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ARTICLES

SPECIAL FOCUS ON GIFTS INC (GREAT IDEAS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS IN THE CAROLINAS)

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Carolinas Communication Annual, Volume XXXVII

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Carolinas Communication Annual

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SPECIAL FOCUS ON GIFTS INC (GREAT IDEAS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS IN THE CAROLINAS)

Editorial Policy (2021)

The *Carolinas Communication Annual*, the peer-reviewed, state/regional journal published by the Carolinas Communication Association (representing both North Carolina and South Carolina), accepts the submission of scholarly articles on an ongoing basis. While articles by authors in the Carolinas and about topics relevant to the Carolinas and the surrounding region are particularly relevant for this journal, the call for submissions is open to authors from around the country and open to a wide range of topics from multiple methodologies and perspectives within the larger Communication Studies discipline. The journal is especially interested in submissions of pedagogical ideas and activities for our GIFTS INC (Great Ideas for Teaching Students in the Carolinas) area, which should be modeled after activity essays published in the journal *Communication Teacher*; submissions of multi-author forums of short thematically or methodologically related position papers or critical arguments; and submissions of "Debut" essays, which are papers written by first-time authors publishing their research in a peer-reviewed communication journal.

Critical essays and "debut" essays should generally be no longer than 6000–7000 words in length (including citations) and should follow the latest editions of MLA, APA, or the Chicago Manual of Style, depending on the author's preference. GIFTS INC essays and activities should generally be no longer than 2000–2500 words and should follow the latest editions of MLA, APA, or the Chicago Manual of Style, depending on the author's preference.

The call for submissions for the 2022 *Carolinas Communication Annual* will be announced in early spring 2022 and authors should submit their essays electronically (in a Microsoft Word file) to the editor. Submissions should include an author name and institution, author contact information, and an abstract in a separate cover letter to ensure blind review. In the cover letter, authors should also note the history of the submission and indicate, as needed, that the submission meets ethical standards of research (for example, IRB approval if relevant). The editor reserves the right to reject any submission that does not meet the basic standards above or seems to indicate a lack of ethical work. Authors should only submit one work per year to the *Annual* and the submission should not be under review with any other journal.

Editor's Introduction

Dear Members and Readers,

As I write this introduction, we are entering into yet another "wave" of the COVID–19 Pandemic. March of 2022 will mark two years of our altered existence. We are tired. Some of us are sick. And all of us ponder life and higher education—neither of which exist independently, but rather in tandem with—beyond the pandemic. As an editor, I do not have answers to many of our difficult questions, but I do want to mark this occasion in our organization's history. I would like our efforts, our thoughts, our struggles, and our successes to leave some mark for future members. If nothing else, I want to express to our future leaders and scholars that we were here, we felt it, and we did it. I have great hopes for our organization's future because I have experienced the quality, empathy, and determination of our current membership.

I think it imperative to note the work of Dr. Peter Gloviczki, who as 1st Vice President, planned and coordinated *two* conferences! Our conference in 2020 was cancelled because of COVID–19, and our 2021 conference will be held virtually. Dr. Gloviczki is the kindest, most generous person to work with, and he has been a wonderful guiding light for our conference over these hard two years. Our executive committee also deserves a moment of mention in this introduction. You were such a pleasure to work with over the course of my tenure as editor. We never imagined we'd pivot as often as we did, but you all truly danced with grace!

I would also like to thank our authors, who despite everything, have managed to create quality scholarship that is the mark of our journal. This year's journal begins with a phenomenological study by Michelle Adams and Timothy Brown who look at the city of Charlotte's murals and their connection to neighborhood transformation and social connection. DaKysha Moore and Elijah Onsomu survey minority students to explore their awareness of personal health. This study offers solutions for better reaching young people when it comes to health and health care. Abby Brooks and Andrew Tollison examine the phrase so dear to our southern souls—"Bless your Heart"—as a face negotiation strategy. This year's article section culminates with a delightful analysis that will remind many of one bright spot in our days of quarantine—the moment we heard *Hamilton* would be released for streaming! Undergraduate honors student, Cassandra Ward and her faculty mentor, Valerie Llynn Schrader, apply relational dialectics to the musical *Hamilton,* to explore literary lessons of friendship. I chose this piece as the lead into our GIFTS section because it provides an example of how professors and students negotiated teaching and learning during the pandemic by finding creative ways to procure artifacts to study and learn from!

Our GIFTS section begins with a piece that exemplifies this creativity in the classroom. Warren Bareiss creates an empathy-building exercise in translanguaging that can be adapted to any classroom and lets students actively participate in their own learning. Melanie Savelli's autoethnographic account of learning from a lesson in social justice gone wrong gives insight to the benefit of inviting students in the journey of empathetic learning and recovery. Krista Kimmel operationalizes her literary letter assignment that provides students the opportunity to interpret literary texts while concomitantly applying communication theories in creative formats. Hannah George uses those great forms of creative expression—emojis—to introduce course concepts like nonverbal communication, symbols, and mediated communication that are often covered in interpersonal communication, upper-division courses, and computer-mediated communication. Henrick, Palmisano, LeBlanc Farris, Burns, and Houser create a small group activity that mimics *The Amazing Race* to teach students the foundations of group communication. Gabriel Cruz uses the popular boardgame, *Codenames,* to help students understand the concept of perception as it relates to communication studies. Ashely George explores the relationship between artifacts and identity with an activity where students interactively engage the rhetorical power of personal artifacts. Jefferson Walker's fun exercise in improv provides an example of ice-breaking, teamwork, and active listening via collaborative storytelling. In our final submission, Julia Weiss creates a media ethics activity that engages students in the principles of ethical decision making in media production.

As I close my final introduction for the Carolina's Communication *Annual,* I would like to say that reading this year's submissions—whether they were accepted or not—demonstrated resilience, grit, creativity…and even a bit of humor. It has been my pleasure to serve as editor and my privilege to experience this time in history with such amazing people. Thank you to all who contributed to this year's *Annual*

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September 2021

Identification/Differentiation in an Evolving Neighborhood: A Phenomenological Analysis of Charlotte's *Mexican Mermaid* and *Gold District Community Mural*.

Michelle M. Adams and Timothy J. Brown

This study applied phenomenology to the Mexican Mermaid (Karla) and the Gold District Community Mural to determine how the murals shape cultural identity in the South End neighborhood in Charlotte, North Carolina. From this analysis three themes emerged: transformation, identification/differentiation, and visual expression. While the themes of transformation and visual expression confirmed the positive impact, murals have on a community, the theme of identification/differential illustrated murals can be associated with both positive and negative meanings. Underscoring these themes is the importance of an individual's social connection to the neighborhood. The deeper the connection to the neighborhood may result in a more meaningful understanding of the placement of the murals within the South End neighborhood. Murals might not be the panacea for neighborhood transformation. Instead, murals contribute to residents' social connection to the neighborhood which can reveal both opportunities and challenges.

Keywords: *Murals, Public Art, Phenomenology, Cultural Identity, Charlotte, Identification/Differentiation*

Murals have a long history beginning with the prehistoric cave drawings through the present day with their characterizations ranging from graffiti and vandalism to street art or public art (Clüver, 2011; Stiffman, 2016). Historically, murals represent the expressions of a community while also cultivating an individual's sense of pride and belonging to a specific neighborhood (LaWare,1998; Moss, 2010; Rich & Tsitsos, 2016). Often murals can provide a voice for underrepresented groups and elevate the ideas and struggles that are not part of the dominant discourse (Mitchell, 2018; Moss, 2013; Wanzer, 2011). But the expressions created by artists and interpreted by individuals have gained currency beyond magnifying the perspective of underrepresented groups. As Bruce and Homan (2018) argued, "Though the community mural movement was a means of celebrating marginalized populations, it also can serve as a bridge for bringing different

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groups together" (p. 228). The power of murals to express and contribute to the identity of an area have made them popular images that distinguish a neighborhood's landscape.

Over the past decade, cities and neighborhoods nationwide have experienced a recent proliferation of murals appearing on previously blank walls of buildings. Cities like Charlotte, Asheville, Nashville, Cleveland, and Atlanta are using murals to promote their city's neighborhoods. Likewise, companies and organizations have embraced the popularity of murals and are utilizing them as a new form of marketing with many high-end retailers like Gucci and Shinola dedicating exterior wall space to celebrate street art and to build brand awareness (McDowell, 2017). Additionally, Instagram influencers like Kendall Jenner are capitalizing on the popularity of murals and their colorful backgrounds to make announcements of new product launches and partnerships (McDowell, 2017).

Charlotte, like other cities with burgeoning urban neighborhoods, is finding itself in the middle of a cultural renaissance as the city has embraced the mural arts movement taking place nationally and internationally. The city has more than 60 exterior murals that can be easily viewed by the public with the majority of the murals located in its urban and trendy neighborhoods: Uptown, North Davidson (NoDa), South End, the Gold District, Plaza Midwood, and Elizabeth (Levans, 2019). Other murals can be found on the interior walls of buildings, rooftops, ceilings, or exterior locations like courtyards that are not easily viewed by the public (Levans, 2019). Charlotte's mural scene has become so prevalent that the city's annual Talking Walls festival, "a city-wide public art and mural festival" (Talking Walls, 2018) is attracting national and international muralists who are eager to leave their mark on the city. During the festival's inaugural season in 2018, sixteen murals were painted by 10 local artists and seven national and international artists (Oyler, 2018). In the first two years of the festival, 31 murals have been designed and painted on various wall or ceilings throughout the city (Oyler, 2018; Talking Walls, 2018). The NoDa neighborhood, Charlotte's historic arts and entertainment district, has similarly embraced Charlotte's mural movement with their annual NoDa Can Jam, where local artists can express their creativity as a group of artists or as individuals (Levans, 2019). Regardless of the use or intention, these murals have become modern works of art that are in highly visible areas that can contribute to the expression of identity for a community.

The mural movement that is prevalent in Charlotte leads to the question: What impact does Charlotte's mural movement have in defining the cultural identity of the city and its residents? This is an important question as Charlotte is often labeled as a city without a cultural identity (Dunn, 2018; Lacour & Way, 2017). Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the murals in Charlotte's South End neighborhood in shaping the identity of the neighborhood and its residents. A phenomenological approach was employed to accomplish this goal by examining individuals' interpretations of the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and *Gold District Community Mural* located in Charlotte's historic South End neighborhood. Analyzing how Charlotteans construct meaning from the murals is important because the city, well-known as a center for the banking and finance industry, is often maligned for lacking a culture. Before this analysis takes place, we will first review the literature to provide context on the mural movement.

Murals and the Construction of Meaning

At the most basic level murals are an expression of a group's ethnicity, culture and heritage and aid in the revitalization and beautification of a community (Bundgaard, 2015; Fredrick, 2009; Greaney, 2002; LaWare, 1998; Marschall, 2002; Moss 2010; Reardon, 2017; Riggle 2010; Sabine, 2002). They are an open art gallery that is accessible to the public and offers a variety of artistic styles in a relatable way. As Marschall (2002) explained "Murals appropriate spaces and buildings, and through these sites they celebrate cultural difference; they recover history and aspects of traditional heritage; they offer unpretentious candid glimpses into the activities and environment of daily life" (p. 51). Furthermore, murals not only connect individuals to history and heritage but reinforce their identity in the neighborhood when they see themselves represented (LaWare, 1998; Moss, 2010). Therefore, it is just as important to have images that create an identity for the neighborhood, as it is to represent a group's cultural and ethnic identity.

Moreover, murals characterize the values and common interests of a community in a way other forms of communication cannot; they unify individuals through their shared messages and meanings in public places (Visconti, 2010). Through this collective "we" individuals can establish a common bond with one another about the neighborhood or the mural itself. Chicano artists were early adopters of the power of representation created by murals as they understood the importance of representing their culture and heritage in their new homeland (the United States) so that younger generations did not lose their historical ties to Mexico (LaWare,1998). Likewise, the renowned "Wall of Respect" which is a 20-foot-by-60-foot mural composed of "images of more than 50 African American heroes" created a unifying visual piece of art that represented the solidarity in Chicago's South Side neighborhood (Reardon, 2017). Similarly, the people of South Africa have embraced urban wall murals "as a way of expressing themselves and reclaiming lost territory" (Marschall, 2002, p. 51). Marschall (2002) argued, the murals invite people to identify with the new South Africa, which is represented by their country's new flag, the faces of their government leaders and the peace symbol.

By characterizing the values and common interests of a community, murals reaffirm their statue as public art. According to Riggle (2010), murals "have the power to engage, effortlessly and aesthetically, the masses through its manifest creativity, skill, originality, depth of meaning, and beauty" (p.244). Their accessibility to all individuals expands beyond class, race, and economic status. This idea is further supported by Moss (2010) who stated, "Murals are an excellent link between the two forms [high art and low art] since they descend from a rich artistic history, but remain accessible to the general public, in both physical location and content" (p. 374). As a result of murals' accessibility, they create a new forum for participation and dialogue among individuals who live, work, or visit the specific neighborhood. The proliferation of murals in urban communities in cities such as Charlotte and how they define and represent cultural values are examples of the positive impact murals can have on communities and its residents (Marschall, 2002).

While most of the impact murals have on a community can be positive, murals like other forms of public art come with scrutiny. As stated by Fleming and Goldman (2005), "there is no litmus test to determine what art will not prove offensive to any constituency….it is impossible [to] not step on toes" (pp. 62-63). For example, Moss (2013) focused on whose story was being told by murals. She argued that murals can sometimes produce sanitized and nostalgic representations that perpetuate the dominant culture's narrative toward marginalized groups. Meanwhile, Mitchell (2018) highlighted how murals function as public memory reminding residents of systems of oppression and opportunities for hope.

Gentrification of a neighborhood is another concern associated with the mural movement. A good example is the redevelopment of the city of Wynwood in Miami. Wynwood, once a working-class urban neighborhood, began attracting struggling artists and gallery owners in the 1980s because of the affordable rents and large empty abandoned warehouse spaces. As the neighborhood became popular it drew the attention of real estate developers who saw the potential to create the area into a tourist destination. The increased interest and redevelopment of the neighborhood led to higher rents in buildings and priced out the existing art galleries and businesses that once attracted everyone to the neighborhood. This led to those original businesses moving elsewhere. Despite the unintended negative impacts of the redevelopment, Wynwood Walls now serves as a tourist destination for people visiting Miami and showcases 50 graffiti and street artists annually. (Wynwood Walls, 2019).

A review of the literature has shown the impact that murals can make on a community. Several themes that emerged from literature include how murals: 1) express a group's ethnicity, culture and heritage and aid in the revitalization and beautification of a community; 2) characterize the values and common interests of a community; 3) reaffirm their status as public art; 4) can spark controversy and scrutiny. These themes highlight how murals serve as a transformational agent in creating community engagement and identity. If murals assist in defining places and express a group's ethnicity, culture, and heritage how do murals in Charlotte function? This is an important question to ask as Charlotte is popularly known as a city "without a cultural identity." This phenomenological study of the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural* was conducted to better understand how these murals shape identity for individuals living, visiting, or working in the South End and Gold District neighborhoods in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Method

Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that can be defined as "how individuals interpret, process, and experience" the world around them (Iwamoto et al., 2013, p. 228). As a research method, a phenomenological approach investigates the lived experience of participants and seeks to identify the narrative which is based on those experiences (Sokolowski, 2000; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Cilesiz (2011), further defined phenomenology by stating the "purpose of a phenomenological study is to reach the essence of the individuals lived experiences of the phenomenon while ascertaining and defining the phenomenon" (p. 495). As a method of inquiry phenomenology helps people better understand how our experiences are affected by where we live and work (Creswell, 2013).

The process of understanding the meaning and symbolism of an object is not limited to our life experiences but it is also influenced by our social connection to that place. It is through our social connection with others and our routines that we form our impression of objects and how we determine their meaning to us and the community (Creswell, 2013).

Moreover, the meaning found in the imagery of community murals is dependent on our interaction and engagement with them, as well as our previous experiences with similar objects or texts. Our impression of the mural is formed from a personal, cultural, and historical context as well as our shared experiences with others (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology seeks to identify the essence of a phenomenon by exploring the lived experiences of a group of individuals and finding the commonalities among them. A phenomenological approach was implemented to understand how the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural* shape the cultural identity of Charlotte's South End neighborhood. Moustakas (1994) and Cilesiz (2011) describe four steps for implementing a phenomenology study: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. Each step is discussed next.

Steps to Implementation

Epoche

The process of determining the *essence* of the lived experience begins with identifying the phenomenon to be studied and the researcher setting aside, or bracketing, any pre-judgements that he/she may have on the topic. Epoche has also been described as something that is known to exist within an individual without any necessary reflection (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is done prior to the interviews taking place to allow the researcher to begin his/her interview with an unbiased, open and receptive attitude to identifying the essence of the experience. When the researcher can identify and disengage from his/her own biases it enables the researcher to interpret the data with a new lens and subsequently find new meanings behind the data (Moustakas, cited in Cilesiz, 2011).

Phenomenological reduction

Phenomenological reduction is the second step in the data analysis process and begins with horizontalizing the data. Horizontalizing involves reviewing the transcripts line by line with equal weight given to each statement that is applicable to the study and noting all relevant words, phrases and statements to the study (Cilesiz, 2011). Any irrelevant data or phrases are removed during the review process. Throughout the process, repetitive tangential meanings and themes are removed until a final list of consistent and shared themes is identified from across the participants. The associated themes are noted for each participant. The relevant items are listed and later clustered into what Cilesiz (2011) calls "meaning units" or "words/phrases that represent only one meaning" (p. 499). Once the meaning units have been identified, individual textural descriptions are created for each participant and include statements from their transcripts. These narratives are representative of their lived experience in relation to the research question and the creation of the essence of the phenomenon (Cilesiz, 2011).

Imaginative variation

During the imaginative variation step, the researcher explores how the lived experience was created and creates the structure with how it occurred (Cilesiz, 2011;

Moustakas, 1994)**.** The researcher begins by reading the textural descriptions several times from different vantage points to obtain a fuller and clearer structure for how the experience was shaped. To understand what the essence of the experience is, commonalities between the experience must be understood and this is done so by permitting the researcher to freely construct or imagine how the experience happened (Cilesiz, 2011). Universal structures that can be used are place, "time, space, relationship to self, to others; bodily concerns and causal and intentional structure" (Moustakas, p.181). Once a structural description is developed for each individual it is added to the end of the textural description that was previously written to create a composite description for each individual.

Synthesis

The final step of the data analysis occurs during synthesis. In the synthesis stage, the researcher identifies similarities among the textural descriptions of the participants. Similarities that are present in each of the experiences of all or most of the participants are identified and combined into one narrative with shared meaning units (Cilesiz, 2011). The final narrative is written in the third person to represent the group. The narrative serves as a composite of the experiences and creates a general description of the phenomenon. This final narrative is called the textural-structural synthesis and represents the essence of the phenomenon (Cilesiz, 2011).

These phenomenological steps will be applied to the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural* to identify the *essence* of individuals' lived experience to understand how the murals shape cultural identity in Charlotte's South End neighborhood. These themes are discussed next.

Analysis of The *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural*

As a flourishing city, Charlotte is undergoing rapid growth and change. Since 2010, Charlotte's population has grown 19.9% moving it past San Francisco as the nation's 15th largest city (Chemtob & Off, 2020). With growth comes the opportunity for Charlotte to define its cultural identity as a major metropolitan city. This study will explore the impact of Charlotte's mural movement on shaping the city's cultural identity by analyzing the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural*. This study will unfold by first, providing background and context on the murals and second, by illustrating the themes that emerged from the phenomenological analysis.

The rationale for selecting the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* mural and *Gold District Community Mural* from the South End neighborhood is based on the growing interest of the South End neighborhood and Gold District to include murals and public art in their community. Similar to the city, the South End neighborhood is undergoing a significant amount of growth and redevelopment and has become a popular destination for people to live, work and play. As a result, the perception of the neighborhood appears to be evolving and the involvement of community members has become an integral part of the neighborhood's growth.

