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The editor of the 2019 Journal of the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri is presently accepting manuscripts. Scholarly articles, book and resource reviews, and teaching resources are all encouraged. Scholarship from a diversity of areas from the discipline encompassing communication, speech, and theatre will be considered. These areas include, but are not limited to: Speech, Debate, Theatre Instruction and Performance, Communication Theory, Interpersonal Communication, Intercultural Communication, Health Communication, Rhetoric, Persuasion, Organizational Communication, Political Communication, Family Communications, Listening, Communication Ethics, Mediation, Public Relations, Film, Mass Media Theory, Mediated Communication, and New Communication Technologies.

All submissions should be in Microsoft Word, and emailed to the editor. References should follow the latest edition of the American Psychological Association style manual. A separate page with abstract, author affiliation and bio(s) should be included. All submissions should be received by May 1, 2019, to ensure full consideration for publication.

Updated submission information for volume 49 will be available in October of 2019 at the website for the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri – **www.speechandtheatre.org**

Submissions can be sent to:

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Adult Siblings' Use of Negative Relational Maintenance Behaviors: Development of a Typology

Scott A. Myers

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop a typology of negative relational maintenance behaviors used in the adult sibling relationship. Participants were 190 adults who completed an open-ended instrument asking them to identify the negative relational maintenance behaviors they used with a sibling. Using first and second cycle coding, in conjunction with the constant comparative method, seven negative relational maintenance behaviors were identified: acting like a surrogate parent, avoiding contact, being antisocial, being unsupportive, confronting behavior, intervening on siblings' behalf, and withholding information. Future researchers should examine the extent to which these behaviors are associated with functional sibling relationships.

By most accounts, the adult sibling relationship is one relationship in which the relational partners are generally satisfied (Bevan, Stetzenbach, Batson, & Bullo, 2006; Myers & Bryant, 2008). Not only are individuals committed to their adult sibling relationships (Rittenour, Myers, & Brann, 2007), but they also engage in a variety of behaviors intended specifically for the purpose of maintaining these relationships (Mikkelson, 2014). These behaviors, which are known as relational maintenance behaviors, were developed originally as a way to explore how romantic partners maintain their marital and dating relationships (Stafford & Canary, 1991) and include *positivity*, which involves communicating in a cheerful and optimistic manner with a relational partner; *openness*, which refers to engaging in discussion about both the quality and the state of the relationship; *assurances*, which revolves around stressing the desire to remain committed to the relationship; *networks*, which includes engaging in activity with a mutual group of family members and friends; and *tasks*, which centers on contributing equally to the tasks or chores central to the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Stafford & Canary, 1991).

Family communication scholars have since taken this typology of five relational maintenance behaviors and applied it to several relationships within the family unit (e.g., parent-child: Burke, Ruppel, & Dinsmore, 2016; Myers & Glover, 2007; grandparent-grandchildren: Mansson, 2014; Mansson, Myers, & Turner, 2010), most notably the adult sibling relationship (Myers & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2014). The study of relational maintenance behaviors in the adult sibling relationship can be traced to Myers and Members of COM 200 (2001) who investigated the extent to which individuals use the positivity, openness, assurances, networks, and tasks relational maintenance in their sibling relationships. They found that not only do adult siblings use all five of these behaviors to maintain their relationships (with tasks being the maintenance behavior they use the most frequently and openness being the maintenance behavior they use the least frequently), but also that their use of each maintenance behavior was positively related with liking their sibling. Subsequent research conducted by Myers and his colleagues has confirmed that adult siblings use these five relational maintenance behaviors both across (Myers & Rittenour, 2012) and within the emerging adulthood (Eidsness & Myers, 2008) early and middle adulthood (Myers, Brann, & Rittenour, 2008), and late adulthood (Goodboy, Myers, & Patterson, 2009) stages of the adult sibling life span, and that these behaviors are positively related to several relational characteristics, including commitment and trust, relational and communication satisfaction, and loving, and liking (Myers, Goodboy, & Members of COMM 201, 2013; Myers & Odenweller, 2015; Myers & Weber, 2004). Individuals also tend to be satisfied with their sibling relationships when they perceive their siblings to use relational maintenance behaviors with them (McNallie & Dorrance Hall, 2015). Moreover, individuals who consider their sibling relationships to be more intimate generally use these maintenance behaviors at a higher rate than siblings who consider their relationships to be less intimate (Myers & Goodboy, 2010; Myers & Odenweller, 2015).

As Dainton and Gross (2008) argued, however, these relational maintenance behaviors suffer from a prosocial behavior bias. That is, the use of these behaviors is generally considered to be proactive, rewarding, and constructive (Canary & Stafford, 1994; Guerrero, Eloy, & Wabnik, 1993), all of which encapsulates affective characteristics such as emotional support, loyalty, and self-disclosure (McEwan & Guerrero, 2012). To extend this line of research to identify the less prosocial ways

in which romantic partners maintain their relationships, Dainton and Gross asked graduate and undergraduate students to identify the negative behaviors—which they conceptualized as “socially unacceptable behaviors that might serve maintenance functions” (p. 180) – that they either use or have previously used to maintain their romantic relationship. From a list of 455 behaviors compiled from the participants, Dainton and Gross developed a typology of six negative relational maintenance behaviors romantic partners use: *jealousy induction*, which involves behaving in ways intended to make a relational partner experience jealousy; *avoidance*, which centers on evading interaction either generally or about a specific topic with a relational partner; *infidelity*, which refers to cheating on a relational partner; *spying*, which involves surveilling a relational partner’s communication channels; *destructive conflict*, which includes fighting or arguing with a relational partner; and *allowing control*, which revolves around making personal decisions out of deference to a relational partner. Subsequent research exploring how negative relational maintenance behaviors operate in romantic relationships has revealed that when individuals use any of these six negative relational maintenance behaviors, they associate less relational and marital satisfaction with the relationship and express lower amounts of liking, commitment, and respect for their partner (Dainton, 2015; Dainton & Berkoski, 2013; Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011; Goodboy, Myers, & Members of Investigating Communication, 2010).

The purpose of this study, then, is to identify the negative relational maintenance behaviors individuals use in their adult sibling relationships as a way to keep to their relationship in existence (Dindia & Canary, 1993). Because not all six of the negative relational maintenance behaviors identified by Dainton and Gross (2008) are applicable to the adult sibling relationship due to the differences that distinguish romantic relationships from sibling relationships, identifying the specific negative relational maintenance behaviors adult siblings use in their relationships is warranted for two reasons. First, researchers have neglected to consider that adult siblings may use negative relational maintenance behaviors in addition to the five aforementioned, prosocial relational maintenance behaviors. Second, because the adult sibling relationship is governed by a paradoxical nature in that adult siblings can simultaneously behave in ways that express love and hate toward each other (Myers & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2014), siblings may be just as likely to use negative relational maintenance behaviors because relational

dissolution is not likely to occur as a result of their use. Because identifying these negative behaviors can provide a more comprehensive picture of the role that relational maintenance behavior plays in the adult sibling relationship, as well as complement the cumulative research gathered to date on adult sibling use of positive relational maintenance behaviors, the following research question is posed:

RQ: What are the negative relational maintenance behaviors individuals use in their adult sibling relationships?

Method

Participants

Participants were 221 individuals (73 men, 148 women) whose ages ranged from 18 to 70 years ($M = 36.5$, $SD = 14.6$). Ninety-six ($n = 96$, or 43%) participants were married and 22 (55%) participants had children (range = 1 to 8). They reported on 91 male siblings and 129 female siblings (the sex of one sibling was not identified) whose ages ranged from 15 to 59 years ($M = 36.2$, $SD = 14.7$). One hundred and two ($n = 102$, or 46%) siblings were married and 115 (52%) siblings had children (range = 1 to 8). Of these siblings, 191 were full biological siblings, 18 were half siblings, 10 were step-siblings, and two were adopted siblings. Participants estimated that they lived, on average, 290 miles ($M = 290.1$, $SD = 534.3$) from their siblings.

Procedures and Instrumentation

Following approval from the university's Institutional Review Board and utilizing Myers's (2011) procedures, participants were solicited from students enrolled in one of two large lecture introductory communication courses at a large Mid-Atlantic university. The author attended each course, informed students about the purpose of the study, presented the inclusion criteria for participation in the study (i.e., potential participants had to be at least 18 years old, have at least one living sibling, and complete the questionnaire only once), and solicited any questions students may have had. In one course, students were instructed to recruit an individual who was between the ages of 18-30

years; in the other course, students were instructed to recruit an individual who was 30 years or older. Students were informed that if they met the age and inclusion criteria, they could complete the survey; otherwise, they would need to recruit an individual who met the criteria. Approximately 41% ($n = 90$) of the participants were students enrolled in one of these two courses.

Participants were provided with a cover letter, a survey instrument, and an envelope. They were instructed to identify a sibling (by initials) whose birthday was closest to their birthday (by calendar date), provide the aforementioned demographic, and answer an open-ended question inquiring about their use of negative relational maintenance behaviors with the identified sibling. Using a prompt similar to the one posed by Dainton and Gross (2008), participants were instructed:

In order to maintain our adult sibling relationships the way we like them, we engage in maintenance behaviors. Some of these behaviors are positive: for example, we assure our siblings that we love them, we are open and self-disclose our feelings to our siblings, and we give compliments to our siblings. However, we occasionally engage in negative behaviors within our adult sibling relationships, and we do these negative things for the sake of the relationship. Keeping in mind the sibling you identified on the first page of this survey, using the space below, please **list** and **describe** any **negative behaviors** that you use or have used with this sibling for the purpose of maintaining the relationship.

To avoid influencing how they answered the question, participants purposely were not provided with a definition of negative relational maintenance and were not given any examples of negative relational maintenance behaviors. Upon completion of the survey instrument, participants were instructed to place it in the provided envelope, seal it, and return it to the student who solicited their participation in the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in two steps. First, to facilitate ease of coding, each behavior provided by the participants was transcribed onto

a notecard. During this step, it was found that eight ($n = 8$) participants indicated that they do not use negative relational maintenance behaviors with their siblings, therefore they were unable to identify any examples [e.g., “there were no negative behaviors” (081)¹; “I don’t think I’ve used negative behavior to maintain our relationships” (100)] and 23 participants identified behaviors that could not be classified, by definition, as a negative relational maintenance behavior [e.g., “we fight over clothes” (046); “he’s a good guy, but he has a bad temper” (076); “she speaks loudly, which can be annoying to people in her presence” (140)], therefore reducing the number of participants in this study to 190 adult siblings. Together, these 190 participants provided a total of 353 negative relational maintenance behaviors.

Second, these 353 negative relational maintenance behaviors were subjected to first cycle and second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). In the first cycle, the behaviors were coded using a combination of In Vivo (i.e., using short phrases from each participant’s language), process (i.e., using gerunds to indicate action in the data), and initial coding (i.e., breaking the data into discrete units) methods (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2013). Using these methods, in conjunction with the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the behaviors emerged inductively from the data and were not informed by any findings obtained in prior relational maintenance research studies. In the second cycle, the behaviors were coded using axial coding as a way to reduce the number of redundant behaviors and collapse conceptually similar behaviors into one another (Saldaña, 2013). This coding cycle resulted in the emergence of seven negative relational maintenance behaviors.

Results

The research question inquired about the negative relational maintenance behaviors individuals use in their adult sibling relationships. Seven negative relational maintenance behaviors emerged from the data. The first behavior is *acting like a surrogate parent*, which is conceptualized as imposing rank on the targeted sibling as a way to keep him or her away from, or out of, troublesome or problematic situations. Some examples of this behavior include “I will yell at my brother when

¹ The number refers to the numerical code assigned to the questionnaire.

he is doing something wrong [that] he might get in trouble for” (032), “I told her to take down pics I didn’t think were appropriate for Instagram . . . I could tell she wasn’t happy and I don’t care, just helping her out because that is my role” (042), “He didn’t understand what I was trying to do and he believed I was simply being mean and like a second parent” (118), and “I have been stern with them in order to keep them on the right track. I have also yelled at them to keep them in order while under my watch” (153).

Avoiding contact was the second behavior, which referred to limiting or evading communication with the targeted sibling regardless of the communication channel (e.g., face-to-face, computer mediated). Several participants indicated that they avoided communication with their targeted sibling by either limiting their contact [“With busy life schedules, contact is limited . . . it forces us to enjoy the time we have together” (002) and “We do not talk much. Not talking that much makes it more exciting for when we see each other” (113)] or relying on text or e-mail messages as a way to keep their communication brief [“I text a comment or question versus calling on the phone; it takes less effort and time, less emotional involvement” (087) and “We communicate only via text messages” (052)]. Other examples of avoiding contact include failing to respond to communication attempts made by the targeted sibling [“I do not respond to any attempt from my sibling to contact me” (127) and “I don’t answer the phone if she is calling” (184)], choosing not to discuss particular topics with the targeted sibling [“I avoid talking about certain things such as politics and religion” (077)], and not wanting to socialize with the targeted sibling [“I told her I was too busy to go to dinner because of work when really I stayed home” (020)]. Other participants intentionally created physical distance between their siblings by “stay[ing] at a hotel when I visit so she has her own place” (066) and “never invit[ing] my sister and her family to come to our house for a visit or holiday” (146).

The third negative relational maintenance behavior is *being antisocial*, which involves communicating with the targeted sibling in ways that observers (e.g., parents, romantic partners, other siblings) would consider to be aggressive, rude, or hostile. For many participants, one way in which they utilized this behavior was to ignore the targeted sibling by imposing the silent treatment: “I give her the silent treatment” (064), “We give each other the silent treatment” (200), and “I give him the silent treatment to show that I am disappointed in him or his actions”

(006). As one participant stated, “Simply not talking to him for a week or two usually does the trick” (191). Other antisocial behaviors noted by the participants include engaging in name calling [“We make fun of each other and call each other names” (009)], using sarcasm, and teasing each other [“We like to tease and make fun of each other for both of our amusement” (086)]. In some cases, this entailed fighting and arguing with the targeted sibling, often frequently and often about both trivial and inconsequential issues: “I fight with my sister when we disagree with each other” (004), “Me and my sister tend to fight a lot” (030), “We fight and argue” (049), and “I often argue with my brother” (058). In some instances, participants either fought or argued with their targeted sibling for a particular purpose or to achieve a specific goal: “I will fight with my sibling to make him start thinking” (025), “I often argue with my brother . . . to help him [solve his relationship issues]” (058), “I have fought with my sibling on several occasions when I knew [he] was doing something that could hurt our relationship” (143), and “me and my sister argue and I believe it helps us understand each other better” (187). For some participants, though, fighting and arguing served as a way in which they can express positive affect toward each other. As one participant said, “One thing I have done is pick on my sister. It’s not a mean picking but rather just messing around with her to show my love” (172). Another participant observed that “if we get mad at each other, we will playfully hit each other, but will make up five minutes later” (012).

