public domain and escalate to a controversy of a high status through many people joining the tagging. Lately, the conservative party of the Philippines has been examining legislation to ban CC as a result of the 'threatening aura' of pro-LGBTQ+ online activists.

The decision about the law proposal was taken after the study led by Millieu Insight had been published. According to it, 4 out of 5 Filipinos have heard of the term 'cancel culture' and 1 in 5 have participated in the movement explaining their choice with such reasons as "did not agree with the actions/opinions of the person or group" or "the person or group is/was involved in a controversy" (Marquez, 2022). Furthermore, Filipinos not only cancel public figures but also their family members, friends and other non-famous people. 52% of them stated that the severity of cancelling is more significant than the controversy for which they were cancelled, which portrays the aggressiveness of the phenomenon. However, the study shows that the Philippines is a country in Asia which is quite forgiving since 41% of the participants were willing to give a second chance for the cancelled.

On the other hand, one of the countries where CC has been driven to its extreme form is South Korea (hereinafter Korea). Public figures, especially K-pop singers (commonly named and treated as idols) and actors, may face cancellations for something as trivial as starting dating or showing their national flag in a live stream video if they do not come from Korea. Korean celebrities are not only for entertainment but also to show an example for society, and their

every step is closely monitored by the public and by the industry. Anything that does not show a good example for the 'fans' may get boycotted in a glimpse of a moment, and the punishment is severe. A psychology professor at Yonsei University, Lee Dong-gwi, considers Koreans to be highly sensitive to any flaws and quick to judge and jump to conclusions (Song, 2024).

One of the more tragic cancellations of today's Korean entertainment world was the one that pushed the renowned Korean actor, well-known to the Western culture as well thanks to his role in the Oscar-winning movie *Parasite*, Lee Sun-kyun, to commit suicide due to the allegations of drug use, an act highly frowned upon by the Korean society. Even though the actor tested negative for any drugs multiple times, he faced cancellation from not only the public but also from many advertisement contracts and film projects. Due to that, he has been fined with a 10 billion won penalty (equivalent of almost 7,4 billion USD) and ultimately lost his career. Only when two months later, he was found dead in his car, after allegedly killing himself, did the narrative change. This unfortunate event shed light not only on the abusive power of CC in Korea but also on systemic issues connected to the exposing of celebrities' lives by virtue of the lack of legal protection of privacy. It was the *Parasite*'s director, Bong Joon-ho, who highlighted this negligence, calling relevant authorities to take action in the matter. The draft was later provisionally called the *Lee Sun-kyun Act*. Its main goal was to protect artists' privacy, and it quickly gained attention and support from politicians, especially from the Democratic Party of Korea.

Nowadays, school bullying is a prevalent reason to cancel idols, with many former classmates emerging to speak about their experiences with today's celebrities. Such events would most likely result in total rejection from any public activities and leaving the group or the movie cast. However not all of the cancelled artists finished fully boycotted. For example, Hyunjin from the boy band called *Stray Kids* seems to have avoided the worst-case scenario by quickly admitting and apologising for the trouble, as well as halting his activities. Even though many were still unhappy because of the four-month break, claiming it was too short, the group has not faced many difficulties in its career. The George Mason University Korea professor of pop music and media studies claims that it does not mean that Koreans do not care about cancelling anymore. However, it may be dependent on the response of the cancelled. The quick recovery of Hyunjin was most likely thanks to him quickly admitting and punishing himself for the act. Those who denied the allegations and refused to repent were severely cancelled with no chance of ever going back to the industry. Another reason for the changing narrative lies in the fact that K-pop and Korean culture receive more and more support from fans all over the

world. Therefore, domestic cancellations are not as powerful anymore, knowing that a star cancelled in Korea may still continue their career thanks to foreign fans (Yang, 2022).

Due to many cancellations, idols have to undergo even more severe training before their debut to show a good example for others. It is also the time when contractors delve into the personal life of the possible future star so as to avoid any involvement in 'scandalous' behaviour. Most of the contracts now include provisions of compensations in case of any social problems engagement (Song, 2024). Song (2024) explains that second chances for the cancelled are possible but hard to achieve. Many conditions have to be met in order to receive it, e.g. sufficient halt on activities, remorse and humility in following projects after coming back. Koreans tend to be overt while speaking out, and they do not avert from very aggressive comments while cancelling. They are often persistent, as hate comments and spamming (i.e. messages and comments sent in a great quantity, normally in a short amount of time) until the demands of cancellers are met, are generally used by 'k-netizens' (Korean internet users).

The United States of America has a very different opinion on the judicial matter because they consider it a form of free speech protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. CC, as mentioned before, has its roots in American civilisation, and that is where it has been developing the most. Americans seem to enjoy calling out others to show how 'woke' they are and how important it is to safeguard their norms, maintaining the right to freedom of speech. The phenomenon is probably as propelled in society due to many reasons that may contribute to it, especially America's history, its egocentrism and victim's attitudes.

One of other reasons for such popularity of CC in the United States may be the fact that the citizens are of fairly diverse ethnicity, religion, etc. (Fractionalisation Index of 52.7%, 49.01% Ethnic Fractionalization, 56.47% Linguistic Fractionalization and 82.41% Religious Fractionalization as per Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization 2013 [Drazanova, 2019]). Such a mixed society may spark many misunderstandings due to different norms and a hierarchy of importance, among other problems. Moreover, politics is also a subject of heated reactions among Americans as the polarisation between Republicans and Democrats seems to be at its peak. Both groups seem to have strong attitudes and views, which they do not fear to demonstrate to others. Therefore, in a highly diverse society where many nationalities, languages, religions, etc. co-exist, it is only natural that people start defending their views and beliefs.

However, these differences may also lead to stormy debates that are additionally fuelled by the omnipresent victimhood of Americans. In the eyes of cancellers, they are

the victims since their norms have been broken. On the other hand, the cancelled may also feel like the judgment was exaggerated, which would mean they are the victims as well. This notion is deeply rooted in the minds of Americans not only due to its extensive use in politics but also because it has been present in the lives of Americans throughout history. Campbel and Manning (2014) argue that the engrafting of the culture of the victim in Eastern? civilisations, especially in the USA, is due to arising identity-based movements, such as feminism, racial justice or LGBTQ+ rights activism, which gives spaces for the victimisation of oppressed groups and raises awareness about the inequalities. Since victimhood culture uses victimisation as a power tool of higher status, such a phenomenon provokes other attitudes to rise in importance (i.e. microaggressions, trigger warnings [information about a potential triggering content of the text, written at the beginning of the post or article], cancel culture, etc.). All of these comportments are possible thanks to social media which enables to develop online activism with a solid basis of victimhood agenda.

Additionally, the USA is the third country with the most considerable number of social media users (Kemp, 2019). All the aforementioned factors combine to create a perfect environment for CC to thrive. Moreover, it causes many microaggressions, which are more and more popular. They may be used not only in a way to relieve one's anger, but many celebrities use scandals to spark emotions and gain attention from the viewers. Such events are usually harmless, however they cultivate these feelings in people who, watching such acts, get used to it and believe that this is a justified and expected behaviour.

1.3. Types of cancellation

CC underlines the importance of power structure and shows how the same act can be judged differently or cause different consequences to different people. While some struggle to avoid the repercussions after a minor mistake, others are too 'big' to fall and do not stay cancelled despite continuous norm-breaking actions (Zarkov & Davis, 2018). This displays the inequalities among individuals and how unstable and various cancellation cases are. Cancelling usually occurs in the same manner, yet the repercussions may be different. They depend on many factors, e.g. the status of the person, the support and a myriad of others.

Even though cancelling may contribute to positive outcomes, it may also be treated as a double-edged sword. The bad aspect of CC emerges when it is being overused or used to spread misinformation, which puts focus on unreal or exaggerated events. As a result, many articles now write about "victims of cancel culture" (e.g. *Ellen DeGeneres: A victim of cancel*

culture or a toxic host? published on *The Gauntlet* [Vasquez Gutierrez, 2021]), which would insinuate that CC is something terrible, and the cancelled were misjudged. Forbes even describes it in their article as „at its worst, it is about unaccountable groups successfully applying pressure to punish someone for perceived wrong opinions" (Gerstmann, 2020). This way, it resembles more a tool used to degrade someone to achieve one's egoistic goals: elevate one's status, enforce the bonds of the group of cancellers, take revenge on someone, etc.

It is easy to cancel people without a strong backup who are not as well-known as celebrities with a vast fanbase, such as teachers. One of them is Paul Rossi, a teacher from Grace Church School in New York City who was cancelled and erased from classes for alleged unprofessionalism in the name of antiracism (Dorman, 2021). The teacher later wrote an article about the whole experience, accusing the school and its headmaster of indoctrinating students with an anti-racism ideology that induces shame in white students for being oppressors. Grace Church School proclaims itself as a 'woke' school which prepares 'woke' students for College; however, as it came out, it was far from today's understanding of 'wokeness'. The recording revealed later showed the racial comments the head of the school, George P. Davidson, made "demonising white people for being born" and that "white students are inherently evil" (Dorman, 2021). Even after the headmaster lost his job, Paul Rossi still stayed cancelled from his role as teacher. Therefore, he has been fully cancelled.

However, even reputed individuals may experience cancellations to such an extent that their whole career is ruined. Such a person was Harvey Weinstein due to whose actions a well-known movement #MeToo has been started and which propagated CC to mainstream. In 2017, he became the first high-profile figure to face the consequences of his actions due to the Internet movement; therefore, he became the first person fully cancelled. Weinstein has been found guilty of rape and a criminal sexual act, and the trial happened solely thanks to the power of oppressed women speaking online. Posts online with hashtag #MeToo had been appearing for 36 months from over 100 women before Weinstein has been punished. It was the first time people listened and took action against seemingly untouchable individuals. Slowly, the influence and reputation of Weinstein had been deteriorating, and his movies started to get cancelled until he himself got cancelled (Grady, 2020). Weinstein's cancellation was such a breakthrough event that the aftermath of it and the cancellations of a similar type are called the "Weinstein effect". It changed the dynamics not only in social media but also pushed the government to address the issue of gender inequality in society.

Some people, even well-known ones, also get cancelled, yet their affluence remains. It is called partial cancellation, since we detach the person from their productions, but the

creation itself thrives. An example of such cancellation is the situation of Woody Allen, an Oscar-winning director acclaimed mainly for his comedy movies such as "Annie Hall", "Manhattan" or "Hannah and Her Sisters". He introduced a distinctive comedic style in the film industry for which he still stays widely recognised despite him being cancelled. His career started to drift off when the first allegation about sexually assaulting his adopted daughter, Dylan Farrow, arose in 1992. However, the sentence has been dropped since there was no credible evidence to prove that. It was only 20 years later when Dylan spoke again about the molestation allegation online, starting to accuse and cancel her father. While the second time, Allen has not been sentenced; he did not avoid the sanctions imposed on him due to a more significant number of cancellations coming from people online. Since then, many actors have started declining to work with Allen and have stated that they regret having worked with him in the past. The situation became even more heated with the appearance of #MeToo and Time's Up movements, as well as when a banner referring to the allegation was hung around the neck of Allen's statue in Spain, which would later be requested to be removed. In 2018, Goodspeed Opera House and Circle Theater in Michigan cancelled its play, which was written on the basis of Allen's film *Bullets over Broadway*. The same year, Savanah Lyon, a theatre major student at the University of California in San Diego, organised an online petition to remove a course including a syllabus with Allen's film in it stating that "when you gave a class that has Woody Allen in the title you're saying something to sexual abuse survivors everywhere – that once again these abusers are being put up on pedestals that they don't deserve" (Robbins, 2018). The petition collected about 15,000 signatures, but the university that values free speech did not take any action towards the matter. Many people spoke on the matter, including Erwin Chemerinsky, a law expert at the University of California Berkley, stating that "lots of horrific people get studied in college. It would be frightening if campuses were making decisions based on the personalities and wrong-doings of people rather than the academic merit of the course" (Robbins, 2018). Therefore, this statement clearly shows that even though a person is cancelled, their work may still be valued, which in conclusion makes the person cancelled see the results of cancellations. Allen himself states that he finds CC silly and asked if he feels cancelled he replied: "I feel if you're going to be canceled, this is the culture to be canceled by. I just find that all so silly. I don't think about it. I don't know what it means to be canceled. I know that over the years everything has been the same for me. I make my movies. What has changed is the presentation of the films. You know, I work and it's the same routine for me. I write the script, raise the money, make the film, shoot it, edit it, it comes

out. The difference is not from cancel culture. The difference is the way they present the films. It's that that's the big change" (Allen, 2023).

Meanwhile, CC may be a valuable tool in fighting against norm-breaking and unacceptable acts. It is also common that cancellations occur 'just because' or according to personal preference. It is a dangerous act because one's beliefs are indoctrinated in others, which makes cancellations a war against individuals in the form of a quarrel online. In consequence, freedom of speech becomes a privilege that is not accessible to everyone, which builds walls between people and highlights inequality (Latif, 2020). CC proves that social platforms are not only a place for connecting with others but also to observe, especially celebrities, and to share one's opinion even through silencing other's (Burmah, 2021). Social media also serve as a space for enforcing one's law and order, but because many various individuals use it, the norms are mutually exclusive, therefore causing a cyber war.

It may happen that the cancellations are not solely a cyber event but a real-life one. While almost all cancellations have consequences on people's personal lives, this cancellation occurred mainly offline. It happened in late 2023 when a billboard 'doxxing' truck drove around Harvard's campus displaying the names, faces, class years, past employment, social media profiles and hometown information of a student who allegedly signed a controversial letter stating that Israel was entirely responsible for the Hamas' attack. Although content-wise, this event was not different from the online one, many people disapproved of such measures, including the vice president of Harvard, Meredith Weenick, who stated that behaviour like that is nothing else than a threat and an act of harassment or violence. She also ensured the safety of every student's physical and mental well-being, counting in the doxxed student(s). However, she stated that while she "strongly condemns any attempts to threaten and intimidate, they will continue to reject the PSC's statement in the strongest terms — and demand accountability for those who signed it". In her e-mail to students, she has compared doxxing to an "unjustifiable and insulting slap in the face" (Sellers Hill & L. Orakwue, 2023). This act shows how a phenomenon widely occurring online can be adapted into a real-life event and how once it is omnipresent in the 'offline zone' it becomes dangerous. Nonetheless, its hazardous and harmful nature is factual online as well since it affects people personally on many levels.

Therefore, it is obvious that cancellations are not evenly distributed and that they rarely stay valid for a long time. It is usually a sudden burst of anger conveyed through social media, yet because people monitor every step of celebrities and high figures, there are a lot of people to watch, so the focus is frequently switched from one to another. 'Woke' culture propels itself to the extent that the seemingly meaningful battles people fight against breaking the norms and

discrimination become of minor importance, knowing that the cancellers are not so consistent and not entirely unified after some time after the 'unacceptable act' that they cancel.

1.4. The discourse of social media

The key functionality of social networks is rapidity. Not only does its increasing importance and usefulness contribute to the wide spread of the Internet and social media usage, but also to the fact that more and more people have smartphones with constant access to the Internet. This has significantly modified the trends in social media, as image-based apps started gaining more attention (Instagram, TikTok), and apps like X and Facebook have been moved to the background among teenagers (Ilbury, 2022). However, older generations than Gen Alpha (born since 2010 onwards) still use communication-based platforms. For all users, the language of social media has changed the way people communicate as well as how they perceive themselves and others.

The fact that the language has changed due to the widespread access to the Internet is evident: shortened messages, the use of abbreviations (i.e. 'LOL' for 'laughing out loud'), increase of slang deployment, altered emotion expressions through emojis, the fake 'perfect life' narrative, and increased judgment online. The common trend is to convey a message in a shorter, less grammatically correct manner than to do it in a more proper way. The rapidity and 'instantiveness' of social media facilitates users to quickly react to some issues in the actual time they are happening. Therefore, the platforms which enable instant post publishing (i.e. X, Instagram) are characterised by highly emotional discourse, addressed either directly (e.g. in a way of naming the emotions) or indirectly (for example, capital letters, exclamations marks, unusual connectors in a form of onomatopoeia or a transcribed spoken language feature, like "pfft" as a way to express disagreement or incredulity). This feature seems to bend the overall reality of languages since, as Calude (2023) describes, "speech is more often used for affective content, writing is more often used for informational content" (Calude, 2023, p. 27). Simplified and expressive writing bends a further rule, stating that "speech is lexically and grammatically less complex, writing is grammatically and lexically more complex" (Calude, 2023, p. 27). Messages and posts are designed to be written and read "on the fly"; therefore, they are connected more to spontaneous, spoken utterances than to the actual written language. Indeed, not all the text posted will be incorrect and written quickly. However, there is a visible majority of the formerly demonstrated utterances.

Another significant difference between any other language is the use of hashtags, which serve as a tool to label the topic. It is usually used to seek parallel voices and unite as many people for the discussion as possible (Zappavigna, 2012). The discourse of hashtags is called 'searchable talk', and thanks to these markings, it is easier to find similar posts and see what is 'trending' in quasi-'real-time'. For example, X updates its trend table every day, showing its users what is the most talked about either in the stated location or worldwide. As a result, not only is the topic underlined by a graphic sign, but the text also contrasts with the rest of the text due to its blue colour.

Different platforms will dispose of their own rules which diversifies the digital discourse. For example, while X and Facebook follow relatively similar systems of communication, the main difference is the expansion of information access. Facebook's posts may reach a broader or smaller audience, depending on the privacy settings chosen by users; however, posts can usually be seen only by your "friends" users, and the person is not anonymous. On the other hand, X's posts are readily accessible to anyone, and users are more anonymous because they usually use nicknames instead of actual full names, as in Facebook's case. However, unlike on Facebook, X has limited character space, which may significantly influence the way it is used, i.e., there are more emotions marked and short messages are published instantly. Reddit allows even greater confidentiality since there are no profile pictures, and people go by their nicknames. The platform is divided into open-access thematic communities, where people share their opinions, findings, and news on the subject stated in the name of the community. Thus, the structure of posts is more complex and thought-through, and the length is more extensive (Jimma, 2017).

Image-based social media usually consists mainly of videos and images with descriptions. Thus, apps like Snapchat may serve to a large extent as photo diaries shared with friends. Its primary use is not to reach a broad audience or share opinion-changing posts but to keep people updated on your personal life. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are more multipurpose and may significantly alter people's views, especially since these apps are the most popular among younger people, thus making them a group that contributes and adopts the most from social platforms. Not only can one use these apps to communicate privately, but they can also create public content in the form of videos, photos, and verbal and non-verbal posts with or without a message.

It seems, however, that the most opinion-altering apps are X, TikTok, and YouTube. All of them work slightly differently: X influences through text posts, it is used by many public figures, and usually, it is the first to follow the news with a facilitating feature of hashtags;

TikTok's users usually post short videos explaining certain news either explicitly or in a compressed way. However, it is mostly the algorithm that presents videos on the homepage, so there is a great chance that some information may be coming from one side only, or may even be omitted due to unmatching interest. Finally, YouTube is a well-known platform on which users upload their videos, usually longer ones, due to the convenient monetary regulation of videos that are longer than 10 minutes. While it may be an easier way to effortlessly receive a daily dose of news, they may not be well-balanced, as well as harmful since the risk of fake news from unverified sources is relatively high. Consequently, it may entail unpleasant consequences not only for personal safety but also for the wider public (Calude, 2023). Social media has altered the way people communicate, but it has also altered the way in which people may turn against others. In the era of the Internet, it is as easy to build connections as it is to build walls between people.

1.5. Social media in the era of Cancel Culture

CC is a widely recognisable phenomenon that has caused many to face consequences for their actions, but many believe that CC is not always justifiable. According to Pew Research Center (2022), 51% of adults say calling out people on social media is more likely to hold people accountable, while 45% say it is likely to punish people who do not deserve it. While social media platforms were made to give voice and unify people online, they do not seem to be prepared for the ways they can be weaponised (Etlinger, 2019). Even though many of them reinforced their community guidelines and policies, hate speech and discrimination are not stopping. Nowadays, many people use social platforms not to connect with others but to monitor and point out any mistakes that others make.

To enhance users' experience while using social media platforms, big-tech companies are obliged to create a set of rules called 'terms of service' and 'community guidelines'. The first one delves more into the legal and contractual obligations of users in order to use platforms, and the second set does more discursive work as it decides what is or is not appropriate (Gilespie, 2018). CC is both affected and affects the social media governance, but one can assume that its effects may be seen on more levels than just one platform. It tries to moderate people's behaviour not only on the Internet but also in real life, as it targets all types of acts of cancelled people both online and in real life.

Twitter has been made to "give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly without barriers" (*X Blog*, 2022). A seemingly innocent statement,

however, may become an issue when used by people abusing their 'free speech privilege'. In reality, there is nothing like free speech on a platform as highly governed not only by users but also by safety teams and highly developed Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology that recognises and analyses language and images posted. The situation that shifted the course of the social media was Twitter's, Facebook's and YouTube's ban of the former US president, Donald Trump, as well as many publications about him "due to the risk of further incitement of violence" (*X Blog*, 2021), after the riot of Trump's supporters at the US Capitol in 2021.

The person who wanted to save free speech was Elon Musk, who bought and renamed Twitter X. His main reasoning was to restore Twitter's image as the place where people can speak without any restrictions, as he proclaims himself a "free speech absolutist" (Sullivan, 2023); however, that idea of him stayed solely in his mind because he started suing anyone who came into his way, himself becoming a canceller. Since Musk took over Twitter, there appeared many conspiracy theories, right-wing extremist statements, etc., sugar-coated with the free speech rule, however many people who are part of 'the Left' were silenced as the crusade against 'wokeism' began (Zimmer, 2023). Twitter lost more than a million users since Musk bought it, because right after that the trust and safety council of Twitter has been dissolved and many journalists have been suspended from the platform. Even the United Nations and European Union spoke on that matter, threatening the chief executor with sanctions and claiming that media freedom "is not a toy" (Race & Kleinman, 2022).

These situations drove many to speculate if platform governance had not become an issue for democratic values. Since every platform has its own set of rules as well as content moderators and AI drive, the Internet is not a unified platform which enables people's freedom of speech. Facebook is moderated by the Oversight Board, the United Kingdom introduced a Draft Online Safety Bill, and the EU has a draft of the Digital Services Act, yet there is no integrity between all of them. A leading free speech global organisation, ARTICLE 19, submitted a plan to create a Social Media Council, which would make an open forum for all the content moderators internationally and provide amendments for all the issues on social media platforms. The Council would be free of legal obligations and serve for the international unity and wellness online (Docquir, 2019). However, forming governance, therefore cooperation between social media and prevention of abuse, corresponding to each party, is almost impossible because one rule may protect some but exclude others.

At one point, all the rules create an artificial space for overly politically correct language only as to make social media accessible and free from even slightly sensitive things. This way, a lot of content would have to be censored. Hence, users would have to fear not only

cancellation from other users but also from the censorships made in terms of platform governance.

On the other hand, it is often argued if CC calls to account or if it is not another form of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined by Kowalski, Limber & Agatston (2008) as a form of bullying done through electronic devices on social media, text messages, online forums and emails. Researchers often argue that cyberbullying may even be the more aggressive form of bullying since it is exposed to a larger audience online, access to the Internet is unlimited, and it can be done at any time. What is more, lack of supervision and anonymity generate a lower feeling of accountability for the negative comments made. Some people join others in cancelling only when its visibility reaches a certain level just to add more 'drama'. Instead of giving one's opinion or informing of the norm-breaking, people start writing threats or invectives, which promotes hatred and undermines others to do the same. As a result, cancelling reminds us to a bigger extent of a never-ending cycle of cyberbullying instead of a fight for the perseverance of social norms.

Chapter 2.   The discourse of Cancel Culture

Introduction

Hate speech on the Internet has expanded over the years, which creates favourable conditions for new distinguishable phenomena emergence. Some of them may be apparent not only in the digital sphere, like discrimination, which may be connected with CC, but the latter usually occurs solely online. It also makes it possible to observe some patterns, such as how cancelling is employed and what reactions it causes. Often, it is followed with an apology from the 'wrongdoer' and their attempt to restore their image. The reactions of people 'wronged' and the answer of cancelled individuals compose the whole event of CC, which encompasses the digital wars occurring on the Internet.

Such actions and reactions give space for the emergence of new identities and relations not only in the online diaspora but also in the real-life sphere. Language shapes our reality and understanding; therefore, the styles and genres used to execute cancelling bring about changes in how we view our world and give space for new contexts to be born. It also enables ideologies to function in new surroundings and situations, as CC is not exactly a new phenomenon but rather an event that has been modified throughout the centuries and uses many strategies of similar phenomena.

2.1. Linguistic strategies of Cancel Culture

Cancelling is a complex action, and since it is not specified in its form, it may cover a vast diversity of situations. While most frequently, it is expressed through various hashtags such as #Cancel_[name], #[name]_is_over_party, #[name]_is_cancelled, #Boycott_[name], it may also be transferred in a less straightforward way (through emojis, attached images, or simply through reposting or commenting the post of a canceller to show one's support). CC may also be linked with other phenomena that are currently occurring within societies and languages, such as discrimination or call-out culture. Therefore, due to CC being a broad concept, many strategies used in cancelling may be connected to other phenomena or theories that already exist. Even if they have many similarities, they are separate cases where CC adds something new to the already existing ones and influences people, their language, and their behaviour on a daily basis (e.g. an altered way of apologising).

The discourse of CC includes all of the characteristics of online discourse since it is executed mostly on the Internet.

Discrimination

Despite many similarities to discrimination, CC differs from it slightly. Reisigl (2007, p. 365) says that discrimination:

means to treat a specific social group or a single member of other social groups unfairly, unjustly, for example, by repressing or suppressing them, decrying them, discrediting them, debasing them, degrading them, defaming them, keeping political rights from them and establishing unjustifiable social, political, economic, educational or other inequalities, by segregating them, excluding them, etc. (Reisigl, 2007)

Therefore, frequently, the action of discriminating is focused solely on others' appearances or social group affiliation; meanwhile, cancelling's focal point is people's behaviour or something they have said.

Discriminating can be broken down into smaller factors. It includes an actor who discriminates and who belongs to a specific social or cultural group, a person or a group discriminated, an action of discriminating, the distinguishing feature for which the victim is discriminated, and lastly, a comparative figure in comparison to which the person is discriminated. Discrimination can either be an active process, meaning it involves doing something against somebody, but it can also include avoiding doing something or letting something happen. Discriminators are generally those who have power over others or those who empower themselves, and victims are usually members of minorities or socially marginalised groups. There may be one or multiple reasons for which a person or a group is discriminated against. However, individuals always get segregated during the process and deprived of rights that others have (Reisigl, 2007).

There is a myriad of types of social discrimination, but the most evident behaviours can be measured in a few categories: intentionality, passivity, directness, and explicitness. The acts may also be simply named accordingly to the subject discriminated, i.e. sexism, nationalism, ageism, etc. While it can be done by an individual, there is also a phenomenon of 'institutional discrimination', which appears in companies and institutions structured to have specific ways of behaviour, resulting in it being discriminatory. It is usually unintentional, and its aim is to achieve equality through temporary unequal treatment. As far as verbal

discrimination is concerned, many variables have to be taken into consideration when describing the discourse of discrimination. Discrimination is realised in discourse by nomination (slurs), predication (ascribing traits, characteristics, qualities and features to others), argumentation (i.e. arguing for and against discriminating), perspectivation, intensification and mitigation, etc. All of the verbal acts may be pronounced on various linguistic levels. (Reisigl, 2007).

Cancelling may be counted as a 'branch' of discrimination because the discourse used is similar, even though the choice of 'victims' is different. In CC, everyone can be a victim in spite of their appearance, group affiliation, etc. When discriminating, a victim is most frequently chosen from the minority group (i.e. a white person in Japan with the majority of Asian people or a Muslim in Poland with the majority of members of the Catholic Church). Otherwise, the action of cancelling, just like discrimination, includes an actor, an action of calling out and putting sanctions on the cancelled person, a victim cancelled, or a reason for which a person is cancelled. However, the distinguishing move of cancelling might be the frequent exhorting of others to join and cancel that person. While discrimination done by one person is enough to cause harm to the victim, one canceller does not strike as powerful unless others join that individual. The cancellation becomes serious when the ratio between a cancelled and cancellers is big enough so that the matter reaches to other people or when the cancelled suffers repercussions of the cancellation.

In both cancelling and discriminating, one factor is enough to treat the victim unequally, but while the former is usually caused by someone's mistake or intentional wrongdoing, the latter is always an act of inexcusable, unjustified hate. However, that does not mean that cancellation is a good phenomenon. It is still conveyed through various discriminative, hateful acts, and just like discriminating, its discourse includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviours. Cancelling can be realised by stating one's opinion, not supporting others, boycotting the person and their 'products', forming a movement and inciting others to join the movement, for example, the #MeToo movement.

