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Little Brother is Watching and Recording You: Social Control in a Deviant Group

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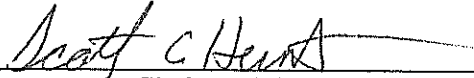
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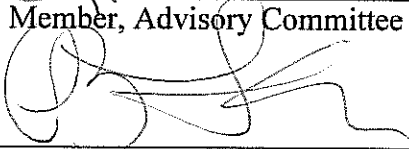
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Little Brother is Watching and Recording You:
Social Control in a Deviant Group

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Abstract

Since the 1950s social control has mostly been explained from the counteraction of deviance perspective. In this research I examine social control in a broader context, what I call social control as the furtherance of action perspective. In order to accomplish this, I conducted a digital ethnography with a group engaged in deviant behavior. The group has no formal name, but individuals are known by the deviant act they engage in. The act is referred to as “capping”, but is best explained as individuals or a group of individuals making screen recordings of live web cam feeds from websites designed to allow interaction through a webcam/chat room interface. These screen recordings are then converted into various video formats and used by the community of cappers in numerous ways. The content of these recorded videos is sexual in nature and often times involves females between the ages of 13-24 years of age. In order to conduct this research I observed interactions in a public capper chat room, conducted in depth interviews with individuals connected to the capping world and analyzed postings and documents related to a capping message board. From my research I was able to determine an extensive network of social control present among this deviant group. Additionally, this was the first time the capping phenomenon has been researched and light was shined upon this group.

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Chapter I

Social Control. Capping?

Effective control of self, others and the attainment of power are staples of human civilization. History demonstrates numerous methods we have used to attempt to control others either by force as in Nazi Germany, by omnipotent god-like status as in Incan culture or by deeply rooted beliefs in many of the world's religions. Regardless of the time, control and power have always been an element of human society.

As technology continues to thrust society forward and present new challenges, control and power still remain intact and important to understanding how we function as a human society. My research presented here explores a current challenge we are presented with by what is called "capping". Capping is the act of using software to screen record live webcam feeds, with sound, from other individuals, which turns the live webcam feed into a re-watchable video. Often times the individual who is recorded is not aware they are being recorded. The individuals who broadcast their webcam feeds do it on websites designed to allow people to broadcast their personal webcam feed in order to connect with and entertain other individuals. Other people interact with the broadcaster (performer) through a chat room on their personal webpage through the website. The interaction that takes place in the chat room with the performer tends to drive the performers actions on their webcam. When cappers, people who engage in capping, interact with performers they attempt to get the performer to engage in sexual acts. If the performer complies with the requests of the cappers, they are usually recorded

unknowingly and the cap, the screen recorded video, is shared, traded and used by the capping community. The challenge capping and the subsequent capping culture presents us could not have been a challenge as little as 15 years ago. Even though capping is new to the scene, thanks in part to technological advancements, the time tested vestiges of power and control, particularly social control, remain intact within the capping culture. While researchers like Ross, Parsons, Hirschi and Gottfredson argue social control is a counteraction of deviance, a deviant group, like the cappers, has immense methods of control which do not counteract their deviance (Gibbs, 1989).

Bridging the differences between the ideas about control is simply more than any one work could ever do. However, attempts at beginning the bridge can be made and are made with my work. A key element of control of any type is the involvement of power; where does the power come from, how is it attained, and what roles does it play with control are all vital questions to understand. Even when discussing self-control, power plays a vital role that is often overlooked or just assumed. The power in play with self control is commonly referred to as will power, but rarely, if ever is it mentioned when discussing self-control. This is a problematic omission because Gibbs (1989) discusses how power must be present if control is present. In my research, I give a brief discussion on the power present within the capping culture. The academic literature I explore is based from two different perspectives on control. The recent trends in control literature view control as a counteraction of deviance (Gibbs, 1989). More classical works, such as the work of Mead (1925), and the more modern work of Janowitz (1975) and Gibbs (1989) have tended to view control as applicable to conformist and non-conformist as well. The use of the words conformist and non-conformist refer to individuals in

relationship to wider societal norms and not merely the norms of their individual groupings. Parsons, Hirschi and Gottfredson refer to control in this manner, as the counteraction of non-conformist behavior as the behavior relates to wider societal conformist behavior. The view point of social control as Mead, Janowitz and Gibbs see it is what I refer to as the furtherance of action. The furtherance may be positive (encouraging the non-conformist or conformist behavior) or negative (discouraging the non-conformist behavior). The capping culture operates from the furtherance of action realm of social control.

My research demonstrates the amount of control in existence among this deviant group, known as cappers, but also presents a dimension of control previously unnoticed. The presence of the cappers in their environment, the Internet, has given rise to form of information control that has not been explored yet. Typical information control within and among groups necessitates a gatekeeper to control who has access to the information and in turn the actions of others. Within the capping community, there is no one individual or group within the group who constitute the role of a gatekeeper. Yet information remains as a control and is itself controlled by the cappers at the group level. This type of information control, group level, without gatekeepers, appears to be a developing condition of the information age. Technologies such as Wiki's, Twitter, Youtube.com and blogs have inundated us with information from a variety of directions. Sometimes the information offers a continuance of perspective, other times a diversion, but at no point is there a gatekeeper denying access to the information.

In the following chapters I argue that control, particularly social control, operates beyond the counteraction of deviance realm. Control instead operates as a furtherance of

action, which can either be a positive or negative furtherance of the action. This standpoint allows for the counteraction of deviance perspective, but does not exclude social control from operating in the furtherance of deviant action. Additionally, I demonstrate how power is an important aspect of effective control. And I add a new dimension to the social control literature with the evolution of information control in the information age. Within these arguments an in depth description of a phenomena which has never been researched. My research conducted with the capping culture has given rise to these theoretical understandings and shows how control and power remain even as social relations change.

In the following chapter I layout the counteraction of deviance perspective of social control and juxtapose it against the furtherance of action perspective of social control. Throughout the chapter I explain how the counteraction of deviance perspective is only half of the understanding of control and how it can be bridged by looking at social control from a furtherance of action perspective. With the groundwork laid in chapter two, I explain where, how and what is capping and the culture it forms. An understanding of capping allows for my explanation of how my data was collected and how I became aware of this hidden phenomenon.

The closing chapters discuss the elements of control found within the capping culture and how power relates to the effectiveness of these controls. The power present within the capping culture is reputational power. There is an explanation of how this power operates and its importance within the capping community. After this explanation I move onto explaining each of the six social controls discovered through my data. Each control is broken down according to a typology laid out by Gibbs (1989). The section

discussing information control explains this new dimension as it operates within the capping community and how it plays a role in the information age we currently live in.

The concluding chapter addresses possible extensions of in this area of research. The phenomenon of capping has never been researched until now. Additional research into the area is a clear possibility, but more importantly extensions of the information control I discuss are required. The age we live in is one with easy access to information, but how it has added dimensions to control has not been explored from my perspective. These extensions and potential weaknesses with my research are what conclude the final chapter. By the end of the closing chapter, a new phenomenon is uncovered and the operation of social control beyond the counteraction of deviance perspective is laid out for you to accept, reject or add to.

Chapter II

Bridging the Gulf of Social Control

In this section I explain the theoretical basis of the controls found within the capping community. The control literature is extensive, and at times, somewhat disjointed. This fact often makes it difficult to summarize effectively the control literature. I focus primarily on two perspectives on control, the counteraction of deviance perspective and the furtherance of action perspective. The majority of research on control since Parsons (1951) has viewed control as the counteraction of deviance (Gibbs, 1989). Viewing control as a counteraction of deviance only captures part of the nature of control. Because of this I demonstrate ties to the furtherance of action conception of control in order to show the weaknesses of the counteraction of deviance conception.

Counteraction of Deviance

Control, particularly social control, has been dominated by the counteraction of deviance perspective. Gibbs (1989) discusses the trajectory of social control from this perspective, pinpointing two people who helped to establish this perspective as the dominant one. The early work of Ross (1901) set the foundation for social control to be seen as the counteraction of deviance. Ross thought of social control as maintaining social order and was therefore found in social institutions. Since maintaining social order requires deviance to be kept in check, social control is seen as combating deviance in this conception. Ross did not see social control as present among individuals, but his

overarching view of social control as maintaining order opened up the door for Parsons to expand upon the conception of social control (Gibbs, 1989).

The counteraction of deviance perspective evolved into its current form with Parsons (Gibbs, 1989). Parsons (1951, p. 297, 231) wrote:

The theory of social control is the obverse of the theory of the genesis of deviant tendencies. ... Every social system has, in addition to the obvious rewards for conformative and punishments for deviant behavior, a complex system of unplanned and largely unconscious mechanisms which serve to counteract deviant tendencies.

The way Parsons conceptualized control extended Ross' view of social control. Instead of merely maintaining the social order, social control was thought of to maintain order and counteract deviant behavior. This view of social control limited it to conforming to societal norms. Any behavior against societal norms is a failure or lack of social control.

The perspective was furthered by the work of Hirschi (1969) with the development of social bonding theory. Hirschi provided clear and measurable concepts to the theory, but the idea that social control was a counteraction of deviance remained (Akers and Seller, 2009). Hirschi (1969) explained there were four concepts which could be measured to determine how effective social control will be. The four measures were attachment to others, commitment, involvement and belief as they relate to conventional norms. These concepts could all be measured and the stronger the bonds are from these four concepts, the more effective social control is seen to be with the individual. Hirschi (1969) even says regardless if the attachment is to deviant friends, a person will conform to societal norms because respect is shown by adhering to societal norms. Hirschi's

conception of social control remains in the counteraction of deviance realm and further established the perspective as the way social control is thought about (Akers and Sellers, 2009).

Hirschi expanded his social bonding theory with Gottfredson by formulating the *General Theory of Crime*. According to Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990, p. 117) their theory “explains all crime, at all times, and, for that matter many forms of behavior that are not sanctioned by the state.” The statement is bold, but it still maintains control is the counteraction of deviance. Hirschi and Gottfredson incorporate and expand social bonding theory into this theory by focusing on self control. Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990) explain how the bonds early in life to family form the level of self control we exhibit as older individuals. They examine child-rearing practices in order to discover levels of self control found later in life. Parents who do not correct wrong doings early in the life of their children, who do not monitor their children or are deviant themselves rear children with low self control. Self-control, itself, is conceptualized as being the “tendency to avoid acts whose long-term costs exceed their momentary advantage (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1994, p.3), combined with opportunity produces criminal and analogous behavior over the life course” (Piquero and Bouffard, 2007).

Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990) say self control levels tend to be the same over a person’s life because it is attained early in life. Close, positive bonds result in high levels of self control and negative bonds to family result in low levels of self control. The level of self-control a person has, according to Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990), is the determinate of a person committing criminal acts, engaging in a variety of analogous behaviors or being prone to committing criminal acts. This view of control views a lack

of self-control as being the problem with those who are prone to criminality. Individuals with high amounts of self-control will avoid committing criminal acts and engaging in analogous behavior because they realize the implications in the long term is not worth the immediate gratification. Those with low amounts of self-control will throw caution to the wind and engage in immediately gratifying behaviors, even if they are criminal.

While Hirschi and Gottfredson's *General Theory of Crime* internalized control from the conception Ross (1901) began with, it still remained as a counteraction of deviance. Under these conceptions of control, it is impossible for a deviant to possess any type of control or to use control for deviant purposes. Beyond this, Gibbs (1989) points out additional limits to the counteraction of deviance perspective. He explains how advertising is precluded from social control in this perspective. Advertising is precluded because most people do not view not buying a product as a deviant action, but advertisers clearly attempt to control behavior socially. Perhaps more problematic for this perspective, other than excluding clear attempts at control, is it "erroneously presupposes an indisputable and empirically applicable answer to this question: What and who is deviant" (Gibbs, 1989, p.57). Those who do not conform are seen as deviant, failures of social control and lacking control. Actions against conformity, as in rebellions, cannot be viewed as a form of social control because they are not conformist behaviors. Many rebellions, small and large, are forms of control. Therefore, the counteraction of deviance perspective is too narrow for understanding the totality of social control (Gibbs, 1989).

Social Control as the Furtherance of Action

The counteraction of deviance perspective of social control is not shared by all control theorists. Janowitz (1975, p.83), for example, writes "[b]ecause some sociologists

have come to define social control as the social psychology of conformity, sociological theory and analysis have suffered.” He has called for a wider view of control, other than viewing it as a counteraction of deviance. This wider perspective is what I call social control as the furtherance of action perspective. By this I mean social control, when enacted, acts as either a positive or negative furtherance of action. It either positively promotes the continuance of an action or it negatively impacts continuing an action. This perspective allows for social control to work towards conformity or nonconformity. Conformist behavior can be controlled positively and non-conformist behavior can be controlled negatively. Or the opposite may also be true, given the actions and motivation of those enacting the control.