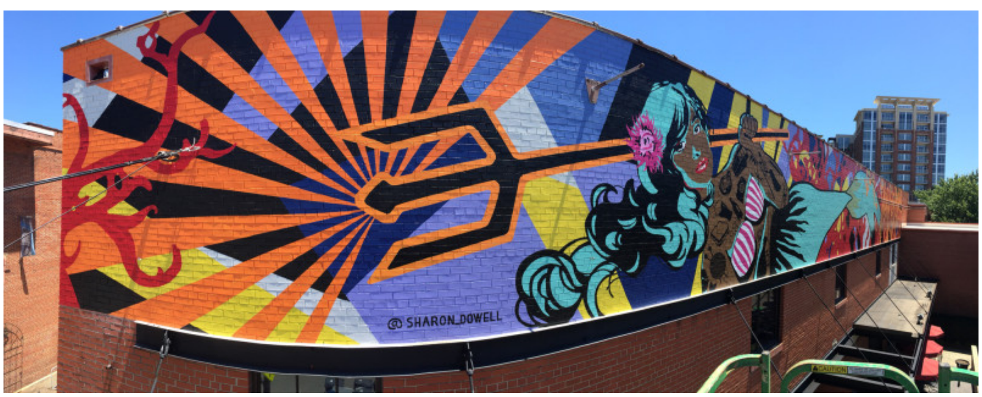
The South End District is a mixed-use community that is "home to residents of all walks of life including artists, students, small-business owners, business and law professionals, who are united by an innovative and creative spirit" (South End, n.d.). The

South End District is located at the border of Uptown Charlotte and Dilworth, one of Charlotte's well-known and historic neighborhoods. Its proximity to Uptown, Charlotte's downtown area, and convenience to the city's hot spots and new upscale condominiums make it an ideal neighborhood to examine. The Gold District neighborhood is a 115-acre area that is a subdistrict of the South End and is undergoing redevelopment with support of local business owners (Gold District, n.d.). The District is best known as the site where Charlotte mined its gold and established its wealth as a city (Gold District, n.d.).

Murals

The *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* (see Figure 1) was painted by artist Sharon Dowell in 2018 for The Design Center of the Carolinas and made possible by a commission from Asana Partners (South End District, n.d.). Karla's free-flowing teal hair and mermaid body are perched along the top edge of the Design Center for the Carolina's building as if she is watching over passers-by below. The mural, which is situated on a main thoroughfare of the growing South End District, depicts Karla holding her black and orange spear. A side street located adjacent to the location of the mural, provides access to the popular areas where several restaurants and stores are located. A short walk away are new high-rise condominiums, a greenway and walking path, and the New Bern Lynx stop, which encourages visitors and residents of the neighborhood to engage her routinely. She is a bright and forceful presence on this otherwise busy street.

Figure 1:Mexican Mermaid Photo credit: Sharon Dowell



Conversely, the *Gold District Community Mural* (see Figure 2) is located on the side of a brick building and features community landmarks, restaurants and symbols of the neighborhood and the city of Charlotte. It was the first community mural that was installed in the neighborhood, and it served as a catalyst for additional public art projects. While bright and vibrant like *Karla*, her scale is much smaller in size, and despite being located around the corner from one of the new popular craft breweries it is relatively unassuming. The significance of this mural to the community is its historical location: it is located at the spot where gold was first mined in Charlotte and where gold can still be found.

Figure 2: Gold District Community Mural. Photo credit: Michelle Adams

With the strong focus on community murals and public art, South End is distinguishing itself as a community that is welcoming to all types of individuals from entrepreneurs to artists to web designers and beyond. The murals are creating opportunities for diverse individuals who patronize the South End neighborhood to connect with one another. Additionally, the murals have become a part of the urban landscape in South End and are contributing to the social transformation of the neighborhood.

Results

The goal of this phenomenological study of the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural* is to determine how the murals construct culture and identity in Charlotte's South End neighborhood. The 10 participants were identified based on their involvement in Charlotte's mural movement and their importance to the growth and success of the South End neighborhood. The neighborhood has seen significant growth in recent years thus it was important to have individuals who were familiar with this evolution included in the study. Snowball sampling was utilized to identify the participants who included community members, neighborhood and non-profit organization leaders, artists, residents, and government officials. A cross section of interviews was conducted among the participants to avoid any inference of preference to a group. The semi-structured interviews lasted an average of 45 – 60 minutes. Open ended questions were pre-written (see Appendix II) and two photos of the murals from the South End neighborhood (Figures 1 and 2) were used as references for the participants. The individuals interviewed had lived in Charlotte from three years to more than 25 years, with 50% residing in Charlotte for 19 or more years. The participants' familiarity with the neighborhood's history was contingent on their time living in Charlotte which also lent itself to their relationship to the neighborhood.

The participants' familiarity to the neighborhood were defined as professional, personal, resident, social or native. These connections provided a range of experiences ranging from the most direct experience—those who work in the South End and are advocates of South End's efforts to include murals in the neighborhood, to individuals who reside or consider themselves "pretty familiar" with the neighborhood and have experienced the impact murals have made on the neighborhood to the occasional visitor who comes to the neighborhood with a specific purpose or intention. In examination of the most direct lived experiences these individuals are urban planners, artists, educators, and nonprofit professionals who have a strong social connection to the South End neighborhood.

Eight (8) of the interviews were conducted in-person with the remaining two conducted by telephone. A photo of the selected texts was shown to the participants after general questions were asked about the South End neighborhood. For the telephone interviews, the photos were emailed to the individuals to give them the same reference as the in-person interviews. The two telephone interviews were conducted in this format as a result of the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 virus. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by using the phenomenological process of epoche, reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis to determine the primary themes which include transformation, identification/differentiation, and visual expression.

Themes

Transformation

Transformation was the primary recurring theme that emerged from the interviews. The transformation theme captures how individuals were redefining the perception and new identity of the South End neighborhood. As a theme, transformation was referenced by participants as part of the transitioning of the neighborhood from an industrial and manufacturing area to a bustling residential neighborhood that is simultaneously defining itself as a place "where things are tried first." This is in reference to Charlotte's rich history of manufacturing and industrial past and the current entrepreneurial ventures and creative opportunities that are happening in the neighborhood (thus, seeing the positive in the transformation). In discussing the *Mexican Mermaid*, participants described the neighborhood as "a lot of elements interacting with one another that feels analogous to South End." While still others saw the *Mexican Mermaid* as a representative of the past when South End was a more diverse and eclectic neighborhood before the new construction and proliferation of apartment complexes began. Some participants noted that the *Mexican Mermaid* represented what people "want South End to be - funky, artistic, creative" or "what South End aspires to be."

In contrast, the *Gold District Community Mural* was described as a literal representation of the neighborhood which includes neighborhood icons like Charlotte's rail line, the South End Water Tower, as well as the names and logos of local businesses that are located within the South End and the Gold District. The participants knowledge of the Gold District, the business logos, and names of the restaurants in the neighborhood contributed to their knowledge of the mural being inclusive of the history of the area. One participant characterized the *Gold District Community Mural* as pulling "together what South End used to be and what it has become and its inclusive of all of that." This description of the *Gold District Community Mural* was consistently experienced across all social connections (professional, personal, resident, social, or native) to the neighborhood.

The transformation theme emphasized how murals have become a symbol of South End's reinvention and have created a sense of pride and awareness to the community. Participants articulated that the *Mexican Mermaid* and *Gold District Community Mural* have contributed to the neighborhood as a place of importance. As one participant stated, "knowing that you have art and murals, I don't know, it kind of makes you feel like you live in an important part of town." As a theme, transformation underscores that for the resident or professional who experiences the murals daily comes to appreciate their value and importance to the neighborhood and as a result, develops a deeper sense of belonging and responsibility to the place they live or work in.

Additionally, commissioned murals by both established and aspiring artists can now be found on buildings, underpasses and parking garage walls all contributing to the growing and evolving personality of the South End district and are expanding the cultural landscape of the community. The variety of murals is also creating a cultural dialogue within the community. Murals are telling stories about the neighborhood's forgotten past making these stories more accessible to everyone who encounters them. Thus, the interactions with the *Mexican Mermaid* and *Gold District Community Mural* are redefining the culture and identity of South End by merging the past with the present in a harmonious manner. The transformation theme embraces the positive nature of the memorialization of the past and present as represented by the murals. For participants, the murals have created a pleasurable experience, and interest in the neighborhood that previously did not exist.

Identification/Differentiation

Identification/Differentiation was the second primary theme to emerge from the interviews. Identification/Differentiation can be described as holding a perception that simultaneously embraces both the positive and negative meanings associated with murals. The identification/differentiation theme illustrates the complexity in which individuals make sense of the murals. Perception with this theme is not either/or but both. Participants understood how murals define, articulate perspectives, and beautify areas but they also expressed the problematic issues associated with the mural movement.

Collectively, the participants agreed that the transformation of the neighborhood and infusion of murals is a positive improvement for the neighborhood. As one participant said, "I truly see murals as a gift to the neighborhood to the people around them." Additionally, it demonstrates the individual's social connection to the South End neighborhood and murals' relationship to the neighborhood. The majority of the participants interviewed were also intimately involved with the Charlotte mural movement or South End's work to include murals in the neighborhood. Those also identified themselves as working in the neighborhood up to four to five times a week.

However, as participants identified with the benefits of murals, more contemplation led to differentiation. These individuals instead of only seeing the positives created by the murals contemplated the ramifications for the neighborhood. The individuals did so in two ways: 1) Most felt the murals found in South End are more focused on social media opportunities, photo ops, and as a marketing tool rather than creating a dialogue or elevating the conversation about what is happening in the city or country: 2) They expressed an imbalance between the new development and the previous historic buildings and local shops. One participant stated that the "debate rages on between preservation of history and the way South End is now" which is at the center of South End's reinvention or transformation and the way those who previously remembered the old South End to what it has become. The loss of character with tearing down the historic buildings and replacing them with 16 or 17 story buildings was a primary complaint. Three out of the four that differentiated with the murals have lived in Charlotte for more than 15 years, with the remaining person residing in Charlotte for seven years. That last person is a strong proponent of mural arts but aligns with a homier intimate neighborhood feeling of the stores along Camden Road.

A discussion of the different types of murals happening in South End was also prevalent among the differentiators. Implicit in the discussion was a valuing of the murals created by artists in telling a story—a memorializing of the stories of a neighborhood as opposed to murals that are being driven by developers. One participant, an artist and nonprofit executive, felt that there are two kinds of murals happening simultaneously in South End: those that are driven by the developers (as referenced above) and the story tellers. For this participant, the storytelling murals (which the participant values), those types of murals are not being included in the South End. This conversation further illustrates the identification/differentiation theme.

Overall, the identification/differentiation theme embraces both the perception that the transformation happening in the South End is having a positive effect on the neighborhood while also cautioning that problematic issues such as redevelopment has happened quickly and is causing gentrification within the neighborhood. The identification/differentiation theme gives pause to who is creating the art, whose story is being told and what are the ramifications.

Visual Expression

The third theme revived in the interviews was Visual Expression. This theme emphasized the artists' use of visual elements such as color, size, patterns, and shapes in creating the murals. Participants noted how the visual elements called attention to the constructed story while also defining its location. One participant described the *Mexican Mermaid* as "It's like a crazy mural. It's got a collage of style and…patterns and elements and beautiful color." Other participants mentioned the *Mexican Mermaid's* "eye-grabbing" shapes, especially the background, the spokes, the orange color, and *Karla*'s "Ray of Light." In addition, the *Mexican Mermaid*'s tattoos were described as "embodyin[g] a lot of Charlotte culture" and that "the patterns and elements and beautiful color plays off of everything going on in the whole area." For participants, these visual features create great energy and enthusiasm that reaffirm the revival being experienced in the neighborhood. Another participant described her favorite feature of the *Mexican Mermaid* as the large size and scale when she said, "You turn that corner and you look up and you're like, oh my goodness, look, it goes all the way across." Also, this participant noted the placement of the trident behind *Karla* and the color blocking conveyed a sense of power and specifically female empowerment.

Furthermore, color and shape were aesthetically important to the individuals' responses to the *Gold District Community Mural* those elements mirrored the descriptions of the *Mexican Mermaid* and included the abstract style, vibrant color, bold shapes, vivid color with specific mentions of the orange, turquoise, and yellow hues. The *Gold District Community Mural* while smaller in scale conveyed a more intimate and community connection to the neighborhood by including neighborhood icons like Price's Chicken Coop and Queen Charlotte. Similarly, the mural was described as a "nice celebration of the businesses in the Gold District and South End" and "it captured the layers of the neighborhood." The layers of the neighborhood refer to the Gold District's connection to the past through depictions of gold mines, the 49ers who mined the gold, to the city's namesake Queen Charlotte at the center of the mural to present day craft breweries that have made their home in the Gold District and South End. The *Gold District Community Mural* was also referenced as a place maker for the Gold District because it "reminds you of where you are" and that the overall meaning of the mural exuded a feeling of love and admiration for the neighborhood.

Despite differences in scale and messages the *Mexican Mermaid* and *Gold District Community Mural* were consistently described by their visual elements of design, shape, colors, and patterns that constructed energy and female empowerment. Participants were in agreement on how the visual elements contributed to the cultural landscape of the neighborhood.

Discussion: The Importance of Social Connection

A phenomenological analysis of the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and *Gold District Community Mural* reinforces murals have the ability to beautify or transform an existing space into something distinguishable and pleasurable. The primary theme of transformation that emerged from the interviews, affirm that murals have the power to change both the physical landscape of a place and individuals' perception of it. In South End's case, the theme of transformation embraces both Charlotte's past and present while cultivating a welcoming environment for individuals regardless of social connection (professional, personal, resident, social or native). The murals themselves are becoming rhetorical devices for the neighborhood and are marking a significant transition time in the neighborhood's existence.

This study indicates that an individual's familiarity to the neighborhood is central to how they interpret how the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural* construct a cultural identity for South End. The deeper the connection to the neighborhood may result in a more meaningful understanding of the placement of the mural within the South End neighborhood and Gold District. It is through our social connection with others and our routines that we form our impression of objects and how we determine their meaning to us and the community (Creswell, 2013; Prasetyo, 2013). For participants, the opportunities for interactivity with the murals offered them the ability to create and partake in a uniquely South End experience. Thus, providing further opportunities to strengthen participants' connection with the neighborhood. This was particularly true with the *Gold District Community Mural* which allows the participants to see themselves in the scene which shapes their perception of the city of Charlotte's history and ambitions. Participant engagement with the murals underscores the power that murals have in contributing to the identity of a community.

Furthermore, an individual's familiarity to the neighborhood reveals important implications for how the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural* were interpreted as illustrated by the identification/differentiation theme. First, the identification/differentiation theme is contrary to what much of the literature states about the influence murals have on shaping individuals' perception of a community. Instead of perceiving murals either positive or negative, this theme revealed that individuals can perceive murals as having both positive and negative associations. Second, an individual's strong connection to a neighborhood might be more important than the mural movement in a neighborhood. Individuals in articulating the complexity of what murals represent and symbolize appear to prioritize their commitment to the neighborhood as opposed to what the murals represent. In other words, individuals in this study are people who are immersed in the neighborhood and committed to the success of the neighborhood. This commitment occurs regardless of the type of mural that is constructed in the neighborhood. Identification/Differentiation does not negate the importance of murals to a community, but rather provides another area to be explored between the individual and his/her connection to the community with murals being one element in it.

Conclusion

The *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and *Gold District Community Mural* have established themselves as symbols of an ever changing and evolving South End neighborhood. The murals which capture Charlotte's past and present have created a positive and upbeat feeling of pride in the neighborhood. The murals define South End as an important place and involve public interaction and engagement creating a sense of belonging and value to the public space. As symbols they drive community engagement which provides an opportunity for the professional, personal, resident, social or native and others to participate in an authentic "South End" experience. Thus, shaping the meaning associated with that personal experience.

Through a phenomenological analysis of the *Mexican Mermaid (Karla)* and the *Gold District Community Mural,* this study addressed how the murals impacted the formation of the cultural identity of the South End neighborhood in Charlotte, North Carolina. From this analysis three themes emerged: transformation, identification/ differentiation, and visual expression. While the themes of transformation and visual expression confirmed the positive impact murals have on a community, the theme of identification/ differential revealed that murals can be associated with both positive and negative meanings. Underscoring these themes is the importance that an individual's social connection to the neighborhood directly influenced their interpretation of the murals and the murals impact on the community. The deeper the connection to the neighborhood may result in a more meaningful understanding of the placement of the mural within the South End neighborhood and Gold District. It is through our social connection with others and our routines that we form our impression of objects and how we determine their meaning to us and the community.

As the mural movement continues to manifest across the country, it is important for organizations and individuals to understand the impact each mural makes when they "reside" within the neighborhood. Murals, like people and neighborhoods, have their own individual meaning and personality that contributes to the construction of the identity and character of the neighborhood. However, in creating these unique pieces of art, cities, organizations, and individuals must not overlook the importance of a resident's social connection to neighborhood in interpreting the meaning of the mural. Murals are not the panacea for neighborhood transformation. Instead, murals contribute to residents' social connection to the neighborhood which can reveal both opportunities and challenges.

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Appendix A
IRB Exemption /Human Subjects Research

QUEENS UNIVERSITY of CHARLOTTE

To: Michelle Adams

From: Queens Institutional Review Board (IRB #00011168)

Date: November 19, 2019

Re: Research Protocol Approval, File #11-19-KSOC-619

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your research application titled "Making Meaning from Murals and Understanding Their Influence on the Community." Based on the research protocol detailed in your application, the IRB has determined that your project satisfies the federal regulatory criteria for exemption from further IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d).

Please note that only the research protocol outlined in your application is exempt. Any changes to your research plans need to be reported to the IRB for review prior to implementation. Further, please notify the IRB immediately if any issues involving risks to subjects or others occur during your study. The Adverse Event Report Form can be found at our portal site: https://my.queens.edu/irb.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and I wish you much success with your project.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah B. Wills, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
Chair, Queens IRB

Appendix B
Research Questions

1. How familiar are you with the South End neighborhood?
2. What is your relationship or affiliation to the neighborhood? (e.g. resident, visitor, tourist, artist, business owner)
3. How often do you visit the neighborhood?
4. How would you describe the South End neighborhood?
5. What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear South End?
6. Describe your first experience in the neighborhood?
7. What do you like most about the South End neighborhood?
8. What is the first image that comes to mind when you see this mural? Why?
9. How would you describe this mural?
10. What is your favorite characteristic of the mural?
11. How, if at all, does it represent the neighborhood?
12. What impact has the mural made in the neighborhood?
13. What is your favorite mural in the South End neighborhood?
14. Why do you think murals have become such a popular form of expression?
15. What about them makes them so popular in South End?
16. Do you consider them to be a form of public art? If not, what is it?

Minority Students' Awareness of Health Disparities and Communication Channel Preferences for Obtaining Relevant Information

DaKysha Moore and Elijah O. Onsomu

Among the many strategies for reducing healthcare disparities, addressing the topic in college classrooms is eminently practicable, but is it effective? This study conducted a focus group among mainly Black students in a communication class at a Historically Black University to assess their awareness of health disparities and the communication channels they would prefer for learning about them. Initially, participants had little interest in the subject because they did not associate diseases with their age group. However, they did express interest in learning more through both interpersonal and mass media outlets, including class assignments, discussions, on-campus events, and social media. Findings indicate that specific Communication classes could be an opportunity for instructors to engage in topics that could help minority students discover more about health problems affecting their community.

Keywords: *African American, College Students, Communication Channels, Health Communication, HBCUs, healthcare disparities*

Introduction

Helping to achieve a level of "health equity" and "eliminating health disparities" are hallmarks of Healthy People 2030 (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [ODPHP], 2020, para 1). According to this national health-promotion and disease-prevention program, active since the 1980s, health disparities include variances in health outcomes based on race/ethnicity, economic status, age, geographic location, gender, and many other factors (ODPHP, 2020). Race/ethnicity has received particular attention. For example, in the United States, Blacks are more likely to die from heart disease than Whites or other minorities, including Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019a). Conditions, such as high blood pressure, increase the risk for heart disease, and Blacks have a significantly higher incidence rate than other groups (Blacks 54%, Whites 46%, Asians 39%, and Hispanics 36%) (CDC, 2020b).

Disparate heart disease and high blood pressure are not the only areas of concern. Blacks are more likely to be diagnosed with breast and prostate cancers and to have more negative outcomes (American Cancer Society, 2020). Blacks are 60% more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes and to suffer more serious consequences, including amputations (US Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2021a). The numbers are also disproportionate for HIV/AIDS. In 2018, Blacks made up slightly more than 40% of new cases in the United States as compared to Hispanics at 27% and Whites at 25% (CDC,

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2021c). Moreover, in 2017, the infant mortality rate was twice as high for Blacks (10.97%) than Whites (4.7%) (Ely & Driscoll, 2019).

These statistics confirm that several diseases disproportionately affect US Black communities. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF, 2008), which reports on US and global healthcare policies, recommends raising awareness as a tactic to reduce health disparities. The study described here explores mainly Black college students' awareness of health disparities and the communication channels they prefer for obtaining information about them.

Addressing health disparities through the classroom

To educate the public about health disparities, Bull and Miller (2008) stress the importance of multilevel approaches, including courses to increase knowledge and awareness among graduate students in nursing programs. Njoku and Wakeel (2019) emphasize that implementing instruction on health disparities in a public health curriculum exposes White students, who may not have been cognizant of, or sensitive to, the problems. Njoku and Baker (2019) encourage adding a health-disparities curriculum in an online format for those studying toward careers in the healthcare industry.

