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Joshua W. Roberts [a] & Scott A. Hunt [a]
[a] Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky, USA
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Social Control in a Sexually Deviant Cybercommunity: A Cappers' Code of Conduct

Joshua W. Roberts and Scott A. Hunt

Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky, USA

This study examines a cybercommunity dedicated to recording live webcam feeds that are sexually charged. Those who record these feeds are known as ''cappers.'' Cappers post these ''caps'' on message boards designed to disseminate, share, and evaluate their aesthetic qualities. Following the insights of Durkin, Forsyth, Quinn, and others, this article identifies and elaborates the means of social control that promotes deviant ends among a capping community by extending Anderson's ''code of the street.'' The capping code's basic rules, strategies, tactics, and motives are analyzed in relation to reputation. The article concludes with considerations for future research.

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As noted by Durkin (2009:672), ''research is sorely needed to examine the relationship between on-line deviance and 'real life' deviance'' by attending to central sociological concepts, theories, and methods (see also Durkin et al. 2006). One such central concept is social control (Gibbs 1989). In the most general terms, an adequate treatment of social control must consider how it works toward conformity and noncomformity, as Mead (1925) suggested (Janowitz 1975). One recent exemplar of how social control promotes conformity and deviance is Anderson's (1999) ''code of the street,'' defined as a set of informal rules and sanctions.

Following Durkin (2009), we apply and extend Anderson's code of the street to examine social control within a deviant cybercommunity. Specifically, our analysis examines a cybercommunity dedicated to recording live webcam feeds that are sexually charged. Those who record these feeds are known as ''cappers.'' Cappers then post these ''caps'' on message boards designed to disseminate, share, and evaluate their aesthetic qualities. We examine how a capping code is constructed and employed as a means of social control that promotes deviant ends. After a review of the relevant literature and discussion of our research methods, the article analyzes capping's basic rules, strategies, tactics, and motives. We pay particular attention to the importance of reputation, noting how sharing enhances reputation and gossip is used to attack it. We conclude with a discussion of how our approach can contribute to an expanded research agenda on social control, particularly in deviant cybercommunities.

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Address correspondence to Dr. Scott A. Hunt, Criminal Justice, Stratton 407, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475-3102, USA. E-mail: Scott.hunt@eku.edu

SOCIAL CONTROL WITHIN DEVIANT COMMUNITIES

Despite being considered ''the central notion of sociology'' (Gibbs 1989), social control has been developed as a ''sensitizing concept'' (Blumer 1969:147–148) that ''gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances,'' rather than a fully specified theoretical construct (Meier 1982:35). Ross (1901), Parsons (1951) and Reiss (1951) framed it as a social psychology of internal (self) and external (social) controls oriented toward conformity (e.g., Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Hirschi 1969; Reckless 1967; Reckless et al. 1957; Toby 1957). Self-control incorporates notions of conscience, impulse control, and learned delayed gratification (Hirschi 2004), while ''social control operates on both informal and formal levels and through 'positive' and 'negative' forms'' (Conrad and Schneider 1992:7). Informal controls are a regular feature of everyday face-to-face interactions, including ridicule, praise, gossip, and ostracism, while formal controls are institutionalized practices.

In addition to the social psychology of conformity, sociocultural analyses have suggested that macro structures and institutionalized cultural practices produce and reinforce conformity. By extension, the social disorganization tradition hypothesizes that deviance is produced when failures in macro structures lead to break downs in local structures and relationships that foster conformity (e.g., Bursik 1988; Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson and Groves 1989; Shaw and McKay 1942). Additionally, some scholars have understood social control, especially policing and punishment, as a form of cultural hegemony (Foucault 1977; Garland 1990, 2001; Marx 1981; Quinney 1970; Rusche and Kircheimer 1939).

However, as Mead (1925) argued, social control can also work toward nonconformity. This insight led to the examination of the social organization of deviants (Best and Luckenbill 1982:7–9), concentrating on associations formed by specific deviance (e.g., racketeers, armed robbers, marijuana users), configurations of criminal behavior systems (e.g., criminal careers), and structures of organizational frameworks (e.g., networks, occupational roles, work tasks). Attention also has been given to relational control within deviant groups, such as Goffman's (1961, 1963, 1983) work on how an interaction order emerges and is maintained among deviants.

