

MOTTling THE CONVERSATION: AN EVOLVING DEBATE

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Mottling the Conversation: An Evolving Debate

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ABSTRACT

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Online forums have often been considered a medium of equality. However, after studying Amazon.com communities taking part in the evolution/intelligent design debate, it became clear that these communities were substituting the ability to produce conversation for the ability to consume it. This becomes important in the development of online hierarchies. In order to outline the differences between access and accessibility, it was necessary to demonstrate how these two ideas operate on a continuum. Amazon.com sits to the access side of the continuum, which makes it a medium that is easily used by the majority of the consuming population. For this reason, it was used in the study to demonstrate how people not in the inner inclusionary circles are setting up gates by substituting access for accessibility in conversations. Articulation theory was used to describe the boundaries created within Amazon.com and to show how individuals can manipulate the boundaries to increase productive ability. It was found that proper online etiquette was important for a participant to be able to contribute to a conversation, demonstrating how etiquette acts as a gate. Various online conversation tactics were also linked to proper etiquette, and, therefore, those who were able to properly invoke these tactics became gatekeepers. The establishment of gates and gatekeepers means that the Internet is not as free as previously thought, and has moved old media gates into new media.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a common belief that the newer a medium is, the less accessible it is, and that only a few experts hold the keys that allow access to the conversations that take place and the information that is presented using the new medium. By the same logic, the older the medium, the more accessible it is to more people. This premise has fueled the idea that the older the medium is, the more competently people will be able to use it. I believe these assumptions are fallacious: to compare a medium's accessibility to the volume or availability of use is inaccurate. A medium's growth in popularity simply means a growth in information to sort through and a need for established filters and gates to separate the valuable information from the garbage. In the beginning of its history, a new medium has few filters and no rules to help users do what Dennis Baron calls "authentication," a means by which a text and its authors are validated (Baron 42). As a medium progresses, it acts and reacts to the input that it encounters. As these reactions redirect the medium, rules are slowly articulated to meet the needs of the users. Each rule helps us understand the history of the medium, and by understanding the various shifts that have taken place, we historicize the relationships created between materiality and meaning (Stromer 261). Through this articulation we are able to trace the establishment of the medium's rules, or more accurately, this act to that reaction.

Once users understand the rules and shifts, users can begin to understand the process that the new medium undergoes in its journey to becoming an old medium; however, since there are no defining characteristics that set apart old media from new media, the terms "old" and "new" are arbitrary. A more accurate way of describing media would be as *matured* or *maturing*. These terms help us to recognize that all media go

through a process, and during this process we have a growth of understanding of its capabilities and limitations. As a medium matures, its users also find ways of establishing hierarchies and filters to help *authenticate* themselves, or reinforce their authority. In the past, seals, knives, or other bits of property were attached to letters or proclamations to verify the information presented. Today, with the emergence of the Internet, we are left again trying to figure out how we verify information from one source to another. In order to do this we need to know the rules of the medium, and we need to be able to maneuver within the medium's boundaries and culturally established rules. The trick of this is to recognize the rules as they emerge within the medium. Rules vary from discussion threads to social spaces and Websites to blogs. What is appropriate and what is, referred to by students as "word vomit," or unsupported ranting, may appear to be one in the same to the untrained cyber-reader. Those who can differentiate the information and successfully authenticate themselves eventually become the cyber-gatekeepers.

The evolution/creation debate provided my central example of how authentication in a maturing medium becomes articulated. This historical struggle is traceable through various forms of media. It also illustrates how rules from the old media are articulated or shifted to fit the demands of the newer media—in this case the Internet. This illustrates specifically that different media have changed how topics are approached and debated and the role that medium has in authentication. No longer can participants rely on their titles or positions to authenticate them, nor do they have to wait years for one conversation participant to respond to another's publication. Instead, they are waiting moments, and at most days, for another interested party to post a response. This increased speed has allowed discussion thread participants to align themselves with participants who share similar views. This situation is important because now groups can be determined based on

slight variations in understanding and instead of the debate's taking place between creation and evolution, it is now being waged on many fronts.

Since Darwin's theory of natural selection was first published in 1859, several variations of both Darwin's theory and creationism have arisen some, of which are Darwinism, Neodarwinism, Creationism, Neo-Creationism, Young Earth Creationisms, Old Earth Creationisms, Intelligent Design, and many more. The two sides that appear the most in discussion threads are Intelligent Design and Neo-Darwinism. According to William Dembski,

Intelligent design is three things: a scientific research program that investigates the effects of intelligent causes; an intellectual movement that challenges Darwinism and its naturalistic legacy; and a way of understanding divine action (Dembski 13).

And Neo-Darwinism is explained by Michael Ruse as the understanding that the natural forces of selection working on non-directed variation can result in complex characteristics (Ruse 255). Simply put, intelligent design gives scientific explanations to support creation. Similarly, Neo-Darwinism expands on Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection by introducing what is now known about genetics.

These sides articulate their views and establish their own voices in an increasingly mottled conversation by offering their interpretations of religious and scientific theories. Understanding the mottling is important because the evolution/creation debate has developed through a mixing of cultural and belief differences that have shaped its progression. Within this debate we see the shift from one hegemony to another as the power is transferred from the church to science through the last 200 years. Online communities establish hierarchies and gates through substitutions of access for accessibility. To demonstrate my claim I am going to : 1) outline the differences between

access and accessibility; 2) show where Amazon.com sits on the access and accessibility continuum; 3) and use a particular version of articulation theory to both describe the boundaries that communities create and how individuals manipulate the boundaries to increase productive ability. This thesis first contrasts access and accessibility in order to frame the discussion on how conversations are both consumed and produced in online culture. Second, I demonstrate how Amazon.com is a relevant observation medium for a case study of this topic due to its ease of admittance and participation. Next, I use Lawrence Grossberg's interpretation of Stuart Hall's theory of articulation as a lens for viewing the conversation fragments that are found in discussion threads. After I have set up my theoretical framework, finally, I explore how several Amazon.com evolution discussion threads create rules and gates to control the distribution of power in online environments.

ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY

The information that reaches today's non-scientific population has been changed as it moves from the researchers into mass media. As mass media filters the ongoing research to make it fit for mass consumption, the result is an exclusion of the majority of the audience from the primary conversation. The result of this filtered transfer of information is similar to playing the game of Telephone, where the original message is passed through several people through speech only and then the original message is compared to the final message, which is usually very different. Although most have access to a version of the ongoing conversation, their accessibility to the conversation is very low. The difference between accessibility and access as described by Jan Van Cuilenburg is as follows:

Definition 1 *Access to Communications*

Access to Communication is the possibility for individuals, groups of individuals, organizations and institutions to share society's communications resources, that is, to participate in the market of communications infrastructure and distribution (message delivery) services, and in the market of content and communication services.

Definition 2 *Accessibility to Communications*

Accessibility of communication is the degree to which it is possible to take a share in society's communication resources. (Cuilenburg, 185)

In other words, just because a person is able to access a conversation does not mean that the conversation is accessible to them so the relationship could be thought of as Access/Consumption, Accessibility/Production. Cuilenburg goes on to explain that the level of inclusion in social groups is what creates the "communicative inequality" that exists in public debates and conversations. Older media were not designed to be accessible

for everyone, and the same restrictions applied to access; they were guarded and privileged circles that were kept by the gatekeepers of the discipline, and the further away a person was from the primary source of information the less information they were privileged to. Figure 1 represents this exclusive tendency of media. The people found in the innermost circles have the most influence on the conversations and are the primary gatekeepers. As one moves further from the primary inclusion circle, one has less impact on the conversation. On the Production/Consumption continuum, people on the pure consumption end would have very little connection to the conversation. Their contact involves reading the research in magazine or newspaper sources or watching television programs on it. They are left only to consume what has trickled down from the upper inclusionary levels. In contrast, on the pure production end of the continuum are the researchers doing work in the field: producing field notes: writing up reports for the progression of academic conversation that will probably never reach the non-academic public. Simply put, those left to purely consume the conversation have no influence. Those who are responsible for the production of the conversation have total influence, and in matured media these boundaries are firmly in place. In the beginning stages of a medium's maturing process, the boundaries are blurred because the medium's rules are not yet in place, *i.e.*, are not typically included in the production of a conversation are able to gain more influence.

At the very center of the production/consumption continuum is a unique area. It is in a sense, a "sweet spot." This is the most influential point on the continuum; it is where consumption meets production and creates a point of high influence. People who reach the inner inclusionary level have an ability to reach a large number of people and as a result are usually well-known on both the production and consumption side of the continuum. These

people are not always the most respected in their fields but are charismatic figure heads representing their views to the majority of the consuming public. Michael Behe and Richard Dawkins are examples of gatekeepers found in the center of the continuum.

