


the audience sets the stage for a return to normal discourse, restoring balance to the situation by playfully chastising the punster. Regardless, it would be valuable to investigate how other sorts of plays on words, such as spoonerisms and malapropisms, are responded to in our culture, and also how puns are treated elsewhere. Be this as it may, I'd like to suggest that the concept of the definition of the situation may eventually help resolve this problem by focusing on actors' understandings of what they and others are doing in some interaction. Since elements of such definitions are sometimes threatened by puns, it seems to be a good place to look to ascertain conditions of both positive and negative responses. For instance, it seems likely that when the general definition of a situation is one of play, or one allowing a bit of frivolity, groans will be of pleasure. Another possibility is that variations in persons' situational self-conceptions—one part of individuals' definitions of situations—may also influence the intended meaning of their responses. Thus, persons who see themselves as quick-witted may be more likely to groan with appreciation than those who see themselves as slow-witted victims losing face to others' rapierlike wit.

Basically I am urging that attention be paid to those variables contained within the general concept of the definition of the situation. This is necessary not only to determine the evaluative content of responses to puns but also to establish what conditions tend to accompany both positive and negative evaluations.

This could have some larger significance, since to the extent that the groans elicited by puns are taken by actors to be negative evaluations, they present an exception or contradiction to the general American cultural understanding that, at least to a person's face, judgments of them will be favorable unless unavoidably otherwise. That is, they would violate the guideline that if you can't say something nice about someone, don't say anything.

Another point worthy of note is the fact that the surface meaning of groaned responses to puns may not be the actual meaning. This draws attention to the broader category of cases of people saying one thing but meaning (and being understood as meaning) another. Irony is the obvious example. Such instances, precisely because of their complexity, are especially interesting and demanding of exploration. They hold much promise for yielding insights into the nature and conditions of human interaction, particularly in terms of the manner in which people anticipate others' acts in ongoing situations.

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 In this analysis of behavior in a public place (the University of Michigan Intramural Sports Building and the Imperial Court Club), Kenneth Schlesinger groups reactions of racquetball players to the points they lose into eight categories. On the basis of his observations over a three-week period (twenty-five games), he identifies the most frequent reactions as facial disgust, swearing, self-condemnation behavior, physical assaults on the racquetball court, and visual checks of the observation deck. Schlesinger's analysis shows the reflection of general American values, e.g., preoccupation with self-image and concern about others' evaluations, in racquetball play. Also important is his point that sports are worthy of anthropological study not just because they are popular but because they exemplify rule-governed behavior in demarcated settings, thus limiting the range of individual variation.

14 / Reactions of Racquetball Players to Lost Points

Kenneth Schlesinger

It is of anthropological interest that many Americans allocate much of their leisure time to participation in athletic activities. Anthropological attention has been devoted to explaining the popularity of athletics; however, the relevance of anthropology to competitive sports transcends the attempt to determine their appeal. Competitive sports provide an opportunity to observe people under controlled circumstances, since many athletic activities are characterized by standardized spatial arrangements, explicit rules, and criteria for success that are common to all who participate. The controlled nature of competitive athletics permits one to notice behavioral consistencies that might not otherwise be discernible, due to subjective differences in motivation or physical conditions.

For the present study I have observed the behavior of individuals engaged in competitive racquetball play. In particular, I have focused on perceptible reactions that follow loss of a point, and that precede the player's acknowledged readiness to resume play. I shall discuss the nature and frequencies of these reactions, as well as their meaning and significance to understanding American character.

I observed racquetball games at the University of Michigan Intramural Sports Building and the Imperial Court Club. Both of these athletic facilities are only open to people who have paid considerable sums for user privileges. The use of the Intramural Sports Building is contingent upon the payment of a substantial tuition fee; court privileges at

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the Imperial Court Club require a sizable membership fee in addition to court costs per hour. Since user privileges at both facilities are relatively expensive, it is possible that the population of athletes that I have observed is comprised largely of middle- and upper-class people. I observed both males and females (thirty and twenty, respectively) whose ages varied from the early teens to the mid-fifties. I believe that the sample population is sufficiently representative of middle- and upper-class Americans that valid generalizations about members of these social classes can be made. Although it is my conviction that the reactions of individuals to lost points do not vary significantly with respect to differences in social class, I have not attempted to substantiate this claim, and have qualified my results accordingly.