Being unsupportive was the fourth negative relational maintenance behaviors. Participants who are unsupportive fail to provide their targeted sibling with relational, financial, emotional, or social support. This lack of support may extend toward the sibling’s accomplishments [“I don’t acknowledge her accomplishments--when my sister got a raise, I wasn’t as happy for her as I should have been” (009)], lifestyle [“I verbalize and portray a negative attitude toward his lifestyle” (008), “I often show strong disdain towards the negative choices in his life” (152)], romantic partners [“I hated her ex-boyfriend, so I tried to persuade her to break up with him and pursue a new one” (060); “I don’t ask about men she may be talking to” (186)], or events occurring in the sibling’s life [“I don’t listen or pay attention to [her] problems” (149)]. In a few instances, participants used the phrase “tough love” when explaining their unsupportive behavior: “I use tough love--I do not let them have what they want always” (015); “In his younger years, I engaged in tough love by kicking him out of my house” (070); and

“Tough love--I tell my brother when he is wrong. Even if it hurts, I am his brother and I have his best interests at heart” (126).

A fifth negative relational maintenance behavior is *confronting behavior*. With this behavior, participants directly address something the targeted sibling either says or does (or in some cases, something the targeted sibling either fails to say or do). This confrontation can be handled either constructively (e.g., listening, offering advice, being honest) or destructively (e.g., criticizing, inducing guilt). Some examples of constructively confronting a targeted sibling’s behavior include “I give realistic advice to get my sibling’s life ‘back on track’” (028), “I often listen to her boyfriend problems and try to offer good advice but I truthfully don’t like him” (109), “I give her constructive criticism when she asks my opinion” (064), and “I give her constructive criticism sometimes” (139); some examples of destructively confronting a targeted sibling’s behavior include “Sometimes my sister can be selfish and ask for a lot of material possessions, so it’s necessary to tell her when she’s over the top” (078); “I have made my brother feel guilty so that he would come visit me” (080); “I tend to instigate debates and arguments between all of my siblings over small silly things” (090); and “I criticize her parenting style and try to explain to her why her kids shouldn’t get everything they want” (133). Regardless of whether these confrontations were constructive or destructive, they often entail “brutal honesty” (082, 126) between siblings and demand participants to “be honest with each other” (043).

The sixth relational maintenance behavior is *intervening on sibling’s behalf*, which requires participants to interact with a third party in order to defend, protect, or support the targeted sibling. For many participants, regardless of their age, their parents represent the third party with whom they intervene in order to prevent the targeted sibling from getting in trouble or suffering from some repercussion: “I have always covered for my brother when we do something dumb” (035); “I have spoken disrespectfully to my parents to stick up for her in situations in which she got in trouble” (038); “If we do something that our parents won’t approve of, we cover for one another and alter the truth” (104); and “I have lied to our mother to protect him” (131). In some instances, participants refrain from making negative comments to significant persons in the targeted sibling’s life to spare the sibling’s feelings. For instance, one participant stated:

My brother is gay and a lot of people have issues with gay people. Recently some of his “friends” have expressed how disappointed they were at some of the states legalizing gay marriage. To try and save his feelings and spare the friendships he has, I kept my mouth shut to express my feelings about wrong his “friends” opinions are of gay people. (107)

Similarly, another participant said “I am kind to his wife who is not nice to me” (131) and one participant stated “When my brother was married to his first wife I disagreed with her choices but kept my opinion to myself because it was for his happiness” (202). In a few rare instances, participants reported getting verbally or physically aggressive with others: “Being rude to others--if my brother dislikes someone, I often treat them worse” (027) and “I have gotten in a fight with a girl that was bullying my sister to protect her” (123).

Withholding information, which consists of lying to or keeping secrets from the targeted sibling, is the seventh negative relational maintenance behavior. For both lying and keeping secrets, the breadth ranged from being relatively trivial to highly significant and the depth ranged from being extremely impersonal to highly intimate. In many cases, participants reported lying to their targeted siblings as a way to spare the sibling’s feelings: “I lie to her about something that happened or something that was said to avoid hurting her” (114), “I lie about her need to lose weight” (020), “lying about how I like his girlfriend” (116), “I agree with her as far as her hair and her clothing just to keep her happy” (205), and “I bite my tongue when she says things that annoy me” (207). Likewise, participants reported keeping secrets from their targeted sibling as a way “to keep from adding stress on them” (010), to “not make him angry or hurt” (025), and “so they wouldn’t stress about it” (093). For some siblings, however, withholding information was more about omitting information rather than being completely open: “I do not open up on a personal level with him. Even though we do hang out, I do not share my personal thoughts about his behavior, personality flaws, bad decisions, or misguided judgment calls” (090) and “When something good or even an achievement happens, no sharing with her as to not appear to be bragging or ‘scoreboarding’ . . . I don’t share some of the achievements myself or my kids receive” (128).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the negative relational maintenance behaviors adult siblings use in their relationships with each other. Using first and second cycle coding, in conjunction with the constant comparative method, seven negative relational maintenance behaviors were identified. An examination of these seven negative relational maintenance behaviors reveals that these behaviors mirror the functions adult siblings generally serve over the sibling lifespan, albeit it in an antisocial way. Goetting (1986) proposed that as siblings move from adolescence through old age, they serve several functions for each other, two of which are companionship and emotional support and aid and direct services. When siblings provide each other with companionship and emotional support, they behave in ways that are suggestive of friendship, comfort, and affection (Goetting, 1986). They also behave in ways that express their love, acceptance, empathy, caring and concern (Boland, 2007; Mikkelson, Floyd, & Pauley, 2011), and they engage in self-disclosure with each other (Dolgin & Lindsay, 1999; Martin, Anderson & Mottet, 1997). Those siblings who provide aid and direct services to one another do so in a variety of ways: they form coalitions with each other as a way to deal with parents, they translate parental behaviors and actions for one another; they provide some form of practical, personal, financial, or instrumental assistance; they teach each other social and life skills; and they protect and defend each other from threats external to their relationship (Eriksen & Gertsel, 2002; Goetting, 1986; Weaver, Coleman, & Ganong, 2003).

One way in which adult siblings may fulfill the companionship and emotional support function is through three of the seven negative relational maintenance behaviors: avoiding *contact*, *being antisocial*, and *withholding information*. Because it is not uncommon for adult sibling relationships to resemble friendships (Van Volkom, 2006) or for adult siblings to consider one another as a “best” or “close” friend (Connidis, 1989; White & Riedmann, 1992), particularly because these relationships tend to become more voluntary once individuals reach emerging adulthood (Floyd & Parks, 1995), there may be times when individuals strategically use these relational maintenance behaviors as a way to preserve their sibling relationships by limiting their communication with each other (i.e., avoiding contact), purposely establishing space between themselves (i.e., avoiding contact), or monitoring the breadth and depth

of their self-disclosure (i.e., withholding information). At the same time, because conflict is an inevitable part of any sibling relationship, when siblings fight, argue, or behave in verbally or relationally aggressive ways toward each other (i.e., being antisocial), they may consider these behaviors to be relationally acceptable ways in which they can communicate with each other. As Myers and Bryant (2008) posited, while these behaviors may not be tolerated or considered to be acceptable in voluntary relationships (e.g., romantic relationships, friendships), they are acceptable in adult sibling relationships and actually serve as one way in which individuals can stress their commitment to their sibling relationships.

Likewise, one way in which adult siblings can provide assistance (i.e., aid and direct services) to each other is through their use of the other four maintenance behaviors identified in this study: *acting like a surrogate parent*, *being unsupportive*, *confronting behavior*, and *intervening on siblings' behalf*. Of these behaviors, *the acting like a surrogate parent* and *intervening on siblings' behalf* behaviors center on, in some way, the provision of protection. While siblings commonly protect each other from parents during childhood and adolescence (Goetting, 1986), as they move through adulthood, siblings may require protection from their friends, romantic partners, spouses, and even themselves. As such, when individuals perceive that their siblings are immersed in a problematic situation (i.e., acting like a surrogate parent), behaving irresponsibly (i.e., acting like a surrogate parent), or needing assistance with handling a third party (i.e., intervening on siblings' behalf), they may utilize behaviors that are intended specifically--and ultimately--to assist their sibling in some way. Similarly, because siblings are expected to serve as sources of tangible, informational, and instrumental assistance across the lifespan (Goetting, 1986; Kahn, 1983), there may be times when individuals either find themselves in a position where they are unable, unwilling, or uninterested in assisting their siblings with relational, financial, or social support (i.e., being unsupportive) or they feel the need to directly address something a sibling has said or done (i.e., confronting behavior).

One limitation of this study, which should be considered in future research endeavors, is that the motives behind why adult siblings use these negative relationship behaviors were not solicited. Although relational maintenance scholars generally have assumed that individuals use relational maintenance behaviors as a way to keep a relationship in

existence, in a specified state or condition, in a satisfactory condition, or in repair (Dindia, 2003; Dindia & Canary, 1993), it is possible that individuals have reasons that underlie their use of a particular relational maintenance behavior (or set of behaviors) with a specific relational partner. Although the participants in this study were not asked to supply a reason for why they used the negative relational maintenance they identified, many participants indicated that they used a particular behavior for a specific reason. Some reasons are due to deference to the targeted sibling [“I do it to help him” (058), “due to my sibling’s high sensitivity to most things” (075), and “I act interested . . . to make him happy” (131)], whereas other reasons have more to do with the targeted sibling realizing, at some point, the consequences of the sibling’s actions [“so she knows I am upset with her” (064), “to show her I am serious about how I feel about something” (067), “to widen his scope of information so he can make a wise choice” (087)], with the ultimate goal of maintaining the relationship. Relatedly, although researchers have found that individuals use relational maintenance behaviors both strategically and routinely (Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000), another limitation of this study was that participants were not asked to report whether their use of the identified behavior(s) was strategic, routine, or both.

Future research could take one of two directions. First, researchers should consider developing quantitative measures assessing both the positive and the negative relational maintenance behaviors used in the adult sibling relationship. Although researchers have adapted both the Canary and Stafford (1992) and the Stafford et al. (2001) relational maintenance measures for use in the adult sibling context, the circumstances surrounding the adult sibling relationship, particularly as it moves through the adult sibling lifespan (Goetting, 1986), are not parallel to the romantic relationship, which is the population for whom these measures were intended. Similarly, the Dainton and Gross (2008) measure is not applicable to the adult sibling relationship due to the six behaviors that comprise it. Second, it might prove fruitful to explore whether adult sibling types (i.e., intimate, collegial, loyal, apathetic, and hostile; Gold, 1989) differ in their use of these behaviors, both as a way to (a) indirectly validate these behaviors and (b) further distinguish how these five sibling types differ in the frequency with which they utilize communication behaviors, including relational maintenance (e.g., Myers, 2015; Myers & Goodboy, 2010; Myers & Odenweller, 2015). Moreover,

as Mikkelson, Myers, and Hannawa (2011) discovered, because adults use relational maintenance behaviors at a higher rate with their genetically related siblings (i.e., biological) than with their nongenetically related siblings (i.e., step, adopted), examining how these adults use negative relational maintenance behaviors with their siblings may shed additional light on the role that genetic relatedness plays in adult sibling relational maintenance.

Nonetheless, the findings of this study provide insight into the types of negative relational maintenance behaviors adult siblings use in their relationships. The identification of the seven negative relational maintenance behaviors used by adult siblings in this study not only complements the extensive body of research conducted to date on adult sibling use of positive relational maintenance behaviors, but also provides researchers with an alternative way to examine the behaviors adult siblings actively use to maintain their relationships with each other. As Scott (1990) posited, adult siblings generally are motivated to maintain their relationships with each other across the lifespan. Based on the findings obtained specifically in this study, as well as the findings obtained in prior research studies, it appears that adult siblings do so using a variety of both positive and negative maintenance behaviors.

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**Is Civic Engagement Possible?
An Examination of the Needs of Different
Populations in the Classroom**

Susan P. Millsap & Scott A. Millsap

Abstract

This study builds on the research that engagement in the classroom on controversial issues increases critical thinking and tolerance of differing viewpoints. Using focus groups at a small four-year liberal arts university and a large community college the willingness of students to engage in these discussions was explored. We found that while there is a difference in expectations between the liberal arts institution and the community college students, there is a desire to hold these discussions in both populations, especially among female students and students of color. Both populations felt that it is the instructor who needed to begin and encourage these discussions to occur.

Based on a paper presented at the National Communication Association national convention on November 10, 2016 in Philadelphia, PA

A national election year! As educators we see this as an opportunity to have open discussions on national issues, social events, and engage students in a critical thinking-based dialogue. The classroom should be a place where students learn about controversies, get exposed to differing opinions, and discover strategies on how to discuss and disagree with other points of view. This, however, can also be a difficult task to accomplish for the educator and an intimidating task for the student especially if the election is very divisive. Are students and faculty ready to engage? Do they have the skills needed to engage in this conversation? We must step back and ask the very basic question of first, is the classroom the appropriate place for these discussions to happen. If that is true then what is preventing students and faculty from engaging in this very civic activity?

New Directions for Higher Education (Winter 2010) dedicated an issue to the concept of a deliberative democracy. The editor defines deliberative democracy as one where “people examine an issue through a

deliberative process in which they invite and consider dissenting perspective, manage conflict, design solutions that are for the common good, and collaboratively implement change” (Thomas, p. 2). The higher education classroom would seem to be the appropriate place to learn the skills required to participate in a deliberative democracy. The lack of civility in the last presidential election cycle would seem to be easy evidence that our education system is not currently providing these skills. And yet there are a multitude of studies that show that engagement in the classroom over controversial issues produces positive results. Studies by Avery, Bird, Johnstone, Sullivan, and Thalhammer (1992) and Bickmore (1993) revealed that classroom discussion between students who hold different political views helps to build political tolerance. In the same *New Directions for Higher Education*, Levine (2010) argues that “Students can learn to think critically about their habits, choices, and beliefs. They can practice reasoning together and navigating the inevitable conflicts over values and emerge in democratic life. They can develop understanding and empathy for those whose lives are differently or less privileged” (p. 15). The benefits stated here also assume a diversity of backgrounds and opinions being heard in the discussion. As Hess and Gatti (2010) point out “it is less likely that discussion would allow students to develop respect for differing opinions if they are not given the opportunity to deliberate with diverse group members” (p. 24). Which leads us to the issue of diversity in the classroom. For many who teach in small, liberal arts colleges we lack diversity in the classroom. And for those who have diversity of race, creed, opinions in the classroom we have students who are not willing to engage in the conversation because of the possibility of being silenced or fear of being in the minority. The same concerns are true for those attending highly diverse community colleges. “Civic education is especially important at community colleges, as they are institutions committed to lessening educational inequalities and providing educational programs and services leading to stronger communities” (Kisker, 2016). The social atmosphere of the classroom is complex and care needs to be taken when approaching these subjects. Along with these concerns there is also the question of ability. Can students participate in these discussions? Do they have the knowledge to carry on a conversation on an issue? And do students have the motivation to do the work to participate in these conversations?