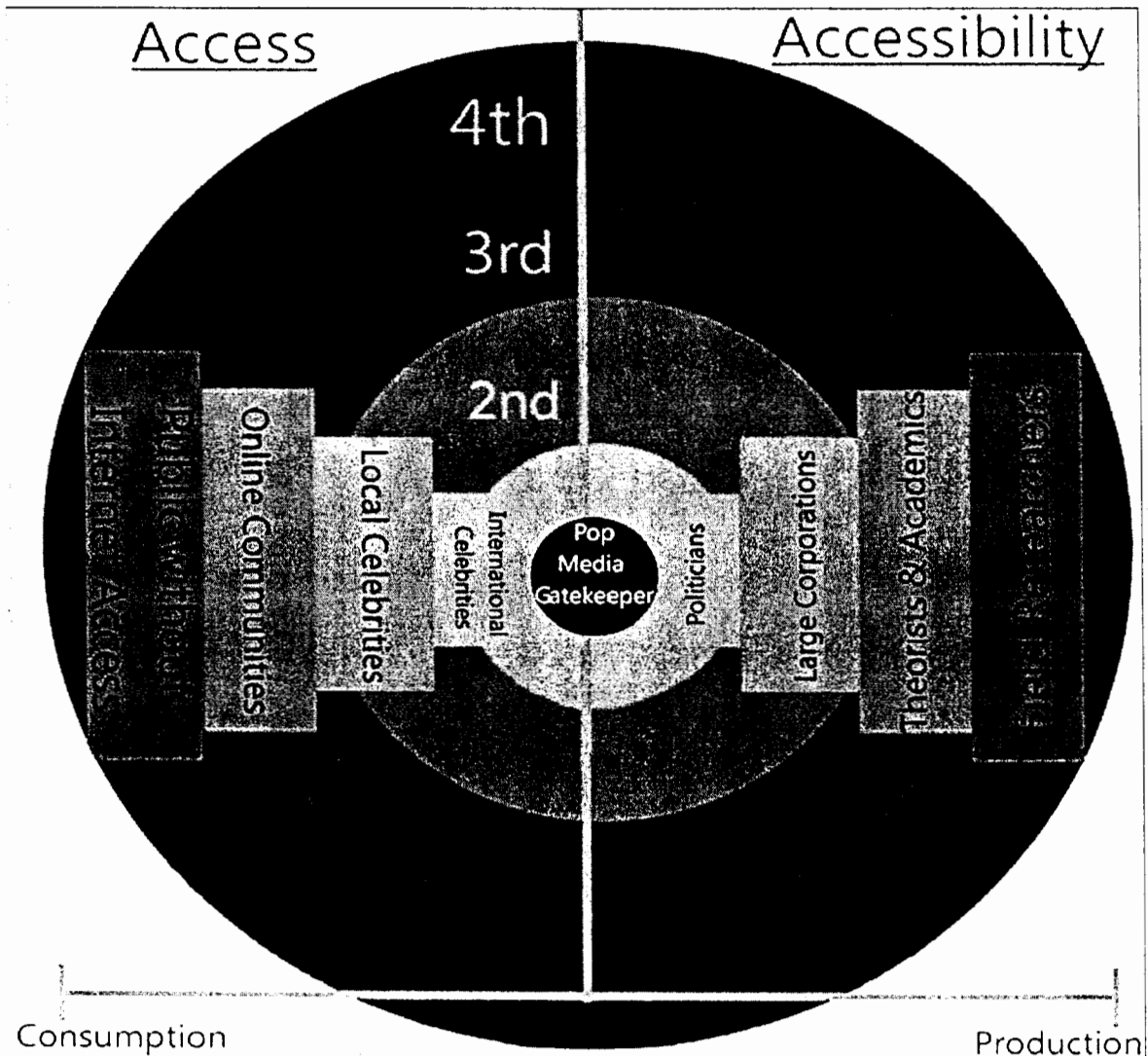


Figure 1. Production/Consumption Continuum

The gates of matured media are guarded closely by scholarly presses and academic correspondence, which keeps conversations limited to a few experts, and the rest of society is left in the outer circles. More importantly, limited accessibility to the conversation makes it easier for the dominant discourse to suppress information. Early in the debate, religious views were able to limit the spread of evolutionary ideas, and, more recently, the

science hierarchies and academic presses have been able to suppress the ideas of Intelligent Design and Creationism by presenting the information as less than scholarly or as folly. The dominant discourse's ability to limit the accessibility to the conversation in matured media has resulted in a conversational shift to a maturing media: the Internet.

AMAZON.COM

Amazon.com offers us an easily accessible example of a Webpage that is actively involved in online conversations. Through features present on Amazon.com, users are able to create ethos, authority, and agency. It does this by providing a way for users to rate participants and posts. The Website even has the power to delete all posts by a certain users if enough people claim that the user's posts do not add to the conversation. In this way, a person with a higher rating (on a scale of 1-5 stars) is more likely to have more authority when posting than someone who is not ranked. Generally, these people are rated highly by others who agree with their views, and not necessarily on how accurate the information they present is or on their ability to lead and direct conversations to productive ends.

Understanding the Medium

With the vast information available through the Internet, it would appear the gates have been flung wide open. Rather than waiting for someone to interpret the information in the debate and translate it for the lower inclusionary levels, now people in the outer circles of access and accessibility are able to acquire the information on their own. After the acquisition, people are then able to discuss it with others of varying educational and cultural backgrounds without the consequences that arise in face-to-face conversations. Historically, such conversations have only taken place when theorists/scientists have responded to claims made by others in the elite and guarded conversation, usually in printed media or conference settings.

With the emerging capabilities of the Internet, people have begun to set up online forums for the exchange of ideas, views, and cultural/religious beliefs; this increased

accessibility has led to a blurring of lines, thus complicating the ongoing debates by mottling the previously clear-cut divisions. In the past, arguments taking place outside of academic and professional conversations happened in settings where the participants had similar beliefs and backgrounds. The Internet has taken debates between friends and colleagues and expanded them to a global conversation. People from various professional, academic, and religious sectors can come together and have discussions on controversial topics without the constraints of matured media. This is not to say that the Internet is devoid of rules; within the digital world every participant has to operate within a set of online criteria, which creates another dimension to this medium. The Internet comes with rules and expectations that Ann Scott Sørensen refers to as “Netiquette,” she further elaborates:

1. You are entitled to express your opinions.
2. You are entitled to an audience.
3. You are expected to learn.
4. You are expected to teach.
5. You have a right to disagree.
6. You have a right to respond.
7. It is your privilege to change your mind.
8. It is your privilege to remain silent. (Sørensen, 4)

These rights are privileges, and if proper “Netiquette” is not followed, it is the right of the other participants to ignore the disruptive participant. Again, this creates a gate guarded by a set of criteria that must be met in order to participate. Not everyone is free to post anything one wishes. The information must follow the criteria established by “Netiquette” in order to be considered in the conversation. Those people unfamiliar with “Netiquette”

are thereby forced to the outermost circle of inclusion, left only to consume what is being said.

As online forums establish their own rules the Websites themselves, begin to act as gatekeepers, keeping out those who are unfamiliar with how to communicate in discussion threads, and even going so far as to deleting all posts by certain participants if they do not follow established rules. This cultural convention is a general guideline that helps us understand the basic rules that go into establishing hierarchies in new media conversations. "Netiquette" will vary from site to site and conversation to conversation. As the medium of conversational exchange changes, so do the necessary rules of engagement. Through these culturally established guidelines, the community and Website work together in forming an active participant in the ongoing conversations. In other words, the medium is itself producing a message to which the participants are constantly reacting. As Marshall McLuhan explains:

The fact merely underlines the point that "the medium is the message" because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form of human association. (McLuhan 203)

As the participants react to the guidelines of the medium and find ways to both act within and bend the established rules, the medium remains the controlling factor. Johnson-Eilola adds to the argument by describing the role the computer has in creating a socially constructed culture in which it is no longer a tool; instead it has evolved into an active participant in the creation of online culture and conversation. The rules act as the guide for the participants and contain the conversational chaos by establishing boundaries; this ensures the production of conversation at some level. In this case correspondences are

possible, but they remain contingent on the participation and culture and must be actively constructed (Johnson-Eilola 26).

Because Amazon.com is a melting pot of services, information, and interests, it creates places for the mottling of ideas, and it actively contributes to several ongoing conversations. Discussion threads in general offer ideal environments to examine articulation through the illustration of two crucial ideas of the Internet culture:

1. Things—objects, words, actions, subjectivities, and so on—do not have timeless, anchored meaning.
2. However, things—objects, words, actions, subjectivities, and so on—do have meaning in practice because participants actively construct those meanings over and over again. (Johnson-Eilola 26)

In other words, the meanings of words and objects are not a constant, and as conversation progresses the user needs to create meaning. Without face-to-face actions, participants need to use words, pictures, and acronyms to relay emphasis, meaning, and emotion within discussion threads, thereby bending the initial meanings.