The furtherance of action perspective comes from exploring the work of Mead (1925), Gluckman (1963), Gibbs (1966; 1989), Janowitz (1975) and Blee (1991). Mead (1925) explained social control required individuals to assume the attitudes of those involved in common projects with them. Mead did not make distinctions between conformist and non-conformist endeavors, but rather just common endeavors. Gibbs (1989) argues for control to be the “central notion”, a conception that those in the field can use to think about most of the subjects in the field, within the discipline of sociology. Gibbs delves, in depth, into the numerous types of control. He does not see control as simply existing as a form of conformity. This view, the furtherance of action, looks at control away from the counteraction of deviance viewpoint. Gibbs (1989) sees control as inescapable, people have always attempted to control their lives, society and the natural world around them. People have always made attempts at furthering or preventing actions, given their own motivations of the actions.

Gibbs divides control into three different types: inanimate, biotic and human. Regardless of the control, Gibbs (1989, p.23) provides a generic definition of control, which is, “attempted control is overt behavior by a human in the belief that (1) the behavior increases or decreases the probability of some subsequent condition and (2) the increase or decrease is desirable.” Inanimate control involves attempts to control things which are not living, such as, controlling where rocks are placed by picking them up and moving them. Biotic control is the attempt to control things which are living. This type of control involves the practices of agriculture and animal husbandry. Examples would be fencing in a herd of cattle in order to control where they can walk. Human control is the attempt to control ourselves and other humans. Human control can exist on the individual level (self control) or the societal level (social control). Human control, particularly social control, is what is explored further because my research focuses on human control.

Gibbs (1989) divides human control into two distinct categories, internal human control and external human control. Internal human control exists in only one form, self control, because people can only control their own behaviors internally. External human control is divided into three subtypes: proximate control, sequential control and social control. Proximate control is a direct attempt to control the actions of one or more people. Proximate control would encompass things such as a general ordering a platoon of troops to take a certain action or physically coercive behaviors from one person to another. Gibbs (1989, p.54-55) says sequential control is “a command or request by one human to another in the belief that (1) it increases the probability of a subsequent command or request by the other human to still other humans and (2) the increase is desirable.” In order for this type of control to be present, Gibbs says there should be a minimum of 3

individuals and at least two commands or requests. This type of control allows for a more complex organization of events to take place; one individual could have control over numerous individuals simultaneously, while proximate control limits the number of simultaneous controlees one person could control because it requires a direct order be given. The final type of external human control is social control. Gibbs (1989, p.58-59) says social control is

...overt behavior by a human, the first party, in the belief that (1) the overt behavior increases or decreases the probability of a change in the behavior of another human or humans, the second party in either case; (2) the overt behavior involves a third party but not in the way of sequential control; and (3) the increase or decrease is desirable.

In order for social control to be present, there must be a minimum of three parties and the probability of a behavior change is not within the individual doing the overt behavior, but affects the behavior of a different individual or individuals. This gives social control its social quality for Gibbs.

Gibbs further differentiates social control by conceptualizing sub-types for the sub-type social control. Gibbs includes five types of attempted social control: referential social control, allegative social control, vicarious social control, modulative social control and prelusive social control. Each type involves the required three parties, but each form of social control is different.

When an individual attempts referential social control, they (the first party) make a reference to another person (the third party) believing that the reference will control the behavior of the second party. Gibbs points out that the third party does not necessarily have to be an actual person, but merely a reference to an entity and what the third party may do, has done or is doing. Imitation is an example of referential social control because

one person is referring to someone they are not in order to control the behavior of others who think they are that person being referred to.

Similar to referential social control is allegative social control; in this form of social control, “the first party always communicates an allegation about the second party to the third party in the belief that (1) the allegation will increase or decrease the probability of the third party doing something to the second party and (2) the ‘something’ will change or maintain the second party’s behavior” (Gibbs, 1989, p.60). In this situation, the allegation made by the first party can be anything and does not have to be true, but the idea is the allegation is “an appeal to the third party’s normative standards or interest” and the third party will feel compelled to take action on the second party. In order to avoid the action the second party alters their behavior or departs from the area of the third and first parties. Like referential social control, the first party says something about another party, but “in referential control the first party does not presume that the third party will become involved directly, that presumption is essential in allegative control” (Gibbs, 1989, p. 60).

The third sub-type of social control, vicarious social control, is defined by Gibbs (1989, p.61) as follows:

In all instances of attempted vicarious social control the first party attempts to punish the third party, reward the third party or somehow rectify the third party’s behavior, always presuming that such action will influence the second party’s behavior.

Vicarious social control often goes by the name of the deterrence doctrine; the criminal justice system in the United States is often said to work based upon the deterrence doctrine and the application of the death penalty is almost always defended by citing the deterrence doctrine. However, vicarious social control is not limited to only punishments;

another example often times used is a form of positive reinforcement by school teachers, rewards are given to certain students and it is thought others will aspire to achieving the reward too.

The fourth type of social control Gibbs (1989) outlines is modulative social control. Modulative social control is attempted when “the first party perceives the third party as having an influence [over the second party] that the first party lacks” (Gibbs, 1989, p.62). In this type of social control the first party believes a third party can control the second party due to their position, either as an admired person, respected person or as a specialist in an area. The most common example of this type of control would be the use of advertising agencies by companies.

The final type of social control is preclusive social control. Gibbs (1989) conceptualizes preclusive social control as being a social control type that involves the control of numerous people. The task of controlling large numbers of individuals, as Gibbs (1989, p. 63) says, “may require substantial time and expertise.” As the resources become limited and the number of individuals to control increases a decision must be made about which groups need to be controlled the most; Gibbs points out that “...foregoing control actions may be so demanding that the first party cannot undertake them. If so, the first party often turns to a third party to do what the first party cannot do” (Gibbs, 1989, p.63). When this type of control is attempted (Gibbs, 1989, p.63):

the first party attempts to increase the probability that the third party will (1) assess the efficacy of alternative or means of control, (2) by surveillance or monitoring identify individuals or those who appear inclined to act contrary to the desires of the first party, (3) act so as to exclude certain categories of individuals from participation in some social unit or restrict their spatial movement, and/or (4) take any other action that facilitates the first party’s subsequent attempts at external human control.

This type of social control is slightly more difficult to recognize as control, but Gibbs gives the example that exclusion from organizations is often times prelusive social control. As well as, saying the structure of society in the novel 1984 is an example of prelusive social control. In 1984 the entire global society is controlled by three world-wide governments working together in order to control their populations. Each nation monitors the behavior of the citizens with technology, controls all information the public consumes, exclude certain people from society because they are “too simple” to be controlled and regulate all aspects of life from sex to sleep. 1984 is an extreme, but very effective, example of how prelusive social control operates effectively and the scale to which it operates.

Each sub-type and sub-sub-type of human control, as Gibbs conceptualizes them, are distinct from each other. All of these, except proximate control and prelusive social control are variations of the controls found within the capping community. Proximate control is not found in the capping community because it necessitates a formal ordering of a group or society which does not exist in the capping community. Prelusive social control is not found for similar reasons; there is no formal organization, so it is impossible to permanently exclude people or to control the amount of people necessary for prelusive social control. These divisions, as outlined by Gibbs, are how I will address each control within the capping community. Because Gibbs does not delineate control into the counteraction-of-deviance realm, he realizes control is and can be used by the deviant as well as the norm-conforming. As I refer to it, Gibbs views social control in the furtherance of action realm. His work, “Sanctions”, from 1966, is an example of how he

has attempted to move beyond the counteraction of deviance realm of social control, the following is an excerpt of this (Gibbs, 1966, p.150):

When both the reaction to deviant conduct and the reactor are socially disapproved, sanctions appear in very weird forms. Since neither the reaction nor the reactor is approved and the intent is asocial, the sanction may be so esoteric that the object of the reaction may not perceive the reaction as it was intended. On the other hand, if such a reaction is perceived by the object as punishment or reward, it becomes recognizable as a deviant sanction.

This excerpt shows how a sanction, often the result of at least allegative and vicarious controls, is conceptualized to occur outside of a counteraction to deviance, but within a non-conforming group. Peering into such a group from the counteraction of deviance mental framework an individual would not understand the situation fully and would likely believe the individuals involved in the controlling and sanctioning of such deviant events to lack control, be it self-control or social control. When you step outside of this mental framework the event takes on a different aura. The act as viewed from the furtherance of action mental framework does not make a judgment about the deviance of the actors involved. Instead, depending if the sanction furthers or prevents the action, the sanction itself can be seen as a positive or negative sanction, even though it is occurring among a deviant group. Control is not lacked in the group, it is merely different.

Beyond the work of Gibbs, Gluckman has also played a substantial role in aiding the understanding of control within deviant groups. Gluckman's work on gossip and rumor is of particular interest in this manner. Gluckman (1963, p. 313-315) says:

The important things about gossip and scandal are that generally they are enjoyed by people about others with whom they are in close social relationship... The right to gossip about certain people is only extended to a person when he or she is accepted as a member of a group or set. It is a hallmark of membership. There is no easier way of putting a stranger in his place than by beginning to gossip: this shows him conclusively that he

does not belong... The more exclusive a group is, the more will its members indulge in gossip and scandal about one another. And the more persistently will they repeat the same gossip again and again without getting bored.

Gossip and rumors operate in two ways, one as a means of defining group membership and two as a social control within that group.

Blee (1991) expands Gluckman's work on gossip as a control. Blee (1991) shows how women in the Women's Ku-Klux-Klan in Indiana would spread rumors about political enemies, businessmen and others as a way to control the actions of those individuals. Indiana was a hot-bed of Ku-Klux-Klan activity during the early 1900s. The women of the Klan were present in nearly all of the small communities of Indiana and many of the towns surrounding Indianapolis. This wide spread geographical coverage, combined with political and business connections allowed the women of the Klan to exert an immense level of control by gossip and rumors over the political and business atmosphere in Indiana. Often times the gossip would be so successful it would spread across the state of Indiana within a day, altering the outcomes of local and state elections and forcing the closure of numerous businesses. This type of control fits very well with the furtherance of action perspective because the use of gossip, in this instance by a deviant group, negatively affected the groups they targeted by forcing them to leave the business community or suffering political defeat.

Besides helping to define a group and acting as a control itself, gossip also plays a role in forming information control within communities. Information control is not something Gibbs touches on. Typically, information control is seen to rely on a

gatekeeper. The idea of a gatekeeper appears both at the group level and the individual level of information control. At the group level, the gatekeeper is usually in place based on a hierarchical scheme. Pettigrew (1972) demonstrated how gatekeepers are a source of power in organizations and between organizations. This power position is one that can influence a lot of control in how and where information moves in an organization. However, this is not the only way in which information is controlled and acts as a control. When dealing on the individual level, information is controlled and controls by the nature of conversation. Turner, Edgley and Olmstead (1975) explored information control on this level. They report that individuals engage in a great deal of information control in everyday conversation. The control is done to alter the perception or behavior of the other individual. Here, again there is the presence of a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper on the individual level is the actual individual in the conversation. Each person acts as a gatekeeper, allowing certain information out, while holding other information back. The information in this instance can be a rumor or a blatant lie at times, but it is always controlled by a gatekeeper. Among the cappers, information control appears to operate differently, without the presence of a gatekeeper, at least at the group level.

Regardless of the control used, power plays a role with control. Gibbs points out how many researchers take power for granted or consider power and control as interchangeable. This conception of power is inaccurate; Gibbs (1989, p.67) proposes that power be conceived as “the perceived capacity for effective control, including the capacity to avoid or preclude retaliation as a reaction to an attempt at control.” This conceptualization of power allows it to be considered with control, but separate from control itself. The likelihood of a control being effective has in large parts to do with the

amount of power involved with the control. Gibbs (1989) discusses there are various types of power; however, I focus on reputation as the primary source of an individual's power because that is what is found in the capping community.

Where Things are

While the counteraction of deviance perspective has dominated the field of control since World War II, it has not been able to address all dimensions of control. As Janowitz (1975, p.83) has written “sociological theory [and criminological theory] and analysis have suffered.” The alternative perspective, I propose, of control theory is the furtherance of action perspective. This perspective allows for control in non-conformist and conformist groups as well. It allows for the continuance of action by positive control and the prevention of action by negative control. The furtherance of action perspective does not contain the breadth of research the counteraction of deviance perspective does, but it addresses problems the counteraction of deviance perspective arises. Throughout the remainder of this writing I approach control from the furtherance of action perspective. The typology of external human control, as described by Gibbs is used to understand the control present in the capping community. I expand his typology of control and approach the distribution of power issue when discussing external human control. The call by Janowitz to go back and go beyond with control literature will be answered in what follows.

Chapter III

Entering the Cappers Domain

The world of cappers is one that remains largely shrouded from public eye. While cappers exist in a very public forum, the Internet, the act of capping and the world capping encompasses remains out of the public discourse. The following sections explain the rise of capping, the Capper Room (pseudonym) where the brunt of research focuses and how exactly I became ensconced in the capping world.

