Humor As a Means of Manipulating a Social Group’s Opinion in Modern Online Communities (A Case-Study on ‘the Houses of’ 2ch and Pikabu)

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Abstract
The Internet is a communication space where newly formed communities are searching for ways to reflect on their social nature. We provide a theoretical framework to demonstrate how humor was used to manipulate social groups before and after the emergence of the media. We use Critical Discourse Analysis and pragmatics to study several cases of social manipulation through humor. The two Internet communities, 2ch and Pikabu, being among the largest Russian-speaking entertainment communities, often compete and use humor as a way to manipulate their representatives for social purposes: to consolidate, fight back, reflect on the norms and values of their community. Our research shows that these communities follow the old traditions of humor and laughter in order to organize a poorly regulated information space. Although 2chers tend to use trolling more often, there is no general difference between these communities in the way they use humor to manipulate their social group.

Keywords: humor, laughter, Internet, social cognition, Critical Discourse Analysis, pragmatics, speech act

1. Introduction
The opening scene of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* depicts a fight between servants of the two houses, Montague and Capulet. The fight is preceded by mockery, like many other fights in the play and beyond. Historically, representatives of rival communities have taunted each other according to long-established cultural rituals. But what do they do if they cannot physically access any of the competitors in order to start a fight? And what if the representatives of the two sides are completely anonymous? The Internet is a communication space in which ‘feuding houses’ have to rethink old rituals in these new conditions. The current research explores how two Russian-speaking Internet communities, 2ch and Pikabu, use humor to reflect their social group. We use Critical Discourse Analysis and pragmatics to investigate how representatives of each
group try to manipulate the opinions of their group, support the beliefs of their group (or challenge them) and defend community norms.

It is important that because of the agonistic nature of humor (discussed later), we are comparing two ‘competing’ communities. For this, we chose 2ch and Pikabu. 2ch is an abbreviation for ‘2 channel’ (https://2ch.hk/). This is a Russian analogue of 4ch, an image board and an anonymous web forum. Due to its anonymity, this online community tends to openly express verbal aggression, pushing the boundaries to the extreme. Pikabu (https://pikabu.ru) takes after another popular resource, Reddit, and also has a lot in common with 9gag. Unlike 2ch, it requires registration and has stricter rules for aggressive content. These two communities produce mainly humorous and entertaining content, are one of the largest Internet Russian-speaking communities and sometimes openly express their negative attitude towards each other.

In our analysis, we will use the following basic terminology. Considering our research [1], we treat ‘humor’ most broadly as anything that refers to comedy and laughter: any comedy genre, that is, a speech act, speech genre, folklore, art genre, etc.; the process of its implementation as a work of art, a real joke; audience reaction, such as laughter or a smile or even a simple admission of ridicule. We understand ‘manipulation’ as an indirect influence on its object (a person, group, institution, or even a social process or phenomenon similar to humor) with the aim to change its properties or course of action. In connection with humor, on the one hand, manipulation can be a way to ridicule a person, lower (or vice versa increase) their social status, etc. On the other hand, this is a way to suppress humor in certain areas of person’s life. By ‘community’ (in this study we will consider this term as a synonym for ‘social group’), we mean a collection of people who interact in a certain way based on the common expectations of the group's representatives with respect to each other [2, 262].

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. We begin our study with a brief overview of how analytical thinking looked at the relationship between humor and manipulation in the history of mankind. Then we look at how traditions are being transformed and adapted with the growth of digital technology. We begin to describe the applied methods of Critical Discourse Analysis and pragmatics and analyze the communicative practices of two Internet communities, 2ch and Pikabu, based on a collection of texts (posts and comments) from their websites. We draw a conclusion about the social foundations and communicative nature of humor in the texts studied.
2. Humor and Manipulation Before the Media Era

Classical Greek philosophers: Plato in Φίληβος and Πολιτεία, Aristotle in Περί ποιητικής (Poetics) and their Roman successors: Cicero in De Oratore, Quintilian in Institutio Oratoria and others, discussed the essence of humor emphasizing its power to abuse. In Book II, Chapter 58 of De Oratore, Cicero asks, "does it become the orator to wish to excite the laughter" [3, 150]. His main concern is the appropriateness of humor in court where it is universally suppressed to this day.