Calling out

Cancellation can be finalised using many linguistic and non-linguistic strategies simultaneously or just one. The most apparent way is to call out a person so as to address the out-of-ordinary issue. It may be executed in a direct manner or a more delicate way. The language may be accusatory with the use of imperative verbs and the presence of evidence, or it may be more

vague. Thanks to the anonymity and safety to come out provided by the Internet, many people decide to share their experiences with others. In this way, they expose the names of those who wronged someone so that a bigger audience will see them. Even simply stating the names of abusers may contribute to bigger phenomena, such as the #MeToo movement or Black Lives Matter. Calling out is a complex method to accuse someone, and it may be executed in a myriad of ways, including name-calling, opinion making and using tagged messages, as well as demanding changes. However, it must consist of addressing the issue or a person in a more or less direct way.

Name-calling

Another strategy is to label, criticise and publicly shame a person. The use of derogatory terms, usually pejorative, highly vulgar words and phrases, directly targets the cancelled. Such terms carry strong negative connotations, which try to tarnish someone's reputation and provoke others to contribute through the use of emotional language. Through labelling people, they get degraded, and their view of others may be associated solely with these labels (Goffman, 1963). Such a strategy not only uses calling out but also puts framing labels on people, which also changes the view on this person and their act. The use of derogatory labels and slurs imposes severe social penalties and attempts to force the individual into a position of defending their identity and actions. Moreover, name-calling may strengthen in-group solidarity by displaying what is and what is not acceptable, which leads to a deepening of social divisions and exclusions of those who disagree with the majority. Name-calling may be executed through slurs, epithets, compound insults, stereotyping and in a more disguised manner through irony and sarcasm. It may also be done in a more descriptive way, through the use of comparison and metaphors (Reisigl, 2007). The strategy is also a powerful tool in shaping power relations and the hierarchical structure of society since it is mostly used to degrade someone while pushing oneself to a higher position.

Opinion making

Besides calling out people and calling them names, which are frequently very vulgar, cancelling frequently includes opinions. Through stating opinions, people use evaluative language which conveys strong judgments and moral stances. This strategy is a part of the Appraisal Theory described by Martin and White (2005). Opinions include descriptions of how certain situation influences their emotions (affect), judgments, and aesthetic values (appreciation)

(Martin & White, 2005). These elements are used to construct a negative view of someone and cancel them. Some of them are very personal, serving as letters that display disappointing and judgmental terms, which, as a result, morally condemn others and consequently play a crucial role in shaping public opinion. It may be conveyed in a collective voice as a representation of the group or solely by an individual. The latter ones, however, get recognition anyway through various forms of showing support online, i.e. liking, sharing and commenting. The use of modality displays how condemning the opinion is; however, usually, all opinions influence others and show which norms are the most important for the opinion maker. Therefore, through more or less direct addressing to the norm-breaker, the latter's free will is shaken, which may drive them to change their behaviour.

Sharing one's opinion, especially in an emotional way, impacts the actions of others. Strong expressions may help to evoke similar emotions in the audience, which fosters a collective response that reinforces the cancellation. Through judgement, people evaluate behaviours based on social norms and standards. Attitudes may be expressed in a direct or less direct way, through modality and with assessing probability. Grading is another factor shaping opinions since the intensity of the language used to evaluate may influence how forceful it is (Martin & White, 2005). Therefore, such expressions not only serve to judge the situation or person but also shape the attitudes of others and align with them.

Boycotting

While sole calling out and humiliating may seem not as powerful, many also boycott the sinner through threats of withdrawing their support or simply not buying, listening, watching, reading, etc., that person's products. The concept of boycotting is connected with withdrawing one's support as a form of punishment. This phenomenon is omnipresent not only in the online world but also in real life, and the reasons for which people boycott, as well as how it is executed, may vary significantly. However, all of these forms are a way to express dissatisfaction with something and demand a change in behaviour. In a way, every post, article or other event calls others first to ponder and second to join their voice and battle alongside against the norm-breaking; some are more apparent, and some are very subtle, but one voice expressed online is already a statement, and now users not only have to show their support by writing their own posts but also through liking, reposting and commenting. Therefore, support or withdrawal may be achieved on various levels.

Demands for accountability

Boycotting is usually connected with demands for accountability and for taking consequences for the action. Sometimes, they are expressed in a not exclusively personal manner. However, they still consist of excluding and making the person 'feel' the anger through their connections. The cancellers may also demand an apology, therefore the liability and pleading guilty in public.

As Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) describe it, there are many techniques used to form a request when it comes to directness. Even simple messages like "Why is he behaving this way?" may be a form of open-ended, indirect hints for someone to change their behaviour. Therefore, most of the posts that complain about someone are types of requests. There are a lot of strategies which may indicate the use of requests. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) enumerate such strategies: *mood derivable*, when the mood of the verb implies its use; *explicit performatives*; *hedges performative*; *locution derivable*, which consists of illocutionary points directly derived from the semantic meaning of the locution; *scope stating*, which uses the speaker's intention; *reference to reparatory conditions*, as well as *strong* and *mild hints*. Moreover, as far as directness is considered, requests may be distinguished between hearer-oriented, speaker-oriented, speaker and hearer-oriented, and impersonal.

Brown's and Levinson's Politeness Theory describes as well a more negative form of demands: threats (Brown & Levinson, 1978). This method is frequently used in CC, as the texts written are connected with strong emotions. Thus, strong language and imposing someone's opinion and values on others are omnipresent throughout cancelling posts. People feel entitled to their views and opinions, that they enforce them on somebody else's values and freedom, which further deepens the division between groups.

Markers of increased emotionality

Language used in CC is extremely expressive and emotional. This technique is typical for online interactions and is even more visible when used in the context of displaying dissatisfaction. Cancelling is highly emotional due to the fact that the posts are published when something norm-breaking happens; the faster an opinion reaches people, the bigger impact it has. It also perpetuates the idea of posting as a public chat for others to join or a digital journal where people write their thoughts for others to interact. The markers of emotionality are: hyperboles, lack of punctuation, onomatopoeias, and repetition, especially repeated letters in a word. All of these aspects foster the attitude for others to join the conversation since posts and comments may serve as a way of communication between people (Novkova et al., 2021).

This way, more people may feel welcome to join the discussion, which, in consequence, may drive the cancellation to a higher level.

Searchable talk

Another strategy widely used by contributors of CC is searchable talk, so making tagged messages with the use of hashtags (#) or tags (@). This technique enables more people to join the movement, such as in the example of #MeToo. Thanks to the popularity of the hashtag, it could grow to such an extent. This method is widely used in microblogging on social media, so it is a form of journaling through short messages to the audience and has developed into the form of posts online (Zappavigna, 2015). It enables the categorisation of the threads and makes searching posts on the same subject easier, which leads to greater visibility. It is also used as a tool to put emphasis on the word that we want to underline, for example, "I am #happy". As a consequence, more people may join the conversation. However, the use of marked speech may also be used as a tool to lure in people by promising them a prize in exchange for their contribution to the movement. Such promises establish accountability and may influence opinion-shaping and influence public judgement (Martin & White, 2005). Therefore, such a strategy may also be called weaponised promises since they are used to lure people in and change their view on things by manipulating their will to participate and, in effect, values and norms.

Slang

The posts are usually written in an informal way, with a lot of slang and vocabulary limited to the online diaspora (Calude, 2023). Internet slang refers to the current social and cultural aspects of the time period, so it perfectly matches the 'intensiveness' of posting at the very moment someone does something norm-breaking (Liu, Zhang & Li, 2023). Slang may be very vulgar, but it may also serve as a replacement for profanities. It also enables people to shorten their message and express their individuality since one has to be deeply immersed in a digital sphere to keep up with the rapid changes in the formation of new slang vocabulary. It may also be a leverage for the message to be more emotional and, at the same time, stay casual so that it is still different from the formal and less casual interactions connected with less friendly relationships. The anonymity of the online sphere and few regulations also give space for the special use of profanity, which is widely accepted.

What is also particular about online communication is the extensive use of emojis, which replace non-verbal signs visible in a conversation face to face. This way, Internet users can convey information succinctly as well as express emotions thanks to various symbols and icons ("Emoji," 2024). The use of emojis may change the message of the text significantly. Moreover, it is possible in some cases to communicate solely through emojis; however, the message may not always be understood the way the author meant it (Calude, 2023).

Sarcasm

Sarcasm and humour are also frequently used to show dissatisfaction with the person or their act. This way, a person may be ridiculed, and the situation ironised, as well as serve as building cohesion among like-minded individuals, sometimes distancing from the target and distorting the information from them, but displaying it clearly to those who understand. Mockery counts in this category as well but may be viewed as more extreme than just joking about the matter. Ironisation of texts makes the real meaning concealed or contradicted. It may be executed in three ways: through verbal irony, dramatic irony, used as a literary device to describe a situation when the audience has more information than the characters in a work of literature, and lastly, situational irony (Joshua, 2020).

Funny images and texts may also engage others, even if they did not have a stance on the matter, since it is attention-grabbing and provides amusement. Memes are a widely recognised form of communication among younger generations online. However, its adaptability and various formats may be adapted to any generation. It may amplify the written message, complete it or stand alone as an independent means of communication. Memes enable netizens to convey their ideas, jokes, and anecdotes through images, which not only reduces the barrier between spoken and written interactions but also makes them feel less personal; therefore, people share these images without much thought. Memes use vernacular English, phrases from dialects, puns, jargon, slang and shortenings, as well as neologisms, which sometimes makes them exclusive solely to the group of people who use that type of language (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Shalevska, 2018). Due to this fact, people frequently use this form to ridicule someone or a situation. It also serves as a tool to cancel someone since memes get circulated around the Internet easily. Thanks to that, many people may contribute to their distribution, even solely by liking the post or reposting it. Memes usually circulate in groups of content with awareness of each other, which reinforces their shareability (Joshua, 2020).

Memes usually bring positive feelings to netizens due to their popularity and humour. They may be a good way of communication, especially on photo-based social media like Instagram, which forces users to post videos or photos to be able to write something underneath. Their form and the obligation to know Internet culture, as well as frequent references based on local affairs to contribute to them, makes them extremely popular and enjoyable to many (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Shalevska, 2018).

Moreover, such people seem less aggressive and more entertaining, which may show 'a brighter side' of cancellation. Humour has been used as a tool of repression and ridicule for centuries. It is a form of showing power or resistance in the case of less power. Both of these forms, however, aim to build bonds among groups and either better their situation or just cope with it with positive humour (Joshua, 2020).

2.2. Social constructs of Cancel Culture discourse

As Fairclough argues: "Texts bring about changes in our knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values and so forth" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 8). Through the exposition of certain linguistic phenomena and contributing to them, there may emerge new identities and relations. Due to that, the world changes as well, which results in shaping new ideologies and contexts. CC is also shaping the world, and its contributors distort ideas and connotations.

Social aspects may be described using three major types of text meaning: action, representation, and identification. The action implies a social relation between individuals or groups and describes how they speak and behave. The identification is a style by which individuals and groups are defined. Lastly, representation is the combination of the two mentioned aspects, which describes the relation between the two entities (Fairclough, 2003). Every social event is composed of these factors which influence people on a daily basis.

As Wodak and Meyer (2009) describe it, language is not neutral, but it is a tool of power which builds structures in society. While cancelling may serve to exert social pressure and challenge dominant narratives by shifting power dynamics when marginalised voices are amplified, discrimination works the other way around: the power remains on the majority side, and the marginalised are silenced. But since CC is not a unified phenomenon, cancellations may also be weaponised, and it may also contribute to silencing other voices and to stifling free speech. The borders between 'Us and Them' are different than in discriminating since the reason for which people get cancelled is not readily apparent. Discrimination concerns marginalised groups and the ones that have power over that group, but CC involves personal,

36

subjective norms and preferences and does not usually think about who has more and who has less power. One could think that facing a reputable figure is equally aimless as believing that one person can lift a whale; however, if many people join that person, the conjoined power is bigger, and therefore, the impossible becomes possible only when many people unite in the action. The problem is one group may lift the whale to put it back into the ocean while the other lifts it to take it ashore and eat it. CC builds uneven distribution of power and artificially divides or unifies people either for good or bad causes.

All of the above strategies, either on their own or in combination with one another, may cause moral panic and, therefore, exaggerated and emotional reactions to potential threats to societal norms and values, which may result in chaos. While some calls from cancellers to join them may contribute to the good cause, like in the event of #MeToo campaign, some may not lead to positive outcomes and may be baseless or harmful.

2.2.1. Identities

The way we speak shapes our understanding of people. As Fairclough (2003) says, "Who you are is partly a matter of how you speak, how you write, as well as […] how you look, how you hold yourself, how you move, and so forth". The identities are described by styles, which help to see how people communicate. Therefore, they are not fixed and constant, but they change all the time altogether with emerging new discourses and situations that construct our reality. Identities enable us to understand what roles people have in society and attribute a set of characteristics to them based on their way of speaking. Although identity cannot stand alone without personality, it is possible to analyse social identities solely on the basis of their linguistic choices. Identity is one of the key factors in communication. Fisher (1970) says that clearing one's image is one of the most important goals.

The set of characteristics that people use to communicate are styles. They can be realised in a wide variety of ways, either in phonological features or in the choice of vocabulary and metaphor. Styles combine well-spoken utterances with body language, which may modify the way people view the message. The use of many strategies while writing may also alter the conveyed text, for example, by complying with the rules of punctuation or by implementing slang words or images and emoticons. Styles reflect personal and social identity through manners of expression. They may also signal their social background or cultural affiliation. The sets of linguistic features are shaped by norms and expectations, which influence the way people present themselves.

The anonymity of the messages forming a net of untraceable, homogenous posts makes the Internet a perfect place for increased aggression (Tannen, 1998). Such an environment incites an activist style of communication which, as a result, creates social media movements (Castells, 2015). As Castells (2015) describes, "movements are largely spontaneous in their origin, usually triggered by a spark of indignation either related to a specific event or to a peak of disgust with the actions". A social movement alone may be a demand even without any statements; however, for a campaign to be successful, there have to be specific demands stated. Otherwise, the lack of it is a fundamental flaw which plays a crucial role in ruling out the outcome of the movement (Castells, 2015). Therefore, they frequently include the use of slogans and catchphrases which encapsulate goals and state what is the most important. Activists are prompted by distrust of the institutions responsible for taking care of norm-breaking events. Moreover, the style is characterised by a highly emotional tone, mainly anger. Therefore, it is frequently very aggressive and vulgar. The fear that activists must face in order to start acting is minimised thanks to the collectivity and shared identities, which may further push the communication style of the expressive register.

The language of CC is also highly confrontational (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). This style allows people to not only take part in activist movements but also spread information. The latter, however, may also be false rumours as the Internet subcultures frequently use it to manipulate others into their propaganda and ideas. It is also a way to gain attention, which consequently results in gaining a bigger audience. Media manipulation not only attacks others by reshaping the hierarchy on the Internet by downgrading the accused and lifting the accuser's status but also "contributes to a wider distrust of mainstream media, increased misinformation, and further radicalization" (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). The confrontational style also uses direct and explicit messages, usually with forceful and strong language, to assert dominance. It also includes making requests and demands to pressure others to act according to the rules of accusers. The use of insults enforces the message and makes it more direct and personal in order to discredit the opponent. The anonymity of social media interactions only reinforces the confrontational behaviour online which makes it even more aggressive and expressive space (Suler, 2004).

CC is a social event which brings about already-existing identities and new ones. The aforementioned strategies in which people cancel display who they are and how they execute calling out and ostracising individuals. The most apparent identities emerging from the interactions are the accuser and the accused, as well as the requester and the requestee. Demanding something to be done is a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1978) because

by making a request, the requestee's freedom is taken, and in consequence, the request is more important than the values or behaviours of the requestee. Face-threatening acts (henceforth FTA) are important factors in creating social relations. The face is understood as a "positive claim of social values" (Goffman, 1963). Brown and Levinson (1978) add the division of face into two categories: positive and negative. Positive is defined as the desire to hold a positive image of oneself or one's values, and negative is the personal freedom and rights as well as the lack of impedance of one's actions.

2.2.2. Relations

The way we speak creates social relationships in which we function. The discourse of CC is highly influential since it is able to persuade people to behave differently and completely alter their lives. Such factors enable to display relations between speakers and hearers. Fairclough (2003) considers relations as actions which shape discourse. According to his argument, language and other semiotic practices are essential in the maintenance and transformation of social interactions. This is because discourse doesn't simply imitate reality but actively influences and constructs it.

Relations may be categorised by genres, which constitute linguistic ways people act and interact. Genres are seen as norms within language use in a particular domain of life. Each genre has its own set of rules, which help to organise actions and examine them. There may be only one genre in an utterance, but usually, there exists a mix of many genres, especially in such a complex phenomenon as CC. Fairclough (2003) describes that genres determine social relations as well as reflect power relations within society. Van Dijk (2008a) adds that they are used to achieve specific communicative goals within particular contexts. Therefore, they not only reflect natural interactions but also manipulative, goal-driven ones.

CC uses various genres to communicate the dissatisfaction of online users, such as social media campaigns. Such a movement aims to gather activists and intimidate the cancelled (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). The genre prompts emergence of mobilisation relation (Papacharissi, 2014). Social media campaigns utilise hashtags, catchphrases, and viral messages, which assemble people with the same norms set and willing to act and fight for them. The debate may also go on a more personal and emotional side when a canceller communicates through open letters posted online. This method increases emotional appeal which may be effective in some campaigns, as it speaks to people more than repeated slogans (Gould,

2009). The issues brought up in open letters seem more urgent and relatable, therefore, it may influence the behaviours of other people joining the movement and the receiver of the letter.

CC has already changed the discourse, especially the one online. Public figures have to mind more what they say, and if they do not go against majorly accepted social norms, moreover when they get cancelled, they are censed to take responsibility for their actions and repay for their wrongdoings. It is also more challenging to restore one's image since everything that has been posted online may stay for longer than words uttered orally. However, the distribution of cancellations is very uneven. What is more, there seems to be no rule when cancellers allow the cancelled to rise again and give them a second chance. Therefore, those who face criticism must use various self-defence strategies to regain people's trust and repair their images.

These actions partook in changing the understanding of traditional forms of avowal and apologies, as every utterance has to be transparent with many people examining it. Avowal is described by Foucault (2014) as an act of confessing or revealing something, as well as acknowledging and accepting certain truths, leading the audience to convince them that they are worthy of forgiveness. It is related to the societal and cultural norms enforced by people and institutions. Moreover, it is a matter not of subjective judgment, but the norms are usually mediated by larger systems of power. Furthermore, Foucault argues that the truth is biased and is not objective but dominated by power relations, which reflects the events occurring within CC, since the truth enclosed through social media or articles, as well as what people believe in, may be altered. This causes the construction of 'online echo chambers', which contribute to the rapid spread of collective judgment within a closed network that results in marginalizing and polarisation of voices and selective exposure to information. Moreover, the actions of the accusers compel the accused to do something to save their face. Either by apologizing or using other image-reparatory strategies described above, which further condemns people to behave according to the norms and pushes them lower in the hierarchy.

While in the previous century, avowal used to be considered enough to redeem, it seems that in today's digital sphere, nothing is enough for people to forgive them. Not even an apology is enough because it may always be discredited and frowned upon as an act to save one's career and not a heartful avowal (Presswood, 2017). Presswood argues that nowadays avowal is viewed on the basis of *exomologesis*, a ritual that explains that people are more keen to seek "sinner's awareness of sin manifested" (2017, p. 47) than forgiveness. Therefore, it is more important to see the remorse and the called-out being tarnished than to reach justice.

According to Holmes (1995), there are various strategies of apologising. The most apparent one is using explicit expressions of apology, which may be executed through an offer of apology, an expression of regret or a request for forgiveness. The accused may also offer an explanation or account of cause for the committed wrongdoings. They may also acknowledge their responsibility for the act by accepting the blame, expressing self-deficiency, recognising the need to apologise, expressing lack of intent and offering reparatory actions. An important part of making an apology credible is promising of forbearance. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) add to the previous strategies, such types as explicit self-blame or denial of fault, since not all apologies must express remorse and real emotions.

Furthermore, it seems like apologies changed their meaning once they became public. Kampf (2009) suggests that speech act theory declines public apologies as the real one. They are, therefore, 'fauxpologies' which serve as something else but not an apology, since they do not meet the required felicity conditions (Murphy, 2015). Contemporary public apologies, rather than serving as moral acts, are focused on conforming to the needs of people to bring justice, yet they do not convey the "right feelings" (Kampf, 2009). The methods Kampf mentioned as used in fauxpologies are: statement of willingness to apologise, reference to past apologies, false expression of regret, alignment with victims, dissociation from events, professing previous ignorance, hedges, qualifications of responsibility, denouncement of behaviour, defence of image, conditional acceptance of blame and non-apologetic explanation of events. In the age of apology, it is rather viewed as humiliation, which reduces the power and position of the one apologising. Rosenfield's *Theory of Mass Media Apology* (1968) analyses how apologies are conveyed through media and the audience's reception of it, as well as all of the other factors around this act. Even as early as in the 1970s, he claimed that journalists were usually unfair in their criticism; thus, in the era of digitalisation, the unfairness and severity of critique, both in justified and unjustified situations, are stretched to their limits.

However, an apology is indispensable to restore one's image. Benoit (2014) argues that public figures use the "Image Repair Theory" to better their reputation and mitigate the negative effects of their actions. He organises their efforts to defend themselves into five categories: *denial*, which involves refusing to take responsibility and deny one's actions, intent, or the consequences left after the action; *evasion of responsibility*, which requires shifting blame onto other people or factors; *reducing offensiveness*; *corrective action*, which includes acknowledging the wrongdoing and taking responsibility as well as a promise to change oneself in order not to make the same mistake; and finally, *mortification*, sincere remorse, apology and acceptance of responsibility without justifying oneself or altering the gravity of the act

(Benoit, 2014). The categories may also be broken down into different subcategories, i.e. Benoit differentiates denial into *simple denial*, thus not admitting to the accusation or pretending that nothing happened and *shifting blame* on someone else. Evading responsibility may be done through *provoking* others and explaining one's behaviour by the occurrence of certain actions made by someone else; *defeasibility*, which enables one to repair one's image by blaming exterior conditions for the occurrence of wrongdoing, *accident* or *good intentions*. To reduce offensiveness, cancelled usually use: *bolstering*, which may be compared to gaslighting, as it requires the other person to concentrate on all the prior positive aspects to overshadow the wrongdoing (ex. "Think of all the times I helped you"); *minimisation* so putting smaller emphasis on the wrongdoing; *differentiation*, thus altering the message so it looks less offensive; *transcendence* which aims to explain the action as a normal and indispensable procedure required to do something seemingly 'positive' (ex. "Searching travellers at the airport is an inconvenience, but it protects against terrorism"); *attacking accuser* and *compensation*. All of these strategies used in apologies or public statements on issues allow people to regain their trust and position, either successfully or unsuccessfully.

2.2.3. Contexts

Every discourse and phenomenon give birth to new contexts and, thus, new social structures and power relations. It includes identities, roles, relationships, goals, actions, settings and social norms. All of these components help to shape the meaning and rules of discourses. Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach (2008a) posits that contexts are mental models constructed by participants to make sense of communicative situations. The designs and conditions of contexts are constantly being updated within group members and communities. Discourses are examined within the frames of context models, which are the basis of a theory of style, genre, register and discourse in general. They are also known as a definition of the situation, and their components are relevant to the group but may not be observable on the outside. Contexts are endorsed by culturally based categories like time, place, participation, action, goals, and knowledge (van Dijk, 2008a, p. 17).

Van Dijk (2008a, pp. 5-12, p. 22, p. 25) defines several key dimensions which shape social structures: social, situational, cognitive, historical, and cultural contexts. Social context includes societal norms, institutions, and hierarchies within a discourse. It describes how, for example, political affiliation can influence the reactions of cancellers. Situational context pertains to the setting in which discourse takes place, therefore, its participants, their roles,

and circumstances of interaction. Cognitive context emphasises mental representations and processes occurring within a discourse. As roles have already been discussed, the focus is on circumstances and sociocognitive aspects. The elements of this context are knowledge of participants, their beliefs, opinions, and intentions. It is focused on explaining how individuals view texts and what factors change their interpretation. Historical context addresses the frames of previous events and dimensions that collide with current discursive practices. Cultural context refers to cultural norms, values and practices that shape our reality. It helps to interpret the meaning and appropriateness of different types of communication in various cultural settings.

Chilton (2004, pp. 51, 53) adds to van Dijk's definition of contexts the use of mental spaces and frames, which serve as cognitive tools that help individuals navigate complex social realities. Utterances are constructed spatial and temporal contexts that influence the way people view language and actions. By creating contexts that justify certain behaviours and responses, reality is shaped. Contexts are not merely backgrounds for discourse but are actively involved in the creation and understanding of meaning.

CC emphasises the division between the canceller and the cancelled. Therefore, it may fall into the category of a digital war. Through underlining otherness and categorising people, binary oppositions are created: 'us' and 'them'. This seemingly puts the perpetrators on a higher level, which gives them power over those who get 'classified' (van Dijk, 2008b, pp. 72-73). Such acts may be face-threatening to the people, and the action of exposing information about them may serve as a powerful tool to alter public perceptions and social relations (van Dijk, 2008b, pp. 213-217). The strengthening of in-group solidarity by displaying what is and what is not acceptable leads to a deepening of social divisions and exclusions of those who disagree with the majority. As a result, it morally condemns others and consequently plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion. It may also be used as a punishment or as a manipulative tool to control society since, as Foucault argues, power and knowledge are connected, and those who know have the power to alter reality (Foucault, 1995, p.).

The unequal representation of power gives space for power dynamics to create battlegrounds between two parties, who have to constantly fight over deeper ideological factors, such as identity, norms and, most essentially, freedom of expression. Social media platforms provide the interactional context where these battles play out, with their own rules, affordances, and audiences influencing how discourse is produced and received. The cypher sphere enables people to interact and reshape their worlds constantly in real time. Therefore, the battles may seem unstoppable and are continuously influencing our reality and language.

Due to the war connotations, some metaphors described by Chilton (2004) are the same as those occurring in CC, e.g. journey or container. CC operates with language such as "attacks", "targets" and "defense" which are strictly related to a battle. Eve Ng (2002, p. 28) suggests that cancelling is usually utilised as a weapon to cause harm. Moreover, she describes the two armies as cancellers and cancelled who build up themselves and tear each other down, just like troops demolish countries of enemies. The two sides may be compared to Chilton's containers not only by the metaphor of nations with their borders but also in understanding of two societies with different norms. However, the fight between cancelled and cancellers may be viewed as unfair since it is usually directed by many people to just one person. Thus, the marginalised society, which at the beginning had its norms broken, may marginalise those who are outside and the norm breaker due to the collective nature of online interactions (Chilton, 2004, p. 58).

Cancelling in the understanding of war may also be compared to a journey (Chilton, 2004, p. 52). Online activism is a road to reaching the norms and holding accountable those who do not respect them. Therefore, a society which follows a certain set of rules is the destination of cancellers, who, on their way, need to face challenges in the form of supporters of the cancelled and the unchanging norm-breaking behaviour. Moreover, the metamorphosis and image restoration of public figures may be understood as progress and moving forward, advancing from the old customs towards a behaviour with respect to the norms protected by online activists. On the other hand, broadening boundaries of widely unacceptable actions and public shaming may also indicate an advancing unravelling of society. therefore, journey which is cancelled may bring about positive changes but also give space for aggravating the conflict and making the Internet an even more hostile place (Ng, 2022).

Finally, cancelling may also be viewed as a trial and punishment or paying the price for one's actions and facing the costs of it (Ng, 2022, p. 60). The norm-breaking events are understood as contagion which needs to be cleansed and punished. Therefore, CC may emphasise the judicial dimensions of social accountability, which involves judging those who cause harm. The spread of ideologies is compared to a virus, and cancellation is the cure to prevent further deterioration of society. As this action may bring serious repercussions it may also signify an execution, which implies the death sentence in social and professional spheres of cancelled's lives (Ng, 2022).

Chapter 3.   Research method and material

Introduction

The aim of the analysis is to display how people cancel through online posts, which include publications, commentaries, images, and videos. All of these forms are treated equally as posts because every kind of content published online may be counted as a post, including non-verbal materials. However, even if they are not directly stated through text, they still bear a meaning more or less discreet.