Several studies have examined strategies to increase health-disparities awareness among medical students. McElfish et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of a diverse approach, including cultural competence, in medical classes. Cene et al. (2010) advocate a community approach that allows medical students to gain experience working with groups who experience high levels of disparate disease incidence and care. Vela et al. (2010) find that offering a course in health disparities helps medical students decide to attend that school of medicine. More recently, Hammarlund et al. (2017) show that a course designed to teach residents about health disparities led to more interventions.

Other disciplines have also stressed the importance of understanding health disparities. Mitchell (2012) advocates adding a course on health disparities to a social work curriculum, suggesting it would help graduate students to recognize the challenges certain clients face. Smith et al. (2007) explain how educators in healthcare and other disciplines can use these recommendations from "the Society of General Internal Medicine Health Disparities Task Force" (p. 654) in the classroom, which include understanding awareness and knowledge about health disparities, and to identify the role intercultural communication plays.

Benabentos, Ray, and Kumar (2014) discuss the specific importance of reviewing health disparities in classrooms at minority-serving institutions. Therefore, this study focuses on college students, most of whom self-identify as Black (African American), and major in the social sciences and humanities at a minority serving institution. It explores their awareness of health disparities and the forms of communication they prefer for learning more.

Research Question

What are the main communication channels students prefer to access health-disparities information?

Methodology

Participants

The researchers' main goals were to explore 1) the type of healthcare disparities minority students are aware of and 2) the communication channels they prefer for finding out more. Participants were recruited from a communication class during spring 2017. For approximately two weeks, the class focused on health disparities and communicating among different cultures in a healthcare setting. After class discussions, students were asked to take part in the study. Eighteen (5 men and 13 women) agreed. Their ages ranged from 18 to 45; 16 identified as Black/African American, 1 as Latina, and 1 as Caucasian.

Data collection

The university's Institutional Review Board approved the research. Participation was incentivized by a $10.00 gift card. One researcher conducted a focus group about health disparities, posing previously developed questions, but more arose following the participants' responses. They included: How would you define health disparity? What other information about health disparities would you like to know? These open-ended questions allowed participants to express detailed opinions in their own words (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007).

The focus group took approximately one hour. It was audio-recorded, and the discussion was transcribed for analysis with the help of an app, Otter. The researchers checked the data for any missing information.

Data analysis

The researchers took an inductive approach to analyzing the transcripts based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They used open coding to categorize comments (Creswell, 1998) and identify patterns. The comments were read several times to group similar remarks together to determine similar levels of awareness and ideas about health disparities. Three distinct themes emerged.

Results

The three main themes are 1) surprised by health-outcome differences; 2) until it hits home; and 3) the best channels.

Theme 1: Surprised by health-outcome differences

Results show that many participants were not aware of health disparities based on race/ethnicity. After classroom discussions, they remained skeptical about the differences in healthcare outcomes, especially between Blacks and Whites in the United States.

> We [African Americans] have things like heart attacks and diabetes and high blood pressure, and that's based on things that we usually eat, and …

> more of us live in impoverished areas that don't have access to things compared to Caucasian people. They have better access to things when they have the same medical issues. They can take care of it better. (Participant 12, Black woman)

> I kind of find it interesting that African Americans have the highest level of health problems with, like, high blood pressure, strokes, heart attack. (Participant 7, Black woman)

> I see in the media how some people are privileged in their medical care… I see how obesity that's causing a lot of diseases, such as heart attacks. I feel like people with lower incomes are eating fast foods, and they are not taking good care of themselves. (Participant 16, White woman)

The participants were not only alarmed by the health disparities between groups, especially based on race and ethnicity, but also expressed views on contributing factors.

> I think one of the biggest problems is the little kids don't go outside enough and exercise. Little kids, they want to … play video games. They don't lose weight; they just want to play video games and eat junk foods. (Participant 14, Black man)

> One thing that stood out to me the most was how African Americans in low-income areas and neighborhoods don't have like Whole Foods and organic markets to give them the opportunity to eat organic products because our organic product is better for our health. So you see a lot of teens and families going to, like, areas where they have a lot of grease and salt a lot of stuff that leads to hypertension. (Participant 13, Black woman)

Based on their shock about US health disparities, the participants said that learning more about them and how to reduce them for themselves and the community is important.

> I would like to know what are the funds that we have available or that they—the researchers—have available to get some programs started in how much change can we actually provoke with those sort of funds and can actually make a change with what is available to fix that gap or no matter what we do, for the funds are not going to make it possible for us to fix that gap in health disparities. (Participant 2, Latina)

> I would like to see how health disparities can be fixed in the education system because a lot of kids in lower income areas—their meals, their breakfast, their lunch, or their snack is inside school, so what kind of healthy choices can we fix inside the schoolhouse? (Participant 1, Black woman)

> I really feel like people need to be educated more about health disparities because you can't be conscious about something that you don't know about or aren't aware about, and I really feel like it should be taught with the basics when you teach kids in school. (Participant 1, Black woman)

While some participants wanted more information on what programs and methods could be used to address and rectify health disparities, others wanted more facts about specific diseases.

> More information in detail on HIV and AIDS due to the fact it is highlight infected in the African American community. (Participant 5, Black woman)

> More on alcoholism as well… alcoholism can also affect people's judgment or what they eat. (Participant 13, Black woman)

> I would like to see more things about mental health because mental health is a thing especially in the Black community, and people keep it on the hush. (Participant 11, Black woman)

Theme 2: Until it hits home

The second most prominent theme is "until it hits home." Participants admitted they do not think about health disparities because they are young and, for the most part, healthy. Their own sense of security mutes their concerns about health or the health of their local communities. They indicated they were not cognizant of health disparities until their families or friends were diagnosed with a disease.

> So my dad has diabetes, and until he got it, we—I—didn't really understand it. I didn't. I just knew it was like something that you should not have and have to take care of yourself and what not. (Participant 8, Black woman)

> I have a couple of people in my family that have died from cancer. And I really don't understand it like that. But breast cancer is the one I would like to know more about because my grandmother died from it. (Participant 3, Black man)

> One way that I learned about diabetes is my friend's brother is 14 and has type 2 diabetes. And he almost died from it because he wasn't informed about it. And, well, he knew about it, but he wasn't really taught you have to do this at this time, and also, like, my grandfather has type 2 diabetes. (Participant 9, Black woman)

> When I was growing up, older people had diabetes and hypertensions and cancers and all of that, but once I got older, I realize that teenagers got diabetes. I lost my sister age 2 to cancer. It something that our generation should be aware of. (Participant 15, Black woman)

Participants agree that one reason they do not think a lot about health disparities is that they generally feel healthy. They feel that these diseases simply do not affect their overall health or day-to-day activities. They consider themselves as healthy as possible now.

> I think it's funny that people think it does not really affect the youth. People are being born with diabetes and conditions like that... There are many people below 20 years old that do have diabetes and are born with diabetes and have issues before they are 21. (Participant 2, Latina)

> A lot of people don't take it seriously. You will see people pouring endless salt and stuff on there, or they complain about having too much sauce and … people just don't take advantage of the necessary information. (Participant 13, Black woman)

> We don't think it's affecting us yet because we are so young, so we are not paying attention to it. And I feel like that's why we're not the target audience because they know it's not on our mind right now. (Participant 16, White woman)

Theme 3: Best channels for communication

The participants suggested they are open to a host of communication channels for retrieving more information about health disparities, including interpersonal venues, such as special events. They discussed the importance of continuing to attend health events in local communities, not only to learn about health concerns, but also to reduce disparities.

> I do think they do work a lot, and they help a lot because when we held the event, a lot of people showed up, and a lot of the people that showed up were of lower incomes. And the reason they show up at these events? Because they really can't afford to go and take a screening or blood test. (Participant 2, Latina)

> I think health events do work. I have volunteered as well as participated… I think the most important thing about the health events is making sure that the areas where there is a need for are addressed, such as the screenings. A lot of times it is a variable of cost of transportation, so those that are impoverished areas can't afford bus passes, and sometimes you know it might not be possible to get childcare. (Participant 5, Black woman)

> We do a lot of health events on wheels, regardless of if we do a community fair, a health fair, or whatever the case may be. A lot of people rely on the program that we have during the year. (Participant 13, Black woman)

> They can't take their kids to the dentist, or their kids can't see in classes, and they can't go get glasses because they don't have too much, so they can either develop an eye strain until they can't see. Basically, so, again, they feel like they're getting looked down on, and they don't feel like, oh, I'm that broke to get something free. A lot of people in my neighborhood are very prideful. (Participant 8, Black woman)

Some participants stressed the importance of learning about health disparities from different points of reference; for example, interpersonal interactions along with media exposure could get more information out to their generation. Others felt the best channels are social media.

> You would like to learn more face-to-face … telling you the information more directly… If you don't understand, you can ask questions. (Participant 4, Black man)

> I believe both mass communication and interpersonal communication can be effective in learning more about health disparities because I have personally learned both here in this class and on television. (Participant 6, Black man)

> Conferences give more information on specific diseases, and there are professionals there to answer any questions that one may have. And I also would like to see something where it can be one of the college campuses where you can engage students … that are not being reached in a way that is interactive as well as informative. (Participant 5, Black woman)

> There should be mass media campaigns to get people involved and learning more about the message of the health issue… Mass media used to get people excited about it and kind of hear about it for the first time, and then also add in the conference information so that when people are hooked on the subject, they can actually have a place to go get that content. (Participant 2 Latina)

> I feel social media would be a great way to get people aware about health disparities because our generation is a technology-driven generation. And I feel like we get caught up in social media. If you scroll, and if you see something that interests you, you click on it, and you start reading more about it. And I feel like that's a great way to get people engaged and involved if it catches your attention. (Participant 9, Black woman)

The participants agree that any message should be straightforward and capture their attention. As participant 7 (a Black woman) states, "I think they should all have those same kinds of messages—like diabetes, say—what can happen; if this happens—or like heart attacks—how those are caused, and what you can do to prevent it—because both draw attention. I know when I watch them, I get excited because it's like serious."

They also agree that the messages should be continuous and help them think about the importance of staying healthy during their younger years.

Discussion

Throughout the past decade, minority groups in the United States have increased (Frey, 2020)—the number of Blacks has increased to more than 46 million (Tamir, 2021)—increasing the need to ensure they are aware of their health outcomes. This study demonstrates that the participants, almost all Black, were relatively unaware about health disparities in the Black community. This finding is not surprising; other studies have shown that Black and White Americans lack awareness about health disparities (Benz, Espinosa, Welsh, & Fontes, 2011; Booske, Roberts, & Rohan, 2011). The participants raised questions about how and why health outcomes differ between Blacks and Whites for many diseases, including high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. They are right to seek more information. In 2018, Blacks were "30% more likely to die from heart disease" than Whites, and their incidence of high blood pressure is 40% greater than Whites' (DHHS, 2021b, para 1).

The classroom discussions about health disparities appeared to increase the participants' interest in learning more about specific health conditions. Topics ranged from HIV/AIDS to mental health, important problems in the Black community. In 2018, Blacks had a higher death rate from HIV/AIDS than other races/ethnicities in the United States and were less likely to get the type of medical care needed (CDC, 2020d). Moreover, minorities are less likely to be properly treated for mental illnesses (McGuire & Miranda, 2008). The variety of health disparities calls for constant discussion in and among Black communities.

A major obstacle to increasing awareness about health disparities among college students is age. Most participants were in their early twenties. To reach them, they stressed, messages about health disparities must resonate with their generation and be culturally relevant. They believe health-campaign developers and educators should use a hybrid approach, including both interpersonal and mass media messages. They referenced the importance of continuing conversations and studies about different health outcomes among groups in the classroom, where they have the opportunity to ask questions and get answers from credible sources. One group of participants also recommended direct communication at community events on college campuses and at community and mobile health fairs. Studies have shown that health events can benefit college students' understanding of health disparities (Lee et al., 2015; Mays, Ly, Allen, & Young, 2009). Other recommended forms of communication include health campaigns through social media. Even though media outlets can reach a large audience, their health message, Gans (2020) explains, may reach people who are unlikely to change their health behavior, which could lead to more health disparities.

Participants in this study were undergraduate students who were not majoring in healthcare nor specifically pursuing careers in the healthcare industry. However, they still represent a population affected by various health disparities. Increasing their awareness and gaining their insights into the communication channels that attract them to messages about health and health disparities are worthy goals. Moreover, introducing health disparities for discussion in a communication class that focuses on cross-cultural exchanges prompts participants—future workforce leaders—to learn more about problems affecting their own communities and those of others.

Recommendations

This study shows that minority students attending a Historically Black University are open to learning more about health disparities that affect their own health, their family's health, and the health of their own and other communities. Past studies discuss reasons for offering health- disparities instruction in health and medical classes (Bull & Miller, 2008; Cene et al., 2010; Gonzalez & Bussey-Jones, 2010; McElfish et al., 2018; Njoku & Baker, 2019; & Njoku &Wakeel, 2019); this study shows the benefits of discussing health disparities in communication courses, such as Intercultural and Health Communication. Communication classes could provide a way to discuss differing health outcomes based on specific demographics. Instructors could assign activities and readings on health disparities. Benabentos et al. (2014) find that many minority-serving universities offer fewer health-disparities courses than other institutions due to lack of resources. However, dedicating even part of the semester to discussions and assignments about health disparities can sensitize students to the problem. In this study, participants say they would welcome the opportunity to learn about different health topics that affect minority communities through a form of peer-to-peer learning. Last, even when resources are limited, health disparities can be addressed through on-campus events, such as health fairs, especially in Black communities.

This study is exploratory. Its findings cannot be used to generalize about minority college students' awareness or preferred communication channels to receive more information about health disparities. However, the questions and suggestions offered by its participants open avenues for future research and practical implementations.

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"Bless His Heart, He Doesn't Know Left from Right:" The Duality of Euphemisms

Abby M. Brooks and Andrew C. Tollison

Whether the phrase "bless your heart" is employed: "bless her heart she just doesn't get it," "bless his heart he just doesn't know better" or "bless your little heart you've had a bad day" the common linguistic expression has been used in a variety of contexts to defuse contextual meaning or to coddle the receiver. This paper seeks to explore the usage of the phrase "bless your heart" as it relates to face-threat sensitivity, with a specific focus on the use of euphemisms in an attempt to save one's own face.

Keywords: *Bless your Heart, Euphemisms, Facework, Language, Politeness theory*

It was the tweet heard around the South, then Governor Nikki Haley responded on March 1, 2016, to a President Donald Trump putdown with "Bless your heart." The comment tallied 6,293 retweets, 127 quotes and 10.5k likes.[1] Responses were made, articles were written, and debates were launched to decode the meaning.

While language use is diverse across cultures, Brown and Levinson (1978)[2] argue that face needs and politeness strategies are universal across all cultures. Rooted in sociolinguistics, politeness theory assumes that verbal messages are rational, purposeful, and goal-directed. One commonly used method to provide the speaker with the ability to use more transparent language in times of reluctance, is through the use of euphemisms. As stated by McGlone, Beck, and Pfiester (2006), euphemisms are a "lexical substitution strategy for representationally displacing topics that evoke negative affect" (p. 261). The potential motive surrounding this use of language is to reduce communicative discomfort for the speaker as well as the receiver of the message (Allan & Burridge, 1991; Liszka, 1990; Partridge, 1947). However, a study conducted by McGlone and Batchelor (2003) noted that individuals use euphemisms most frequently to protect their own self-

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[1] https://twitter.com/AmbNikkiHaley/status/704756959019474948

[2] Brown and Levinson's first work titled *Universals of language usage: Politeness phenomena*, was published in 1978. In 1987, a reissue titled *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* was released. All references hereafter are to the 1987 edition.

presentational concerns than to minimize a potential threat to the addressee. One such euphemism, common in the Southern region of the United States of America, to soften a comment, to show empathy, or perhaps an attempt to save face for a receiver, is "bless your heart." Conversely, "bless your heart" has been deployed to mask a sender's meaning in attempt to allow the sender to save face.

Adapted from Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, face-saving is "concerned with warding off social rejection" (Berk, 1977, p. 530). These face-saving strategies, later defined as *facework* by Brown and Levinson (1987), have the capacity to reduce the stigma associated with social rejection (Goffman, 1963). A myriad of research has addressed the use of facework strategies during interaction (see Lim & Bowers, 1991; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996), yet limited attention has been paid to the use of euphemisms as face-saving strategies. As will be addressed in the current manuscript, one potential predictor on euphemism use is an individual's face-threat sensitivity or "the likelihood that an individual will have a negative affective reaction to a face threat" (White, Tynan, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004). For this reason, this project will investigate the use of the linguistic utterance "bless your heart" while keeping in consideration the face-threat sensitivity of the speaker may impact euphemism use.

Review of Literature

Politeness theory was introduced to further advance Goffman's (1959) concept of *face*. While not the first researcher to reference and discuss face, Goffman is commonly credited with introducing the term into western civilization. To Goffman (1967), face is the "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by his or her self-presentation" (p. 5). To further define Goffman's (1967) concept, face is a public image that is "on loan from society" and can be taken away if an individual is deemed unworthy of it (p. 10). It is a primary assumption of the politeness theory that all interactants have an interest in maintaining face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Face

While Goffman (1959) viewed face as a public property, Brown and Levinson (1987) characterized face as intrinsically belonging to the individual. In further developing Goffman's (1959) concept, Brown and Levinson (1987) identified two types of face needs that all interactants possess: *positive face* and *negative face*. Positive face is the "consistent self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). Lim and Bowers (1991) took the notion of positive face one step further to include two distinct positive desires: *fellowship face* and *competence face*. Fellowship face refers to a person's desire for affection and inclusion, while competence face centers on the desire for respect.

Brown and Levinson (1987) define negative face as "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction—i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). In other words, negative face revolves around being free from constraints and impositions. Lim and Bowers (1991) identified Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative face as a person's *autonomous face*. In opposition to popular belief, during an interaction, face needs affect not only the receiver of the message but also the sender (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore, "it is the mutual interest of interactants to maintain each other's face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61).

Sensitivity to Face-Threats

Any communicative announcement that jeopardizes one's ability to control actions or to be respected is identified as a face-threatening act. These acts, both linguistic and nonverbal in nature, include "communicative acts such as insults and criticisms which can threaten a receiver's positive face by conveying disapproval, while requests [for favors can] threaten a receiver's negative face by constraining the receiver's behaviors and imposing on their autonomy" (Erbert & Floyd, 2004, p. 263). According to Goffman (1967), interlocutors have the potential to display "too much perceptiveness [to face threats] or too much pride, and [become] someone who is thin-skinned, who must be treated with kid gloves, requiring more care on the part of others than he may be worth to them" (p. 40).

This concept was later identified by White et al. (2004) as an individual's face-threat sensitivity. As reported by Oatway (1997) and Tynan (1999), those with high face-threat sensitivity have a tendency to exhibit lower levels of trust and self-disclosure due to the potential of self-inflicted face-threats. Due to this decreased trust and self-disclosure, interlocutors high in face-threat sensitivity are significantly less likely to partake in any communicative event which has the potential to threaten face (whether it be their own or another person's). White et al. (2004) offer that high face-threat sensitivity creates "a roadblock to integrative agreements and joint gain" (p. 112). To further clarify, highly face-threat sensitive individuals respond to stimuli such as criticisms more readily than do others, which inhibit that person's overall communicative abilities. This hindrance impacts the receiver's ability to control anger levels (Carson & Cupach, 2000) as well as perceive embarrassment (Keltner & Anderson, 2000; Keltner & Buswell, 1996, 1997; Keltner & Haidt, 1999) that has the potential to occur during dialogue.

As proposed by Tynan (1999), an interactant's level of face-threat sensitivity is unique to that person and therefore is worthy of investigation. Despite this call to action, face-threat sensitivity has received limited attention. In particular, how do these individuals with high face-threat sensitivity address potentially threatening situations to themselves as well as others?

Facework

In an attempt to refrain from threatening the face needs of the receiver as well as one's self, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced five facework strategies which are "ordered on their degree of politeness, or the extent to which they mitigate face threats" (p. 65). These five forms of facework are categorized into one of four dimensions: off-the-record, on record without redressive action, on record with redressive action, and avoidance (See Figure 1).

When a message is delivered as directly as possible, the strategy being used is *bald-on record*. When using this strategy, there is no attempt to lessen the possibility of face threats. *Positive politeness* is the second facework strategy and it involves "crafting the message to minimize threats to the receiver's positive face [desire to be respected]" (Erbert & Floyd, 2004).