ARTICULATION

When looking at individual threads, we are not merely looking at a set of texts. We are watching a conversation unfold. Therefore, to analyze the conversation we must look at how the interpretation of cognitive, semantic or narrative fragments within the text come together as conversation. Lawrence Grossberg explains:

Articulation is the production of identity on top of difference, of unities out of fragments, of structures across practices. Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, this experience to those politics, and these links are themselves articulated into larger structures etc. (54)

Articulation theory makes sense of how people in various cultures can create unnecessary and undetermined unity. Articulation helps a rhetorical analyst understand the implications of the junction between text and culture and allows the analyst to create order from the unstructured chaos of conversation. From Grossberg we learn how unity is established from one conversation fragment to another, creating hierarchies that influence the development of junctions between text and culture. Stromer adds to this by describing why the acts and reactions arising within conversations are important:

It's about how radically different rhetorics emerge historically in the ever-changing segregation and hybridization of things and discourses. Further, multiple configurations of rhetoric can exist simultaneously and be interconnected or independent of each other. ... [A]rticulation is not about collapsing the distinction between materiality and meaning to advance a specific critical project; it is about historicizing different configurations of materiality and meaning ... as conditions for the coming into being of a given form of rhetoric. (260-261)

Essentially, articulation theory emphasizes that it is not important to un-mottle the conversation; rather, it is important to understand the various twists and turns that have taken place in the history of the conversation. This theory examines how ideas and methods shift perspectives from the acquisition of an epistemology to the more creative process of articulating (Slack 114). Articulation requires thinking about how we create connections, and those connections create what we know; *i.e.*, a process of how connections are created rather than a process of creating and maintaining group consensus. When an author articulates another's words, they are altered through their interpretation and juxtaposition against other information that might not have been in close proximity. This conjunction of different pieces of conversation unites different discourses and creates temporary and non-inevitable alliances. When we do this, it impacts reader understanding of not only the conversation we are discussing but also its history. As we translate what came before us, we inevitably will alter it by changing the context it is presented in, thereby creating a twist or bend in the conversation and providing a platform for other conversation participants to react. Through these series of reactions, eventually temporary agreement will be reached within a group, again creating a debate platform. Simply put, where ever there is a consensus, it can be challenged.

With each new consensus, groups articulate their own information, and form a group, no matter how unofficial, which provides strength for an argument. In online forums, participants need to authenticate themselves by following the rules of the forum. To gain support and power in maturing media, an author or participant needs the backing of other participants. Forming groups or alliances demonstrates the user's ability to follow the established medium conventions and contribute to the conversation in a socially acceptable way. Generally, it can be determined if a participant has acceptably articulated

themselves by the number of participants who respond favorably to or rally behind a particular user.

The shifts that take place in the evolution/creationism debate are often done in an attempt to discredit the opposing group's information. The struggle between religion and science has become a common feature of public debates over the last 200 years. With this well-aged conversation comes a matured set of rules and likewise a select few gatekeepers with the ability to follow and manipulate the rules. An example of a gatekeeper with well developed skills in rule manipulation is Richard Dawkins. Michael Ruse provides an example of Dawkins' skill in *The Evolution-Creation Struggle*:

It is fashionable to wax apocalyptic about the threat to humanity posed by the AIDS virus, "mad cow" disease, and many others, but I think a case can be made that *faith* is one of the world's great evils, comparable to the smallpox virus but harder to eradicate. Faith, being belief that isn't based on evidence, is the principal vice of any religion....Given the dangers of faith—and considering the accomplishments of reason and observation in the activity called science—I find it ironic that, whenever I lecture publicly, there always seems to be someone who comes forward and says, "Of course, your science is just a religion like ours. Fundamentally, science just comes down to faith, doesn't it?" Well, science is not religion and it doesn't just come down to faith. Although it has many of religion's virtues, it has none of its vices. Science is based upon verifiable evidence. Religion's faith not only lacks evidence, its independence from evidence is its pride and joy, shouted from the rooftops. (Ruse 202)

Dawkins offers us a couple of examples of deceptive articulation—the first and most obvious being his supposed quotation of "someone who comes forward." Dawkins is not

directly quoting someone here, but merely condensing or combining questions he has received on more than one instance and represents many people and their beliefs in one simple sentence. He is communicating what he has *heard* at his lectures but not necessarily what was actually *said* or asked. We are only clued into the words and not the context of the questioning, and without being privileged to the contextual surroundings we are unable to fully appreciate the significance behind the questioning. In this action Dawkins is shifting the conversation. As our sole interpreter, we are left at the mercy of his biases. In doing this he is articulating what he has experienced in his lectures for another audience, but since the original context is no longer with the relayed information, there is a shift in its meaning. Dawkins is attempting to illustrate the mind set of creationists by using a generic quotation, and since he has managed to authenticate himself through his title and position as a published author and professor of Zoology at Oxford University he has more influence on the consuming audience. His professional circumstances make him a conversation gatekeeper, and his words carry more weight than those without his credentials. Therefore, Dawkins is responsible for producing the conversation and is found in the 1st inclusionary circle.

The Dawkins' quotation can also be viewed in the cultural relevance that it holds in the historical conversation. Dawkins' is a vocal atheist; his quotation illustrates this and sets up an evolution versus religion dynamic, and rather than being viewed as his opinions/ideas on religion, they will be viewed as evolutionary biology's stance on religion. And as Ruse points out, it's no longer that simple (Ruse 202).

Through this over simplification Dawkins is acting as a "conversation bully" and as a result is complicating the conversation by creating a textual situation where the reader is led to believe something not grounded in any presented evidence. This deception sets up

an interesting dynamic for the creation of textual conversations and deceptive articulation. *Deceptive articulation* occurs when a participant directly quotes sources inaccurately and uses the information out of context to bolster his/her argument and ethos. Dawkins' is using his position on the production/consumption continuum to manipulate his authority and influence on the production of the ongoing conversation. By doing this, he can sway how the conversation is consumed by those not included in the inner inclusionary circles.

Media choices by those in the inner inclusionary circles also add to their authority. Gatekeepers are invited to give university lectures, publish books, and take part in Television interviews, all of which are matured media with limited accessibility. In the past, people like Dawkins would be the only people allowed to partake in public evolutionary debates, but with the emergence of the Internet, more people are able to contribute publically. In this paper, my use of articulation theory describes the process by which online communities appropriate the practices of matured media, such as public and academic debates, for the establishment of their own hierarchies.

Although maturing media are not as established as the traditional forums, they are still a form of mass communication due to the extent of information access. Gates and gatekeepers were needed to separate the information from the word vomit just as the media before them. However, participants in online forums are not as privileged as Dawkins' and his fellow gatekeepers, because the maturing medium has yet to develop an accurate way of authentication. This means that even though forum participants can reach a larger audience, they are still excluded from the inner circles of inclusion.

METHODS

In order to look at how the access and accessibility has changed from matured media to maturing media, I used Amazon.com evolution discussion threads. This form of new media was chosen because of its ease of access and accessibility in combination with the ability of the researcher to monitor the conversations without interfering with or altering them. Four online discussion threads from Amazon.com were identified using the following criteria:

1. The conversation must be on Amazon.com under “evolution forums.”
2. Conversations must be longer than 20 posts.
3. Conversations must not have had a new post in 5+ days to ensure that the conversation is no longer ongoing.

Of the 15 conversations in the forum on 1/20/09, only four conversations met all three criteria and they were “Evolution,” “All Metaphysical/Paranormal Phenomena Explained,” “Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard,” and “ID Theory 101 – Course Description.”

All four of the conversations contained views from both evolutionary and Intelligent Design, making them appropriate for this study.

For my analysis, I coded each of the four threads using the participant’s initials and the number of posts they had contributed (i.e. RCW12), and then the individual posts were classified based on their characteristics and put into data tables. The data tables were examined for patterns based on their conversational tendencies and were used in the rhetorical analysis of the conversations. These patterns along with the conversational context determined the rules of Amazon.com discussion threads and the establishment of authority was also determined with this approach.

Classification

In order to fully unravel the debate, it was necessary to go through each thread and identify each of the discussion board participants and classify them as either Intelligent Design (ID) or evolution supporters. After the participants have been generally categorized, they will be categorized further as creationist, Intelligent Design, Darwinist, or Neo-Darwinist. If an author could not be placed into a more specific category they were classified as either ID/creationist or evolution. It is important to understand the affiliation of the author, because with their affiliation comes a history and set of beliefs that guides their argument and will influence the shifts of the conversation. The author classification will also help authenticate the participant, because if they are arguing with valid information, other similarly classified participants will support their arguments.

The posts were classified as well, and all of the posts in the thread were placed into one or more of the following categories:

- 1) Informational—any post that quotes or presents information that can be verified or cross-referenced.
- 2) Hostile—any post that directly attacks another member of the conversation directly
- 3) Religious—posts that mention a god.
- 4) Anti-religious—posts that refute the idea of a god/higher power/ creator.
- 5) Alienating—posts that directly try to eliminate or force another person out of the conversation, either by directly attacking their opinions/information or by encouraging others to ignore the singled out person.
- 6) Other—posts that do not further the conversation or disrupt it. Examples of posts that fall into this category are apologetic or expressing gratitude.

- 7) Deleted by Amazon—in some instances Amazon.com deleted comments by particular users.

The deleted posts were still be coded as being deleted, which illustrated how the medium (the computer or Website) “does not create broad social changes but rather participates in broad social changes. In a recursive and contingent process, particular forms of interface tend to influence how people work” (Johnson-Eilola 34). In the present study it means Amazon.com participates in the ongoing conversation by influencing how participants gain and maintain authority. This impact on the author’s authority alters how they are seen by other members of the forum; especially, if Amazon.com has deleted all posts by a certain participant.