Examining the social organization of deviants, Durkin et al. (2006) argue that certain cybercommunities encourage the most pathological deviance (Durkin 2007; Quayle and Taylor 2002; Quinn and Forsyth 2005). This research extends Goffman's (1963:81) ''back places,'' ''where people of similar preferences feel no need to conceal their pathology and can openly seek out one another for support and advice'' (Quinn and Forsyth 2005:199). New technologies and emergent pathological cybercommunities has reproblematized rationales for norm violations (Durkin et al. 2006), deviance disavowals (Durkin 2009), strategies to prevent deception (Durkin 2007), stigma management (Durkin 2007), the organization of deviant actors and communities (Quinn and Forsyth 2005), and the facilitation of deviance (Quayle and Taylor 2002).

Following Durkin, Forsyth, Quinn and others, we investigate social control within a deviant cybercommuity to extend concepts developed in analysis of nonconformity in real-world communities. Specifically, we build upon Anderson's (1999) code of the street (see Duneier 1999). The code of the street provides guidelines for deviant behavior and the articulation of motives (Matsueda 2006). While Anderson's concept has been widely heralded, it has been applied only to real-world communities, primarily African-American urban neighborhoods (e.g., see, Brookman et al. 2011; Daems 2005; Garot 2007a, 2007b; Jones 2008; Parker and Maggard 2009; Parker and Reckdenwald 2008; Rosenfeld et al. 2003; Stewart et al. 2006; Stewart and

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Simons 2010). We integrate Anderson's insights with those from the burgeoning literature on pathological cybercommunities to illuminate the social control in the capping community.

RESEARCH SETTING, METHODS, AND DATA

As ''Web 2.0'' emerged in the last decade, cybercommunities centered on live, streaming webcasts made the Internet a more user-centered, interactive environment. It is during this time that the capping community has formed. As Durkin et al. (2006:595) elucidate, this move toward a more interactive Internet has seen the rise of pathological cybercommunities ''previously suppressed by time, space, and societal restraints.''

Cappers can be placed among such communities as pedophiles who use the Internet to disseminate child pornography because the capping community does not exist on one website (Jenkins 2003; Quayle and Taylor 2002). Cappers operate on multiple websites at once, tied together by a common code. One central type of website is the webcast or ''performer'' sites. Performer websites are based exclusively on ''user generated content'' (UGC). The UGC of live webcasts happen in real time with a participatory chat room for other users of the website to interact with the broadcaster. The broadcasting websites formally prohibit deviant behavior (http://www.blogtv.com/TermsOfUse/). Still, some perform in a sexually charged manner, take drugs, threaten suicide, or behave in other provocative ways, sometimes at the urging of cappers.

Prior to the existence of the performer websites, capping was done on a one-on-one basis through the use of instant messaging (IM) technologies that allowed webcam feeds (e.g., MSN IM, Yahoo IM, and Skype). A capping community was non-existent because capping was a solitary activity. As Quinn and Forsyth (2005) show, with greater use of the Internet and advances in technology, previously isolated deviance has become communal deviance.

While the content targeted by cappers exists on performer websites, the general capping community exists away from those websites on short-lived uniform resource locators (URLs), which last from a few minutes to several months. Short-lived URLs prevent detection and infiltration (Jenkins 2003; Quayle and Taylor 2002), but also impede community continuity and expansion.

The research here is based on one chat room and a related message board, both of which were dedicated to capping and that offered free access. ''Capper Room'' was ostensibly a portal website that would link to broadcasters on performer sites. In addition to being a portal site, the Capper Room provided a chat room where the community could discuss caps, targets, and other issues. At the beginning of the research, the Capper Room was thriving with over 90 users at any given time and usually over 120 after 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Near the end of the research, the Capper Room had declined to a point of rarely having 100 users in the room and on most occasions had only 60–70 users. This decline seems to be typical of the chat rooms that exist in the capping community. The Capper Message Board was a related site that allowed for the posting of caps and subsequent discussion.

The Capper Room and Capper Message Board were the locations from which observations were made. Observations were made at the Capper Room from February to June 2010. Observations from the Capper Message Board were made from April to June 2010. In addition, there were five interviews conducted via e-mail. For the Capper Room, the first author received permission to enter and observe. A strategy was devised that sampled all days and times because of

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the diverse and worldwide nature of the capping community. Data were collected from the Capper Room at least three times a week, with observation sessions lasting at least an hour, but most lasting well over an hour. During the observation sessions, chat logs were copied into a Word document. In total, 100 chat logs were recorded, ranging from an hour-and-a-half (about three single-spaced pages) to over 13 hours (over 30 single-spaced pages).