Methodology

In order to answer these questions, we developed a questionnaire to be used in focus groups of college students who attend a small liberal arts college whose student population is very homogeneous and a community college whose student population is very diverse. Focus Groups took place one month before the Presidential election. Conversations were held at the community college with a total of 50 students from two Interpersonal Communication classes and two Small Group Communication classes. Conversations at the small liberal arts college were held with a total of 23 students from a Public Speaking class and an Argumentation and Advocacy class. All groups were asked the same questions to begin the conversations.

The demographic profile of the groups from the two different institutions is striking. Twenty-nine of the 50 community college students were students of color or of a minority ethnic identification. Twenty-five self-identified as female. Twenty-two of the 23 liberal arts college students were white and eighteen self-identified as female. The questions that guided the focus groups were:

- How do you obtain news?
- Have you or do you plan to vote?
- What are some topics you have discussed as a class?
- Have you had service projects in your classes?
- Do you volunteer outside of school?
- Do you like to discuss contemporary issues in your classes?
- Is it okay to disagree with your instructors during these in class discussions?
- Are your instructors trying to persuade you of their viewpoint?
- Are you bothered by your instructor's attitude?

Results

The Community College students expressed the following:

- Most students do not make an effort to obtain news every day. The ones who do use their phone and a headline service.
- Almost half of the students plan to vote or have voted early. Of these twelve were students of color and eighteen were female.

- Most students report that they do not have class discussions of contemporary issues. If they did, the topics recently covered were the November election and Black Lives Matter. A few students mentioned climate change.
- Only nine of the 50 students involved remembered having a service project in a class. Nine students mentioned volunteering in their community away from class.
- Less than ten students reported being involved on campus by signing a petition, registering to vote, or joining a campus organization.
- Only 12 students said they regularly talk to their classmates about any of these topics.
 - Ten of these students were female and seven were students of color.

During discussion almost every student said they like having class discussions about these topics and they wished it would happen more often. They enjoy the interaction and feel free to disagree with their instructors. A minority, 12 out of 50, felt their instructors were trying to persuade them of a particular viewpoint and only two reported being bothered by this effort. Most said they could tell how the instructor felt about the issue but did not feel pressured to agree. More women had voted or planned to vote than men and more women had participated in service projects and community events. Women also reported that they regularly talked to other students outside of the class about current topics.

The Community College students expressed the following:

- Class discussion is their source of information since they don't watch news or read news.
- Professors usually bring up issues, not them.
- Sixteen are registered to vote. Fifteen plan to vote. One did not know that voter registration time had passed.
- No one volunteers for any candidate or works for the polls.
- All could mention a service project connected to a class.

- The election and current events are discussed in other classes. Two students specifically mentioned in Spanish class and a Statistics class.

Like the previous sample, all the students in the focus group wanted professors to bring up current events in the classroom. The students felt it was a part of the learning process and part of being treated as adults. Most felt that professors should talk about issues since it is real world and students should be aware of things, so it's part of the professor's job. Students hear the same things repeated in different classes but they indicated that that is okay since it gives them different perspectives on the issue. As one student observed, "It was cool when (my professor) encouraged me to watch the debates since it made me do it so I would have something to say in class. That was the first debate I'd ever watched." Some students indicated that they are not always free to express opinion depending on the class. For example, "in political science classes it is expected but in general education classes not so much." Students expressed an unwillingness to disagree with a professor unless it is part of the class. But when the discussion was part of the class most definitely felt that they could disagree with professors and one said they hoped that they do disagree. When it comes to professors trying to persuade them to a certain position the students were not surprised and didn't seem to mind. Students indicated that they felt that it gave them a perspective that they probably would not hear otherwise.

Discussion

Students from both samples want to engage in civic discussion in the classroom because it is their source of news. And while the four-year liberal arts students expected this discussion in certain classes the community college students did not. If Kisker is in that these discussions should be happening in community colleges to help balance inequalities, the results of our focus group discussion of community college students would indicate that it is not. The students who did express interest in discussion and other forms of student involvement tended to be female or students of color. This conclusion is also consistent with the four-year liberal arts students. The desire to engage in discussion of civic issues in the classroom, as expressed specifically by the four-year college

students, would appear to justify civic engagement in the classroom. So, what are the barriers to this engagement?

The students suggest that the problem with student engagement rests with the faculty member's willingness to engage. There may be pressure on faculty from some administrations to refrain from discussing topics if they are not germane to the course or subject. There is also a time issue involved. Faculty would need to incorporate time for these far-ranging discussions into the course schedule to ensure that they still can meet the highly detailed, highly structured, course learning objectives that are common in our institutions today. Perhaps, in our zeal for measurable assessment we have eliminated the creative. Like any skill, leading a discussion takes practice. If teachers are not practicing the skill it may become intimidating. And certainly, teachers need to be able to create the climate that is needed for these discussions to have a positive impact on the students, but this paper did not address the faculty perspective. The popular view that conservative students are being brainwashed by a liberal faculty is not born out in the sample.

Based on our small focus group of students it would seem that there is some justification in challenging faculty to engage students more in civic discussions. The students are expecting some this engagement. They are also expecting disagreement. And it is in the classroom that we can attempt to bring back the civil discussion that we can hope will translate to the broader society.

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**The Cultural Identity of Oreo:
Negotiating Individuality in a World of Expectations**

David A. Wendt

Abstract

Cultural expectations are demanded for group members from every culture. When those expectations are not met, then various consequences can be felt for the nonconforming member in question. One term that is used for nonconformity is “Oreo.” This negative cultural term has an interesting historical significance that can be related to the expectations placed upon African-American culture early in the United States. However, the modern concept of “Oreo” relates to seemingly successful assimilation into a dominant culture while losing perceived cultural identity.

“Individuals no longer needed to BE
white, straight, Protestant and able-bodied;
they needed to ACT
white, straight, Protestant and able-bodied.
But it was not equality.” (Yoshino)

“You’re the whitest black person that I have ever met!” was the greeting that was given by a multi-racial student to an African American student. The student accepted the greeting with a smile, sat down and prepared for class. Then under a muffled, hushed breath, that word could be heard as the greeting was extended, “Oreo.” What precipitated that remark? On a daily basis they appeared to be friends and comrades sharing smiles and laughs throughout speeches, discussions and debates. Should the student be honored or ashamed? How should the other students, who heard the comment, feel about this comment? Should the instructor question this interaction? Should the instructor start a discussion on the importance of individuality? Is this statement a derogatory comment or a “perceived” term of endearment?

The slang term “Oreo” is generally referred to African-Americans who are perceived as racially or ethnically black on the outside, but by actions and language, white or Caucasian on the inside by

their peers. They may be viewed as collaborating effectively with white authority or having grown up in a predominately white area. Other similar derogatory terms are “Apple” for American Indians who are red on the outside, and white on the inside, “Coconut” for Latinos and Hispanics who are brown on the outside and white on the inside and “Banana” or “Twinkie” for Asians who are yellow on the outside and white on the inside. Societal perceptions that these individuals have lost or have turned away from their native culture and have assumed white or Caucasian character traits lead to the use of these terms. Those terms may appear benign to the majority of society; however, self-doubt and isolation radiates for these victims of cultural collectiveness. The explosive term “Oreo” tends to be utilized by youthful groups to signify “...that acting white was part of a larger oppositional peer culture constructed by black Americans in response to their history of enslavement, and the discrimination and persistent inequality they face (including discriminatory treatment in the labor market). The oppositional identity was said to be “part of a cultural orientation toward schooling which exists within the minority community” (Tyson, 2005).

There are two beliefs on the origin of this term. In the 1980’s, John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham introduced this term in a study of students in Ohio. In his book, *Acting White: The Ironic Legacy of Desegregation*, Stuart Buck found that the term “Oreo” was in response to racist white teachers and students during desegregation in the 1960’s. Historically, some would argue that the term “Oreo” could be the derivative from “Uncle Tom” in Harriett Beecher Stowe’s classic novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1852. The character of Uncle Tom was negatively viewed as excessively subservient to whites. Persons deemed with the dismaying “Oreo” are viewed similar to the character of Uncle Tom as they appear comfortable in white culture.

Chinese-American Eric Liu, in his memoir *The Accidental Asian* describes some ways that he could be considered “acting white”:

I listen to National Public Radio.
I wear khaki Dockers.
I own brown suede bucks.
I eat gourmet greens.
I have few close friends “of color.”
I married a white woman.
I am a child of the suburbs.

I furnish my condo a la Crate & Barrel.
I vacation in charming bed-and-breakfasts.
I have never been the victim of blatant discrimination.
I am a member of several exclusive institutions.
I have been in the inner sanctums of political power.
I have been there as something other than an attendant.
I have the ambition to return.
I am a producer of the culture.
I expect my voice to be heard.
I speak flawless, unaccented English.
I subscribe to Foreign Affairs.
I do not mind when editorialists write in the first-person plural.
I do not mind how white television casts are.
I am not too ethnic.
I am wary of minority militants.
I consider myself neither in exile nor in opposition.
I am considered “a credit to my race.”

He finishes his summary with the following statement “some are born white, others achieve whiteness, still others have whiteness thrust upon them.” He states that he became white “by acclamation.” He has moved away from the periphery and toward the center of American life, which has forced him to “become white inside” (Yoshino, 2006). His philosophy can be applied to many African Americans as they assess their middle-class oriented lives and begin to analyze this concept of “Oreo.”

This concept that particular actions and language solely belong to one race is false. Most ethics, values and morals come from the socioeconomic class of birth and childhood. “Middle class black values are falsely viewed by a majority of blacks as “white” while they are colorblind” (Steele 1990). Unfortunately, numerous aspects of middle class socioeconomic status are associated with a traditional Caucasian life. This is not the case as middle class status crosses all racial, ethnic and cultural boundaries. In the wake of our past and current racial disparity, “... black teenagers use of “acting white” in relation to academic achievement is similar to white teenagers use of the term “nerd,” the only difference is that black teens express it in radicalized terms as in addition to normal teenage peer pressure, they are grappling with racial identity and what it means to be black” (Cross, 1991). In an

11-school study, it was found that “black students, exactly like white students—recognize the importance of school achievement and want to succeed because they know their outcomes as adults depend on it” (Tyson, 2011).

The definition of class by each group: People at the bottom define class by your amount of money: people in middle class value education and your line of work almost as much as money: at the top, people emphasize “taste, values, ideas, style, and behavior” regardless of money, education or occupation (Fussel, 1983). Each socioeconomic class brings distinct beliefs and characteristics that focus behavior and a specific set of ethics. The behavior that allows individuals to use the term “Oreo” would not be accepted in all classes. For many blacks that are seeking to change socioeconomic class, the realization that successful academic performance is mandatory to increase their hopeful ever-changing socioeconomic status. “The acting white theory provides a simple name for the hurdle that they (working class blacks) had to overcome just to make it to college. But in the struggle to overcome their peers’ self-defeating attitudes, many students confused the structural impediments of their socioeconomic and racial statuses with the effects of personalized racism” (Bond, 2014).

Student narratives provide an authentic insight into this problem. Students were interviewed that had personally experienced being termed “Oreo” by their peers. These students, now in college or adults were asked to discuss the various times that they were called “Oreo” and how they identified themselves from a cultural context.

Being called an Oreo for the first time was a bit conflicting for me because of the two different perspectives people who used it towards me. The first time I was called that (Oreo) it meant that I was a black man who wanted to be a white person so therefore, I was perceived as to wanting to do things a white person would want to do or wear. Emotionally, I was offended because that was not how I wanted to be viewed. For the first year of high school, that’s how I was viewed. Later, the definition changed, Oreo meant that I was a black person who was proper and had manners, but hung out with a lot of white people. I also have white people in my family and as family friends. That’s the definition that I liked because it was the truth. After asking people’s definition

and it being the same, I accepted it.
The definition began to grow on me.
That made me more comfortable with finding myself
as a person to this very day. (Reece, 2017).

Cultural identity is the self-perception of belonging to a group of similar people. Normally it is related to ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, nationality or religion. Traditions, rituals, beliefs and norms of behavior can be heavily influenced or associated with a specific cultural community. Perhaps this term “Oreo” is given as a symbol to persons who have assimilated into the dominant white culture. This innate ability to assimilate can cause cultural members that the aforementioned member has seemingly negatively negotiated their roots to gain economically, emotionally or socially within the dominant culture, may cause a feeling of betrayal to occur as they successfully navigate mainstream society.

Growing up in an area that was safe and educationally strong was good
I grew to be annoyed with being called an Oreo.
Personally I take it to be extremely degrading.
I feel like by being an African American,
everyone expects me to fit the stereotype
and when I don't, I am said to be white on the inside.
It is degrading, because people are saying black people
don't/can't speak proper, act ghetto, are disrespectful,
and are not as academically capable as someone who is white
(Washington, 2017).

When I view cultural identity, I identify myself as an educated,
Christian, African-American. I don't place myself in a specific
racial group.
I feel like my identity is because I'm sheltered.
I believe it's because I chose to achieve manners and
became a proper person like anyone else.
I don't have the average expected perspective on an African-
American.
I think being called an “Oreo” is its own group,
But, it doesn't mean I'm any different from the people

or race that I am apart of. I feel like less educated and less mannered African Americans, who meet the opposite, perceive Oreo as white people because African-American people look at Caucasian people as being proper and educated (Reece, 2017).