In order to ensure the posts are properly categorized, the context of the conversation was considered. This allowed various implications that took place in the conversation to be accounted for and helped keep true to the context of the conversation. After the posts had been placed into their appropriate categories, I classified the authors based on their conversation authority and/or influence as Leading Participants, Supporting Participants, or Disrupters. Leading and Supporting participants tended to follow the rules of “Netiquette” and Disrupters did not follow proper “Netiquette.”

Patterns

Each thread was examined in order to determine the different argumentative positions. According to Trimbur, “Articulation is always a matter of struggle in a war of positions where nothing is certain ahead of time but rather a matter of practice” (Trimbur 7). With this in mind, each successful discussion thread should eventually establish two (or more) clear sides, and every author should be classified as either Supporting or Leading and be affiliated with a side. The conversation, having an undetermined end, should

progress until either one of two things happens 1) a resolution or agreement is reached on some level; or 2) the conversation breaks down because an agreement cannot be established and the conversation dies.

After all the data was coded, I looked for changes in conversation tone and for the authors who appeared to facilitate the changes. The patterns that emerged helped to form the rules of the discussion thread and added varying foci to the four different threads. Whether a shift was productive or not was dependant on which participant was leading the conversation. On Amazon.com, the audience and authors were determined by a set of common interests and experiences relating to the Website's discussion threads and the ongoing evolution/ID debate. This meant that there was little variation between the four thread's conversational rules (Grossberg 42). The tone and direction taken by each conversation was be determined by the established rules, focus of the threads, and the participants who attempted to post comments that broke the rules. Disrupting participants had less impact on the conversation than those who respected the boundaries established in the medium.

All four threads were examined closely, but the "Evolution thread" was examined more carefully, because of the shifts in tone and the conclusion reached between two leading participants. Within this conversation three participants, Richard C. Wilson, G. Vision, and Christopher Blair, were focused on the most due to their impact on the conversation.

RESULTS

When I analyzed the data, specific conversation characteristics emerged. Participants used either productive or unproductive tactics to invite participation and production in the conversation. It was then noted that participants who used productive conversational techniques made the ongoing discussion more inviting for participation from others; while those who used unproductive tactics created more barriers and acted as conversation gatekeepers. Some of the unproductive conversational techniques were quote mining, filibustering, hostility, and circular arguments.

- 1) *Quote mining* is a term and tactic that was both developed and defined in the discussion threads I examined, and it is simply the use of scholarly quotes out of context to bolster an argument.
- 2) *Filibustering* is similar to quote mining and often times used in combination, occurs when a participant creates an incredibly long post filled with a combination of their argument and quotes they feel are important.
- 3) *Hostile posts* directly attacks a participant or their beliefs/ideas.
- 4) *Circular arguments* are not grounded in strong supporting evidence, and therefore the participant is unable to offer any credible argument as to why their point is valid. They are arguing for argument's sake; *e.g.*, "I am right because you are wrong."

Productive conversational postings were similar to those in verbal conversation. Participants who took the time to read the post they were responding to and appropriately reply encouraged conversational growth and eventually the debates were able to reach partial agreements (*i.e.*, participants found some common ground and agreed to disagree on some topics).

Every examined thread had at least two leading participants and multiple supporting participants. The leading evolution participant would change at times, but, in all four threads, the leading ID/creationist participant remained the same. Thread totals are represented below in Table A.

Table 1. Discussion Thread Results

| Forum | Number of posts on 1/20/09 | Number of Authors | Pro-Evolution Authors | Anti-Evolution Authors | Anti-Evolution Post | Pro-Evolution Posts | Unknown Posts |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Evolution | 180 | 16 | 12 | 3 | 55 | 117 | 1 |
| All Metaphysical/paranormal phenomena explained | 42 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 19 | 23 | 0 |
| Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard | 52 | 15 | 12 | 3 | 10 | 42 | 0 |
| ID Theory 101 – Course Description | 33 | 17 | 30 | 2 | 2 | 30 | 0 |
| Thread Totals | 307 | N/A* | N/A* | N/A* | 86 | 212 | 1 |

*Totals do not accurately represent the actual number of authors in all four threads since a few authors were found in all threads. See appendix for author totals.

Of the four examined conversations only one reached a conclusion during the period of study. Three of the threads did become active again after an extended period of time; however, the focus of the conversations had redirected and in most cases were facilitated by new leading participants. The three conversations that did not reach a

conclusion tended to partake in circular debates among two primary participants one on either side of the debate.

DISCUSSION

The studied text was not devoid of conversational tone or implications. Instead, it was full of implications, making it complicated to study. The conversational approach to writing in discussion threads is accompanied by an entire set of rules and etiquette that needs to be understood in order to make sense of the chaos that several intertwined conversational fragments create. It became clear early on that the individual posts could not be studied independently and just as in matured media, the context always needed to be considered. This meant understanding who the participants were responding to and how they were reacting to the other conversations taking place around them. The conversations were not linear, and the participants were not necessarily responding to the post directly prior. In some cases the posts were not part of a conversation at all and instead were just general comments on the entire discussion. The various conversation fragments and miscellaneous posts wove together to form the overall conversation body, which was generally made up of one dominating conversation and several complimenting. However, after tracking the multiple interactions it became possible to describe the rules of the discussion thread, most of which followed Sørensen's "Netiquette" with some additional Amazon.com specific rules:

- 1) The posts and participants have to contribute to the topic to elicit a response.
- 2) Participants can bring in outside material to help illustrate their views and also suggest readings.
- 3) Suggested readings need to be on topic or the post will be dismissed (occasionally trolls suggested the participants go read the bible, which was ignored since it was not relevant to the ID/ evolution debate.)

The participants who were best equipped with an understanding of the rules of the forum were the most influential in the conversation and many times would use their knowledge of “Netiquette” to establish their authority and push others out. Just like Richard Dawkins is a conversational bully in matured media, certain thread participants acted as bullies to push their views and alienate others. In order to create gates within the forum, a variety of textual techniques were used. Some of which resulted in productive conversational bends, but most tactics were designed to discredit or aggravate the participant’s debate opponent.

One of the most powerful tactics used was the filibuster. Similarly to how they are used when addressing members of congress, only thread members with established authority can effectively use them to redirect the conversation. Filibustering was often used in combination with another tactic, “quote mining.” The term “quote mining” was used by Laurel Jenkins-Crows in the discussion thread “ID theory 101 – Course Description,” and was defined by Christopher Blair (CB) in the “evolution” thread as, “Picking and choosing what you want from scientific papers, especially simply quoting the abstract and not reading the meat of the article, [...]” Christopher Blair’s definition demonstrates how people use this tactic to authenticate themselves. Quote mining in discussion threads is a way of asserting authority; it shows an ability to access primary literature. By condemning abstract citation he’s excluding those people who do not have the access to full academic articles. His implication is that he does have access, which establishes him as a person of authority in the thread and suggests the quotations he contributes to the conversation are from the body of the academic paper.

Filibustering and quote mining bombards the thread with information that appears to support whatever point the user is trying to prove, but it is not necessarily meant to be

read more than it is to be skimmed or even completely ignored. In a filibuster, it is not uncommon for someone to cite everyone from Kurt Gödel and Richard Lewontin, to Stephen Gould in an attempt to articulate themselves into a conversation. The result is a full Webpage worth of quotations, some with authors names attached and some without. The quotations are usually connected by phrases like “for instance” or “and also,” a transition technique that results in the complete abandonment of the participant’s authoritative voice. These informational rants are generally ignored in the discussion threads unless they are posted by a participant established higher in the hierarchy, and even then they are only considered by the two leading participants in the context of their heated debate. Even though filibusters can be acceptably used by the leading participants, if the tactic is used before a participant has properly authenticated themselves the overwhelming contribution results in an undermining of authority and is usually ignored or hidden. If filibusters are used properly they can:

- 1) show others that the author is familiar with the big names in the field, thereby creating authority;
- 2) provide a place for the author to refer back to, especially if the filibuster incorporates a lot of quote mining;
- 3) distract the other participants so that the direction of the conversation can be changed.

Essentially, filibusters manipulate the types of reactions that occur, and allow the participant to have more control over the conversational shifts. Filibustering and quote mining offer ways for participants to bolster their authority by flaunting their access to primary literature. By doing this they authenticate not by illustrating their accessibility to

conversations, but rather, by their access to them. Thus, the participants are substituting access for accessibility and demonstrating how the right to use filibusters acts as a gate.

One participant who has seemed to have mastered the art of the online filibuster is Christopher Blair. Mr. Blair was a notoriously hostile leading participant throughout the Amazon.com evolution discussion threads. He appeared in three of the four examined threads. Upon further investigation of his Amazon profile it was discovered that he had a high rating of 4.5 out of five stars, which demonstrates the support he has gained in the Amazon.com community. His conversational tactics or lack thereof, consisted of attacking the intelligence, education, or beliefs of those who did not agree with him, and sometimes included other evolution advocates. His approach was forceful, blatant and Mr. Blair spends more time “talking” than actually responding to the posts of others. Despite his lack of conversational abilities he is strongly favored in his community. At first, this hostile approach and high favorability seemed to be a fluke, but it was determined that discussion thread visibility plays a large role in establishing authority. The more threads a participant partakes in leads to more people reading and agreeing with their posts, and as a result adding to their ranking. Those who are not as active as Mr. Blair would have a difficult time authenticating themselves in this particular medium.