The first author collected data from the Capper Room as a strict observer (Adler and Adler 1987). Choosing a strict observer field role was done for two primary reasons. First, the Capper Room was a public, on-line forum that allowed for lurkers. Therefore, not chatting and also having access to the content of the chat did not violate community member's privacy. As one capper commented on the public nature of the chat room: ''don't tell your secrets to the wind if you don't want the trees to know.'' Second, not only is it not feasible to get consent from everyone who enters a public setting generally, in this particular instance, trying to obtain consent is complicated by the fact that any single individual may possess more than one user identity. This strategy of strict observation is common in digital ethnography (Murthy 2008).

A second source of data was posts to a sub-board on a larger message board used to share caps. The material included blog entries and documents pertaining to capping techniques and controversies. The content of the documents offered interactional and technical tips for successful capping, which were referred to by cappers as ''protips.'' The sub-board was selected because it was the most frequented among all sub-boards and was the only one exclusively dedicated to capping. Once a week for ten weeks, the first author collected the interactions from every thread on the first page of the sub-board. These interactions were copied verbatim and pasted into a Notepad file for analysis. This amounted to over 1,200 single-spaced pages of material. The content of the documents amounted to about 20 single-spaced pages.

One problem with gathering data from individuals who might be engaged in the child pornography trade is the issue of avoiding downloading or transmitting illegal images and videos (Jenkins 2003). In his research of message boards operated by child pornography collectors, Jenkins (2003) turned images off in his Web browser so as to avoid downloading illegal content. Since the cappers in this study primarily targeted girls 13–19 years of age, the first author followed Jenkins' lead. In addition, he copied and pasted the contents of individual threads from the sub-board into Notepad because it is text only software. Consequently, even if the image code was inadvertently copied, it would not have been converted into an image in Notepad.

A third source of data was five in-depth e-mail interviews. Each interviewee was connected directly to the capping community. All five were informed about the nature of the research and guaranteed confidentiality. None were associated with the Capper Room. One identified himself on Youtube as someone who alerts targets to the dangers of being capped. This interviewee referred the first author to an editor of a capping e-magazine who was also interviewed. A third was an administrator at a performer website. A fourth interviewee was an administrator of a gossip blog aimed at the performer website community. The fifth identified himself as a capper in an instant message on one performer website. The interviews consisted of e-mail conversations that ranged from 3 to 15 exchanges.

The data were subjected to constant comparative analysis (Glaser 1965). Using this method, the first author coded and recoded the data into themes. Social control emerged as a prevalent theme. Further coding began to identify types of social control.

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SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE CAPPING COMMUNITY

Although the Internet has led to the emergence of pathological cybercommnities (Durkin et al. 2006), the anonymity and fluidity of the Web make measuring the number and size of communities impossible. While there is no way to assess accurately the number of capping communities or cappers, the perception among cappers is that the community is quite large. M-Capper speculated on the size of the capping community: ''I would go as far to say there tens of thousands of cappers all over from hundreds of different sites. They either work in groups or work alone trying to get 1-on-1 from girls.''

The idea that cappers form a community suggests that there is some form of social control or code to organize interactions and to claim membership.

The Game of Capping

A distinctive feature of the cappers' code was their reference to capping as a game. This metaphor entails a certain perspective on capping and a guide for behavior (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Cappers frame caps that show a performer stripping or engaging in sex acts as ''win.'' M-Capper, who edited a capping e-magazine, discussed the total involvement some cappers experience in playing the game: ''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.''

The administrator of a performer website indicated the centrality of ''win'' in the capping game: ''The motivation for cappers is they want to 'win' the game they are playing. It's a matter of feeling superiority or control over another person.''

The game metaphor acts as a referential control (Gibbs 1989) by providing a resource to which cappers can refer when articulating rules and parameters for the community. It frames what constitutes ''winning'' and ''failing.'' As the administrator of a performer website indicated, the capping game revolves around dominance, similar to Anderson's (1999) view of the street.

As Anderson (1999) explains, all who are connected to the community must follow the code to operate socially. In the capping community, everyone must ''play'' the game. The first step in the capping game is identifying a broadcaster to target. This is often done in chat rooms like the Capper Room, but is also done by searching the various performer websites. The following excerpt demonstrates how an ongoing performance on a website was targeted:

> **V-Capper**- here she just hand hands inside panties on pussy http://www.stickam.com/[performer]

V-Capper was viewing a performance that was sexually charged and he then posted the above message and link so that other cappers could go to the site and try to score ''win.''

Once cappers arrived at a target they followed a specified protocol. For example, a document provided instructions on ''how to raid'' a website: ''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 [the website] forever.''

Broadcasters typically do not know they are being targeted. ''They want attention and 'viewers' to make themselves feel good,'' according to an administrator of a performer website.