Even though the perceived American philosophy of taking pride in diversity and promoting tolerance and acceptance of all groups, there are insurmountable “social pressures to conform to mainstream white culture, they (all cultures) should be able to freely choose to identify with white culture if they wish, basically this is a Civil Rights issue” (Yoshino, 2006). This issue happens predominantly in integrated schools (Tyson, 2005) where diverse cultures constantly work to fit into the composition of the school population. “Remarkably, schools that are less than 20 percent black have the largest “acting white” effect for blacks and Hispanics.” (Fryer, 2009). “Acting white” is a charge that black kids make against each other in racially integrated contexts, not segregated ones. At all-black schools, speaking properly and getting good grades is not interpreted as an act of identity treason because there’s no in-group/out-group dynamic around race. But at the types of integrated schools that are viewed as a remedy for the black/white achievement gap, successful black students are more commonly drubbed for social sedition by the black peers. Why? According to Fryer, achievement—in this context—is interpreted as an out-group behavior” (Bond, 2014).

At first I did not really think about it,
but now that I am older I understand why I am called an Oreo.
Now, when someone calls me an Oreo or says, “You’re not really black,”
I will argue with them and explain that I am black,
I just don’t fit their standard of black.
My main point for my argument is that when someone
that is white acts ghetto, disrespectful, doesn’t speak well, etc.
why do people not call them black? (Washington, 2017)

The Urban Dictionary defines the term “Oreo” as a stereotype created by blacks to be used for other blacks who are “black on the outside, white on the inside.” Their skin color is black and white meaning to display characteristics of a “white” person, therefore

“betraying their black roots.” These characteristics being (but not limited to), raised in an environment that’s NOT the projects, speaking proper English/very limited use of slang, having an eclectic taste in music, having a diverse group of friends, being well-educated, being legitimately employed, not abusing the welfare system, being well-mannered and civilized, saves money for college instead of bling and cheap grills, and wearing nice clothes that are not Roca Wear, Sean Jean, Baby Phat and so on. Most blacks confuse the “Oreo” stereotype to being “bourgie,” which is a very rude, stuck-up black, who thinks they are more “high-class” than they really are (2016).

These callous stereotypes often force minorities to cover. “To cover is to tone down a disfavored identity to fit into the mainstream. In our increasingly diverse society, all of us are outside the mainstream in some way. Nonetheless, being deemed mainstream is still often a necessity of social life.” However, Yoshino goes on to say “Covering is a hidden assault on our civil rights. We have not been able to see it as such because it has swaddled itself in the benign language of assimilation... The reason racial minorities are pressured to “act white” is because of white supremacy (Yoshino, 2006). In an important speech in 2004, then Presidential candidate Barack Obama, attempted to eradicate the stereotype that “a black kid with a book in his hand is acting white” (McWhorter, 2014). As President of the United States, Obama continued to work tirelessly on improving racial relations and improving the academic achievement of black students.

Author Paul Barrett in his book, *The Good Black* tells the story of a young man in his journey to find himself. He worked hard to receive two degrees from Harvard University, his B.A. and J. D. During his early life, his mother told him, “He was a human being first, an American second and a black third.” He consistently worked to avoid African-American groups, was viewed as the best dressed man in the firm and never spoke of the racism issues of the day. Finally, after many years of attempting to assimilate successfully into white culture, he stated “I was going to have to be more publicly honest about the lie I was living. It wasn’t that I was around people who were open minded, who thought blacks were terrific. It’s that I was bending over backward all the time to avoid making white people uncomfortable... It’s too much work.” The book tells his story of his successful rise to the American Dream, but feeling as a failure. His story analyzes the philosophy of success for minorities, that there is a reward for assimilating into white norms.

Tucker Bryant's Spoken Word poem "Oreo" is a testament to the feelings and personal struggle of frustration and confusion as he copes with the psychological paradox of this forced identity crisis. His disdain for this term is a testament to the many children that have been targeted throughout their younger years and have consistently struggled to achieve self-respect and self-awareness.

"The irony of all this is my mother told me you are what you eat
but the first time somebody called me an Oreo
nothing about this skin felt sweet.

You see when somebody says you're not "really Black"
they'll smile a shade of ignorance that expects you to wear their
words like a medal
They expect you to cling to those words as if their bigotry
is the closest thing your hands will ever come
to touching white privilege

When someone calls you an Oreo
they'll hit the emergency ejection button on their throat
and force a laugh that ensures you,
you'd be a fool to be offended
because this is a pat on the head this is how they thank you
for not forcing them to swallow the parts of you that don't sit right
in their stomach, their suburbs their supremacy

Stacy thank you for proving you don't have to call me your dog
to make me feel like you own me to be able to yank my culture by
a collar
and force it to heel you are the reason
I cannot raise my hand in a lecture hall without feeling
like a critic to my own complexion as if the only way for me
to jump start my career was to stand on a free throw line

She called me an Oreo because I was the first shade of brown
that hadn't been served to her on fox news
I was the first shade of brown that hadn't been served to her
in a Starbucks coffee cup and white washing,
white washing is adding creamer to your coffee

because you become dependent on artificial sweetener
to make it easier to swallow because you love the caffeine
but can't stand how bitterly the blackness binds to your tongue
forgive me for refusing to sugarcoat my skin
whenever you need a pick me up
your compliments are as hollow as a papier-mâché smile
and I refuse to shake hands with someone
who thinks mine belong in cuffs

blackness is not something we abandoned the moment we are too
large
to fit your television screen
and I will never stay silenced
and the world that asked for my ancestors
just to earn its approval because acceptance,
acceptance means more than looking for a mirror inside
somebody else what makes you think the best we can be
was a reflection you so pardon my French
but fuck you and your Oreos.”

Communication Theory of Identity

To help understand this seemingly forced identity crisis, the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) suggests that communication as a whole, externalizes a person's identity. The process of communication, both verbal and non-verbal is a foundation by which identity is formed and negotiated with others. Identities vary in their scope (how widely held), salience (importance), centrality (sense of self), and intensity (ownership of identity). Identities have emergent individual and communal properties, which are viewed to help define the total identity as the four distinct layers are interpenetrating together (Hecht, 2005).

Identity is formed, maintained and modified through social interaction. The personal identity layer refers to self-image. Basically, it is how you see or define yourself. The enactment identity layer is the communicative self in a given moment with will affect interaction. Examples might include the clothing worn at a specific time or event, the “style” that you emulate and how you walk. The relational identity layer refers to views that are dependent upon others. The information shared to

a larger group of people for another opinion. The final layer, communal identity is formed by the overall collective opinion. For example, one's self-concept as an African American (personal identity) is juxtaposed with the term "Oreo" stated by an influential person (relational identity), as well as with how one's communities (communal identity) identify and support this perception. Unlike the other three layers, communal identities are held in common by groups rather than "owned" by individuals. These layers are said to constantly intertwine with each other in the total development of self-identity.

People may experience identity gaps, discrepancies between or among the four layers of identity. People view themselves much differently than the group or community views them. At this juncture, they are challenged to collaborate their personal layers as well as, communal identity expectations. It is not uncommon for the four layers to collide at some point. This is when the individual has the chance to grow and continue to define who they are. This process can be difficult if the collaboration is questioned. Common identity gaps may include a discrepancy between self-reflection and the individual's perception of the group's view. Seen through CTI, this information continually integrates and challenges one's self-awareness while considering the groups' ideas.

Author Kenji Yoshino asserts the four axes that marginalized groups focus upon to form their identities similar to the CTI. These four axes are the fundamental dimensions along which identities are all muted or flaunted. Appearance concerns how an individual physically presents herself to the world. Affiliation concerns her cultural identifications. Activism concerns how much she politicizes her identity. Association concerns her choice of fellow travelers.

The personal identity layer often refers to the appearance axe. The basic personal decisions reflect upon self-esteem and the strength to present "their real self" to the world through their appearance. The enactment layer equals the affiliation axe as social interaction by demonstrating on a consistent basis is the key to the communicating their cultural identity.

Relational identity could be filled with the activism axe depending on extent to which the individual feels the need to politicize feelings and concerns of the surroundings. Finally, the community identity equals the association axe as these acquaintances and friends will experience the identity that the individual will present to the world. "We are most strongly motivated when we want something for ourselves.

When our personal wants are best achieved through group action, as in the civil rights movement, we lend our energy to the group, and it becomes as strong as the sum of our energies” (Steele, 1990).

These two theories provide a framework for discussion and a basis for analyzing the various selves that are projected throughout each interaction of a day. They work hand-in-hand as individuals internally struggle to maintain their sense of cultural identity. These four levels indicate that individuals constantly shift their esteem to survive this difficult world of cultural collectiveness.

Cultural Implications

To help understand why members of cultural collectives can feel betrayed, sociologist Stephen Barkan offers six elements of culture including beliefs, values, norms, language, roles and social collectives. Shared symbols evoke specific emotions and reactions from people. Further definition states that language is the basis of interaction and communication among people. Norms are expectations and rules of behavior created by external and internal social controls. Values are the things that people consider important, such as love, loyalty, hard work, compassion, knowledge and humanitarianism. Values define what is just, fair and good in a given society. They represent a society’s ideal culture and social standards but may not reflect how people actually behave. Beliefs are the things that most people in a society consider to be true. Beliefs create a bond among people from the same culture. Roles define a person’s associates, responsibilities, power and wealth. Social collectives refer to the togetherness among people from the same culture.

These elements of culture establish a foundation from which the members can operate for full group understanding. These commonalities allow boundaries for acceptable behavior, establish worth for the group and distinguish language. This concept is the fundamental level of Group Think. When members differentiate from the acceptable norms of behavior, then the members may feel threatened.

When collective members feel that their culture is being assaulted, they will vehemently assert control to re-establish all members to maintain their norms. Younger members “usage of the term “acting white” by black teenagers does not reflect cultural values, rather it is a manifestation of their racial identity development experienced in conjunction with normal adolescent hassles and peer pressure” (Spencer,

2008). As these teens commiserate with their frustrations, one possible revelation is to utilize their anger on members who do not elect to follow the rules of the collective and hence, “act white.” To further support this idea, Harvard Economist Roland Fryer found “higher-achieving black students are cited by fewer of their peers as friends.”

As these teens mature and begin to face the tightening job market and the harshness of real life, if their myriad of past indignities have not been rationalized, the intrapersonal angst of their teen years can be felt later in life. Remnants of their feelings of cultural betrayal can emerge in both their personal and professional lives. If the forum of their inner mind is negative with phrases such as “you’re not good enough,” “you can’t handle the job” and “blacks are not as good as whites,” then the bitterness seemingly cannot fill the void from their betrayal of childhood acquaintances and the thoughts of the cultural traitors permeates their anger and the derogatory comments will follow. This overall negative struggle can provide a backdrop for their children to distinguish those children that do not fit the neighborhood culture and therefore will target another generation of “Oreos.”

These long-term effects cause some individuals to lash out at persons, who in some way, that have appeared to cause these consequences. Therefore, unfortunately those individuals that show differential traits suffer the brunt of their pent-up frustration. Even if professional success occurs in their lives, there is a lingering feeling of uncertainty. “I became paranoid that I was merely a product of affirmative action, even though I knew I wasn’t. Still, I never felt like I was actually good enough. And with my family and friends so proud of me, I felt like I could not burst their bubble with my insecurity and trepidation” (Ghansah, 2016). Feverish excitement on a job promotion can be combined with feelings of strenuous insecurity. Perhaps the Brazilian proverb states it clearly “Money whitens.” Author John T. Molloy states, “It is undeniable fact that the typical upper-middle class American looks white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. He is of medium build, fair complexion, with almost no pronounced physical characteristics. He is the model of success; that is, if you run a test, most people of all socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds will identify him as such. Like it or not, his appearance will normally elicit a positive response from someone viewing him. Anyone not possessing his characteristics will elicit a negative response to some degree, regardless of whether that response is conscious or subconscious” (1988).

Feeling frustration with mainstream culture, youth may displace their anger as they feel their ideas and concerns are not taken seriously. Professor Anne Arnett Ferguson implies that “white culture ruthlessly excludes African-American cultural modes as relevant and meaningful” (2001). This exclusion of cultural relevancy can be felt strongly in our educational system. Traditional educational practices, such as tracking, influences high achieving black students’ conceptions of racial identify, achievement and getting ahead: what courses they enroll in, who their friends are, and how they navigate peer pressure with being studious. In short, they face many of the same challenges as white youths face but with significant additional burdens (Tyson, 2011).

One area of education that provides a vicious paradox is that of language acquisition. Middle class standard formal English is taught within the classroom, while other cultural verbal patterns are not considered or spoken. For many students, formal English is treated as a foreign language. Many disgruntled youth may adopt slang as their language of choice to defy the lack of cultural relevance in most school settings. “Language (i.e. black English) is a political instrument and a vivid and crucial key to identity. But did Malcolm X urge blacks to take power in this country “any way y’all can?” Did Martin Luther King Jr. say to blacks, “I has been to the mountaintop and I done seed the Promised Land?” Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and James Baldwin did not achieve their eloquence, grace and stature by using only Black English in their writing. Andrew Young, Tom Bradley and Barbara Jordan did not acquire political power by saying “Y’all crazy is you ain’t gon vote for me.: They all have full command of standard English, and I don’t think that knowledge takes away from their blackness or commitment to black people” (Jones, 1982).

Psychologists know that basic language patterns are formed very early, with the basic language structures firmly in place by age five. We learn language, perhaps the most complex of all of our systems of knowledge, by imitation rather than by prescription. That is, we make sentences and follow the pattern of language long before we can explicitly state the rules of grammar and syntax, if we are ever able to do so. Childhood errors are replaced, usually without instruction, with standard forms because the child hears the language used by adults (Fox, 1997).

I think the time period we are in now, race is a very big issue and people look for ways to separate from each other. This word is proof of that. I don't see a point in having stereotypes for people based on the race, culture or religion because everyone has their own personality and beliefs. (Washington, 2017)

I feel like some people think that an Oreo is a black person acting or desiring to be a Caucasian, when actually we want to be ourselves. We should be judged by our personalities, Not similar qualities as another race. I feel like the term originated from black people, who were not taught how to behave or respond to things. I remember a time in high school because I wasn't prone to using Ebonics or whatever the slang terms were at the time, then I was different. Another time I was asked what music I listened to, (rock, country, hip-hop and rap) and because of the selection, I was considered an Oreo. I often heard it more from public school students, but hardly ever from private school students. My qualities, interests, sports (soccer), environments, political views, and background come into play on being called an Oreo (Reece, 2017).