I observed racquetball games at these places over four weeks. During my preliminary observation (Week 1), I observed the range of losing behavior and noted which reactions occurred frequently. On the basis of my preliminary observation, I became conscious of similarities in the reactions of individuals to points they had lost. Although there were peculiarities in reactions, the observed behaviors could be classified into eight specific categories: (1) self-condemnation behavior, (2) physical assaults on the racquetball court, (3) stall tactics, (4) visual checks of the observation deck, (5) compliments directed toward one's opponent, (6) facial disgust, (7) swearing, and (8) indifference.

I observed twenty-five racquetball games over a three-week period, during which time I recorded the frequencies with which losing behaviors occurred, treating the occurrence of each reaction as a single observation of its parent category. Since all the reactions I observed were amenable to classification into the eight categories, I did not need to record any additional significant reactions, nor to determine their frequency.

Before presenting the frequency distribution of the observed losing behaviors, I shall clarify and exemplify the categories. Self-condemnation behavior refers to self-directed verbal remarks that express anger or dissatisfaction. Examples include: "I stink," "I can't hit the ball," and "I'm worthless." Physical assault on the racquetball court is self-explanatory, and encompasses reactions such as hitting the walls with one's racquet, stomping on the court, etc. Stall tactics refer to instances in which individuals delay behavior for more than fifteen seconds after the server has acknowledged readiness to initiate the next point. Observed stall tactics include facing the back wall instead of the front, pretending to tie one's shoes, and slowly drying one's grip.

Visual checks of the observation deck refer to gazes at the observation deck of their court. Compliments directed toward one's opponent involve praise toward the victor, e.g., "Nice shot," "That's tough," etc. Facial disgust refers to the expression of anger or dissatisfaction through frowning, sneering, or shaking one's head so as to convey disapproval. Indifference refers to the seeming absence of any reaction(s) to a lost point, i.e., nonchalance in resuming the ready-court position, without delay as previously defined. With the exception of indifference, all of the categorized behaviors may occur simultaneously; they are not mutually exclusive. For example, one can praise an opponent while frowning and hitting one's racquet against the wall.

The frequencies of the preceding categories are noted in table 1. Facial expressions of anger and disgust were the most frequent reactions. Facial expressions varied somewhat, but disgust was evident in each case. The categories of self-condemnation, swearing, and facial disgust had similar frequencies. Physical assaults on the court and visual checks of the observation deck were two-thirds as frequent as self-condemnation. Indifference was approximately one-third as frequent, and stall tactics and compliments about one-fourth as common as self-condemnation.

Although certain reactions were much more frequent than others, I shall conjecture as to the underlying meaning of all these categories of behavior. Such a discussion is clearly warranted because multiple observations of reactions of each category were made in almost every game.

The relatively high frequencies of facial disgust, self-condemnation, swearing, and physical assaults on the court suggest an almost unanimous distaste for losing points among the sampled population. All of these reactions express anger or displeasure about the event that preceded their occurrence. (It appears that the people whom I observed were very

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TABLE 1 Frequency Distribution of Classified Reactions to Lost Racquetball Points

Category of Reaction	Number of Observations
Facial disgust	210
Swearing	202
Self-condemnation behavior	184
Physical assaults on court	126
Visual checks of observation deck	120
Indifference	65
Compliments	46
Stall tactics	45

judgmental of their performance. They seemed to have continuously evaluated their performance on the basis of each point.