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After a broadcaster is targeted many cappers begin to flood the room. Often the viewer count sky-rockets quickly. The administrator at a performer website 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 . . . they tend to leave.

This administrator suggests how a performer is targeted and encouraged to engage in increasingly provocative behavior that will make a good cap or a ''win.''

For most cappers, a ''win'' involves recording teenage performers. The administrator at a performer website discussed steps taken to protect young performers:

> 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. This stops people from being able to chat privately with unsuspecting teens, luring them into a false sense of security.

Cappers indicated that the most desirable targets were teenagers, as M-Capper confirmed: ''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, a lot of people will be turned off from a cap with an adult female unless her actions themselves are epic.''

Because cappers targeted teenage girls primarily, pedophilia was often discussed. The notion that cappers are pedophiles was a running joke among cappers. This was evidenced in a chat log from the Capper Room:

D-Capper- if you wernt pedos u wouldnt be here anyway
T-Capper- we should argue about what pedos we are more often. L-capper you're a pedo! you capped a girl on [a teenager performer website]
G-Capper- Justin Bieber is on TV if anyone can cap it for a loop [a previously recorded video used to imitate a live streaming video and which gives the impression that the capper is a peer], send it to me
E-Capper- he said hate pedophiles but he was streaming cp [child pornography] he is hipocritical
L-Capper- HAHAHAHA. T-capper 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

While cappers may not be pedophiles (individuals with sexual attraction to pre-pubescent children), many are involved in what is legally defined as child pornography (pornographic representations of those under the age of 18) in the United States.

This view was confirmed in an interview with M-Capper who was asked about whether cappers were pedophiles or ephebophiles (individuals with sexual attraction to pubescent children, usually those 12–14 years of age) or hebephiles (individuals with a sexual attraction to older adolescents, usually those 15–18 years of age): ''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.''

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The capping game crosses the borders of legality, creating an atmosphere of ''badness'' and guardedness, similar to Anderson's (1999) code of the street. Within the capping game a status hierarchy (Gould 2002) exists in that certain individuals are ''more bad'' than others, a point made by Anderson (1999) when referring to those who are ''more street'' than others.

In addition to specifying the object of the game (i.e., ''win''), the code provides guidelines for acceptable behavior for community members. An example of cappers referring to the code for this purpose is demonstrated in an exchange that took place in the Capper Room after a new capper disrupted a live performance and prevented its capture.

G1-Capper- this is y the heroes win, everybody quick to put someone else down. no organization which is y u got people keeping girls to themselves

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 commited enough

J1-Capper- you guys do all the work and people like me reap the benefits.

G1-Capper- leeches ruin the game too 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'' [IM]. shit, it was so easy to get win back then, u ran out of HD space, lol

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

This exchange mirrors the kinds of interactions that Anderson (1999) describes as the code of the street. For example, J1-Capper ''disses'' (disrepects) H1-Capper and his claim to a positive reputation and H1-Capper disses J1-Capper by claiming that he is showing youthful ignorance. H1-Capper also disses anyone who acts like a ''renter,'' showing a lack of care for the community. G1-Capper claimed that the failed attempt to capture that performance was due to a lack of understanding of the capping game and insufficient commitment to the capping community. H1-Capper sarcastically countered by saying that trying to enforce greater commitment to the game might be excessive social control.

This dialogue specifies appropriate goals and strategies, such as the ''long con,'' which is a protracted effort to build rapport between the capper and performer. The con (Goffman 1952, 1959) relies on the strategy of impersonation in which a capper feigns to be a teenager. Cappers create fake accounts as teenagers, post pictures of teenagers to represent themselves and use loops. Once a capper has built a teenage persona they must gain the trust of the broadcaster and develop a personal relationship to gain multiple caps. Capper–performer relationships ranged from a one-time performance to extended interactions lasting as long as four years.

Capper–performer relationships are established to encourage a performer to broadcast increasingly provocative material. When asked if cappers make friends with broadcasters to elicit sexually enticing performances, M-Capper replied: ''The key thing is once someone makes friends with the user they pretty much 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.''

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The capper–performer relationship is focused entirely on ''getting win from the performer,'' and this plays on performers' desires to be popular. An example of how cappers manipulate performers was discussed in a letter posted on a news blog by a girl who was capped: ''When I was 16 . . . I was targeted by [a specific capper]. I didn't know anything about capping. He took advantage of the fact that I was naive and immature. He capped me in the most vulnerable state, masturbating with a brush.''

This demonstrates the capping code includes intricate cons for playing the game.