This chapter aims to introduce three norm-breaking events which caused cancellations online. The events include three American public figures: a rapper, producer, and shoe designer, Kanye West; a TV persona, actress, and host of a talk show, Ellen DeGeneres; and the former US President, Donald Trump. The material gathered serves to explain in a broader light the norm-breaking events and their entourage, as well as display how the three figures reacted in the face of cancellation. The description of their behaviour and efforts to come back to their careers after cancellations contribute to better understanding of the whole phenomenon. The situations serve as a background to the cancellation posts described in Chapter 4, and the reactions of the figures constitute the basis on which social effects of the cancellation discourse are formed, which is included in Chapter 5.

3.1. Source data and methodology

The materials studied include three cases of widely cancelled American figures: Kanye West, Ellen DeGeneres and Donald Trump. Each situation is described and provided with examples of cancellation in the form of posts, comments and transcription of video commentaries from the following five social platforms: X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Reddit, Instagram and Facebook. The choice of the platforms is justified by the easy access through searchable talk to the sources posted from 2013 until the first half of 2024. Moreover, the users on these platforms display a wide variety of social identities considering their age, gender and political affiliation. They are also the most used platforms in the United States. Most of the materials come from X, as it is the first key player in fostering real-time conversations and most of the cancellations started and were propagated mostly on this platform. The characteristics of the platforms mentioned are described in section 1.4 above. The publications are mostly marked with typical hashtags which strike cancelling.

Chapter 4 includes a linguistic analysis of the posts with the use of the cancelling strategies discussed in section 2.1. The strategies include discrimination, calling out, name-calling, opinion-making, boycotting, demands and requests for accountability, the appearance of searchable talk, and the use of slang, markers of increased emotionality, or sarcasm. Such analysis allows us to define which methods are used most commonly and how they are executed. Moreover, it displays the expressiveness and aggressivity of the posts online, which may have a serious impact on society and, most essentially, on the individuals cancelled.

The societal aspects of CC are considered in Chapter 5. It includes a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to the cancelling texts and behaviours as well as the reactions of the cancelled people to examine what styles identities, genres, as well as relations emerge in the cases of cancellation. Moreover, it covers the formation of contexts through the use of metaphors and vocabulary contributing to such comparisons. Identities are described with the use of style features, such as activist and confrontational, described e.g. by Suler (2004), Marwick and Lewis (2017) or Castells (2015), which contribute to the emergence of identities of accuser and accused, requester and requestee (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1974; Brown & Levinson, 1978). When it comes to genres, they display what relations are created in the process of cancelling, ex. collectivity through social media campaigns (Marwick & Lewis, 2017), as well as reactions to the cancelled, therefore their image restorative methods. Finally, the contexts will be examined, most specifically, the metaphor of war described by Chilton (2004), but also through metaphors such as binary oppositions, container, journey, judicial trial, and virus comparison (Chilton, 2004; Ng, 2023). The analysis also covers the subject of silencing and voice representation based on the power distribution described by van Dijk (2008b). It will also delve into the hierarchy and the reason why some people get and stay cancelled while others seem unbothered by the cancellations. The focal points are to examine how cancelling is executed online, what techniques are used to cancel, how they affect the language and society, as well as what identities and social relations emerge throughout the process of cancelling.

What is more, the study also includes the analysis of reactions of the cancelled individuals, their apologies (or the lack thereof) and overall behaviour described either personally on their social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Kanye's blog KanyeUniverseCity) or through journalistic articles and interviews with the cancelled figures (in cases when something connected to the events happened outside of the digital sphere, or when the materials have been deleted from this sphere). Furtherly, the analysis includes the use of apologies and image repair methods as genres characterised by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain

(1984), with the addition of strategies of apology avoidance and fauxpologies as defined by Kampf (2009). The image repair methods are identified on the basis of Benoit's (2014) classification.

3.1.1. The 'uncancellable' Kanye West

Kanye West (also known as Ye) is a reputable producer, rapper and clothes designer. His career sparked in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and is now called "one of the most controversial and influential celebrities of his generation" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2024).

The first cancellation of Kanye happened in 2009, when during MTV Video Music Award (VMA), the drunk rapper barged on the stage while Taylor Swift was receiving her award for the Best Female Artist Music Video. He interrupted her acceptance speech saying: "Yo, Taylor, I'm really happy for you, I'mma let you finish, but Beyoncé has one of the best music videos of all time". Then he just shrugged and left the stage in the background of echoing boos from the audience (Wilson, 2020). Even though this event happened relatively early, when there was no CC yet and people were not online as much, he still received hate for that. Even Barack Obama named Kanye a "jackass" (MacAskill, 2009).

The argument between them would later reappear in waves, as when the affair would calm a bit, new instances were being added. In 2016, Kanye released a song *Famous*, where he alludes to the VMA situation: "I feel like me and Taylor might still have sex / Why? I made that bitch famous (Goddamn) / I made that bitch famous" (West, 2016). He claimed he has received permission from Swift to use her name in a song, however in a later leaked video, it became apparent that he only asked about using the first verse, and he did not mention anything about calling Taylor Swift slurs. He also asked her to promote the song, so that the "Swift army" knows that the singer herself accepted and liked it. Later in the video however, she said she was afraid the line was going to be rude: "I thought you would call me dumb, bitch, but it's not [the case]", but Kanye assured her that he would not do that (Dejui Eiraqius, 2020).

Kanye West has always been a controversial figure. His journey through cancel culture started before the climax of the CC. The overall affiliance with Donald Trump, who is also not much liked person on the Internet, as well as Kanye's candidature for the president of the United States of America in 2020 certainly gave many opportunities for audience to speak about their dissatisfaction. However, the real moment when his career started to decline was in 2021. It was the moment when he started making antisemitic, racial comments which many found discriminatory. The whole issue began with a shirt that he wore, which had "White Lives

Matter" written on it. While the act itself seems harmless, it may be viewed as problematic. when weighing it against his comments about George Floyd, whose tragic passing instigated the "Black Lives Matter" movement. West claimed that Floyd was not killed by the police officer but because he had taken Fentanyl (Dennis, 2022). The event is even more controversial since his parents were members of the Black Panthers Party, which patrolled the neighbourhoods of America and protected African Americans from police brutality (Duncan, 2024). Even though the artist explained that he wore the shirt to include everyone, he still got called for his anti-Blackness. However, the real turnover of his career was when he wrote the now-deleted antisemitic post on X (see Screen 3).

*Screen 3.*Deleted post of Kanye West on X. (Haaretz, 2022).

This Tweet caused many to reconsider their support to the rapper, especially since this situation was not the first problematic act. After this incident, Kanye continued to say other questionable remarks, e.g. that "every human being has something of value that they brought to the table. Especially Hitler" (Lex Fridman, 2022). He also mentioned that he "likes Hitler" and that "he is and loves Nazis".

Despite so many problematic events, Kanye West stays uncancelled. Even if his career faced a serious crisis due to his antisemitic behaviour, when many big companies like Adidas, Gap and others cancelled their deals with the artist, *Forbes'* removal of West from

its billionaires list (*Real Time Billionaires*, 2024), and many social platforms ban, including *X*, he has never considered himself cancelled, and he still has many fans all around the world.

Recently, in April 2024, Kanye as faced yet another controversy which might be "the last straw" (@*MotionGoing* in West, 2024b) as some comment under the now-deleted video promoting mysterious "Yeezy porn" (Yeezy is a company run by Kanye West). Although, some speculate that it might not be what it sounds like, many people claim it is even worse than previous antisemitic comments and that they no longer can support such a person. Due to many posts and comments, Kanye himself has deactivated his accounts on social media.

People's reactions to many cancellations were different, however, even if the comments or posts were published on various platforms, they were all unfavourable. Some attacked solely the artist, while others were directed at those supporting him, including big companies and his casual supporters. Celebrities of Kanye's calibre usually strike strong emotions and as a result, many cancellations. Public figures like rappers and music makers are those whom younger generations look up to and follow their steps; therefore, even the slightest wrongdoing may provoke big reactions from people.

However, despite so many strong reactions Kanye West seems to be uncancellable. Even if faced with some repercussions, he is still as successful as one can be. As Caramanica (2018) describes it in his article Kanye West is a proof that "it's possible to be canceled and thrive at the same time". While West acknowledges that he is facing difficulties, he does not apologise. He either blames his cancellation on other people or on his supporter's lack of consistency, e.g. when the rapper started his campaign for a president, he never hid his support for Donald Trump, which caused many controversies. After that, he summed up the cancellation with these words: "I'm canceled. I'm canceled because I didn't cancel Trump." (Caramanica, 2018). Therefore, it shows that he did not take responsibility for his actions, but instead he pushed it on others.

Kanye West is also quite unapologetic, as he rarely publicly apologises and if he does, the apologies may seem untrustworthy. For instance, after the aforementioned issue with Taylor Swift was resolved with his apology posted on his now non-existing personal blog *KanyeUniverseCity*, which however did not spark positive reactions from both the fans and the singer herself.

Only two days later, during his appearance on *The Jay Leno Show,* he seemed to realise the gravity of his wrongdoing, and when asked how his day was, he gave an extensive answer how he was dealing with the whole situation, however even though he claimed he would apologise to the singer personally right away, the apology came much later. When asked by the

host when he had realised that he had done something wrong, he admitted that only when he gave back the microphone and she didn't continue her speech. The last question he received was "how your mom would react? Would she be disappointed in this? Would she give you a lecture?", after which Kanye was battling with tears and started to describe how his life had been hard since his mother passed away a year before, and that he did not have a break for many years. The question was met with mixed emotions. Many would call out Jay Leno for being insensitive, but some claimed as well that it was all staged so that Kanye could show his more 'humane' and emotional side of him.

After the incident he took a year off and disappeared into hiding to, as he named it, "develop more as a person and a creator, to focus more on what he wants to bring to the world" (The Ellen DeGeneres Show, 2016). When asked if the reason why he came up stage was because he was drinking his response could be taken as passive aggressive, that he would never come to such events, because he was solely being a "soldier of culture" but it was taken the wrong way.

The apologies of Kanye West seem, however, to never serve their cause. He had a lot of opportunities to apologise for the antisemitic comments, e.g. during an interview with Piers Morgan (2022), however, he always claimed that some unrelated conditions had to be met for him to apologise. He had also been suspended from the platforms, but he managed to 'squeeze in' a speedy, now-deleted apology in Hebrew. The apology was not found well by the Jewish community. According to American Jewish Committee, his apology is "beyond being bizarre and possibly a ploy to gain more attention. The Hebrew apology — posted without translation — is inaccessible to most American Jews who do not speak the language" (Sherman, 2023). A bit later, Kanye West has been again suspended for posting a swastika interlaced with a Star of David (CBS News, 2023). As controversial as Kanye West is, he has rarely shown remorse for what he had said or done. In his eyes, it is his way of openly using his freedom of speech.

In a short interview with *TMZ* (West, 2024a), West showed his unapologetic side, with no guilt for saying things that have left so many people outraged and even debunked that his apologies may not be true, claiming that it is truthful only to some extent. Despite such behaviours and many empty apologies or even the lack of them, Kanye manages to thrive.

3.1.2. Ellen DeGeneres – "the most hated person in America"

Ellen DeGeneres is a widely known comedian and television host. Although Ellen has been successful from the get-go, and her career has been flourishing, she has been faced with two breaking points in her life. The first one happened even before Internet has been as widespread as it is now, therefore it is difficult to call it a cancel culture event. However, the reactions were greatly similar. From 1994, Ellen was starring a leading role in a prosperous TV series These Friends of Mine, which was later re-branded to Ellen. The show was cancelled a year after, DeGeneres revealed that she was gay. Since society was less open than it is now, DeGeneres had to face boycotting. It was only in 2003 that she started her own talk show. The Ellen DeGeneres Show, which leveraged her career, and she became one of the most well-known TV hosts (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024a).

However, her career once again hit the curb when she got 'officially' cancelled. Throughout the years of her talk show, she received many 'micro' cancellations, yet they were not as powerful and lasting as the one in 2020. Ellen has been accused of toxic workplace environment, racial comments and microaggressions, as well as allowing sexual harassment on set. The accusations influenced the rating and support of viewers and the Warner Bros. company, which decided to conduct its own investigation. The reactions regarding the situation were amplified due to the contrast between her public and personal image. The host has always shown kindness and positivity on the screen and was well-known for her aphorism "Be Kind". The dropping fanbase and increasing number of former employees coming out about the show led the host to cancel her show in 2022 (DeGeneres, 2021a).

Ellen DeGeneres gave another reason for people to cancel her the same year, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when, in a now taken down video, she compared staying at home due to quarantine to "being in jail" (Ali, 2020). Viewers were quick to point out that it does not feel right coming from her mouth, considering her staying in one of her multimillion-dollar mansion.

Many journalists called Ellen's removal from the media an "official cancellation" (e.g. [Sakellariou, 2022]) due to so many institutional and serious repercussions. Cancellers proclaimed Ellen as "the most hated person in America", which seems a bit hyperbolic, taking into consideration that some of the accusations are not even directed immediately to her but to the producers of the show.

Nevertheless, people do not cease to show their dissatisfaction with the whole situation, especially since Ellen came back to the media only a bit over a year later with

a documentary Saving the gorillas: Ellen's next adventure (Harper, 2023). Her rapid comeback to television received mixed reactions, but many preserved their previous cancellations, thus the trending hashtag #FuckEllen on the platform X in 2023.

After the allegations, Ellen did not admit to the alleged wrongdoings and the toxic atmosphere on set. Instead, she claimed she had no idea of the acts happening in her workplace and that she was disappointed to learn about it. In a videoconference with the staff, she told them that she was not perfect and that sometimes, when the show is running as a well-oiled machine, hosts are not as sensitive to human beings (Littleton & Donnelly, 2020). This 'apology' was followed by terminating contracts with three senior producers of the show, who vowed innocence.

In 2020, after the allegations, her apology was aired at the beginning of the 18th season of The Ellen DeGeneres Show, which left people with mixed reactions, as they felt it was insincere and as if Ellen was claiming herself as a victim. She explained that the rumours are not true and that she was disappointed to learn about the situation on set through news articles, therefore claiming not only innocence but also ignorance. She promised that things would change and that they were starting a new chapter. The apology was not faced with good reviews, considering that the show lost a further 1 million viewers (Koblin, 2021).

She displayed a different approach during her stand-up comedy show, where she said that she "has been kicked out of show business" and that there are no mean people in show business". She also said: "The 'be kind' girl wasn't kind," she continued. "I became this one-dimensional character who gave stuff away and danced up steps. Do you know how hard it is to dance up steps? Would a mean person dance up steps? Had I ended my show by saying, 'Go f–k yourself,' people would've been pleasantly surprised." She then admitted that she did not know how to be a boss and that "eventually she is going to be kicked out for a third time because she is mean, old and gay" (Schwartz, 2024).

After all that, she announced that the show would come to an end in 2022. She admitted that, in fact, she had a hard time believing that anyone struggled on set because she "knew how happy everybody was" (Kent, 2021). Ultimately, she blamed cancel culture for the whole situation once again pushing the responsibility on others and commented: By this comment, she has summed up that in her opinion, cancel culture is too merciless and that it aims at people who may be innocent, and that by cancelling, we restrict individuals to explain themselves and let them right their wrong.

In 2021, later on in the 18th season of her show, she announced that the next season, will be the last one. She underlined that it was "the best show of her life and she owes it to her

audience" (The Ellen DeGeneres Show, 2021). She stated that it has always been the case that she wanted to finish at the 19th season, however later, she claimed that she has been thinking about the decision for a sometime. Following, she thanked her audience once again. Ellen claimed that it was her decision to finish the show due to lack of creativity coming from it. However, she has also added that she was crying every day for a few months after making the decision and that she hated how it ended, which makes it unlikely that the stated reason was the only one. She blamed the cancellation on the crowd, her gender and sexuality, claiming that if she were a man, no such thing would happen. Finally, she compared her situation with her mother's, who suffers from dementia, saying: "My mother doesn't know she's my mother, and I'm trying to figure out who I am without my show" (Yandoli, 2024). Such a comparison resembles tragedising the whole situation, bringing it to a personal level of a victim who suffers as much as someone who is stricken with a serious disease.

3.1.3. Donald Trump – The 'Canceller-in-Chief'

Political figures are especially exposed to extreme opinions from other people. Donald Trump, the former US President, is a living tapestry of that. CC is more often directed towards Republicans and conservative tactics, which liberals and leftists deprecate. Therefore, the Republican President has faced criticism many times. It does not mean, however, that he had not done anything that could incite such reactions.

During Trump's presidential campaign in 2016, The Washington Post published a video of him "having an extremely lewd conversation about women in 2005" (Fahrenthold, 2016). In the video, Donald Trump talks with Billy Bush about their 'scores' (women they wanted to 'conquer') in a very derogatory manner, as seen in the quote below.

Donald Trump:	I moved on her like a bitch […].
Billy Bush:	Sheesh, your girl is hot as shit.
Donald Trump:	Whoa! Yes! Whoa!
Billy Bush:	Yes! The Donald has scored. […]
Donald Trump:	I better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her. I'm automatically attracted to beautiful – I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. […] And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything. […] Grab them by the pussy.

(Fahrenthold, 2016)

Due to the video, Trump faced serious criticism of his misogynist attitude, which resulted in a loss of voters. However, this situation has not prevented him from winning the elections.

Trump's presidency has been full of controversies and discriminatory behaviours. His stance on migrants was especially hurtful to many people, especially with the travel ban and family separation policy as well as the building of walls on the borders. All of his actions, the alleged history of sexual misconduct, and his rhetoric forced people to come out on the streets to protest in the *#notmypresident* manifestation. None of them, however, had an effective outcome because Trump still had the same opinions on various matters.

The crucial moment in Trump's cancellation journey was in 2021 when Trump was banned from social media due to the riots at the Capitol, which were an answer to his losing the elections. The former president allegedly incited the protests when he posted on his Twitter such a message: "Statistically impossible to have lost the 2020 Election. […] Big protest in DC on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!" (Mason & Landay, 2021). This post and his comments on the protest were treated as a call to fight. Only hours after the Capitol lockdown, Trump recorded a video to protestors to remain peaceful, which was soon taken down from all the platforms due to regulations. Facebook removed the video about 40 minutes later, stating that it violated its Community Standard on Dangerous Individuals and Organizations. In the video, Trump said: "I know you're hurt. We had an election that was stolen from us. It was a landslide election. […] But you have to go home now. We have to have peace. We have to have law and order. […] So go home. We love you. You're very special" (Oversight Board, n.d.). The riot left several people dead and over 100 police officers wounded. After that situation Trump's accounts have been suspended, with Twitter's statement that the Tweets about riots are against their Glorification of Violence policy (X, 2021).

During that time, Donald Trump's media company created its own platform, "Truth Social", which is a clone site of Twitter; however, 'truth' was only in its name. In 2022, the platform has been accused of censorship after several accounts have been banned for posting information opposing the former President's stance. Therefore, when Elon Musk bought Twitter and rebranded it to *X*, quickly retrieving Trump's account, he was not as interested in posting there as on his social platform. To this day, the only thing he has posted on *X* is his mugshot from when he was sentenced after charges he conspired to overturn his election loss (Colvin, 2023), with a link to his site promoting "donation to help Trump win back the White House from Crooked Joe Biden" (*Donald J. Trump For President 2024*, n.d.).

His return to Facebook occurred sooner, thanks to *Oversight Board*'s case against the platform's decision to ban the account.

It seems, however, that Trump's cancellation has been forgotten, especially since he still holds a strong voter base. Firstly, since he came back to all the social media, and secondly, because he is still thriving and is a presidential candidate again. The polls indicate that Trump is favoured over Biden and other candidates in around 30 out of 50 states. Although per cent-wise, the general election polls show a subtle difference, with Trump having around 0.6% to 1.2% majority of votes (as per 15 May 2024 via *RealClear Polling* and *270toWin*), the future may hold yet another case of colossal image repair and restoration from cancel culture.

Cancelling and hating on heads of countries may be constant and slightly different than in the example of Kanye West and Ellen DeGeneres, as presidents may be cancelled solely for their political affiliation. However, the intensity of posts online is bigger when something wrong happens in the eyes of cancellers. Degrading the head of the country may be tricky since it is easier to get banned or even incriminated. Nevertheless, Trump did not seem to care much about what people say, both online and in reality, since he believes in his righteousness and freedom of speech.

Donald Trump has been unapologetic many times. He has not shown any remorse, and even if he apologised, it seemed forced and held an ulterior move behind it. The most important apology made by him was in 2016 after the tape affair. In a video post on his *X* account, he said that he was not perfect and that his words were nothing in comparison to the actions of Bill Clinton. The apology seemingly goes deep when Trump shows remorse and admits to his wrongdoing. However, the magic of the apology wears out when he changes the focus to other people. The same thing happened two days later when, in a debate, he was asked about the situation. He again changed the topic of his apology to someone else's wrongdoings instead of focusing on his own.

This, however, might have been the only 'serious' apology coming from him, yet considered by many as highly scripted and unnatural. He follows a no-apology policy, and he believes in the freedom of words. For Trump, apologies are like trophies. However, they are the trophies he requires from others. In his eyes, if he had to make an apology, that would hurt his ego, and it would mean that he has lost. Thus, in a belief that he does not become a loser like Obama, who apologised too frequently, he continues his no-apology policy. He makes mockery out of his own apologies as he does not believe that he is required

to apologise. Therefore, most of his 'mockpologies' may be seen on his *X* account (see Screens 4-6 below).

Sorry, I never went bankrupt and don't wear a wig (it's all mine)!

Screen 4. Donald J. Trump. [@realDonaldTrump]. (February 25, 2013). Retrieved from X on 29 April 2024

Sorry losers and haters, but my I.Q. is one of the highest -and you all know it! Please don't feel so stupid or insecure,it's not your fault

Screen 5. Donald J. Trump. [@realDonaldTrump]. (May 9, 2013). Retrieved from X on 29 April 2024

I am sorry to have to reiterate that there are serious and unpleasant consequences to crossing the Border into the United States ILLEGALLY! If there were no serious consequences, our country would be overrun with people trying to get in, and our system could not handle it!

Screen 6. Donald J. Trump. [@realDonaldTrump] (August 21, 2018). Retrieved from X on 29 April 2024

Yet, even if he does not apologise, he still has a strong army of voters and does not seem to be concerned with cancellations or even more serious repercussions like a jail sentence. He does not seem to get shaken by the opinions of others, thus his continuous norm-breaking behaviour.

Chapter 4.   Linguistic analysis of the cancellers' (re)actions

Introduction

This Chapter provides an analysis of posts based on cancelling strategies occurring in them, such as discrimination, calling out, name-calling, opinion-making, boycotting, demands and requests for accountability, the appearance of searchable talk, as well as the use of slang, markers of increased emotionality, or sarcasm. The strategies taken into consideration are chosen by their importance in forming the phenomenon, which is constructed through such activities as posts, images, and comments. The examples analysed come from the following platforms: Facebook, X, Reddit, Instagram and YouTube.

4.1. Analysis of the three cancellation cases

CC is a greatly complex movement, and it links many other phenomena like hate speech, discrimination, call-out culture, etc. Due to its complexity, many texts may be counted in; however, the most apparent posts include words and hashtags including "cancel", "boycott", "is over", and others. Usually, a hashtag connected to the situation is created, and because of sharing it more and more, it gets locked and reserved for that event or person (i.e. #nosafeplaceforjewhate after Kanye West's antisemitic comments). Because cancelling seems to be very popular among online users, there are many of those who contribute to it, resulting in its widespread expansion. Certainly, its digital nature is the most important aspect, as it allows people to react instantly and to a big crowd. By using various forms of reaching a greater number of spectators, like commenting, sharing and using hashtags, not only do the norm-breaking events get recognition, but also the rising of boycotting can be executed with a bigger number of participants.

A typical post consists of three elements: calling out the cancelled, addressing the norm-breaking issue, and an opinion on that person or their action. However, they may consist of only one or two of the factors mentioned, usually referencing only to a person and an opinion on them. The latter may be expressed both in a more and less aggressive way. It usually includes an accusation and a complaint that the accused has committed a wrongdoing. The analysis below describes the five most characteristic forms of cancelling, which include discrimination, opinion-making, name-calling, demands and requests, as well as sarcasm, also

in the form of memes. The techniques mentioned were the most numerous on social platforms, which reinforces their influence on other people and on society overall.

When it comes to discrimination, it is broken down into intentionality, passivity, directness, and explicitness; and is realised especially by nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation, intensification and mitigation. Opinions, in turn, may be conveyed in a myriad of ways, such as through letters or judgment. Name-calling uses labelling, slurs, epithets, comparisons, metaphors, compound insults, and stereotyping. It may also be rendered not straightforwardly but with the use of various methods of secrecy, such as irony, sarcasm or the use of emojis. Demands are realised by mood derivable, explicit performatives, hedges performative, locution derivable, scope stating, reference to reparatory conditions, questions, as well as strong and mild hints. Finally, sarcasm includes the use of verbal irony, dramatic irony, situational irony, as well as elements connected with memes, such as vernacular English phrases from dialects, puns, jargon, slang, and shortenings.

While cancellations are similar in all the three cases as they include all of the techniques, the posts on Ellen DeGeneres are the most harsh as they consist of the most derogatory language, discrimination and sarcasm. Even though Kanye West and Donald Trump face serious cancellations as well, and they were even banned from social media for some time, it is Ellen who faced serious withdrawal from social life, which affected her career. Kanye West's cancellation includes the most opinions and requests and acts of advice made in a cautionary tone therefore the movement did not fully bring lasting effects. The most complex is Trump's cancellation, as his status is the highest of all the three figures. Thus, he has the strongest tools to manipulate the public and the outcome.

4.1.1. Kanye West

Kanye West has been widely cancelled and such moves do not cease as new affairs come to light. His cancellers usually express disappointment and are not as aggressive as in the two following cases. Most posts talk about moralising and informing about the issues. They serve to withdraw support not only through personal letters addressed to Kanye but also to his supporters and other people so that they rethink their choices. However, all the five techniques: discrimination, opinion-making, name-calling, demands and requests, as well as sarcasm are also used in numerous situations.

Discrimination

Kanye West did not receive many discriminatory comments. Even if they occurred, they seemed accidental or more covert. The posts mostly referred to his race, however, they were done in a delicate way.

（１）　This text from Kanye is probably the best insight one can have into how the **African American** mind processes the world (Retrieved from X. *GBH* 🤡 ⚔️ *Remilio*. [@xbtGBH]. June 4, 2024)

The message in example (1) above is connected to the alleged obscene text message from Kanye to one of his workers. The post may not immediately strike as discriminatory, especially considering the inclusive, respectful usage of "African American". However, even if the discrimination seems more covert, it suggests different treatment solely due to the affiliation of the widely marginalised racial group in America. It also shows a stereotyped image of an African American as a profane man with no decency. The online user suggests that this is the usual mindset of people of that race, which puts everyone in the same box and denies equal rights to every individual (Reisigl, 2007). The comment is also quite directly aimed at Black people. While it is not strictly derogatory or vulgar it may be viewed as hurtful.

Opinion making

Opinions predominated among all the cancelling posts. While most of them were not so vulgar or strong, the messages targeted the rapper, constraining him from his freedom and showing disrespect or dissatisfaction with his actions.

（２）　Kanye is dead wrong. Offensively so. Slavery is not a choice. But what is a choice, is listening to his music, buying his branded products and following him on Twitter. Jeesh. And I thought nobody could be dumber than Ben Carson saying slaves were immigrants… (Retrieved from X. Ana Navarro-Cárdenas [@ananavarro]. May 2, 2018)

Example (2) boycotts the artist in a more subtle way while stating an opinion not only on his actions but also on his supporters. The user states that not only should such behaviour be condemned but also everything connected with the wrongdoer, including his works. It is a voice which targets other's consciousness and asks to reconsider one's actions, through an emotional statement. Sometimes more personal opinions may shift people's view on their

own behaviour, which, as a result, may lead to them boycotting the artist by unfollowing him and ceasing to support his products. The opinion directly displays the judgment and negative emotions connected with Kanye, his music and his supporters, which shows that the online user is familiar with not only his person but also his worldview and products. Such an opinion shows that the situations caused by Kanye West influence all the elements of the Appraisal Theory described by Martin and White (2005), as the opinions include comments on how the situation affect others, what their judgement is on them, as well as how they shape viewers' appreciation.

On the other hand, there are people who share their opinions on irrelevant issues to the widely cancelled affairs, as in example (3) below:

(3) Until 2 days ago, I never knew who Ye was. I heard the name a lot but thought he was a standup comic. I didn't know he is a Rapper. I don't follow popular culture. His kids have odd names- North West, Saint West, Chicago West, Psalm West #KanyeIsOverParty #KanyeWest (Retrieved from X. Iver Mectin ✡ PS. [@jong_slow]. October 27, 2022)

The text shows how influencing others' opinions can be. Even someone who did not know much about the person may join the movement thanks to the cancellers' posts. For many people social media are a sole source of information. Hyperbolised or highly emotional messages may be appealing to many, which has forced people to be personally offended, even though they might not have gotten the chance to do so without the movement. Such a comment does not convey the message of a group of people, but rather represents an individualistic judgement and a set of aesthetic values (Martin & White, 2005).