PROTIPS on Capping Culture

Because few know about the capping culture it is an unexplored area. The only mention outside of a few blogs I am aware of about cappers is from Fox News 11 based in California. Fox News 11 has done three news features on the capping culture because of complaints the station has received from residents in California about being capped. Also some of the companies, which allow people to broadcast their webcams on the Internet, are based in California, so the station has easy access for comments from the companies. This limited coverage and limited knowledge on the topic, necessitates a background understanding of who, what, where, how and why.

The New Fame

My research here focuses on a relatively newer technology that has yet to hit the status of technologies like Facebook.com, Twitter, Youtube.com or the blog-o-sphere. The generic term for the technology is live, streaming “webcasts”. While “webcasting” has been present as a technology since the 1990s, the idea of a live, streaming “webcast”

is a development of the “Web 2.0” (the Internet moving towards a more interactive market) culture present with today’s Internet. The large players in this technology are Performer Website 1, Performer Website 2, Performer Website 3 and Performer Website 4 (pseudonyms). While each of these websites differs slightly, the general idea of a live, streaming “webcast” is at the heart of each. These platforms are based exclusively on “user generated content” (UGC), much like Youtube.com, but the primary difference is the UGC on these websites is produced via a live webcam feed with a live participatory chat room to add to the interaction. The users who produce the live video feeds are referred to as broadcasters (performers) on the sites and they have the capability of interacting with other users of the sites through a chat room associated with their broadcast page.

Each user has their own page on the website with the option to broadcast if they want. In addition to this users of the websites can subscribe [allows users to show they like the performer’s show] to broadcasters they like, friend [a higher level of like than subscribing] broadcasters they know or like and ban [permanently stops users from interacting on the performer’s page] other users who they want. While a user is broadcasting they have complete control over their chat room, they can kick [temporarily removes a user from interacting in the chat room] out certain chatters who are causing problems for ten minutes, they can ban users who they wish to, they can create operators [chat room members who can kick other chatters] in their chat rooms to help them maintain order and they have the ability to co-host another user, which allows another person to broadcast from their webcam in addition to the broadcaster. The content of the

broadcasts is wide ranging, from broadcasters displaying musical talents, broadcasts debating current events or broadcasters just socializing with other chatters.

However, there is also a nefarious side to the content displayed by broadcasters. Some broadcasters intentionally broadcast themselves performing sex acts, acting sexual, taking drugs or threatening suicide. The major performer websites I have discussed include a statement similar to the following, from Performer Website 1, in their terms of service agreement (TOS) which states; “In connection with UGC you further agree that you will not submit any content that: ... (e) is vulgar, pornographic”. Of all the content not permitted by the administrators of these websites, “vulgar, pornographic” content is the most stringently policed.

Besides the content, the users and broadcasters of the websites are also from wide ranging backgrounds. Users and broadcasters are from many parts of the world and anywhere from 13 years old to well into their golden years. Each of these websites attempts to control the use of their sites by underage broadcasters. One of the sites, Performer Website 1, has a restricted section of their website for broadcasters aged 13-16. This section is known as the junior section. I asked an administrator at Performer Website 1 about this section, her response was:

Moving the teens to a separate section has been good in the sense that we gave them a lot of safety features that they didn't previously have. In the junior section there is no private messaging or co-hosting. This stops people from being able to chat privately with unsuspecting teens, luring them into a false sense of security. It also stops people from coming up as a co-host only to reveal themselves naked. It also helps the moderators find the raiders [people who start trouble, then leave], cappers and perverts faster. Obviously online anyone can lie about their age, but often times they aren't very smart about it. We have caught so many people because they have another username on the site in the adult section. We are able to

check their IP [a unique number assigned to each computer that accesses the Internet] to see what names they have and which ones are really active.

Regardless of the controls the websites put in place there are still those, of any age, who purposefully perform and broadcast restricted content.

The Rise of the Capper

The aforementioned websites are where cappers have risen up from. Prior to the existence of the performer websites, capping was done on a one on one basis. The use of instant messaging technologies which allowed webcam feeds, such as MSN instant messenger, Yahoo instant messenger and Skype were the homes of a few cappers. This form of capping was largely done independently. A capping community was basically non-existent because of the individual nature of capping during the time. As the performer websites and webcams became more prolific, the nature of capping changed and a community of cappers began to rise. The performer websites gave independent cappers a place to coalesce and craft their skills. While some broadcasters of the performer websites do intentionally broadcast sexual behavior, the majority who perform and broadcast restricted content are persuaded to do so by cappers or tricked by one or a few cappers into a trusting relationship. An example of this can be seen in the words of one capped girl who wrote a letter to be posted on a news blog, Performer Blog (pseudonym) about Performer Website 2:

When I was 16 however, I was stupid enough to be targeted by “[AA].” I didn’t know anything about capping, or that it was even possible to do things like that. [AA] took advantage of me. He took advantage of the fact that I was naive and immature. He took advantage of the fact that I was on Zoloft, an antidepressant which is known to decrease inhibitions. He capped me in the most vulnerable state, masturbating with a brush.

As shown by this quote, cappers do persuade or gain trust of broadcasters and are capable of influencing the broadcaster to engage in excessively explicit actions.

The cappers have larger purposes than a onetime show; they do so, so that they may cap the broadcaster for their own uses and/or to be traded amongst the community later. Also the above quote demonstrates who the cappers target; which was also supported by the following quote from M Capper:

Age is definitely a factor, majority of the time the most epic caps [caps with the most desired sexual behavior and performers] will come from girls who are age 13-17 as they are the main target [performer who is singled out] ,a lot of people will be turned off from a cap with an adult female unless her actions themselves are epic.

While most would affiliate those in the capping community with pedophiles and internet predators, they are not the same. The idea that they are pedophiles, to the cappers, is something to joke about, as seen in the following excerpt from the Capper Room (pseudonym):

D Capper- if you wernt pedos [pedophiles] u wouldnt be here anyway
E Capper- i wont bad anyone but i hate hypocrisy
L Capper- schiggiddy schwa. [interjection] this is the most chatting i've ever seen in this room :D
T Capper- we should argue about what pedos we are more ofthen
L Capper- lol i know right!
T Capper- l your a pedo!you capped a girl on [Performer Website 1] junior!
G Capper- Justin Bieber is on TV if anyone can cap it for a loop [a cap used to imitate another person in order to get a new cap], send it to me
E Capper- he said hate pedophiles but he was streaming cp [child pornography] he is hipocritical
L Capper- HAHHAHAHA. t I'm sorry, she was 2 years old, she was lusting after me I saw it in her pacifier :D [laughing emoticon]
E Capper- I hate fake moralists

As this excerpt shows the cappers throw the term “pedo” around as well, but they also use the moniker as something to joke sarcastically about. In general society, such claims are never joked about and talked about almost as little as they are joked about. When I asked M Capper about cappers being pedophiles or being better classified as ephebophiles or hebephiles, he said the following:

No, not all cappers are pedophiles... Those terms [hebophile and ephebophile] do seem more suitable since most cappers will find real child pornography (under the age of 10) sickening but there are some who also enjoy that kind of stuff.

M Capper explains here, how, no doubt there are some cappers who are also pedophiles, but to classify them all or the most of them as pedophiles would be an inaccurate assertion . The terms, ephebophile and hebephile, encompass individuals with a sexual attraction to youth in puberty or to youth in late adolescence (essentially a sexual attraction to individuals aged 12-19 years). The terms are not often used, but I feel they are more accurate and differentiate an area that should be differentiated. The other common conception people often think when hearing about underage youth, sex and the internet is the story of the sexual predator luring the youth to meet for sexual relations. While there has been at least one news story of this happening with an individual who also capped, it is not the case for the community as a whole. In general the cappers do not want an in-real-life (IRL) meeting; they prefer to keep the meetings between themselves and the performers in virtual reality. This community of cappers, which exist exclusively on the Internet, and which differs from other Internet communities in content is what my research focuses on.

The Capper Room

While the content the cappers go after exist on the performer websites, the trading, organizing and the general community exists away from those websites. Essentially there is no central organizing place for the cappers. The closest place would be Capper Message Board (pseudonym), which I used to help triangulate information from Capper Room. Capper Room is unlike other organizing places on the Internet for the cappers; this is a single website which masquerades as a website for users to search for interesting broadcasters on websites the performers broadcast. The Capper Room website has multiple functions, one of which is to search for current live broadcast on the performer websites and another is the actual Capper Room chat. Capper Room, where I conducted the majority of my research, at its time was a thriving chat room in the capper world. However, by the time my research was winding down, the activity and use of Capper Room had declined substantially. At the initial entering of Capper Room, there was always over 90 users at any given time and usually over 120 after 8 pm eastern standard time. Near the end of my research the Capper Room had declined to a point of rarely having 100 users in the room and on most occasions' 60-70 users in the room. This decline seems to be typical of the chat rooms that exist in the capping community. Many of the chat rooms in the capping community only exist for a day before they are closed by administrators at websites that allow for chat rooms to be hosted or before the room gets discovered by heroes, blackmailers and "newfags" [new users who make it clear they are new]. Also the sheer size and scope of the capping community makes a central chat room unreasonable. M Capper speculated on the size of the capping community:

There's obviously more to the capping community than just 4chan, [Capper Room], and [Capper Message Board]. I would go as far to say there are tens of thousands of cappers all over from hundreds of different sites like Performer Website 2 or Small Performer Website and hundreds of other unknown websites. They either work in groups or work alone trying to get 1-on-1 [individual attempts at capping] from girls.

While “tens of thousands of cappers” is not a huge number when talking about total Internet usage, it is a significant number of users when dealing with individual websites that have users’ that total in the tens of thousands.

Why cap?

An obvious question is why do the cappers cap? I asked the question to M Capper, the following was said:

For the simple thrill of it. It's live, unprofessional, and real. These are real girls broadcasting live from their bedrooms and the fact is that if no one records it then it's almost as if it never happened because it will never be seen again. The obvious reason why people cap these shows is so that they can watch it again to "Fap" [masturbate] to later on or so that they can show their friends what they missed out. It becomes an addiction for a lot of people to get as many caps as they can and create collections and grade others and build reputations, in other words the more they cap the more it starts to become a game.

My research does not focus on the individual level of capping, but I feel it is important to have an idea about what the motivations for capping. The idea that they strive for something real and unprofessional are interesting. These areas open up the world of capping to further research through the lens of post-modernity, but my research here focuses on other aspects of capping. The fact that the evolution of the use of the Internet is giving rise to individuals like the cappers is one that should be looked at in more depth than my research can at this time.

Hidden in Public

Qualitative research often times requires multiple techniques be used to get to the heart of the subject matter. Additionally the research techniques must be adapted to the situation at hand. In my research I utilized several qualitative techniques to fully understand the world of the cappers. I relied on straight observation of a chat room, in depth interviews through email communication, snow-ball sampling to gain access to an individual capper, a qualitative content analysis of message board posts and analysis of found and given documents. Each technique adds additional layers to the data and is an aid in triangulating the data.

The data collection phase spanned five months from early February till June 2010. The data I collected and analyzed during my research on cappers is quite extensive; I collected a total of 100 chat logs. In addition to this primary data source, I also conducted five interviews via email, gathered 10 weeks worth of message board posts and collected a variety of found/given documents regarding the capping world.

The primary method I used in my research was observation of the Capper Room. Access is gained by the creation of a username and a password for the username. The username I created for this research was W3 (pseudonym); the reasoning behind my choice of this username was double faceted. My primary reason was because it was a username I had created and used when I first discovered Performer Website 1 and I was intending that if anyone had noticed my user name from Performer Website 1, they would not think it weird I had popped up in Capper Room. With my username created, I now had access to the Capper Room. The way in which I collected data from the Capper Room was decided on prior to entering the chat room. I had decided to spend at least an

hour in the chat room each time I entered the setting; this would allow me to gauge the activity level in the chat room, give a standard base time for my observations in the Capper Room and ensured I wasn't letting impatience drive me away from the setting. On most occasions I spent well over an hour in the Capper Room because the activity level tended to be high during my observations. In addition to having a standard minimum time to spend in the Capper Room, I also made sure to mix up the time of day I entered the room. This allowed me to capture a greater amount of activity from more individuals because of the varying time zones that exist in the world.

The most important choice I made prior to recording data was the choice to be a covert, strict observer. This was a choice made from several factors. First, the idea of informed consent is one which hardly takes into account research done in public settings. Not only is it not feasible to get consent from everyone who enters a public setting, it also ventures on breaching the ethical issue of protecting individuals identities. Because my research in the Capper Room focused strictly on the main chat which is public to all users in the room, I felt it would be unnecessary and potentially harmful to create the link of informed consent where there need not be a link to start with. Additionally, Murthy (2008, p.839) writes:

My research of digital ethnographic work reveals a disproportionate number of covert versus overt projects. Much of this frontier-breaking work has been especially interested in sex and deviance. A similar pattern holds true with their 'analogue' antecedents. Pioneering physical ethnography, especially projects sponsored by the early Chicago School, supports this conclusion

As Murthy shows strict observation only strategies are seen as most effective.