Christopher Blair has, it seems, mastered the “Netiquette” of Amazon.com. His arguments are circular and fueled by the power of being part of the majority. He and his supporters fight to be superior and do not feel the need to create any sort of agreement with those on the opposite side of the debate. His language below demonstrates this.

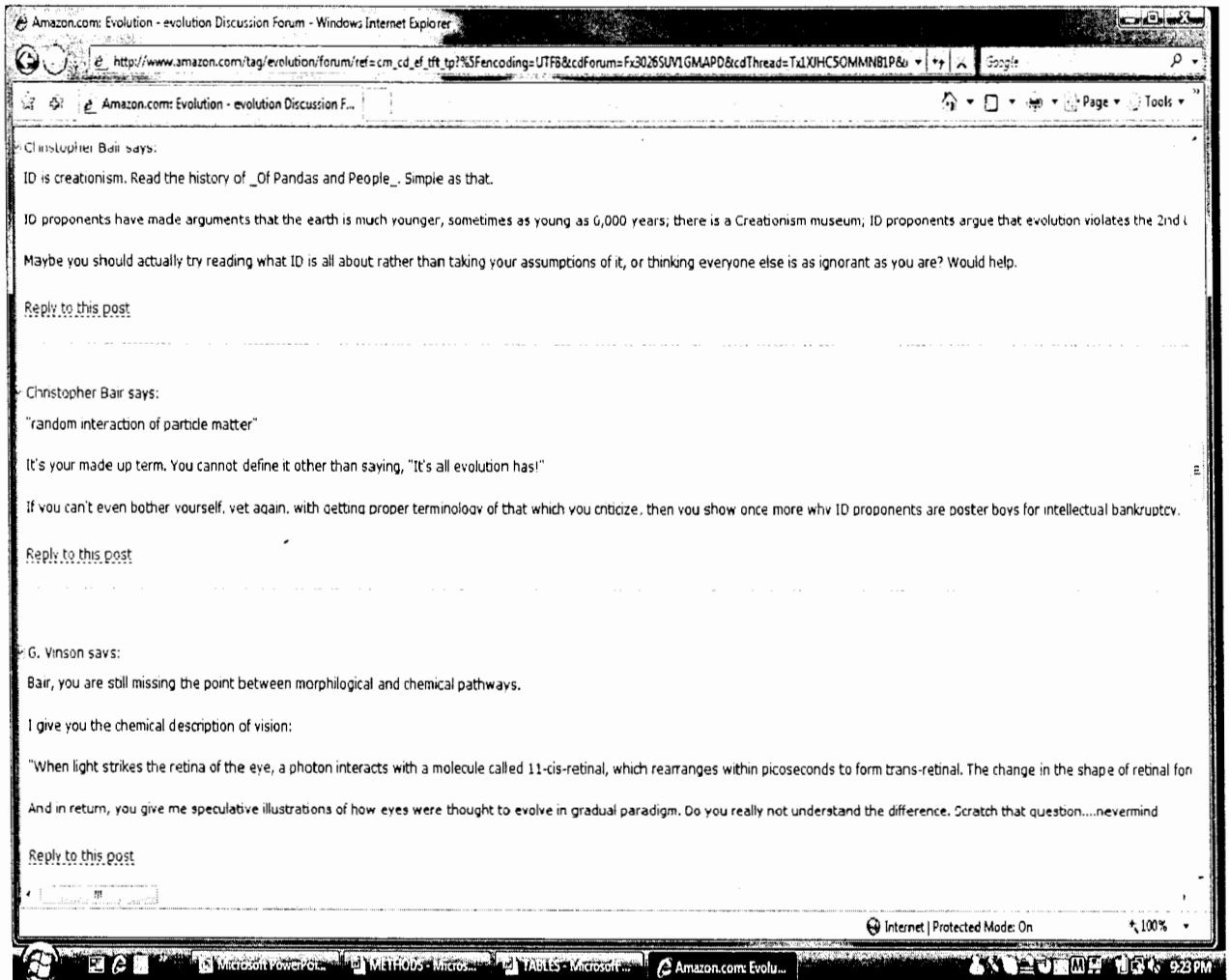


Figure 2. Chistopher Blair Example

The hostility in Mr. Blair's comments shows his complete lack of respect for Mr. Vision's views and opinion. His rhetorical tactics in this screen capture revolve around rhetorical questions and creating doubt in the other side's information. His tactics do not function to progress the conversation, but rather, shut it down. Similar to how Dawkins' has articulated himself into matured media conversations, Mr. Blair wins his arguments through misleading the consuming public; he is a conversation bully who attacks other participants' authority. Blair is trying to undermine Vision's claims by manipulating them and insulting his intelligence: "Maybe you should actually try reading what ID is all about rather than taking your assumptions of it, or thinking everyone else is as ignorant as you

are? Would Help.” G. Vision’s authority is damaged by this attack, since he does have the approval of the leading thread participant. Since Blair has managed to authenticate himself in this forum through his presence and 4.5 star rating he has reached a higher level of authority and influences others’ authority. His ranking makes him a conversation gatekeeper, it suggests he has the support of the Amazon.com community; therefore, his posts carry more influence than those without the medium’s support. On a much smaller scale, Christopher Blair is acting as Dawkins does in popular media and is responsible for producing and driving conversations in the evolution forums.

As Blair pushes his views and tramples G.Vision’s he is acting as a conversation bully, and as a result he complicates conversations by creating a situation where the other participants are not encouraged to engage. He uses his ranked position to manipulate his authority and influence on the production of the ongoing conversation and sways how the conversation is consumed by those not included in the conversation thread. The evolution thread was dominated by Christopher Blair and G. Vision’s constant war of words and the only reprieve was when Mr. Blair took a hiatus, which allowed a calming force to surface.

Richard C Wilson (RCW) was one of the few leading participants who did not fall into the hostile tendencies of the discussion threads. He articulated himself into the conversation by actively reading and responding to other posts, which resulted in a significant decrease in the hostility, and also an eventual agreement with the thread’s Intelligent Design supporter, G. Vision. Unlike his evolutionary counter parts, he did not attack G. Vision or his ideas. Instead, he worked to understand what everyone in the discussion thread was trying to say and help others to see where there was conversation common ground and where there was disagreement. Where other leading participants took more hostile approaches to illustrate their point, and did not take the time to understand

what everyone was trying to say, RCW was drastically different. He asserted his authority by becoming a mediating force and by not attempting to alienate the other participants. His acknowledgement of other participant contributions resulted in productive conversation ends. RCW's language use is demonstrated below in Figure 3.