In the surviving part of Poetics, Aristotle dwells on the opposition of the comic and the tragic, calling the comedy "imitation of characters of a lower type" [4, 20]. It may seem that he limits humor to folklore tradition and use (thus, opposing it to the civilized world). However, it is believed that the second part of Poetics, Tractatus Coislinianus, firstly balances this opposition and, secondly, outlines two vectors: Old comedy as a more abusive type, close to the iambic invective in the style of Archilochus and Hipponax, and New comedy which "has a deeper meaning than his (The author's) words, literally, suggest" [5, 259]. The second type refers to the late comedy by Aristophanes (e.g., The Clouds) and his successors. It "disregards laughter, and tends toward the serious" [5, 285]; it is rather a satire revealing public vices. The New comedy brings us to another important concept: the laughing wise man. The famous comparison of Democritus of Abdera as a constantly laughing wise man with Heraclitus of Ephesus, who unceasingly weeps [6], emphasizes the ability of humor to elevate a person above society and relieve tension of taking life too seriously. Describing the Chinese tradition of the study of humor and the philosophy of the Chinese thinker Lü Kunn 1536-1618, Paolo Santangelo calls such laughter "a sign of non-conformist behavior or deeper wisdom" [6, 7]. In the Buddhist tradition, the smile on Buddha's face means serenity and victory over desires [8]. In some Daoist texts, the authors advise not to laugh too hard, stating that laughter can damage the kidneys and hips [9, 339]. If strong laughter is linked to mockery, the wise man's laughter should be, on the contrary, characterized by a sort of ease, detachment and solitude.

Concerning the Old comedy, in Part III of Poetics, Aristotle mentions that the Dorians (an εθνος of Classical Greece) attribute the origin of the word "comedy" to the phrase κατά κώμας 'wandering from village to village' [4, 15] where the second word denotes "the most primitive and ancient form of settlement" [10, 78]. Archaic insulting folk (or carnival, tribal) humor became the subject of elaborate research in the twentieth century.

In her doctoral dissertation The Poetics of Plot and Genre (1936) [11], Olga Freidenberg suggests that the key folklore opposition of life and death is bound to laughter and
crying. Laughter is an inherent part of invective rituals. On the one hand, there are competitions in court that do not allow laughter. On the other hand, there are verbal rituals (for example, during the feasts) when two competitors ridicule and accuse each other of different vices: “pre-Islamic bragging and slanging, Old Norse mannjafnadr and the Icelandic nidsang (anthem of hatred), as well as ancient Chinese contests” [12, 86]. Elena Gurevich observes such elements of senna (a ritual of verbal confrontation) and mannjafnadr as accusation of disgraceful behavior, swearing, exaggerating and feigning contestants’ fault [13].

In the first part of his Mythologiques, The Raw and the Cooked, (1964), Claude Levi-Strauss renders some Indian, Bolivian and Brazil myths that forbid laughing under the penalty of death. One of the legends tells that “the Indian warrior despises laughter and tickling, which are barely suitable even for women and children” [14, 122]. However, Levi-Strauss mentions another kind of laughter that binds it with the origin of cooking fire: “the triumphant laughter marking cultural invention” [14, 132]. William Martineau in A Model of the Social Functions of Humor [15] describes a sociologist’s approach to humor. It is considered as a means to increase solidarity of an in-group and demoralize the out-group; it releases tension that is accumulated because of the cultural restrictions and helps to overcome the fear of failure and the nature.

Mikhail Bakhtin in Rabelais and His World (1965) [16] writes about the carnival laughter. In 1966, Julia Kristeva develops his thought in the article Le mot, le dialogue et le roman (Word, Dialogue and Novel) (written in 1967, published in Σημειωτική: Recherches pour une sémanalyse) introducing the concept of Mennipean novel (Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, Marquis de Sade, Balzac, Lautréamont, Dostoevsky, Joyce, Kafka): “Its history is the history of the struggle against Christianity and its representation; this means an exploration of language (of sexuality and death), a consecration of ambivalence and of "vice"” [17, 50].