Beyond this, I also looked at the privacy policy of the website where the Capper Room is hosted. The privacy policy says, “Personally Identifiable Information does not include information that is collected anonymously (that is, without identification of the individual user) or demographic information not connected to an identified individual”. The information I collected was strictly the chat log of the main chat in the Capper Room. This information is not protected under the privacy policy, but to further disclose the identities of users who posted in the main chat I changed their screen names so it is nearly impossible to identify the user who typed the chat line.

Along with the privacy policy, the Capper Room itself has a posted rule that the room is intended for the use of individuals over the age of 18. Taking on good faith the users of the site abide by this, I felt it was acceptable to do a covert, strict observation of the main chat. The ethical dilemma to do covert, strict observation of the main chat was later subsided completely by a user in the Capper Room. The B Capper, said, “If you reveal your secrets to the wind you should not blame the wind for revealing them to the trees.” This statement in the main chat demonstrated an understanding by this user and other users of the Capper Room that it truly is an open, public space. If the users want to protect their secrets, they could simply private message each other and leaves other users to guess as to what was going on. Since they typed in the main chat and seemed to understand it was public, I see no ethical issue with doing covert, strict observation research in the chat room.

As I have previously mentioned, I utilized several qualitative techniques in order to get a full representation of the capping culture. I supplemented my analysis of the data from the Capper Room with in depth interviews conducted with five different

individuals. Each person I interviewed was in some way connected directly to the capping culture. All five individuals were made aware of my intentions before I conducted the interviews. All five individuals consented to being interviewed as long as I take precautions with their identities. None of the individuals I interviewed were contacted through my observations of the Capper Room. As I have previously said, my intentions in the Capper Room were purely observational only of the main chat, and it is my belief if I had used the Capper Room to also find individuals to interview it would present an ethical dilemma. All of the individuals except one I sought out on my own. The four individuals I sought out were easy to contact. Three of the individuals have a public messaging system to get in touch with them (email, profile messages, etc.). The fourth individual, S Capper (pseudonym), sent me a private message while I was in a Performer Website 1 broadcast in February, at first we simply chatted, but I soon found out he may have been a capper and I told him what I was working on, he agreed to help and to be interviewed. I became acquainted with the fifth individual, M Capper, by using a snowball sampling technique. I asked one of my other contacts, Hero, if he had contact information for any potential cappers; he had contact information for M Capper and put me in contact with him through email. Like the others, I told M Capper up front what I was doing and how he could help with the research.

While I am thankful to these individuals for consenting to being interviewed, the interviews were not the best possible situation. Interviews with four of the individuals were conducted through email communication. Email communication is not ideal for in depth interviews, but as I said earlier, when doing any type of ethnography you have to adapt to the situation at hand. The questions I asked had to be very pointed and naturally

immediate follow up questions were impossible. I was able to ask follow up questions once I received responses, but again the questions had to be very precise. A few questions I asked were taken differently than I meant them and I had to re-ask the question a different way. There were also issues in getting timely responses; M Capper took the longest to respond to questions, but he is also the one person who is an active capper. The interview with S Capper was not the most ideal because it was an interview that took place very late at night. I was about to discontinue my explorations of Performer Website 1 for the night when I was “pm’ed “(private messaged) by S Capper. The timing of the interview and the unexpected nature of the interview meant it was short, but the format was ideal, real time private chat. I was able to ask follow up questions and illicit further explanation from him. Either way the interviews added more depth to the research and further clarification even though they were not the ideal situation.

The last technique I used during my research was a content analysis of posts to a sub-board on a larger message board used to share caps and a content analysis of given and found documents. I was made aware of the message board by S Capper and the Capper Room. The documents I was given were given to me by S Capper and consisted of a message board thread of his favorite performer and an image of a letter written by a performer. The documents I found were another letter written by a performer to the capping community on a gossip blog dedicated to Performer Website 2 and the magazine M Capper has been developing about the capping community. All of these documents aided in understanding the fullness of the capping community.

In order to use the posts from the sub-board of the message board, I used a method discussed about in Beyond Tolerance, by Philip Jenkins (2001). In the book he

researches message boards being operated by collectors of child pornography. Since the possession or even viewing of child pornography is illegal he turned the images off in his web browser, so the images never load. Since the cappers primarily target girls 13-19 years of age, I decided to take no chances in viewing potentially illegal material and turned the images off in my web browser. In addition to this, I also decided to copy and paste the contents of the individual threads from the sub-board into Notepad. I chose Notepad because it is text only software, so even if the image code was copied it would not turn into an image in Notepad. Newer versions of Microsoft Word have the capability to read image code and turn the code into an actual image. This was just another safety precaution. With these decisions on the way to get the data from the message board, I was only left with the decision of which sub-board and how many threads and pages from the sub-board. I did a two week observation period of the various sub-boards on the message board, looking for which was the most active. Once I had discovered that the sub-board entitled SCW (pseudonym) was the most active, I decided it would be the sub-board to use. I then made the decision of copying and pasting once a week, every thread from the first page of SCW. I decided on this because within a week there would be substantial posts made to this sub-board. Any less time and I would have been copying and pasting many of the same threads over and over. As it turned out I did not copy and paste very many of the same threads. There was significant activity on this sub-board to gather a full image of the capping culture.

As I collected my data, I was simultaneously engaged in the analysis of this data. This is a method all ethnographers implore in their research in order to begin focusing the research. The method is referred to as constant comparative analysis. The method was

developed and written about by Glaser (1965) in his work “The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis.” This method involves being engaged with the data from start to finish and has the capability of giving rise to theory if the data permits. While using this method, I coded my data by themes. As the theme of control became more prevalent I began coding by type of control. As types of control began to show similarities I combined these categories to gain further understanding of the phenomena. This process was carried out for all the data I gathered and proved to be invaluable in questioning the interviewees about the capping culture.

Each technique I used during my research proved to be valuable to discovering the way the capping culture uses control to hold it together. The techniques I used have been proven to be valuable to physical ethnographers and as ethnography delves further into the digital world these same methods will continue to be adapted to the digital world. Naturally it would have been better to be an actual participant in the Capper Room and on the sub-board. However, to become a participant in the Capper Room would have been a breach of ethics. In my mind, being an observant participant necessitates given consent on behalf of the individuals being studied, the very nature of the Capper Room (being open to anyone with an Internet connection) makes this a near impossibility. The sub-board faces many of the same ethical hurdles as the Capper Room. The sub-board allows for anonymous posting, making informed consent on the edges of impossible. For these reasons, I believe the methods I chose to employ in this research were the most effective, most unobtrusive and safest for the research group and me.

The methods undertaken to research the capping culture were varied. Preliminary knowledge of the capping world allowed me to understand it even existed. The further

into the world I explored, the greater understanding I gained. Each method employed added to the understanding of the cappers, but also aided in maintaining the safety of the cappers and myself. As my data piled up, the analysis became clearer, as I explain next.

Chapter IV

Manning the Controls

The following sections explore the controls and power present in the capping community. The first aspect of the capping community I describe is reputational power and the role it plays in the effectiveness of control. Since power relates directly to the effectiveness of control it is important to understand it first. After that it can be seen that each control is merely an attempt at that control, the effectiveness of the control relies on the power of the individual attempting the control.

The controls are addressed with sharing first because it is the most important aspect of the capping community. Sharing is explained as sequential control, referential social control or vicarious social control depending on how it is being attempted. Next I explore the opposite of sharing, the control of hoarding. Hoarding is explained as vicarious social control, allegative social control and referential social control. Using the metaphor of a game as a control is the next control explained, unlike the first two it is used in only one way, as referential social control. The control exerted on performers is developed next, as it is the control that gives rise to the community itself. The final two controls I delve into are gossip and information control. Both controls are closely related, but gossip operates as a control unto itself. When gossip does is used as a control itself, it is used as allegative social control. Or it operates in the channels of information control within a group that lacks gatekeepers. Information control is a dimension to the social control research I develop myself as it raised from my research with the cappers.

Influence by Reputation

One aspect of control that is inherent in the very nature of control is power. This section will explore power amongst the cappers. As Gibbs (1989) explains, “Power is the perceived capacity for effective control, including the capacity to avoid or preclude retaliation as a reaction to an attempt at control.” Within the capping community, I was able to discover the power which seems to be an indication of the success of controls enacted to other cappers. The power at play within the capping community is reputational power. The power levels appear to be along a continuum from weakest to strongest; blackmailers are the weakest in terms of reputation and elite cappers are the strongest. The continuum of power, when controls are enacted to other cappers is as follows: Elite Cappers (cappers with large collections of caps and rare caps, who share caps and links to live performers shows willingly and produce the best original caps), Cappers (cappers who share willingly, provide links to live performers shows, produce original caps and are often just beginning a cap collection), Sharers (cappers who do not produce original caps, but have large collections of others caps which they share willingly and they share links to performers live shows), Traders (cappers who produce original caps, have a collection of caps, but trade their caps and links to live performers shows with others instead of sharing), Leeches (cappers who do not produce original caps, do not share or trade caps or links to live performers shows, but instead just collect others caps and watch live performances), Hoarders (cappers who produce original caps, collect caps, but do not share or trade any caps or links to performances),

Heroes/White Knights (people who are not cappers, but are aware of capping and go to live performers shows warning them they can be recorded and blackmailed with the cap) and Blackmailers (cappers who produce caps, share and collect caps and links to live performers shows, but use the caps they produce and collect to blackmail those performers for future performances against their will).

This continuum of power is based on my interviews and observations from the Capper Room and the Capper Message Board. M Capper said the following about organization within the capping community:

There is pretty much a food chain of sorts with capping which is basically people who get the most caps are more powerful, well not just caps but rare ones that barely anyone has or 1 on 1 caps.

While the “food chain” appears to be simple, with Elite Cappers being at the top, the capping community is rarely cut and dry, like everyday life. The way in which the power is gained and a capper moves up the “food chain”, goes back to what M Capper said:

The main goal for most cappers though is to ... It takes a lot to get into most private groups due to trust issues with a lot of groups so a person would have to be skilled with capping and manipulating and have a large collection of caps not many others have as well as behaving a certain way towards others in public.

In other words, reputation and understanding the “game” are crucial to gaining or losing power within the capping community. Reputation is the more important of the two and takes time to build regardless of the capper. Some cappers may join the community with ties to Elite Cappers initially, but they will eventually have to prove themselves worthy of a high ranking reputation. A short formula for the reputational power of a capper or any individual can be shown as:

Individuals most prominent perceived reputational level – Individuals lesser perceived reputational levels = Total Reputational Power Level (IMPPRL – ILPRL = TRPL)

It would be impossible for an individual's most prominent perceived reputational level to be in a lower reputational level than their lesser perceived reputational levels because in order to be in a higher level an individual would have to have obtained that amount of reputational power to start with. For example, it would be impossible for a capper to be perceived as mostly a Hero, while partly being perceived to also be an Elite Capper in the eyes of other cappers. When the situation moves away from the standpoint of other cappers and to the standpoint of a performer's perception of their viewers, the reputational levels change, but the principle remains in place for understanding an individual's TRPL.

Sharing is Caring

The backbone of the capping community is sharing. Cappers share everything from caps to software. M Capper said the following in regards to sharing, "Sharing is essential to build a reputation, if you don't share then no one will know how good you are and you will be a nobody". Sharing gives the capping community purpose, it allows cappers to differentiate among them, but most importantly it acts as a social control in various ways.

From my research, I have discovered sharing acts as a control in three different ways; sharing operates either as sequential control, referential social control or vicarious social control. The reasoning behind placing sharing in three categories is it is such an integral part of the community that it operates in more than one way. Sharing controls

and compels others to follow more of the written and unspoken rules of the capping community. As well as controlling the way cappers behave toward each other in the various places they congregate. As M Capper said, “Sharing is essential...” it couldn’t be said any more clearly.

Sharing as Sequential Control

When sharing is used as a form of sequential control, it is done so to control large numbers of cappers. The idea of sequential control is “a command or request [is given by] one human to another in the belief that (1) it increases the probability of a subsequent command or request by the other human to still other humans and (2) the increase is desirable” (Gibbs, 1989, p.54). When sharing is used as sequential control, one capper usually makes a request for a particular cap to others in the hope others will also request the cap and eventually the capper who has the requested cap will post it to be shared. When sharing is used like this it allows the capper who fulfills the requests of the multiple cappers to gain a stronger reputation. As cappers share more and more their reputation increases and when they make a request, the likelihood of their request being fulfilled increases. Often times this type of control is seen on the Capping Message Board; an example of this is included here:

Anonymous >>62341 >>62347 Links are dead [the shared file links no longer work]. Reup [re-upload the content and repost the links] She probably still needs them if she wants you to contact her.