Additionally, the cappers' code establishes ''vocabularies of motive'' (Matseuda 2006:29; see also Blum and McHugh 1971; Burke 1950; Foote 1951; Mills 1940; Scott and Lyman 1968; Sykes and Matza 1957). As Durkin et al. (2006) point out, vocabularies of motive in pathological cybercommunities reinforces rationales for rule violations. In an interview, M-Capper explained:

> For the simple thrill of it. 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 is so that they can watch it again to ''Fap'' [masturbate] to later.

In this excerpt, M-Capper refers to the motivation of reputation. Cappers gain respect and influence in the community by sharing ''quality'' caps with others. A cappers' collection becomes a trophy room and the capper code encourages cappers to play the game by pursuing targets, making caps, and sharing them with the community to score ''wins.''

Reputation

As a capper becomes more adept playing the game, the capper garners a positive reputation. Reputation is similar to the code of the street where ''juice'' builds an individual's status (Anderson 1999). The higher reputation a capper has the more likely it is the capper will be able to exert effective social control on others in the community because the effectiveness of any given social control relies on the power backing it (Gibbs 1989).

While some may join the community initially with ties to respected cappers, all cappers eventually must earn a positive reputation. This is similar to Anderson's (1999) notion of ''manning up.'' A direct way to ''man up'' is to acquire original content (OC), a cap that was made by a capper and has not been released, and then share this OC. Sharing OC demonstrates that the status hierarchy of the capping community is based on mutual dependence (see Gould 2002). By doing this cappers earn their reputation as someone who can score valuable wins.

Anderson (1999) points out that ''juice'' can be gained or lost by physical appearance, possessions, and violence. ''Juice'' exemplifies the ''Matthew effect'' (Merton 1968; Zuckerman and Merton 1971) in that the juice-rich get richer and the juice-poor get poorer. The juice-rich can leverage their positive status to gain higher standing in the community. The capping community, similar to most social hierarchies, ''lie between the two extremes of complete equality and winner-take-all inequality'' (Gould 2002:1149).

The capping status hierarchy derives from possessions and actions. Possessions in the capping community include caps, links to performers' broadcasts, software, and performers who are engaged in a romantic-like relationship with a particular capper. Action includes violence

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that is manifested in gossip that attacks a particular capper's reputation. The specific topics of reputational gossiping pertain to blackmailing, hoarding, heroing, and being law enforcement.

The construction of reputation suggests that the capping community consists of a status hierarchy (Gould 2002). The most prestigious status was that of ''elite capper,'' who possessed large collections, owned rare caps, shared caps and links, and produced the best OC. Beneath elite cappers were ''cappers,'' who shared caps, provided links, produced OC, and were often just beginning a cap collection. Below cappers were ''sharers,'' who did not produce OC, but had large cap collections that they shared along with links. Next, ''traders'' produced OC, possessed modest collections of caps, but traded their caps and links instead of sharing.

In addition to these positive statuses, there were negative ones. Beneath traders were ''leeches'' who did not contribute any caps, OC, or links, but took the caps and links of others. The next lower status was ''hoarders'' who ''kept the girls to themselves'' by not sharing links, OC, or caps. Beneath hoarders are ''heroes'' who are not cappers and warn performers about being recorded and blackmailed by cappers. ''Blackmailers,'' the lowest status, threatened to expose incriminating caps or information about performers. This was done to elicit more provocative performances. These ''black sheep'' reputations (leeches, hoarders, heroes, and blackmailers) are a reflection of negative in-group evaluations of behaviors and are difficult to shed (Marques and Yzerbyt 1988; Marques et al. 1988).

Sharing is Caring

The foundation of positive reputation is sharing. Cappers share caps, OC, links, tips, personal information, music, movies, and software. The software most important to the community allows members to cap and run loops. Cappers also share software that allows for re-encoding and video editing as well as creating password-protected compressed files to make sharing easier. 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 and compels others to follow the code.

In the following exchange, three cappers discuss the importance of sharing:

C-Capper- [posted url to C-Capper's blog page] Thats for win.
C-Capper- [posted url to another C-Capper blog page] Is for [pirated] music movies and programs
A-Capper- thx C
C-Capper- not a prb [problem]. If anyone wants to contribute any of their win tward these efforts go for it and post some links. It would be nice to see open sharing like there used to be on anon boards [anonymous message boards]

C-Capper opens this exchange with links to ''win'' and pirated materials. After A-Capper thanks him, C-Capper invites others to share and refers to a longing for the ''open sharing'' of the past. In the past, capper message boards shared ''rare'' caps (i.e., caps with younger performers and more extreme performances). Many of these message boards were shut down due to increasing public awareness and police surveillance of sites suspected as distribution points of child pornography. The norm of sharing has also been impacted by concerns about heroes who would use posted material to disrupt ongoing broadcasts and by desires to limit access to blackmailers who would use the videos to blackmail performers.