In sum, although cultures generally suppress humor in institutions like court, government, and church, and forbid straight-out laughter and mockery, there are two kinds of humor that are universally allowable. The insulting folklore-related humor is limited to ritual use and special genres: carnival, feasts, verbal contests, etc. Its essence is triumph over the nature (for crowded events) and a weaker competitor (for one-on-one contests). The second type is the humor of wise men, gods, artists and writers, etc., who stand above everyday life. In this case, humor serves as a tool for revealing the essence of everyday phenomena and reconciliation with their imperfection.
3. How Humor in the Media Manipulates the Audience

When technologies like radio and television emerged, many genres of humor were adopted for recording and broadcasting. For example, stand-up comedy that, as R. Stebbins believes, takes root in prologues of ancient Greek dramas [18], sprang up on the radio with shows by Jack Benny, Fred Allen, George Burns and Gracie Allen. Their shows are enlisted among the most popular by H.M. Beville Jr. (the Research Manager of the National Broadcasting Company, USA) in his *ABCD of Radio Audience* (1940) [19].

M.T. McFadden argues that the two reasons for the success of Jack Benny’s show were a reflection of “the social context by presenting the anxieties, that were widespread during the Depression in America” and “offering temporary ideological solutions to many of these social anxieties” [20, 113]. Also, as L. Mintz puts it, stand-up comedians are ‘not really supported by the costume, props, setting, or dramatic means of transportation’ [21, 193], that is, it is just the speaker, his or her speech and the audience. From this perspective, stand-up comedy is a wise man’s humor inheriting its traditional use of reconciliation. Not surprisingly, it can be broadcast on a national radio channel.

Concerning television, D. Marc states that the situational comedy and variety show are the two forms that dominate TV [11, 22]. He calls both approximations of the theater. For example, “the sitcom bears a certain physical resemblance to a British comedy of manners”, however, “a more direct ancestor may be the serialized family comedy adventures that were popular in nineteenth-century American newspapers” [11, 22]. Interestingly, the sitcoms are not so action-oriented and more psychological. Marc compares television to “the stage at which our national history/drama is enacted” [12, 22]. Sitcoms provide a continuous entertaining experience in which the tensions arising from the embarrassment and guilt, that accompany the characters in the play, relax at the end of each episode. This genre seems to be an officially approved tool for dissipating social anxiety and discontent with routine.

Since the 1950s, the laugh track has been an unavoidable feature in sitcoms: it creates the illusion of being in the theater and watching the stage. J. Smith assumes that the first show to appear with a laugh track was Hank McClure Show (1950). He explains the expansion of recorded laughter by the ‘ideology of presence and immediacy’ [23, 36]. The detached from the scene television audience needs social experience. Being a tool of in-group association, humor becomes a collective decision when one hears laughter of his other participants. Not surprisingly, stand-up comedy, sketch shows, and other genres borrowed the laugh track. However, Smith argues that by telling the audience
where to laugh, the laugh track dominates individual thinking. Nowadays, sitcoms are often shot in front of a live audience to partially resist this accusation, at least partially.

We will now focus on the changes that the Internet brought at the end of the twentieth century. It is hard to say whether humor on the Internet has attracted less researchers’ attention than humor coming from any other medium. Leah Black and Denise Forro mention Internet sites with humorous content designed as large collections and sites that include ‘jokes, cartoons, and stories’ [24, 167] as additional content. The authors also attempt to describe kinds of humor that are unacceptable at the workplace: “Sarcastic or sexual humor, humor used as a ‘power play’ or to challenge authority, humor employed as a means of excluding others, or humor that is used to undermine, belittle, or humiliate an individual.” However, they conclude that “humor, like justice and fair play, cannot be legislated” [24, 167].