“The power of the epithet “acting white” is just one manifestation of a belligerent youth subculture among poor blacks that rejects mainstream institutions generally. Acting white is to education as stop snitching is to law enforcement: an attitude of aimless and self-destructive opposition, borne of deprivation, alienation and despair. The root cause lies in the depth and pervasiveness of inner-city poverty. Poverty can't be the cause of “acting white” because blacks in the Jim Crow era ...pursued education eagerly even in the presence of far more dire poverty. If poverty...caused the acting white criticism, it surely would have shown up long before the 1960's. But the problem isn't just objective poverty. It's also social isolation, which worsened dramatically at precisely the time the acting-white problem emerged” (Ford, 2010).

My opinion has not changed because I don't look at the term as being offensive anymore. I just accept I, here (at college) because it does not define me as a person. I do not place myself in a specific racial group. I feel like my identity is because I'm sheltered. I believe it's because I chose to achieve manners and becoming a proper person like anyone else. Although others who disagree wouldn't say the same due to their environment of their childhood. I feel like it may be part of me as a fraction, but not as a whole. I know I have more to offer as well (Reece, 2017).

Conclusion

“African-Americans are told to “dress white” and to abandon “street talk”; Asian-Americans are told to avoid seeming “fresh off the boat”; women are told to “play like men” at work and to make their child-care responsibilities invisible; Jews are told not to be “too Jewish”; Muslims, especially after 9/11, are told to drop their veils and their Arabic; the disabled are told to hide the paraphernalia they use to manage their disabilities. This is so despite the fact that American society has seemingly committed itself, after decades of struggle, to treat people in these groups as full equals.... In the new generation, discrimination directs itself not against the entire group, but against the subset of the group that fails to assimilate to mainstream norms” (Yoshino, 2005). This forced sense of conformity has harmed the supposed individuality that is guaranteed in the basic tenants of the Constitution.

History is an integral component of this cultural collision. Not all stakeholders view American history through the same lens. The cascade of opposing views must be considered if the future is to successfully be immersed in true tolerance. “It confirmed how inextricably interwoven the past is in the present, how heavily that past bears on the future; we cannot talk about black lives mattering or police brutality without reckoning with the very foundation of this country. We must acknowledge the plantation, must unfold white sheets, must recall the black diaspora to understand what is happening now” (Ward, 2016).

Open dialogue must be the foundation of understanding. Currently, few people feel comfortable facilitating open forums where the true emotions of American history can be freely spoken. The challenging aspect of this problem, it that long-standing frustration can incite potentially volatile conversations.

After initial racial issues can begin to be freely discussed and mutual understanding can begin to materialize, then the ideas of cultural expectations can be considered. This idea of cultural collectiveness is fundamental to the use of terms such as “Oreo.” Cultural understanding contains the basis as to why teens of color feel “social pressures to conform to mainstream white culture, they should be able to freely choose to identify with while culture if they wish (Yoshino, 2007). Basically it appears to be a violation of civil rights. Society must allow all citizens to live a life that allows them to pursue life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Black teens that enjoy academics must “dismiss anybody who tells them that having a book in their hand means they’re white” (McWhorter, 2014).

In these days of increasing multi-racial icons, those stagnant stereotypes of yesterday should be placed in the historical context where they belong. The perceived tolerance and acceptance that sustains the fabric of our current culture must allow all citizens to feel relevant in all sectors of the country. Major icons must speak to the youth to encourage individuality and the importance of pursuing dreams of the future that do not focus on any specific cultural expectations. “When self-esteem is established apart from race, then racial identity can only enhance because it is no longer needed for any other purpose” (Steele, 1990).

President Obama spoke openly about how black Americans using “group think” psychology to bully other blacks, keep them from expressing themselves as individuals and stop them from assimilating into the broader culture of America. “Sometimes African-Americans, in communities where I’ve worked, there’s been the notion of “acting white”—which sometimes is overstated. But there’s an element of truth to it, where, OK, if boys are reading too much, then, well, why are you doing that? Or why are you speaking so properly? And the notion that there’s some authentic way of being black, that if you’re going to be black you have to act a certain way and wear a certain kind of clothes, that has to go. But my point is, is that you don’t have to act a certain way to be authentic” (Wright, 2014).

“I think the real trouble between the races in America is that the races are not just races, but competing power groups—a fact that is easily minimized, perhaps because it is so obvious. What is not so obvious is that this is true quite apart from the issue of class. Even the well-situated middle-class (or wealthy) black is never completely immune to the peculiar contest of power that his skin color subjects him to. Race is a separate reality in American society, an entity that carries its own potential for power, a mark of fate that class can soften considerably, but not eradicate. The distinction of race has always been used in American life to sanction each race’s pursuit of power in relation to the other” (Steele, 1990). As our society evolves, the shifting of cultural power will allow the competing groups to equally compete for the desired equity in employment, entertainment and life in general.

We may find the answer in a very strange place: Broadway. The musical *Kinky Boots* establishes a definition of today’s hopeful version of tolerance and acceptance. A failing shoe company gains rebirth by no longer making traditional shoes to manufacturing sexy performance boots for drag queens. Many tumultuous relationships occur early in the production. As the characters get to know and understand each other, friendships arise, followed by acceptance. Difference becomes unimportant. Commonalities appear stronger and more obvious. Each group depends on each other for survival. The final musical number, *Just Be*, offers a six-step solution to solve problems that involve a lack of understanding. Their six-step process: 1. Pursue the truth. 2. Learn something new. 3. Accept yourself and you’ll accept others too. 4. Let love shine. 5. Let pride be your guide. 6. You change the world when you change your mind. Though these suggestions may appear cheesy and simplistic, they are a beginning philosophy that can hold people accountable in their understanding of tolerance and acceptance. As change is embraced, negative stereotypes can be erased and will have less impact of our American culture. The phenomenon of “Oreo” can be inextricably diminished and placed in a linguistics historical museum.

“Just Be, Who You Wanna Be
Never Let’um Tell You Who You Oughta Be

Just Be, With Dignity
Celebrate Your Life Triumphantly
Kinky Boots

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Yes, Mmmm, Snaps: The Influence of the Call and Response Tradition of the Black Church into Forensics

Tomeka M. Robinson, Sean Allen, & Goyland Williams

Abstract

The forensics community has long been hailed as one of the most accepting, progressive, and open-minded segments of the academy. However, minority competitors and coaches continually face a myriad of challenges in terms of acceptance within the community. Many scholars have argued for more inclusiveness within the activity in terms of representation and acceptance of literature from diverse perspectives (Robinson & Allen, 2018; Rogers et al., 2003; Billings, 2000), however, very little attention has been placed on the issue of behavioral norms and expectations within rounds. More specifically, no article to date has explored the impact of culture on audience reactions and behaviors within forensics. Many students, especially students of color, have been conditioned to engage in what is commonly referred to as the call and response tradition of the church from a young age. Snaps, mmmms, and other verbal and nonverbal expressions are a part of this engagement. Therefore, this paper argues that similar expressions within forensic rounds flow from this tradition and thus warrant an evaluation. We will use a critical race theory (CRT) lens to argue that the failure to recognize these behavioral norms as being culturally bound, at best misses the point of audience feedback and at worst upholds the idea that the only way to properly engage in performance is to conform to whiteness.

Introduction

“I wasn’t at AFA. I don’t know how bad the “mmmms” and snaps were, but the conversation is everywhere. I often “mmm” and used to get my life when people “mmmm” at my performances. Also, a few years ago wasn’t the same circuit advocating for people to literally get up and walk out in the middle of a performance if you’re triggered? But “mmm-ing” is distracting. As a performer, I can’t help but to

feel that the audience is always a part of my performance. Part of communicating is the response. The audience is that response. Whether it's a laugh at a joke, a tear at my sad moment, or a "mmmm" at a line that moved you."

These are the words from a student following discussions immediately after AFA in 2017 where many coaches, competitors, and judges took to Facebook and various other social media outlets to complain about the excessive snaps and mmmm moments in final rounds at the tournament. This post received many responses, mostly from other students and coaches of color agreeing with the sentiment in the post. While there was some disagreement on whether all of the displays were genuine, the comment that warranted the most likes from those engaging in the discussion was:

"Ultimately the norms of how folks experience the activity and interact with it should be decided by students. It's their nationals, it's for them. If they've sort of decided in some unspoken way that this is how one responds to a performance at this level, okay. I hear their arguments about being distracting, but I'm also like 'go to a slam, go to a church, go to a really bomb ass play, go to a wrestling match---vocal and physical response is real."

As communication scholars we know that when creating a public discourse, understanding the rhetorical situation is a necessary condition in ensuring the success of the discourse (Bitzer, 1986). The situation controls the rhetorical activity that the rhetor can generate because a fitting response to the exigence is primarily determined by the audience's emotional, logical, and psychological needs. As a result, it is the audience to whom the speaker must tailor their discourse.

The forensics community has long been hailed as one of the most accepting, progressive, and open-minded segments of the academy. However, minority competitors and coaches continually face a myriad of challenges in terms of acceptance. Many scholars have argued for more inclusiveness within the activity in terms of representation and acceptance of literature from diverse perspectives (Robinson & Allen, 2018; Rogers et al., 2003; Billings, 2000), however, very little attention has been placed on the issue of behavioral norms and expectations within rounds. More specifically, no article to date has explored the impact of culture on audience reactions and behaviors within forensics. Many students, especially students of color, have been conditioned to engage in

what is commonly referred to as the call and response tradition of the church from a young age. Snaps, mmmms, and other verbal and nonverbal expressions are a part of this engagement. Therefore, this paper argues that similar expressions within forensic rounds flow from this tradition and thus warrant an evaluation. We will use a critical race theory (CRT) lens to argue that the failure to recognize these behavioral norms as being culturally bound, at best misses the point of audience feedback and at worst upholds the idea that the only way to properly engage in performance is to conform to whiteness.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) was developed in the mid-1970's as a number of scholars noticed that there was a need for new theories and strategies to combat the more covert forms of racism that were gaining ground in the era. The basic CRT model consists of five elements: (1) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (2) the challenge to dominant ideology, (3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) the transdisciplinary perspective (Solorzano, 1997; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). The heart of CRT theory lies in the rejection of colorblind orientations of equality, expressed as "rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, [as this] can thus remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 49) and instead, calls for "aggressive, color conscious efforts to change the way things are" (Duncan, 1995, p. 164).

CRT also uniquely relies on narratives to substantiate claims. According to DeCuir & Dixson (2004) "an essential tenant of Critical Race Theory is counter storytelling" (p. 27). Deconstructing and understanding narratives can be used "to reveal the circular, self-serving nature of particular legal doctrines or rules" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. xvii). While many scholars argue for universalism over individual narratives, CRT emphasizes the role of individual narratives to the sense-making process, as we understand context through narrative. The unique focus on narratives coupled with a call for race-conscious decision making provides a useful lens when addressing the complexities of behavioral norms within forensic rounds.

Forensic Audience Norms

Given the degree to which forensics encourages and promotes various forms of original arguments and performances as a vehicle for social change, forensic competitors frequently employ different styles, epistemologies, and performance practices learned and used within their communities. Additionally, as a community, forensic competitors, audience members, and critic-judges are consistently tasked with listening, analyzing, and evaluating those performances as they compare to their counterparts. Forensic tournaments consist of three categories: limited preparation, public address, and oral interpretation. Each category has different expectations, rules, and norms for competitive success. Bartanen (1998) observes that oral interpretation competitors are called to reflect upon their “expressive and instrumental dimensions and how those messages can be best conveyed to new audiences” (p. 5-6). Public address competitors are more limited in their audience adaptation due to the memorized nature of speeches. However, they both share a commonality in that forensic competitors must consistently assess and engage “variable listener response to messages” (Bartanen, 1998, p. 6). Although Bartanen articulates the forensic competitor’s constant negotiation with tailoring one’s performance to fit audiences and feedback, her concerns fail to account for the influences that culture brings to bear on the nature of audience feedback.

As calls to diversify the forensic community continue to challenge the scarcity of racial, ethnic, and gendered minorities in certain events (public address and limited prep), over and against the representation in oral interpretation events, concerns of cultural methodologies and how ethnic minorities participate as both speaker and audience member have surfaced. Particularly, certain members of the community are frustrated with the ways in which competitors-as-audience provide immediate feedback by responding through sound in real time as a form of agreement with the message and/or performances choices. The negative reactions to this strategy suggest that some norm/expectation has been violated and should be relegated to some other space outside of the community.

Challenging Forensic Audience Norms

Modeled after early Greek and western-centered approaches, speech communication and forensics in particular operates from a paradigm that eschews audience interaction and avoids or overlooks culture in the service of discursive rigidity (Jackson, 2004). The normative practices in oral interpretation, unlike the public address or limited preparation category, allows more space for the audience to respond to expressive and performative choices of the performer. However, the forensic community, like the larger American society, still operates as an environment where white dominated hegemonic rhetorical practices are the norm.

In individual events that primarily utilize pathos as a competitive rhetorical strategy (oral interpretation events and persuasion), audience responses and interactions often draw upon elicited responses that are steeped in African-American rhetorical practices, while events that are tailored to logical appeals (public address and limited preparation events) are guided by an ethos that limits audience interaction and participation. The contrast in individual event rounds at forensic tournaments is that the listeners' responses are rather evoked than rehearsed. Audience members seem to give genuine reactions to the speaker. Similar to Gospel music making, singers and audiences appear not to be fully in conscious control of their behavior; they are out of time and space. These outburst responses suggest that this style of praise and celebration is not understood by those outside of this experience (Banjo & Williams, 2011). Simply put, the "response" from audiences in forensic competitions are rather triggered from the "call" or "performance". These responses from audience members appear to signify an agreement with the speaker and their advocacy.

Call & Response in the African American Church

Although inherently connected to historical African roots, call and response is pervasive in contemporary African American church services. A pastor may call out to his congregation "Can I get an Amen?" The audience then responds with "Amen". This is a form of interaction between a speaker and audience in which the speaker's statements ("calls") are punctuated by responses from the listeners (Foster, 2001). Call and response and audience performance can all be thought of as part

of the group or communicational nature of art. This theory of art is interactive, process-oriented and concerned with innovation. These patterns provide a basic model that depends and thrives upon audience performance and improvisation, which work together to ensure that the art will be meaningful or functional to the community (Sale, 1992, p. 41.) Pattillo-McCoy (1988) contends that these cultural practices such as call and response interaction, invigorate activism. She places focus on black churches, rituals and how they are utilized in social action. Specifically, the power of call and response interaction lies not only in the possibility of realizing concrete results from supplications, but also in the cultured familiarity of these tools among African Americans as media for interaction, conducting a meeting, holding a rally, or getting out to vote. This culture constituting a common language that motivates social action. Thus, the call and response format tend to become a diasporic tradition that is rooted in traditional African cultures but similarly helps to create a new, unique tradition in the United States (Epstein, 1977).