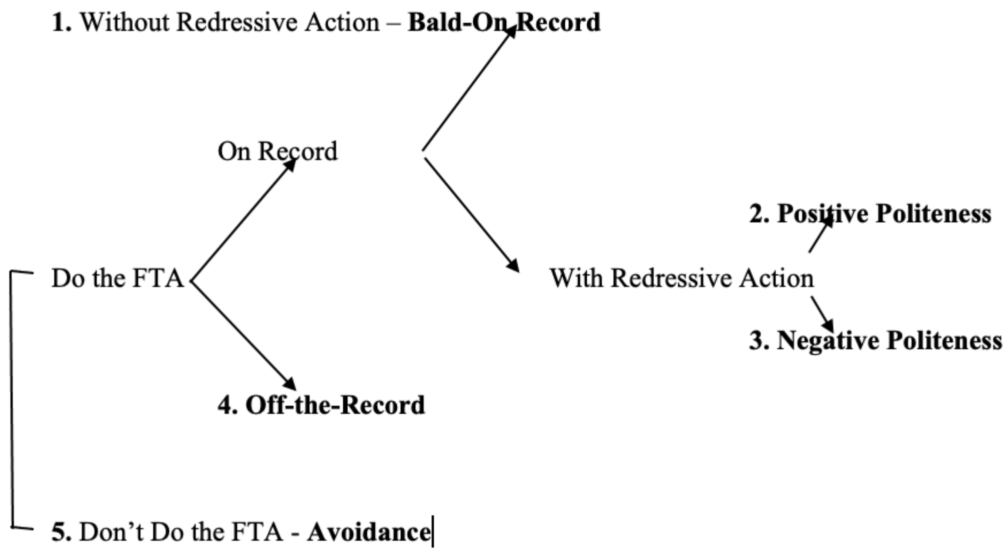

Figure 1: Five Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 74)

An example of positive politeness is if the actor states "you are great at what you do, but this is simply not your best work."

The third type of facework strategy is *negative politeness* which involves the creation of a message that is less likely to place a threat on the receiver's negative face (desire to be autonomous). A potential example of negative facework would be if the actor states, "you are really close, but this project is going to take just a little more work."

Off-the-record is the fourth strategy put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987). This strategy involves the message being implied but never actually stated. For instance, if a professor refuses to accept a student's proposal, the professor could say "you must be extremely busy right now." A benefit to using the off-the-record strategy is the professor would be able to deny that he meant the proposal was not constructed well if the student took great offense. The final facework strategy is simply to *avoid* the face threatening act altogether (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this situation, the actor might feel the potential face threat of a message could outweigh the benefits of the message to the extent the message is never articulated.

Euphemisms as Facework Strategies

A type of facework strategy not explicitly addressed in the theory is saving face through the use of euphemisms, which are known to "tell it like it isn't" (McGlone, Beck, & Pfiester, 2006, p. 261). Euphemisms "reflect inner anxieties and hang-ups, but their very existence suggests that people can use linguistic facework to confront and discuss these inhibitions, if not overcome them" (McGlone & Batchelor, 2003, p. 262). As stated by McGlone and Batchelor (2003), "lexicographers have traditionally characterized euphemisms as a linguistic substitution strategy (e.g., substitution of use the restroom for urinate) motivated by the communicator's reluctance to offend an addressee" (p. 251).

The assumption is that individuals high in face-threat sensitivity will take greater care of the other communicator's face through the use of indirect facework strategies. In that, a "euphemism provides a way of speaking about the unspeakable" (Redfern, 1984, p. 1181). As such, the overarching purpose of a euphemism is to substitute altruistic and indirect statements for potentially threatening expressions. Overall, euphemisms are a linguistic facework strategy that can be used to confront unpleasant topics with others as well as overcome inhibitions to address such topics. Despite the argument against the functionality and effectiveness of euphemisms, there is scholarly consensus that euphemisms are useful in communication as they can displace topics of intense affect by avoiding direct references to particular events (Liszka, 1990).

Being that a euphemism's longevity is dependent upon its frequency in conversation, it is possible that the euphemism will hold the same face-threat value as the traditional statement (Craig, 1990; Fazio, 2001; Holtgraves, 1986; Rawson, 1995). For a euphemism to succeed, "in reducing the communicative discomfort associated with a distasteful topic, it is imperative that it not call undue attention to itself" (McGlone et al., 2006, p. 263). Thus, this investigation will provide insight into one of the South's most popular euphemisms, "bless your heart." More specifically, this study will examine the valence associated with the euphemistic phrase "bless your heart" and attempt to determine how communicators use this phrase in everyday language as an attempt to save face for themselves as well as others.

As such, the following research question is proposed:

RQ1: How, if at all, has the connotation of the phrase "bless your heart" changed in conventional discourse?

Method

Subjects

Participants were 75 adults (53.3% male, 45.3% female, and 1 participant did not specify) who were recruited from communication courses at a large Southeastern university. Most (84%) of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian. The next largest percentage, 4.0%, of participants identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino(a). African American and Asian American/Pacific Islander were each identified 2.7% respectively, while 5.3% of the respondents identified with being racially mixed and 1 participant did not specify race/ethnicity. Respondent ages ranged from 20 to 38 years of age with a mean age of 23.12 years (sd= 9.38).

Overall Method and Design

Participants responded to open-ended items revolving around the euphemistic phrase "bless your heart." The first question, "what is the valence of the phrase 'bless your heart?'" offered the following answers: (response options: 1 = positive, 2 = negative, 3 = neutral). The second question asked participants to describe an instance in which the phrase "bless your heart" could be utilized. Two coders analyzed the data for usage and categories.

Results and Discussion

Of those surveyed, 53.3% viewed the use of the phrase "bless your heart" as a positive phrase, 34.7% viewed as a negative phrase and 8% viewed as a neutral phrase. In addition to collecting connotation meaning the survey also asked the participants to provide examples of usage. Because the purpose of this work was to determine the connotation of the phrase "bless your heart" the neutral responses were removed and analysis was limited to the positive and negative responses.

Those participants that demonstrated the "bless your heart" phrase as being positive provided sample phrases that gave further insight into the usage. Even though the participants answered that the phrase was being used in a positive connotation, coders determined that there were two distinct categories for which the examples fit. Those categories are expressions of 1) an act of care and concern; and, 2) as an act of appreciation:

Examples of usage as an act of care and concern:

> If someone is working all day and comes home and has to work some more and someone else sees them and says "poor thing, bless your heart" and shows genuine remorse and care.
>
> When I have just had a really bad day and everything has gone wrong and someone (says) "bless your heart" to me.
>
> I had the flu and my grandmother said "bless your heart".

Examples of usage as an act of appreciation:

> (When you open) a door for an elderly woman and she says "bless your Heart."
>
> If you had done a good deed or helped someone out and a person acknowledged that act and said "bless your heart."

Participants who declared the phrase "bless your heart" as having a negative connotation provided sample phrases that coders divided into two distinct categories, both of which use the phrase to defuse the potentially hurtful words. Those categories are: to 1) soften slights; and, 2) excuse:

Examples of usage to soften slights:

> When someone makes fun of something about you, they say "bless your Heart.".
>
> Bless your heart can be negative when someone says something dumb or ignorant.

> Someone expressing one's stupidity "Bless your heart, I can't believe you didn't know that."

Examples of usage to excuse:

> (If someone) gives a bad speech and I say "bless your heart."
>
> A teacher receiving an assignment says, "well bless your heart, you did try hard, anyway."
>
> If someone has a really obnoxious quality about them, another person may be like "bless his heart."

From this analysis we can surmise that more than half of those participants who use the phrase "bless your heart" demonstrated that the phrase has not lost the soft connotation of face. While on the path towards, "bless your heart" has not reached a saturation point from the viewpoint of the sender of a message.

The findings in this study answered the research question regarding the connotation of the phrase "bless your heart." This work found that most participants continue to use the phrase "bless your heart" as a sign of sympathy or concern while those who do use the phrase in a negative connotation use it to "soften" the blow of the crass words or excuses which allow for a saving of face. In other words, the euphemism is no longer camouflaged but is still effective in language use.

Language and meaning continue to be an important part of interpersonal relationships, so much so that further analysis of face-saving measures will allow us, as researchers and participants, to better understand ourselves and our relationships. Like all studies this one was not without limitations. This work was limited as it was exploratory in nature but there is room to continue the analysis. To make this line of study stronger, future research could provide participants with media (video or audio recordings), performed examples or a script based on the responses collected here. By providing participants with an example of usage and then asking them to respond to the same question regarding their understanding of context (1 = positive, 2 = negative, 3 = neutral) researchers would be able to further analyze the euphemism.

Another line of study would be to determine with whom the speaker is most concerned with saving face. In other words, when the speaker utilizes the phrase is she/he concerned with saving face of the subject, with the subject, with the audience, all of the above, or a combination of the receivers.

In conclusion, this work was designed to further the understanding of saving face through language use in relationships and to test the meaning of the Southern phrase "bless your heart." Due to their high comprehensibility and low discourse salience, euphemisms are appropriate for discussing distasteful topics (Burgoon & Langer, 1995), which supports why we continue to use the phrase "bless your heart" as part of our vernacular. The findings within are significant; as familiarity with a euphemism increases, the associated politeness decreases. However, it is important to note that politeness does not simply go away when the recipient acknowledges the euphemism. As such, message recipients often understand the self-presentational tactic of euphemism use (Schlenker, 1980), as euphemisms are innocuous references to impolite statements. This attempt at politeness is appreciated by the receiver of the message, just not to same extent if the euphemism was still camouflaged.

Findings in this research analysis support that the need to save face in interpersonal relationships remains important in selecting language and the contextual usage of the phrase remains positive. Ultimately, it is important for scholars to understand what euphemisms are in use, so they can be analyzed in terms of politeness for use in everyday life.

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To Express Oneself or to "Talk Less, Smile More?:" Rawlins' Relational Dialectic of Expressiveness and Protectiveness in the Musical *Hamilton*

Cassandra Ward and Valerie Lynn Schrader

In the musical Hamilton*, Alexander Hamilton tests many of his relationships while trying to build a legacy. The relationship he strains the most in pursuit of this legacy is his friendship with Aaron Burr. In this rhetorical analysis, we apply Rawlins' relational dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness to Alexander Hamilton's friendship with Aaron Burr as portrayed in the musical* Hamilton*. We argue that the tensions caused from the lack of management of the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness in Hamilton and Burr's friendship leads to the loss of Hamilton's life and the demonization of Burr as a villain. By seeing how Hamilton and Burr's relationship was strained from their failure to manage the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness, audience members can learn how to appropriately trust friends in their lives. We suggest that Hamilton, in this way, provides audience members with what Kenneth Burke describes as "equipment for living," enabling them to learn life lessons about the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness that they can apply to their own relationships.*

Keywords: *Relational Dialectics, Dialectic of Expressiveness and Protectiveness, Rhetorical criticism, Rhetoric, Musical Theatre, Hamilton*

The Broadway musical *Hamilton*, written by Lin-Manuel Miranda and based on a biography by Ron Chernow ("Hamilton," 2020), depicts the life of founding father Alexander Hamilton. It opened on Broadway on August 6, 2015 after a highly-successful off-Broadway engagement and was still running when Broadway temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic ("*Hamilton*," 2021). *Hamilton* has been a national phenomenon since it debuted with nearly 2,000 performances to date ("*Hamilton*," 2020), and fans of the musical have reported difficulty getting tickets to the show due to its popularity and limited supply of tickets, causing resellers to charge "astronomical prices" (Hyman, 2019, para. 2). The musical's popularity has only increased with the premiere of the professionally-filmed recording of the show on the streaming network Disney+. The musical has won a number of awards; the Broadway production won 11 Tony Awards, 2 Drama League Awards, and an Astaire Award, and the off-Broadway production won 8 Drama Desk Awards, 3 Outer Critics Circle Awards, and a New York Drama Critics Circle

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Award ("*Hamilton*," 2020). Lin-Manuel Miranda also won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 2016 for *Hamilton* ("*Hamilton*," 2020). Other productions of the show include a North American tour and a West End production in London ("*Hamilton* on Tour Musical," 2017).

In addition to the show's wild popularity, *Hamilton* fared well with critics. Brantley (2015) of *The New York Times* said he wished he could have reacted negatively to the show because of how much it was being hyped, but was so impressed by *Hamilton* that he suggested that the musical proves that Broadway is not dead. Teachout (2015) of *The Wall Street Journal* argued that *Hamilton* is the most important musical of the decade due to the combination of hip-hop and history (para. 2). Semuels (2015) of *The Atlantic* noted that the musical brought to light how many of the founding fathers were enslavers, which is a part of history of which many Americans are unaware. Stasio (2015) of *Variety* observed that despite a location change, months of performances off-Broadway, and difficult music, the show's quality remained high and was never dull. As the reviews suggest, *Hamilton* is both a critical and popular success.

Through its storyline depicting a number of relationships in Alexander Hamilton's life, *Hamilton* offers important messages to theatre-goers. In this rhetorical analysis, we apply Rawlins' theoretical construct of relational dialectics to Alexander Hamilton's friendship with Aaron Burr in the musical *Hamilton*, with particular focus on the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness. We utilize this dialectic to show how Hamilton causes tensions in his friendships, and then fails to attempt to fix them after the damage has been done. These tensions ultimately lead to him losing his life, as well as to Burr's demonization as the villain in Hamilton's story. We suggest that by seeing how this friendship was strained from the lack of management of the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness, theatre-goers can learn how to appropriately trust friends in their lives. Audience members can learn from Hamilton's mistakes and negotiate the tensions between expressiveness and protectiveness in order to treat the people who love them well while still working to build the life and legacy they desire. In this way, *Hamilton* provides theatre-goers with what Kenneth Burke describes as "equipment for living," enabling them to learn life lessons about the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness that they can apply to their own relationships.

The Story of *Hamilton*

Hamilton tells the story of Alexander Hamilton's life from his childhood and participation in the American Revolutionary War through his time as a member of President George Washington's cabinet, up until his death. Alexander Hamilton was an immigrant from the Caribbean who moved to the American colonies to access education and to fight in the upcoming war. While in the military, he meets friends who will have a lasting impact on his life: the Marquis de Lafayette, Hercules Mulligan, and John Laurens. He meets Aaron Burr, with whom he has a complicated relationship for the rest of his life. Hamilton eventually marries Eliza Schuyler, though the musical suggests he was interested in his sister-in-law Angelica as well, and he has multiple children with Eliza. He becomes George Washington's right-hand man in the Revolutionary War.

After the war, Hamilton becomes Washington's treasury secretary. Through this position, he meets James Madison and Thomas Jefferson who work to take down Hamilton due to political disagreements. While Eliza is away visiting family for the summer, Hamilton, who stayed home to get his financial plan through Congress, has an affair with Maria Reynolds. Hamilton eventually makes a deal with Madison and Jefferson to get his financial plan through on the condition that they get to choose the location of the capital, which ultimately works in Hamilton's favor. After tensions rise in the cabinet, Burr, Jefferson, and Madison tell Hamilton that they have discovered suspicious financial receipts, which Hamilton admits were from the affair. Hamilton then publishes the Reynolds Pamphlet publicly admitting to the affair, which clears him of financial wrongdoing but causes a rift in his marriage. Hamilton's eldest son, Philip, participates in a duel that ultimately takes his life. After this, Hamilton takes a break to heal the relationships he has broken. In the presidential election of 1800, Jefferson runs against Burr, and Hamilton endorses Jefferson. This causes Burr to lose the election, and he challenges Hamilton to a duel because of this. Burr kills Hamilton during the duel. The musical ends with a song featuring Eliza telling Hamilton how she has worked to tell his story and build his legacy.

Theoretical Foundation

In his book, *The Compass of Friendship: Narratives, Identities & Dialogues*, William K. Rawlins (2009) contends that "freedom surely lives at the heart of friendships" (p. 1). Friendships and relationships are a crucial part of how people develop and grow. Relationships begin the moment we are born, and since newborns require attention, the need for a relationship quickly becomes a necessity (Rawlins, 2009, p. 15). Then, throughout our lives, we continue to use communication to become who we are as people (Rawlins, 2009, p. 16). Communication with others is necessary for our personalities to develop, and friendships are formed through communication with others.

Rawlins (1992; 2009) describes several relational dialectics that affect friendships. Relational dialectics are tensions in friendships that have the potential to bring friends closer together or to cause damage in a relationship, depending on how the friends choose to manage these tensions. Relational dialectics have also been studied extensively by Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery (1996; 2008), who focus primarily on dialectical tensions in romantic relationships. Because the relationship in *Hamilton* between Hamilton and Burr is a friendship, we have selected to examine the musical through Rawlins' relational dialectics, which focus on friendship.

In his earlier book, *Friendship Matters: Communication, Dialectics, and the Life Course*, Rawlins (1992) describes two different types of dialectics: contextual dialectics and interactional dialectics (p. 7). Contextual dialectics include the dialectic of the private and the public, and the dialectic of the ideal and the real (Rawlins, 1992, p. 7). Interactional dialectics include the dialectic of the freedom to be independent and the freedom to be dependent, the dialectic of affection and instrumentality, the dialectic of judgment and acceptance, and the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness (Rawlins, 1992, p. 7).

The dialectic of the private and the public, like all other dialectics, affects many different kinds of relationships (Rawlins, 2009, p. 8). The dialectic of the private and the public shows the difference in how friendships are expressed in public compared to what is accepted by those friendships in private (Rawlins, 1992, p. 9). This dialectic presents a conflict between how friends act within private settings compared to the societal expectations of friendships. How they may differ can cause tensions in friendships, particularly if one friend fears judgment from society.

The dialectic of the ideal and the real shows the tensions that arise within friendships due to expectations that may be unrealistic in the relationship (Rawlins, 1992, p. 11). There are certain expectations in every friendship that come from socialization, and when those expectations are not met, problems can arise (Rawlins, 1992, p. 11). For example, one societal expectation in friendships is basic care for each other. This can look like checking in and asking how things are going for a friend. If one person expects that and the other person does not do that, the first person will think that the other does not care about him/her/them and would most likely not want to stay in the friendship.

The dialectic of the freedom to be independent and the freedom to be dependent illustrates the difference in how friends rely on each other. The freedom to be independent is when friends do not need each other to live their own lives and have their own interests without the interference of the other (Rawlins, 1992, p. 16). The freedom to be dependent is relying on the other person in the friendship (Rawlins, 1992, p. 16). This can cause problems if one person wants more independence while the other person is more dependent. For example, if one person asks the other for help and the other makes other plans, this would likely cause damage in the relationship.

Rawlins (1992) describes the dialectic of affection and instrumentality in the following terms: "this principle formulates the interpenetrated nature of caring for a friend as an end-in-itself and/or as a means-to-an-end" (p. 17). This dialectic shows the difference between caring for a friend and using a friend for one's own advantage. Affection is needed in any relationship, friendships included. If there is a lack of affection, or if a friend is using another for his/her/their own gain, this can cause serious damage in the friendship.

The dialectic of judgment and acceptance shows how friends react to things their friends do, what they say, and who they are, whether that be with judgment or acceptance (Rawlins, 1992, p. 20). People want to be accepted, especially by the people they care about. Friends have to make the choice about whether they want to judge their friend on the person he/she/they is or whether they choose to accept him/her/them. Friendships are often broken due to judgment, but there is also a healthy amount of judgment that is necessary in friendships. If a friend is making bad choices, it is important for his/her/their friend to hold him/her/them accountable so that he/she/they can learn lessons and grow.

The dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness illustrates the desire to be both open with friends and protective with information about ourselves (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). People want to be able to tell their friends about their lives, who they are, and what they have been through, even though there is an inherent fear of being judged. This causes people to protect themselves by not disclosing information to their friends or allowing them to get close enough to them to hurt them. This can cause issues if a person is too protective and won't let his/her/their friends in, or if a person is too open and is judged because of what he/she/they shares. In this analysis of *Hamilton*, we have chosen to focus primarily on the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness because this dialectic appears to be the root cause of much of the tensions in the relationship between Burr and Hamilton, as it is portrayed by *Hamilton's* creative team and performers.

Rawlins (2009) also describes two different types of friendship: personal and political (p. 5). A personal friendship is when people are friends because they choose to care about the well-being of the other (Rawlins, 2009, p. 5). Political friendships are when people are friends because of their circumstances, such as friends who see each other only through civic engagement, work, or school (Rawlins, 2009, p. 6). It is worth noting that in any friendship, there are active choices made by all parties to participate in the relationship (Rawlins, 1992, p. 16).

Literature Review

Communication scholars have applied Rawlins' relational dialectics to various communication contexts, including health communication (Amati & Hannawa, 2013; Dean & Oetzel, 2014; Jones, Scarduzio, Mathews, Holbrook, Welsh, Wilbur, Carr, Cary, Doty & Ballard, 2019; Oetzel, Simpson, Barrymore, Iti & Reddy, 2015.; Ohs, Trees, & Gibson, 2015; Toller, 2005), instructional communication (Striley, 2014; O'Boyle, 2014), communication technology (Hall & Baym, 2011), and family communication (Sahlstein, Maguire & Timmerman, 2009). To date, few scholars have applied Rawlins' (1992; 2009) relational dialectics to musical theatre. In 2013, Schrader applied Rawlins' concepts related to friendship to the characters of Elphaba and G(a)linda in *Wicked*, noting how the pair negotiates the dialectic of judgment and acceptance. Furthermore, Bachert & Schrader (2017) applied relational dialectics to the friendships and romantic relationships of the characters in the musical *Ragtime*, noting how mutual negotiations of the oppositions were essential for each relationship's success or failure.