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Another example of reinforcing the norm of sharing emerged in a discussion board thread. The thread was described as the ''epic thread'' for sharing. By ''epic'' or ''real win'' or ''rare caps'' cappers are referring to caps that are of high quality both technically (video and sound) and ascetically (attractiveness of the performer and appeal of the performance).

Anonymous-1- This board has been seriously short of real win since the epic threads. Let's see if this thread can get some good unseen win. I'll post the first vid . . . 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 or tattooed girls], and cute tits rule. Here's the first vid as promised for a teaser, NN [non-nude] but sexy and fun. [posted url to video with a password]
Anonymous-2- Ok I am going to test the waters and share something people have been wanting if others post good shit I will post more [posted url to video with a password]
Anonymous-1- Nice vid, thanks. I'll upload #2, the towel vid for that.
Anonymous-2- I'm in a giving mood here is another cap that was wanted awhile ago now I sit and wait to see what happens. [posted url to video with a password]
Anonymous-1- Here's vid #2... [posted url to ''towel video'' with a password]
Anonymous-3- i do have some rather rare caps i will post. I will start tomorrow
Anonymous-4- this is not new i posted it already one week ago. just tits and panties bate [masturbate]. [posted url to video]
Anonymous-5- fantastic stuff sirs!
Anonymous-6- thanks fellas for being generous...really nice caps!!!

This thread demonstrates sharing and the appreciative attitudes that build ''positive'' reputations.

Although sharing is encouraged, not sharing is not always considered hoarding. In some instances, not sharing is seen as acceptable by all cappers because it preserves the possibility of more win. This was demonstrated 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 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.''

When not sharing is done for this reason it is viewed as delayed sharing. It benefits the community and enhances the positive reputation of the capper.

Gossiping as Symbolic Violence

Gossiping is a means of social control that attacked reputation. As Gluckman (1963) points out, gossip defines group membership and works as social control within that group by building-up or tearing-down reputation (see also Blee 1991). Gossip may not pertain to matters of substance; but rather, it can relate to minor and even trivial matters (Anderson 1999). Similar to Anderson's (1999) code of the street, where existence in the community depends much upon personal reputation, cappers were quick to guard against reputational attacks and equally as quick to denounce the reputations of perceived threats.

Cappers gossiped about other cappers' reputations, either consisting of positive or negative imputations. Negative imputations revolved around accusations of being heroes, blackmailers, law enforcement, trolls, or hoarders. A suggestion pinned [pinning keeps the thread first on a

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message board] on the Capper Message Board summed up the action that would be taken against those accused of disrespecting the cappers' code: ''Any posters who are perceived to be blackmailers, heroes, hoarders or trolls will be banned. There is a zero tolerance level for that.''

These prohibitions are similar to Anderson's (1999) notion of having someone's back. ''Having the back'' or ''taking up'' for the capping code and community requires a capper to denounce and act against those suspected of disrespecting the code and community.

The reputations of the accusers were important in establishing the credibility of accusations. For example, in order for negative gossip to be seen as credible against an elite capper, a few respected cappers had to substantiate the allegations by ''taking up'' for the capping code and community. For cappers with lesser reputations, it did not take the leaders of the community to substantiate negative gossip and take sanctions such as banning the offender.

When cappers' reputations were assailed by gossip it was incumbent on them to respond. One tactic was to reaffirm commitment to community norms. For example, those accused of hoarding might increase their sharing. Sometimes other cappers, with solid reputations, would come to the defense of the accused. However, this came with the risk of being associated with someone who was truly violating norms.

The most violent attack against a capper's reputation involves gossip that alleges blackmailing. Aside from its potential illegality, cappers believed that blackmailing led to spoiled performances because performers would look distressed, ruining the aesthetic quality. In an interview, M-Capper discusses blackmailers: ''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.''

Another topic of gossip revolved around hoarding. However, being accused of hoarding was not the ''death sentence'' that being accused of blackmail was to a capper. Often times, a capper who claimed to have viewed and capped a performance, but had not yet shared it, was accused of hoarding. The accusations of hoarding slowly grew unless the capper shared the cap in question. The perceived label of hoarder could potentially result in banishment.