Name-calling

Name-calling has been omnipresent throughout all the cancellations of Kanye West. The vulgar and derogatory names are not so frequently used due to respect which supporters maintain even during his cancellations. Instances of slurs usually connected with high emotionality of commenters have not been present in the corpus of cancelling posts.

(4) So much for old **Ye Himmler** (@kanyewest) saying @adidas couldn't drop him 😅 (Retrieved from X. Bernacules Nerdgasm [@Bernacules]. October 26, 2022)

Example (4) uses an invective focused on labelling Kanye as an infamous figure connoted negatively by many. Himmler was known as Hitler's right hand and an important person

contributing to the Holocaust. Therefore, such a label, expressed through comparison to a historical figure, seems very incriminating as well as derogatory, as it magnifies the antisemitic situation caused by Kanye into yet a bigger issue. Either rightly or not, such a label could imply that West is responsible for the Holocaust and the death and torture of Jews since as Goffman (1963) argues labels have power to influence other's view on a person and a situation. It may even shape people's understanding of historical facts, as displayed in this example. Thus, the whole issue has been hyperbolised and over-exaggerated, considering that Kanye's actions were limited to discriminatory and questionable comments. Such a connotation also makes West's behaviour more outrageous as it maximises its offensiveness.

Demands and requests

The instances of demands and requests are deeply connected with the cancelling movements of Kanye West. While some are strong and imperative, most of them serve as a warning. It seems as if fans feel the urge to take an extra step before actually withdrawing their support and try to better their idol's behaviour first, as shown in example (5) below.

（5）Kanye, **this is the last freaking straw** (Retrieved from YouTube. @MotionGoing. [West, 2024b])

Such a post may not directly be a demand or request, but it conveys a need for the rapper to change, therefore the request is expressed in a more covert way. While it does not state any reparatory conditions (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), there is a condition which says that if Kanye does not change, he will face further cancellations and loss of fans.

There was also a majority of requests over demands, as shown in example (6). The fans seemed to respect Kanye even in the face of cancelling him.
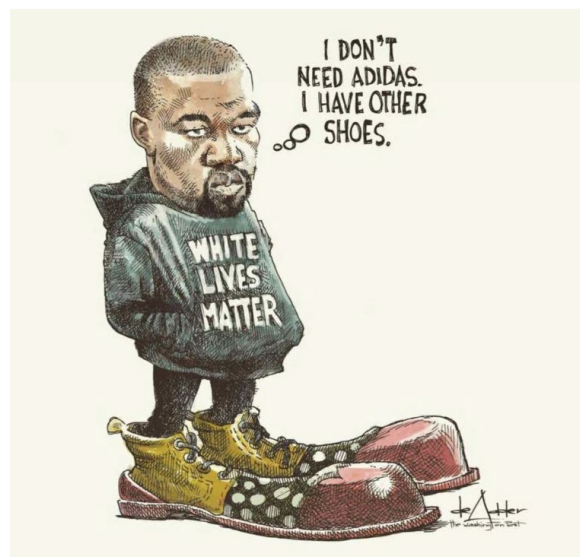
（6）Kanye, man. You dropped an album literally called "Jesus Is King". You changed my life. You got me out of a porn addiction. **Kanye, didn't you tweet, that pornography should be banned? Kanye, please get it together man.** Your one of the most influential people of All Time man. Please (Retrieved from YouTube. @BelatedAF. [West, 2024b])

As Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) argue, questions may also be treated as demands. The request from example (6) uses open-ended indirect hints, e.g. "Kanye, didn't you tweet, that pornography should be banned?" which aims to change Kanye's behaviour without directly

stating what he should do instead. However, the request is followed by a more direct, explicit performative request, "please, get it together". The whole message is like a hedged performative, whose aim is to remind Kanye that he is a better person and he should act this way as well. It also functions as a scope stating which describes the user's intention, that Kanye means a lot to him and he really does not want to stop supporting him.

Sarcasm

Sarcasm and humour are intrinsic methods to express one's dissatisfaction and draw on cancellation. The method most utilised to ridicule a situation or a person is memes.

Screen 7. Adele C. [@adele_c____]. (October 26, 2022). Retrieved from Instagram May 30, 2024

This meme regards the cancellation of Kanye West and the removal from his partnership with Adidas. Its aim is to ridicule his thinking and his belief that he cannot get cancelled, which he frequently shows in interviews or through saying something new which breaks the norms of others. The clown shoes he wears depict his absurdity and detachment from reality. Such depiction of irony may be counted as situational irony (Joshua, 2020), although communication online is more delayed than spoken, live interactions. It does not, however, use as many written elements. The verbal irony is used solely to put focus on the situation and Kanye's lost deal with Adidas. The relevance of the situation is emphasised by actual life events, when Kanye wore a White Lives Matter shirt for a fashion show, which most likely was a provocation from his side. Such shareable meme builds bonds by ridiculing the person and stating one's opinion on the matter without written descriptions.

62

Another meme does not portray any defined situation but its aim is to ridicule and offend Kanye. Such an outcome is realised through a degrading image which displays Kanye West costume consisting of a trash bag, as shown in Screen 8 below.

Screen 8. Matt Consola. [@swishcraft]. (October 26, 2022). Retrieved from Instagram, August 28, 2024

Such an image not only ridicules and comments on Kanye's acts but also degrades him by insinuating that he is trash. The comparison serves as stating one's opinion without using words. It is a satire that shows that adults who do not stop others from behaving in a hurtful manner are as worthwhile as the people they support. Therefore, it alludes that Kanye's supporters are also trash, as the costume "fits most". A strong message like that may be counted as a mockery, which is usually a highly enjoyable way to reinforce the shareability and popularity of a post (e.g. Joshua, 2020 & Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Shalevska, 2018).

4.1.2. Ellen DeGeneres

Ellen DeGeneres' cancellation has been especially harsh and career-breaking. She faced a lot of backlash, which forced her to detour her TV appearances to smaller and quieter roles. Her cancellers used all the methods of cancelling, with an exceptional focus on derogatory name-calling and demands.

Discrimination

Ellen did not receive a lot of discrimination; however, in some instances, the method was more covert and indirect, focused on her race. While discrimination towards white people may not be the most prevalent in the United States of America, it also occurs, as shown in example (7) below.

(7) Ellen is not going anywhere because she's **WHITE**. […] (Retrieved from X. Oscar. [@LittyOscars]. August 04, 2020)

Such comments underline the discrepancy between White people and people of other races. Even though Ellen's situation had nothing connected to racism, the Internet user is shifting focus on her race. The widely recognised 'white supremacy' or 'white privilege' theory (Martinez, 2017) may be valid in some instances; however, such behaviour gives space for even more discriminatory attitudes since it strikes as accusations of dominance over other races and a denial of equal rights, as well as a different treatment solely due to physical features (Reisigl, 2007). The claim that Ellen was treated better because she is White puts every White person in the same box, which correlates with the idea of segregating society and constitutes an indirect, covert form of discrimination, as described in Reisigl (2007). Therefore, these comments may bring connotations of discrimination due to their shifting focus not on the acts of Ellen but her race, claiming that she was privileged and that such power comes from factors that cannot be controlled and not from her behaviour. The use of capital letters for the word "white" puts further emphasis on it, which undoubtedly steals attention from the action.

Opinion making

Opinions were occurring frequently in the case of Ellen's cancellations. People seem to watch her every step and comment on it, so she finally realises that she is in the wrong and steps down from her position. Some of the opinions were especially extensive, as in example (8) below:

(8) […] She's become a full on narcissist and because of that is vulnerable to all sorts of misguided priorities. She has turned her back on everyone that has supported her and helped over the years, even dear friends. I heard someone say once they all her old friends, associates, and people she has done business with should start a support group to deal with the trauma they have experienced because of her. (Retrieved from Reddit. [@Flimsy-Discussion529]. 2023)

The text above is not only an opinion of the Internet user who posted it, but it also correlates to the gossips, which may or may not be true. Gossiping is a powerful tool for spreading information to circulate around. However, it also risks spreading fake news. Such opinions play an important role in attitude formation as well as they influence the cancelled in a way that they might either admit to the allegations or react in a harmful way for their career, including the lack of reaction. In the case of Ellen, she kept private with her opinions on the views on her online until she could not, which costed her her career. The comment seems to be neutral so it does not include all the elements of Matin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. It is focused strictly on the judgment of the situation and demonstrating a description of the situation; however, emotions and appreciation are in the form of marginal hints which show that the Internet user does not support such behaviour.

Another example of opinion is displayed in example (9). It includes irony, which is a commentary on her behaviour itself and shows dissatisfaction with her actions.

(9) The whole #EllenDeGeneres monologue is a waste of time smh […] (Retrieved from X. DKAstrology ʜᴜᴊᴍ ♓ 🌟. [@DKAstrology]. September 21, 2020)

The text above includes not only a direct opinion "is a waste of time" but also a more covert one "smh", which is an abbreviation for "shaking my head". Such a comment displays disappointment and disbelief. Slang words used this way are markers of increased emotionality, and they serve to bring these emotions closer to the group of people who understand Internet speech (Novkova et al., 2021). Ellen's behaviour is condemned and judged by the poster, who shares their affect judgements and appreciation (or the lack thereof) of the matter.

Name-calling

Name-calling is utilised frequently throughout Ellen DeGeneres' cancellations. Ellen quickly received the nickname of the worst person in America. People frequently resort to vulgarity and explicitness, spreading derogatory nicknames without any basis on why they do it. Such attitudes strike higher aggressiveness and dissatisfaction not only with the acts, but also with the action-doer, as shown in example (10) below:

(10) Ellen **Degenerate** (Retrieved from X. David B Bell [@DavidBBell1]. September 7, 2024)

The name is focused on word formation which is a word play on DeGeneres' surname. The label is degrading and it implies that Ellen has no values in her life, thus the norms of the netizen have been put on a higher level of importance, according to the framework of Goffman (1963). Such comment not only aims to degrade the cancelled, but also to entertain through using catchy phrases. In this way, it makes positive connotation among like-minded individuals, which may encourage them to join the movement.

(11) Ellen DeGeneres is **a nasty bitch**. I'm glad her show is canceled because her whole marketing ploy was to be this really nice person, when in reality she was just **a filthy human being**. (Retrieved from X. katy 🌸 [@KatyKray73]. May 27, 2022)

The name-calling in the example (11) above is straightforward and very degrading. It uses strong invectives, ex. "nasty bitch" and "filthy human being"; thus, it is highly emotional and rude. The labels are not connected strictly with the cancelled actions but aim to ridicule and make Ellen lose her face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

(12) Hilarious how **loveable, liberal lesbian** Ellen is on the verge of being cancelled. Nobody is safe from the woke-usts! (sic!) (Retrieved from X. Martin Daubney [@MartinDaubney]. August 18, 2020)

The comment above publicly shames Ellen by extensive labels, which may also be understood as discriminatory and derogatory. The use of sarcastic "loveable" affects the message, making it even more offensive. The epithets used to describe Ellen are connected strictly to her person and her affiliation instead of her actions. What is more, the names are stereotyping through discriminatory, highlighting the affiliance of Ellen to certain social groups which are frequently targeted by others. According to Goffman, such a procedure, may diminish the visibility of the whole complexity of her persona and limit the understanding of who she is to the epithets above. Even though none of the labels used would be considered offensive when standing alone, considering the entirety of the context, the message is highly ironic and aims to ridicule the host.

Demands and requests

Due to higher emotionality and dissatisfaction with Ellen DeGeneres and her actions, she receives many demands and requests. Most of them aimed to boycott the host and make

her leave the show. However, some of them are very derogatory and even incriminating, as she receives death threats as well, as displayed in example (13) below:

(1 3) If you didn't think Ellen was Hitler already **this is even more of a reason to cancel her show, give her an enema, and then BURN her**!!! (Retrieved from X. MrBlackPasta. [@MrBlackPasta]. August 20, 2020)

The demand includes a dangerous message, which should not be used by anyone, as it may be incriminating for the speaker. Death threats in such comments fall into the category of demands; however, they are the most extreme kind of demands, formed by a mood derivable, as described by Brown & Levinson (1978). Not only are they dangerous, but they also spread high negativity and rudeness, as well as they are extremely face-threatening and display negative politeness by restraining Ellen from any other option. Such text may be met with applause from the side of cancellers, which furtherly incites similar attitudes. As a consequence, the discourse around Ellen gets highly aggressive, which may also escalate to real actions.

(1 4) Ellen DeGeneres. When you do stand-up comedy about sexual assault at your workplace with your hundreds of employees, **it's time to cancel yourself. Please. Cancel yourself permanently. Thank you.** (Retrieved from X. Erin Elizabeth Health Nut News🥜 [@unhealthytruth]. September 23, 2020)

The core of the demand above, is the imperative statement "cancel yourself permanently", and it directly states what the request is. Moreover, it is preceded by a grounder "it's time" which underlines that it is enough and she is due to refrain from further public appearances. The request is highly bald-on-record which, according to Brown & Levinson (1987), means it is direct and urgent as well as it gives no other possibility to the cancelled. The Internet user also states the request without any insight into Ellen's feelings. The use of "please" and "thank you" mitigates the message by seemingly softening it due to their politeness. However, such phrases may also be understood as sarcastic, which would furtherly underline the firmness of the request. According to Blum-Kulka's and Olshtain's (1984) it includes mood derivable, explicit performatives and scope stating.

(1 5) Ellen Degeneres **should never have a redemption arc**. She portrayed an image of kindness while being nothing of the sort behind the scenes. Decades of this made her more money than imaginable, so **she should just live a quiet normal**

existence without trying to be on my screen. (Retrieved from X. luca [@LucaGuadagnegro]. April 26, 2024)

The above request is constructed on the basis of a hidden message which resembles more a suggestion than an order. According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) framework, the demand is indirect, however, it includes strong hints and scope stating as it clearly defines what Ellen should do: "live a quiet life" and refrain from "trying to be on the screens". The act is further mitigated through the use of the word "just", which softens the message by suggesting that the demand is not big. Moreover, the demand is preceded by a grounder which explains and justifies the requester's need (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

Sarcasm

Memes are an inseparable part of the Internet. Memes usually function as entertainment but they may also convey more important messages and be a source of information for many. In CC they serve to ridicule and unite people of the same opinion through the bonding element, which is humour. In Ellen DeGeneres' case, humour is an indispensable factor which contributes to most of the communication acts between the host and the people supporting or cancelling her. It is due to the fact that she is also a comedian, and uses humour herself in many situations. Thus, such a factor facilitates comprehension and forms a basis of mutual understanding. On the other hand, it may also act as a cause of creating walls, as memes are usually weaponised against the cancelled. Such images usually concern not only the actions or things that one can control but also physical appearance, which is, in many cases, unchangeable.

Screen 9. Jesse Paul Cook-Pierson. (August 05, 2020). Retrieved from Facebook May 30, 2024

The screen 9 above uses meme as a form of ridiculing. The photo of Ellen is taken from her video on Instagram (@ellendegeneres, 2020). The photo itself quickly became a meme and is still circulating the Internet. The emoji on the right is known as the "cursed emoji" and frequently represents someone scary, intoxicated or maniacal. The post not only laughs at the similarity between the two but also describes Ellen as unstable and crazy. Ellen's post was published after the first articles about her started appearing; therefore, people started cancelling Ellen and laughing at her as well.

Sarcasm and humour play an important role in digital communication, which facilitates the action of ridiculing others. Sarcasm can be used solely to laugh at someone, but it may also convey a message or an opinion on something in a more discreet way, as shown in example (16). However, they may also be followed with an explanation for clearer delivery of one's thoughts, as displayed in example (17).

(16) WOW! She's really making an.... effort..... **isn't she?** 😂 @TheEllenShow #fuckellen (Retrieved from X. ЯႱ. [@Raptor_Judy]. August 20, 2020)

(17) […] "**look how nice I am guys**!" - that she gave him a promotion looks very forced and comes across fake 😴 #CancelEllen #ellenpompeoisoverparty (Retrieved from X. DKAstrology ʜᴜᴊᴍ ♓ ✨. [@DKAstrology]. September 21, 2020)

Both of the comments aim to ironise the whole situation while stating that they do not agree with such a course of events. While they are not rude or derogatory, they still convey the message of a lack of respect for such actions and for Ellen herself, especially since they include explicit marks of cancellation in the form of hashtags.

4.1.3. Donald Trump

There are many instances of unkind, rude language mixed with expressive and imposing messages within Donald Trump's cancelling posts. The most numerous are discrimination and name-calling, even though the labels are not as derogatory as in previous cases. On the other hand, opinions are an important factor when talking about politics; thus, many posts include judgments on the President and his presidency.

Discrimination

The cancelling posts of Donald Trump include many instances of discrimination due to various factors, e.g. age, race, physical appearance, most of all his hair and weight. Such posts aim to downgrade and ridicule a person based on something they cannot readily change, as shown in example (18) below:

(18) You're **an old, fat man**. Mark Cuban is good looking, he's in great shape, he's a SPORTS TEAM OWNER & billionaire. **Everything you're not** (Retrieved from X. American Woman. [@Liberal_Lady5]. October 5, 2017)

The above comment displays discriminatory attitudes towards higher-weight and older people, therefore it is counted as multiple discrimination. Through comparison, the Internet user also degrades individuals living below the poverty line, as if all the labels and humiliating depictions that Trump received were worse than those of Cuban. Even if the person wanted to call out Trump only, such names which he got called may be putting emphasis on the physical appearance and age of him instead of focusing on his actions. Therefore, some who share such characteristics with the cancelled may feel bad about themselves since the post implies that they are undesirable. Focusing on physical appearance instead of actions brings about connotations of different treatment and derision, which strike as discrimination.

On the other hand, a more rude comment which targets at a feature one cannot change at all is about age. Ageism is a serious issue which leads to excluding older people from various spheres of society (Reisigl, 2007).

(19) This is the look of a **defeated, senile, demented OLD MAN**! #notmypresident #neveragain #trumpsguilty (Retrieved from X. Russel Thompson. [@RussThompson29]. April 23, 2024)

Example (19) shows the text including ageist language, where the Internet user describes older people as "defeated, senile and demented". Even though this comment might have been aimed solely towards Trump, such linguistic choices may lead to aggravating the problem of stereotyping, which concludes that older people are worse off than younger ones. The following comparison devalues the individuals and their contributions.
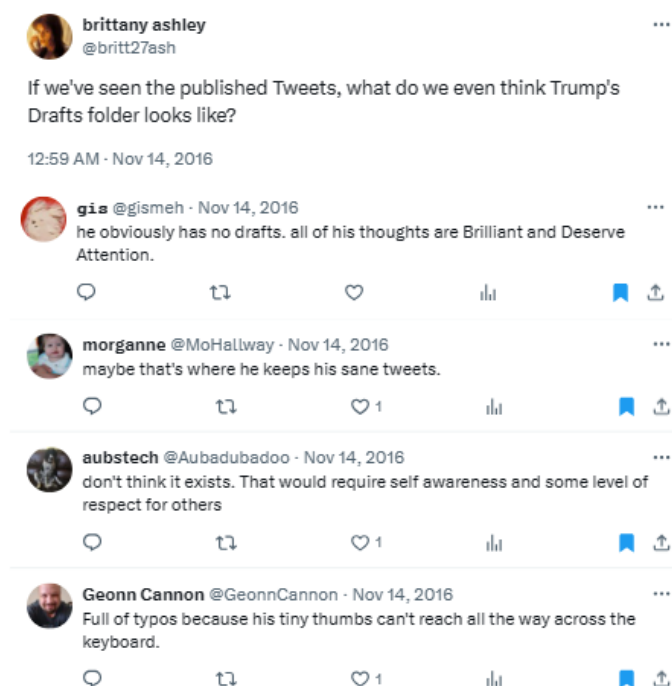
Opinion making

Opinions are an important factor when cancelling people. Through opinions, Trump cancellers not only judge the president himself but also his supporters, which may lead to a re-evaluation of others' choices. Especially persuasive are comments on Trump's presidency, which include judgment on both the president and his potential voters, as presented in example (20) below:

(20) I really want to remind people how Trump really screwed up the response to the Covid 19 pandemic. (Retrieved from X. Michael World Leader. [@LeaderMichael]. May 10, 2024)

The text shows an opinion which evaluates Trump's actions. Moreover, it serves as an influence on others since it reminds the wrongdoings from the past. It may be highly imposing on those of weaker stance on the matter. Through its persuasive message, it not only displays the values and norms broken within the scope of this person but also suggests that others should feel the same way. At the same time, it marks Trump's actions as negative. By making connotations to such a tragic event as a pandemic, it may reinforce the message and make it more personal to many as it may be highly relatable for them.

Opinions may also be conveyed in a more collaborative way with a question as a prompt to encourage others to reply and state their views, as shown in Screen 10 below:

Screen 10. Comments under Brittany ashley's post. [@britt27ash]. (November 14, 2016). Retrieved from X, June 24, 2024

Screen 10 displays a typical interaction on X which includes an original post as a prompt and the replies as opinions of others on the matter. All of them are offensive and aim to ridicule Trump. They do not, however, include all of the Appraisal Theory elements (Martin & White, 2005). They solely pertain to judgements and slightly to appreciation, but they do not define emotions either directly or indirectly. Only through a sarcastic tone, one can see annoyance with quality and relevance of Trump's posts online.

Name-calling

In Trump's case, name-calling has not been as explicit as in DeGeneres' case; however, there are many instances of a bit less vulgar names. Nevertheless, the labels show emotionality and that cancelling Trump is important for Internet users.

（21）@realDonaldTrump I truly don't care. You ever Lexpress [sic!] your feelings about anyone else? You Sir, are a **narcissist**. (Retrieved from X. Lex_571. [@Lex_491]. February 25, 2013)

Example (21) above shows a softer form of labels used towards Trump. The style of the text is mixed; since the first part is informal and neutral, leaning towards disrespect, the last sentence was targeted to sound more eloquent. Such a structure usually strikes sarcastic and ironic connotations, which adds a more discreet layer of disrespect. Thus, the label "narcissist" not only conveys its degrading features through the label itself but also by ridiculing through sarcasm.

However, most labels directed to Trump are more derogatory and expressive than in the previous utterance, as shown in example (22) below:

（22）**Demented Trump** forgot he's **the rotting cunt drip** that stole away women's reproductive rights (Retrieved from X. Trump is a pedophile [@Nublinski]. August 26, 2024)

The text displays strong accusatory language. The labels used are meant to provoke reactions and gather like-minded people, as well as punish Trump and force him to reply to them. The names are used directly without any hidden meanings.

Demands and requests

Trump did not receive as many demands and requests as he received threats, opinions and labels. The demands were, for the most part, highly expressive and imposing. Some were also even incriminating, as they included trial-like judgment, e.g. in example (23) below:

(23) Send that criminal to prison!!!!! #TrumpCrimeFamily #TrumpisaNationalDisgrace (Retrieved from X. Evelyn Woolfolk. [@EvelynWoolfolk]. May 11, 2024)

The text displays a very condemning label. By calling someone a criminal, cancellers play the judges who decide who is guilty and who is not. Such a comment may impose someone's values on others and discard someone's freedom by incriminating them. This not only seeks to cancel an individual but extends the attack to their family and associates, intensifying the public shaming and polarizing discourse. The demand is direct and includes the use of mood derivable, which marks the force of a request.

Sarcasm

Trump's cancelling posts include many instances of ridicule and funny images meant to laugh at him and his actions. The President himself uses humour frequently to ridicule others, thus many people cancelling him use his weapon as well. Most important of humoristic texts are sarcastic utterances, as shown in example (24) below:

(24) Guess I will watch this 60 minutes interview, so I know what Trump is going to deny he said tomorrow. #60Minutes (Retrieved from X. Sandi Bright Colvin. [@Fanofdalser]. November 14, 2016)

The use of situational irony may lead to the exclusion of those who do not follow the news. *60 Minutes* is a news magazine broadcasted on CBS TV station, which is believed to have liberal affiliation (Jurkowitz et al., 2020). Through using hashtags and popularising certain events where the cancelled individuals appear, the audience may be gathered prior to it. This way, more people can react to it, which maximises visibility and publicity (Joshua, 2020). It also amplifies expectations that something norm-breaking may happen. Therefore, those who would not be interested in political matters may join solely to look for reasons to further cancel Trump.

（25）Today's episode of stupid things to say while standing behind bulletproof glass: Trump: "American does not have a gun problem." (Retrieved from X. John Oberlin [@OMGno2trump]. August 22, 2024)

Another post shows a further example of a situation irony, as described by Joshua (2020). Quick responses to issues happening make such commentaries even more relatable and amusing for a broader audience. Moreover, the post has the format of a meme, which increases its likeability (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Shalevska, 2018).

Conclusion

The cancelling posts include a myriad of intertwining methods, such as opinions and name-calling, or discrimination and sarcasm. While all of the forms of cancelling are counted as expressive and unkind, not all of them are rude or explicit. Kanye West received numerous opinions and demands, and the posts were written as if the cancellers still respected him. As a political figure, Donald Trump got many opinions and labels, which stroke as expressive. The harshest comments were directed toward Ellen DeGeneres, who had to accept her fate as "the most hated American" and a lot of other labels, as well as imposing rude opinions and demands.

Chapter 5.   Discursive construction of Cancel Culture

Introduction

This chapter deals with societal aspects emerging from CC. It covers identities and relations formed in the process of using styles and genres of discourse as linguistic expressions of these social constructs (Fairclough, 2003). The identities and relations described are based on the posts cancelling Kanye West, Ellen DeGeneres and Donald Trump as well as their reactions to these movements. The analysis of identities includes styles such as activist and confrontational, which lead to the formation of identities of the accuser and the accused, as well as the requester and the requestee (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, Brown & Levinson, 1978). The cancelling posts make space for the creation of relations of partnership, community building, and collectivity within the cancellers through the use of such genres as social media campaigns. On the other hand, the cancelled take an inferior position and try to regain their status when they apologise and use strategies to repair their image.

The restorative actions of Kanye West, Ellen DeGeneres, and Donald Trump are analyzed based on various apology strategies. These strategies include denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, mortification, statements of willingness to apologize, references to past apologies, false expressions of regret, alignment with victims, dissociation from events, professing previous ignorance, hedges, qualifications of responsibility, denouncement of behaviour, defense of image, conditional acceptance of blame, and non-apologetic explanations of events. These concepts are drawn from the works of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Kampf (2009), and Holmes (1995). In addition, their actions are examined through image repair methods such as denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification, as described by Benoit (2015).

The apologies are relevant in building relations, as they show what kind of position people put themselves in to regain their status. The apologies are either posted by the figures themselves on their social media or said by them during interviews, debates, conferences, or their own TV shows. One apology and one comment with restorative actions are displayed via journalistic reports, due to their restricted access (video conference with workers and non-recorded stand-up show). Each figure is examined separately.

Cancellations bring about connotations of dispute or even war (Chilton, 2004). Since the movement is ruled out between two sides acting as armies, there seems to be a fight over whose norms should be respected more. Moreover, the two camps are behaving as containers,

whose borders are their norms. The fight conditions the need of judicial trial to rule out who is in the wrong, and whose norms should be respected more. All of the metaphors, coming from the war connotations, are valid in the context of cancellations.

5.1. Constructing social identities in the three cancellation cases

The use of strategies of cancelling also displays what identities are formed within society. Stylistic elements of speech acts enable the emergence of the identities of the canceller and the cancelled. The most apparent identities are constructed in the rhetoric Us vs Them (e.g. Reisigl, 2007). The correlation of the canceller and the cancelled always implicates the formation of two opposing groups, or rather a group vs a cancelled individual since the targets are usually aimed at one person by a vast public.

Cancellations are propagated by the type of argumentation called the *argumentum ad populum*, which insinuates that people follow others. This means that, usually, there is a person or a smaller group of people who start the cancellation, and then others join to show their support for the movement. The posts are written in an activist style, whose aim is to persuade and mobilise for change. The activist identity is a very important factor in CC, as it creates collective attitudes in fighting against norm-breaking. It also allows people to feel like they have enough power to shift their reality by changing someone else's behaviour.

The other aspect of activism is its confrontational style of language. In order to 'face the enemy' one has to be direct enough to reach the audience and the norm-breaker. Therefore, the messages are highly accusatory, often also aggressive and vulgar, since calling out is connected with increased emotionality. By explicitly stating someone's name and saying what the fight is against, and by strengthening the message with strong, condemnatory language, one has a bigger chance to influence others.