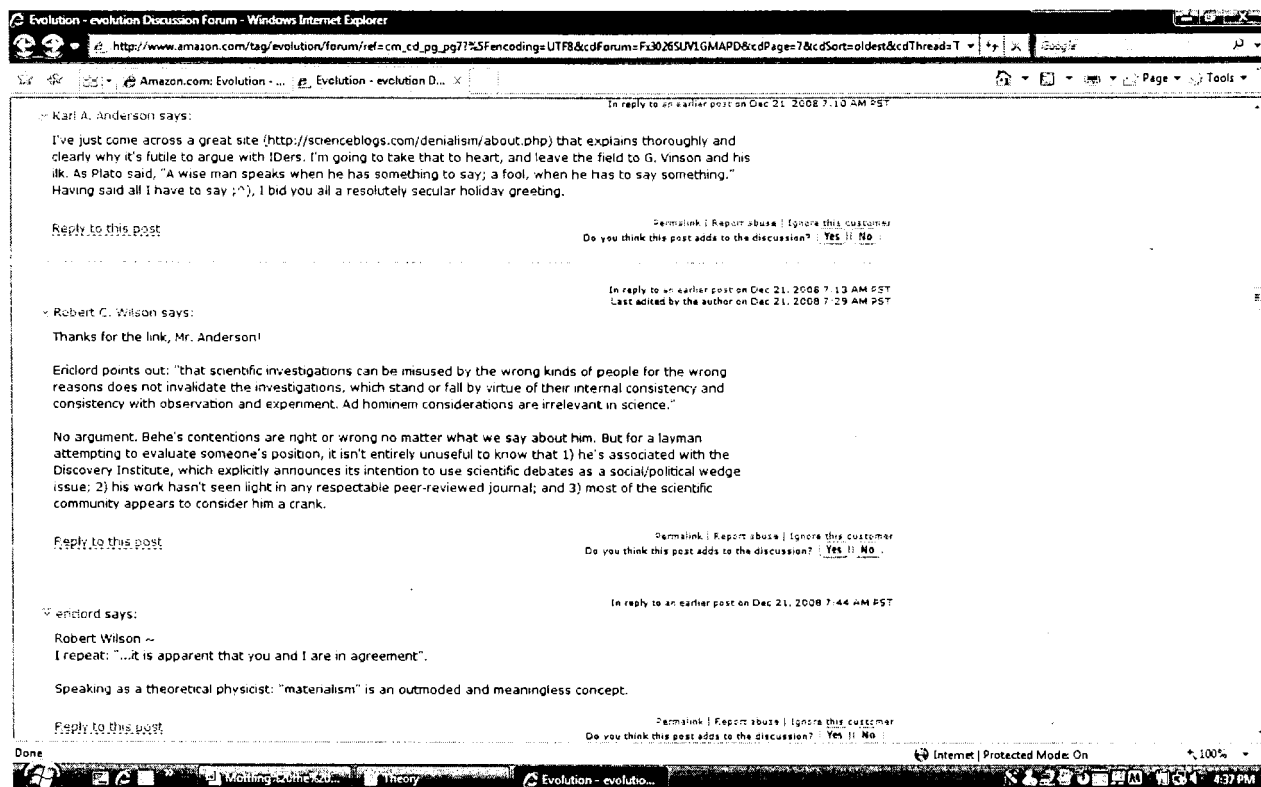


Figure 3. Richard C. Wilson Example

In this screen capture, Richard C. Wilson finds himself sandwiched between two participants who have similar views. The big difference between Mr. Wilson and Mr. Blair is that Wilson is having a conversation with the other participants where Mr. Blair only professes. By approaching other participants in a diplomatic way Wilson was able to open the "evolution" thread up to more people, and more people were able to input their thoughts and interpretations. Instead of condemning opposite views, he did his best to interpret them. In the first seven words he mentions two other conversation participants and acknowledges their views. Richard C. Wilson states "Thanks for the link Mr.

Anderson!” and “Ericlord points out:...” By acknowledging and articulating the views of other participants, Richard C. Wilson is making the conversation more accessible to those supporting it, and encourages them to have larger conversational roles. His comment to Mr. Anderson encourages others to read back to the link provided, and his restating of ericlord’s comments shows a respect for his contributions. Both of these actions would require others to read the stated text in order to appropriately respond, thereby furthering the online conversation with traditional conversation tactics. At this point in the thread, Richard C. Wilson establishes his authority by appropriating a set of practices to calm and produce conversation, and, by doing so, eliminates hostility and changes the way information is articulate at that point. Although most of the conversation was still dominated by G. Vision and Richard C. Wilson, supporting participants played a much larger role in the production of conversation due to the inclusive practices put in place by the leading participants.

CONCLUSIONS

When examining the various Amazon.com conversations a few things became clear

1) If a participant followed the rules of the discussion thread it was hard to exclude them; 2) The more participants obeyed netiquette the more welcoming the conversation was to new participants, and the conversation was able to debate two opposing sides with less hostility; 3) Participants who were aggressive and hostile tended to dominate the conversations and had high approval ratings, but their contributions were circular, and set up an “us”/ “them” dynamic that hindered the forward movement of conversations. By doing this, they created the illusion of authority and were able to become discussion thread gatekeepers. Reading through the four threads, I got the impression that most participants were not on the site to actually conduct academic or educated debates. Instead they seemed determined to prove that people who subscribed to the intelligent design hypothesis were completely ignorant, and those who were able to articulate ID in this light held a higher status than those who did not. Richard C. Wilson was the most influential and positive force in the four discussion threads and was left unranked by the Amazon.com community. Christopher Blair on the other hand was highly ranked for his contributions even though most of his posts were hostile and attacked the beliefs of other participants.

When title, education, and profession are removed and we are forced to base our judgments on how people textually represent themselves, we should question the accuracy of online power distribution. Even though the online world has seemingly opened doors to otherwise privileged conversations, people are quickly guarding their sections of the Internet with filters and gates making it difficult to progress towards the central “sweet spot.” As gates are established in maturing media, the gap between those producing the conversation and those consuming it is widened and the majority of the population is left to

sift through information in order to decipher what is important and what is not. In a medium that awards Webbies and that is being bombarded with celebrity Webpages, blogs, and tweets it seems that mature media has invaded maturing media. Doing this moves established gates into our “free for all medium,” taking away the freedom that the Internet has come to represent with the establishment of the public Internet. With no way of proving credentials, discussion thread participants are left to their ability to articulate themselves into a conversation and to do so in a site-appropriate manner. This is the only way a participant can get noticed and hope to progress towards the continuum’s inner sweet spot. In this way, the Internet has almost caught up with the rest of the world, and the only way to become a gatekeeper is to first become famous or infamous in the medium. So even if someone is able to access primary conversations that were previously denied to them, the developing online gates and gatekeepers ensure that one is still only able to consume.

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APPENDIX

A 1. Participant Data

| | Author | Forum(s) | Number of Posts | Leading/Supporting/Disrupting | ID/ or Evolution | Darwinism/Neo-Darwinism or Neo-Creationist/Intelligent Design |
|---|-------------------------|--|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 1 | William Missett (WM) | All metaphysical/ paranormal phenomena explained | 19 | Leading | ID | ID/Creationist |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--|---------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 2 | Christopher Blair (CB) | All metaphysic/ paranormal phenomena explained/ Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard?/ Evolution | 11/2/39 | Leading/Supporting/Leading | Evolution/Science | Neo-Darwinism |
|---|---------------------------|--|---------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|----------|--|-------------------|---------------|
| 3 | Charles F. Mielke (CFM) | All metaphysical/ paranormal phenomena explained/ Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard?/ ID Theory 101 – Course Description/ Evolution | 8/6/1/24 | Supporting/ Supporting/ Supporting/ Leading | Evolution/Science | Neo-Darwinism |
|---|----------------------------|--|----------|--|-------------------|---------------|

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|---|------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 4 | Lanceradvanced (La) | All metaphysical/ paranormal phenomena explained | 3 | Supporting | Evolution/Science | Neo-Darwinism |
| 5 | Richard H. Wright (RHW) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 2 | Supporting | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|-----|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 6 | T. Nguyen (TN) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard?/ ID Theory 101 – Course Description | 8/2 | Leading/Supporting | ID/Creationism | ID |
| 7 | Mark Hornberger (MH) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Supporting | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| 8 | Lostn (Ln) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard?/ ID Theory 101 – Course Description | 14/4 | Leading/Supporting | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |
| 9 | Joseph Van De Mark (JVDM) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 2 | Supporting | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|---|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 10 | mostserene1 (Ms1-1) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Disruptive | Evolution | N/A |
| 11 | BubbaCoop (BC) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Disruptive | ID | Creationism |
| 12 | Paul Tinsley (PT) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Supportive | Evolution | N/A |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|--|---|------------|----------------|----------------|
| 13 | Christopher Petroni (CP) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Supportive | Evolution | N/A |
| 14 | Northern Man (NM) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Supportive | Evolution | N/A |
| 15 | T.N. (T.N.1) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Supportive | Creationism/ID | Creationism/ID |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|--|-----|------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 16 | Jane Doe (JD) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard? | 1 | Supporting | Evolution | Evolution |
| 17 | Karl A. Anderson (KAA) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard?/ Evolution | 1/3 | Supporting/ Supporting | Evolution | Evolution |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---|-----|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 18 | Randall R. Young (RRY) | Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard?/ ID Theory 101 – Course Description | 8/2 | Supporting/Supporting | Evolution | Evolution |
| 19 | Michael G. Lapietra (MGL) | Evolution | 14 | Leading | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |
| | dvimus (DV1) | Evolution | 1 | Supporting | Evolution | Evolution |
| 20 | Eclectic Amazonian (EA) | Evolution | 1 | Supporting | Evolution | Evolution (Neo- Darwinism?) |
| 21 | L.N. Smith (LNS) | Evolution | 2 | Supporting | Evolution | Darwinism |
| 22 | Susan (S) | Evolution | 1 | Disrupting | Creationism | Creationism? |
| 23 | Salil Maniktahla | Evolution | 1 | Supporting | Evolution | Evolution |
| 24 | R. Doerge (RD) | Evolution | 2 | Disrupting | Creationism | Creationism |

Table A.1. (Continued)

| | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|-----------|----|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 25 | G. Vinson | Evolution | 52 | Leading/ Disrupting | Intelligent Design | ID |
| 26 | Robert C. Wilson (RCW) | Evolution | 18 | Leading | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |
| 27 | ChemEBeaver | Evolution | 1 | Supporting | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |
| 28 | ericlord (EL) | Evolution | 8 | Supporting | Evolution | Neo-Darwinism |
| 29 | Laurent Duchesne (LD) | Evolution | 3 | Supporting/ Disrupting | Unknown | Unknown |
| 30 | J. Vanek (JV) | Evolution | 1 | Supporting | Evolution | Darwinism |

A 2. Thread Statistics

| Forum | Number of posts on 1.20.09 | Number of Authors | Pro-Evolution Authors | Anti-Evolution Authors | Anti-Evolution Post | Pro-Evolution Posts | Unknown Posts |
|-----------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Evolution | 180 | 16 | 12 | 3 | 55 | 117 | 1 |

Table A.2. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|------|------|------|----|-----|---|
| All Metaphysical/paranormal phenomena explained | 42 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 19 | 23 | 0 |
| Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard | 52 | 15 | 12 | 3 | 10 | 42 | 0 |
| ID Theory 101 – Course Description | 33 | 17 | 30 | 2 | 2 | 30 | 0 |
| Thread Totals | 307 | N/A* | N/A* | N/A* | 86 | 212 | 1 |

- Totals do not accurately represent the actual number of authors in all four threads. See table A 1. for author totals.