Bachert & Schrader (2017) also suggest that theatre-goers can learn life lessons from watching the characters' interactions on stage. In *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Kenneth Burke (1967) notes how people learn life lessons from proverbs, and he extends this concept to literature. Burke (1967) contends that literature can serve as "*equipment for living*, that size up situations in various ways and in keeping with correspondingly various attitudes" (p. 304, emphasis Burke's). "Equipment for living" can provide readers with lessons that they can apply to their day-to-day lives. In this article, we hope to extend this argument regarding how theatre-goers can use "equipment for living" that they learn from observing the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness in *Hamilton* to their own friendships.

Hamilton, as a popular musical theatre show, has already been studied by a number of scholars; however, to date, none have yet examined how relational dialectics play a role in the characters' relationships. Studies have explored the musical's portrayal of women (Wolf, 2018) and class (Sekellick, 2018), its use of music (Dobrick, 2018; Seevers, 2018), and its connection to other shows (Brooks, 2018; Magee, 2018; Saez, 2018). In two separate studies, Inayatulla & Silva (2018) and Mayora (2018) examined how *Hamilton* can motivate audience members to engage with political and social justice issues. Furthermore, in 2019, Schrader examined how the musical creates public memory through its use of narrative. We hope to contribute to the literature on *Hamilton* by bringing to light the messages regarding the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness in this musical.

Analysis

Throughout the musical *Hamilton*, Alexander Hamilton's friendships are tested due to relational dialectics. Throughout this analysis, we apply Rawlins' relational dialectics, specifically the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness, to Hamilton's friendship with Aaron Burr. Hamilton and Burr tend to favor different oppositions in regards to expressiveness and protectiveness: in most cases, Hamilton values expressiveness while Burr values protectiveness. This hurts their friendship throughout the entire musical, and provides a cautionary tale for audience members regarding how to manage the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness in their own friendships.

Burr is the primary narrator of the musical and tells the story of Hamilton's life. Their first meeting is the first time we see Hamilton interact with anyone, and it occurs in the second song of the musical, foreshadowing the important role that Burr and Hamilton will play in each other's lives. The dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness shows the difference between protecting yourself to avoid being hurt, and being vulnerable and expressing who you are (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). Though it can be necessary to protect yourself, if there is a lack of communication between friends regarding the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness, the friendship is not likely to last (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). Negotiating this dialectic can be challenging (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22), as shown by Hamilton and Burr's difficulty with it. This dialectic is illustrated in a disagreement between Hamilton and Burr during their first encounter:

> BURR: While we're talking, let me offer you some free advice. Talk less.
> HAMILTON: What?
> BURR: Smile more.
> HAMILTON: Ha.
> BURR: Don't let them know what you're against or what you're for. (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 23–24)

Burr is encouraging Hamilton to keep his beliefs and ideas to himself in order to protect himself, which is a philosophy that Burr abides by in his own life. He even goes so far as to warn Hamilton that "fools who run their mouths off wind up dead" (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 24). This particular line foreshadows their final disagreement. Hiding his personal opinions and beliefs is something that Burr does throughout the musical, and this protectiveness consequently leads to their duel at the end of the show. Hamilton, on the other hand, does not believe in this practice. He feels that he should be completely honest about what he believes and share his beliefs with everyone, no matter the consequences. Later in the same song, Hamilton counters Burr's philosophy by challenging, "If you stand for nothing, Burr, what'll you fall for?" (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 25), illustrating the importance he places on expressiveness.

Friends are often cautious in new friendships in regards to revealing information about themselves that may hurt their personal confidence or the friendship itself (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). Then, as trust develops, the friends become more comfortable disclosing more information about themselves (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). Though it is not an easy task, if the friends manage the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness effectively, trust will develop over time and the friendship will prosper (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). The relationship between Hamilton and Burr, as illustrated in *Hamilton*, fails to develop and prosper because the partners fail to manage the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness. Hamilton seems to trust not only Burr, but everyone he meets, with the vulnerable pieces of his life. He believes that being honest and open from the beginning is an effective way to get people to trust him and to build meaningful relationships. On the other hand, Burr rarely is vulnerable with anyone. He believes he needs to be protective in order to not be hurt, whether it be in personal relationships or in the political world.

Hamilton thinks the way Burr keeps things private means he is doing it for the wrong reasons. He believes that this makes Burr untrustworthy, and so he does not trust Burr from their first meeting to the end of the musical. The first time he trusts him, he quite literally puts his life in Burr's hands and loses his life because of it. Rawlins (1992) states that friends are naturally protective of themselves until they begin to trust each other (p. 22). Burr does not think he can trust anyone, let alone Hamilton. Friends usually become more open with each other once they know each other better (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). This never happens between Hamilton and Burr, and it causes Hamilton to deem Burr untrustworthy since Burr won't let himself be vulnerable with anyone.

At the end of the first act of the musical, after the Americans have won the Revolutionary War, tensions grow between Hamilton and Burr. During the song "Nonstop," we see Hamilton proposing a form of government at the Constitutional Convention and Burr baffled by how freely Hamilton is speaking:

> BURR: Why do you always say what you believe? Ev'ry proclamation guarantees free ammunition for your enemies! (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 138).

Though Hamilton believes Burr to be sneaky and untrustworthy due to his secretiveness, Burr's motivation in maintaining this secretiveness is to not be vulnerable. He thinks that this is the best way to get ahead in the political world. Hamilton vehemently disagrees later on in the song, where he asks Burr to help him write a series of papers, which would later go on to become the Federalist Papers, to support the U.S. Constitution:

> HAMILTON: Hey. What are you waiting for? What do you stall for?
> BURR: What?
> HAMILTON: We won the war. What was it all for? Do you support this constitution?
> BURR: Of course.
> HAMILTON: Then defend it.
> BURR: And what if you're backing the wrong horse?
> HAMILTON: Burr, we studied and we fought and we killed for the notion of a nation we now get to build. For once in your life, take a stand with pride. I don't understand how you stand to the side. (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 142)

In this scene, Hamilton argues with Burr over his hesitation to defend the Constitution. Burr is being protective of himself, while Hamilton is choosing to express his beliefs through the Federalist Papers. Motivated by fear of making an argument that could invite opposition, Burr refuses to express himself even when it could help the country for which he fought. To be able to form and keep a connection, friends need to be expressive (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). Hamilton is upset that he is reaching out to Burr for help, and Burr won't oblige him and contribute to the founding of the country because of his fear of people disliking him for it. Even though Hamilton's anger seems to be focused on the Constitution, Burr may have hurt his feelings since he still does not trust him. Friends need to be able to be vulnerable with each other (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). Hamilton doesn't understand how Burr refuses to be vulnerable even for such an important cause.

Burr, on the other hand, thinks it is in his best interest to avoid inviting any opposition and waits to see what option will best promote him to a position of power:

> BURR: I'll keep all my plans close to my chest. I'll wait here and see which way the wind will blow. I'm taking my time, watching the afterbirth of a nation, watching the tension grow. (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 142)

This tension only grows throughout the rest of their careers. Despite Hamilton's openness (and occasional recklessness), he was one of three men who wrote the Federalist Papers and he secured a position in George Washington's cabinet as treasury secretary. Friends are protective with the information that they disclose to each other in order to avoid being hurt (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). Burr doesn't understand why Hamilton succeeds in everything he does while being, in Burr's mind, so risky and careless with expressing his beliefs.

The turning point in their friendship is when Burr is running for president in 1800. He is running against Thomas Jefferson, who is Hamilton's rival in the political world. The election is so close that the deciding factor in the election is who Hamilton endorses since he is one of the most influential members of the Federalist Party. Hamilton ends up endorsing Jefferson, even though they have argued countless times throughout the years and have disagreed on almost every issue. However, Hamilton chooses to support Jefferson because he believes Jefferson is simply more trustworthy than Burr. As Rawlins (1992) observes, friends need to be able to communicate in order to trust each other (p. 22). Because Hamilton and Burr never negotiated or managed the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness, trust did not develop in their friendship, and this leads Hamilton to support Jefferson over Burr, stating "But when all is said and all is done, Jefferson has beliefs. Burr has none" (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 261).

Burr is undeniably upset at this, especially after Jefferson wins the election and changes the rule that the person who receives the second highest number of votes serves as Vice President. Alone, Burr expresses his frustration to the audience before addressing the issue with Hamilton:

> BURR: How does Hamilton, an arrogant, immigrant, orphan, bastard, whoreson, somehow endorse Thomas Jefferson, his enemy, a man he's despised since the beginning, just to keep me from winning? I wanna be in the room where it happens. (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 266)

Burr was under the impression that being protective of himself was how he got so close to winning the presidential election; in contrast, at this point, Hamilton had no career by being so expressive. Earlier in the musical, through the publication of the Reynolds Pamphlet, Hamilton confessed to having an extra-marital affair, and this ruined his career, causing him to retreat from public office and essentially preventing him from ever being seriously considered for the presidency. When Hamilton took away Burr's chance at becoming president, Burr became so angry that he challenged him to a duel.

This duel is where Hamilton's lack of protectiveness proves fatal. He had thought Burr was untrustworthy since nearly the moment he met him, but in the duel, he trusts that Burr will do the right thing. During the song "Blow Us All Away," Hamilton tells his son Philip how to properly engage in a duel:

> HAMILTON: Alright. So this is what you're gonna do: Stand there like a man until Eacker is in front of you. When the time comes, fire your weapon in the air. This will put an end to the whole affair.
>
> PHILIP: But what if he decides to shoot? Then I'm a goner.
>
> HAMILTON: No. He'll follow suit if he's truly a man of honor. (McCarter & Miranda, 2016, p. 246)

His son ends up dying in the duel, and in his own duel, Hamilton, for the second time, makes the mistake of believing that firing his gun in the sky is the right decision. Hamilton trusts that Burr is a man of honor and will fire his gun in the sky like Hamilton does. Instead, Burr, thinking that Hamilton is aiming to kill, shoots Hamilton and takes his life. Hamilton spent his entire friendship not trusting Burr, and then in a literal life-or-death situation, he finally believes that Burr will do the right thing. This was not the case. This choice also makes Burr the villain in Hamilton's story.

Discussion

In this article, we applied Rawlins' relational dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness to Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr's friendship in the musical *Hamilton*. The dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness can cause tension in friendships if the friends don't feel the same way about when to be protective or expressive (Rawlins, 1992, p. 22). This is illustrated throughout Hamilton and Burr's friendship in *Hamilton*. Throughout the entire musical, the two are constantly arguing over their different views on many things, but the underlying motivation in almost all of their arguments concerns the differences in expressiveness and protectiveness. Hamilton believes it is best to be honest and expressive with who he is in order to achieve his goals, while Burr believes in the value of hiding one's beliefs in order to prevent opposition. This tension only grows as the musical goes on and explodes when Burr kills Hamilton during a duel.

It should be noted that Hamilton's relationship with Burr is not the only contentious relationship in the musical; Hamilton has difficult friendships and relationships with nearly every other character in *Hamilton*. However, because Burr is placed in the position of both primary narrator and antagonist, he also becomes the character whom the musical shows as knowing Hamilton the longest, and their friendship is portrayed as a "frenemy" relationship. They consider each other friends, but many times throughout the musical, they seem to lack the geniality that is commonly seen between friends. They disagree on things constantly, and their final disagreement ultimately leads to Hamilton's death. The cause of all of these disagreements is rooted in the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness.

We contend that the relationship between Hamilton and Burr, as it is envisioned by creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton*'s creative team, and the performers playing the roles, serves as "equipment for living" (Burke, 1967) for audience members. The audience can learn lessons from both Hamilton and Burr in the musical. Burr hides his beliefs and emotions in order to protect himself, which may work in some situations, but eventually comes back to ruin his chances at becoming president. This can happen in everyday situations as well. If people in a friendship are hiding things from their friend, it will cause problems eventually. Is it really a friendship if it is based on false pretenses, or if the friends don't truly know one another? In the end, it comes down to trust. This is a vital component of not only all friendships, but all relationships in general. If someone does not feel like they can trust another person, or even themselves, in a friendship, then what is the point of being in it? This is the case for Hamilton and Burr. Burr doesn't trust himself to be who he thinks he needs to be in order to succeed. In contrast, Hamilton believes that the only way to succeed is to express himself completely and sometimes vehemently. Audience members can see that Hamilton and Burr value the extreme oppositions of the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness. Instead of navigating between expressiveness and protectiveness, they both favor the opposite ends of the spectrum, which causes consistent tension in their friendship. Audience members can look at this friendship and see that it is not healthy, and that is not what good friendships should be like. Friendships need to have a balance of expressiveness and protectiveness.

While previous research on how musicals can create “equipment for living” for audience members regarding relational dialectics has primarily focused on characters that provide positive examples (Schrader, 2013; Bachert & Schrader, 2017), this analysis has suggested that unhealthy fictional relationships can serve as cautionary tales for audiences as well. We can learn from Hamilton and Burr’s friendship as portrayed in *Hamilton*. We can learn from Burr that we need to be vulnerable and trust people who we believe will not hurt us. We can learn from Hamilton that we don’t always need to share every detail about who we are and what we believe with every person we meet, because some people may try to hurt us. It is up to us to distinguish which people are worth trusting, or even worth getting hurt over.

Through this analysis of Hamilton and Burr’s friendship in the musical *Hamilton*, we learn that trust is necessary in friendships, but that being overly expressive can have drawbacks, as the people we think may never hurt us may do just that. It is up to each audience member to see Hamilton and Burr’s friendship, learn from it, apply it to their own friendships, and decide how they want to handle expressiveness and protectiveness in those friendships. Some may find it beneficial to be completely vulnerable with who they are, or they may choose to, like Burr, “talk less” and “smile more.”

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Flipping the Script: A Lesson in Spanish and English Translanguaging in a Mock Healthcare Setting

Warren Bareiss

The lesson described in this article is an empathy-building exercise where students are positioned as patients who feel lost, misunderstood, and powerless due to potential language barriers in a healthcare setting. Inspired by an established model pertaining to American Sign Language, I have adapted the lesson for nursing students at a much smaller university and further developed it to emphasize Spanish-speaking patients and multiple interpreting scenarios, informed by scholarship on translanguaging. Although I have constructed the lesson for a nursing class, it can easily be adapted to communication courses on interpersonal, small group, and intercultural communication in a wide variety of contexts.

Keywords: *Language Barriers, Translanguaging, Interpreting, Translating, Healthcare*

Courses: Introduction to Professional Nursing, Interpersonal Communication, Small Group Communication, Intercultural Communication

Learning objectives: It is hard to imagine a more frightening experience than needing immediate medical attention, but not being able to communicate with your healthcare providers. Federal law mandates that healthcare facilities take reasonable steps to provide interpreting services for limited English proficient (LEP) patients; however, services vary dramatically from setting to setting (Showstack, et al., 2019). As stated in a story broadcast by National Public Radio,

> [D]espite the law, and despite the obvious benefits, thousands of hospitals and other medical facilities continue to fall short, leaving patients—if they are lucky—relying on family members and friends to be ad hoc interpreters of maladies and medical care. It's an informal and imperfect form of triage that unfolds in clinics across the country every day, with potentially harrowing consequences should something be lost in translation. (Elred, 2018)

The lesson described in this article is an empathy-building exercise where students are positioned as patients who feel lost, misunderstood, and powerless due to potential language barriers in a healthcare setting. Inspired by an established model focusing on Deaf patients and American Sign Language, this lesson is adapted to emphasize communication with Spanish-speaking patients in a primarily English-speaking healthcare facility, while

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adding a theoretical emphasis based on translanguaging scholarship. Although I developed the lesson for a nursing class, it can work equally well in courses specifically within the field of communication, notably courses on interpersonal, small group, and intercultural communication.

Students should come away from the activity having experienced a sampling of circumstances in which a person feels dependent, frustrated, and perhaps even devalued because their language is not the dominant language spoken. Also, by the end of the activity, students should have a more nuanced awareness of the range of interpreting scenarios occurring in "real world" situations, while understanding that onsite, qualified interpreters offer the most effective, empathetic, and respectful form of communication with people who natively speak another language.

Theoretical Foundation

Numerous studies associate language barriers with disadvantages in access to social services (Al Shamsi, et al., 2020; Rasi, 2020). Language proficiency is, of course, just one of many ways in which communication is linked to patterned forms of exclusion and marginalization. Related factors include race, class, gender, age, and disability, to name just a few (Motschenbacher, 2020, p. 287), and no course addressing communication skills, ethics, or theory would be thorough without discussion of these topics.

Based upon such research, one might easily conclude that language differences are hurdles to be overcome in social service delivery; however, scholarship on translanguaging turns that assumption around, suggesting that a multiplicity of languages can provide fertile ground for sharing perspectives and reaching mutual understanding. Translanguaging occurs when speakers draw from a range of linguistic repertoires—languages, dialects, and even slang—to communicate in multilingual contexts (Otheguy, Garcia, and Reid, 2015; Paulsrud, Tian, & Toth, 2021).

Translanguaging is similar to communication accommodation theory in its emphasis on shifting one's communicative repertoire as needed to facilitate clear exchange of meaning (Meuter, et al., 2015). Translanguaging scholarship, however, tends to be more overtly critical in its assessment of ideological assumptions and consequent policies that privilege some communicative systems (and people who use them) while suppressing others (Garcia & Otheguy, 2017; MacSwan, 2020; Sahah & Rose, 2021). As Ortega and Prada (2020) argue, nowhere is translanguaging more critically needed than in healthcare settings serving diverse populations.

Pojar-Bloom's (2018) ethnography of a summer health clinic in the Dominican Republic offers a vivid example of translanguaging in practice. In Pojar-Bloom's account, the clinic—administered by healthcare students and professionals from a university in the United States—functioned best when linguistic differences were not seen as bothersome boundaries, but rather, as resources to be drawn upon and shared. Over time, the initial hierarchy privileging medical discourse spoken in English along with Spanish as taught among universities in the United States gave way to increasing, albeit limited, use of Dominican Spanish among medical personnel. This gradual process served not only to facilitate communication, but also to reduce social distancing between local patients and visiting healthcare providers.

Scholarship on translanguaging reveals that that while validation of some people and invalidation of others does occur with regard to linguistic hierarchies, those hierarchies can be made less salient by first drawing attention to their existence. The G.I.F.T. described in this article is an attempt to build that awareness through a role-playing activity. Although we can teach about linguistic hierarchies and their effects through lectures and course readings, sometimes, the best way to learn about a problem is to experience it.

Activity Description

This lesson was inspired by the "Deaf Strong Hospital" (DSH) workshop originating at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry (Mathews, et al., 2011; Thew, et al., 2012). During DSH, medical students roleplay as "patients" at a mock hospital, and Deaf volunteers roleplay as "healthcare providers." "Patients" are assigned symptoms which they try to describe without benefit of signing skills as they rotate among different steps in the hospital visit. A medical interpreter is provided in only one scenario. The objective is for hearing students to get an impression of communicative challenges faced by many Deaf patients in healthcare settings.

Previously, I adapted DSH for a much smaller university where I teach. Whereas about 100 medical students and over 50 faculty members and volunteers participate in DSH, our version consisted of just three faculty members, eight Deaf volunteers, and about 50 students. And while DSH lasts all day, our scaled-down version took place during a more manageable weekly class meeting of two hours and thirty minutes.

Having successfully conducted our mini-DSH, a participating nursing faculty member suggested that we develop the workshop further, emphasizing Spanish in recognition of an increasing Hispanic population in South Carolina. To date, we have conducted the Spanish version twice, with a third in the planning stage.

Indeed, the strength of the lesson is in its flexibility because it need not be limited to any particular language or even to students planning healthcare careers. Although I situate the lesson in a mock healthcare facility, it could easily be adapted for other common settings such as a shopping center, an employment service, an airport, and any number of government service facilities. As an exercise in the benefits of empathy-building and the costs of exclusivity, the lesson would function well in a wide range of communication courses where empathy building, code-switching, and translanguaging are examined.

Learning activities merging communication pedagogy and other specialized disciplines generally require some degree of cross-disciplinary collaboration (McGowan, 2018), so the first step in preparing the lesson is forming interdisciplinary partnerships. My team consists of myself as the communication expert, three faculty members who teach Spanish (one of whom is also a qualified medical interpreter), and a faculty member in nursing. In other situations, of course, team members would vary in specialties depending on the scene chosen for the lesson.

Because the activity requires multiple faculty members and student volunteers, advance coordination is required. I reserve a large laboratory space to accommodate about 35 people. After one or two meetings with faculty members—who, in turn, meet with student assistants—everyone gets to know their roles and when to show up. Finally, I secure scrubs for all the "doctors" and "nurses" and print descriptions of symptoms on slips of paper for each "patient."

On the day of class, approximately 50 students assemble as usual in a large lecture hall. Their instructor introduces me and the rest of my team. I explain that we are going to learn about language, culture, and interpreting. I am careful not to give too many details away because students have more fun with the activity when they are taken by surprise in their roles as “patients.”