Many posts are brief and lack detail, serving more to explain the message than to make an accusation. The informative and analytical tone actually enables them to see the mistake and gives them space to ponder and change their attitudes. Even though such posts may still be very emotional, they are usually more informative on the matter and enable to see what is happening. This way, both passers-by and the wrongdoer may realise what is happening so that they address the issue accordingly. Such a style, however, may be less explicit due to the limit of characters imposed on publishers. Nevertheless, the rule may be omitted by posting a 'personal letter' in the form of a screenshot or by making a video commentary on the issue.

Activism may be viewed more like cyberbullying, especially in the face of spreading false rumours. The identity of a bully is frequently linked with satirical style as well as aggressive, manipulative language, which leads to exclusion and dehumanisation. Even though memes and funny images used to cancel may be viewed as entertaining and may lead to reaching bigger audience, they are also often very harmful and humiliating. The manipulative tone may also falsely propagate an issue to a higher level, not only influencing the opinions of the cancellers but also the accused's opinion of themselves.

On the other hand, the cancelled identity may foreshadow if the cancellation is successful or not. The identity of the requestee forces the cancelled to react and abide by the request or demand. However, that does not usually happen, as these are the circumstances that oblige them to act accordingly. Then further dynamics may result in two ways: the first option is that they stay in their powerless state or get pushed even further, and the second suggests that through various image reparatory methods, they are forgiven and may continue living their pre-cancellation life. However, the second case is rather rare. Instead, the cancellation may be frozen in time, waiting to become valid again once something similar happens or when that person does another norm-breaking thing. The cases of Kanye West, Ellen DeGeneres and Donald Trump show how the public figures deal with their cancellations, which display three kinds of identities: the contradicting person in West's case, the victim DeGeneres and the offender Trump. The stylistic devices that allow such analysis are fakeness and politeness of the image reparatory methods, including apologies. The identity of the requestee and the accused is described with the use of the abovementioned styles.

Moreover, all the three cases include the involvement of the abovementioned identities of activists, accusers and requesters. Kanye West's cancellers tend to use a confrontational style and try to convey more personal messages to the celebrity, which could mean they still respect his cultural heritage even though they do not agree with his behaviour. Nevertheless, the strong language and accusations make it clear that people take his cancellation seriously. On the other hand, Ellen DeGeneres' fall was abrupt and unyielding. The cancellers use strong language with accusatory tools as well as incite others to join the movement. The accusers are quick to judge and give their opinion, which frequently is very aggressive. Lastly, the cancellers of Donald Trump mostly point out the wrongdoings and what they do not agree with. While cancelling political figures seems easy due to the affiliation with a political group, the cancellation of the former president does not resonate so harshly. The activism is limited to simply calling out, usually with vulgar language, however, not many actions were connected

with the words. Therefore, his cancellation, even though concluded with the social media ban, can be counted as light.

The analysis covers not only the styles constituting the formation of identities of the cancellers, but also of the three cancelled figures. Such a perspective allows to display the complexity of the situation and a set of identities from both sides. This should help to formulate some conclusions on why some people continue being cancelled, while others recover from it.

5.1.1. Kanye West

The cancellers of Kanye West consist mainly of his fans or former supporters. There is no doubt that they feel respect towards his previous persona and his art. However, most of them decide not to contribute to his career any longer, due to so many norm-breaking events. The cancellers feel that inclusivity is important and they are mostly of liberal views. Many of them are of African-American ethnicity, therefore, they assimilate with the words of Kanye on a deeper level due to the relatability of experiences. However, even this factor does not convince them to stay and support their artist. Many write personal texts to inform about the issues and that they could no longer agree with him in certain matters. Nevertheless, there are exceptionally many texts written in passive style, without derogatory comments. On the other hand, aggressive, emotional and vulgar publications are not missing either. Numerous letters directly referred to Kanye which reinforced the emotional and personal character of the posts.

The identities visible within cancellers are the requester and the accusers. The stylistic means of forming such identities are the confrontational and moralistic tone of posts. People demand actions from Kanye but they are not so forceful or rude, which slightly softens the message. On the other hand, Kanye West displays the identity of a contradicting person. His styles do not match the messages of cancellers which builds dissonance. He seems friendly but forceful in his freedom of speech. He remains fake about his actions which do not mean anything, as he does what the public or his image needs the most at the moment.

The requester

The most apparent identity within the cancelling posts is a requester. Such identity can be seen in example (6) above, where the requester seems to be complicated because, on one hand, they come from a low position of admiration of their idol (e.g. "you changed my life"), but on the other hand, they feel empowered enough to influence Kanye's behaviour (e.g. "get it

78

together"). The request is made with respect towards the rapper, with the use of politeness strategies described by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), e.g. the repeated use of "please". This politeness strategy aligns with cultural norms and allows Kanye to maintain his face while still challenging personal moral standards on himself and others. What is more, the Internet user reminds Kanye of his previous values by stating, "Didn't you tweet that pornography should be banned?". This puts the requester in a position of a guardian of values and social norms.

Moreover, people mainly point out Kanye's mistakes and the activism is rather passive as there rarely are strong demands for Kanye to be judged, but they are directed to his fans (example 26). The texts convey a strictly moralistic message, which aims to inform what actions are unacceptable and why, as well as provide an explanation how to change the course of events before the probable cancellation.

(26) I really wish people would stop idolizing and enabling this guy. So-called "genius" is no excuse. Bipolar disorder is no excuse. Many people with bipolar live their lives without being narcissistic, antisemitic jerks. (Retrieved from You Tube. [@janinecarson8380]. 2022)

In example (26) the requester positions themselves above others, which gives them illusory authority to influence people's behaviour. By stating, "I really wish people would stop idolizing and enabling this guy," the requester assumes a position of moral superiority, indirectly asserting control over the narrative surrounding Kanye. According to van Dijk framework (2008), such a statement may be used in order to challenge societal hierarchy and force one's norms on others. Moreover, as stated by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), the phrase "I really wish" functions as a softener, which could be understood as an attempt to maintain social harmony while pushing a change. Similarly, the phrasing "idolizing and enabling" can aim at the unjust higher position of Kanye, according to the Internet user. It also crosses out the possibility of redemption and forgiveness towards the harmful behaviour of the rapper.

Many journalists or defenders call Kanye a "troubled artist", "genius", or a "provocateur", so he is not considered as a predator but a talented, loved rapper with social problems. This reaction may be due to him being close to his fans and using informal language as well as many procedures to which people may relate and, therefore, understand him better thanks to his small distance from 'normal people'. Kanye West himself is a human rights activist who fights for racial equality and gives opportunities to those in need so that they can

have comparable chances to those who are more privileged. His good deeds, however, do not eliminate those that are unacceptable.

The accuser

The cancelling posts are focused on Kanye's actions and not on his appearance. Therefore, they are strongly logical and often include explanations for such reactions. While the style used is confrontational because it contributes to the movement; it is not as rude or excessively aggressive. The accusations are made mostly in the way of a warning to him rather than condemning him (27).

（27）@kanyewest you're an ignoramus who's lost touch with reality. Once again, you're being attacked because you made a stupid decision and said a disgusting thing. Own up to your mistakes, or they'll haunt you for the rest of your life. (Retrieved from X. Ellie 📇. [@allthingselliej]. May 02, 2018)

The example above displays the identity of an accuser who puts themselves in a position of moral authority and directly challenges Kanye's behaviour through downgrading labels, such as "you're an ignoramus who's lost touch with reality". The accuser claims a higher status, which enables them to judge and criticise Kanye's actions and to push their norms on him. The phrase "you made a stupid decision and said a disgusting thing" puts a direct blame on the rapper which is reinforced with the threat "own up to your mistakes, or they'll haunt you for the rest of your life". Such wording implies that the fans and the cancellers struggle to enforce their norms on Kanye and shape their reality according to their needs. The bluntness and directness of the accusation show that social harmony is not so important to the Internet user as conveying a clear message, even at the cost of a lack of politeness (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

The contradicting Kanye West

For his part, Kanye West shows reluctance and feigns ignorance on his cancelled actions. Even though he sometimes shows remorse and apologises, he does not get pushed away from the spotlight easily. His moves are calculated towards his goal, which is more important to him than his public image, as exemplified below (example 28) in a fragment of an interview with TMZ (2022):

(28)   The day I was taken down the Balenciaga site, that was the most freeing days.
        […] I had to get out of these big corporations so I could get directly to the people.
        (West, 2022a)

This utterance shows that Kanye tries to find benefits and sell his lie to people to appear stronger. Taking into consideration the whole context and his other utterances one may notice that it is merely a façade which enables him to seemingly keep his face. In a later interview with TMZ he admitted that this moment was hard for him as he nearly lost everything and went bankrupt (West, 2024b). Knowing that, it appears that Kanye will do and say anything so that it seems as if he has control over the events and maintains his status. Even though he frequently says he is fighting with good intentions because he tries to preserve everyone's free speech rights or battles for lessening race inequalities, he often ends up making trouble and saying or doing something which crosses others' boundaries. The fake style is apparent in his speeches, as he never seems to react truthfully, with an open heart and mind to the cancellations, as displayed in example (29) below.

(29) People just in general they love me so much I'm actually a hard guy to really hate
        for a long period of time it's because of my huge cock. (West, 2022b)

Kanye West is successful at manipulating the dynamic of situations to his advantage. He changes the rhetoric of them so that it suits his thought-through image, which he has been building over the years of his public activities. He reverts bad outcomes of his wrongdoing, such as Balenciaga's dropping the partnership contract with him, into a fully controlled result of his actions. Moreover, he changes the nature of this consequence into positive circumstances which aims to appease his fans. He frequently mentions his artistic vision and that he is a rebel, as well as an activist, and that he has rights to his own opinions the same way cancellers have. Instead of apologising, most often Kanye himself withdraws himself from the public eye for some time and silences himself instead of responding to issues (DeGeneres, 2016).

All these factors create a contradicting identity of Kanye in the face of cancellation. Once, he shows remorse and promises to change his behaviour, and the other time, he provokes and victimises himself, as seen in example (30) below:

(30) I wanna talk about the Jewish comment; it's actually proven the exact point that
        I made. So many actors been bullying [me] behind the scenes. […] Ari Emmanuel
        asking people not to do business with me. […] They'll mute you. (West, 2022a)

By making himself a victim of the situation he not only cleanses himself of all the wrongdoings but also tries to rebuild fans' trust and support. By stating the actual name of another person seemingly in the wrong, he switches focus on Ari Emmanuel, making him the offender instead of Kanye. So even though he apologised for the anti-semitic comments and suffered the consequences, he still insists that it was within his control, tries to make a profit out of the situation and maintains fan's support by saving his face. This displays a rather complex style of response since his techniques are not consistent and are highly dependent on the circumstances and his objectives.

5.1.2. Ellen DeGeneres

The cancellers of Ellen DeGeneres are quite aggressive and vulgar, which underlines their expressivity and anger towards the host. Although Ellen herself is a representative of the LGBTQ+ community and is of liberalistic beliefs, she cannot avoid cancellations, even from people of the same social groups. Within the cancellers, the identities of the requester and the accuser are highly apparent, with an advantage of the latter one. Cancellations of Ellen are highly authoritative and assertive. Many of them consist of direct demands and commands on what should be done. The texts are rather rude and derogatory, consisting of many humoristic aspects. Taking into consideration that they have the power to influence such an impactful show with a long history of airing confirms that the anger of the audience may have great effects.

During her cancellations, Ellen DeGeneres uses a style of victimizing herself through emotionality and instances of unfairness. The fakeness is hard to judge; however, taking into consideration that many of her responses to cancellations were made on her show, which is scripted, one can assume that the actions are not fully heartfelt.

The requester

Requesters highly outnumber other identities within DeGeneres' cancellers. The demands posted are authoritative and assertive, which contribute to the forceful style, as shown in example (31) below:

> (31) Is it just me or should celebrities like @TheEllenShow behave & stop using #blacklivesmatter to boost their own likability factor? #cancelellen #EllenDeGeneresisoverparty #EllenIsOverParty Treat your employees with respect THEN speak & be listened to Ellen. #BeKind (Retrieved from X. Ireland's Big Issue. [@BigIssueIreland]. June 12, 2020)

The requesters are solid in what they want to achieve. Moreover, they give instructions what has to be done to cease cancellations: "Treat your employees with respect THEN speak". The identity of a requester is constructed through a combination of assertiveness, moral authority, and directness. According to van Dijk (2008), the request is highly authoritative as it demands Ellen directly and firmly to "behave" and "treat her employees with respect". The requester is coming from a higher position, assuming the role of a moral judge and holding Ellen accountable. They assert their dominance when instructing her what has to be done in order for her to even be able to explain herself. The posts are, for the most part, rude and disrespectful, and they consist of strong names, such as in example (11) above (e.g. "nasty bitch").

The accuser

There was only one reason for Ellen DeGeneres' cancellation which contributed to the number of accusers. Since everyone knew why Ellen got cancelled in the first place, the situation did not have to be repeated. Therefore, there are not so many accusers within cancellers, as requesters. However, the accusers often refer to additional or peripheral issues rather than restating the central controversy, like in example (32) below:

> (32) Seeing @TheEllenShow apologizing for her abhorrent behaviour rings so hollow. You're only sorry you got caught. #hypocrite #cancelEllen (Retrieved from X. Jack Pierce [@realjackpierce]. July 31, 2020)

The accusers are not so assertive as in the case of requesters. Therefore, their style is softer, seeking only to inform that more has to be done in order for the cancellers to be satisfied. In the example above, Ellen is accused of insincerity ("you're only sorry you got caught"), which positions the Internet user in a higher position, serving as an authority and a judge of societal norms (van Dijk, 2008). The hashtag "#hypocrite" further reinforces this power shift, as the accuser labels Ellen's behaviour as morally unacceptable, thus exercising discursive power in the public sphere. according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) analysis, the accusation is blunt and direct; it lacks mitigation and reflects a bald-on-record approach. All of these elements form the idea of a superficial, fake apology, which has to be pointed out by the moral judges of social norms who seek to hold wrongdoers accountable and bring back social harmony. While less aggressive than requesters, accusers still assert their moral judgment, but they seek not to impose change but to highlight hypocrisy and wrongdoing.

The victim Ellen DeGeneres

Ellen DeGeneres frequently chooses the identity of a victim in her responses to accusations and apologies. Through styles of emotionality and seeking support, she manipulates people to stop the cancellation since she claims not to be responsible for the problems. By blaming her cancellation on the CC, she victimises herself and calls for accountability of others as well as for shifting in the dynamics of cancellations so that further movements like that are ceased. Eventually, when she decided to finish her show, she displayed her assertive and empowered style, which aimed to convince her accusers that it was not due to them, but because she had made that decision herself, as shown in example (33) below:

(33) I want to announce that the next season is going to be the last one. […] I want you to know that I thought a lot about this decision. […] You may wonder why I've decided to end after 19 seasons. The truth is, I always trust my instincts. […] I truly have felt like next season was the right time to end this amazing chapter. (DeGeneres, 2021a)

By repeated "I', "my", Ellen underlined that she was the one in control. Thus, she put herself in a higher position as someone who is in power. On the other hand, such an action could also insinuate that Ellen did not admit to her wrongdoings because the end of the show came not due to cancellation but due to the alleged initial plan to finish in the 19th season.

Her apologies are full of contradicting styles: they are formal and scripted, as well as they contain a lot of humoristic elements with sarcasm.

(34) And in all seriousness, I truly have felt like next season was the right time to end this amazing chapter. In 1997, I knew it was time to come out on my sitcom and live my truth. Back then I had a vivid dream that a bird flew out of a cage and set itself free because it needed to get out of that cage. And recently I had a dream that a bird, a beautiful bird with bright red feathers, came to my window and whispered "you can still do stuff on Netflix" (DeGeneres, 2021)

Ellen recites her monologue in a serious tone, naming all the important issues in a way that could benefit her. However, the comedic interludes modify it by shifting the dynamic of the speech. According to linguistic theories on politeness and face-saving (Goffman, 1967; Brown & Levinson, 1987), humour can serve as a strategy to mitigate face-threatening acts. By incorporating humour, Ellen attempts to diffuse the seriousness of the situation,

re-establishing a connection with her audience through shared laughter. However, this also functions as a way to downplay the accusations against her, subtly shifting the narrative from one of accountability to one of resilience and self-deprecation. The humour lightens the tone and may distract from the gravity of the allegations, which is a common tactic in self-defence discourse. Through comedic remarks, she tried to bring herself closer to the audience and build a group of supporters.

However, her rebranding from "kind lady" to the "most hated person in America" seemed too strong. Once the allegations appeared, her carefully polished persona was tarnished, and as of the present time, she cannot come back to the life she once led. Even if her speeches or interviews do not always directly state the issue, Ellen seems rather personal, especially with claims about her loss of the show.

(35) I hadn't been sleeping. […] I was very emotional. (DeGeneres, 2021b)

Ellen personalizes the narrative by sharing her emotional struggles, thus seeking to elicit empathy from her audience. This appeal to emotion is a classic strategy in constructing a victim identity, as it shifts the focus from the actions that caused the controversy to the emotional impact on the individual. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) discuss how such emotional language can function as a mitigating device, softening the perception of the speaker's responsibility by emphasizing their own suffering. By highlighting her lack of sleep and emotional distress, Ellen positions herself as someone who is also harmed by the situation, thus inviting her audience to sympathize with her rather than condemn her.

5.1.3. Donald Trump

The styles contributing to the formation of identities of the requester and the accuser within Trump's cancellers are the most diverse. The cause for that is the fact that people cancel Trump for many reasons, not only for his actions as in the previous cases but also for his political party affiliation, appearance, speaking style, beliefs, etc. The styles used by cancellers are expressive, derogatory and condemning.

On the other hand, Donald Trump is extremely stative when it comes to his reactions to cancellation. He uses humour and ridicule to degrade enemies and cleanse himself. He often attacks offenders and manipulates the crowd into thinking he is above others while his offenders are at fault.

The requester

Trump does not have many requesters within his cancellers. People tend to ridicule and accuse him more instead of moralise or give second chances. The requesters usually target other cancellers or Trump's voters so that they stop supporting him (example 36). Requesters in this case primarily target Trump's supporters rather than Trump himself. They also aim to condemn Trump and make him take accountability for his actions, however they are not as forceful as in the case of Ellen DeGeneres.

(36) Beware false prophets deceiving in the name of justice, empowering the enemy they claim to fight. Stay informed, challenge authority, seek truth to resist manipulation and preserve a just society. #StayVigilant #SeekTruth #ResistManipulation #TrumpLies #TrumpIsGuilty #TrumpIsAPieceOfShit 💩 (Retrieved from X. AClarice [@AngelaClar1]. May 11, 2024)

The moralisation is solely directed towards other people than Trump and his party. Such a method is based on the fact that Trump has shown many times that he does not apologise nor change his behaviour. He does not fear cancellations and pushes forward even if he is banned from social media. The requester adopts a higher position, warning others of the dangers posed by Trump, whom they label a "false prophet." The hashtags further reinforce the message by framing Trump as a liar and manipulator, but the ultimate goal is to rally others against him, not necessarily to engage with him directly.

According to Reisigl and Wodak's (2017) approach, this type of requester identity functions as a guardian of societal norms, positioning the speaker as someone who seeks to correct or protect the public from potential harm. The use of biblical language ("false prophets") and the appeal to moral authority reflect a discursive strategy aimed at delegitimizing Trump while empowering others to resist his influence.

The accuser

The accusers represent a numerous group within Trump's cancellers. People accused him of many wrongdoings and norm-breaking events varying from discrimination to being a cult leader and a rapist. The accusations act as a summary of all the things he has done wrong to show the extent of Trump's actions and express one's concern and other negative emotions or ridicule him, as shown respectively in examples (37) and (38) below:

(37) A criminal defender blaming others for his troubles. Let's not forget that he is the head of the #TrumpCrimeFamily @realDonaldTrump (Retrieved from X. COM ✋UA. [@CarlosOMonzon]. May 11, 2024)

(38) @realDonaldTrump You're a reality TV star just like the Kardashians. Only with less class than the Kardashians, if that's at all possible (Retrieved from X. Navy Mom. [@USNavyMomPA]. April 19, 2015)

The accusations are forceful and, in most cases, derogatory, but not necessarily explicit. In these examples, the accusers use labels such as "criminal defender" and "head of the #TrumpCrimeFamily" to paint Trump. The comparison to reality TV stars, coupled with the remark about lacking class, is intended to ridicule and diminish Trump's status (van Dijk, 2008). These accusations are forceful and derogatory, they include sarcasm and insults to assert the accuser's dominance over the accused.

The offender Donald Trump

Donald Trump's style of responding to issues is shifting focus to others and offending them so that people focus more on other things than his actions. It seems that his unphased attitude towards many cancellations, as well as his successful pushing the focus on other issues, is really effective, as seen in his speech in example (39) below.

(39) We're living in the real world. This is nothing more than a distraction from the important issues we're facing today. (Trump, 2016)

Not even his methods of offending and attacking others while seemingly trying to repair his image could convince his supporters that he manipulates them and uses them for his own benefit. Such information, when stated while apologising for one mistake, seems like a manipulation of facts which aims to minimise offensiveness. In his eyes, he is a victim of aggressive, unjust cancellations since he underlines that his words try to unite the USA and its people to fight against broken morals, such as the illegal actions of Bill Clinton.

(40) If you look at Bill Clinton, far worse. Mine are words and his was action. His words, what he has done to women. There's never been anybody in the history of politics in this nation that has been so abusive to women. (*ABC News*, 2016) .

He further deepens the division of people by polarising his supporters and his cancellers with friendly remarks to the former and disdain towards the latter. He frequently emphasises how strong he is and that he is a reliable leader and fighter for a better America, which seemingly purifies him from his many norm-breaking actions.

The most important factor about Donald Trump is that he is a politician of the Republican Party, which has a very conservative approach to ruling the country. The ideologies connected to that identity contradict the norms of the majority of cancellers, since, as Norris (2023) argues, cancellations are mainly directed from liberals towards conservatists. Such a position in society and his nationalistic ideologies align Trump with a powerful identity of an authoritative style of speaking. He also does not fear to confront many subjects in an aggressive, expressive way, which often comes out as forceful and condemning to others.

(41) Hillary Clinton and her kind have run our country into the ground. […] Bill Clinton has actually abused women and Hillary has bullied, attacked, shamed and intimidated his victims. (Trump, 2016)

His beliefs and the way that he speaks give space for exclusive language and behaviour (ex. "Hilary Clinton and her kind"), which may be a basis for the norm-breaking for many people.

5.2. Constructing social relations in the three cancellation cases

CC is a highly complex phenomenon; thus, it gives rise to various genres and social relations resulting from them to emerge in discourse. The cancelled and cancellers' relations are the most dynamic. They are strictly action-reaction expectant relations since cancellers react to cancelled actions, and consequently, cancellers' reactions expect the cancelled to react to the actions and address them. Therefore, the analysis shows the two sides through the genres that are used in both cases.

CC is as propagated as it is because it forces others to react and address the issue. If they do not, people assume that the widely spread rumour is true. That is why reactions are crucial in the process of cancellation, because otherwise the career of a person may be halted irreversibly. By influencing the cancelled's freedom of action through accusing them, the canceller is given a higher status of power, which in consequence may lead to serious

repercussions. Such power, however, may only be an illusion in the hands of cancellers since many people seem not to waver even when faced with accusations, e.g. Donald Trump.

Firstly, the cancellers' actions resemble social media campaigns. Through publishing viral posts with the use of popular hashtags, the controversial behaviour is put into light and the demand for the cancelled is formed. Campaigns involve rapid information spread and inciting to join the movement. It is not usually done by means of the actual campaign where one has to collect signatures, but through the number of posts, likes, and shares that replace such a traditional method. Every interaction around the movement is equal to signing a petition. Moreover, the campaign may even be reinforced emotionally when cancellers write open letters either to the cancelled individuals or institutions and companies supporting them. The emotional, expressive message has better chances to reach others, and thus call for accountability. Such a genre gives strong basis for community building as well as relation of partnership and solidarity. Thanks to similar goals, people bond over cancelling their common enemies in the form of norm-breakers or events. Thus, those who share a group understand each other better and help each other out to achieve what the majority wants.

Apologies are an important genre acting as a response to accusations. The analysis of public apologies and other public reactions to being cancelled is very important while examining people's attitudes and their crisis communication in the face of cancellation. These attempts to repair include changing the audience's attitudes, creating and changing their beliefs to either better one's view of oneself or to degrade the offensiveness of one's acts. However, when apologies are strategic and fake, like in the case of public apologies (as argued by Kampf [2009]), the relation built between cancellers and the cancelled is a manipulation of social harmony and a violation of social norms and values. It also strikes as taking over the control of the movement and elevating the status of the cancelled.

The analysis covers the reactions of Kanye West, Ellen DeGeneres and Donald Trump to getting cancelled, as described in Chapter 3. To provide the findings, Holmes' (1995), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) and Kampf's (2009) approaches to apologising are used. Holmes, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain propose a set of strategies typically used to apologise. They include explicit expressions of apology, explanation or account of cause, acknowledging the responsibility by accepting the blame, expressing self-deficiency, recognising the need to apologise, expressing lack of intent and offering reparatory actions explicit self-blame or denial of fault. Kampf adds methods utilised in fauxpologies, such as statement of willingness to apologise, reference to past apologies, false expression of regret, alignment with victims, dissociation from events, professing previous ignorance, hedges, qualifications

of responsibility, denouncement of behaviour, defence of image, conditional acceptance of blame and non-apologetic explanation of events. The genre of apologies is realised through retrieving the status of the cancelled through image reparatory strategies, analysed with the use of elements of Benoit's (2015) Image Restoration Theory. They include denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action and mortification.

5.2.1. Kanye West

Kanye West's cancellers are mostly activists, but most importantly his supporters. Thus, their cancellation seems more personal and humane than in the other two cases. Because people want to moralise Kanye instead of bashing him, their mobilisation resembles a campaign so that more people speak out since a bigger group has a better chance of being noticed by the rapper. The cancellers write open letters, either in a shorter or longer form, which consist of directly addressing the recipient. All of the acts of coming forward are an attempt on the side of cancellers to build a relationship with each other but also with the rapper. The community which is created fights for the same goal – social harmony, which is shaken by West's actions. Therefore, the cancellers who still respect the celebrity form a bond with him and warn him either through hashtags, open letters or other forms of social media campaigns.

On the other hand, Kanye himself does not help his case with his reactions and attempts to restore his status and build a connection with his supporters. His reactions are fake, and through genres of apologies and other reparation methods, he only furtherly disrupts the harmony and manipulates it into his well-being.

Building collectivity through social media campaigns

Social media campaigns are a powerful tool in building collectivity and partnership. Thanks to hashtags and other forms of searchable talk, they gain a bigger number of participants, which broadens the movement's reach on the Internet. Open letters are a part of social media campaigns. However, their content is usually more emotional, as shown in Screen 11 below.

Open Letter to Kanye West..........

Since 2007 I've started my day working out in some form or another. The one thing that stayed consistent over the years was - the beginning of my playlist. Full blast "Did you realize, that you were a Champion in their eyes, Yes I Did". That was my song, my motivation, my get your ass up and do the damn thang. Whatever that was for me at the time.

I developed a Love/Hate Relationship with you.

I hated the moment you tarnished Taylor Swift's award acceptance.
I loved that you had the guts to say on camera that "George Bush" didn't care about Black People.
I hated the moment you married Kim Kardashian. (Not because I don't like her) But you never loved her. (And I don't believe she ever loved you) She was simply the other end of your "Power Couple". You wanted what Jay-Z and Beyonce have.
I loved the moments I saw you bonding with your kids.
I hated the moment you made a mockery of the church.
I loved your Netflix Documentary because it showed how much you loved your mom, how determined you were to bring your talent to the world and the hustle you had in you.

After that....

There have been no more "Love" moments for me. Just Hate.

Trump Supporter
Running for President and making a mockery out of US Politics
Black People chose slavery.
Teaming with Candace Owens
White Lives Matter shirts
George Floyd died from Fentanyl overdose
Going Death Con 3 on Jews

It's so sad how your Buffoonish ways has changed how I start my day after 15 years. I am forced to find a new Daily Anthem. I've deleted every Kanye album out of my library. I can't even listen to your music without asking the questions -

Why does he hate Black People so much? Why does he hate himself so much? Or is it all for attention?

I asked my husband the other day - how does Kanye's story end! Will he just fade away? Will his life end early due to a Heart Attack or Psychotic Breakdown? Because all these antics and foolishness must take a toll on his mental and physical health.