Cases of suspected hoarding were treated harshly. One illustration of this type of reaction was the events surrounding one of the ''elite cappers,'' R-Capper. R-Capper had built his reputation up by sharing caps and links to shows as well as providing answers to other cappers' questions. Eventually, R-Capper was suspected of hoarding caps:

N-Capper- R Capper - have you posted ''that'' clip yet? ;-) you know the one! lovely afternoon duo you streamed [playing a cap in another chat room with video capability] in the week
R-Capper- No. thats the english girls, they were sweethearts
H-Capper- gonna post it?
R-Capper- no
N-Capper- if we ask you every day then maybe you'll crack ;-)

R-Capper was not willing to share a cap that he had streamed earlier in the week. Streaming the cap showed the community he possessed quality ''win,'' but by not offering to share it he was hoarding the cap because there was no apparent promise of further ''win'' with the performer.

Later the same day, R-Capper was challenged vigorously about the quality of his caps. In reference to an ''epic'' show that just ended on chatzppl.com, R-Capper responded:

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R-Capper- i capped some epic shit recently.. but this was the best. good for me. started at around 9-10 fps [frames per second]
N-Capper- chatzppl.com will never ever be 9 frames per second
R-Capper- im lying then. fuck off. fucking cocksucker N-Capper
N Capper- cocksucker? Why? because i proved you wrong
R-Capper- YOU CALL ME A LIAR – WHYYYYYYYY? WHY WOULD I MAKE THAT SHIT UP??? [all caps equals shouting]
N-Capper- you may of capped it at 9 frames per second, but it didnt stream at that rate
R-Capper- MANY PPL HERE SEEN MAY CAPS. But fuck it I'm not sharing any of it anyway so u can just go fuck yourself all of you

In this chat-fight, N-Capper does not initially call R-Capper a hoarder. Rather, N-Capper challenges the veracity of R-Capper's rather mundane claims about the quality of the video streamed, which R-Capper apparently took as a questioning of his ''elite capper'' status. In response to this questioning, R-Capper promises to retaliate by hoarding. R-Capper and N-Capper continued this argument for about an hour, in which other cappers joined. R-Capper's response to this challenge was to reconfirm that he would hoard his prized materials:

R-Capper- dont argue with him [N-Capper] I-Capper
I-Capper- not arguing
R-Capper- cool I-Capper. take his [N-Capper's] side. fuck u too then. Bye. ur insults mean nothing to me. cuz I got ALL the win.
J-Capper- can't believe we're still on this. When we're ALL supposedly on the same page in terms on content

In this exchange, R-Capper, still incensed with N-Capper's challenge to his claim about streaming speed, becomes angry with I-Capper for not taking his side in the argument. As an elite capper, R-Capper expected other cappers to ''have his back.''

This extended argument led to another accusation that R-Capper was a hoarder. Over the next several days, there was gossip about R-Capper's hoarding. The day following the argument, R-Capper initiated this exchange:

R-Capper- [posted url to a screen shot of a cap]
K-Capper- there a link to the vid [entire video from which the screen shot came] R-Capper?
P-Capper- R-Capper such a tease
R-Capper- sorry. couldnt help myself. 600 ppl there by the end, im sure someone good and decent will share one of these days

R-Capper shows he is hoarding a cap and continues to fan the flames.

The negative reaction to R-Capper's hoarding was evidenced in an anonymous post:

Anonymous Post1- 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; 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 you can keep for your hoardboards [private message boards] and whatnot i.m.o. [in my opinion]

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Months after R-Capper's open hoarding in the Capper Room, his hoarding was a topic of gossip. Even those who were glad to get the few of caps he would share were tired of his hoarding. In response to his hoarding, a ''backlash'' was threatened which would involve reporting R-Capper to authorities because of his known collection of child pornography.

All did not shun R-Capper; it was presumed that those who did not speak against him were part of a private group of cappers started by him. This was later confirmed by R-Capper:

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

The gossip diminished R-Capper's juice and sought to end his hoarding or lead to his exile.

Another common theme of capper negative gossip was heroing. Cappers accepted as fact that as long as there were cappers there would be heroes trying to stop them from getting ''win.'' Also, it was commonly believed that heroes would pose as cappers in the community. The heroes passing in the community (Goffman 1963) is similar to Anderson's explanation of how ''decent people'' must enact the code of the street to function in the community. Because heroes were thought to have infiltrated the capper community, suspicious behavior (e.g., changes in sharing patterns, viewing habits, and times present in the community), scoring one-on-one ''win'' with a performer who had been ''heroed,'' and becoming an obsessive fan of one performer could lead to allegations that a capper was a hero. Often times a capper would engage in heroing as a way of exacting revenge against perceived wrong-doing by the community. The Capper Room was believed to be a spot from which heroes tracked cappers. Therefore, the Capper Room was always trying to ''keep the house clean,'' which led to frequent hero allegations.