BCM nah, i got the pics [pictures]. i thought you were talking about other ones that werent on my bucket [photobucket, a photo sharing web-based platform]. buuut half of those bucket pics aren't even me, if you couldn't tell on your own. just sayin'.

The first user, Anonymous, is requesting that an earlier shared file be reposted because the original links no longer work. This request is asked in addition to an earlier request by user BCM, so it is a continuation of an existing request. The user BCM is a performer who has been capped in the past, but has now assimilated into the capping community. She is requesting pictures and capped videos of herself that she has lost. The other users of Capper Message Board also want to collect her caps and therefore make requests along with her. Because they understand the more requests there is for a file, the greater the likelihood of getting the file. The following lines in the thread demonstrate this point further:

- Anonymous** >>62366 are we talking nude / bikini pics, cause i have those around somewhere
- Anonymous** >>62290 I can reup everything + zips [compressed files] i found outside of this thread/site but i dont have the one above (i only had vids with that filename). Reup so i can merge and have you guys tell me what doesnt belong.
- BCM** contact me already, man! you said a few hours, not your post is gone, & it's been two days of me eagerly checking every inbox i have.
- CCM** >>62543 ok I messaged you on DGangster [private messaging system]. Also, who the fuck deleted my post?
- Anonymous** how about u guys re-up the fucking vids
- Anonymous** >>62579 if no one does it i'll reup tonight. Like 7hours from now. I dont have access ATM [at the moment]. I request a reup of that zip tho. Can anyone do that? or new pics/content? or a rar [compressed and encrypted file] of all the images?
- Anonymous** Re-up please.

These posts are continuations of the earlier requests for the files. The users are beginning to specify exactly which files are being requested. The anonymous users are assumed to be different users and for the most part they usually are because of the differences in writing style. For example, the second anonymous

user above spells “reup” without a hyphen, while the last anonymous user spells it with a hyphen. This difference leads me to believe they are different. Also users who request a file are clearly not the same user who claims to have the file. These differences make it possible to differentiate between users without identifying names. When users wish to ask direct questions to each other, they create usernames like the pseudonyms above, BCM and CCM. The user BCM, the capped performer, continues to request the files and other users join in as well. Again, they understand by making a request and by making more specific requests the ability to control the actions of someone with the file to share it will increase. The following posts from the message board demonstrate the effectiveness of the sequential control:

Anonymous >>62671 [http://www.multiupload.com/\[requested video\]](http://www.multiupload.com/[requested video])
Anonymous >>62671 MY NIGGA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Anonymous holy shit! does she have any other vids?

This example is a nice illustration of how sequential control works amongst the cappers. The minimum requirement for sequential control to be in place, according to Gibbs, is three individuals and at least two requests/commands. In the above exchange there are five requests made from what appears to be four or five individuals. The requests by the multiple individuals are then met by an anonymous poster who re-uploads the video(s) that have been requested. The poster who fulfills the request is thanked by the following two posters, one who posted, “MY NIGGA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” and the other who said “holy shit!” and who also started a new chain of requests by asking if there were more caps, implying

that if there are they should also be uploaded. Each of these requests made in this one thread were made in an effort to show the demand for the cap in order to influence a capper who has the cap to share it.

The primary way sequential control is thought of is when there is a clear distinction of a chain-of-command. Within the capping community there is no formal chain-of-command, per say, the chain is more so a chain-of-requests where anyone could fulfill the request or add to the chain. When the requests are made by anonymous users or fulfilled by anonymous users, the purpose of building a reputation is minimized; the sharing in these instances tend to reinforce the importance of sharing and the control and power of sharing within the community as a whole.

While I do not know the age of the performer in the requested cap, she was also posting in this thread as user BCM. From what she posted and others posted in the thread it is to be assumed she was between the ages of 16-20 at the time of the cap. If this is the case then the person fulfilling the request could have potentially been violating child pornography laws in the United States by distributing the cap if she was under the age of 18. However, the control once a person enters the capping community is strong enough for users to violate laws that could carry serious prison sentences. It should be noted that many cappers are of other nationalities other than American and many cappers who share, cap and download caps tend to use proxies (software which masks the identifying IP address, with other IP addresses) in order to hide their identities and IP addresses.

Sharing as Referential Social Control

When sharing is used as referential social control it is mostly done as other users reference sharing is caring, how much sharing was done in the “old days” or how certain cappers share in order to induce more sharing. The entire idea behind referential social control, as Gibbs says, is for one party to refer to a person, group, idea, mantra, thing or whatever in order to control a behavior in another party. Like all forms of social control, according to Gibbs, there are three parties involved. In the case of sharing as referential social control, the first party is a capper who refers to the third party which is usually the idea of “sharing is caring” and the second party is other cappers who the first party is attempting to induce to sharing. An example of this is seen in the following excerpts from the Capper Room:

C Capper- [http://www.\[users website for caps\].blogspot.com](http://www.[users website for caps].blogspot.com)
C Capper- thats for win [naked girls] and such
C Capper- [http://music-\[users website for noncaps\].blogspot.com/](http://music-[users website for noncaps].blogspot.com/) is
for music movies and programs
A Capper- thx c
C Capper- not a prb
C Capper- if anyone wants to contribute any of their win toward these
efforts go for it and post some links
C Capper- it would be nice to see open sharing like there used ot be on
anon boards [anonymous message boards]
O Capper- I collect links from nice guys like you at night and
download vid [videos] during the day at my dads house
which has broadband [high-speed internet]
C Capper- lol right on
C Capper- [http://uploading.com/files/\[collection of caps\]](http://uploading.com/files/[collection of caps])
O Capper- so anything I have you prolly have
O Capper- but I really do appreciate guys like you
C Capper- i doubt it i used to be part of some pretty well kept boards
and have alot of rare content from the past 4-6 yrs

The above exchange captures the way in which sharing is used as referential social control basically in all the ways the cappers use it; C Capper and O Capper both

demonstrate this. When C Capper says “if anyone wants to contribute any of their win toward these efforts go for it and post some links”, he is referring to the widely held belief in the capping community that “win” is to be shared amongst cappers. He follows this up with yet another reference to sharing, but this time he is referring to the history of sharing in the capping community when he says, “it would be nice to see open sharing like there used to be on anon boards”. Both of these statements are good examples of how cappers use referential social control to attempt to illicit others to share their “win”, but they are not the only ways. O Capper demonstrates a third way in which referential social control is used, when he says, “but I really do appreciate guys like you”. Here O Capper is referring to respected sharers in the capping community. The reference to the sharing prowess of cappers like C Capper is done in the belief that other cappers in the community will want to reach a similar level of respect and begin to share unseen or rare “win”. Regardless of what is being referred to, the belief remains the same that whatever is referenced in terms of sharing will induce sharing behavior by others; which is the very idea behind referential social control.

Sharing as Vicarious Social Control

The final way in which sharing is used as a control is by vicarious social control. In these instances “the first party attempts to punish...reward...or rectify the third party’s behavior, always presuming such action will influence the second party’s behavior” (Gibbs, 1989, p.61). This type of control is seen often times in “epic threads” on the Capper Message Board. An example of this type of thread is below:

Anonymous So here's the deal. This thread was a great idea. This board has been seriously short of real win since the epic threads [threads with a lot of good/rare caps being shared]. Anons

[cappers assume all other cappers are anonymous even if they know the names of others] are hoarding too much win. Let's see if get this thread can get some good unseen win. I'll post the first vid when it's done uploading to get this started, but then need to see some win to keep going. Post something new and unseen and I'll release another vid. Pro tip: no chubbies or tats [no caps with overweight girls or tattoos], and cute tits rule. One new vid will get you one of my vids, and when we get there, number four, the TC [a performer website] vid, is gonna take something really good. Open for suggestions.

Anonymous >>58857 Here's the first vid as promised for a teaser, NN [non-nude] but sexy and fun...
[http://www.multiupload.com/\[a cap\]](http://www.multiupload.com/[a cap]) pass [password]: anon

Anonymous Ok I am going to test the waters and share something people have been wanting if others post good shit I will post more [http://www.multiupload.com/\[a cap\]](http://www.multiupload.com/[a cap]) password: crack

Anonymous >>58869 >>58871 Nice vid, thanks. I'll upload #2, the towel vid for that.

Anonymous Im in a giving mood here is another cap that was wanted awhile ago now I sit and wait to see what happens
[http://www.multiupload.com/\[a cap\]](http://www.multiupload.com/[a cap]) Password: crack

Anonymous >>58872 Here's vid #2...
[http://www.multiupload.com/\[a cap\]](http://www.multiupload.com/[a cap]) pass: anon

Anonymous i really want this thread to become great anon. i have no OC [original content/caps] really. BUT, i do have some rather rare caps i will post. i will start tommorrow. haha where's R Capper anon and H Capper? they could help us in making this thread epic

Anonymous ok, i was not going to post anything here. cause most of my threads get nuked [removed from the message board] in now time. but i changed my mind and will try it once more. this is not new i posted it already one week ago. just tits and panties bate [masturbate].
[http://sharebee.com/\[a cap\]](http://sharebee.com/[a cap])

Anonymous fantastic stuff sirs!

Anonymous thanks fellas for being generous...really nice caps!!!

This thread demonstrates the use of vicarious social control and as seen in the posts, using sharing this way appears to be an effective social control. The thread begins with a global mod [a moderator of the message board who can remove posts or threads from all

sub-boards] at the Capper Message Board declaring that the day was epic day. The moderator then followed this declaration by posting a couple of caps himself. The sharing of these caps resulted in an anonymous capper saying, “I'll post the first vid when it's done uploading to get this started, but then need to see some win to keep going. Post something new and unseen and I'll release another vid.” This capper posted the cap shortly afterwards and his posting was met by another user posting a different unseen cap. As the thread continues a third capper (who is the second party in the vicarious social control scenario) posted a cap due to seeing the first capper (who is the third party in the vicarious social control scenario) get rewarded for posting his own epic cap with another epic cap from another capper (who is the first party in the vicarious social control scenario). This is represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sharing as Vicarious Social Control

First Party	Second party	Third Party
The user who posts the second cap with the password to the file as anon. This user rewards the third party for sharing an epic cap.	Any users other than the first or third party users who share caps. In the above thread the user who declares they had changed their mind about posting.	The user who posts the first cap, the “none nude (NN) teaser cap”. This capper is rewarded for posting the cap by the first party.

Vicarious social control is also seen in the Capper Room, the idea is virtually the same as it is on the Capper Message Board. The only alteration is instead of only caps being

posted, links to performers' shows are also posted and then the original poster of the link is rewarded with links to other shows or to groups within the capping community. This is still done in order to illicit more sharing of "epic win" or rooms with high potential of "win" to be shared.

Malevolent Hoarding

Juxtaposed to sharing as a control is hoarding as a control; where sharing seems to bring out a sense of community and solidarity within the capping community, hoarding tends to bring out the self involved aspects of the cappers. Hoarding is largely seen as negative within the capping community, but hoarding as a control appears to be very effective.

Hoarding as Vicarious Social Control

Although it is often seen as negative, this is not always the case. In one instance hoarding is seen as acceptable by all cappers and this is best said in the rules to the Capper Message Board:

If you know a girl is currently active [still broadcasting on performer websites] and hasn't been hero'd [told she is being recorded] or blackmailed yet, try and keep all mention of her off the board. Wait a week or two or even a month if necessary before posting the win.

In this instance hoarding is very acceptable and even encouraged by other cappers. When hoarding is done like this, it is best viewed as vicarious social control because by hoarding a cap of an active performer that is wanted, the capper is attempting to encourage this behavior and differentiate it from long term hoarding. An example of this is seen in the following Capper Room exchange:

G Capper- looking for [S cap] anyone?
Y Capper- let me look brb [be right back]
Y Capper- it look like it was recorded on feb 28 maybe i will wait

This exchange took place on March 5th 2010, Y Capper was choosing to hoard this cap in the chance the performer may do other activities that are cap worthy. Keeping the [S cap] out of circulation decreases the likelihood of the performer getting “heroed” or blackmailed. The reason this exchange is considered vicarious social control is the complete lack of other cappers calling Y Capper a hoarder and the fact that G Capper did not react negatively to Y Capper’s open hoarding of a clip he desired. In fact, G Capper went on to share a link shortly after this exchange and Y Capper went on to share a different cap for which he was praised for sharing.

Y Capper- [http://hotfile.com/dl/\[a cap\]](http://hotfile.com/dl/[a cap])
F Capper- ty
P Capper- nice kitty
P Capper- thanks
G Capper- [http://cam4.com/\[a performer\]](http://cam4.com/[a performer])

The inaction on the open hoarding by Y Capper is seen as a reward, since in almost all other instances open hoarding results in harsh retaliation by other cappers. The open hoarding of such a recent cap also shows other cappers what should be done and is an attempt to get them to also engage in this behavior.