@UncleRuss said, "Build your own shit! Right your wrongs! Empower your community! And be a "Super Hero" you can do it.

As A Life Coach, I say to you, "Put your kids first. Seeing their father become one of the most hated men in America is only doing damage." You've made the money and you have the status as one of the greatest in the music game. Why turn your legacy into one of shame for your kids to endure?

Bridget Boyd
YouTuber - Ebony Ladies in the DR
letstalkaboutitlc.com

Screen 11. Ebony Ladies in the DR. [@EbonyladytheDR]. (October 28, 2022). Retrieved from X, July 13, 2024

Such a message generates a special relation between Kanye and his cancellers. While they do convey the point they want, they do not do it in an offensive, aggressive way. The letter is not accusatory in an attacking way. Instead, it contains questions ("Why does he hate Black People so much?") or statements of regret ("It's so sad how your Buffoonish ways changed […]"). Moreover, the text mixes direct addressing to Kanye ("I say to you […]") and indirect ("Why does he hate himself?"). The indirect way of referring to the rapper and asking rhetorical questions builds distance, which, as a result, seems less accusatory. Such a form of activism may not bring the desired outcome and seems too slight to bring changes. The mobilisation,

however, is very strong, even though the text is not as much. Such a statement is proven by the actual repercussions that Kanye had to face due to his cancellations.

Manipulating social harmony through apologies

Kanye rarely apologises, and if he does, it either does not express what the apology intended or is treated more like a mockery. Even if he sometimes may be seen as 'the good guy' who has a bigger plan on his mind, he brings attention to himself with controversial events; the truth is that his actions have an impact on other people. Although, from time to time, he seems aware of that fact, his actions do not correlate with the remorse he seemingly shows in his apologies.

The first apparent aspect displayed in the apology to Taylor Swift, published on his personal now-deleted blog *KanyeUniverseCity*, is that it is written in capital letters, with many exclamation marks (example 42), ellipses (example 43) and multiplied letters (example 44).

(42) EVERYBODY WANNA BOOOOO ME BUT I'M A FAN OF REAL POP CULTURE!!!

(43) I GAVE MY AWARDS TO OUTKAST WHEN THEY DESERVED IT OVER ME…

(44) I'M SOOOOO SORRY   (Crosley, 2009)

Such a procedure would normally indicate expressive discourse emotionally charged. However, due to the contradictory content, highly informal style and lack of sincerity, it shows more the lack of remorse and sarcasm in the text. Moreover, all of his efforts to better opinions about him and apologise were to no avail, since they were later proved to be insincere and fake. Such a statement may be backed by the scandals between the two later on, which seemed like a provocation on Kanye's part. This attitude would confirm that West did not have any remorse.

While in the apology written in Hebrew after antisemitic comments, the linguistic inclusion of Jewish people could be viewed as positive for some, many American Jews were unhappy due to the fact that they did not speak Hebrew. Therefore, seemingly acting in a belief of including a community, another part of it was excluded. Overall, Kanye West's apologies and other reactions seem very mixed up, and their usage is inconsistent. Due to that fact, it is hard to determine whether any of them are real. He frequently explains himself and assesses his actions with good intentions, but his promises for the future seem redundant since his behaviour does not align with his words.

Moreover, Kanye rarely uses explicit expressions of regret or apology and if he does, they are frequently mocking or insincere. For example, he acknowledges his wrongdoing in an apology to Taylor Swift, published on his blog, as shown in examples (45) and (46).

(45) I'M SINCERELY SORRY

(46) I'M IN THE WRONG FOR GOING ON STAGE AND TAKING AWAY FROM HER MOMENT! (Crosley, 2009)

However, most often Kanye uses 'ifpologies' as displayed in example 16, which do not reflect an intent of apologies, especially since the message has been distorted by the words that followed it displayed in example (47) below. Such a statement diminishes the regret and makes apologies untrustworthy due to their lack of honesty.

(47) I'm sorry if y'all had to hear a grown-up conversation with us screaming at each other. (West, 2024a)

West frequently tried to explain his behaviour. During the scandal with Taylor Swift, he first called himself a "fan of real pop culture", implying that the singer was not compatible with such a statement. He further explained his behaviour with a prior similar situation, where he had given away his award to another artist when he thought they deserved it more. Therefore, he still did not see the offensiveness of his actions, but rather that they were reasonable, as is visible in example (48).

(48) I'M NOT CRAZY YALL, I'M JUST REAL. (Crosley, 2009)

Later he explained that he had not been acting like himself because he had been mourning his mother. In his apologies, Kanye frequently pushes the responsibility on exterior events, for example, when apologising for the antisemitic comments, he explained that "we got to the point when something had to happen" (West, 2024a)

Kanye's apologies are rather contradicting, quickly rushing from regret to denying his intent and fault. He is not a readily regretful person and has not fully shown responsibility for his actions. Yet, he does acknowledge one of his wrongdoings in a way, e.g., in an apology to the Jewish community, shown in example (49).

(49) It was not my intent to hurt or disrespect, and I very much regret any pain I may have caused. (Singh & Williams, 2023)

However, the use of the modal verb "may" could have distorted the message by expressing the possibility of causing harm and not fully acknowledging that he, in fact, had hurt many people. In the same apology, he also shows a lack of intent (example 49) and displays self-deficiency and offers to repair his behaviour (example 50). This is also visible in example (51) below, where he recognises the need to apologise to the people by underlining the importance of forgiveness. All of the strategies show that he is able to acknowledge the responsibility to a certain point.

(50) I am committed to begin with myself to learn from this experience in order to ensure greater sensitivity and understanding in the future. (Singh & Williams, 2023)

(51) Your forgiveness is important to me. (Singh & Williams, 2023)

The apology itself does not feel much like a heartfelt apology because even in that short blog post, Kanye says many contradicting messages, like in example (52) below.

(52) WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD!!!! EVERYBODY WANNA BOOOOO ME BUT I'M A FAN OF REAL POP CULTURE!!! (Crosley, 2009)

This could mean that he does not hold himself accountable, and he still stands for what he did. He also downgrades Taylor Swift as an artist and her music, as he claims that it is not a real pop culture. He affirms his stance once again when he adds to his apology that he gave his award to another artist when he thought they deserved it over him. Therefore, even though he apologises and says how sorry he is, he still makes it clear that this is his opinion and that he is entitled to it. He shifts the focus from his wrongdoing to the fact that he still believes in the rightfulness of his words many times, which works the same way as minimisation. In his apology to Jewish people, he also successfully minimises his wrongdoing by stating that he was sorry about "any unplanned outbursts", which could imply that it was accidental and not intentional.

What is more, during the issue with antisemitic comments, he does not underline his intent to change and repair his deed. The sincerity of his apology falls thin, because he uses the ifpology, which shifts the focus from taking responsibility to just saying sorry, only if there is anyone hurt by that. This suggests that he does not believe that the message and action could be negatively viewed and accepts the blame only conditionally.

All of the public apology strategies used by Kanye undermine the relations of manipulating social harmony and elevating his status instead of building a community due to the lack of sincerity. Through these different methods, the rapper was able to overturn and shift the cancellations to his own benefit.

Maintaining power imbalance through false image repair

As for image repair, considering all his reactions to situations where norms have been broken, Kanye West frequently uses techniques to reduce the offensiveness of his words and actions. He is eager to explain himself and show to everyone that the belief in bigger good deeds drives his actions. This creates a relation of trying to maintain his higher status in society and not lose face, even in light of cancellation.

In interactions outside of apologising, he shows a rather unapologetic side of himself, as shown in example (53).

(53) Black people can't be antisemitic. We are Jew. (West, 2024a)

His wrongdoings fade into the background as he manipulates the situation to his benefit, stating that his antisemitic comments are not offensive because he is a Jew himself. He also uses differentiation in the message by saying that he did not do anything wrong; he solely stated his opinion to which he was entitled. In his interview with Piers Morgan (Piers Morgan Uncensored, 2022) he also admitted that he would not apologise unless his conditions are met, which shows that norm-breaking events are tools to achieve his goals.

He sometimes also shifts blame onto others, for example, when he was cancelled for his support of Trump and starting in the presidential elections, as shown in example (54) below:

(54) I'm cancelled because I didn't cancel Trump. (Bromwich, 2018)

Such a stance pushes the responsibility and the wrongdoings on Trump, while Kanye stays innocent. He also reduces his participation in norm-breaking events (example 55) when he explains why he was cancelled after the antisemitic comments.

(55) I even said his apologies and they still fuck with me. (West, 2024a).

By this statement, he presents a belief that when one apologises, even if later he claims that the apology was only partially true, the person should get cleared of all the faults.

Furthermore, West frequently tried to evade responsibility by stating that something was accidental or was not intended. He also underlined thoroughly that he was not incorrect and even proceeded to make himself a victim by explaining his wrongdoing and evading responsibility. He provokes others, as shown in example (56), in a situation where he was faced with an accusation in the Thirty Mile Zone (TMZ) interview (West, 2024a) when asked about his removal from various platforms.

(56) I like it, remove us. (West, 2024a)

He used defeasibility when explaining the situations of wrongdoing by stating that it was needed or that it had to happen. The good intentions behind the situation have also been frequently underlined, as shown in example (57) below.

(57) I always wanted to help people. My entire life, I just wanted to give and do something that I felt was right. (PublicApologyCentral, 2011)

By such a statement, Kanye manipulated the situation into the idea that he is the victim because people accused him even though he meant no harm.

West often explains everything with his freedom of speech and that he has the right to his own opinions. Through bolstering, he frequently wanted to show his good side so that the wrongdoing was outweighed by the positive aspects. He also underlined that when he had been in such a situation where he believed someone else should have gotten the award, he gave it away. He showed that he is a 'bigger person' and that he solely guards his free speech privileges in an interview with Jay Leno (example 58), showing that he had good intentions and that he was not a perpetrator.

(58) I always wanted to help people. My entire life, I just wanted to give and do something that I felt was right. (PublicApologyCentral, 2011)

He also reduced offensiveness through transcendence by stating that he felt responsible for guarding a proper level of development in pop culture. Even though, he sometimes promised to change or do something (example 59), the promises stay unfulfilled.

(59) I WILL APOLOGIZE TO TAYLOR 2MRW. (Crosley, 2009)

In fact, the personal apology came rather late. His offer to repair is, therefore, fake. After the scandal he had a one-year hiatus, which was explained as a journey to develop more

as a person (DeGeneres, 2016). He claimed to have corrected himself before going back to showbusiness. However, further scandals connected to the singer and outside this issue showed that the words did not match the actions.

Lastly, Kanye West expressed mortification by apologizing and asking for forgiveness. Kanye West touches the sphere of empathy in example (60) below.

（60）It's been extremely tough. Just dealing with the fact that I hurt someone or took their dignity away… You know, it's actually someone's emotions that I stepped on, it was very… it was rude. (PublicApologyCentral, 2011)

He explained how he realised that he had hurt her feelings and that he just wanted to be a good person and not that kind of man. He even made himself a victim, by stating how hard this situation was for him and his mentality. However, as mentioned above, taking into consideration the context of the whole situation does not show that the "sincere apologies" were, in fact, real.

All the manipulatory devices which caused Kanye to seemingly only react emotionally and empathically to his cancellations allowed him to manipulate the crowd into thinking that he was really trying to retrieve his status. However, in reality, he seems to never consider himself as cancelled, which helps him to never lose face in front of his cancellers. In fact, he claims to have gained more from the cancellations than the cancellers, which confirms that the methods to retrieve his status were only for silencing cancellers. He has therefore manipulated the power distribution or his benefit. By shaping his reality and akin people believe his rhetoric he challenges the social hierarchy so that even though he gets cancelled he stays relevant to wide public.

5.2.2. Ellen DeGeneres

Ellen DeGeneres' actions caused controversy among the people since so many had mixed reactions. The comedian had both a strong fanbase of supporters and also of haters, who were successful in cancelling her from the problematic talk show. Her reactions, however, could not stop people from speculating, and even though she might not have been such a monster, as many call her, she had to continue her career and private life with "the most hated person in America" tag. Through social media campaigns, which include heavily used hashtags and competitions, people build a community of cancellers who unanimously join forces and work together to take down their enemy.

Ellen DeGeneres' seemingly heartfelt and well-thought-through reaction did not help her at all. The force of the cancellers overwhelmed her attempts to regain her status and convince people that she was not a bad person. She failed to manipulate social harmony, even if her apologies and status-retrieving methods were highly emotional and appealing.

Building collectivity through social media campaigns

Ellen's cancellers are very eager to build a big army, which would overpower any comeback of the host to television. Their social campaigns are especially forceful since they contain many instances of rude, explicit and highly expressive language which appeals to others. Moreover, due to many competitions, which include posting with cancelling hashtags, the movement gets propagated to the wider public (example 61).

> (6 1) Respond to this with the most insane stories you've heard about Ellen being mean & I'll match every one w/ $2 to @LAFoodBank (Retrieved from X. Kein T. Porter. [@KevinTPorter]. March 20, 2020)

Posts which promise a prize which can be granted if someone interacts online in a certain way, are extremely popular. Not only are they relevant due to their up-to-date relevance but also thanks to the reward. Such interactions online create disproportions between the cancelled and the cancellers, forming two parties, which, in conclusion, reinforces the Us vs. Them rhetoric (Reisigl, 2007). The posts and actions of cancellers are aggressive and forceful to such an extent that they bring to life serious repercussions and penalties not only for the host herself but also the whole crew. Consequently, such events have a force of changing the culture since the Ellen DeGeneres Show has been a very important part of America's cultural heritage for many people.

Manipulating social harmony through apologies

Apologies are an important genre in forming social harmony, as their message may play a crucial role in relation building. However, when it comes to public apologies, they are, for the most part, fake and bring nothing else but manipulation.

Ellen's apology aired on her show did not have the desired outcome. Due to its scripted nature, it was very indirect, formal and distant (example (34) above). It also contained moments of sarcasm and humour. She does not state clearly the issue; instead, she refers to them in a mitigated way, as shown in example (62)

(62) […] this summer, there were allegations of a toxic work environment at our show, and then there was an investigation I learned that things happened here that never should have happened. (DeGeneres, 2020)

In her speech, she refers indirectly to "the things that happened" and that "there were allegations of the toxic work environment", which distances her from the wrongdoings (The Ellen DeGeneres Show, 2020). Her apology seems more reactive than proactive since she addressed the issue only after the investigation of Warner Bros Company. She tried to preserve her public persona face; thus, her apology may be taken more as a self-justification than a real statement of willingness to apologise.

She did not explicitly state that she apologises. Instead, she used techniques of fauxpologies (Kampf, 2005) presented in example (64) below. She also did not explain why something happened or what caused it because she did not explicitly take the blame for it. Such a procedure minimises her involvement and wrongdoings. Thus, her name seemingly could get cleared. Moreover, while she did not take direct responsibility for the issue, she admitted she understood her 'higher' position, as shown in example (63):

(63) I realize I am in a position of privilege and power with which came responsibility and I take that responsibility for what had happened at my show. (DeGeneres, 2020)

Therefore, she would take care of reorganising matters within the management of the show, but she would not admit that she was a part of the problem. She also acknowledged the responsibility when she said she has made some amendments in the staff and that they were staring a new chapter. She has therefore offered to repair the situation, acknowledging that it is existent, but she did not say anything about her involvement in it.

Ellen did not directly say she did not do anything, but by indirectly pointing that she should not be connected to the issue, she suggested that it was something that happened in her surrounding without her involvement. However, by stating that the articles that said that she was not what she appeared to be on TV were not true, in a way, she dismissed all the allegations. She also reinforced that message by manipulating the audience, as shown in example (64) below:

(64) The truth is I am that person that you see on TV […]. I was an actress, […] but I don't think I'm that good that I could come out here every day for 17 years and fool you. (DeGeneres, 2020)

She has thus made clear that she did not want to admit to any rumours and would rather save her TV persona instead.

Her expressions of regret and apology look forced and are conditioned. They do not come from the real regret but from the obligation she received through cancelling posts. Her statement expressed only a willingness to apologise and was addressed solely to those who felt affected. It was, therefore, not explicit, and the acceptance of blame was conditional. The two examples of fauxpologies can be seen in examples (65) and (66):

(65) I want to say I am so sorry to the people who are affected […].(DeGeneres, 2020)

(66) If I've ever let someone down, if I've ever hurt their feelings, I am so sorry for that. (DeGeneres, 2020)

The ifpologies fall into the category of fauxpologies; therefore, they cannot be fully counted as a real expression of regret.

The fake nature of the apology, on one hand, puts Ellen in a higher position since she seemingly rebuilds the previous power relations, but on the other, due to it and her alleged actions, she has lost her higher status as a "kind lady" and instead gets decisively cancelled. Her apology seemed more like manipulation on her part rather than a sincere act of regret, which deepened the discrepancies between her and her cancellers. While the cancellers came out and demanded things to be done so that she could resist the cancellation, she tried to further manipulate the public, which made her pay the ultimate price of losing her career. Not admitting to her wrongdoings for a long period of time only worsened her situation and proved her inferior status over her cancellers.

Maintaining power imbalance through false image repair

In other interactions amidst the allegations, apart from the apology, the discursive relations Ellen DeGeneres established were manipulative in nature. She would frequently say she was a victim, and other than apologising, she never said sorry. She made jokes and tried to save her persona by minimising her involvement in the matter. This created a discursive relation where she distanced herself from the norm-breaking events, suggesting a lack of involvement and shifting responsibility away from herself.

In the conference with her coworkers, she did not admit to any wrongdoing and claimed she had no idea what was happening in her workplace (example (62) above). Thus,

she denied her involvement in the norm-breaking events. Later, in an interview, she also held CC accountable for the whole situation. Therefore, she indirectly shifted blame on people who contributed to her cancellation for falsely spreading untrue rumours, which caused her to lose her show.

She evaded responsibility by defeasibility in a talk with her staff members (example (67) below).

(67) I am not perfect and sometimes when the show runs as a well-oiled machine, hosts are not as sensitive as human beings. (Kent, 2021)

That would mean that she claimed she was not perfect and that such acts were bound to happen in such a big production. She has also said that hosts are on a different level than humans, which would glorify the position even more. During her stand-up, she also used provocation by once again claiming she was innocent, as shown in example (68):

(68) Had I ended my show by saying "go fuck yourself", people would've been pleasantly surprised. (Kent, 2021)

Therefore, she cleared her image by reinforcing the "kind lady" persona through using sarcasm and humour. She underlines that she is not a person to say "go fuck yourself" but that it would give a clear sign that the allegations were true. She has thus denied that such conditions were true.

Ellen reduced offensiveness in her apology by attacking the accuser when she claimed that the articles about her were false, as well as in the interview by attacking the cancellers for not letting anyone make mistakes. She also used bolstering during her standup show, as displayed in example (69) below:

(69) Do you know how hard it is to dance up steps? Would a mean person dance up steps? (Kent, 2021)

She has thus not only claimed that she was not responsible for the "mean things that happened" but also manipulated the audience so that they believe that she was the good one. She used differentiation (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984), which worked just like gaslighting, when she shifted focus from her to other people's wrongdoings, as shown in example (70):

(70) I have a hard time believing that anyone struggled on set because I know how happy everybody is. (Kent, 2021)

Such an action further shows how she feigned ignorance of the matter and tried to convince everyone that the atmosphere on the show was great. Finally, through transcendence (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984), she diverted attention from actually apologising to explaining how hard it was for her, which would mean she shifted the responsibility to others and made herself a victim of the situation. She used expressive and emotional speech, as shown in example (71) below:

（71）My whole being is about making people happy. And with the talk show, all I cared about was spreading kindness and compassion, and everything I stand for was being attacked. So, it destroyed me, honestly. (DeGeneres, 2021)

This fragment alludes that Ellen wanted to show people that she was different from what the allegations state and that the whole situation also hurt her. Thus, she has distanced herself from the whole issue in an attempt to maintain face and remain her power she used to have over people by playing on their emotions.

5.2.3. Donald Trump

Trump's cancellers used many genres. However, the most essential included humoristic posts which aimed to ridicule Trump. Memes acted as a factor unifying people just like social media campaigns. Funny images or posts gather numerous public, which form a big group of cancellers.

Donald Trump, during his cancellation, did not want to build any relations with his cancellers or appease them. Throughout the whole process, he has never considered himself cancelled, and he always pushed forward despite any disadvantages. The lack of apologies and attacking offenders instead created a massive discrepancy between him and his cancellers and enemies. His status is unshaken, and he stays unphased by the cancellations, which elevates his position even higher. Through aggressive and discriminatory behaviour, he secures his status, which appeals to his supporters.

Building collectivity through humour

Humoristic, sarcastic and funny content online usually brings a lot of people and softens their reaction towards such posts due to their relatability and entertaining devices. Such a form of posts challenges the existing hierarchy and reinforces relations within the group of cancellers by amicable relatability. Thanks to them, cancelling does not seem as aggressive as it really

is. The harmful effects are also not as powerful since ridiculing does not bring about such forceful connotations. The posts include memes and altered images of Trump, such as in screens 12-14 below:

Screen 12. Pro-Decracy. [@sherritxoxo]. (May 5, 2024). Retrieved from X, August 27, 2024

Screen 13. Cajun. [@bigcajunwba]. (May 10, 2024). Retrieved from X, August 27, 2024

I have a dream.

Screen 14. Across The Bord – Russ. [@RussSegner]. (May 8, 2024). Retrieved from X, August 27, 2024

The memes are a commentary on society and the politics of Trump. Screen 14 aims to ridicule and degrade Trump as well as it serves to be relatable for all of the former president's cancellers. Thanks to the less rude and entertaining nature of the images, many people join these movements either through liking, commenting and reposting such posts or through posting their own memes. Such an action forms collectivity with the same goal, which is to ridicule and cancel Trump. Even though cancellers are not as successful when it comes to cancelling Trump, they may still entertain themselves in the process so that they also gain something from it.

Manipulating social harmony through apologies

Donald Trump seems like a perfect manipulator of truths; therefore, when it comes to shifting harmony through fake apologies, he is also very successful. The apologies of Donald Trump feel like fauxpologies. Not only does he extensively use conditional apologies with 'if', but he also changes the focus of the apology to accuse the attacker and explain how he is better in many ways. He minimises his involvement and the offensiveness, by his unapologetic attitude. Looking at the two main apologies made by Donald Trump after the Access Hollywood tapes, one can notice that both of them are very similar. The first one was recorded and published on Trump's social media, and the second one happened during Presidential debates with Hillary Clinton in the room. The Twitter version seems scripted and serves

as a basis for the next one, which is more expressive and aggressive due to its live nature. These apologies and the fauxpology after sharing the post of the far-right anti-Muslimism British party were the only well-known apologies made by the former president.

Although the words of his apology imply that he explicitly expressed regret, his overall attitude precluded its sincerity. He used phrases, as shown in example (72) below.

(72) I've said and done things I regret, and the words released today on this more-than-a-decade-old video are one of them. […] I said it, I was wrong and I apologize. (Trump, 2016)

However that was just a small percent of the speech. In an interview, when asked about sharing Anti-Muslim videos on his social media, he did not use a straightforward expression of regret, but one of fauxpologies, as shown in example (73) below:

(73) If you're telling me they're horrible people […] I would certainly apologise if you would like me to do that. (Wolf, 2018)

The use of double conditional phrases not only made it clear that Trump did not want to apologise, therefore he did not hold himself accountable for it, but also in result he did not apologise, even if the word "apologize" has been said. Due to the insincerity of his apologies and conditionality of acceptance of blame, Trump's expressions fall into the category of fauxpologies.

He does not explain his behaviour in an apologetic way; however, he uses techniques of fauxpologies. He explained his behaviour in a non-apologetic way in his apology for the leaked tapes, as shown in examples (74)-(76) below.

(74) Anyone who knows me, knows these words don't reflect who I am. (Trump, 2016)

(75) I am a person who has great respect for people, for my family and Americans. (*ABC News*, 2016)

(76) I've said some foolish things but there's a big difference between the words and actions of other people. Bill Clinton has actually abused women and Hillary has bullied, attacked, shamed and intimidated his victims. (Trump, 2016)

He also used the defence of image (example 76 above) when he claimed that attacking women was unacceptable and that Bill Clinton was abusive. He highlighted that what Clinton did were actions, but his were 'merely' words. He was, therefore, the 'less guilty one'.

He acknowledged his responsibility by offering to repair his behaviour in the statement displayed in example (77) below:

(77) I pledge to be a better man tomorrow and will never, ever let you down. (Trump, 2016)

Thanks to that comment he manipulated the situation into his own benefit. By showing that he has changed, he proves to people that he is no longer this version of himself and that he seemingly condemns such behaviour.

Moreover, he begins his apology posted in social media by expressing self-deficiency which lowers expectations for his person, as shown below in example (78):

(78) I've never said I'm a perfect person, nor pretended to be someone that I'm not. (Trump, 2016)

This way, Trump brought himself closer to regular people and admitted that the mistake had been committed, but it was acceptable since nobody is perfect.

Such attitude and manipulation bring about changes in the social hierarchy. Not only does Trump's status stay unshaken, but he also pushes down those who cancel him by not giving them what they desire. The deals with Trump never seem to go the way cancellers would like. Such disparity creates a bigger distance between the rights that Trump has and what his cancellers may do to force something on the politician.

Maintaining power imbalance through false image repair

The techniques of maintaining power used the most by Donald Trump were minimisation and denial. He tried to evade responsibility by shifting the focus to someone else instead of focusing on his wrongdoings. The use of such methods to seemingly restore his status is merely a cover for the attacks that he aimed at those who oppose him. Therefore, he challenges other people's statutes and the existing hierarchy while elevating his own position, which seems unbreakable.

Trump evaded responsibility by provoking his opponent, Hillary Clinton, and her husband, as shown in examples (79) and (80) below:

(79) I think she [Hillary Clinton] should be ashamed of herself. (*ABC News*, 2016)

106

(80) If you look at Bill Clinton, far worse. (*ABC News*, 2016)

He also used defeasibility to shift focus on the actions of the Clintons and accused them of "far worse" wrongdoings (example 81). He has thus cleaned his conscience, shifting the fault on other people.

As previously stated, the strategy of minimisation is omnipresent in Trump's apologies and interactions after the scandal. He calls his actions merely "words, not actions" and "some foolish things" (example (76) above) that happened a long time ago when people should focus on the world right now. The focal point of his apology is not to actually apologise but to underline, through transcendence, that he has the right to say whatever he wants, as long as it is in privacy, which a locker room seemingly should guarantee, and that Bill Clinton was far worse, thus, he attacked his accuser.

He also used minimization (example (76) above) and shifts the focus from him to Hillary and Bill Clinton (example 81).

(81) That was locker room talk. […] Don't tell me about words […], this is what people say, but what President Clinton did […]. And I will tell you that when Hillary brings up a point like that and she talks about words that I said 11 years ago, I think it's disgraceful and I think she should be ashamed of herself, if you want to know the truth. (*ABC News*, 2016)

Therefore, through minimising the gravity of words, he smoothly goes to denying, since these are only words "said in the locker room" and that "it was 11 years ago", so it is not valid anymore.

Moreover, he uses bolstering (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) to state that he had travelled the country and that these travels had changed him, as shown in example (82) below.

(82) I've travelled the country talking about change for America but my travels have also changed me. I've spent time with grieving mothers who have lost their children, laid-off workers whose jobs have gone to other countries and people from all walks of life who just want a better future. I have gotten to know the great people of our country and I have been humbled by the faith they have placed in me. (Trump, 2016)

He was, therefore, a better man and should not be held accountable for something that was not valid anymore.

He compensated for his behaviour by showing a change in his actions, as shown in example (83) below.

(83) So you can say any way you want to say it, but Bill Clinton is abusive to women. Hillary Clinton attacked those same women, and attacked them viciously, four of them are here tonight. One of the women, who is a wonderful woman, at 12 years old was raped. At 12. […] Kathy Shelton, that young woman, is here with us tonight. (*ABC News*, 2016)

He represented two women allegedly hurt by the Clintons, and mentioned them during his speech as well as showed that he seemingly cared about them by allowing them to come to the debate. He reinforced the message that he was the good one and the Clintons were the bad ones by offering compensation that he took care of the victims.

In his fauxpology for anti-Muslimism remarks, he continued with reducing offensiveness by bolstering, as shown in examples (84) and (85):

(84) I am the least racist person anybody is going to meet. (Wolf, 2018)

(85) Certainly, I wasn't endorsing anybody. (Wolf, 2018)

The utterances show that he denies all the allegations. By saying the above statements, he has cleared his conscience.

Through all of his actions, Trump avoids admitting to any wrongdoings, and if he has to, he shifts focus from himself to others so that his actions are forgotten. A scarce number of apologies and reactions around Trump's issues proves that cancellations do not shake him, and he manipulates situations for his own benefit. He remains in a high position and overpowers those who seek justice by cancelling.