R-Capper was rumored to be not only a hoarder but a hero as well. The following gossip circulated over a week:

March 6th

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

March 11th

U-Capper- R-Capper is a hero now?
Y-Capper- no, 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 allegedly posted the following in a performer's chatroom] ''DO NOT SHOW ANYTHING. YOU ARE BEING RECORED AND WILL BE PUT ON PORN SITES BY THE ASSHOLES AT [Capper Room]''

March 13th

C1-Capper- i clossed room [abandoned win]. R-Capper ruined it

This gossip was used as evidence that R-Capper was a hero.

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Another suspected threat to the capping code and topic of gossip was the perceived presence of law enforcement. R-Capper brought up this topic in the Capper Room:

R-Capper- i remember when there werent cop mods here. js [just saying]
K1-Capper- I thought u were a mod?
R-Capper- i left when law enforcement mods entered the building . . . . i asked to be unmodded. [Moderator username] 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 [the owner of the website] confirmed

The above excerpt shows how R-Capper alerted the rest of the Capper Room about the presence of a law enforcement moderator. R-Capper drew on the reputation of the administrator to substantiate his allegation against this specific moderator.

After R-Capper's accusation, a news story from CNET.com (McCullagh 2010) was linked that heightened speculation about law enforcement presence. This story detailed how the FBI was pushing the FCC to require Internet Service Providers to keep records of websites that individuals visit for longer periods. In response to this story, I-Capper posted: ''notice what they want it for? not espionage, not terrorism, not organized crime - it's those nasty people taking bathtub pix of their children that threatens the union to its roots, and requires invasive action.''

R-Capper's accusation and concerns stemming from the CNET article reduced interaction.

During this time, tinychat.com began to post user IP addresses when a room was closed by administrators. Tinychat had done this to more effectively enforce control over broadcasts on their site by preventing cappers from recording performances that violated their terms of service agreement. It was in this context that R-Capper's accusations gained credibility. As a result, many cappers abandoned the Capper Room entirely.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to an understanding of the relatively unknown phenomenon of capping. Following the insights of Durkin, Forsyth, Quinn, and others, we identified and elaborated the means of social control that promotes deviant ends among a capping community. Our analysis extended Anderson's code of the street beyond its typical applications. We identified the capping code's basic rules, strategies, tactics, and motives, paying particular attention to reputation. We explored how sharing enhances and gossiping attacks reputation. We conclude here by considering some possibilities for further research.

An avenue for future research pertains to the issue of public vs. private interactions. Within the capping community there is a great deal of mixing between public and private distinctions. The actual caps themselves demonstrate this confusing mix. Many of the actions that cappers record are considered to be private, but they are done in a public forum. This confusion of public and private goes well beyond the capping community itself. With the plethora of social networking sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, Tinychat, and Stickam) that emphasize sharing private information in public, virtual space, there has been an increase in capping and blackmail opportunities. Falling in line with the work of Durkin, Forsyth, and Quinn, future research would examine how the Internet and cybercommunities are challenging notions of private and public space, particularly how private deviance is moving to public deviance.

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Our research could serve as a foundation to explore possible ties to the child pornography trade. Many cappers expressed they had no interest in what they termed ''real child pornography.'' Their conception of it was videos or pictures of anyone below ten years old engaged in a sexual act. While many believed this, it was rumored that some cappers targeted children 12 and younger. There are certainly those in the capping community that are interested in real child pornography. What are the ties capping has to the child pornography trade? How are caps thought of in the child pornography world? While this line of research would pose some serious methodological and ethical issues, this extension of our analysis could be useful in determining how to better protect children and adolescents from people willing to exploit them.

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JOSHUA W. ROBERTS is a 2010 graduate of the criminal justice graduate program at Eastern Kentucky University. His graduate thesis is titled ''Little Brother is Watching and Recording You: Social Control in a Deviant Group.'' He is currently in the application process to Ph.D. programs.

SCOTT A. HUNT has been editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* and has published in *Symbolic Interaction, The Sociological Quarterly, Perspectives on Social Problems, Sociological Inquiry, Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, and *Rural Sociology*. He is coauthor with Pamela Wilcox and Kenneth Land of *Criminal Circumstance: A Dynamic Multicontextual Criminal Opportunity Theory*. He is also involved in research on problem gambling and crime as well as topics pertaining to religion and criminal justice.

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