Call & Response in Forensics

Similarly, within forensic rounds for students of color trained in this tradition, performances or even lines that are particularly deep often elicit the “response.” It is a natural expression to encourage, engage with, and respond to the performer and invigorates the activism response that Pattillo-McCoy (1988) describes. However, this in-round responsive style continues to be criticized by many forensics competitors and coaches. Many feel some responses are more over the top than genuine, with audience members overreacting to give certain competitors an edge to win over others. Gaer (2002) describes this manipulation of conventions in order to increase competitive success. He contends that one of the most often heard criticisms of forensics, and one that a modern Lysimachus would no doubt make, is that the emphasis it places on competition. As noted by Somers-Willett (2005) where she compares slam to forensics competition, Damon (1998) writes, “the criterion for slam success seems to be some kind of realness authenticity that effects a felt change of consciousness on the part of the listener” (p. 329). This leads some to question whether audiences and performers consciously or unconsciously rely on material that speaks to marginalized identities and thus elicits this “response.” Perhaps some audience members are overreacting to performances, even so, when competitors perform, racial

or not, they are performing an experience. Emotional experiences are not just limited to race, but every individual in society and the audience provides feedback based on how they experience the performance.

Implications for Forensic Community

Calls for more diversity and inclusion within the community are hollow if they fail to take into account issues like how culture impacts audience feedback. Acceptance of difference forms of audience reactions are not only necessary but vital to the growth of our community. Suppressing or critiquing alternative forms of expression without considering the history and culture behind them upholds white supremacist ideologies. If as a community, we are serious about dismantling systems of oppression, then we have to also extend that ideology to behavioral norms.

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**The Challenges of Dissent:
Teaching Conflict, Forgiveness, and Civility in the
Communication Curricula**

Scott Jensen & Randy K. Dillon

Abstract

The genesis of this article began with the first author (Jensen) presenting on the topic at the 2017 Annual Conference of the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri (STAM) Lake of the Ozarks. The STAM presentation was nominated by the STAM Executive Committee and Board of Governors as a program for the Annual Convention of the Central States of Communication Association. Later, reviewers encouraged that a classroom “example” of teaching be included as part of the program. The second author (Dillon) supplied an example of teaching conflict management as part of students preparing for a communication internship. Through a vetting process by different States Advisory representatives at the Annual Convention of the National Communication Association in Dallas, Texas in November 2017, this program was selected as a top States Advisory conference program. Both authors presented this work as the spotlight program from the State of Missouri at the Annual CSCA Convention, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 6, 2018. The first part of this article provides the argument for teaching conflict, forgiveness, and civility. The latter part consists of one example where the teaching is applied in a Communication Internship preparation course.

Any parent finds reasons to be proud of his/her children; I’m (Scott) no different. For me, even beyond my kids’ talents on the baseball field, in musical performances, or on the dance floor, I take great pride in my children’s’ abilities to help their friends resolve conflicts. Their frustration with conflicts and the inability to resolve them—or avoid them—within their social circles is a sign of maturity that is a void among both adolescents and adults. Conflict is not always enjoyable, largely because it is a dialectic. Inherently, conflict means there is a difference of opinion, created by multiple perspectives, that can

only be managed by engaging the differences. When we decide to approach differences in perspective, we begin the conflict management process. While each conflict interaction can evolve in a number of ways, those that are managed with some degree of competence have common denominators: they reflect a desire to be aware of the differences that drive the conflict, they demonstrate a willingness to listen to and respect the differences, and they acknowledge that conflict is inevitable and essential for relational growth and sound decision making.

We find that conflict resolution is among the most challenging and salient courses and subject matter we teach. Students are often uncomfortable with engaging conflict, or admittedly unwilling to consider challenges to their worldviews. Today's world makes us witness to unprecedented levels of mismanagement of conflict. It seems social dialogue is growing more polarized, which reflects a dogmatic defense of our worldviews and likely rejection of perspectives that challenge what we think and feel. A lack of willingness to engage discussions over difference in perspectives is the first and most impactful contribution to an inability to competently manage conflict dialogue. The seemingly inherent discomfort is the motivation for this paper. The communication curricula is well designed to not only help our students understand the importance of engaging difference and embracing conflict, but also to equip them with the knowledge and skills that prepare them for their future relationships and responsibilities of citizenship.

Defining our Terms

Defining these concepts in our teaching reflects intentional efforts to shape a particular perspective on the part of our students. Conflict, according to Hocker and Wilmot (2014), is "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals." (p. 13). Forgiveness, according to Lulofs and Cahn (2000), is "a cognitive process that consists of letting go of feelings of revenge and desires to retaliate." Reconciliation, as described by Hocker and Wilmot (2014), is "the process of repairing a relationship so that reengagement, trust, and cooperation become possible after a transgression or violation." (p. 332). Whereas, Argument is defined by Kroll (2013) in a way that promotes understanding as a goal of the interaction. Based on his perspective of argument as a gateway to peace

and understanding, he writes that his teaching of argument and conflict would highlight learning “how to reframe disputes so that the focus was on problems of questions that drew writers and readers away from contentious argumentation and into mutual inquiry.” (p. 6)

Why the Communication Curricula as the Centerpiece for Understanding Conflict?

Communication is inherent, and is perhaps the most essential factor in conflict. For communication signals the existence of conflict. It can create conflict and communication can shape how the conflict evolves or devolves. Furthermore, in order for the communication to be resolved, communication must take place.

Communication and performance learning spaces are the contexts in which our students find their voice and learn to use it responsibly. Within communication classrooms students are exposed to both intra and interpersonal communication. Students learn about audience and how to pursue and achieve shared understanding. Performance learning spaces encourage both an understanding and the creative expression of human conditions. Stories give opportunities to recreate positive and negative communication choices and episodes. These disciplines of Communication and Performance are at the heart of helping our students grow as empathic and responsible individuals.

Today’s Need for Conflict... and an Understanding of It

A number of realities make the teaching of conflict, including forgiveness and civility, paramount. Today’s youth are less interpersonally connected than ever before. Electronic and social media engagement allows for meaningful interpersonal connection. However, it lacks a physical immediacy within which critical communication skills are necessary. Considerations such as touch, proxemic influences, facial interaction, paralanguage, immediacy of feedback and response, and an accountability for choices that comes with being physically present are not replicable in social media or through electronic exchanges. Today’s youth communicate in ways that often do not motivate them to think about, let alone become skillful with these communication behaviors and realities. These nonverbal considerations are vehicles through which

disagreements and conflicts are communicated. We are in a negative spiral of reinforcement of ineffective communication. Engaging conflict in negative ways, or without an understanding of how to effectively engage, reinforces poor management of conflict.

Jandt (2017) notes that childhood instruction about conflict likely comes from what we model from our surroundings. In his overview of conflict, he writes that “most child development theorists assert that it is peer relationships that shape our behavior and that the specific conflict-ending strategy used is a product of maturity.” (p. 5) More specifically, we grow our conflict management skills through practice, even when that practice is a repetition of less mature (or healthy, appropriate, etc.) choices. Too often students are placed in situations that call for collaboration or compromise, yet little if any instruction is included with those activities. The implication of what Jandt suggests is that we may create opportunities to reinforce bad habits, making it even more challenging to create positive approaches to conflict and argument as our students evolve into adults.

The polarized society in which we live is further testament to the need for teaching civility in our communication. Too many individuals are not skilled at tempering their worldviews and belief-disbelief systems when they are part of an argument or dialogue. Examples of this lack of skill or lack of adherence to this skill bombard us every day. U.S. Congressional votes are increasingly cast along party lines. Ad hominem attacks are often at the heart of dialogue between professions in both private and public sectors, with these unreasoned approaches to disagreement being showcased in the media. Because this lack of civility is actuated by people who are found by many to be credible, the poor communication choices are received as appropriate or, worse yet, effective.

Signs of Conflict Gone Badly

Perhaps the most profound signs of conflict gone badly are those that strike closest to home—intrapersonal manifestations. Manusov (2011) notes that we often engage in uncivil dialogue with ourselves, engaging in self-talk that is judgmental and blaming. Consequently, the more comfortable we become with this internal dialogue, the more it manifests itself in a comfort level with such negative language. Manusov (2011) writes, “For many of us, the things we say in our minds to and

about ourselves—often over and over—are rarely ever subject to rebuke, perhaps because the audience (us) to such communication (ours) is also the critic (us)” (p. 17).

Because others do not “hear” the incivility we have with ourselves, we are left to our own devices to curb our tendencies to unfairly judge ourselves. One cause is also a factor in reinforcement of negative conflict choices—social media. Today we have points of comparison—and make those comparisons. Furthermore, we can mass produce personal narratives with little accountability—and we do, including the creation of false narratives to which we aspire.

Similarly, our placating of conflict or otherwise uncomfortable situations often motivates us to resist, ignore, or reject messages that are uncomfortable. These tendencies create a perceived “right” to refuse exposure to ideas or interactions that make one uncomfortable.

Lukianoff and Haidt (2015) talk about microaggressions, or words/interactions that are perceived as violent because they presume realities that may provoke disagreement. They also reference trigger warnings, or cautions educators are supposed to provide for students who may find class content, such as a film depicting rape or alcoholism, to provoke a strong emotional reaction. The authors note that many educators are reporting a chilling effect on their teaching from a growing trend to shield students from content that is potentially emotionally disturbing or divisive enough to create an emotionally disturbing communication situation (like a spirited class debate). They offer this warning as an implication to these trends:

“If campus culture conveys the idea that visitors must be pure, with resumes that never offend generally left-leaning campus sensibilities, then higher education will have taken a further step toward intellectual homogeneity and the creation of an environment in which students rarely encounter diverse viewpoints. And universities will have reinforced the belief that it’s okay to filter out the positive. If students graduate believing that they can learn nothing from people they dislike or from those with whom they disagree, we will have done them a great intellectual disservice.” (on-line)

Shulevitz (2015), in a New York Times commentary, talks about safe spaces, or areas in which uncomfortable exchanges are shielded. She writes that they are “an expression of the conviction, increasingly prevalent among college students, that their schools should keep them

from being ‘bombarded’ by discomfiting or distressing viewpoints” (online). In explaining the potential for safe spaces to silence dissent and constructive disagreement, she notes that “the notion that ticklish conversations must be scrubbed clean of controversy has a way of leaking out and spreading. Once you designate some spaces as safe, you imply that the rest are unsafe.” (online)

The other general warning sign is our failure to embrace conflict with communication choices that demonstrate respect and openness to difference. Fritz (2011) writes, “Communication marked by incivility—rudeness, impoliteness, failure to treat others with at least minimal respect—distracts us from tasks, increases stress, and infects the organizational climate, creating a toxic matrix of distrust and cynicism that transforms enthusiasm into reluctant resignation and daily routines into drudgery” (p. 12). It is this tendency that is becoming commonplace in society, and the impetus for increased difficulty to engage someone in a constructive dialogue when disagreement is at its core.

Embracing Negative Conflict in Communication and Performance Learning Spaces

The very nature of communication and performance education is the seemingly perfect academic context for helping our students become better equipped as practitioners of—and models for—conflict management. These learning spaces encourage voice and a dialectic that helps students understand their voice. Much of the theory and practice in these contexts encourage promoting debate and discussion. What we do in these learning spaces addresses both the principles of effective conflict management, as well as corrects negative conflict choices. Central to both communication and performance education is listening, understanding and embracing difference in experiences and worldviews, and engaging difference with reasoning and civility. It is often the lack of these qualities that fosters negative conflict.

As in any skill, we learn to communicate better and manage conflict more competently when we practice it. That means, like in any other activity, engaging the conflict by often confronting uncomfortable situations and topics. While doing this face-to-face, in the physical presence of one another, exacerbates the discomfort, it also affords a more authentic dialogue.

Face-to-face interaction is commonplace in communication and performance classrooms and co-curricular activities. This has the benefit of combatting the increasing reliance our students have with communicating predominantly on social media, a context in which interaction lacks physical and synchronous elements that are both highly influential in how conflicts are managed. It mirrors the way our students will be expected to communicate as professionals and parents as they evolve into adults.

The Benefits of Teaching the Pedagogy and Practice of Conflict

Clearly the immediate benefits of teaching conflict and civility is the pre-emption or reversal of the problems that stem from how our students presently manage their conflicts. Perhaps the greatest benefit is instilling confidence in our students as advocates for not only their own ideas, but also for the notion that conflict is essential and can be a positive experience. Teaching the importance of civility in discourse and the strategies and choices that define civil exchanges implicitly models both an attitude and a skill set that challenges otherwise negative models that our students may follow in their communication exchanges.

Our students are also better prepared for success when they learn to constructively engage disagreement and uncomfortable situations. As the expression suggests, “life is hard.” We seldom have the opportunity to self-select the make-up of our classrooms, our work environments, or other contexts in which we communicate. We have little control over the convictions of people in our lives, nor over how they communicate those convictions. Reality guarantees that we will be forced to confront divisive situations in our lives, even when those situations create profound discomfort for us. Our students must be willing to confront conflict.

Students must understand how to balance their own advocacy with a sensitivity toward others with whom they are interacting. They must value and understand how to promote civility.

Manusov (2011) writes, “We are more likely to treat others poorly when we think poorly of ourselves; those angriest with themselves are those most likely to act angrily with others. But if we can find forgiveness in ourselves, we may let go of the strong negative emotions we carry around with

us and spend less time emanating those emotions outward”
(p. 19).

Looking more generally, teaching civil approaches to conflict generates better citizenship. Quality decision making mandates considerations of a breadth of ideas, generated by an often-diverse collection of individuals who are part of the decision-making process. Elections are inherently grounded in competing viewpoints. The United States of America, in particular, prides itself on values of pluralism and an encouragement of diversity in people, experiences, and ideas. The very idea of being “American” or being a responsible citizen is grounded in difference that inevitably leads to conflict. While engaging these differences of opinion does not always result in feelings of satisfaction for all involved, competent conflict management can help ensure that the dialogues are characterized by respect for the differences that bring the conflict to light. This willing engagement of difference, and skillful approach to conflict, help shape a student to be a citizen who contributes to society through communication competence and a passion for respect and civility, resources sorely lacking in today’s world.