Hoarding as Allegative Social Control

Beyond vicarious social control through hoarding, it can also be categorized as allegative social control and referential social control. While allegative social control and referential social control are both similar, when a control is allegative social control there is a belief the third party will take an action against the second party, who the allegation

is about. The allegations do not need to be true or to have even taken place yet; the allegation may be about a future behavior of the individual it is about.

During my research the tossing around of alleging another was a hoarder was something that occurred often. The best illustration of this type of control is the events surrounding one of the “elite cappers” from the Capper Room, R Capper. R Capper had built his reputation up to the point of one of the most cappers in the Capper Room, others asked him questions often and in the beginning of my research he was very open to sharing caps and links to shows. However, near the end of February and beginning of March (2/27/10 to 3/13/10) R Capper had began to change his behavior of open sharing.

N Capper- R Capper - have you posted "that" clip yet? ;-) you know the one!
R Capper- d [performer]?
R Capper- no
N Capper- the lovely afternoon duo you streamed [playing a cap in another chat room with video capability] in the week
R Capper- thats d [performer],, the english girls
N Capper- yea
N Capper- sweet
R Capper- they were sweethearts
H Capper- gonna post it?
R Capper- no
N Capper- if we ask you every day then maybe youll crack ;-) [wink]
R Capper- lol [laughing out loud]

The above excerpt comes from February 27th and as can be seen R Capper was not willing to share a cap that he had streamed earlier in the week. This does not mean the cap was made during the week, just that R Capper was streaming a cap on another chat site to show what he has.

After this initial exchange of R Capper admitting he was not going to share a wanted cap, which was taken lightly, the intensity during that day picked up. R Capper got into an argument with N Capper about the quality of a recent show they both capped.

R Capper- it was to me.. and i capped some epic shit recently.. but this was the best
R Capper- good for me
R Capper- started at around 9-10fps [frames per second, the speed a webcam feed runs at, higher fps is better quality]..
N Capper- [Performer Website 5] will never ever be 9 frames per second
R Capper- im lying then
R Capper- fuck off
R Capper- fucking cocksucker N Capper
N Capper- cockcucker? why
N Capper- bnecuase i proved you wrong
R Capper- YOU CALL ME A LIAR - WHYYYYYYYYY
R Capper- WHY WOULD I MAKE THAT SHIT UP???
N Capper- you may of capped it at 9 frames per second, but it didnot stream at that rate
R Capper- MANY PPL HERE SEEN MAY CAPS
R Capper- but fuck it im not sharing any of it anyway so u can just go fuck yourself all of you

R Capper and N Capper continued this argument for a longer period of time, in which other cappers joined or were dragged in. The important thing to see, is again, R Capper readily admits he is going to hoard another cap that many in the Capper Room wanted.

The argument lasted for nearly an hour, as seen below:

R Capper- dont argue with him I Capper
N Capper- [Performer Website 5] does not
I Capper- not arguing.
R Capper- cool I Capper take his side fuck u too then bye
R Capper- ur insults mean nothing to me
R Capper- cuz igot ALL the win
R Capper- and u just anon [used here it means you are just like everyone else]
R Capper- therefore ur gay
J Capper- can't believe we're still on this. When we're ALL supposedly on the same page in terms on content

This exchange began the process of R Capper being viewed and alleged to be a hoarder.

Over the next several day after the argument, there were numerous rumors about R Capper and more overt examples of R Capper's hoarding. The day following the argument, R Capper did the following:

R Capper- [http://img682.imageshack.us/\[a performer\].jpg](http://img682.imageshack.us/[a performer].jpg) [a picture of a video file]
K Capper- there a link to the vid R Capper?
P Capper- R Capper such a tease
Z Capper- let's dream...
R Capper- sorry.. couldnt help myself
R Capper- 600 ppl there by the end, im sure someone good and decent will share one of these days
T Capper- i thought you werent gonna come here anymore R Capper
R Capper- ikr [I know really]

Again, R Capper clearly shows he is hoarding a cap to the Capper Room and continues to fan the flames by saying “im sure someone good and decent will share one of these days”. After his overt hoarding, rumors began to fly about R Capper and he started a rumor himself which I will explain shortly. Many of the rumors about R Capper were of him being a hero and ruining win for others, while getting and keeping the win to himself. This can be seen in the following quotes:

March 6th
B Capper- he's on here monetering us
W Capper- what's wrong with R Capper?
B Capper- monitoring
B Capper- he's here
Q Capper- monitoring for who?

March 11th
U Capper- R Capper is a hero now?
Y Capper- no
Y Capper- fake R Capper is fake
A1 Capper- I think R Capper is MA Hero [MA Hero is a known hero]

March 12th

X Capper- very annoying >> R Capper: DO NOT SHOW ANYTHING YOU ARE BEING RECORDED AND WILL BE PUT ON PORN SITES LIKE [Share Cap Site] BY THE ASSHOLES AT [Capper Room]

B1 Capper- even spoke directly to D Capper [D Capper is among the Elite Cappers in the community and goes by a variety of names.]

March 13th

C1 Capper- i closed room

C1 Capper- R Capper ruined it

While it is impossible to know if R Capper was indeed the hero, several in the Capper Room believed this to be the case because of how he began to be treated in the Capper Room due to his open hoarding. Some pointed out that it is easy to use someone's username from one site on a different site, it is unlikely the "fake" would know other users' usernames at the different sites. This is seen by what B1 Capper said, "even spoke directly to D Capper" and what B Capper said earlier in the chat on March 6th, "lol r is here and trying to fuck with me r: WHATS UP B WHATS YOUR NAME IN THIS CHAT? r: B ARE YOU THERE?". These instances appear to be more than a coincidence and lead to the users of the Capper Room to shunning R Capper. His last appearance in the room was March 9th; the open hoarding done by R Capper led directly to others not having interactions with him in the Capper Room. The open hoarding by R Capper chased him away from being able to be trusted by and interact with other cappers in public areas. This is seen by a couple of posts made to the Capper Message Board on May 18, 2010 by two anonymous posters:

You have grown very tiresome R Capper.

R Capper, there is absolutely no fucking reason for you to keep posting random snapshots [pictures of caps] of shit you're gonna hoard. you can

keep all your shit to yourself; we know you've got a collection of epic caps; we know you've got gigashits upon gigashits of cp [Gigabytes of child pornography, a lot of it]; we don't care (that is until you make us, of course and obviously you will get backlash because of it). you share and that is appreciated, but the rest of your faggotry [generally being an asshole] you can keep for your hoardboards [private message boards] and whatnot i.m.o. [in my opinion]

Months after R Capper's open hoarding in the Capper Room, he was still an alleged hoarder of epic caps because of this, even those who were glad to get the crumbs of caps he would share were getting tired of his hoarding. Everyone, though, was not taking action against R Capper; it was presumed after he was shunned from the Capper Room that he had started his own private group of a few cappers. This presumption was later confirmed by R Capper on the Capper Message Board:

i told him to go fuck himself when he invited me to his board and told me about his crazy posting rules then i was like fuck it i already have 2 ppl on ur board and then showed him proof of that and he raged [got mad] lol what a clown

The allegations of hoarding, due to the open hoarding by R Capper lead to many cappers turning on him. As a response to the direct action of other cappers to not have dealings with R Capper, he created his own private group of cappers, heroed win for those not in his group in order to get the win himself and angered many cappers. The anger of the other cappers is best summarized by this excerpt from an above message board posting, "we know you've got gigashits upon gigashits of cp; we don't care (that is until you make us, of course and obviously you will get backlash because of it)". This excerpt shows how other cappers were and maybe still are near the point of reporting R Capper to authorities because of his known collection of child pornography. When hoarding is allegative social control, it is a very powerful control. The above example shows the

power of hoarding as allegative social control because a capper, who was considered by all to be a quickly rising elite capper, could not keep from being shunned by other cappers because of the allegations of hoarding. R Capper's initial teasing and playful hoarding, quickly turned into him being labeled a full blown alleged hoarder. This allegation led to his shunning from the Capper Room and to his having to create a private group to sustain his reputation in the community. While R Capper is not the average capper, when the average capper is alleged to be a hoarder it is as good as a death sentence because they lack the ties to form or gain access to a private group. As seen before, building a reputation is a key component of the capping community.

Hoarding as Referential Social Control

The final way in which hoarding is classified as control is when it is referential social control. Essentially, this is similar to when sharing is used as referential control. Hoarding is most often referred to as a negative thing and should be avoided or stopped. An example of this is seen here:

D1 Capper- why give out a room without the password?
E1 Capper- Its pointless
F1 Capper- its a form of hoarding

In this situation, the password itself is hoarded that could lead to live win or to other caps because the link that was posted was a temporary chat room on another website used to share links and caps. The idea that "Its pointless", as E1 Capper says, refers to the hoarding of a password. This is an attempt by users in the Capper Room to stop others from hoarding passwords or caps. As well as an attempt to get others to not post links to things they do not know the password.

A Metaphoric Game

A common theme throughout my research was how cappers and those who interact with the capping community view capping. When they discuss capping they talk about the “game” of capping. This is also seen by their framing shows where a performer is getting nude or engaging in sex acts in the metaphor of a game and referring to these shows and later caps as win. M Capper said the following about how cappers view capping:

It becomes an addiction for a lot of people to get as many caps as they can and create collections and grade others and build reputations, in other words the more they cap the more it starts to become a game.

This view was also mentioned by the administrator at Performer Website 1:

The motivation for cappers is basically what I mentioned in answer 6. They want to "win" the game they are playing. It's a matter of feeling superiority or control over another person. I think the internet has really just become a large school yard where there are bullies and those who get picked on. Whether governments want to admit it or not, we need to police the internet just like we do real life because everyone is living online these days.

The idea that capping is seen as a game, acts as a control itself within the capping community. If sharing is the skeletal system of the capping community, then capping as a game is the nervous system. The metaphorical framework of capping as a game entails a certain way of viewing capping from the cappers perspective (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). In games, usually, people are not seriously endangered, there are rules to play by, there is an understanding and appreciation for the game at play and usually there is an understanding of how to win the game. This metaphorical framework acts as a coping mechanism to one extent for the cappers to justify what they do. It also works as an effective referential social control within the community.

Understanding the game of capping shows the dedication a capper has put in to become a capper and support the community. Referring to the game acts as a control from older members towards the younger members. It sets the example for how to act, what to do and just generally how to be as a capper. A good example of cappers referring to the game happened in the Capper Room:

- G1 Capper-** see this is y the heros win, everybody quick to put someone else down. no organization
- H1 Capper -** all im saying, is if your usernames dont come with their own pictures and full on biographies, including hobbies, interests, and at least one dead family member, you're not committed enough
- G1 Capper-** which is y u got people keeping girls to themselves
- G1 Capper-** lol H1 Capper
- J1 Capper-** you guys do all the work and people like me reap the benefits. so thanks. i got time to go through the trouble of making accounts etc etc, but i don't because im not a huge faggot
- G1 Capper-** leeches ruin the game too
- J1 Capper-** hate away sister
- G1 Capper-** they have no appreciation for the game so they dont give a shit about it and ruin it. im not hating, im tellin the truth. its like the diff between a renter and an owner of a house
- J1 Capper-** you take this shit wayyyy too seriously nigga
- G1 Capper-** renters dont give a shit about the house, its not theirs, owners take care of it and appreciate it. yea my point proven, ur a "renter". this is y its been harder to get good win since the days of "yahoo". shit, it was so easy to get win back then, u ran out of HD [hard drive] space, lol
- J1 Capper-** you're age is showing
- G1 Capper-** who gives a fuck, this aint [Performer Site 1]jr
- J1 Capper-** and your lack of companionship
- G1 Capper-** "my age is showing" wtf
- J1 Capper-** how old are you
- G1 Capper-** lol ok mr psychologist, anything else u wanna analyze? 29 in feb probly youngest here
- J1 Capper-** internet is serious business. im 19
- G1 Capper-** yea right
- J1 Capper-** real talk
- G1 Capper-** shit man, i was in iraq and i was still gettin win
- J1 Capper-** fuck iraq

H1 Capper- those yahoo bitches were fun. you could get so much win running the long con. you guys today have no appreciation for the kind of skill that shit took

In the above interaction from February 4th, the G1 Capper was making an analogy about the respect for the game of capping being like the difference between a renter and an owner of a house. He was referring to how appreciation and understanding of the game leads to more win, but with the influx of new people who are “renters”, in the mind of G1 Capper, do not understand or appreciate the game and it results in more fail. G1 Capper was making an attempt at referential social control with J1 Capper, who is clearly a “renter”. Also, H1 Capper sheds light on another control mechanism used within the capping community, which I will address shortly, the control of performers; H1 Capper, seems to be like G1 Capper in that they understand the game of capping and share the view the new cappers need to be controlled in order for there to be more win. In this instance, using the referential social control of referring to the game of capping is in some ways an initiation process for controlling new cappers and allowing them to work into the ranks of capping.