Humor on the Internet often criticizes law, government and politics. For example, Jody C. Baumgartner mentions ‘parody or spoof websites posing as candidates’ websites, high-quality video shorts produced especially for the web, jokes, cartoons, satire, and parody, targeting both candidates’ that emerged around the USA 2004 presidential campaign. The author concludes that due to such humor ‘youth might develop a more critical orientation toward political institutions and leaders’ [25, 332]; however, the society can benefit from it.

The genres described above (a joke, parody, etc.) were known before the Internet. However, there is a humorous genre that takes root in the Internet communication: a meme. Patrick Davison summarizes definitions of meme from online sources such as Wikipedia, Urban Dictionary, Know Your Meme, and Encyclopedia Dramatica as follows: “An Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” [24, 122]. It can be a word or phrase, image (with or without a text), gif, and video, short and catchy. Beside its typical humorous functions to entertain, offend out-groups, etc., Davison studies their intentional anonymity: “The prioritization of creative freedom over security is epitomized by the non-attribution meme” [24, 132]. That is, the community of meme-creators prefers to keep their freedom to suggest any content (‘racist, sexist, or otherwise offensive’ [24, 132]) that they would never create in any area ruled by law and government. The price for this is “no concern for rights management, monetization, citation, or licensing” [24, 132]. This feature outlines, probably, the main difference between the Internet and radio and TV: the humor of official broadcasting companies is a way of making one's living and, hence, it is ordered and supplied in agreed volumes, while the Internet humor is self-expression or lifestyle.
The Internet humor has one more obvious use compared to that of radio and TV. Bill Ellis notes that after national disasters like terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, although at first jokes about the event are undesirable, in a while humor emerges as a coping strategy. However, "those who communicate such jokes run a social risk in spreading them beyond a trusted circle of acquaintances" [2, 27]. Not surprisingly, when topical disaster jokes are forbidden on radio and TV, they flow into the Internet.

Talking about manipulative power of humor in the Internet, we cannot overlook trolling. This phenomenon is not particularly bound to humor. However, anonymous Internet communication is characterized by a special attitude to rudeness and offense, and often includes derision. Scott E. Fahlman, Professor Emeritus of Carnegie Mellon University, writes that already in the early 1980s, "flame wars" were common in the local net: "The problem was that if someone made a sarcastic remark, a few readers would fail to get the joke, and each of them would post a lengthy diatribe in response" [28]. The inability of some users to read the frivolity of the message became the basis for a new way of communication. Whitney Phillips tells about a subculture of anonymous users who create forums to discuss, as this Internet expression has it, "the grossest of the gross" [3, 29]. Probably, the most known forum of this kind is 4chan.org. Trolls can also join against other Internet communities and attack them at other forums. Phillips writes that trolls do it for "lulz" (a slang word derived from "laugh out loud"): 'lulz celebrates the anguish of the laughed-at victim' [27, 29]. Trolling is not necessarily bound to forums; cf. the abovementioned political parody. The Internet encyclopedia LurkMore (in Russian) uses troll slang and attitudes to describe many social, political, art and mass media phenomena.

In general, the use of humor on radio and TV is different from that on the Internet. Official broadcasting companies use humor to entertain and distract their clients, and help them reconcile themselves with social, political and other phenomena that affect as many audiences as possible. To feel more included in the process, the audience is made to hear a laugh track. With the advent of the Internet, large collections of jokes have attracted the attention of researchers with their often inappropriate content that cannot be controlled by law. Harsh disaster jokes, banned on official channels, go online as a coping strategy. Internet humor attacks any political leader, leaving no other alternative but to become indifferent to politics themselves. It is abundant, free and anonymous. Consequently, it pushes the boundaries of rudeness and insults only in order to know what else can be done to push them even further. And this brings Internet users to creation of a new "feudal state" in which communities ("homes") consolidate and strike
up communicative fights to compare their verbal power. Next we will see how two such Russian-speaking communities, 2ch and Pikabu, use humor as a manipulative force.

4. Internet Communities 2ch and Pikabu through the Prism of Critical Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics

First, we would like to outline the method we will use in our analysis of the Internet communities. It is a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and linguistic pragmatics. The aim of CDA is to describe social cognition via text analysis. Earlier we noted that although CDA is an interdisciplinary branch of research, it does not simply borrow but combines meanings of terms from other disciplines [5, 30], pragmatics being among them.