Increased propensity of conflicts to result in forgiveness and reconciliation. Orloff (2011) writes that “our desire to transform anger is a summoning of peace, well worth the necessary soul stretching.” (on-line). Forgiveness, as defined earlier, assumes an abandonment of efforts to “get even.” It entails a conscious choice to let any transgression rest. It is an active and deliberate choice that is difficult, particularly when transgressions are personal. Too often our engagement of conflict, because of incivility and/or a lack of skill in managing conflict results in perceived transgressions. Forgiveness allows us to transcend those feelings. In the end, peacemaking is made possible through forgiveness, and even more so when we seek reconciliation.

Seizing and Creating Opportunities in Speech and Theatre Learning Spaces

There is no shortage of techniques, strategies, and experiences through which civil conflict can be taught. Below is a simple bullet-pointed list of several ideas. Other resources that have valuable testimony of the importance of engaging conflict and advocacy, as well as suggestions for doing so include Finkel (2000), who writes about ways of promoting student-centered learning that democratizes our students,

Snider and Schnurer (2006), who offer a number of suggestions for teaching debate across the curriculum, and Briscoe (2016), who shares narratives that capture the life-changing impact of debate. Sharing classroom experiences with fellow educators will, no doubt, yield a seemingly unlimited list of other ways that our speech, communication, performance, and theatre students can benefit from the pedagogy and practice of civil conflict management.

- Intentional scene and character analysis
- Debates
- Games
- Constructing responses to commentaries
- Re-shaping vitriolic messaging
- Deliberately selected scripts for performance
- Small group assignments
- Discussing/Analyzing websites with competing ideas
- Discussions/Assignments focused on election-year candidates and issues
- Film and television reflections
- Improvisational depictions of situations
- Empower students with decision making in their co-curricular teams, casts, and clubs

Like so much of our communication, we tend to overlook the importance of deliberate instruction of communication skills, opting instead to assign speeches absent training in formal speaking, or expecting our students to engage others with civility without being cognizant of the reinforced ideas of conflict and interaction that are often misguided. If we want students who are confident enough to advocate for themselves, sensitive enough to do so in ways that show genuine respect for others, and skillful enough to do so in the face of unpredictable contexts and potential discomfort, we must be proactive in helping them fulfill our hopes for them. We must do what we do best—teach. The remaining part of this article utilizes teaching conflict management in a specific context—communication internships. It is only one example, but hopefully a conversation will continue and others will be empowered to come up with their own powerful examples and applications of teaching conflict, conflict management, forgiveness, and civility. As communication and performance professionals it is a responsibility to do so. Our students need it, and the future of society depends upon it.

“Just One Example – Using Real-Life Conflict Scenarios” Teaching Healthy Conflict Management as Part of an Internship Preparation Experience

Internships are opportunities for students to gain supervised practical experience. I’m Randy, and as the internship coordinator for the Department of Communication at Missouri State University over the past ten plus years I have worked with over 700 undergraduate and graduate interns navigate internships for profit and non-profit organizations. Internships can be valuable experiences for several reasons. First, employers value experience; internships can give students professional experience he/she might lack otherwise. Second, internships allow students to apply classroom knowledge in practical settings. Third, an internship experience will let students see firsthand what it is like to work in a particular profession or organization. This may affirm for the student the career path he/she has chosen, or it may lead one to decide on a different path. Most internships are unpaid, but there are occasional exceptions.

Duties during one’s internship will vary according to the individual site and internship agreement, but a description of the responsibilities is agreed to before the internship begins. Examples of internship sites for communication majors at Missouri State University include: businesses, non-profit groups, university offices, professional organizations, sports organizations, and government offices.

Although Communication students at Missouri State University can do an “internship” at any time during their tenure as a college student and list such on a resume, an individual student must meet certain requirements in order to do an internship for university credit. Since internship credit is at an upper division level (COM 495) to qualify for an internship a student must be a junior or senior and have completed six credits beyond the core courses for students majoring in communication. Communication minors should also be at least a junior and have six hours of communication courses completed. The prospective intern must have a minimum of 2.5 GPA overall out of a 4.0 grading scale as well as a 2.5 or above GPA in the major/minor. Students submit an internship proposal approved by the department internship coordinator. In addition, the student intern must be officially admitted to his/her communication degree program by the date one’s internship begins.

Certain limitations do apply for communication internships at Missouri State University. One limitation is that credit cannot be given retroactively for prior internships. Sequential internships must generally be at different sites; occasional exceptions to this may be negotiated if responsibilities differ for the second internship. Communication majors can enroll in up to six academic credit hours of internship, whereas, communication minors are limited to no more than three academic credit hours. Each academic credit is equal to 48 hours worked at the internship site. Most students enroll in three academic hours which requires a minimum of 144 site hours (48 x 3); with some enrolling in six academic hours which requires a minimum of 288 work hours put in at the internship (48 x 6).

Students are expected to complete concurrent assignments for the communication internship at Missouri State University. Assignments include: Keeping daily journal entries that ask the intern to state what he or she is doing, and to reflect on the day's work. If the opportunity arises, interns are encouraged to conduct a personal interview with their supervisor or a superior about their own career experiences and recommendations. Each intern is required to meet with the academic internship coordinator at least once in the semester, usually before midterm, to check on progress and provide feedback. During the last couple weeks of the semester and when the internship is concluding, a student intern must provide submit a hard copy (three-ring binder) portfolio which includes sample materials of work completed during the internship. In some cases, online portfolios are permitted. The portfolio must be clear, organized, and professional looking since this will showcase the intern's work, and can be used to demonstrate to future employers. Other requirements include writing a five to seven-page internship evaluation reflecting on the semester's work, and what one has learned. In addition, each intern must submit accurate time sheets signed by one's supervisor, and arrange for a final letter of evaluation from the internship site supervisor to be sent to the Communication Department's internship coordinator.

In my over ten years as the internship coordinator working with students engaged in what for many is their first professional work experience I hear from them about what excites as well as what surprises them about their internships. No matter what the challenges are in learning a new position, one thing that is common for an internship, as with any job, or career move, is the importance of dealing with the

interpersonal situations that one finds in the workplace. As Waldron (2012) states, "...whenever [people] closely coordinate their efforts to achieve important goals, their interactions have the potential to become emotional" (p. 104). Thus, the biggest challenge for many new interns is managing actual and potential interpersonal conflict interactions with supervisors, co-workers, and clients. Working with interns on how to handle these conflicts is the emphasis of the rest of this section in this article. What follows is a description of how I have worked with students in an internship preparatory course on learning about conflict, conflict management styles, as well as scenarios that as a group we can look over to help assist students in critically analyzing potential conflict situations, and how to best handle them.

Although not required, some of my interns have taken advantage of a one credit hour internship preparation course. As part of the course, students are given the opportunity to learn and discuss the topic of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that occur between superior/subordinate, co-workers, and with clients/patrons of a work organization. For each time I have taught the course I have been fortunate to have colleagues in the Center for Dispute Resolution at Missouri State University who have assisted my interns in talking about the assumptions of conflict--including that conflict can occur in the workplace, and can be normal and even healthy if conducted correctly. With guidance students are encouraged to talk about conflict, and how their early and previous experiences have influenced their own ways of "doing conflict". We also discuss different conflict styles and how differences in conflict styles can even initiate and lead to more conflict.

As part of the internship preparation course, students are introduced to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes that differentiate the five major styles of conflict. Please see references for a more complete guide. Briefly, these styles are:

- Avoiding – This style is often characterized by physical and or emotional withdrawals.
- Accommodating - Sometimes referred to as smoothing or obliging. This type of style means giving in, and has more concern about the other person than the self.
- Competing - Forcing or arguing without listening. Coercing another is part of the competing style.
- Compromising – Focusing on trade-offs of give and take, but offering little to no mutual satisfaction.

- **Confronting** – Often known as collaborating. Integration and mutual satisfaction are key elements of this kind of conflict style. It often calls for more communication and brain-storming (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977).

After going through the major conflict styles, students talk about when to use and not use different conflict styles. Rahim (2002) provides a helpful matrix that offers suggestions depending on the context and the players for when a certain conflict style may be preferable, and when to refrain from using a particular conflict management style. For example, avoiding may be seen as not a very good conflict management style, but if the task is simple and not so important or if there needs to be more time needed for processing than the avoiding style may be the best to employ at the moment. Likewise, a compromising conflict style may be the best if consensus can't be reached or a temporary decision needs to be made (Rahim, 2002).

Next, students are put into small groups and assigned one or two of the eight scenarios conflict scenarios that are listed later in this article. I developed each of these scenarios inspired by conflict internship situations. What resonates with new student interns is that each of the eight scenarios results from a real-life internship conflict that took place with previous interns. Names of individuals, places, and other identifying information have been changed, but the actual conflict is presented as it occurred. After reading the scenarios students are then given follow up questions including: What do you want for yourself in this situation? What don't you want to have happen? What story are you telling yourself about the other person's behavior/perspective in this situation? Assume your supervisor/coworker is a rational, reasonable, decent person—what might explain their behavior in this situation? How will you talk to your supervisor/coworker about this situation? Students are asked to read out loud their assigned scenario(s) to the rest of the class, and then present their responses. Time for open question and answer discussion including entertaining other possible strategies for responding are explored.

Internship Scenarios (from the interns who have come before)

Scenario 1: Stuck--and not much to show for it.

You're stuck. It's been over 6 weeks into your internship and all you have to show for it is managing the social media sites for the company. Your primary duties have consisted of updating the Facebook page, and keeping up on the twitter chats (although not that many) for the company that you intern for. Your supervisor and other co-workers have provided you with several compliments about your skills with managing "that social media stuff". However, you would like to do more. Last week you mentioned to your supervisor about this but the result has been putting in more data entries on the address contact list. You know that you could do well if only given a chance to prove yourself. Another employee at the company who has heard about your growing frustration assured you that you just needed to put in more time before being allowed to do something other than what you have been doing already. But you don't have time—the semester will be ending before you know it. You are concerned that you will be spending the entire semester with nothing to show in your portfolio except that you kept up the Facebook pages. Not only could this not look good for your final internship grade (you fear) but also for getting experience for the next internship or job. Your frustration only increases when you think back to your original interview with your supervisor that you would get the opportunity to work directly with event planning, writing, as well as other PR work. You know that the auction fundraiser benefit that is one of the biggest events that the organization is involved with is coming up in a couple months and you believe that you could be beneficial to help out on this. So far, your attempts to get to work more with this event are going nowhere.

Scenario 2: Believe me, this is not what I signed up for.

Your internship supervisor looks like they are going to have a nervous breakdown. No wonder. Since Benjamin, one of the best public relations/marketing employees left the company over a month ago to move to Denver with his wife who got a job transfer, nothing has been the same here at Best First Marketing. What was a busy fast paced

environment while Benjamin was here has become intolerable with dropped deadlines, disappointed clients, and sharp tempers all around. To make matters even worse the hiring for Benjamin's replacement has not gone well. The person that was going to be here scooted out after only 3 days on the job. Your supervisor is exhausted from the first round of searches and now has to conduct another one. There is so much work that needs to be done and you feel for everyone who is giving 110%. You have tried to do your best and even came in earlier and left later than your assigned internship hours. You want to help out further-and you have. However, it is becoming apparent to you that all this stress and work at Best First are taking a toll on other parts of your life. One thing for certain your classes are suffering. You bombed your last exam in the Intercultural Com class. You know that you should have passed that. A paper that you turned in as another class assignment was not your best and you are waiting to see the negative results of your lack of efforts. You need this internship to not only graduate; it would look great on for your resume. But you are exhausted and you don't know how much more you can take.

Scenario 3: How much longer can I keep up this charade?

You think you are going to throw up. Sitting in your car you can't seem to get the energy to open the door and drag yourself into the office. You're downright anxious and miserable and it is all because you realize this internship is a BIG mistake. Oh the people at your internship site have been so good and nice and encouraging. They all seem so full of pep and you have put in an Oscar worthy performance so far to go along with this charade. But you hate the cold calls, the visits to the stores to ask for this and that, the constant bargaining for advertising rates. Furthermore, you don't have any faith in the product that you are selling—advertising in a College welcome back to campus directory. What college student is going to clip paper coupons to get a discount on dry cleaning anyway? You try to look on the bright side in that you have learned a lot about sales, even got to spend an all-expense paid week-long “boot camp” for summer interns at the company's training headquarters in North Carolina. You are even getting paid for this internship. Your friends and others in your classes were so envious of you when you interviewed and then landed this internship. But you hate what you are doing. You say to yourself that you could stick it out, but it

is only June 19 and the internship doesn't end until August 8. You want to say something but feel that you will be a disappointment to so many people, your internship supervisor, your teachers, your friends, and especially your mom and dad who told everybody that you had this incredible internship—and you're getting paid too. You had been so excited about this internship. Now you are miserable.

Scenario 4: Am I being paranoid or what?

What can you do to tell Stephanie that you DON'T want her job? When you first started work at your internship things seemed to be going so good. You immediately felt like you were needed at this internship and everyone made you feel welcome. You were even told by your internship supervisor that you would not be referred to as an intern, but as an “associate.” After your first week, you even went out to happy hour with Stephanie and a group of other co-workers after completing that big assignment. You have been asked to share your opinions at the Monday morning “associates chat” where all 10 employees get together to access what needs to be done that coming week, what is going well, what is not, and how to proceed. Lately, there has been increasing tension between Stephanie and you. You don't know how or when it started, or even if you should make a big deal about it. But, Stephanie has been saying negative things about you. They are jibes that could be taken in a humorous way, but you are starting to have suspicions. Stephanie has more than once said, “you want to take over my job,” and “just because you are getting a college degree doesn't make you special.” You tried to brush these comments off, but now you are expecting that Stephanie has been going to your supervisor with negative things about you. The internship supervisor hasn't said anything directly about this situation, but you just feel it. You are starting to get the cold shoulder from your supervisor and even others in the company. Must be things that Stephanie has said! Hmm, everybody seems to be all smiles, but?

Scenario 5: Ouch!

You can't believe what you are reading. In your hand is a copy of a letter of final evaluation from your internship supervisor. A copy was also sent to your teacher Dr. Dillon. The letter addresses your strengths at the internship with some things like you came to work on

time, was appropriate in your dress, etc. But you take a double take --the final paragraph says that you need to work on your interpersonal skills in....Furthermore, you are often “immature” in your attitude toward.... There was even something about not being flexible in the software choices that you make. This is unbelievable. Never did you have a clue that your supervisor had this opinion about you. You even talked with your supervisor who only seemed to have positive things to report about you. Now this! What are you going to do? You are concerned about this letter with its pointed criticisms will not only impact your internship grade, but you were counting on a strong letter for future employment. On top of that you referred a friend to apply for this internship next semester.