I divide the class in half, taking one half with me to the lab area nearby. The other half of the class remains in the lecture hall and is given a presentation by our team’s medical interpreter. During her presentation, my colleague describes how certified interpreters work with patients and providers. The significance of this part of the lesson is that students learn directly from a professional whose day-to-day work is about communicating in situations where translanguaging occurs. Depending on how the lesson is shaped, this speaker could be a bilingual person from business, government, non-government social services, a faith-based organization, and so forth.

While the presentation is delivered to one half of the class, the other half gathers near the lab area. Just outside the door, I have set up two tables where I explain that the students are going to roleplay as “patients” and check into the “doctor's office.” I give each student a slip of paper with their symptoms printed in English. These “symptoms” represent the immediate problem needing attention. Two student assistants act as “receptionists.” Speaking only Spanish, the assistants present the “patients” with a form to fill out asking their names, addresses, and symptoms—again, all in Spanish—so that a second, more contextual problem is established. This is where the fun begins as the "patients" now realize the position that they are getting placed into.

“Patients” are organized into groups of five, and each group is led into the lab. The lab is spacious enough to have allowed us to set up five folding tables in a circle with about ten feet of space between each table. Student assistants are waiting at each table in their role as “doctors,” complete with scrubs and a few simple tools such as tongue depressors and scales.

Each group of five “patients” moves from table to table with one member of the group taking an active role per table and the others observing. Active “patients” attempt to describe their assigned symptoms to the “doctors” who only speak Spanish, while observing group members are prohibited from helping. Since only a few “patients” speak much, if any, Spanish, miscommunication inevitably occurs, often to the amusement of the observing students. Meanwhile, “doctors” instruct their “patients” to perform common examination tasks, for example, standing on the scale, while prodding them with various instruments such as the disposable tongue depressors, all contributing to the confusion.

A small number of “patients” who are fluent in Spanish, of course, have no problems describing their symptoms. “Patients” with limited Spanish skills are more prone to devising translanguaging strategies, leveraging what words they know in Spanish to their best advantage. “Patients” with little or no Spanish language skills resort to enacting their symptoms, adding to the humor of the situation.

Three types of “interpreters” are present among the tables: an onsite qualified medical interpreter, an offsite qualified medical interpreter communicating through a laptop, and a bilingual family member (sometimes played as a child). Two tables have no interpreter.

In contrast to DSH, I developed a range of interpreting scenarios to demonstrate differing degrees of translanguaging that nurses are likely to encounter in reality. The faculty member acting as an onsite professional interpreter represents the situation in which effective translanguaging most likely occurs. In that situation, everyone shares the same space, and communication flows most clearly among participants. Communication is more problematic with the online, professional interpreter due to occasional signal loss, simulating problems often occurring in reality. A murkier opportunity for translanguaging occurs when the "interpreter" is a conveniently present family member who does not understand much of the medical terminology—a situation all too often resorted to in reality. And, of course, having no interpreter at all is the worst possible scenario for clear communicative exchange for "patients" who don't speak Spanish.

After about forty minutes, each group has had time to visit every "doctor," and each "patient" has been active once. At that point, we take a ten-minute break. Following the break, the two halves of the class switch places, and we begin the presentation and rounds again. Following the second set of rounds, we all reconvene in the lecture hall.

About thirty minutes are allotted for debriefing with everyone present. At this point, the "doctors" and "interpreters" function as a panel, recounting incidences that they witnessed in the workshop and leading a class discussion about students' experiences, perceptions, and reactions.

Outcomes

Although participants in this activity laugh and have fun with it, the takeaway message couldn't be more serious. During the discussion, students describe their impressions of what it was like to feel "helpless" and "dependent" in their roleplay, much like patients who don't speak the dominant language in real-world, healthcare conditions. As one student explained, "this was an amazing workshop that was really effective in showing me how difficult it is for non-English speaking patients." Students often use the word "respect" when evoking empathy toward Spanish-speaking patients and patients from cultures other than their own, for example, "I know a little bit of Spanish but I feel as though it is not enough to give proper care…. I understand every culture is different but we have to respect it and provide the best care."

Written responses also indicate students' recognition of their weak translanguaging skills and lack of confidence in treating patients who speak Spanish. Typical comments include, "I feel very little confidence in working with Spanish speaking patients. I feel as if important information would for sure be omitted." Lack of confidence is not an unwelcome consequence of the lesson. On the contrary, I hope that students recognize their limitations and seriously consider learning Spanish.

Written comments reveal that students do plan to take Spanish (or other language courses) following the workshop. One student, for example, wrote "I don't feel that confident, I think I need more practice…. Try taking a class to improve my skills." Another wrote, "Not too confident. Of course there are interpreters, but I would like to learn Spanish myself so I know." A third student wrote, "This workshop was very informative and motivational for me to learn a second language."

An important part of this lesson is for students to recognize that no matter what their skills are in Spanish (or any other language), it is best to work with a certified medical interpreter. The important point is that bridge building is most successful when fluent, trained professionals help to create translingual opportunities for all communicative participants.

Happily, most students do refer to the need for interpreters in their written comments, for instance, “If there is an interpreter I feel fairly confident to be able to communicate. However, if there was no translator available I do not feel confident in my ability to communicate” and “Individually, very little confidence. W/an interpreter, more confident b/c they are our voice!” Unfortunately, students don't use the word “certified” in their responses; therefore, in future iterations, that needs to be stressed more to be certain that students distinguish between credentialed and lay interpreters.

Two further benefits of this exercise are also worth mentioning. First, the roleplay scenarios validate skills that a few students already have in speaking Spanish. Students who are fluent in Spanish demonstrate the functional value of their language skills in the easy way that they communicate with “doctors” in the roleplay. Even minimal Spanish language skills were seen to be of some use as limited means for translanguaging and in building rapport between “patients” and “doctors.”

Also, interdisciplinary collaboration involved in planning and administering the exercise has its own positive outcomes. By bringing together faculty in communication, Spanish, and nursing programs, friendships are built across disciplines that might not otherwise occur which, in turn, lead to further partnerships. For example, I later worked with a nursing faculty member from this exercise on another project promoting organ donation, and I have been invited to participate with my Spanish language colleagues in their newly established center for Latino/a studies.

Conclusion

This exercise functions well by positioning students within scenarios where they might experience the reality of out-group exclusion based on linguistic hierarchies. Then again, students could also rise above those hierarchies by attempting rudimentary forms of translanguaging. As noted by Aoyama (2020, p. 2), multilingual scenes constructed in classroom settings often foster spontaneous instances of translanguaging, especially if problem-solving is built into the scenario. At the very least, students recognize the problems presented by language barriers and the need to adapt, at least somewhat, to the linguistic needs of those who depend upon them.

Students have been enthusiastic about this assignment, describing it as “terrific,” “an awesome experience,” “very fun,” and “amazing & a true learning experience.” Having exposed nursing students to their privileged social positioning with regard to language, I cannot help but hope that some benefit of the exercise will be passed on through the students to their Spanish-speaking patients. Further, I hope that other communication instructors will develop the exercise to fit their respective courses and resources so that the benefits will extend to other social spaces where translanguaging occurs. As such, this exercise is an opportunity to adapt and enhance what Motschenbacher (2019) describes as “inclusive pedagogies as well as social inclusion more generally” (p. 287).

Given the number of people involved, this activity requires much planning, and that can be time consuming. My experience as team leader, however, has been fulfilling in many ways. Faculty participants bring their areas of expertise to the table in a horizontal sharing of ideas and responsibilities that generates an engaging afternoon for students and faculty. On balance, the challenges posed in preparation and administration of this exercise are far outweighed by many potential benefits to students, faculty, the university, and the community at large.

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Seeing the Success Through the Failure: A Lesson in Social Justice

Melanie R. Savelli

In this autoethnography, I describe an instance in which my attempt to teach social justice to college seniors resulted in tears, pain, and an overall appreciation for the daily struggles of others. I discuss where things went right, when they took a turn for the worse, and how I tried to recover. I reflect upon the experience and identify key takeaways.

Keywords: *Social Justice, Communication Education, Communication, Perspectives*

Background

The purpose of the activity was to educate students about the meaning of social justice and the positive impact of social justice warriors. The activity was also intended to further demonstrate how people are always struggling with an invisible burden so we should always be kind. During our Communication Capstone course, students come together to utilize communication theories and skills to address a social justice issue of their choosing. My university prides itself on helping students learn about social justice issues and empower them to positively promote change. As such, our curriculum is designed to showcase how students emerging from our program can positively impact the world around them. At this point in the semester, students were learning about social justice so that they could better pitch their topic.

Best Laid Plans

About twenty students were scattered among rows of tables in a large classroom, facing forward. I proceeded with an activity that I had read about online for teaching the concept of social justice (Morgane, n.d.) and modified it slightly for my audience. I had students take out a piece of paper and told them that they were going to have the opportunity to earn extra credit. Once the cheering quieted down, I explained the directions. I put the recycling bin in the middle of the front desk that faced the students. Any student who made a basket would earn 10 extra credit points. While some lamented their athletic ability, most students were enthusiastically awaiting their turn.

I then explained that students were not allowed to leave their seats and had to make the basket from where they were currently seated. Naturally, the complaints started. It was presumed that the back few rows of students didn't have a chance at making the basket and that students in the front of the class were automatically going to get the extra credit. I then paused to explain the concept of privilege and how people were born with certain advantages and disadvantages to success. We brainstormed about what those types of

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things might be, specifically as it pertained to earning a college degree. One very basic example was that students with affluent parents were able to easily afford college. Before delving too far into the topic, I changed the rules.

Instead of having to stay where they were seated, everyone got to take five steps forward. That way, everyone was treated equally. Once again, the students in the back complained about how the five steps just put the front row students even closer and that the back row still only had a minimal chance of scoring a basket and earning the coveted extra credit. Going back to the discussion about the cost of college, I brought up the equal solution of making college free for everyone. I goaded the students by saying that if college was free for everyone, everyone should be able to get a degree. It wouldn't matter if parents were rich.

Knowing that my university is comprised of a lot of first-generation college students, I knew this would evoke my desired reaction. Students then started listing off all of the other barriers to success. A basic reason was that even though college was free, those that could already afford it now had more money for books, housing, food, and fun. The students who struggled to make tuition still needed to work at least part time in order to have enough for the same things that other students may take for granted. Keeping things equal didn't make things equitable.

This then evolved into a deeper conversation about the concepts of privilege, equality, equity, and justice. Students caught on quickly that this was never really about extra credit, but I wanted there to be more to the lesson.

People are not always aware of the privileges that they are afforded or the social injustices that others have to face. I felt it important to point out that even people who are traditionally portrayed as having an easy life because they do not have to fight some of the same injustices, still have immense struggles. We should not assume that someone has it easy, just because of the way that they look or act. To demonstrate this concept, I added on to the activity.

Since they already had a piece of paper out, I had students write down what they felt weighed on them throughout the day but not to write their names or any other identifying information. I prompted students to think about what kept them up at night, what stressed them out the most, what did they always have to consider when making a decision, etc. The room was quiet. I have never seen so many students take an assignment so seriously and become immediately introspective.

Where Things Started to Go Wrong

After a few minutes, I saw pencils go down and had students ball up their papers and throw them up to the front of the classroom. I gathered the papers and read them one by one. The room was silent, solemn, and the emotion was palpable. I read off disclosures about sick parents, having to raise their siblings, being homeless, having to rely on the food pantry, debt, deathly illnesses, addiction, depression, suicidal ideations, and many more equally heavy themes. As I continued to read, some students cried silently in their chairs. One student even left the room.

While the activity was intended to prompt a culture of respect, camaraderie for people going through similar things, and kindness, I naively did not anticipate this reaction. As the room got more somber, I had to quickly decide to either stop reading, debrief, and change the subject or to continue reading. I chose the latter because I did not want to invalidate anyone's feelings by dismissing their disclosures. Something that I am often taught when learning about social justice is that being uncomfortable is part of the process of understanding and change. I did not want to take away this amazing opportunity for students. At the same time, I was ill-equipped to handle the classroom dynamic.

I read the last student note and paused. I could hear a pin drop. The students were deeply moved by this activity and I was right moved along with them. It was humbling to hear what people struggle with on a day-to-day basis when you often only see them smiling for a few short hours each week. It emphasized that people are comprised of so much more than what they let you see on their surface. Having to conclude the activity, I spoke from a place of love and honesty. I reminded students to always take the path of patience and kindness because you never know what someone else is going through. You will never fully understand or appreciate why a person made a choice that they did because you do not know what other choices they may or may not have had. Everyone has a struggle and that we all have the opportunity to raise others up rather than push them down.

Tying back into social justice, I pointed out how many of these issues have a root in social justice and I empowered my students to reflect upon these themes when deciding their project for the semester. I encouraged them to be the champion that they wish that they had. I reminded students that if they were to remember only one thing from this class, it was to be kind.

As students were leaving, I overheard them talking about how awful they felt and how they didn't realize that that was what they were walking into. Some students said that they felt ambushed. Others discussed being surprised by how many people were affected by the same struggles. People talked about the general themes present in student responses and what they should be doing about it. There was no doubt that everyone had strong opinions.

Once the class was dismissed, I retreated to my office in a near panic. Not only was I managing my own reaction to students' struggles, I was berating myself for not thinking through the activity. The extra credit basketball activity was a huge success, but I did not properly foresee the result of my disclosure activity. I evoked a lot of powerful and painful emotions in my students and did nothing to help them cope. I was not knowledgeable or qualified and I left many of my students in a negative emotional state. I considered the activity a huge flop that caused more problems than it helped solve. I felt horrible for putting my students in this situation without helping them through it.

Magnified by the fact that the lesson was about social justice, I could not ignore how my personal privilege had been at the root of my failure. Had I experienced the same type of trauma, suffered in silence, or been publicly rejected for some of these things, I would have thought twice. I kept thinking about how naive my actions were. I thought about how pompous I must have seemed when going through the activity when I clearly had not considered the negative impact of my choices. There I was teaching about social justice and how we needed to fight against stigmas when at that same time, I was opening my students to potential stigmatization and ostracization without their consent. Despite the fact that no names were mentioned, the class was filled with people specifically trained to read nonverbal cues and emotions were high.

Reconciling My Failure

As a person of action, I knew I had to address the situation somehow, but I also realized that acting without thought and purpose would cause even more damage. I quickly and carefully constructed a plan and ran it past respected colleagues in my department. Because of the relationship that had already been established with my colleagues, I felt comfortable disclosing my mistake knowing that they would only try to lift me up and help rather than scold me. Not only did I seek their advice, I was also sharing my cautionary tale and wanted other instructors to know why students may be a little “off” in their remaining classes of the day.

After I was confident in my plan, I sent out an e-mail debriefing my students about the activity. I explained my rationale as well as what I hoped they took away. Most importantly, I included a long list of resources that my students could reference, depending on their specific needs. I left links, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses for services on campus regarding counseling, addiction support, mental health resources, and the mobile food pantry. I left numbers for various hotlines that students could call. I also reached out individually to students that I could visibly see had a strong reaction (those crying or holding back tears, and the student that left).

Learning from my Failure

Upon hearing more about student reactions through discussions in and out of class, as well as student opinion surveys, I have decided to take both activities as an overall “win.” Some of the students who cried during the reading of disclosures said that they didn’t mind crying and that they appreciated the raw honesty of everything. Others said that they cried because they were extremely empathetic and to not take it as a negative. I also received excellent feedback for how to handle things moving forward. I received the suggestion to inform students, prior to writing their disclosures, that they would be read out loud. Another suggestion was to have students write down their struggles and throw them in the garbage as a way to symbolically “get rid of” the baggage. A student riffed on this and said to have students write their thoughts down and throw them away as they walk into class to represent leaving everything at the door.

Having had plenty of time to mull it over in my mind, I am no longer embarrassed at the “fail.” At the end of the day, my students learned a valuable lesson about one another, and I created a classroom culture of respect, acceptance, and social support. I have taught this class many times and am of the opinion that this group of students had the strongest bond out of all of them. I’d like to think that the disclosure activity had something to do with it.

In working through my own emotions regarding students’ reactions, I appreciated it for the learning opportunity that it was. I learned to think beyond my intentions and to more strongly consider student reactions and feelings. I am now better at thinking around an issue to brainstorm possible unintended consequences so I can better prepare for them. I now have an excellent list of campus resources that I am able to provide all of my students. I also have an even deeper respect for the daily struggles that my students face during their educational journeys. Overall, I am humbled by the perseverance, resilience, and strength that I am surrounded by every day and am grateful for this teaching “fail.”

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Sincerely, Your Professor: Using Literary Letters to Teach Communication Theory

Krista M. Kimmel

Courses: Undergraduate courses in interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, communication theory, as well as basic communication courses

Objectives: Literary letter assignments allow students to identify and analyze communication theories found in works of nonfiction, drawing from the foundations of Reader Response Theory. In addition, the interpersonal letter exchanges between instructor and student enhance the existing instructor-student relationship.

Introduction and Rationale

Faculty are consistently tasked with the challenge of teaching communication theory in meaningful and innovative ways. While popular music (Cruz, 2020; Hall, 2020), films (Kelly, 2010; Proctor & Adler, 1991), and television shows (Seroka, 2020) have proven to be effective instructional tools in the classroom, engaging literature in communication courses provides students with an opportunity to analyze characters' interpersonal behavior, interactions, and relationships (Merolla, 2009). For example, nonfiction narratives allow students to explore the author's lived experiences, while connecting the text to their own perspectives.

By implementing literary letter assignments, students will not only explore their interpretations of the text, but they will also practice identifying and analyzing communication theories in a creative format. Moreover, literary letters provide another form of assessment to evaluate students' understanding and application of course material in a way that forges an interpersonal exchange between instructor and student. The literature is ripe with scholarship underscoring the importance of the instructor-student relationship in facilitating student learning (Stratchan, 2020; Teven & Monte, 2008; Therrell & Dunneback, 2015). Thus, faculty should explore multiple assignments and activities designed to enhance student-instructor interaction.

Reader Response Theory

Popularized by Louise Rosenblatt, Reader Response Theory emphasizes the role of the reader in creating meaning from written text. Reader Response Theory suggests that readers "are challenged with the task of interpreting a text through the lens of their prior knowledge, diverse perspectives, and personal experiences" (Woodruff & Griffin, 2017, p.

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108). Reader Response Theory rejects the idea that meaning lies inherently within the text, suggesting instead that the reader and the text are mutually dependent on one another. By forming their own connections to the author's narrative, students can engage with the text in a purposeful manner. Furthermore, Spirovska (2020) observes that when students employ Reader Response Theory, they can connect literary texts to their beliefs, lives, and values, strengthening the relationship between the text and course content. Overall, implementing Reader Response Theory in a communication course will allow students to exercise a host of critical reading, thinking, and writing skills.

The Assignment

Students are assigned one work of nonfiction to read during the semester (see Appendix A for a list of suggestions). Instructors should consider several criteria in making the selection, including book length and genre. Generally, I aim to select a book with contemporary appeal (e.g., memoirs by popular figures such as Trevor Noah or America Ferrera). Nonfiction works that focus on relationships, families, and/or culture are most appropriate for this assignment (e.g., *Educated* by Tara Westover). Ideally, students should read the book in the second half of the course to maximize the potential of applying what they have learned. While the selection may be added as a required course text, students can often download the book at no cost using widely available library apps (e.g., Libby). To ensure students have read the text, instructors may consider giving short reading quizzes throughout the semester. Since the literary letters require that students demonstrate mastery in their understanding and application of communication theory, these assignments may be used as a final project.

For this assignment, students are tasked with writing literary letters in response to the assigned reading to their instructor. Literary letters are a form of personal communication directed to a specific audience, with the expectation of a personalized response (Frailey et al., 2009). Students should write a minimum of two literary letters while reading the assigned book; one should be submitted when students have read half of the text and the other is completed after students have finished the book. Students' letters should be a minimum of 350 words and include one direct quotation from the reading. The quotation should account for no more than 10% of the total word count. It should be explained that students do not need to summarize the book's content in their letters; rather, students must exhibit analysis, evaluation, and reflection in their writing. Students should address passages from the text that are of relevance to communication theory (e.g., relational dialectics theory; communication accommodation theory). As suggested by Reader Response Theory, each student will engage with the text uniquely, forming their own connections with the narrative. Instructors may choose to include a few sample prompts to assist students with their writing:

1. The author seemed to be experiencing ___ theory when…
2. Parts of the text reminded me of my own experience when…
3. This passage/scene is an example of ___ theory because…
4. I was confused when…
5. I was surprised by…
6. After I read this passage, I began to think of…
7. I wonder what will happen, now that…

8. If I could give advice to ____, I would say…
9. After finishing this book, I will…

Appraisal

Following the submission of the letters, each student should receive a personalized response in return. I collect the letters through our institution's learning management system and leave a letter in response in the grade center, along with the student's score. Students are evaluated on the analysis of communication theories they identified in the text, as well as the thoughtfulness and concreteness of their writing. Instructors should provide feedback on students' understanding of communication theories discussed in the letters. As this exercise serves as an interpersonal exchange, instructors should also demonstrate appreciation for students' perspective and truth in their letters. Instructor letters should be conversational in tone and personalized for each student.