Friendly Impersonations

As I mentioned earlier, the controls exerted by cappers are not only exerted upon other cappers or heroes. There are also controls exerted on the performers themselves, most of the time, in order for cappers to get their win. While my research does not deal exclusively at the performer/capper interactions because of ethical and possible legal situations, there are some cursory observations that can be made about these relationships. I am certain there is a control aspect here because I have been told from

two interviews the cappers seek to control the performers. The Performer Site 1 administrator said:

They want to "win" the game they are playing. It's a matter of feeling superiority or control over another person.
Yes, we can find rooms that are being 'attacked' [by cappers] on a daily basis. It does seem very out of control to us and we always try to get it back under control. Sadly, we rarely have the support of the broadcaster because he or she often thinks that the viewers in the room 'like' him/her.

A similar theme was broached by M Capper:

Yes definitely. The key thing is once someone makes friends with the user they pretty control them. Of course it's never a real friendship as cappers will always drop the act once they've gotten everything they needed from the girls.

In both interviews with these individuals, they expressed how control is used and apparently effectively used by the cappers.

When the Performer Site 1 administrator said "we always try to get it back under control", she was referring to the cappers having taken the room and actions of the performer under their control. The control exerted by the cappers or the heroes to the performers is largely referential social control; Gibbs (1989, p.59) points out that "[i]mpersonation is an implicit and nonverbal means of referential control. The impersonation when it comes to the performers is the cappers attempting to impersonate friends who enjoy the show and the performer for the live show and nothing else. In actuality many of them enjoy the performer because of the potential of getting win from the performer.

However, this is not the only control exerted by the cappers over the performers; in a document I was given by M Capper it outlines how to "raid" Performer Website 2 rooms. Performer Website 2 is a website many cappers frequent in attempts to get win.

The document mentions an effective strategy is “if there are 2 girls, try to get them into a competition”. This strategy would imply the use of vicarious social control, by presumably awarding the performer who does what the “crowd” asks for with praise in attempts of getting the second performer to outdo or match the other performer.

In my short interviews with the hero, many of the techniques cappers use, heroes use as well. Mostly they try to gain the confidence of the performers into trusting them that they can be recorded. However, the likelihood of effective social control exerted by heroes seems to be low because of the sheer numbers of cappers. In my interviews with the hero and M Capper, both made it clear that heroes were definitely in the minority. Effective control from heroes requires a hero to gain a top level reputation on a performer website and to maintain that power level. Without a powerful reputation level, a hero is simply outnumbered.

Making a Cap

As I mentioned, I did not observe interactions between cappers and performers during my research. However, from my interviews and observations in the Capper Room I have been able to ascertain the process of how a cap comes into being and what a cap is like. I believe it is important to show how the caps come into being and the interconnectedness of the controls at play during the process.

The first step in the capping process is identifying a broadcast to target. This is often done in chat rooms like the Capper Room, but is also done by searching the various live, streaming webcast websites. A typical post in the Capper Room showing this step is the following:

V Capper- here she just hand hands inside panties on pussy
[http://www.\[Performer Website 2\].com/\[performer\]](http://www.[Performer Website 2].com/[performer])

The targeting of the broadcasters is often a short description of why the person is a good target. From the viewpoint of the broadcaster, they do not know they are being targeted, “they want attention and often ‘viewers’ to make themselves feel good or important”, said Performer Website 1 administrator. After the broadcaster is targeted many cappers begin to flood [a mass of people entering a show] the room. Often times the viewer count sky rockets, from 10 or so viewers, to well over 150 viewers within two or three minutes. The Performer Website 1 Administrator said the following about this influx of viewers and what happens next:

The bad behavior usually increases as the mass increases because they generally tell the host that if they do something there will be more viewers... Or ‘when you get to 200 viewers you HAVE to flash us.’ If the host refuses to do what they said when he or she reaches that number of viewers, they tend to leave a bit. Basically if the host does what the viewers say, it could go on forever.

[W]e can find rooms that are being "attacked" on a daily basis. It does seem very out of control to us and we always try to get it back under control. Sadly, we rarely have the support of the broadcaster because he or she often thinks that the viewers in the room "like" him/her. To be honest, the host often reacts with a lot of hostility towards our moderators, cursing at them, telling them to F off [fuck off], calling the mods [moderators, they are employed by this website to police behavior] perverts for being in the room...

Attempts at maintaining order on sites like these, as seen from these quotes, can be a challenge. The challenge is exacerbated by the addition of the cappers. Their ability to persuade and influence can only lead to the logical conclusion that they have a certain level of control over the broadcasters when they enter the shows. The targeting, the influx of viewers and the “winning over” of the broadcasters puts the cappers into a powerful

position. So powerful that the moderators of sites like Performer Website 1 receive a hostile reception for trying to help a broadcaster from being capped.

While it would make for intriguing research to follow cappers, heroes and performers in these live interactions, the legal gray area and ethical considerations make this near impossible. Regardless, control and more precisely social control is certainly one aspect of these interactions. This demonstrates the levels of control present within “deviant” groups, even though some attempt to say this is impossibility.

Gossiping to Control

The next control within the capping community to explore is the role gossip plays in the community. Gossip operates as a form of allegative social control by its shear nature. The cappers tend to gossip about the following: other cappers being a hero, other cappers being a blackmailer, law enforcement involvement and, as I previously discussed, accusations of hoarding. When any of this gossip is alleged the cappers always take some form of action. When a capper is alleged to be a blackmailer there is usually strong action taken by the community. The action is taken because as M Capper said:

They are looked down on and disgraced in the community. No one likes a blackmailer... But overall, when it comes to blackmail even the best of cappers will become heroes just to stop it.

Blackmail is considered to be an ultimate betrayal in the community, although the cappers typically do not tell a performer they are being recorded, many believe it is wrong to illicit further action by blackmailing the performer with the recorded cap. Part of this reasoning is because many cappers believe blackmail to be illegal, however, the legal qualifications of what is and what is not blackmail differs from location to location.

In some places eliciting an action from someone is not blackmail, while eliciting money or valuable items is considered blackmail. The legal fuzziness of the issue and the moral reprehensibility of blackmail seem to be why it is looked down upon so much in the capping community.

As I said allegations are not only about blackmail; a common theme of capper gossip is heroism. Suspicious behavior by a capper, getting one on one “win” with “heroed” performers and even being an obsessive fan of one performer often leads to allegations of a capper being a hero. While being an alleged hero is not as bad as being an alleged blackmailer, it is still looked down upon in the capping community. Cappers tend to accept the fact that as long there are cappers there will be an opposing force of heroes trying to stop them from getting “win”.

This fact leads cappers to always trying to “keep the house clean” from heroes. The Capper Room was always believed to be a spot heroes tracked the cappers from and in fact I discovered the Capper Room from a Youtube.com video posted by a hero. When a user is alleged to be a hero, others either quit discussing things with this person, try to get them banned from a chat room or kicked from a chat room or the cappers will, so to speak, pull ranks and begin communicating via private messages with other cappers they know they can trust. If the allegation of being a hero is found to be true, then the user will be banned from the chat room and banned from any message boards as well. A suggestion found on the Capper Message Board pinned [pinning keeps the thread first on a message board] rules thread sums up the action taken against those alleged to be heroes best:

-Any posters who are perceived to be blackmailers, heroes/white knights, hoarders or trolls [people who are intentionally disruptive] will be banned. There is a zero tolerance level for that.

Any gossip of the above behaviors will result in action taken against the alleged by others in the community. Knowing this tends to keep heroes quiet and cappers from engaging in behaviors that will force them away from other cappers.

Within the community, it does matter who is telling the gossip and about whom it is. In order for R Capper to have actions taken against him to the level they were taken, it required some cappers in the Capper Room and a few respected cappers to back up the allegations against him. The reason for this is the amount of power R Capper had in the capping community. R Capper is considered to be an Elite Capper/Hoarder, which places his true power level somewhere around that of a Trader. His status gives him power, but he was able to be barred from the Capper Room by a group of cappers who were not Elite Cappers because of gossip and hoarding and the stronger power behind those controls than the power he had to resist the controls. For lesser cappers, it would take very few people or even that the allegation be true to have action taken against them. Gossip and rumors definitely work as a way for the cappers to shield others out, differentiate between each other in terms of how long they have been in the community and to control the behaviors of each other in the community.

In the next section I discuss information control, but before I begin that discussion, it is important to point out gossip is similar to information control. Information control, as I will explain it, requires a certain level of substantiation of the information. Gossip on the other hand tends to be completely unsubstantiated in its execution as a control. Gossip gains its usefulness as a control by having hints of

possibility, without hints of truth. Others need not to have the gossip backed by truth because imagination takes the gossip and runs with it. In the right circumstances, with the right people, gossip becomes an extremely effective control (Blee, 1991).

No Gatekeepers, No Problem

The final control aspect to understand from the capping community is one that risen from my data and extends upon the control categories of Gibbs. As I collected and analyzed my data I was noticing I had a category of data that essentially didn't fit any of the categories Gibbs had laid out, but still seemed to operate as a control. As I have noted earlier, the majority of research on information control implies the presence of a gatekeeper. Within the capping world, a world that exists on and in the "information super-highway", there are no gatekeepers. The lack of gatekeepers of information does not keep it from acting as a control of others. Before I can address information control though, there needs to be an understanding about what information is conceived to be in the capping culture and perhaps the larger Internet culture.

What is Information?

If information does not fit into the categories of inanimate, biotic or human, then what exactly is information? This is a perplexing question that many have attempted to answer. It is extremely difficult and ambiguous to explain what information is because as John Perry Barlow (1994, p.5) writes in "The Economy of Ideas", "it is a natural host to paradox." Barlow says information is much like the scientific understanding of light. Light is understood to be both a particle and a wave and in Barlow's assessment, information should also be understood under the guise of a paradox. Barlow (1994, p.5)

states, “Information is an activity... a life form... a relationship.” Information is something which takes on life like qualities, but it is not alive in the biological sense.

As Barlow demonstrates, information must be understood as something which is near lifelike, but not alive because of the way it exists in world. Information is something that is given rise by humans with the creation of ideas, but once out, information takes on lifelike qualities. It is able to move in the form of pictures, speech, words and all other ways we interact with information. While these are forms and qualities of information, it still is not a definition for what information is. However, it leads me towards a definition of information, when combined with the way Blee (1991) discusses gossip and Gibbs (1989) discusses control.

As I mentioned previously, gossip is, by in large, unsubstantiated in its existence, it is merely ideas without basis. For ideas to become information, a level of substantiation must take place. Information cannot exist as an idea because it would only be gossip if this was the case. It must be connected to more information and to our understanding of the world. Therefore, I define information as substantiated ideas that create greater understanding about the world. This definition of information demonstrates how it comes from human minds, but once it enters the world it seemingly takes on its own life and in turn creates an understanding for us about our world. Information exists in its own flow of life, interacting with us and being transformed by us at the same time. This understanding of information is perplexing, but it is exactly what allows it to act as a control on others.

Controlling others with information

In traditional conceptions of information control, access to information is controlled by gatekeepers and the information will remain immobile for as long as the gatekeeper wishes. Controlling the access and flow of this information in turn alters the behavior of those who do not possess the information and gives the gatekeeper a substantial amount of power (Pettigrew, 1972). Fitting with this understanding about gatekeepers, Barlow (1994, p.6) says, “Information that isn’t moving ceases to exist as anything but potential... at least until it is allowed to move again.” However, if there are no gatekeepers, how can information be used as a control?

The capping community demonstrates how information can be used as a control without gatekeepers effectively. The cappers lack of a centralizing organization makes controlling access to certain information impossible. So access to the potential Barlow refers to is never realized because the flow of information is never stopped. In order to control the actions of others, cappers flood their community sphere with information attempting to divert or continue others down specific lines of information. This information overload is often characterized as being detrimental to organizations and communities (Toffler 1970; Edmunds and Morris 2000).

However, in the capping community the overload of information makes it possible to control the actions of others with information. The overload of information makes the already non-controlled flow of information even larger. As long as the information in this flow can be substantiated it is useful information. The nature of information, combined with attempts at control in the capping world lead me to define attempted information control as an overt behavior by a human in the belief that the

behavior will divert or maintain the flow of information, this diversion or continuance will alter the behaviors of other humans and the diversion or continuance is desirable. This definition of information control does not require a gatekeeper, but it allows people to still control others with information. An example of this is discussed in the next section.