5.3. Constructing social contexts in the three cancellation cases

Cancellation may be understood as a 'crisis', considering that this action requires repairing one's image, which falls under the frame of crisis communication (Benoit, 2014). Therefore, it leads to serious repercussions and changes within the context of our world. Cancelling is also compared to the digital war of freedom of expression. While cancelled individuals lose their privileges to freedom once they get called out for something, they may also undermine this privilege within the group of cancellers. The dynamic and rapid nature of digital interactions

means that contexts are constantly being constructed and reconstructed, with each participant's interpretation of events shaping the ongoing discourse. This leads to a fluid and often contentious landscape where meanings and consequences are negotiated in real-time.

Cancellation is understood as a war because many metaphors used as a description of war (Chilton, 2004) can find their meanings in this phenomenon as well. Every cancellation needs binary oppositions consisting of the cancelled and their cancellers. Consequently, the two armies may be taken as separate containers. Just like countries have their borders, the two sides of online conflicts also have their borders and walls, which define the sets of norms linked to them. Since one side imposes its norms on the other side, they judge and condemn the cancelled, creating a judicial metaphor (Ng, 2022).

Moreover, cancellations spread like viruses in a meaning that norm-breaking and the degradation of society advance at a high speed (Ng, 2022). That is why people feel the urge to act and oppose such a development of matters in an aggressive way. However, cancelling may also be a condemned behaviour, especially in situations when it is too forceful and unjust. Such a double-ended sword reinforces the previously mentioned connotations of two armies fighting with each other over who should be more influencing and which side should be praised more: freedom of speech and actions or defending traditions and norms widely accepted by society.

5.3.1. Kanye West

Cancellations of Kanye West displayed all the metaphors of war. There were two sides not only when it comes to the rapper vs his cancellers but also within cancellers, as one part was aggressive and forceful with no respect, and the second tried to respectfully warn Kanye before they withdraw their support. Therefore, the binarity of the sides is visible. Moreover, each side represent a set of norms which are relevant only in certain groups. Such groups convey a metaphor of containers, holding within their borders a set of rules to follow, just like countries have their rights and obligations.

Silencing opposition metaphor

Even though there were numerous cancellations of Kanye, they did not seem to shake the artist. In one interview he himself said that he liked getting cancelled and it gave him more recognition, as shown in example (86) below.

(86) TMZ: Some of these platforms removed you.

Kanye West: We're number one. Everything that they did only helped us.

I like it, remove us. I like the simplification. […] (West, 2024a)

Therefore, he seemed not only unbothered by the negative comments, but also he used it to his advantage. While people's reactions imposed their power on the rapper and theoretically should impose their demands on him, he did not comply with them and responded to the issues in his own way. He has thus silenced his cancellers by not conforming to their needs. Despite that, he did not lose as much recognition or supporters. He may have shown that he struggled financially, yet it may have been only a technique so that people cease to cancel him and pity him. Every step of Kanye seems calculated. He displayed such an attitude, especially during the antisemitic comments issue, when he claimed that he would apologise only if his conditions were met. Thus, he used cancellations for his own ideologies and ideas for the world.

Armies metaphor

The cancellations also reinforce emotional responses and build expressive debates over the acts. The reactions of the people cancelling vary from admiration (example 87) to hatred (example 88) or annoyance (example 89), which forms two opposing armies.

(87) MAN YOU CANNOT CANCEL KANYE, EVERYONE LOVES YE. THIS A GENERATIONAL ARTIST. MY HEART IS FULL OF THE LOVE HE RECEIVES OUTSIDE USA (Retrieved from X. LE GARÇON VULTURES. [@SaintSeverino]. August 24, 2024)

(88) kanye is a fat fucking cunt and radiohead are fat fucking cunts too […] i just despise both for pretending to be the holy grail of everything. (Retrieved from X. marina ⚑⚨†ʟᴛ. [@spyfailure]. August 23, 2024)

(89) In some sort of shitty commentary on "cancel culture," Kanye West made the conscious decision of appearing alongside Marilyn Manson (an alleged sexual predator) and DaBaby (a homophobe) at his Donda listening party (Retrieved from X. CONSEQUENCE [@consequence] August 27, 2024)

Thus, the discourse around Kanye either softens people's views or makes them more aggressive. While many people seemed to plead with Kanye to change and come back to his

old, better self (example 90), some took more imperative steps, which only aggravated the war between the two sides (example 91).

(90) God damn I miss the old kanye... (Retrieved from X. Endofdaysonmars. [@endofdaysonmars]. August 30, 2024)

(91) so, for those who have been in doubt or for those who say he did not know what he is doing, Kanye knows exactly what he is doing. He is anti-Semitic scum who allows to spread his anti-Semitic hatred just because he is the descendant of slaves, African American A whiny bitch (Retrieved from X. Lewis h447. [@QZ3gnZ5pEm4o6dP]. December 15, 2023)

Even though both of them play important roles in influencing people and reshaping their behaviour, the many situations with Kanye showed that none of them has more power over him. Therefore, the arrogance and lack of apologies on the part of the artist only reinforced the firmness of cancellers, leading to more and more assertive steps following every norm-breaking event. However, to have a bigger impact on the rapper, the number of fans should be larger than that of cancellers, which, in consequence, does not lead to the desired turn of events according to which Kanye would sincerely apologise and cease to cause more problems.

Containers metaphor

The existence of two armies foreshadows the existence of two closed groups, with borders made out of their personal norms as boundaries. While people have their own limits of what is acceptable and what is not, the sets of boundaries in a certain matter may be similar to those of other people, which incites group formation. Thus, the separate containers are shaped on the basis of the similarity of norms and goals. In Kanye's case, the containers represent a group of cancellers who cancel to warn (example 92) and to cancel out of spite (example 93), as well as a container of Kanye and his supporters who do not cancel (example 94).

(92) Y'all pray for Ye, this shit isn't funny. He's having one of his bi-polar episodes. He def need some help. Kinda like when he cancelled his tour. #kayne #PrayForYe (Retrieved from X. J. E. [@j_esquiel85]. July 21, 2020)

(93) god please take all her [Taylor Swift's] pain, double it and give it to kanye west (Retrieved from X. mi [@swiftd3lrey]. August 16, 2024)

(94) This is why it's so hard for ppl to effectively cancel Kanye. His story really resonates with us all. (Retrieved from X. Tracee California. [@TraceeCali4nia]. August 19, 2024)

On the examples of the texts above, it is visible that each of them took a different route about Kanye's cancellations. The Internet users from examples (92) and (94) still respect and care for Kanye, even though example (92) wants Kanye cancelled for his own good. Example (93), on the other hand, represents a container of those who do not respect the rapper and want him gone, as well as wishes for his suffering. Each of the Internet users have a slightly different approach towards the issues of the artist, and each of them stay within their boundaries when speaking about it online.

Judicial metaphor

On the other hand, the groups may be divided as well solely into cancellers versus Kanye and his supporters. Those who try to cancel him as a warning do contribute to the movement of cancellation. Therefore, they judge his actions and comment on them in order to give a penalty in a form of changing his behaviour.

(95) being a swiftie is holding the man accountable and not giving him more money after EVERYTHING he did to tay (Retrieved from X. jass is (not) shortnsweet. [@jasstaysversion]. March 1, 2024)

The canceller not only condemns Kanye, they also punish them by not giving him more money, meaning they do not listen to his music or buy anything which would benefit him. The internet user also announces the punishment for others, judging the things he has done. Thus, cancellations remind a judicial process with Kanye as the accused and cancellers as plaintiffs as well as judges simultaneously.

Virus metaphor

The fakeness of the actions of public figures may lead to reshaping the cognitive context of how people decide whom to judge and to what extent. It influences mental models that people use to understand societal norms and celebrity behaviour. One action may lead to reshaping the value set of many people; as for example, a norm-breaking event may lead to withdrawal

of support not only to the norm-breaker but also to those who are close to them or those who act in a similar way. Kanye's actions fuel debates about free speech and expression, as shown in Screen 15 below.

Screen 15. The Broken Voice's post and comments (Retrieved from X. [@The RaisedVoice] November 14, 2022)

While free speech is guarded by the law in America, erratic behaviour based on this principle is not accepted everywhere. It also puts other public figures and their status of leaders for fans in a questionable position because celebrities usually set examples on how to live, and many people follow them; such attitudes may lead to normalising such abuse of freedom of speech to use it against others. Thus, bad behaviour spreads like a contagious virus around people. While some people agree that free speech should be granted to everyone, others think that it should only be given if it accords with their norms. Therefore, the idea of free speech is also understood as a right which includes a set of rules, e.g. the things said should be tolerant and inclusive.

5.3.2. Ellen DeGeneres

Ellen DeGeneres' cancellations were especially polarised, as the host tried to maintain her status, however, the reactions of Internet users were extremely powerful. By putting themselves in a higher position, the cancellers use various cancellation strategies to gain what they want. The two sides, Ellen and her cancellers, form two polarised armies with strong borders, that are hard to break down. Such a binary division incites strong reactions, including judgments which later grow into the scale of a social media trial of Ellen, who had to take the penalty of stepping down from the host spot. On the other hand, the cancellations were so harsh because people propagated it to the limits, creating hashtag contests and encouraging others to join the movement to such an extent that it reminded a virus, infecting more and more people.

Silencing opposition metaphor

While Ellen tried to silence her opponents by using various strategies to retrieve her status, such as manipulating the emotions of cancellers (example (71) above), her attempts ended in vain. Instead, it was her who got silenced and had to resign from her career (DeGeneres, 2021). The power distribution was in favour of the cancellers, who outnumbered and outvoiced her and her few supporters. She herself has indirectly admitted that CC crossed out her chances to come back after cancellation, as shown in example (96) below:

> (96) everything I stand for was being attacked. […] It's a culture now where there are just mean people, and it's so foreign to me that people get joy out of that. […] [T]his culture we're living is [is one where] no one can make mistakes. […] [T]he culture today is one where you can't learn and grow, which is, as human beings, what we're here to do. (DeGeneres, 2021)

The fragment from an interview with Ellen proves that it was the CC that destroyed her persona and her career. She has thus been silenced. Silencing a public figure with a high status meant that the social hierarchy was rearranged. Even though celebrities and wealthy people usually take higher positions, in the face of Ellen's cancellation, the majority of voices were elevated to a superior place, which caused the host to pay the price for her actions.

Armies metaphor

Since the cancellations of Ellen are extremely strong and harsh (as seen, e.g. in examples 11 and 13), the fight between the two sides strikes as aggressive as well. The two camps formed armies of soldiers who fight for their rights, as displayed in example (97) below.

(97) Ellen is on your side. She and her legion bolstered up public troops, sending them world wide for your cause while the underside orchestrate the world behind scenes. (Retrieved from X. medusa's gf. [@isapphic]. May 31, 2020)

The post above has an explicit reference to armies. It describes cancellations as a warzone, and whoever wins has power over the wider public. The text also alludes that Ellen tries to manipulate the truth by using her celebrity friends to defend her from the cancellers.

Her fans and cancellers are another set of two armies battling online over whose voice should remain.

(98) Ellen DeGeneres' entertainment career, from her dancing to her celebrity interviews, is a cancer on Western civilization and her cancellation would be a step forward in freeing the normies from the increasingly fake, lame and pathetic mental prison in which they dwell (Retrieved from X. Patrick Howley. [@HowleyReporter]. August 6, 2020)

(99) @TheEllenShow is ending her show after 18 seasons. Ellen says that almost getting cancelled last year made her rethink being on TV. Good move Ellen! They don't deserve your entertainment! Trash cancel culture bullies aren't human. This is why Ellen is a G! (Retrieved from X. Jody's Corner. [@jodyscorner1]. May 13, 2021)

The side of the cancellers requires that every person is treated rightfully and that no perpetrators continue their career unharmed (example (98) above). On the other hand, the side of Ellen seems to fight for the truth and fair treatment (example (99) above), although she is the one who knows the whole truth about the situation. In fact, her reaction was long overdue, which would mean she wanted to silence the matter by not responding at all. However, that did not help the case.

Containers metaphor

The two sides of the fight of cancellation have strictly set rules and boundaries, which strikes connotations of secluded containers. Such a division brings about even stronger associations with two hostile groups who keep and secure their norms within their borders and do not let anyone cross the line, as seen in example (100). At the same time, both parties are very territorial and want to invade the other with their rights and norms. This way, through a fight, the winning group would have more authority over the second.

> (100) you don't have to lie, ellen, we know you're not on our side lmfao. fuck your "neutrality"!! (Retrieved from X. medusa's gf. [@isapphic]. May 31, 2020)

The post above clearly states that there's a division between the cancellers' and Ellen's side ("we know you're not on our side"). It also underlines that there is no neutrality; the two armies must stay within their containers. Throughout the whole cancellation of Ellen, it seems like the cancellers have been more successful in this area, as they were the ones who ultimately led to Ellen's withdrawal from the public eye, and they still guard this outcome.

Judicial metaphor

The existence of two sides naturally brings about judgment from one to another. However, the judgments from the side of the cancellers are especially strong that it reminds more of a trial than simply sharing one's opinion.

> (101) I hope her [Oprah Winfrey] and Ellen get life is (sic!) prison for their horrific crimes against children. It so sad people don't know this and how the left is hiding this. (Retrieved from X. Dog Turd. [@therealDogTurd]. August 25, 2024)

The Internet user uses an explicit allusion to punishment for wrongdoings. Moreover, they judge not only Ellen but also another host Oprah Winfrey, as well as categorise the two as "the left", which they also find at fault. The cancellers demand change in the most forceful way, which suggests seeking revenge for breaking the norms. As a result, the whole process ended in putting Ellen in a type of social jail, which closed her out of public career and day television.

Virus metaphor

The cancellations of Ellen spread at an appalling speed. The rumours about the well-known show and its beloved host bewildered many people, which incited strong, emotional reactions.

From the moment the rumours broke out until the finish of the show, there was a big gap of time, thus the anger and impatience of people gradually grew. People realised that to gain what they wanted from the cancellation, they needed to be more impudent and firm, as well as that they needed to grow in number for a bigger impact. Therefore, the hashtags such as #cancelellen or #fuckellen started trending due to the motivation from the group of cancellers in the form of a promise of a prize, as shown in example (102) below.

> (102) Giving away this 1 bitape to one lucky winner...to enter all you have to do is retweet this post with the hashtag #FuckEllen ...winner will be announced tomorrow at 8pm eastern standard time. (Retrieved from X. Lone Shark 🦈. [@JeetimusPrime]. October 25, 2023)

The post above gathers people to write comments and repost with the use of #FuckEllen hashtag. Once it reaches mainstream, the cancellations flood social media and spread around like a real virus. Even if people do not personally connect with the whole movement thanks to a bigger number of the following mark, the cancellation may thrive.

5.3.3. Donald Trump

Donald Trump's cancellation especially connoted with the idea of war metaphor of cancellation due to its political implications. Because people opposing Trump were usually also of other political views, the fight between the two sides has strong connotations of a real war of power in the country. Both sides are extremely polarized, as they represent different sets of norms and beliefs, thus they are separated and keeping within the borders of their 'containers'. Due to strong emotions and dissatisfaction, many people condemn Trump and demand harsh repercussions, even putting him in jail, therefore, such acts resemble judicial procedures. Since Republicanism is a very influential party in the USA, it is important that a good leader shows their supporters how to behave. However, because many claim that Trump's actions are, in most cases, unfavourable for the wellbeing of many Americans, the cancellers try to nip in the bud the norm-breaking presented by the former president so that the bad behaviour does not spread like a virus. On the other hand, since nothing seems to work cancellations spread likewise as well, creating a never-ending cycle of wars.

Silencing opposition metaphor

The silencing of Trump's cancellers scarcely ever occurs. Since nothing seems to work in order to cancel Trump, many people understand it as a loss. On the other hand, Trump cannot ever be silenced, thanks to his immense power and high status. Even if he gets banned on social media, he has enough supporters to successfully build his own social platform from the scratch and gather voters. He also does not apologise, which influences his understanding of other issues. Since an apology is like admitting to one's sins and giving a reaction may be associated with losing face, Trump has a no-apology policy, thanks to which he is immune to cancellations.

Armies metaphor

The two polarised camps of different political parties resemble two armies fighting with each other over whose beliefs and norms should be more influential in the United States of America. While one group is against having Trump as a president due to many questionable acts on his side, the other one praises Trump as their righteous leader. Trump, knowing that he has the support of his voters, does not usually take part in the cancelling process at all, as shown in example (103) below. His reactions are limited to securing his relatability and higher position than his opponents; thus, he always stays uncancelled.

> (103) Donald Trump is threatening FOX News that, if they keep publishing polls showing Kamala Harris's lead growing, he's going to direct his voters/cult members to boycott the election. #CryBabyLoser (Retrieved from X. MP Arizona. [@AzPetrich]. August 29, 2024)

The post above displays a belief that Trump is using his voters as his soldiers. The Internet user also alludes that the voters are members of a cult, which insinuates their commitment and devotion to the cause. By saying that Trump "is going to direct his voters", the text shows the authoritative side of the president, which means that he is the leader of the army.

Containers metaphor

The cancellers of two different groups secure their norms in containers, to which they do not let enemies. They also keep out all the deterioration which may happen due to the presidency of Trump, which personally influences all the people involved in cancellations and not only. The borders symbolise the limits of norm-breaking events. However, the container of Trump seems unbreakable and inaccessible since the cancellations do not even reach its borders.

The metaphor of containers with borders and, consequently, sides of armies is displayed in example (104) below:

(104) As a violent member of his cult attacked the media at his rally, Donald Trump told the crowd, "That's beautiful. That's all right. That's okay. No, he's on our side." (Retrieved from X. Jesse Dollemore. [@Dollemore]. September 1, 2024)

Trump's comment states explicitly that there are sides in the society, and taking into consideration the entirety of the issue, it is clear that the former president wants to gather as many people in his container as he can. The two containers in this situation are the Republicans and people of other political party affiliations, mostly Liberals.

Judicial metaphor

In such a polarized society, the disputes are unavoidable. In a society where Trump seems unstoppable, people try to bring justice by their means. However, executing a successful cancellation with a person of high status, just like Trump, is not easy. Therefore, the cancellations are very intensive and numerous.

(105) I'm a former Trump voter and will never vote for that man again. He is a convicted felon. He is an adjudicated rapist. He was a horrible leader. I have two daughters. He is not anybody I would ever let walk my dog, much less let my children look up to. (Retrieved from X. Republican Voter Against Trump. [@AccountableGOP]. August 30, 2024)

In the example above, the poster condemns the former president even though in the past he was a Trump voter. The Internet user accuses Trump and punishes him by not allowing him in his life. He is thus just like a judge, however his judgement reaches only other Internet users who may get influenced by such stance. Trump, on the other hand, does not seem shaken by any of the cyber trials.

Virus metaphor

Trump's cancellations aimed to cease the norm-breaking on his part but also that no more people follow his steps. Harmful behaviours spread easily around those, who have a bad leader. Moreover, highly emotional posts started circulating quickly, and are still relevant and used by many thanks to the offensive hashtags' facilitated spreadability. In the case of Trump,

hashtags like #NotMyPresident, #TrumpCult or #TrumpIsaNationalDisgrace were and are to this day frequently used, as shown in examples (106), (107) and (108) below.

(106) Women's rights should never be up for debate. #NotMyPresident #ProChoice (Retrieved from X. Antonio K. Ross Jr. [@FiscalPhenomenon]. September 2, 2024)

(107) ANOTHER EMBERRASSING MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY. #EnoughIsEnough #TrumpisaNationalDisgrace (Retrieved from X. Lori Beach Girl. [@LoriPalmus]. August 31, 2024)

(108) They don't even care that he hates and uses them. He gives them permission to expose their true selves #deplorables #magats #basementdwellers #magacult #trumpcult #brainwashed #maga #trumpsupporters #republicans #donaldtrump #trumpderangementsyndrome (Retrieved from X. 4fureepost. [@4fureepost]. August 30, 2024)

Especially recently, just before the presidential elections in the USA, the use of catchy phrases is at its peak. There are many posts that contain not one but many hashtags so that they reach a greater number of spectators. Thus, cancellations spread quickly, just like a virus and with everyday closer to the election day, it only rises in number. However, such a tendency is meant to slow down once the new president is elected and people get used to it. Therefore, cancellations are time-dependent and come and go just like waves of infected people.

Conclusions

Cancellations instigate expressive reactions both from the side of those cancelling and those cancelled. Such acts determine the formation of identities such as the requester and the accuser as well as a variety of identities of the cancelled based on their reactions and status reparatory methods. The process of cancelling brings about changes in society and instigates connotations to war, as it resembles a battle between two armies who guard their norms. Moreover, it may also be similar to a judicial trial, especially taking into consideration that the cancellers use demands and requests as well as accuse the cancelled, and subsequently, the second party has to defend itself and use status reparatory methods to omit the final penalty: the loss of career, which may be understood as a jail keeping from the type of life the cancelled used to lead before

the cancellations. While all the cancellations in the three cases of Kanye West, Ellen DeGeneres and Donald Trump had similar elements, the outcome and realization of the cancellations differed.

Kanye's cancellation was severe, however the love and support from his fans enabled him to still thrive, even if the rapper did not apologise thoroughly for his actions. Ellen DeGeneres was completely cancelled and still receives cancelling posts, which prevents her from coming back to the public eye. Her case was especially career-destroying because she apologised and offered changes in her behaviour, but people still chose to cross her out of their lives. Trump has been untouched by the whole movement at all times. One may think that his power is incomparable with even such numerous cancellations.

Conclusion

Cancel Culture is a greatly 'infectious' phenomenon. Its widespread expansion led to many changes in our reality. Even though it is still unclear what the exact definition of it is, or if it really exists, it is clear that through hate speech, boycotting and other forms of cancellations, one may have a big influence on someone's career and life.

Nevertheless, the future of both CC and Celebrity Culture seems questionable. Both of them are powerful movements, very influential to the people around them as they hold the power of making actual changes in real life. However, once the celebrity culture dies out, CC will also have no place to be as influential. Moreover, even now, the cancellations are not durable because their contributors are not persistent enough, and they frequently change their focal target. Yet, for now, CC seems to hold big power of forming the reality of the world both online and offline. The cancellations may be treated as another form of protest, and they often involve ideological battles over free speech, justice, and morality. Therefore, they can lead to tangible changes, such as policy reforms or shifts in public attitudes toward specific issues.

However, apart from the positive effects CC holds, it may also lead to serious repercussions. Since cancelling is connected with hate speech, cyberbullying, discrimination, etc., it may have a great impact on the targets. Since the Internet is full of fake news and information which lack context and could be taken the wrong way, there is a risk that the cancelled people's lives get overturned for nothing. In consequence, it prompts even more inequalities and injustices. It also results in silencing less powerful voices and homogenisation of attitudes and norms. CC is already a threat for otherness, and many people are afraid to speak freely in fear of getting cancelled. CC is not only targeting those who did something wrong, but also those who do not agree with the crowd's opinion or who do not contribute to the movement.

Moreover, CC may be used as a tool to gather spectators. Cancellation may occur in a very thought-through manner. It may not only be driven by the spectators but also by the public figures or their management. Thanks to that, these people get recognition and fame, even if they are seen in a negative light. By posting and commenting, one may find their group of people with "a common enemy to unite them". On top of that, fighting in a crowd and seeing that one may contribute to a 'good deed' might be exciting for many.

However, cancellation may also occur without much thinking since many people contribute to movements without thoroughly informing themselves, as some posts seem to spread misinformation, and some also seem to be incomprehensible and irrelevant to the

matter. Some people may be highly influenced by the media and other users, which contributes to their opinion-making. Such a procedure can frequently lead to overspreading the affair and blowing it out of context, just because it is 'buzzworthy' (popular and talked about on various platforms (as per Cambridge Dictionary), which consequently leads to serious repercussions for the targeted person. Moreover, some cancellers seem to be joining the movement without prior knowledge about the issue or even the person. Such a behaviour shows how influential using hashtags and spreading posts and comments online, as well as media coverage, is for people who were not even concerned about the matter.

All of these aspects make CC a digital war of voices and power, which goes against the American view of freedom of speech. What is more, due to its dynamic and myriads of voices, it seems to be artificially reigniting in cycles. This conflict accentuates the division of people and highlights not only the differences between the canceller and the cancelled but also between cancellers and defenders, as well as simple spectators, etc. Many people, even those who were not as connected to the cancelled individuals, may suffer losses. Therefore, due to its popularity and being used wrongly, the tool, which seemingly could have been used to have many positive outcomes, harms many on its way, even those for whom CC is fighting.

The cancellation of Kanye West only partially brought about the desired outcome. While he has lost a lot of contracts and suffered from the ban on social media, he does not suffer much damage to his image. Even during his cancellation, people treat him respectfully, using mainly warnings and demands instead of harsh messages. The demands aim to inform Kanye that he needs to change his behaviour not to lose what he has now. There are not many instances of offensive and discriminatory language but amicable, personal letters. On the other hand, Kanye's responses to cancellations have been unpredictable as once he would apologise, and later his words would rule out the apology. Such an approach, however, allows him to still stay relevant to the public and maintain his career.

Ellen DeGeneres' cancellations brought the end of her career, at least to the extent of fame and respect she once had. Even though she tried to emotionally convince people she was not guilty, harsh comments, usually using derogatory and labelling language, finally condemned her. Her cancellation reminded trial, where every wave of hashtags and posts acted as a judicial session. Ultimately, the battle ended with an ultimate penalty on the side of Ellen, who had to resign from her former lifestyle.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, did not suffer any losses. His status has been unshaken for the most part, even if his cancellers ridiculed, discriminated and incriminated him. The political cancellations greatly remind a battlefield, with two armies guarding their

123

containers. However, it was the cancellers who would attack, as Trump barely ever responded to the issues. Nevertheless, despite his lack of attention towards the cancellations, he secured his face and did not let the cancellers shake his life.

This thesis constitutes a basis for the study of discourse online. However, it does not include the analysis of cancellations happening in the form of protests and other forms of offline events. It is limited to boycotting, yet only in the form of a 'verbal promise or threat' of boycotting. The actual carrying out of the threat has not been taken into consideration during the research.

Moreover, analysing cancellers online may not be done exclusively without reaching out to the users whose posts and comments were used since most of the accounts are anonymous. To examine better what people know about Cancel Culture and how it influences them, as well as analyse who contributes to the movement; there is a need for a survey-based study.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the research on the discourse of the Internet and of image repair in the crisis of cancellation. While many studies are focused more on the general online diaspora or on the analysis of how CC is perceived through the eyes of individual spectators and journalists, the subject of CC discourse analysis and the influence it has on the cancelled has rarely been disclosed. Up to date, only the discourse of the users online has been studied, but without the addition of reactions of how the communication changes others. As a result, this thesis has aimed to answer the question of how CC is executed online, what influence it has on people and discourse, as well as what others do to minimise the repercussions of cancellations on them. In general, people write very aggressive posts and are eager to guard their norms, and as a result, this instigates image-repairing actions from those targeted. The consequences of extending the influence that CC has on many people cause many changes not only in the people's behaviour but also in their speech and how they view the world. CC has been proven to have a great impact on present life, especially on those, who may easily be targeted by it.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present the phenomenon of Cancel Culture, how it has influenced social communication and how it is changing contemporary reality. Cancel Culture is mainly developed in the United States, and although the topic is not new, it is relatively rarely described by discourse scholars. Cancel Culture mainly takes place in the online sphere through special kinds of posts, comments or other forms of publication on social media platforms. It serves the purpose of reacting to the behaviour of others, in particular public figures, whose behaviour violates cultural norms. The movement aims to punish the wrongdoer and bring about real change in society. Although this phenomenon contributes to many positive aspects, such as giving space for the voices of people from marginalised social groups, it has many negative consequences, for example, excluding and silencing people due to fake news. Analysing the discourse of cancellation allows us to explore what identities, relationships and contexts emerge in the cancellation process and how the exclusion language creates divisions, leading to an endless digital war between the cancellers and the cancelled. The binary division of conflicting parties evokes connotations of armies clashing to protect their 'containers' representing their norms.

