

TWO WEEKS OF OBSCENE PHONE CALLS

There are six factors that constitute any speech event: addresser, addressee, context, message, code and contact.

context--OBSCENE PHONE CALL

message--"I WANT TO STICK MY COCK UP YOUR ASS"

addresser--UNKNOWN-----addressee--ME

contact--TELEPHONE

code--SPEECH

The point is that meaning is more than what is literally stated in the message. The meaning of an act of communication is derived from the union of all factors--context, code, and means of contact--with the message. Meaning is subject to considerable variation depending on how these elements relate.

THE CONTEXT

Natural

The caller, a young man, dials my number/ I pick up the phone when it rings.

I say "hello"/ The caller does not identify himself.

The caller states the message, i.e., "I'm going to stick my cock up your ass"/ My options are to:

1. hang up
2. listen
3. respond verbally
4. take further action by calling the phone company or changing my phone number.

These calls continue over a two week period.

denotative

The telephone is an instrument of communication.

The caller violates standard phone behavior.

The caller has initiated what is known as an obscene phone call.

Cultural

connotative

It is associated with certain behavioral conventions.

The communication takes on meaning through this violation.

Society categorizes obscene phone calls as a perverse and antisocial mode of sexuality. The callee is being verbally abused and is the injured party. A woman is victimized by a man. It is a "little rape" in that a man is obtaining sexual gratification from a woman without her consent.

THE MESSAGE

NATURAL

"I'm going to stick my cock up your ass."

CULTURAL

denotative

Caller employs auditory signs.

connotative

The words form a statement of intent.

The call is an intrusion. The statement is unexpected and inappropriate to the medium. The words themselves have implicit shock value and in this context are likely to provoke shock and outrage. My immediate reaction is anger and disgust; and as the calls continue over a period of time, dismay, that I have been singled out and don't know why.

Intent to:
Rape is a crime against women. All women are potential victims and many live in fear of rape. Many women's subliminal fear of rape affects their daily lives in terms of mobility-- reluctance to be on the street alone at night, hitchhike, etc.

Anal sex connotes aggression, a taboo.

Anal rape connotes humiliation, degradation of victim, pain.

This statement puts me in a passive role to the caller's aggressive one.