Students often indicate they enjoy writing the letters more than they anticipated. Many appreciate the break from traditional paper or journal assignments, and students frequently report gaining confidence in their ability to identify and analyze communication theory in the "real world." Additionally, because of the interpersonal nature of the literary letter assignment, instructors can engage more easily with reserved or introverted students (Bauer & Sweeney, 1999). The assignment may translate into more fruitful class discussions following the letter exchanges. For example, instructors may assign groups of students to lead class discussion one day on relevant topics from the book, or alternatively, the instructor may ask each student to share one discussion question. Such discussion exercises contribute to active learning in the classroom, while allowing students to elaborate on topics that are meaningful to them. One limitation of this assignment is that students may be displeased with additional required course reading. To help mitigate this response, instructors should consider students' feedback regarding the choice of text at the conclusion of each semester. Despite this limitation, students generally embrace the assignment, citing a heightened interest in reading and an increased understanding of course content.

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Appendix

Almost a Woman, by Esmerelda Santiago
American Like Me, by America Ferrera
The Best That We Could Do, Thi Bui
Black is the Body, by Emily Bernard
Born a Crime, by Trevor Noah
Burnt Toast Makes You Sing Good, by Kathleen Finn
Educated, by Tara Westover
The Honey Bus, by Meredith May
Laughing without an Accent, by Firoozeh Dumas
The Other Wes Moore, by Wes Moore

GIFTS INC: Symbols and Clarity

Hannah George

The instructor can utilize a concept with which students are already familiar (emojis) to introduce course concepts (nonverbal communication, symbols, mediated communication) and provide direct application. These concrete examples are a beginning point for more abstract discussions and thought. This activity is always entertaining for students as well as the instructor. It's a chance for everyone to voice an opinion or answer a question and generates good conversation. This builds on the activities published in Communication Teacher *by Brody and Caldwell (2019) and Yang (2020).*

Student Learning Outcomes

The following activity meets the course objectives listed below for a 200-level course on interpersonal communication, as well as 300-level course on nonverbal or computer-mediated communication.

- Discuss and critique the concepts, processes, principles, and challenges of interpersonal communication in romantic relationships, families, friendships, and professional interactions.
- Demonstrate awareness of managing personal identity, perception, language, and nonverbal cues through communication.
- Examine and explain how communication impacts and is shaped by culture, race, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class.
- Analyze your own face-to-face and mediated communication in a variety of social interactions and personal relationships.

Classroom Implementation

- This lesson can be used in face-to-face classrooms or online through screenshare. This could potentially be used in a discussion board setting where students share their responses and then respond to 2-3 other members of the class (depending on size) about similarities and differences in response.
- Subjects can include symbols, gendered speech, cultural speech, mediated communication, interpersonal communication, and family communication.
- This can be done with any kind of symbol or image. It's best to choose those that have multiple meanings depending on identity and context.

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- For this example, I use emojis since the class is usually familiar with them, and they are easy to share as examples.

Image: Emoji library (grid view)

Additional Video Resource *please review this to see if it is appropriate for your audience*

Lucidchart. (2018, July 17). *Emojis Explained*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pKNGG1kI1Q&feature=youtu.be

Question prompts

1. What are these?
2. Why do we call them that?
3. Why do we use them? What is their purpose in communication?
4. When do you use them?
5. Which ones do you use most often? (pick the emoji stated by the majority of the class as most often used to analyze)
6. (*Ask one student*) What is the emoji's meaning to you?
    a. Follow up—Does it mean that to everyone in the class or do you interpret its meaning differently?
        i. For similarities—point to how and why they believe these shared meanings exist
        ii. For differences—discuss aspects of their identity that could have potentially influenced that difference
    b. Repeat exercise for additional students.
7. What context do you use "this" (*the most used emoji*) in? Use it in a sentence or give me an example?

   a. What are settings you would NOT consider the use of this emoji appropriate? Why?
   b. How does the setting or context of the communication change its meaning for you?
8. Who do you send this emoji to?
   a. Are there people you would NOT send these to? Why?
   b. How does the receiver of the message change its meaning to you?
   c. Can you assume that all receivers of your messages decode your emoji the same way that you do? What potential issues could a difference in meaning cause?
9. How does your mom use these? Your friends? Your boss?
   a. Why do you think the differences in their use of it exist?
   b. How does the sender of the message change its meaning?
10. Who decided it meant “this”? (examples: skull versus skull and crossbones for “I’m dead”)
    a. What are the influences on shared meanings in nonverbal communication?

Link it Back to Content (Wood, 2020)

- Qualities of symbols (arbitrary, ambiguous, abstract)
- Meanings of language are subjective
- Symbolic abilities of language
- Uses in speech communities (culture, gender, etc.)

Time Allotted: Depending on the discussion from students, this exercise can take 15 to 45 minutes in the physical classroom and 10 to 15 minutes in the virtual classroom.

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Teaching Small Group and Team Dynamics through *The Amazing Race* Experience

Katherine Henrick, Brad Palmisano, Kristen LeBlanc Farris, Michael E. Burns, and Marian L. Houser

Learning how to effectively collaborate in groups is an important component of communication education that has implications for students' academic outcomes and future job prospects. We present a scavenger hunt activity based off of the popular series, The Amazing Race*, that takes place over approximately three course sessions. The aim of the experiential learning activity described in this manuscript is to help students to differentiate between group and team communication concepts, to apply these concepts to a group problem-solving process, and to evaluate their individual and group members' communication strategies.*

Courses: Basic Communication Course, Small Group Communication, Organizational Communication

Objectives: Upon completing this activity, students will be able to (1) differentiate between teams and groups, (2) distinguish between task-oriented and relationship-oriented roles in groups, (3) compare their experiences to Fisher's (1970) or Tuckman's (1965) phases of group development, and (4) value working with others to solve problems.

Working in groups is an essential component of contemporary academic and business environments (Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003). This is evidenced by the fact teamwork has repeatedly been identified as one of the top three skills sought by employers (e.g. Gaskell, 2018; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2016; Petrone, 2019). Learning how to effectively collaborate in groups can produce positive peer relationships (Roseth et. al, 2008) and promote successful problem-solving (Barron, 2000). Additionally, organizations that embrace groupwork are often regarded as innovative and hold a competitive advantage within their respective industries (Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003). Moreover, instructors who foster groupwork through course assignments are better equipped to facilitate peer learning, increase their contact with students, and reduce the burden of individual evaluations (Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003). Given the importance of groupwork competence to success in both academic and industry contexts, this activity introduces students to the fundamentals of effectively working in groups and teams.

For instance, students learn three primary differences between small groups and teams. First, whereas groups are formed from proximity or classification, teams are formed from goals, relationships, and roles (Hackman, 1990). Second, team members take on specific roles which remain constant, while group members may take on a variety of roles

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(Beebe et al., 2019). Finally, teams have a specific goal/objective/mission (Salas et al., 1992) while small groups are simply united by a common purpose (Beebe et. al, 2019). While many communication instructors teach students the foundations of groupwork through traditional classroom instruction methods, *The Amazing Race* activity advocates for active student participation and involvement in groupwork through the application of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). This activity was used to fulfill the group and team competencies and objectives for the small group communication unit of our introductory communication course which occurred as part of a study abroad program in London and Paris. This activity can be adapted to traditional, on-campus courses as well.

Activity

Activity development. Prior to the activity facilitation, the instructor should create the clues to each location of the scavenger hunt. In order to adapt this activity to a traditional course, instructors might have students travel to locations at their university or within their city (see Appendix A). This may be particularly useful for introductory classes which may be largely composed of first-year students who are not as familiar with the campus. Additionally, if it is possible to find locations that represent some relevance to course material, either related to groups or previously discussed concepts, these might be helpful to include in the race. For example, while facilitating *The Amazing Race* in London during our study abroad trip, the students solved clue 1A and subsequently visited a location where they can watch others engaging in debates or participate in important conversations themselves (see Appendix B).

Assignment setup. For both study abroad and on-campus courses, this will likely span at least three class sessions: one for course content and assignment discussion, one for the solving of the clues and completion of the race, and one for the debriefing conversation about what they experienced and learned. In the class session prior to the scavenger hunt, the instructor should review the objectives of the assignment, engage in a discussion of the course content, and assign groups consisting of approximately 5–6 students. Students may also pick their own groups; however, it is important that groups are approximately the same size to ensure each group has an equal chance of completing the race in the allotted time. The amount of time necessary for completing the race is largely dependent on the locations chosen by the instructor. We used the navigation system through Google maps to determine approximately how long it would take each group to travel to all locations using public transit. We completed *The Amazing Race* on our first full day in London, and students were given several hours to travel around the city. On-campus classes should allot at least one full class session for the completion of the race. The discussion following the race should be approximately 50 minutes, regardless of the time spent on the race itself.

Instructions.

1. Instructors should preview small group concepts with students and encourage them to reflect upon how these might manifest during the race. Concepts should include but are not limited to: Characteristics of groups and teams, Fisher's (1970) or Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development and other pertinent group dynamics (e.g., roles, norms, status, power, cohesiveness, groupthink, leadership).

2. Provide students with important safety reminders, particularly if this activity is being conducted in a large area, such as a city. Students should know what to do in the event they are lost or find themselves in a dangerous situation.
3. Instructors should then distribute envelopes with clues (see Appendix A and Appendix B). It is recommended that groups receive the clues in various orders, so that students may work together to solve the clues and determine the most efficient route to the locations.
4. Once students receive their clues, they will all begin to solve them. When a group has solved all their clues and the instructor has verified the answers, the group may find their way to the locations.
5. Students should take pictures with all group members at each location to document their visit.
6. Once students complete the *Amazing Race*, the winning group will be selected based on how quickly and completely they accomplished the tasks. A discussion of the race and communication experiences with the groups should follow.

Debriefing

To debrief the activity, the instructor should facilitate a class discussion. To ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in the discussion, instructors should consider using a think-pair-share (Kaddoura, 2013) or liberating structures method (Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2013). Both methods suggest having students individually think about their responses to the questions prior to discussing with a partner or group and then the class at large. Discussion questions may include:

1. What did the organization process look like throughout the race?
   a. How did you make decisions in your groups?
   b. Did you make any mistakes? If so, why? If not, why were you successful?
   c. Do you believe that you were working as a group or a team? How do you know?
   d. Did your group experience groupthink? If so, how could you have avoided it? If not, what prevented you from doing so?
   e. Did a leader emerge? What type of power do you think they had? What leadership style did they enact?
2. What roles did you see being carried out in your group?
   a. Did you carry out more than one role? Why or why not?
   b. Were you fulfilling more task, social, or individual roles?
3. Did you notice your group going through the stages of group development?
   a. What stage do you think your group got to during the race? Why do you think that is?
   b. Can you describe what each stage looked like for your group?
4. What did you learn about working in groups that you did not know before this activity?

    a. What did you learn about yourself or members of your group that you did not know before?
    b. What would you do differently if you could complete the race again?
5. How can you apply what you learned in this activity to the future groups you work in?
    a. How will understanding team dynamics and how you operate within a team help you in the future?
    b. How will understanding these communication and teamwork principles help you in your other projects?

Upon completing the discussion, the instructor should provide an overview of the students' insights and how they applied to the relevant course concepts.

Appraisal

The Amazing Race activity is not only flexible, but enjoyable. Students reported enjoying this activity more than other group work they had done because of the freedom it provided and the amount of time they were able to spend working with their group members. However, it is important to emphasize to students that they stay on task to finish the race and think about the ways to apply the small group concepts to the activity. Additionally, it seemed that having students with some expert power in each group was helpful for completing the tasks while minimizing obstacles. For example, groups who had students who had previously travelled to London and were familiar with the Tube system appeared to encounter fewer difficulties. When facilitating discussions, students often indicated that those who were familiar with the city or campus emerged as their group leaders, which helped to facilitate conversations about types of power and leadership.

Finally, this activity resulted in meaningful discussions of the selected small group concepts. Students appeared eager to discuss these and mentioned they reflected upon them as they completed the activity. Students expressed what they learned using the appropriate terms, asked insightful questions, and formed connections to how they could apply the content during the remainder of the study abroad program and in their future schoolwork and professions. As a whole, this activity was an engaging way to allow students to practice applying the material, get to know their group members, think critically, and have fun while doing it.

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Appendix A

The Amazing Race Clues – On Campus Edition

Instructions: Your groups are competing against each other to see who can complete this race first. To begin, you must solve the following clues which will tell you where to go. After you know all the locations, bring it to the professor to check and make sure you got them all right. Once you are approved your group is free to travel to the locations. You must take pictures at each location to prove that you were there. If you see anything particularly interesting along the way, feel free to take a picture of that as well. The first group back to the classroom wins. If you are not finished by the return time, you still need to return to the classroom to check back in for attendance.

Here are your clues:

1. This landmark was installed October 2008 by the Taylor-Murphy and psychology buildings. It was created by Matthew Palmer and is made of bronze.
2. This landmark denotes what is known as the “free speech area” of our university. This landmark is also believed to bring luck to students who rub it before taking an exam.
3. These four monuments are located near Flowers Hall and honor military service members.
4. This is the tree-lined mall between many major buildings on campus. You can often find many student organizations here.
5. This is where I spend my Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30-3:00. Write your team name on my doodle board, take a picture with your team, and erase it before you leave.

Appendix B

The Amazing Race Clues – Study Abroad Edition

Note: Remember, the goal is not to divide and conquer! You should work with your group and arrive together at every location. Please make sure you are paying attention to your communication along the way.

1. This is the largest of the four royal parks and was established by Henry VIII. He used this park as hunting grounds during his rule.

   a. This is an open-aired public speaking, debate, and discussion area of the park. Speakers are encouraged to discuss and debate any topic as long as it is lawful. While here you are required to engage with one of the speakers or speak on a topic about which you are passionate.

   b. This water feature was created in honor of a famous member of the royal family and was dedicated on July 6, 2004. The design represents her love for children and free spirit.

2. This London icon is now actually owned by the state of Qatar and occupies a 5-acre site in London. The motto of this place is "Omnia Omnibus Ubique," which is Latin for "All things for all people, everywhere." It's also a great place for tea and a bite to eat.

   a. This place has the first of its kind in the UK. Why take the steps when you can ride the steps?

   b. This soft toy has become an institution at this shop. Every Christmas they release a new version along with several London inspired versions year-round. Take a photo with your favorite.

3. This place is the largest of its kind in the world. It houses 150-200 million items from many countries. Many people come here to conduct research. It was created on July 1, 1973 and prior to 1973 it was part of the British Museum.

   a. This document was first drafted by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1215 to make peace between an unpopular King and a group of rebel barons. It was initially unsuccessful and reissued in 1216, 1217, and 1225 and eventually served as the English system of common law.

Three Strikes and You're Out: Using *Codenames* to Teach Perception

Carlos Cruz

This activity is designed for an introductory communication course and requires students to play a modified round of Codenames. Students work in small groups to correctly place a number of words into categories created by the professor. Groups are afforded three "incorrect" guesses before they are eliminated from the game. After the activity is completed, groups write a reflection using the three stages of perception (selection, organization, and interpretation).

Keywords: *Perception, Board Games, Collaboration*

Learning Outcomes: This activity provides students with an opportunity to do the following:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the stages of perception through a written reflection.
2. Engage in critical thinking as they examine the connections across a list of words.
3. Improve their collaboration skills.

Introduction

Perception is a core concept in many communication courses. Overviews of perception typically include the following three stages: selection, organization, and interpretation (Wood, 2018). Briefly, selection refers to deciding what environmental information should be processed or ignored. Once we have this information, we begin the organization process. The organization stage typically involves placing the newly acquired information into categories (Qiong, 2017). Finally, the interpretation process explores the attachment of meaning to the now categorized information (Wood, 2018).

Classroom discussions of perception often emphasize the subjectivity of perception. What does it mean to say that perception is subjective? In describing the impact of perception, Taylor (2019) writes, "Perception acts as a lens through which we view reality. Our perceptions influence how we focus on, process, remember, interpret, understand, synthesize, decide about, and act on reality." For example, two people can have a conversation and walk away from that conversation with completely different understandings of the interaction. There is no single explanation for these radically different interpretations as perception can be influenced by a number of factors including culture, physiology, and our social roles (Wood, 2018). Regardless of the explanation, the idea that perception is subjective can be found all across the communication discipline: in conversations examining the effectiveness of a leadership style in a group communication course, in activities demonstrating the ambiguity of nonverbal communication in

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interpersonal interactions, and in audience feedback to a practice presentation in a public speaking course.

This subjectivity is why communication textbooks (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor II, 2016; Wood, 2018) advocate for perception checking as a way to reduce miscommunication. The perception checking process typically begins with a personal description of the event in question and ends with a request for more information from the other individuals in the interaction (Chinmaya & Vargo, 1979). This solicitation of information is designed to check the assumption that the way we view the world is accurate. A thorough discussion of the subjectivity of perception sets the stage for an activity that will require students to view the connections between words from a number of perspectives including their peers, their professors, and themselves.

To demonstrate the stages of the perception process, I created a class activity that features cards from the board game *Codenames*. In 2020, the global market for board game and puzzles was worth $11.3 billion dollars according to Euromonitor (Jarvis, 2021). The $3.7 billion in sales for the United States market accounted for nearly a third of the worldwide market (Jarvis, 2021). While board games are experiencing a surge in popularity as a form of leisure time entertainment, researchers have called for an increased appreciation and examination of their educational utility (Willet et al., 2018).

A recent literature review that examined the benefits of using board games with adult learners highlighted a number of positive outcomes such as improved critical and reflective thinking skills, a deeper understanding of communication skills, and enhanced collaborative abilities (Boghian et al., 2019). In fact, variations of *Codenames* have been used to explore a wide range of topics. Souza et al. (2018) developed a spinoff of *Codenames* that combines words and images to teach physics concepts. Sousa (2020) required civil engineering students to create new cards in a lesson on mobility. Octaviana et al.'s (2019) modified version of the game was designed to help students with their English vocabulary. While the activity described below does not require the creation of new cards, the research indicates that the *Codenames* formula can be beneficial in the classroom.

The Activity

For those unfamiliar with *Codenames*, the game's description reads, "The two rival spymasters know the secret identities of 25 agents. Their teammates know the agents only by their CODENAMES. The teams compete to see who can make contact with all of their agents first. Spymasters give one-word clues that can point to multiple words on the board" (Czech Games Edition, n.d.). For example, the following clue "banana: two" indicates that there are two words on the board that the spymaster associates with bananas. In this scenario, the spymaster may want the other agent to guess the words "tree" and "monkey." The first team to correctly identify all of their agents in the field, represented by the previously described words in a 5x5 grid, is declared the winner. This intuitive gameplay resulted in immediate success as *Codenames* received the prestigious Speil des Jahres ("Game of the Year") award (Zimmerman, 2016). Since its release, the creators of *Codenames* have developed a number of spinoffs featuring Disney-Pixar characters, Marvel characters, a cooperative game known as *Codenames Duet*, and an image only version known as *Codenames Pictures*.

To begin, I create small groups of 3–5 students. Once the groups are created, I provide a brief explanation of the rules for a normal game of *Codenames*. In a typical game, the spymaster can only provide a single clue at a time. However, to create an environment where students are racing against the other groups, I provide all of my clues to begin the game. The first group to match the correct words to my hints will earn extra credit for their homework grade.

In addition to the clue provision change, I create a grid that is nearly twice the size of the one found in *Codenames*. My grid features 48 words to provide students with an extensive list of options to consider. My version of *Codenames* requires students to place 22 words into one of six categories but the activity can be modified based on the needs of the professor. Students are afforded three incorrect guesses before their team is eliminated. A guess is only considered incorrect if their selected word does not fit into any of the categories provided by the professor. The *Codenames* portion of the activity ends when a team correctly places all words into the correct categories or when all groups have received three strikes.

Group submissions are evaluated on a rolling basis so teams have a number of strategic options available to them. Teams can decide to complete the "easy" categories first to build confidence. Other groups may decide to submit the category with the most *Codenames* early to determine how many strikes they will have left for the entire activity. Some groups may decide not to have their work evaluated until they have completed all categories to avoid losing debate time for feedback from the professor. This last play is risky as the group may use all three strikes on their only submission of the class. The activity allows students to be strategic in their approach to gameplay.

Debriefing

After the game portion has concluded, students are tasked with writing a reflection that uses the steps of perception. Students must correctly identify each step in the perception process and provide an example of how each stage was used in the activity. This reflection is typically written with the members of their group but the professor for the course can opt for individual reflections.