Mall Cops and Cappers

The Capper Room plays an integral role in the capping community as a place information is readily discussed about many topics which affect capping. In mid-February 2010 R Capper brought up a topic which is often discussed amongst cappers, the presence of law enforcement. The following exchange was the beginning of R Capper exerting information control against the other members of the Capper Room:

R Capper- i remember when there werent cop mods here
R Capper- js [just saying]
K1 Capper- I thought u were a mod?
R Capper- i left when law enforcement mods entered the building
K1 Capper- Lol

The above excerpt shows information being diverted by R Capper to the rest of the Capper Room about the presence of a law enforcement moderator in the Capper Room. This information was crucial to the Capper Room because around this time R Capper had began to get in arguments with others in the Capper Room, which ended with a majority of cappers in the room enacting, successfully, allegative social control about R Capper's hoarding. But at the time of this exchange he was still viewed by most as an Elite Capper, so his releasing of this information was vital, but the reasons would not be known until later. The next exchange is a continuance of information about the presence of a law enforcement moderator in the Capper Room:

- R Capper-** no i asked to be unmodded
- R Capper-** [a mod] is law enforcement.. dont want anything to do with that
- H1 Capper-** what kinda law enforcement? mall cop?
- R Capper-** some shady organization.. dunno exactly.. but admin [administrator, the owner of the website and has the ability to assign people as moderators/mods] confirmed
- H1 Capper-** not surprising, i figured there was a reason half the users left lol
- K1 Capper-** If there is no mod around I think it would be wise for this room to self-regulate and not allow any links to underage rooms

This excerpt from a chat log in mid-March shows information being continued about the law enforcement moderator, that the moderator worked for “some shady organization” would have even more impact on the Capper Room. Additionally, R Capper further substantiated his claim of a law enforcement moderator by saying the administrator confirmed this. The administrator, himself, would go on to explain he did tell R Capper this, which allowed for the idea of a law enforcement moderator to be firmly pushed into the realm of information and away from gossip. By mid-March the room had already begun to go through changes because of the information diverted in mid-February about a law enforcement moderator. Prior to this diversion, there was skepticism about the presence of law enforcement in the Capper Room.

There was occasional discussion in the early days of my research about this and even a news story from CNET.com (2010) detailing how the FBI was pushing the FCC to require Internet Service Providers to keep records of websites individuals visit for long periods of time. In response to this story, I Capper said, “notice what they want it for? not espionage, not terrorism, not organized crime - it's those nasty people taking bathtub pix [pictures] of their children that threatens the union to its roots, and requires invasive

action.” Also, in the midst of R Capper’s diversion of information, a website used by the cappers to get “win” had began to post user IP addresses when a room was closed by administrators of the website. It was in this light of higher than normal skepticism that R Capper diverted information and was able to have that information further substantiated and continued due to reliable, outside sources.

R Capper’s claim of the presence of law enforcement was based in truth. As H1 Capper said, “not surprising, I figured there was a reason half the users left”. This was a true statement because the Capper Room in the early days of my research would average around 120 users at any given time in the room, by mid-March the total at any given time was never over 80 users. The information about law enforcement involvement in the Capper Room that R Capper diverted, combined with information from outside sources did drive away several of the members from the Capper Room.

The actions taken here fit the definition of information control. Information about a law enforcement moderator ceased after the actions taken against R Capper for his hoarding, but the information that was already present was effective in causing numerous cappers to leave the Capper Room. The numbers in the Capper Room continued to fall to only having around 60 users in the room at any given time.

By late May, information was diverted back from R Capper’s diversion about the law enforcement moderator. This time the information was diverted by the administrator of the Capper Room. The administrator informed the users the law enforcement moderator was A Moderator and was in fact affiliated with a webcam safety group online. The moderator was not a law enforcement officer, but instead relates potential abuses online to law enforcement agencies and attempts to provide information about

web cam abuses, including capping. With this information now out in the open, the users of the room seemed to be put at ease and the declining user numbers finally stopped. The administrator of Capper Room even substantiated his claim by placing a link to the webcam safety group webpage on the Capper Room chat main page. R Capper's initial diversion appears to have been for him to attempt to poach some "up and coming" cappers into his own private group [discussed earlier]. In order to control these potential individuals he diverted information in order to increase skepticism by some users and cause them to abandon the Capper Room.

No Gatekeepers Ever?

The information control is not limited to law enforcement involvement or information control of this sort only. Cappers, like people in everyday conversation with one other person operate as their own gatekeeper to that person. This type of information control is a written rule in the capping community, as part of the capping document I was given, when dealing with the actual act of capping:

DO NOT TELL ANYONE YOU'RE SCREENCAPPING IF YOU ARE!
Chances are, the girl will feel embarrassed and not want to show anything anymore or she may just leave Performer Website 2 forever.

Gatekeepers are always present at individual conversation levels, but as I demonstrated above, gatekeepers are not always present at the group level. The cappers tend to acknowledge this idea in a rule on the Capper Message Board and a rule accepted as part of the game of capping, "No other personal info (MySpace, AIM, phone #s, full name etc)." This rule demonstrates the cappers understanding that there are no gatekeepers of information in the capping community. Once information enters the informational flow it is there for all to use. Diverting personal information away from public message boards

controls the actions potential blackmailers and heroes in the actions they can take against a performer.

While the traditional information control concept of a gatekeeper remains at the individual level in conversation, the gatekeeper concept does not fit at the group level. Even without the presence of gatekeepers, information remains as a control in the capping community. As a result of the conception of information, I classify information control as another form of control. Information control should be considered as a fourth category to those which Gibbs (1989) outlined, biotic, inanimate and human. The nature of information and the ability to use it as a control make it its' own entity and should be treated as such in the control literature.

Controls Controlled

The controls and power present in the capping community help to further the non-conformist behavior cappers engage in. The controls used in the community are mostly social controls and help to establish group identity amongst a collection of people who are not formally organized. The controls I identified were often used at simultaneously and by numerous cappers. However, the success of any individual control relies on the amount of power associated with the control. In the capping community the power associated with the controls is reputational power. And like regular society, reputations in the capping community are built up over time by actions and lost by actions as well.

Each control I identified in the capping community relies on power to be effective, from: sharing to hoarding to capping as a game to controlling performers to gossip and to information. All rely on the reputation of the person attempting to exert the

control for the control to be effective. This does not mean all the controls operate the same though. As I explained earlier, each control is classified in its own way and sometimes multiple ways. Even information control, which I developed, operates in its own way. What can clearly be seen from this discussion is the presence of social control amongst a non-conformist group acting as the furtherance of action in that group.

Occasionally a diversion in information flow is desired, like when R Capper diverted the information flow about law enforcement involvement. A continuance in information flow is also desired, as seen when cappers are actively capping a performer to control their actions as they enter or stay away from the “win.” Continuing or diverting the flow of information is not only present in the capping world; it can be seen to be present in our daily news cycle with “up-to-the-minute” Twitter updates, Youtube.com posts and blog updates diverting or continuing the flow of information.

Chapter V

A Door Opened

The capping community is one that is extraordinarily unknown by most in society. My work here is the first exploration into the capping phenomena. With this research I am able to contribute empirically to the field by examining this little known phenomenon, but also I am able to contribute theoretically to the field. I have added a new dimension to the control literature with the development of control by information without the presence of gatekeepers.

The control by information dimension fits within the way information is conceived to be and also fits into the perspective I call control as the furtherance of action. This perspective encompasses a wider territory than control as the counteraction of deviance. The furtherance of action perspective allows for controls to positively or negatively affect people, for either conformist or non-conformist purposes.

I was able to develop control by information by the methods I employed during my research. The multiple methods I used were done to triangulate data in order to get a full idea of the capping world. I took methods used in traditional ethnography and extended those into the virtual realm. Virtual ethnographies are a developing area of research in the field and as life becomes more lived in the virtual world it will become more important to use the virtual realm in research.

With the methods used, I had a tremendous sum of data. By using the constant comparative method, I was able to collect data and analyze simultaneously. This allowed me to see the control aspects which were rising from the data. As control became a dominant feature I picked up from my analysis, I began separating the control into categories. I wound up with five categories that were definable and another category that needed to be examined further. The extra category became control by information. While my analysis became geared toward control, the data still has more meat left on the bones. But like all research, time constrains the focus of research.

As I mentioned, my research here is the first to delve into the capping phenomenon. Because of such I am unable to compare my research to other within the field. This is a weakness which cannot be overcome; all research that is the first faces this challenge. My attempt to counteract this challenge was the use of multiple qualitative methods to triangulate data. But again, this is a potential weakness because of the limited research done in the virtual realm. Some view research done virtually as unreliable and artificial because the researcher is not literally around other living, breathing people (Murthy, 2008). While being around physical people adds to research, in the virtual realm observation only research becomes stronger because you do not have to talk and can largely go unnoticed by simply not typing any messages. Regardless of the research performed there are always weaknesses present. All that is possible is to minimize the weaknesses and attempt to make the research as strong as possible.

In closing here I am going to lay out future questions based on the data I collected. These future questions deal with the capping community. Extending research

into the capping world allows for more dimensions to be added to the understanding of capping.

One avenue for future explanation, of the capping community from my data I did not get into in this research, is the mixing of public and private in the capping community. Within the capping community there is a great deal of mixing between public and private distinctions. The actual caps themselves demonstrate this confusing mix of what is private and what is public. Many of the actions the cappers record are considered to be private actions, but they are done in what is clearly a public forum. This confusion of public and private goes well beyond the capping community itself. With the plethora of new technologies, like Twitter.com, Facebook.com, Performer Website 6, Performer Website 1, etcetera, that all emphasize social networking. All of these technologies are used extensively and with a high level of competency in the capping community, but they are also are obviously used by many more people not in the capping community. An interesting question from my data and with additional data would be what are the consequences of bringing a great deal of private life into the public sphere? And why has this move taken place? One consequence has been the rise of the capping culture itself and more so with the blackmailing aspect found within the capping culture. It is now much easier to pry into the private life of individuals because many live their life in the public sphere more than in former times. There are likely further consequences with this such as “sexting” and online bullying to name a few; why this has taken place would be a very interesting question to explore, as well.

Based off of the previous question, the capping culture is one that seems to be connected to a larger group that also resides online within many of the same technologies

the cappers utilize. The larger group was referred to the cappers often on the Capper Message Board and within the Capper Room. The group is called Anonymous. The capping culture is connected to the group Anonymous and appears to be an off chute of the group. The cursory information I know about Anonymous is they seem to be a group with more organization than the cappers, but there does not seem to be a formal organization. Anonymous has engaged in a wide variety of activities from leading protest against Scientology to harassing and disabling Australian government websites for the Australian governments' move to censor the Internet to harassing various people online. An interesting question would be how is the capping community tied to Anonymous and if the degrees of control found in the capping community extend to Anonymous, a group who has engaged in face to face meeting between each other?

Part of the capping culture I was unable to explore in much depth was the interactions and relationship the heroes and the cappers. While I did interview one hero I was primarily seeking what he knew about the capping culture itself. The heroes are certainly outnumbered, but they are able to exert control on the cappers themselves. Other aspects of the hero culture are unknown and what it may share with other parts of society. A sequel of sorts to this study would be to explore the hero culture as it exists contrasting the capping culture. Some questions to give direction to such a study would be:

1. What are the controls the heroes use in regards to cappers? How is the success of the controls gauged?
2. Do the heroes view themselves as other types of informal community policing groups, like community watch, Perverted Justice, etc.?

3. Why do the heroes do what they do?

There would be hurdles to clear in doing such a study, but I believe it would be very informative in understanding the capping phenomena. Some of the hurdles to clear would be actually finding the heroes. To the best of my knowledge there are no hero chat rooms. The heroes I know about operate independently of each other for the most part. Also many of the heroes stay on the performer websites and do not engage in actions outside of those websites. This would make it very difficult to interacting with the heroes.

But if it was possible to find heroes to study, the study could provide a contrast to the capping community. Heroes operate more individually than do the cappers. This contrast to the capping community would allow for insights from people in the capping community, but not someone who is in it for the reasons cappers are. The way heroes view cappers and the interactions between cappers and performers that heroes can provide detailed information about would prove to be very valuable to further understanding the capping culture.

A final extension of my capping research would be to explore possible ties to the child pornography trade. The issue of child pornography was one that was often discussed by the cappers. Many cappers expressed they had no interest in what they termed real child pornography. Their conception of child pornography was basically videos or pictures of anyone below 11 or 12 years old engaged in a sexual act. While many believed this, there are cappers who targeted individuals 12 and younger; R Capper was said to have been streaming a known child pornography video in a Performer Website 6 room the cappers had set up near the

end of my research. There are certainly those in the capping community that are interested in real child pornography and nearly all in the community have some degree of interest in what American law refers to as child pornography. What are the ties capping has to the child pornography trade? How are caps thought of in the child pornography world? To what degree is the child pornography trade hidden as compared to the capping trade? These are just a few extending questions to further develop understanding to how capping may be changing conceptions of child pornography. As well as, demonstrating how close adolescents are coming into contact with individuals who engage in the trade of child pornography. This extension of the capping data could prove to be informative in how to better protect children and adolescents from people willing to exploit them.

My research into the capping culture is the first to be done into it. I certainly did not capture the entirety of the community in this research, but this research is a launching point. A launching point into the capping community and a launching point into understanding the changes taking place to society as we integrate life online with life offline. While I never met any of the cappers face to face, I was able to get a snapshot of who they are individually and how they are as a group. With time the intricacies of the capping community will be revealed and the way society is evolving will be understood in greater context.

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Vita

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