In [31], we suggested that online communities can be observed at three levels of abstraction: as a social group (a general representation of a group’s integral features), a cluster (a number of actual users that interact at an actual website, social network, forum, etc.), and an individual that identifies himself or herself with one or several social groups. From the point of view of CDA [32], when individuals bring in thoughts that gain support of others, the thoughts become beliefs, values and norms. When shared, they turn into pragmatic assumptions in an actual dialogue conducted by a cluster of individuals, and there is no need to voice them every time when a new thought is verbalized.

What are assumptions in humor related to manipulation of public opinion? To answer this question, we will use the method of pragmatics suggested by John Searle in his article *What Is A Speech Act* (1965) [33]. Searle suggests that a speech act is regulated by five rules:

**Rule 1.** The propositional content rule, including a condition that the parties understand what kind of speech act is uttered.

**Rule 2.** The attitude towards the speech act.

**Rule 3.** The content of the action presumed by the act.

**Rule 4.** The intention rule: whether what is pronounced should be done.

**Rule 5.** The agonistic rule: the pronounced utterance ‘counts as...’ [33, 14-15].

We will now consider the cases of humor from the most popular topics at Pikabu (‘Hot’, ‘The best’) and 2ch (‘/b/’) to find out where and how individuals and clusters use humor to manipulate the opinion of their group. We will call members of these communities 2chers and Pikabushniks as they name themselves in this way.
Case 1. A Pikabushnik suggests driving out all 2chers from the main thread of 2ch `/b/`: 'Пикабушники, давайте объединимся и изгоним Двачей из 2ch.hk/b?' ([https://2ch.hk/b/arch/2019-05-05/res/195841691.html](https://2ch.hk/b/arch/2019-05-05/res/195841691.html)) ('Pikabushniks, let us join together and drive out 2chers from 2ch.hk/b?' (Here and further on, the translation of examples is ours))

At first it seems that, according to Rule 3, the content of the action is stated directly. However, it presupposes an impossible effort and outcome from Pikabu community, as `/b/` is the most popular topic thread at 2ch and serves to integrate the community. Hence, the content of the probable action is different from what is stated. Besides, it triggers a series of humorous responses, and we can guess that this is a start of 'comparison of men' mannjafnad, that, as mentioned earlier, included accusing of disgraceful behavior, feigning contestants' fault, etc. (Rule 5: the actual intent of the speech act). 2chers are taken in and start to mock Pikabushniks. They blame them for the love for likes: 'Пикабучую!' ('You earn my like, Pikabushnik!'), 'Плюсую' ('Like'), 'плюс тебе в карму' ('here's a karma point for you'). 2chers do not have a rating system and often express their pride of it. They also mention professional failures: 'Работает тупорылым тестировщиком. SQL не владеет.' ('Works as a dumb tester. Doesn't know SQL'), sexual disorders and old age: 'куколды сжв 70 годов' ('cuckold Social Justice Warrior of the 70s'), etc. The Pikabu community responds with similar accusation: 'Не работает, гомосексуалист. Языками программирования не владеет.' ('Doesn't work, homosexual. Cannot program.'), 'Я с Пикабу. /...У меня, правда, нет слов. / Убийства животных, истязания людей, мучения... / Пикабушники просто святые по сравнению с вами, хотя и среди нас самих много дебилов.' ('I'm from Pikabu. / ...I'm speechless. / Kill animals, torture people, suffering.../ Pikabushniks are saints compared to you, although there are some dummies among us as well.') (Comparison of 2chers and Pikabushniks also often mentions Pikabushniks' tendency to write long original posts and comments: 'Пикабушник может сочинить целую простыню с оригинальным сюжетом, даун-оп не может придумать название из одного слова' ('A Pikabushnik can write a whole sheet with an original plot. A loony author cannot think of a post title longer than a word') [https://2ch.hk/b/arch/2017-11-21/res/165435979.html](https://2ch.hk/b/arch/2017-11-21/res/165435979.html) It is of interest that programming is one of the virtues that is worthy of respect in the both communities.