Self-condemnation, a very common behavior, also demonstrates players' preoccupation with self-image. Most of the self-condemnatory remarks claimed limitations in abilities for performance, such as, "I can't hit the ball," and "I can't win a damn point." Perhaps these individuals were broadcasting these remarks in an attempt to impose order on their immediate environment (cf. Assagioli 1973:51), for it appeared that they were expressing aspects of their self-images that made it increasingly probable that their performance, if unchanged, would correspond to their own and others' evaluations of their athletic skills. These remarks suggest a strong self-consciousness in the sampled population.

The widespread tendency to check the observation deck may be seen as a demonstration of concern over the publicity of one's performance. It is my impression that players looked up at the deck in order to determine whether anyone had seen them lose the preceding point. Furthermore, since self-image is in part a result of how (one thinks) others see one, these reactions may be a further demonstration of the player's preoccupation with self-image. For, in checking the observation deck, an individual may have been attempting to increase his/her awareness of other people's reactions to his/her unsuccessful efforts, thereby facilitating the modification or reinforcement of his/her self-image.

It is more difficult to explain the apparently irrational physical assaults that individuals inflicted on the walls and floors of their racquetball courts. It seems plausible that such aggressive behaviors might have been techniques through which players attempted to neutralize their responsibility for losing a point. Perhaps when a player slammed his/her racquet against the wall, he/she was transferring the blame for defeat to the racquet, which had allegedly "mis-hit" the ball, or the wall, which had been in his/her way. Similarly, when a disgusted player stomped his/her feet on the court surface, perhaps blame was being transferred to the floor, which had "interrupted" the flight of his/her last shot. I am suggesting that the observed individuals might have engaged in these aggressive behaviors in order to cleanse themselves of responsibility for their errors. According to this analysis, they were punishments of court and equipment to permit the defeated player to "save face" and maintain a positive self-image.

Compliments directed toward an opponent serve a similar function. If a player loses a point and then praises an opponent's performance, the loser's responsibility or blame for the loss is effectively neutralized, since

a compliment insinuates that the outcome of the preceding point was beyond the loser's control; i.e., the opponent hit a strong, unreturnable shot.

Stall tactics were less frequent than the other reactions, but were still used in almost all of the games. They may be interpreted as strategies employed to improve one's chances for victory. The importance of these behaviors is that they manifest a strong desire to win. Since intentional delays between points did appear to perturb the opponent, it seems that in these instances the desire to win was so strong that illegitimate means to victory were employed.

Although I have labeled the eighth category *indifference*, absence of any noticeable reaction may not truly indicate a lack of concern or interest. One might be feigning indifference in an effort to appear invincible or unaffected by the opponent's efforts. However, indifference might also be a true manifestation of nonjudgmental awareness; here the title of this category is most appropriate. In the former case, apparent indifference is a strategy that demonstrates both a strong desire for victory, and a consciousness of one's self-image, which one manipulates so as to attain a psychological advantage. But in the case of nonjudgmental awareness, the desire to win and the degree of self-consciousness are very much reduced. Since it is not apparent whether indifference is a disguise or an actual state of mind, it is difficult to draw conclusions from this category, even though these reactions occurred fairly frequently.

Although all these reactions were observed within the context of competitive interactions on racquetball courts, the preceding behaviors are symbolic of various aspects of American character. I do not wish to succumb to the myth of classlessness in American society; however, it is my conviction that these reactions symbolize certain personality traits that transcend social class boundaries. It is on this premise that I discount any restrictions on the generalizability of the observed reactions which might emanate from the skewed nature of the sample population. Furthermore, since I have only suggested that the sample population might be disproportionately representative of the middle and upper classes, it is not necessarily the case that the composition of my sample is so biased that the following generalizations must be qualified.