A.3. Forum: Evolution Thread: All metaphysical/paranormal phenomena explained

| Posts | Informational | Inquiring | Religious | Anti- Religious | Hostile | Alienating | Other | Deleted by Amazon |
|-------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|---------|------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | WM1 | | WM1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | CB1 | CB1 | | | |
| 3 | | WM2 | WM2 | | | | | |
| 4 | CB2 | | | | CB2 | | | |
| 5 | WM3 | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | CB3 | | CB3 | CB3 | | | |
| 7 | | WM4 | | | WM4 | | | |
| 8 | WM5 | | | | | | | |
| 9 | CFM1 | | | | CFM1 | CFM1 | | |
| 10 | CB4 | CB4 | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | WM6 | | | | WM6 | |
| 12 | | CB5 | | | CB5 | | | |
| 13 | La1 | | | | | | | |
| 14 | WM7 | | | | | | | |
| 15 | WM8 | WM8 | | | WM8 | | | |

Table A.3. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|------|------|--|------|------|------|------|
| 16 | La2 | | | | | | | |
| 17 | La3 | | | | | | | |
| 18 | CFM2 | | | | CFM2 | CFM2 | | |
| 19 | | | | | | | WM9 | |
| 20 | CB6 | | | | CB6 | CB6 | | |
| 21 | | | | | | | WM10 | |
| 22 | | | | | | | CB7 | |
| 23 | WM11 | | | | | | | |
| 24 | CB8 | CB8 | | | | | | |
| 25 | WM12 | | WM12 | | | | | WM12 |
| 26 | | | | | La4 | La4 | | |
| 27 | | CFM3 | | | | | | |
| 28 | | | | | | | | WM13 |
| 29 | | | | | CFM4 | | CFM4 | |
| 30 | CB9 | | | | | | | |
| 31 | CFM5 | | | | | | CFM5 | |
| 32 | CB10 | | | | | | | |

Table A.3. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|------|--|--|------|------|------|------|
| 33 | | | | | | | | WM14 |
| 34 | | | | | | | | WM15 |
| 35 | | | | | CB11 | CB11 | | |
| 36 | | CFM6 | | | | | | |
| 37 | | | | | | | | WM16 |
| 38 | CFM7 | CFM7 | | | CFM7 | | | |
| 39 | | | | | | | | WM17 |
| 40 | | | | | | | CFM8 | |
| 41 | | | | | | | | WM18 |
| 42 | | | | | | | | WM19 |

Table A.4. Forum: Evolution Thread: Evolution Science Research: A Double Standard?

| Post | Informational | Inquiring | Religious | Anti- Religious | Hostile | Alienating | Other | Deleted by Amazon |
|------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|---------|------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | RHW1 | | | | | | RHW1 | |
| 2 | | | | | | | TN1 | |
| 3 | MH1 | | | | | | | |

Table A.4. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 4 | | | | | | | RHW2 | |
| 5 | Ln1 | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | JVDM1 | |
| 7 | | | | | | | | TN2 |
| 8 | | Ln2 | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | RHW3 | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | | | TN3 |
| 11 | Ln3 | Ln3 | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | | | | TN4 |
| 13 | | | | | Msl-1 | Msl-1 | | |
| 14 | TN5 | | | | | | TN5 | |
| 15 | Ln4 | Ln4 | | | | | | |
| 16 | Ln5 | | | | | | | |
| 17 | TN6 | | TN6 | | | | | |
| 18 | | Ln6 | | Ln6 | Ln6 | | | |
| 19 | | Ln7 | | | Ln7 | | | |
| 20 | | | TN7 | | TN7 | | | |

Table A.4. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | |
|----|------|-------|-----|-----|------|------|--|
| 21 | Ln8 | | | | Ln8 | | |
| 22 | CFM1 | | | | | CFM1 | |
| 23 | | | | | | TN8 | |
| 24 | | JVDM2 | | | | | |
| 25 | | | BC1 | | | | |
| 26 | | | | | | PT1 | |
| 27 | CFM2 | CFM2 | | | CFM2 | | |
| 28 | Ln9 | Ln9 | | Ln9 | | | |
| 29 | CP1 | | | | CP1 | | |
| 30 | NM1 | | | | | NM1 | |
| 31 | RRY1 | | | | | | |
| 32 | Ln10 | | | | | | |
| 33 | | T.N.1 | | | | | |
| 34 | | RRY2 | | | | | |
| 35 | Ln11 | | | | | | |
| 36 | | JD1 | | | JD1 | | |
| 37 | CB1 | | | | CB1 | | |

Table A.4. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|------|--|--|------|------|------|--|
| 38 | CB2 | | | | | | | |
| 39 | | | | | Ln12 | | | |
| 40 | | | | | Ln13 | | | |
| 41 | | RRY3 | | | RRY3 | RRY3 | | |
| 42 | Ln14 | | | | Ln14 | Ln14 | | |
| 43 | | | | | RRY4 | | RRY4 | |
| 44 | CFM3 | | | | CFM3 | CFM3 | | |
| 45 | RRY5 | | | | | | RRY5 | |
| 46 | CFM4 | | | | | | CFM4 | |
| 47 | | | | | | | RRY6 | |
| 48 | RRY7 | | | | | | RRY7 | |
| 49 | | | | | | | CFM5 | |
| 50 | | | | | | | RRY8 | |
| 51 | CAA1 | | | | | | | |
| 52 | | | | | | | CFM6 | |
| | | | | | | | | |

A.5. Forum: Evolution Thread: ID Theory 101-- Course Description

| Posts | Informational / Informative | Inquiring | Religious/ Pro ID | Anti-Religious/ Anti-ID | Hostile | Alienating | Other | Deleted by Amazon |
|-------|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------|------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | SM1 | | SM1 | | | SM1 | | |
| 2 | | | | Br1 | Br1 | | Br1 | |
| 3 | TN1 | | | | | | TN1 | |
| 4 | | Br2 | | | | | Br2 | |
| 5 | TN2 | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | SDC1 | SDC1 | SDC1 | |
| 7 | DA1 | | DA1 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | | LJC1 | |
| 9 | SDC2 | | | | | | SDC2 | |
| 10 | LJC2 | | | | LJC2 | | | |
| 11 | SDC3 | | SDC3 | | | | | |
| 12 | LJC3 | | | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | | | RM1 |

Table A.5. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|------|--|------|------|-----|------|--|
| 14 | LJC4 | | | | LJC4 | | | |
| 15 | T1 | | | | | | T1 | |
| 16 | | | | | | | SM2 | |
| 17 | QEV1 | | | | | | QEV1 | |
| 18 | | | | | Ln1 | | Ln1 | |
| 19 | Ln2 | | | Ln2 | | | | |
| 20 | NY191-1 | | | | | | | |
| 21 | HK1 | | | | HK1 | HK1 | | |
| 22 | HK2 | | | | HK2 | HK2 | | |
| 23 | Ln3 | | | Ln3 | | | | |
| 24 | | QEV2 | | QEV2 | | | QEV2 | |
| 25 | Ln4 | | | Ln4 | Ln4 | | | |
| 26 | KB1 | | | | | | | |
| 27 | | | | JF1 | | | | |
| 28 | | | | | | | RRY1 | |
| 29 | | RRY2 | | | | | | |
| 30 | | | | | | | LJC5 | |

Table A.5. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|--|-----|--|--|--|--|--|
| 31 | CFM1 | | | | | | | |
| 32 | | | ED1 | | | | | |