Case 2. During the fire at the shopping center ‘Zimnaya vishnya’ (Kemerovo, Russia), the both communities produced disaster jokes.

The mentioned ability of humor to help to reconcile with a tragedy, when humor is inappropriate in formal channels, is shown in the polylogues of the both communities.
It is notable that this humor demonstrates a social intent. A 2cher writes: 'Трупов нет! это все 5D' ('There are no corpses! It's 5D') as a response to the news that there were no casualties at the shopping center. The outwardly expressed intention of this speech act is to prove that the official version of events is truthful, to protect the government by suggesting that the dramatic events were a result of an illusion at the center's cinema. However, as the proposed proof is obviously too exaggerated, we can suppose that the underlying intent is quite the opposite: to criticize the government. There are jokes of a similar type at Pikabu. In response to urgent fire checks in Russian shopping malls after the tragedy in 'Zimnaya vishnya', a Pikabushnik writes: 'Люблю есть сладкую вату в ТЦ, а он закрылся на проверку, и теперь я должен есть ее на улице. Спасибо, Зимняя вишня.' ('I love cotton candies in malls, but due to fire checks I have to eat it in the street today. Thank you, Zimnaya vishnya.') (https://pikabu.ru/story/kakie_uroki_chinovniki_izvlekayut_iz_zimney_vishni_iili_kak_zastavit_chinovnikov_rabotat_5849315#comments).

However, the difference in anonymity policy is shown in the disaster humor, as well. 2chers allow non-social humor (more like trolling), for the sake of lulz. The humorous remark of a 2cher 'ПОДДАЙТЕ ГАЗКУ' (https://2ch.hk/b/arch/2018-03-26/res/173169810.html) ('ADD MORE GAS') utters the want for more deaths. There was even a whole series of such jokes from one of the 2ch moderators known as Abu. The 2chers announced him dead in the fire, then created a story of how he heroically saved people from the fire, then announced him alive, which is an obvious parallel with the Pope of Fools, and what Bakhtin and Kristeva describe as a carnival celebrating the triumph of life above death.

**Case 3** 'The grossest of the gross': a 2cher asked what to do when his 2-year old niece left in his care fell down and hit her forehead (https://2ch.hk/b/arch/2018-12-08/res/187762913.html).

Asking for advice presupposes that communicants would return instructions. Among the answers to Case 3 there were actual tips like 'call the ambulance', but there were also a lot of humorous remarks with the obvious violation of pragmatic Rule 4: 'Попробуй сильно дунуть в ухо, чтобы вмятина выправилась' ('Try blowing hard in her ear to straighten the skull'), 'Попробуй легкими ударами (только ЛЕГКИМИ) выровнять вмятину.' ('Try to straighten it with light (LIGHT) taps.'), 'Надо присоской, если нет -- то вантузом выпрямить ее. Вмятины у машин так выпрямляют.' ('Use a suction tool. If you don't have it, use a plunger. They repair dents with it'), etc. Unlike Pikabu, the anonymous 2ch community, when they start to troll somebody, tends to go to extremes, reaching the limits of what the human thought (and the society's norm) allows. The
thread continued with ingenious ideas of a murder and covering up the crime. On the one hand, this is not a 'comparison of men' now, as there is no obvious competitor in the vicinity, but training before the actual verbal fight: some of the brought-in thoughts are used later in other comparisons. On the other hand, the participants of the community compare among themselves and test their ability of how far they can go. After a variety of 2ch polylogues, the reader notices that, although with a bit of variation, the community goes over a list of similar vices, which finally seems burdensome.