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de présenter le phénomène de Cancel Culture, la façon dont il a affecté la langue et nos réalités. La Cancel Culture se développe principalement aux États-Unis et, bien que le sujet ne soit pas nouveau, il est relativement rarement décrit par les spécialistes du discours. La Cancel Culture se déroule principalement dans la sphère en ligne par le biais de toutes sortes de messages, de commentaires ou d'autres formes de publication sur les plateformes de médias sociaux. Elle sert à réagir au comportement d'autres personnes, en particulier des personnalités publiques, qui violent les modèles de normes acceptés par la majorité avec leur propre comportement. Il est ainsi possible de « punir » le coupable et de provoquer un véritable changement dans la société. Bien que ce phénomène contribue à de nombreux aspects positifs, tels que donner la voix à personnes de groupes sociaux marginalisés, il a également de nombreuses conséquences négatives, telles que l'exclusion et la réduction au silence de personnes sur la base de fausses nouvelles. L'analyse du discours de l'annulation nous permet d'explorer les identités, les relations et les contextes qui émergent au cours de l'annulation, et la manière dont le langage de l'exclusion crée des divisions conduisant à une guerre numérique sans fin entre les groupes qui annulent et ceux qui sont annulés. La division binaire des parties en conflit évoque des connotations d'armées s'affrontant pour protéger leurs « états », qui sont des normes sociales professées.

Bibliography

50 cent. (2007). Hustler's Ambition [Song]. On *Get Rich or Die Tryin': Music from and Inspired by the Motion Picture*. G-Unit, Interscope.

2024 General Election: Trump vs. Biden Polls. (2024). RealClear Polls. https://www.realclearpolling.com/polls/president/general/2024/trump-vs-biden

Allen, W. (2023). Woody Allen on Dylan and Ronan, being canceled and his new movie (E. Keslassy, Interviewer) [Interview]. *Variety*. https://variety.com/2023/film/global/woody-allen-dylan-ronan-being-canceled-new-movie-1235712494/

Ali, R. (2020). Ellen takes down video after 'jail' joke about coronavirus self-quarantine lands poorly. *USA Today*. https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2020/04/08/ellen-takes-down-video-after-coronavirus-quarantine-jail-joke-lands-poorly/2973412001/

Benoit, W. L. (2015). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: Image repair theory and research* (2nd edition). State University of New York Press.

Blazina, C. (2024). A growing share of Americans are familiar with 'cancel culture.' *Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/06/09/a-growing-share-of-americans-are-familiar-with-cancel-culture/

Blum-Kulka, S. and Olshtain, E. (1984) Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics*, 5(3), 196-213.

https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/5.3.196

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Bruenig, E. (2015). Why won't twitter forgive Suey Park? *The New Republic*. https://newrepublic.com/article/121861/suey-parkof-cancelcolbert-fame-has-stopped-fighting-twitter

Burmah, L. (2021). The curious cases of cancel culture. *Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations*. https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/1289

Calude, A. S. (2023). *The linguistics of social media: an introduction*. Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/The-Linguistics-of-Social-Media-An-Introduction/Calude/p/book/9781032330945

Campbell, B., & Manning, J. (2018). *The rise of victimhood culture: Microaggressions, safe spaces, and the new culture wars*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Caramanica, J. (2021). Into the wild with Kanye West. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/arts/music/kanye-west-ye-interview.html

Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Chen, H. (2023). A law that cancels cancel culture? This country is considering it. *CNN*. https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/12/asia/cancel-culture-law-singapore-intl-hnk/index.html

Chilton, P. (2003). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice* (1st edition). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203561218

Colvin, J. (2023). Trump returns to site formerly known as Twitter, posts his mug shot shortly after Georgia surrender. *AP News*. https://apnews.com/article/trump-twitter-tweets-return-49594b9f72c68a309758e19bc9cdce0f

Cuadra, J. M. (2023). Marites Culture in the Philippines: An emergent online gossip phenomenon. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, *22*, Article 0. https://infinitypress.info/index.php/jsss/article/view/2188

Dennis, D., Jr. (2022). Kanye West's 'Drink Champs' episode failed us all. *Andscape*. https://andscape.com/features/kanye-west-drink-champs-episode-failed-us-all/

Dershowitz, A. (2020). *Cancel Culture: The latest attack on free speech and due process*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Dejui Eiraqius. (2020). *The full unedited conversation between Taylor Swift & Kanye West* [Video file]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUPL_TyVq94

Dideriksen, M. (2023). Fear of being canceled. *NOCD*. https://www.treatmyocd.com/what-is-ocd/common-fears/fear-of-being-canceled-ocd

Docquir, P. F., & Centre for international governance innovation. (2019). The social media council: Bringing human rights standards to content moderation on social media. *Models for Platform Governance* (pp. 9–13). http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26127.4

Dorman, S. (2021). NYC instructor 'relieved of his teaching duties' after criticizing racial 'indoctrination' of students. *Fox News*. https://www.foxnews.com/us/nyc-teacher-relieved-of-duties-indoctrination

Drazanova, L. (2019). *Historical index of ethnic fractionalization dataset (HIEF)* [dataset]. Harvard Dataset. https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/4JQRCL

Etlinger, S., & Centre for International Governance Innovation. (2019). What's so difficult about social media platform governance? In *Models for Platform Governance* (pp. 20–26). Centre for International Governance Innovation. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26127.6

Facts and figures 2021 (2021). *Internet use* [Dataset]. International Telecommunication Union. https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2021/11/15/internet-use

Fahrenthold, D. A. (2016). Trump recorded having extremely lewd conversation about women in 2005. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9ce776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847eeed4_story.html

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research.* New York: Routledge.

Farley, R. (2017). Trump's rare apology. *FactCheck.org*. https://www.factcheck.org/2017/12/trumps-rare-apology/

Fong, W. L., & Lim, T. (2023). Cancelling cancel culture: What should legislation look like? *The Singapore Law Gazette*. https://lawgazette.com.sg/feature/cancelling-cancel-culture/

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). (2nd Vintage Books edition) New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (2014). *Wrong-doing, truth-telling: The function of avowal in justice*. University of Chicago Press. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB15796968

Fridman, L. (Director). (2022, October 24). Kanye 'Ye' West interview: Lex Fridman Podcast #332. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AWLcxTGZPA

Gerstmann, E. (2020). Cancel culture is only getting worse. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/evangerstmann/2020/09/13/cancel-culture-is-only-getting-worse/

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma; Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Prentice-Hall.

Gondringer, M. (2021). *Cancel culture and cancel discourse: cultural attacks on academic ideals*. https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/eng_etds/9

Grady, C. (2020). Some say the Me Too movement has gone too far. The Harvey Weinstein verdict proves that's false. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/culture/2020/2/24/21150966/harvey-weinstein-rape-conviction-sexual-predatory-assault-me-too-too-far

Greenwood, S. (2021). Political correctness and offensive speech. *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/05/05/4-political-correctness-and-offensive-speech/

Harwood, E. (2017). Even the New Year's Eve ball drop is getting in on #MeToo. *Vanity Fair*. https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2017/12/tarana-burke-me-too-new-years-eve-ball-drop

Harper, A. (2023). *Saving the gorillas: Ellen's next adventure* [Film]. Discovery Channel.

Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, men and politeness*. Longman.

Ilbury, C. (2022). Discourses of social media amongst youth: An ethnographic perspective. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *48*, 100625. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2022.100625

Inglis, G. (2020). Call-out culture vs. cancel culture: know the difference. *Medium*. https://medium.com/@gavininglis/call-out-culture-vs-cancel-culture-know-the-difference-2135274734f0

Jimma, J. D. (2017). Language of social media: examination of English as a Lingua Franca [Bachelor's thesis]. *University of Iceland*.

Joshua, S. F. (2020). A pragmatic analysis of the discourse of humour and irony in selected memes on social media. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics Studies*, *2*(2). https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v2i2.281

Jurkowitz, M., Mitchell, A., Shearer, E., & Walker. (2020). *Americans are divided by party in the sources they turn to for political news* [Dataset]. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2020/01/24/americans-are-divided-by-party-in-the-sources-they-turn-to-for-political-news/

Kampf, Z. (2009). Public (non-) apologies: The discourse of minimizing responsibility. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(11), 2257-2270. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.11.007

Kang, J. C. (2014). The campaign to "cancel' Colbert. *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-campaign-to-cancel-colbert

Kanye West threatens to go 'death con 3 on Jewish People. (2022). *Haaretz.com*. https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2022-10-09/ty-article/.highlight/kanye-west-threatens-to-go-death-con-3-on-jewish-people/00000183-bbcb-d05f-a9eb-bbeb67620000

Kemp, S. (2019). Digital 2019: *Global digital overview* [Dataset]. Dataportal https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-global-digital-overview

Kemp, S. (2022). *Digital 2022: the Philippines* [Dataset]. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-philippines

Koblin, J. (2021). Ellen DeGeneres loses 1 million viewers after apologies for toxic workplace. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/22/business/media/ellen-degeneres-ratings-decline.html

Kostadinovska-Stojchevska, B. & Shalevska, E. (2018). Internet memes and their socio-linguitic features. *European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies*, 2(4), 156–169. https://doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1460989

Kowalski, R. M., Limber, S. P., & Agatston, P. W. (2008). *Cyber bullying: bullying in the digital age.* Blackwell Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470694176

Latif, J. (2020). American Muslim character cancellation: Framing engagement through the sphere of deviance. *Media & Communication,* 8(4), 133–144. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i4.3121

Lee, C. (2022). Doxxing as discursive action in a social movement. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *19*(3), 326–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1852093

Lil Wayne. (2009). I'm Single [Song]. On *I Am Not a Human Being*. Young Money; Cash Money; Universal Motown.

Lim, Y. & Van Der Heide, B. (2014). Evaluating the wisdom of strangers: The perceived credibility of online consumer reviews on Yelp. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 20. 10.1111/jcc4.12093.

Littleton, C., & Donnelly, M. (2020). 'The Ellen DeGeneres Show' ousts three top producers. *Variety*. https://variety.com/2020/tv/news/ellen-degeneres-producers-ed-glavin-jonathan-norman-glavin-kevin-leman-jonathan-norman-1234737854/

Liu, J., Zhang, X., & Li, H. (2023). Analysis of language phenomena in internet slang: A case study of Internet dirty language. *Open Access Library Journal*, *10*(8). https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1110484

MacAskill, E. (2009). Obama calls Kanye West a 'jackass' over MTV outburst. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/15/obama-kanye-west-mtv

Marquez, Y. (2022). Is cancel culture doing more harm than good in the Philippines?. *Mili*. https://www.mili.eu/insights/is-cancel-culture-doing-more-harm-than-good-in-the-philippines

Martin, J., & White, P. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230511910

Martinez, E. (2017). What is white supremacy?. *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting*. https://www.pym.org/annual-sessions/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/06/What_Is_White_Supremacy_Martinez.pdf

Marwick, A., & Lewis, R. (2017). Media manipulation and disinformation online. *Data & Society*. https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline-1.pdf

Mason, S. H. J., & Landay, J. (2021). Trump summoned supporters to "wild" protest, and told them to fight. They did. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN29B2CY/

Mishan, L. (2020). The long and tortured history of Cancel Culture. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/03/t-magazine/cancel-culture-history.html

Murphy, J. (2015). Revisiting the apology as a speech act: The case of parliamentary apologies. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 14(2), 175–204. doi:10.1075/jlp.14.2.01mur

Ng, E. (2022). *Cancel Culture: A critical analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (2015). *Spiral of silence*. https://noelle-neumann.de/scientific-work/spiral-of-silence/

Norris, P. (2023). Cancel Culture: Myth or reality? *Political Studies*, *71*(1), pp. 145-174. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023

Novikova, O., Kalugina, Y., Mustafina, A., & Edeleva, I. (2021). Linguistic analysis of Insta, Twit posts and LJ blogs in the context of their functions (based on the Russian language). *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, *15*(5), pp. 66–86. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v15i05.20013

Oversight Board. (n.d.). *Former President Trump's suspension*. DOI: 14 May 2024. https://www.oversightboard.com/decision/fb-691qamhj/

Owens, E. (2023). *The case of cancel culture*. St. Martin's Press.

Permanent suspension of @realDonaldTrump. (2021). *X Blog*. https://blog.x.com/en_us/topics/company/2020/suspension

Presswood, A. (2017). Avowal is not enough: Foucault and public shaming in a socially mediated world. *Ohio Communication Journal, 55*, 43-53.

Race, M., & Kleinman, Z. (2022). Elon Musk: Twitter users vote in favour of Musk stepping down. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/business-your-money-64021412

Real time billionaires. (2024). *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/real-time-billionaires/#4fc82cde3d78

Reisigl, M. (2007). Discrimination in discourses. In H. Kotthoff & H. Spencer-Oatey (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Communication* (pp. 365–394). Mouton de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110198584.4.365

Robbins, G. (2018). *Woody Allen at center of free speech fight at UC San Diego*. San Diego Union-Tribune. https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/education/sd-me-woodyallen-ucsdclass-20180213-story.html

Romano, A. (2019). Why we can't stop fighting about cancel culture. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/12/30/20879720/what-is-cancel-culture-explained-history-debate

Rosenfield, L. W. (1968). A case study in speech criticism: The Nixon-Truman analog. *Speech Monographs*, 35, pp. 435– 450.

Sakellariou, A. (2022). 8 Reasons Ellen DeGeneres is officially cancelled. *The Things*. https://www.thethings.com/reasons-ellen-degeneres-is-officially-canceled/

Saint-Louis, H. (2021). Understanding cancel culture: Normative and unequal sanctioning. *First Monday*. https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i7.10891

Schwartz, R. (2024). Ellen DeGeneres to address 'second time I've been kicked out of show business' in Netflix Special (Report). *TVLine*. https://tvline.com/news/ellen-degeneres-cancelled-netflix-comedy-special-controversy-1235225642/

Sellers Hill, J., & L. Orakwue, N. (2023). As students face retaliation for Israel statement, a 'Doxxing Truck' displaying students'. *Faces Comes to Harvard's Campus. The Harvard Crimson*. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/10/12/doxxing-truck-students-israel-statement/

Sherman, M. (2023). The rapper Ye, who has a long history of making antisemitic comments, issues an apology in Hebrew. *AP News*. https://apnews.com/article/ye-kanye-antisemitism-apology-40450fa8868c660d954b672d5dfbcc3a

Shulevitz, J. (2023). It's okay to like good art by bad people. *The Atlantic*, pp. 80–84.

Song, S. (2024). Loved like idols, canceled like demons. *The Korea Herald*. https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20240124000711

Suler, J. (2004). The Online disinhibition effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, 7*(3), pp. 321–326. https://doi.org/10.1089/1094931041291295

Sullivan, M. (2023). Elon Musk's hypocrisy about free speech hits a new low. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/sep/07/elon-musks-hypocrisy-about-free-speech-hits-a-new-low

Tannen, D. (1998). *The argument culture*. Toronto: Random House.

The Committee's Choice & People's Choice Word of the Year 2019. (2019). *Macquarie Dictionary Word of the Year*. https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/resources/view/word/of/the/year/2019

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas. The power and fragility of networked protest*. New Haven: Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14848.

Twitter 2.0: Our continued commitment to the public conversation. (2022). *X Blog*. https://blog.x.com/en_us/topics/company/2022/twitter-2-0-our-continued-commitment-to-the-public-conversation

van Dijk, T. A. (2008a). *Discourse and context: a sociocognitive approach*. New York. NY: Palgrave Macmillan

van Dijk, T. A. (2008b). *Discourse and power*. New York. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Peebles, M. (Director). (1991). *New Jack City* [Film].

Vasquez Gutierrez, S. (2021). Ellen DeGeneres: a victim of cancel culture or a toxic host? *The Gauntlet*. https://thegauntlet.ca/2021/07/07/ellen-degeneres-a-victim-of-cancel-culture-or-a-toxic-host/

Wodak, R. (2012). *Critical discourse analysis*. University of Lancaster.

West, K. (2024b). *Yeezy porn is cumming* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zzPp_Lq0j8

Wilson, L. (Director). (2020). *Taylor Swift: Miss Americana* [Film]. Netflix.

Wolfgang, D., & Richards, J. (Directors). (2014). You're canceled (Season 5, Episode 2) [Television series episode]. In *Love & Hip Hop: New York.* Monami Productions & Eastern TV.

X. (2021, January 8). Permanent suspension of @realDonaldTrump. *X Blog*. https://blog.x.com/en_us/topics/company/2020/suspension

Yang, H. (2022). The wrath of 'cancel culture' wanes for K-pop stars. *Korea JoongAng Daily*. https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2022/04/28/entertainment/kpop/stray-kids-big-bang-gidle-soojin/20220428132642731.html

Young, C. (2021). What cancel culture is — and isn't. *The Bulwark*. https://www.thebulwark.com/what-cancel-culture-is-and-isnt/

Zappavigna, M. (2012). *Discourse of Twitter and social media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web*. Continuum International Publishing Group.

Zappavigna, M. (2015). Searchable talk: The linguistic functions of hashtags. *Social Semiotics*, 25(3), 274-291.

Zarkov, D. and Davis (2018). Ambiguities and dilemmas around #MeToo: #ForHow Long and #WhereTo? *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(1), pp. 3–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506817749436

Zimmer, T. (2022). Elon Musk was never a liberal, and his plans for Twitter were never benevolent. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/21/elon-musk-liberal-twitter-plans-benevolent

Table of Screens

Appendix – research material

Kanye West

Ana Navarro-Cárdenas [@ananavarro]. (2018). Kanye is dead wrong. [Tweet]. *X*. https://twitter.com/ananavarro/status/991517556245762048

Barnacules Nerdgasm [@Barnacules]. (2022). So much for old Ye Himmler (@kanyewest) saying @adidas couldn't drop him. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/Barnacules/status/1585116868234575872

Belated [@BelatedAF]. (2024). Kanye, man. You dropped an album literally called "Jesus Is King". [Comment on the video *Yeezy porn is cumming*]. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zzPp_Lq0j8

Bromwich, J. E. (2018, June 28). Everyone is canceled. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/style/is-it-canceled.html

CONSEQUENCE [@consequence]. (2021). In some sort of shitty commentary on "cancel culture," Kanye West made the conscious decision. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/consequence/status/1431110919195615235

Crosley, H. (2009). Kanye West apologizes to Taylor Swift for VMA rant. MTV. https://www.mtv.com/news/j0vcye/kanye-west-apologizes-to-taylor-swift-for-vma-rant

DeGeneres, E. (Producer). (2016). Episode 159 (Season 13, Episode 159) [TV series episode]. In E. DeGeneres (Executive Producer), The Ellen DeGeneres Show. A Very Good Production, Telepictures Productions, & Warner Bros. Television.

Ellie 🖼 [@allthingselliej]. (2018). @kanyewest you're an ignoramus who's lost touch with reality. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/allthingselliej/status/1098734598643286659

Endofdaysonmars [@endofdaysonmars]. (2024). God damn I miss the old kanye... [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/endofdaysonmars/status/1829522089721667750

Iver Mectin [@jong_slow]. (2022). Until 2 days ago, I never knew who Ye was. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/jong_slow/status/1585619315214123008

J. E [@j_esquibel85]. (2020). Y'all pray for Ye, this shit isn't funny. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/j_esquibel85/status/1285420935521071106

Janine Carson [@janinecarson8380]. (2022). I really wish people would stop idolizing and enabling this guy. [Comment on the video *Kanye 'Ye' West Interview | Lex Fridman Podcast #332*]. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AWLcxTGZPA

Jass🌶 ᔕ [@jasstaysversion]. (2024). they were listening to kanye. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/jasstaysversion/status/1763372700456866242

LE GARÇON VULTURES [@SaintSeverino]. (2024). Kiss of Life's Natty posts about Kanye's Vultures listening event. [Tweet]. *X.* https://x.com/SaintSeverino/status/1827236748616986633

Lewis h447 [@QZ3gnZ5pEm4o6dP]. (2023). so, for those who have been in doubt or for those who say he did not know what he is doing. [Tweet]. *X.* https://x.com/QZ3gnZ5pEm4o6dP/status/1735519685309862141

marina 🏳️‍⚧️†ʟᴛ [@spyfailure]. (2024). kanye is a fat fucking cunt and radiohead are fat fucking cunts too. [Tweet]. *X.* https://x.com/spyfailure/status/178905656080589903

mi [@swiftd3lrey]. (2024). god please take all her pain, double it and give it to kanye west. [Tweet]. *X.* https://x.com/swiftd3lrey/status/1824231315710886370

Motion Going [@MotionGoing]. (2024). Kanye, this is the last freaking straw. [Comment on the video *Yeezy porn is cumming*]. *YouTube.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zzPp_Lq0j8

PublicApologyCentral. (2011). Kanye West apologizes for grabbing the microphone from Taylor Swift at the MTV Video Music Awards [Video file]. *YouTube.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrHAb6ynStE

Singh, K., & Williams, D. (2023). Rapper Ye, the former Kanye West, apologizes in Hebrew for anti-Jewish remarks. *Reuters.* https://www.reuters.com/world/us/rapper-kanye-west-apologies-jewish-community-antisemitic-remarks-2023-12-26/

Tracee California [@TraceeCali4nia]. (2024). This is why it's so hard for ppl to effectively cancel Kanye. [Tweet]. *X.* https://x.com/TraceeCali4nia/status/1825653527538266153

West, K. (2022a). Backlash Against Me Proves My Antisemitic Theory... Echoes Hitler in Odd News Conference (TMZ, Interviewer) [Interview]. https://www.tmz.com/2022/10/22/kanye-talks-tirades-anti-semitic-backlash/

West, K. (2022b). Kanye 'Ye' West Interview: Lex Fridman Podcast #332 (Lex Fridman, Interviewer) [Interview]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AWLcxTGZPA&t=

West, K. (2024a). Kanye West Talks to TMZ, Stands by Antisemitism, Says He Can't Be Canceled (TMZ, Interviewer) [Interview]. https://www.tmz.com/2024/02/12/kanye-west-interview-tmz-antisemitism-adidas-continued-success/

West, K. (2024b). *Yeezy porn is cumming* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zzPp_Lq0j8

Ellen DeGeneres

AClarice [@AngelaClar1]. (2024). Beware false prophets deceiving in the name of justice, empowering the enemy they claim to fight. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/AngelaClar1/status/1789056560808804420

David B Bell [@DavidBBell1]. (2024). Ellen degenerate. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/DavidBBell1/status/1832199801909477651

DeGeneres, E. (Producer). (2020). Episode 1 (Season 18, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In E. DeGeneres (Executive Producer), The Ellen DeGeneres Show. A Very Good Production, Telepictures Productions, & Warner Bros. Television.

DeGeneres, E. (Producer). (2020). Episode 1 (Season 18, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In E. DeGeneres (Executive Producer), The Ellen DeGeneres Show. A Very Good Production, Telepictures Productions, & Warner Bros. Television.

DeGeneres, E. (2021a). Ellen DeGeneres to end talk show: "I need something new to challenge me" (Exclusive) (L. Rose, Interviewer) [Interview]. *Hollywood Reporter*. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/feature/ellen-degeneres-show-end-1234951571/

DeGeneres, E. (2021b). Ellen Degeneres explains why she's ending her show (Guthrie, S., Interviewer) [Interview]. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bKgbnoeKPQ

DKAstrology [@DKAstrology]. (2020). The whole #EllenDeGeneres monologue is a waste of time smh. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/DKAstrology/status/1308091246938914822egen

Dog Turd [@therealdogturd]. (2024). I hope her and Ellen get life is prison for their horrific crimes against children. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/therealDogTurd/status/1827556980870742373

Erin Elizabeth Health Nut News 🥜 [@unhealthytruth]. (2020). Ellen DeGeneres. When you do stand-up comedy about sexual assault at your workplace. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/unhealthytruth/status/1308626765892530177

Flimsy-Discussion529. (2023). Sad when someone gets so far away from what they say are their core values. [Comment on Reddit]. *Reddit*. *https://www.reddit.com/r/ellendegeneres/comments/seor7u/comment/jcn2nc6/*

Ireland's Big Issue [@BigIssueIreland]. (2020). Is it just me or should celebrities like @TheEllenShow behave & stop using #blacklivesmatter. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/BigIssueIreland/status/1271480594313199618

Jack Pierce [@eatjackpierce]. (2020). Seeing @TheEllenShow apologizing for her abhorrent behaviour rings so hollow. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/realjackpierce/status/1289190960178630667

Jody's Corner [@jodyscorner1]. (2021). @TheEllenShow is ending her show after 18 seasons. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/jodyscorner1/status/1392852379695861762

katy 🌸 [@KatyKray73]. (2022). Ellen is a nasty bitch. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/KatyKray73/status/1529988332708499456

Kent, S.-A. (2021). Ellen blames 'cancel culture' for toxic workplace claims. *The Mirror*. https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/ellen-blames-cancel-culture-toxic-24101347

Kevin T. Porter [@KevinTPorter]. (2020). Right now we all need a little kindness. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/KevinTPorter/status/1241049881688412160

luca [@LucaGuadagnegro]. (2024). Ellen Degeneres should never have a redemption arc. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/LucaGuadagnegro/status/1783871672484835698

Lone Shark 🦈 [@JeetimusPrime]. 2023. Giving away this 1 bitape to one lucky winner... [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/JeetimusPrime/status/1716995143570493788

Martin Daubney [@MartinDaubney]. (2020). Hilarious how loveable, liberal lesbian Ellen is on the verge of being cancelled. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/MartinDaubney/status/1295656330368372736

medusa's gf [@isapphic]. (2020). you don't have to lie, ellen, we know you're not on our side lmfao. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/isapphic/status/1267121499833499655

MrBlack [@MrBlackPasta]. (2020). How cruel!!! [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/MrBlackPasta/status/1296441642329739274

Oscar [@LittyOscars]. (2020). Ellen is not going anywhere because she's WHITE. [Tweet]. *X*. *https://x.com/LittyOscars/status/1290420866149359617*

Patrick Howley [@HowleyReporter]. (2020). Ellen DeGeneres' entertainment career, from her dancing to her celebrity interviews. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/HowleyReporter/status/1291133413303427072

Яし [@Raptor_Judy]. (2020). WOW! She's really making an.... effort..... isn't she? [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/Raptor_Judy/status/1296544348981440512

Donald Trump

4fureepauz [@4fureepauz]. (2024). They don't even care that he hates and uses them. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/4fureepauz/status/1829298886197838335

ABC News. (2016). Donald Trump discusses 'Locker Room Banter,' comments about women. [Video file]. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDjDPRk3nPY

American Woman [@Liberal_Lady5]. (2017). You're an old, fat man. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/Liberal_Lady5/status/915899060313346048

Antonio K. Ross Jr. [@FiscalPhenomenon]. (2024). Women's rights should never be up for debate. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/FiscalPhenom/status/1830384376808407136

COM ✋🏼 [@CarlosOMonzon]. (2024). A criminal defender blaming others for his troubles. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/CarlosOMonzon/status/1789406593060061506

Donald J. Trump [@realDonaldTrump]. (2016). Here is my statement. [Tweet]. *X*. https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/784609194234306560

Evelyn Woolfolk [@EvelynWoolfolk]. (2024). Send that criminal to prison!!!!! [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/EvelynWoolfolk/status/1789394879824494693

Jesse Dollemore [@Dollemore]. (2024). As a violent member of his cult attacked the media at his rally. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/Dollemore/status/1830018980561744123

John Oberlin [@OMGno2trump]. (2024). Today's episode of stupid things to say while standing behind bulletproof glass. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/OMGno2trump/status/1826667373744849264

Lex_571 [@Lex_491]. (2013). @realDonaldTrump I truly don't care. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/Lex_491/status/305885758940663809

Lori Beach Girl [@LoriPalmus]. (2024). ANOTHER EMBERRASSING MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY. [Tweet]. *X. https://x.com/LoriPalmus/status/1830000829962895375*

Michael World Leader [@LeaderMichael]. (2024). I really want to remind people how Trump really screwed up the response to the Covid 19 pandemic. [Tweet]. *X. https://x.com/LeaderMichael/status/1789020603891998737*

MP Arizona [@AzPetrich]. (2024). Breaking: Donald Trump is threatening FOX News. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/AzPetrich/status/1829173050232975373

Navy Mom [@USNavyMomPA]. (2015). You're a reality TV star just like the Kardashians. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/USNavyMomPA/status/589556593081061376

Republican Voters Against Trump [@AccountableGOP]. (2024). I'm a former Trump voter and will never vote for that man again. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/AccountableGOP/status/1829636519495188679

Russel Thompson [@RussThompson29]. (2024). This is the look of a defeated, senile, demented OLD MAN! [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/RussThompson29/status/1782834831220449588

Sandi Bright Colvin [@Fanofdalesr]. (2016). Guess I will watch this 60 minutes interview, so I know what Trump is going to deny he said tomorrow. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/Fanofdalesr/status/797952106262982656

trump celebrates dead soldiers [@Nublinski]. (2024). Demented Trump forgot he's the rotting cunt drip that stole away women's reproductive rights. [Tweet]. *X*. https://x.com/Nublinski/status/1827934663085539735

Wolf, Z. B. (2018). Donald Trump is not sorry. Ever. *CNN*. https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/15/politics/donald-trump-apologies/index.html