Table. A.6. Forum: Evolution Thread: Evolution

| Post | Informational/ Informative | Inquiring | Religiou s/ Pro ID | Anti- Religious/ Anti-ID | Hosti le | Alienating | Other | Deleted by Amazon |
|------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | | MGL1 | | | | | | |
| 2 | CB1 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | CFM1 | | | | | | | |
| 4 | DV1 | | | | | | | |
| 5 | MGL2 | | | MGL2 | | | | |
| 6 | | GV1 | GV1 | | | | | |
| 7 | CB2 | | | | CB2 | CB2 | | |
| 8 | | GV2 | GV2 | | | | | |
| 9 | MGL3 | | | MGL3 | MGL 3 | | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|------|------|------|----------|------|------|--|
| 10 | | CB3 | | | CB3 | CB3 | | |
| 11 | GV3 | | GV3 | | GV3 | | | |
| 12 | | GV4 | | | GV4 | | | |
| 13 | MGL4 | | | MGL4 | MGL 4 | | | |
| 14 | CB4 | | | CB4 | CB4 | | | |
| 15 | CB5 | | | | CB5 | | | |
| 16 | GV5 | | | | GV5 | | | |
| 17 | | | | | GV6 | GV6 | | |
| 18 | | | | | GV7 | | GV7 | |
| 19 | | | | | MGL 5 | MGL5 | MGL5 | |
| 20 | CB6 | | | | CB6 | CB6 | | |
| 21 | GV8 | | | | GV8 | GV8 | | |
| 22 | | | | | CB7 | CB7 | CB7 | |
| 23 | | | | | GV9 | GV9 | GV9 | |
| 24 | | GV10 | GV10 | | GV10 | | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|------|--|--|----------|------|------|--|
| 25 | MGL6 | | | | MGL 6 | | | |
| 26 | GV11 | | | | GV11 | | GV11 | |
| 27 | | | | | CB8 | | | |
| 28 | CB9 | | | | CB9 | | | |
| 29 | MGL7 | | | | MGL 7 | MGL7 | | |
| 30 | | | | | GV12 | | | |
| 31 | | | | | MGL 8 | MGL8 | | |
| 32 | | | | | CB10 | CB10 | | |
| 33 | EA1 | | | | | | | |
| 34 | | GV13 | | | GV13 | GV13 | | |
| 35 | MGL9 | | | | MGL 9 | | | |
| 36 | GV14 | | | | GV14 | | | |
| 37 | CB11 | CB11 | | | CB11 | CB11 | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------|------|--|--|-----------|-------|-------|--|
| 38 | | CB12 | | | CB12 | CB12 | | |
| 39 | MGL10 | | | | MGL 10 | MGL10 | | |
| 40 | CFM2 | CFM2 | | | | | | |
| 41 | LNS1 | | | | | | | |
| 42 | MGL11 | | | | | | MGL11 | |
| 43 | CB13 | | | | | | CB13 | |
| 44 | CB14 | | | | CB14 | | | |
| 45 | | LNS2 | | | | | LNS2 | |
| 46 | MGL12 | | | | | | MGL12 | |
| 47 | CB15 | CB15 | | | CB15 | | | |
| 48 | GV15 | | | | GV15 | GV15 | | |
| 49 | | | | | GV16 | GV16 | | |
| 50 | GV17 | | | | GV17 | GV17 | | |
| 51 | GV18 | | | | GV18 | GV18 | | |
| 52 | CB16 | | | | CB16 | CB16 | | |
| 53 | | | | | GV19 | GV19 | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------|------|----|------|----------|------|------|--|
| 54 | | CB17 | | | CB17 | CB17 | | |
| 55 | | GV20 | | | GV20 | | | |
| 56 | | CB18 | | | CB18 | | | |
| 57 | MGL 12 | | | | | | | |
| 58 | | | | | | | GV21 | |
| 59 | S1 | | S1 | | | | | |
| 60 | CFM3 | | | CFM3 | CFM 3 | | | |
| 61 | CB19 | CB19 | | CB19 | | | | |
| 62 | CFM4 | | | CFM4 | | | | |
| 63 | CB20 | | | CB20 | CB20 | CB20 | | |
| 64 | CFM5 | | | | | | CFM5 | |
| 65 | CB21 | | | CB21 | | | | |
| 66 | CFM6 | | | CFM6 | | | CFM6 | |
| 67 | MGL13 | | | | | | | |
| 68 | CFM7 | | | | | | CFM7 | |
| 69 | SM1 | | | SM1 | | | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|--|
| 70 | | CFM8 | | CFM8 | | | CFM8 | |
| 71 | GV22 | | GV22 | | GV22 | | | |
| 72 | GV23* | | GV23* | | GV23 * | GV23* | | |
| 73 | CB22 | CB22 | | CB22 | CB22 | | | |
| 74 | | CB23 | | | CB23 | | | |
| 75 | CFM9 | | | CFM9 | | | CFM9 | |
| 76 | CFM10 | CFM10 | | | | | | |
| 77 | | CB24 | | CB24 | | | | |
| 78 | | | GV24* | | GV24 * | GV24* | | |
| 79 | CB25 | | | | CB25 | | CB25 | |
| 80 | CFM11 | | | CFM11 | | | CFM11 | |
| 81 | CB26 | | | CB26 | | CB26 | | |
| 82 | | GV25 | GV25 | | GV25 | | | |
| 83 | MGL14 | | | | | | | |
| 84 | | | | | | | GV26 | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------|-------|------|-------|-----------|------|-------|--|
| 85 | RD1 | | RD1 | | | | | |
| 86 | | CFM12 | | CFM12 | CFM 12 | | | |
| 87 | CB26 | | | CB26 | CB26 | | | |
| 88 | | GV27 | | | | | | |
| 89 | CB27 | CB27 | | | | | | |
| 90 | | | | | CFM 13 | | CFM13 | |
| 91 | GV28 | | | | GV28 | GV28 | | |
| 92 | | RD2* | RD2* | | | | | |
| 93 | CB28 | CB28 | | CB28 | CB28 | | | |
| 94 | CFM14 | | | | CFM 14 | | | |
| 95 | GV29 | GV29 | GV29 | | GV29 | GV29 | | |
| 96 | | CB29 | | | | | | |
| 97 | | | | CFM15 | CFM 15 | | CFM15 | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|-------|------|------|-----------|-------|--------|--|
| 98 | | | | | GV30 | GV30 | | |
| 99 | | CB30 | | | CB30 | | | |
| 100 | CFM16 | CFM16 | | | CFM 16 | | | |
| 101 | RCW1 | | | | | | RCW1** | |
| 102 | | | | CB31 | CB31 | | CB31 | |
| 103 | CFM17 | | | | | | CFM17 | |
| 104 | GV31 | | GV31 | | GV31 | | GV31* | |
| 105 | | | | | | | GV32 | |
| 106 | CFM18 | | | | CFM 18 | | | |
| 107 | | | | | GV32 | GV32 | | |
| 108 | RCW2 | | | RCW2 | | | | |
| 109 | | | | | GV33 * | GV33* | | |
| 110 | RCW3 | RCW3 | | RCW3 | | | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|------|------|------|--|-----------|--|-------|--|
| 111 | | | | | GV34 * | | GV34* | |
| 112 | RCW4 | | | | | | | |
| 113 | | | GV35 | | GV35 | | | |
| 114 | RCW5 | RCW5 | | | | | | |
| 115 | RCW6 | | | | | | | |
| 116 | | GV36 | | | | | | |
| 117 | | | | | GV37 | | GV37 | |
| 118 | RCW7 | RCW7 | | | | | | |
| 119 | GV38 | | | | | | | |
| 120 | RCW8 | | | | | | | |
| 121 | GV39 | | | | | | | |
| 122 | GV40 | GV40 | | | GV40 | | | |
| 123 | RCW9 | | | | | | | |
| 124 | | GV41 | | | GV41 | | | |
| 125 | | CB32 | | | CB32 | | | |
| 126 | CB34 | | | | CB33 | | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|-------|------|------|------|-------|------|--|
| 127 | RCW10 | | | | | | | |
| 128 | GV42 | | GV42 | | | | | |
| 129 | | | | | | | GV43 | |
| 130 | CB35 | | | | CB35 | | | |
| 131 | | CB35 | | | | | | |
| 132 | CEB1 | | | | | | | |
| 133 | CB36 | | | | | | | |
| 134 | | | GV44 | | GV44 | GV44 | GV44 | |
| 135 | RCW11 | | | CB37 | CB37 | CB37 | | |
| 136 | RCW12 | | | | | | | |
| 137 | CFM19 | | | | | CFM19 | | |
| 138 | EL1 | | | | | | | |
| 139 | RCW13 | RCW13 | | | | | | |
| 140 | EL2 | | | | | | | |
| 141 | RCW14 | RCW14 | | | | | | |
| 142 | CAA1 | | | | | | | |
| 143 | EL3 | EL3 | | | | | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|-------|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|
| 144 | RCW15 | | | | | | |
| 145 | | GV45 | | | GV45 | | |
| 146 | CAA2 | | | | CAA 2 | | |
| 147 | GV46 | | | | GV46 | | |
| 148 | EL4 | EL4 | | | | | |
| 149 | GV47 | GV47 | GV47 | | | | |
| 150 | EL5 | | | | | | EL5 |
| 151 | | | | | CFM 20 | CFM20 | |
| 152 | RCW16 | | | RCW16 | | | |
| 153 | RCW17 | RCW17 | | | | | |
| 154 | EL6 | | | EL6 | | | EL6 |
| 155 | | | | | | | RCW18 |
| 156 | CAA3 | | | CAA3 | | CAA3 | |
| 157 | RCW18 | | | | | | |
| 158 | | | | | | | EL7 |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------|------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|--|
| 159 | *LD1* | | | | | | LD1 | |
| 160 | | EL8 | | | | | | |
| 161 | | | GV48* | | GV48 | | | |
| | | | | | * | | | |
| 162 | | GV49 | | | | | | |
| 163 | LD2* | | | | | | LD2 | |
| 164 | | | | | GV50 | GV50 | | |
| 165 | CFM21 | | | CFM21 | | | | |
| 166 | GV51 | | GV51 | | | | | |
| 167 | | | | CFM22 | | | CFM22 | |
| 168 | GV52 | | GV52 | | | | | |
| 179 | | | | | | | CFM23 | |
| 170 | | | | | | | GV53 | |
| 171 | CB38 | | | CB38 | CB38 | | | |
| 172 | CB39 | | | CB39 | CB39 | CB39 | | |
| 173 | CFM24 | | | | | | | |
| 174 | JV1 | | | JV1 | | | | |

Table A.6. (Continued)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 175 | LD3 | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|