**Case 4.** A Pikabushnik reflects on who Pikabushniks are:

'Пикабушники -- это люди, которые готовы помочь человеку и дать дельные советы, если он действительно нуждается в помощи, но готовые с удовольствием и злорадством утопить тебя в минусах, если ты просишь их о какой-то ерунде... / Пикабушники -- это братья. это семья. со своими законами и правилами.' ([https://pikabu.ru/story/kto_takie_pikabushniki_3250675](https://pikabu.ru/story/kto_takie_pikabushniki_3250675))

('Pikabushniks are people ready to help someone and give useful advice if he or she truly needs help, but they are also ready to down-vote your post with malicious joy and pleasure if you ask them for a trifle... / Pikabushniks are brothers. it's a family. with its own rules and laws.')</n
Posts and separate comments with reflection on community's identity appear in 2ch and Pikabu quite often, and, as often, they contain humor. The post in Case 4 was not very popular in terms of likes and comments, but it contains the characteristic features that let us call it what we earlier called a wise man's laughter. Again, a wise man stands above himself or herself and the crowd, and laughs and immediately weeps about what he or she sees. His or her laughter 'counts as' (pragmatic Rule 5) unveiling this ambiguity.

Interestingly, down-voting is mentioned as a community's vice. In another post, a Pikabushnik suggests that the site moderators should ban the users who only down-vote others' posts: 'Запретить только минусовать' ([https://pikabu.ru/story/zapretit_tolko_minusovat_6675818](https://pikabu.ru/story/zapretit_tolko_minusovat_6675818)) ('Ban to only down-vote') and gets -63 for the post. This time the speech act itself followed the rules of an actual suggestion and the call to action. However, the intent failed and the sub-community of Pikabu, who call themselves 'League of Evil' (they down-vote all posts they see), consolidated and answered not only with down-voting and direct disapproval, but with humorous remarks. Consider, for example, the following exaggeration: 'User 1: Кажется, автор хочет устроить геноцид Рыцарям Свежего' ('User 1: It seems that the author wants to commit genocide on the Knights of the Fresh'), as well as inversion: 'Правильно, надо их пряниками накормить, они раздобреют и начнут плюсы ставить.' ('Right, give them spice cakes,
they will grow fat and kind and start up-voting.) Hence, in large Internet communities, it is not always an out-group that starts a feud, but it can be a sub-community.

2chers also reflect on their community in this way. They even use the inside-the-community slang terms to underline drawbacks of the community's typical representatives:

1. ‘Хикка’ (from Japanese ikikomori) (https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23182523) refers to young men who prefer to stay at home, do not have career aspirations or start a family;

2. ‘ТНН’ means ‘Girls are unnecessary’ and refers to young men who cannot start a relationship with a girl;

3. ‘Бугурт’ originated from ‘butthurt’ and denotes a painful emotional reaction to news, a commentary, etc.

However, as long posts are not so common at 2ch, this self-reflection looks more like a patchwork of isolated short jokes.

5. Conclusion

Our analysis of the pragmatic rules show that, in terms of social cognition, the modern online communities use humor for similar manipulative purposes: to consolidate and fight against their competitors, to reflect on their identity and community's norms and values.

According to Nick Couldry and James Curran, media power can be of two types. The first one is the power of groups that have access to media. From this perspective, the media do not have power of their own. The second approach implies that "the media is an emergent form of social power in complex societies whose basic infrastructure depends increasingly on the fast circulation of information and images" [4, 34]. From this point of view, humor transmitted through the Internet excites different nodes and connections: not only the target and the audience, but, for example, such institutions as court, government, corporations, church, minorities, parents' committees, etc. This process brings up different kinds of enforcement, such as moral, political, economic, and legal. As if opposed to Rechtsstaat, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls the Internet communication "amorphous, anarchic and intensely social" [21, 35]: the informal bare humor is excluded from the legal state. Instead, the Internet community returns to history and creates a state of its own.
Our analysis of the social nature of humor in the Internet shows that the two competing communities, 2ch and Pikabu, repeat the traditional practices of the old: *senna* and *mannjafnadr*, carnival, and a wise estrangement. However, the forms they use (memes, comments and posts, image boards, hashtags) are technologically new. The manipulative technique is based on the pragmatic rules that are so violated that they produce a humorous effect. Consequently, pragmatic rules (*Pragmatikstaat*) serve as laws, their violation - an invitation to verbal hostility, and the names of community and slang as markers of differentiation between the parties.

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