Scenario 6: From the Ozarks to the Big Apple. I've got this! Do I?

Yesterday, you did it again. You mumbled, and froze at the last meeting. You have lost confidence. You feel like you are out of your league. All these thoughts flood through your head because you have lots of time to think when you are riding with strangers on the morning mass transit. You thought it would get better as you got further along in your internship, but things don't seem to be getting better. If you work alone, you seem to be doing all right, but all these professionals with their perfect looks, their perfect outfits, and their perfect lives are resulting in you feeling like less than a mouse. There is more than one person here that for the life of you makes you feel this way. The supervisor knows your aunt because they went to school together. This connection no doubt helped you land this incredible internship in this exciting city. From the start there has always been a bit of an edge between you and your supervisor. You have to admit that you may have said some things that could be taken out of context, but the reason you said these is because you feel nervous and threatened. Now, you think that you have bombed not only this internship, but your chances in this career field. Oh no! Your bus is going to be late to work again, and you will have to go through the scene again about being late and why. There will be the looks of there “the hillbilly girl” goes again with her excuses, and then I will probably stutter something out anyway. But, I want to tell them to all go to hell. One thing for certain public transportation from Jersey to Manhattan sucks

Scenario 7: Got a hold on me/Never let you go.

You are racing back to your old summer internship. Jim emailed and Angie called your cell asking to please help out with You have to admit you had a blast at your summer internship. You learned so much, worked with great people, and concluded that what you are learning in school is building toward something that could turn out to be a successful career someday. The name of the company itself on your resume will do wonders for your prospects. Jim and Angie seem to know everybody and everybody knows them. Plus, you have to admit you liked being called the “millennial wunderkind” when it came to producing materials with Adobe. However, things lately have been getting a bit tedious. It is closing in on the end of October and you have been racing back and forth to your “old” internship for over two months. You did well on your internship—earning an A. Now as you weave around traffic on Glenstone you have lost count of the number of times that Jim or Angie have begged you to come back to lend your special expertise. They taught you so much and you know the special circumstances and skills of what needs to be done. You want to help, but you are saddled with 18 hours this semester, a part time job, as well as serving as chair of your student organization that is preparing for Homecoming next week. The summer internship seems to be becoming the slow bleed, something that you are not able to shake off. You don’t want to jeopardize your relationship with the folks back at your summer internship, but you need to do or say something to move on. But how? You can’t keep this pace up.

Scenario 8: Friends and work don’t mix—this time for sure.

Why am I such a pushover? It was I who should get credit for selling all those tickets for the Cardinals upcoming fundraiser. Ryan didn’t do a damn thing, but he gets just as much credit for the success from the higher ups as I do. At first, I thought it would be fun to work with one of my fraternity buddies in one of the best sports PR/marketing internships there is in the local community. However, after covering up for him while he was hung over the other day, as well as doing his calls for him more than once, I have about reached my limit. Ryan and I first started working at this internship back in April. Ryan told me about this opportunity because as a business student the recruiter had come to the Business College to look for business majors to intern for the Cards

season. Ryan helped me get an interview with the Cards, despite the fact that they had never hired a Communication major for this type of internship. I appreciate this and have told him so. I have to admit Ryan is a fun friend and frat brother, but as a co-worker—sheesh. He is so well liked by everybody, the guys back at the Greek house, the girls, the coaches, players, and the staff here. His dad is pretty big in the St. Louis area. I don't want to lose Ryan as a friend, but I'm afraid that something is going to happen that I get the blame for what Ryan has done—or not done.

Conflict is part of any organization where people work together. New student interns should be made aware that there are healthy ways to handle conflict management with supervisors, co-workers, and others that are part of the workplace including volunteers, patrons, and clients/customers. Understanding different conflict styles and knowing when it is best to employ a style can help the student intern be more comfortable and successful when he or she does get faced with a workplace conflict. Providing opportunities with real-life scenarios of those who came before them (previous interns), and discussing these in a safe learning environment help cement this learning about conflict management in the workplace. This will be a skill that can be honed as the student navigates the internship and moves on to other job positions that hopefully constitutes a long successful career.

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Invitational Rhetoric and the Speech Course

Ryan Louis

Speech textbooks often provide rudimentary introductions of critical thinking and audience-focused methods to first-year students. Their broad categories of speech genres make the rhetorical purpose of each speech seem simple and intuitive: an informative informs, a persuasive persuades. The complex nature of purpose gets lost when we try to force square intentions into round objectives.

Foss and Foss's (2012) textbook from Waveland Press contemplates a different paradigm that calls on students and professors to "invite transformation," eschew typical generic forms and replace them with "interactional goals." These goals reach across traditional genres to incorporate myriad forms of communicative situations: interpersonal, intercultural, small group, mediated and public. The authors meticulously consider ethics—discouraging *conquest* and *conversion* rhetorics that seek to dominate or change. They find fault with *benevolent* and *advisory* rhetorics that must assume the internal worlds of the audience. These rhetorical modes, they argue, structure discourse as top-down: a speaker, working within such paradigms, acts as conveyor of ultimate knowledge and, thus, assumes a form of personal power *over* the audience. Instead, the authors suggest a model of *invitational* rhetoric in which:

you initiate communication with others because you believe you can offer opportunities for growth. By offering your perspective in the form of a presentation, you invite the audience to see and experience the world in new and more complete ways. At the same time, you are open to learning from the perspectives of others as you engage with them... You may choose, as a result, to engage in a process of questioning and rethinking your own viewpoint that leads to your own transformation (10).

Gone is "speech," replaced by "presentation." This word-switch suggests that all forms of human communication—performances of self to others—fit within the ethical framework of mutuality. Foss and Foss explain: "every time you speak, you are making a presentation. Each time you do, you have a goal in mind—a reason for communicating" (21). I love this textbook. Assignments that flow from their "interactional goals" (asserting individuality, articulating a perspective, building

community, seeking adherence and discovering knowledge and belief) are diverse—ranging from individual and group presentations to collaborative efforts, interpersonal experiences and both professional and service learning opportunities. By removing the forced “this is what a demonstrative speech looks like” lecture, I am able to discuss many forms of interaction while maintaining the important aspects of speech theory. It allows me to pay special attention to the implications of performance. All presentations, after all, require planning, rhetorical strategizing, outlining, researching and receiving/responding to feedback.

Sample Assignment #1: Asserting Individuality

Foss & Foss spend ample time discussing environmental factors. Because ethicality is ever the text’s focus, students must account for audience safety (physical, spiritual, psychological), freedom (ability to choose), openness (genuine curiosity for difference) and value (finding validation). This is never easy to do; but such a focus helps students think broadly about what potentially leads to exclusion, shame or a failure to retain information.

Before a presentation, students submit a “Performance Report” answering three queries:

- (1) How will this speech augment the corresponding interactional goal?
- (2) How will you ensure that your speech will create a safe, open, free and valued environment?
- (3) Provide an analysis of how the subject of your performance will affect this specific audience. Each performance write-up must have two credible (and cited in APA!) sources to back up any claims.

I use this as an opportunity to think outside my box. I invent my own prompts based in the interactional goals. For the first presentation, in lieu of typical introductions, I ask students to assert their individuality by responding to an important speech (last semester, I used the *State of the Union*). Foss and Foss define presentations that assert individuality as one that emphasizes:

“who you are as a unique individual. You reveal something about your values, beliefs, attributes, roles, and/or experiences to help your audience members come to a better understanding of you, your perspectives, your personality, and your worldview” (23).

Here is the rubric I use:

Rubric: Asserting Individuality #1

Watch the President’s *State of the Union* (some of it? All of it?). Then prepare; it is now time for *you* to address...the class.

In less than 10 minutes, discuss and/or argue for/against the president, his speech, the audience, the environment, etc. This may sound counterintuitive—after all, this genre of address often appears only to outline upcoming policy initiatives by an elected official and his/her cabinet.

Though it will be tempting to favor one of the other interactional goals (namely, articulating a perspective or seeking adherence), it is essential for you to remain firm in your attempt to assert individuality.

How you choose to perform (site, flow, structure, props, etc.) is entirely up to you. Just follow the prompt above, acknowledge the environment, your purpose, modes of proof, thesis and signpost. Write it out ahead of time, speak from notes, wing it...whatever. Choose for yourself!

Hints:

- A. What is it about the speech that interests you? What did you respond to most positively/negatively?
- B. Once you understand how sections of the speech, the speaker and/or the environment are relevant to you, your presentation may choose to take on personal narratives or interpretations.
- C. Ultimately, this presentation should make the audience understand you as a person MORE than your connection to the speech’s policy initiatives.
- D. An example is on the back of this sheet.

What my presentation might look like:

Growing up as a son of an Air Force colonel, I find it interesting how people discuss the military in the public square. I take on some attributes of a military life while disagreeing with others. I am a person who tries to follow tenets of the military's practice of politeness and organization. I keep my hair relatively short and address many people by "sir" and "ma'am." I generally dislike armed conflict, though, and have difficulty blindly following any orders from authority figures.

A large part of President Trump's speech was about the military and its place in society. I am a member of that niche audience—though indirectly now that I've moved far away from home. Regardless of how direct my role in the military is, I emotionally respond to references made in political contexts. I usually get frustrated for what I perceive to be tactless and insincere appeals to individual senses of patriotic zeal. In President Trump's address, his discussion about the value of the military—attaching its concepts to what seemed like fervent and uncritical advancement of military prowess at the expense of diplomacy—contradicts some of my own deeply held beliefs. I see the world as a place where it doesn't matter what religion, race or sexuality a person embodies. We should have each other's back when times get tough.

I remember a time growing up—the only time I ever got into a fight—when, as a young American boy in a British school, some kid teased me mercilessly about my nationality. The perception that 'Merican-Brit is some unbridgeable gap makes me so upset. I can't remember if my motivation for putting up my fists that day was to defend my country against an imperialist mindset or just a defense against some brat. My tactics in that moment taught me a lot. In retrospect, I fought dirty: I scratched, popped him in his jimmy and essentially screeched until he ran away. I don't remember feeling very proud. Forever I would have a notch—a win, I suppose, if I had been thinking of it like that. But is it a win for us to march, ceaselessly, into battle? Why is crushing in defeat preferred to bridging our understanding, especially when our differences seem marginal?

I can't say, for sure, that this moment generated my perceptions regarding military force. That would be silly. I was 8. But I can trace the ideas gained, over time, from my small and timid childhood to why I reacted to a speech of unjustified ferocity.

I may be a bit naive—a dove-ish effeminacy in a world of brutish hawks—but I can't help it.

I never got into a fistfight again. I do sometimes say that I have a 100% win record; but hopefully, underneath such a ridiculous comment, folks come to know the softer truth.

* * *

At first glance, this presentational prompt may seem polemical, but the students—ever want to show *all* of themselves during the first week of class—talk in stories: who they are, where they came from, what values they espouse. It is a wonderful icebreaker to build rapport, create common objectives and establish vulnerabilities for a thought-provoking semester.

I provide my script, first, as an example. I also hand it out to make plain the idea that I am a participant in the class. I do not want to be a simple metaphor for power; I want to be invitational.

Sample Assignment #2: Building Community

In an effort to entrench rapport-building as a class objective, I pay tribute to traditional epideictic presentations. To seek community, “you are concerned about and committed to the stability and preservation of the knowledge, themes, beliefs, values, and practices that form the core allegiances of the community you are addressing” (27). Here, however, I do it with a twist.

Rubric: Building Community #1

One thing we know about humor is that—often enough—insults and deprecation promote jocularly. Often, if the individual is willing to “take it,” the audience feels it appropriate to laugh along...even when the jokes get VERY inappropriate.

Thus constitutes the world of Toasting. We toast to celebrate individuals on their impending successes. At a traditional wedding, the best man or maid of honor may feel it appropriate to say a few words about the newly coupled. Likewise, at retirement ceremonies, people often feel moved to *cheers* a lifetime of occupational accomplishment.

The world of *Roasting*, however, takes the celebratory aspects of toasting to a whole new level. Built around insults, a roast conveys similar results as toasting, if done right: increased jocularly, more camaraderie. Deep down the insulters, though superfluously making fun, are *celebrating* the individual being roasted.

A good roast builds community—a group of people who, through a series of jokes, is made to feel like an *insider*. We may celebrate as a group and, thus, satisfy this week’s interactional goal.

Assignment:

- As a group, pick one person to roast; you will also roast me (your hilarious professor)
- As a group, you will complete two full roasts.

What each constitutes:

1. Both roasts include 1 roastee and, the rest, roasters. Each roaster must take their turn making fun of the roastee.
 2. At the end, the roastee makes an acceptance speech and, usually, gets his/her shot at revenge.
- You will each be graded individually for how your part contributes to the whole and the interactional goal.
 - Things to watch for: communities are devastated by what may be considered as inappropriate humor—thus, an audience analysis is ever more important. What will the roastee be able to handle? Moreover, what will your professor be able to handle?
 - Teams must work together to plan, but should not share their speeches with each other. The success of a roast often depends upon the spontaneity and sincerity of the performances.

* * *

I encourage students to work together at first. They share their discomforts and fears and then create rules and boundaries. I ask that they consider the power dynamics in play: what changes between roasting a fellow student and, then, a teacher? What *forms* of humor

manage relationships more effectively than others? The results are fun—sometimes wicked. They always *build* our community.

Conclusion

Students conduct two presentations in each “genre.” Two assignments require they consider more than one interactional goal at a time. This means students are performing 7-9 times in a semester. The results can be manic; they are always poignant. I like the fast-paced environment this creates; I enjoy the opportunities for creativity. Because I am not tied to traditional genres, I incorporate performance theory, oral interpretation and qualitative research (in Asserting Individuality #2, I have them read poems *and* do autoethnography-lite)!

I am never forced to use standard grading rubrics or yoke my agenda to genre. Instead, I play with how I teach students to evaluate. Constructive criticism becomes situational (sometimes oral, sometimes written). It is a semester of thoughtful and engaging multimedia presentations. I am a pragmatist, teaching ethics while preparing students for specific and useful rhetorical situations (some of them personal; some professional). In the end, I add a few more “genres” to their rhetorical toolbox. Not everything has to be a PowerPoint and a lectern. I am thankful for *that*!

References

Foss, S., & Foss, K. (2012). *Inviting transformation: Presentational speaking for a changing world*, 3rd edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

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