I have claimed that certain observed reactions to lost points were manifestations of the player's strong desires to win. These desires were indirectly demonstrated by the displays of aggravation that followed lost points, as well as by illegitimate tactics that players instituted in order to improve their chances for victory. The frequently observed desire to win

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← American character

- 5/18 - 1/21 - 2/12
- done before
- 12/12
- 02 - 10/18
- 1/21/12
- 1/21/12
- 1/21/12
- 1/21/12
- 1/21/12
- 1/21/12

(116) (1) Amer. culture

illustrates the premium that many Americans place on surpassing other individuals who participate in activities similar to their own. Similarly, distaste for losing that characterized the sample population typifies the frustration that many Americans experience as a result of unsuccessful bids for fame, recognition, and distinction among their peers. Therefore, these behaviors are symbolic of the strong consciousness and sensitivity of American people to their relative social position, which I assume to be at least partially contingent upon the outcome of various competitive interactions with others.

There is also significance to the previously established judgmental awareness of the sample population. Americans who have never played racquetball also tend to reflect upon and evaluate their behavior. This reflective, analytical state of awareness is a manifestation of the dominant, linear mode of consciousness in American society. Ornstein (1972:57) states that our culture is so thoroughly based on this active, linear mode that many Americans "have almost forgotten that other constructions of individual consciousness, other cultural styles, are even possible." However, anthropologist Dorothy Lee (1950) reports that the Trobriand Islanders have a total present-centeredness, in which all actions exist only in the present. Therefore, although the tendency to reflect upon and evaluate one's behavior as if it were a performance is characteristic of Americans, it is not a cultural universal.

Finally, the concerns relative to the publicity of unsuccessful behavior and the maintenance of self-integrity, which I have previously attributed to the sample population, are generalizable to the American public at large. Americans frequently attempt to conceal their mistakes in order to circumvent ridicule and public embarrassment. Similarly, Americans often assert that they are victims of circumstance, and they frequently pass blame onto others in order to "save face" and maintain favorable public standing. The significant element of self-consciousness implicit in the preceding generalizations should be emphasized, for a concern over self-image is prevalent among Americans.

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The observation, interpretation, and generalization of the reaction of racquetball players to lost points demonstrates the amenability of competitive athletic activities to anthropological investigation. The ultimate value of this research not only derives from the significant contributions it makes to the current understanding of American character, but also from its illustration of the potential significance of certain behaviors that either elude our awareness or initially appear too irrelevant for anthropological concern.

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Suzanne Faber took advantage of her job as a cocktail waitress in a local bar to explore relationships between income level, alcohol consumption, and tipping. Her data are based on participant observation, observation of behavior in a public place, and formal questioning of informants. Her most significant finding is a tendency for lower-income people to tip more than middle- and high-income people, a pattern that may reflect social insecurity or their identification with the bar employee. As in the selections by Larson and Van de Graaf and Chinni, Faber uses quantitative data to substantiate her conclusions.

15 / Social Class, Tipping, and Alcohol Consumption in an Ann Arbor Cocktail Lounge

Suzanne Faber

American culture is marked by diversity based on differential access to strategic resources. Various attempts have been made to prove that behavioral differences between representatives of the many social strata are observable. Speech patterns, style of dress, mannerisms, and so forth, have been analyzed as indicative of a particular background, a particular class. While class differences are indeed evident in many areas of behavior, questions nevertheless remain as to the specific circumstances in which differences may be discerned. Are class-based differences manifest in even the most commonplace, routine activities? The focus of my research is an attempt to answer precisely this question.

Through observation of individual behavior in a bar situation, based on examination of drinking and tipping habits, I have attempted to determine whether or not class-based behavioral differences in such routinized circumstances are apparent. Being employed as a waitress at a local bar has afforded me the opportunity to compile the necessary data.

Both the location and the atmosphere of this tavern proved conducive to comparative analysis of class. The fact that it is situated in a hotel implies that its patronage is not limited to local customers. It is located near an expressway off-ramp but still close to many large and small businesses. It is large, clean, and tastefully decorated. There is a dance floor and live entertainment, usually including the kind of pop and soft rock music that appeals to a variety of age groups. Compared to other bars in the area, it attracts customers from a fairly broad range of income groups, as will be demonstrated further on.

The data were compiled over four weeks, during which I worked