Reflections in the selection section have addressed a number of different ideas. Given the size of the grid, student responses have often highlighted the need to focus on a single row, category, or even word. It is difficult to carefully examine the grid in its entirety. Other responses in this section have highlighted the classroom environment. Group work can often result in a relatively loud environment especially as students are racing against the clock. Students have mentioned a need to block out the discussions of other groups in order to complete their task.

This version of *Codenames* is a perfect fit for understanding the organization stage of the perception process. Organization focuses on the classification of newly acquired information but in this game the goal is to determine which words fit into preconstructed categories. In reflecting on their experience, one group stated: "We worked individually and then at the end we put our information together to see if we match and then put what we all thought belong into the different categories." This response is atypical in that the group members opted to work individually before attempting to achieve consensus. Given the previously described time component, most groups immediately launch into a frenzied discussion as opposed to taking a moment to formulate their initial impressions. The tactic highlighted in this group's reflection may prevent the first response from dominating the group's discussion.

Responses addressing the interpretation stage have primarily explored different understandings of a word in the grid. One notable example from a previous course connects to the concept of weather. In my version of the grid, students are tasked with finding three words related to weather. The three "correct" responses for this category were lightning, blizzard, and frost. While completing this activity, one student was insistent with their group members that glacier should fit under this category. To support their argument, the student used their phone to locate definitions of the word "weather" and photos of glaciers. Ultimately, the group did not include glacier in their final list but it was not for lack of trying from the student.

In addition to understanding the meaning of a single word, reflections often explore grid construction and the activity as a whole. One of the clues provided to students is myth: three. When I created the board, I envisioned that student responses for this category would be minotaur, Hercules, and Homer. When I stopped by one group, they had an extensive list of questions including: whether I created the grid alone, whether I made assumptions about the audience's knowledge when I created the grid, and finally if I was an avid reader. These questions were intermingled with comments regarding our entire course and my educational background. All of these questions and reflections on my existence were to determine whether I included "Venus" as one of the terms under the "Myth" category. Unfortunately, the Roman goddess of love never crossed my mind when I created this activity. In their reflection, the students highlighted how their experience in our classroom affected their evaluations of the listed words.

To begin this paper, I highlighted the role of perception in courses across the communication discipline. The communication discipline is incredibly wide-ranging as evidenced by the website of the National Communication Association (n.d.) that lists a bevy of specialization topics including: health communication, interpersonal communication, mass communication and media literacy, performance studies, small group communication, and organizational communication. It may be difficult to immediately see the connection between these ostensibly disparate topics. However, the description of each specialization starts with the same word: how. Exploring how an individual responds to a message, no matter its source, returns to the issue of perception. This activity provides students with an opportunity to address the question of how. In this case, students are tasked with explaining how the perception process was used to select 22 "correct" words from a grid of 48 words. In providing these explanations, students often define the components of the perception process prior to selecting examples from their group's interactions. This combination of rehearsing class material, discussing it with your peers, and applying these concepts to their real-world interactions allows students to deepen their understanding of the perception process.

Appraisal and Conclusion

The class session featuring this activity is often one of the highlights of the semester. Students are presented with an opportunity to increase their knowledge of the perception process through the use of a card game. In addition, students can work collaboratively with their peers while simultaneously practicing their reasoning and persuasion skills as needed. The classroom may get a bit noisy at times but students are refining a number of valuable communication skills in the process. Professors can emphasize the stages of perception and valuable skills gleaned from the activity in a class discussion.

In terms of limitations, this activity has primarily been used in interpersonal communication courses. However, I think it can be used in any course that explores the stages of perception. As it places a premium on feedback provided by the professor, it may not be suitable for classes with more than 30 students. It would require an extensive time commitment to interact with all of the groups in a larger class. The current version of the activity can take between 30–50 minutes as it requires students to learn the rules of *Codenames* and the activity, create and revise their submissions based on class discussions and feedback, and write a reflection using the stages of perception.

Ultimately, this activity addresses the call (Willet et al., 2018) to continue examining the use of board games in the classroom. The *Codenames* formula appears to be malleable enough to examine theoretical concepts across a host of fields. The next time you want a class activity to engender critical thinking and collaboration consider playing a round of *Codenames* with your class.

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Artifacts and Identity: An Interactive Approach to Teaching the Communicative Power of Everyday Objects

Ashley George

Abstract: *Artifacts, or everyday objects, can be powerful vehicles of communication in interpersonal interactions. An often underdiscussed nonverbal code, artifacts offer a unique opportunity to display aspects of one's identity. As with any communicative act, however, there is always room for misunderstanding to occur. This single-class activity offers an interactive approach to the study of the rhetorical power of artifacts in our interpersonal relationships and the frequent misperception of their intended message.*

Keywords: Nonverbal Communication, Artifact, Identity, Interpersonal Communication

Courses: This activity can be used in courses such as Interpersonal Communication, Nonverbal Communication, Human Communication, Intro to Communication, Public Speaking, and Business and Professional Communication.

Objectives: The purpose of this single-class activity is to engage students in thinking critically about the power of artifacts in the study of nonverbal communication. The goal is for students to become more aware of the ways in which artifacts communicate significant information in everyday experiences. This could include information about an individual's values, beliefs, and identity. After completing this activity, students should be able to define artifacts, describe how they function, and explain the rhetorical power that artifacts have in interpersonal relationships—especially as it relates to the idea of self.

Introduction and Rationale

Artifacts can be an overlooked code in nonverbal communication, as constructs such as proxemics, gestures, eye contact, etc. consume most of our dialogue in this area. However, there is much communicative power in the display and/or use of artifacts in one's interpersonal communication. Artifacts are defined as objects one either owns, wears, and/or displays that communicate one or more aspects of an individual's identity. Often, a discussion of artifacts as a nonverbal code works in tandem with a discussion of one's dress as a function of nonverbal communication. Examples of artifacts could be a wedding ring, a necklace with a religious symbol, or a pin with one's sorority emblem (among many others). When displayed to others, these objects can be powerful indicators of the "face" that an individual is intending to present (Goffman, 1959). The display of artifacts is, in fact, considered a rhetorical choice; they can function, whether intentionally or otherwise, to impact one's presentation of self. Additionally, this rhetorical choice may or may not have the desired effect in regard to self-presentation. The goal in completing this activity is for students to recognize the ways that perceptions of artifacts can lead to conclusions

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about others' identity, and further, to recognize that those perceptions may be inaccurate representations of the way the individual would identify themselves.

Goffman (1959) coined the term "face," and he described it as an approved social identity we present to the outside world. This identity is crafted in many ways, and Goffman's work specifically focused on presentation behaviors individuals engage in called "facework." One's self-presentation is thought to be a collection of individual choices regarding facework, the version of oneself presented at any given time. In this way, the display of artifacts serves as a type of facework.

Activity Description

The instructor begins the activity by instructing each member of the class to identify one object that he or she brought with them to class as important to them (it can be an object that they are wearing such as a hat or necklace or an item in their backpack or purse, etc.).

The instructor should explain that in terms of the descriptor of "important," the object should be something that has communicative value, or something that communicates at least a piece of their personal identity. The instructor has the choice to instruct students ahead of time to bring an artifact of their choosing with them to class or have students choose from the everyday objects they carry with them without advance warning.

The instructor makes his or her way around the room with a container—typically a bag or basket—and asks the students to place their selected object inside the container. The instructor should remind the students that they will be receiving their artifacts back after the completion of the activity; however, it is still important to instruct them not to include an object of very high worth or value to them in case something is lost or broken at the conclusion of the activity. It is also important that the students do not see the items that the other students are placing in the container.

After each student has selected and placed an item, the instructor will return to the front of the classroom and shuffle the items. Next, the instructor will make his or her way around the classroom and instruct each student to select an item from the bag. The students should not select their own item. After each student has selected an item, they will be instructed to write a brief biography of the person they predict is the owner of the item. Their only identifier to this person is the item they selected (they do not know to whom the item belongs). Each student will include responses to the following questions in their written bio/description.

1) What is this person's major?
2) What personality characteristics does this person have (organized, creative, etc.)?
3) What is the relationship status of this person?
4) Where is this person from geographically?
5) What are this person's hobbies?
6) What is important (values) to this person?

They can then include any additional biographical information that they would like beyond their responses to these questions.

After they write their responses, each student will introduce the class to their item and they will share the biographical descriptions they wrote about the "mystery owner." After each person shares their biography, the person who owns the item will identify themselves as the owner and then that student will have an opportunity to respond to the description and correct any missed assumptions about their identity.

Debriefing

Students, of course, frequently report incorrect information, but sometimes their bios are surprisingly accurate. Because students typically benefit from having an opportunity to personally reflect on this activity/experience, they should be given ~15 minutes in class to generate a written reflection before the instructor leads a class discussion. This reflection should include a response to questions regarding 1.) how they experienced someone else crafting descriptors of them based on this one object. Next, they should reflect on 2.) why someone might have misinterpreted aspects of their identity and/or 3.) why they drew the conclusions they did about a classmate based on the artifact they selected. Lastly, 4.) they should offer a reflection about the communicative power of artifacts as nonverbal codes. They should discuss the insights they gained after having completed the activity regarding the rhetorical choices involved in displaying artifacts and the interpretation of those rhetorical choices, including any discussion of biases realized. This reflection exercise creates a foundation for dialogue as a class about stereotypes, generalizations, and mindfulness in interpersonal relationships.

After all students have completed the written reflection portion of the assignment, the instructor should lead a follow-up discussion with the class about the communicative power of artifacts. He or she should cover two main points:

1) Artifacts are powerful communicators of our identity and what is valuable to individuals.
2) We can make many erroneous assumptions about individuals based solely on our perception of artifacts.

Sample discussion prompts are as follows:

After having reflected on this activity and its implications, what conclusions can be drawn about the communicative power of artifacts in your everyday interpersonal interactions?

1) Have you ever made inaccurate assumptions about someone based on the display of certain artifacts? How can this be a barrier in our interpersonal relationships?
2) What can we do to mitigate assumption-making in these instances?
3) What did you learn about the choice to display artifacts as a personal rhetorical choice?

Typically, students will reflect on a few different concepts. First, they are interested in why the person who chose their artifact drew the conclusions they did about their identity based on seeing this one object. Secondly, they consider in a new way how the objects they carry with them on an everyday basis communicate aspects of their persona to others around them. Third, they are instructed to consider how their attitudes and feelings toward other people are often based on nonverbal codes that they inherently interpret with bias.

Appraisal

In order to assess a student's performance on this class activity, 50% of their total grade is based on their engagement in the activity during class time, with 25% allotted for their participation in the activity itself and 25% for the discussion following the activity. The remaining 50% is assigned for the written reflection.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this activity of course is that we typically make assertions about the rhetorical message of an artifact when we see it as it naturally occurs either on or with an individual. Creating an identity around a singular object without the ability to connect the object's owner is certainly a limited scope. However, the benefit of the activity being completed in this manner is that students are able to contemplate an object's significance in a way that is disconnected to a particular individual. Because artifacts are an often understudied and discussed type of nonverbal code, it is effective for students to consider their communicative power without being attached to a particular individual first. Then, the next layer of discussion can unfold when the owner of the artifact is presented and students consider how the artifact and the individual operate together to communicate one's identity. Being able to consider the nonverbal code at both of these levels offers a richer consideration of how objects are powerful projections of one's self presentation.

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"Yes, and" Story Circles: Using Improv to Improve Communication and Teamwork

Jefferson Walker

This single-class set of activities is designed for use in the basic course and can be adapted as an icebreaker for other communication courses. The activities draw on the "Yes, and" principle of improvisation by engaging students in a collaborative storytelling experience. The activities demonstrate the value of teamwork, listening, and adaptability.

Keywords: *Improv, Basic Course, Collaboration*

Intended Courses: Basic Course

Learning Objectives: After completing this set of activities, students will be able to:
1. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of "Yes, and" as an approach to teamwork.
2. Reflect upon the importance of active listening, adaptability, and clear communication in collaborative environments.
3. Describe the benefits and challenges of collaboration as a team strategy.

Introduction and Rationale

Various professions are increasingly turning to improvisational games to develop skills in communication and teamwork. In recent years, schools and consultants have conducted improv training sessions with scientists, healthcare practitioners, and business and community leaders. As renowned actor and science communication practitioner Alan Alda (2017) suggests, "Improv games allow most of the tips about public speaking to become second nature, rather than forced and mechanical" (p. 99). Moreover, Alda and other researchers promote improv's potential to cultivate one's ability to empathize with, listen to, and work effectively with others (Cuny, et al., 2019; Lindenfeld, 2018; Watland & Santori, 2014). The following set of activities, primarily designed for use in the basic course, introduces students to improvisational storytelling and offers a lesson on communication and collaboration in team environments.

This set of activities draws heavily on the improvisational principle of "Yes, and," which Alda (2017) calls the "fundamental rule of improv" (p. 61). For an improviser, "Yes, and" entails both agreeing to whatever they are presented with and contributing something of their own. Imagine an improv scene where one person says to another, "Welcome to the chapel. Are you with the bride or the groom?" If the scene partner responds with, "This isn't a wedding chapel, it's a classroom," the scene comes to an abrupt stop. Denial

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prevents the scene from moving forward. Imagine instead that the scene partner replies with, "I'm with the bride. In fact, I'm her long-lost sister!" The act of agreement ("*yes*, this is a wedding and I'm with the bride") allows the scene to continue. The additional contribution ("*and* I'm her long-lost sister!") moves the story forward in an interesting way.

Watland and Santori (2014) translate the "Yes, and" principle to team settings. The authors write, "['Yes, and'] provides the foundation for moving all ideas and actions forward. When an idea is put forward by a team member, other members accept the idea and add other information and insights to move the idea forward" (p. 92). The following activities ask students to practice "Yes, and" in a collaborative, storytelling environment and reflect on how the principle might fit in their own lives.

Description of Activities

With the class seated in a circle, begin by introducing students to "Yes, and." Explain the concept and its importance to improv. Next, inform students that they will be implementing the "Yes, and" principle during a set of storytelling activities and discussing its merits afterwards.

One Sentence Stories

In the first activity, students will be telling a story one sentence at a time, using the "Yes, and" principle. Before starting the story, ask for suggestions for a name and occupation for the main character. Tell the class that their goal is to come up with an entirely fictional story about this character with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The rules of the activity are that the story must begin with "Once upon a time," and end with "Happily ever after." Each student will contribute one sentence at a time to the story, with every sentence starting with "Yes, and." For example:

Student 1: "Once upon a time, there was an accountant named Alexis."

Student 2: "Yes, and…she worked on the top floor of the tallest building in the world."

Student 3: "Yes, and…Alexis was claustrophobic and did not enjoy taking the elevator to her office."

Student 4: "Yes, and…Alexis would typically arrive to work at least two hours early each day so she could take the stairs."

Student 5: "Yes, and…one morning, Alexis was walking up the stairs when she saw something unusual."

As the above example demonstrates, the structure of this activity makes it impossible to predict where a story will go. Sometimes character traits and plot points are dropped (e.g., will we ever hear more about Alexis' job as an accountant? Will she face her claustrophobia?). Unexpected twists and turns are likely. In most cases, the best course of action is to sit back and see where the students take the story. Occasionally, the story will stall out and it will be necessary to step in. A simple prompt of "Let's resolve this issue," or "Let's reach the end of the story by the next go-around" should suffice. Sometimes students may forget to begin their sentences with "Yes, and." Stepping in with reminders is important to keep the activity focused on that principle. Other times, students will feel apprehensive about participating. It is important to encourage the class that there is no one correct way to contribute. Tell them that the goal is not to be funny (although that may certainly happen), but simply to move the story forward.

One Word Stories

For the second activity, ask the class for suggestions for favorite fairytales (e.g., “Cinderella” or “Little Red Riding Hood”). Select one and explain that the goal for this story circle will be to recount the story as accurately as possible. This goal makes it best to select a fairytale that is not too obscure, as the activity will work better if most of the group is generally familiar with the story. Of course, there will be students who are more acquainted with the story than others. Some may know different versions of the tale and others will not know it at all. This is expected and can be a part of the lesson.

As with the first activity, the rules are simple. The story should begin with “Once upon a time,” and end with “Happily ever after.” The twist is that students must tell the story one word at a time. For example:

Student 1: “Once”
Student 2: “Upon”
Student 3: “A”
Student 4: “Time”

…and so on. Encourage the class that this may be a challenge, but that they should simply do their best. Remind them that the goal is to tell the story as accurately as possible, so students should not try to take the story in any unusual directions.

As the story progresses, a few setbacks are likely to arise. Some students get stumped and others frustrated that the story is not on track. Some sentences run-on and take unexpected turns. Give these issues time to work themselves out, but step in if necessary. If the story stalls or loses its way, pause to ask the group questions: “Who are some important characters that are missing?” or “What’s the next thing that needs to happen in this story?” Some students will choose their words to elicit laughter, which is fine if it fits within the story. However, if it is apparent that students are trying to disrupt the story, it is appropriate to remind the class of their goal to tell the tale as accurately as possible. Often, during the class’s first time completing the activity, students will have a difficult time ending the story. A simple prompt of “Let’s start to wrap this story up,” will usually be enough to propel the story towards its ending.

Debriefing

After completing the story circle activities, an instructor-led discussion will allow the class to reflect on various communication and teamwork concepts, as well as assess the merits of the “Yes, and” principle. Instructors may choose to have a debriefing session after each individual activity or after the class has completed both. Use open-ended questions to begin: What were the biggest challenges of the activities? What went well? How could the class improve if they tried the activities again?

Students often share their frustrations. Some are annoyed that the story missed important plot points (“We never even met Cinderella’s Stepsisters!”). Some are frustrated that they were unable to provide more direction to the story. The one-word story activity especially can prevent students from making meaningful contributions to the story. Participants cannot always add in the name of a character, place, or important event; they are sometimes limited to conjunctions or prepositions based on the sentence structure ("I knew what needed to happen next in the story, but whenever it was my turn it was always time to say 'and.'"). These frustrations can be turned into insightful discussions on communication and teamwork. When such issues come up, ask students to consider how the frustrations relate to working in groups. One takeaway is the necessity of relying on others in collaboration. Some individuals are creative types who will make unexpected choices, while others are more reluctant to make meaningful contributions. Some individuals are experts who know the topic (or story, in this case) well, while others may not be as well-versed. Collaboration is often touted as the ideal form of groupwork, but these activities demonstrate its challenges. Another takeaway is related to team role-playing. The activities show that there are times when it is appropriate to play a key task role; in this case, when a character needs to be introduced or a plot point resolved. Other times call for individuals to play support roles (adding an "and," "with," or "because"), allowing other group members to take the spotlight with more important contributions.

The final point of discussion should focus on how the "Yes, and" principle can be applied to other settings. Ask questions such as: What is the benefit of "Yes, and" as a philosophy? For coming up with new ideas? For working with others? Although there are places where the approach is not appropriate (for instance, overburdened individuals who habitually agree to new tasks), there are many places where the principle could be implemented effectively. In groupwork, for example, "Yes, and" may make individuals feel that their contributions are valued, as their ideas are explored and developed, rather than rejected outright. Encourage students to think about how the "Yes, and" principle could fit into their personal and professional lives.

Appraisal

Students generally enjoy the activities and frequently ask to do them again. They work well as icebreakers and help create community in the classroom. Repeated use may amplify that effect, as students typically grow more comfortable and confident when telling their stories in subsequent efforts. These activities are also great launching points for in-depth discussions on the "Yes, and" principle and other concepts related to communication and teamwork. While the activities are designed for the basic course, they can be adapted for various communication classes. Creative instructors could adapt the activities and tie the "Yes, and" principle to content in classes such as leadership, small group communication, and science communication.

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Liar, Liar: Using a Fyre Festival Documentary to Teach Moral and Ethical Perspectives in Media Production

Julia K. Weiss

Through lecture, documentary viewing, writing, and discussion, students are asked to identify and explain the unethical decisions made by a media team and are asked to reflect on how they would handle the presented situation differently by referencing moral perspectives. Students learn to consider ethical dimensions and moral perspectives when making decisions in creating media and discuss transparency in producing media for the public.

Keywords: *Media Ethics, Public Relations, Marketing, Moral Philosophy*

Courses: Media Studies, Media Ethics, Mass Communication, Journalism, Public Relations, Marketing.

Objectives: Students place themselves in the role of a media team member to walk through ethical decision making in media production; learn and apply moral perspectives to media decisions; and discuss the implications of honesty and transparency in media production.

Introduction and Rationale

Careers in media industries are continuing to rise in popularity, and particularly so in the Internet-based and Public Relations sectors. The United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 4% growth in careers related to media and communication between 2019 and 2029 (Media and Communication Occupations, 2021) with a 7% growth for public relations careers (Public Relations Specialists, 2021) as well as a 6% growth in advertising, promotion, and market managers (Advertising, Promotions, and Marketing Managers, 2021). Whether students are planning for careers as media writers, social media specialists, public relations experts, or the like, they often take communication and media classes to prepare them for such professions. Within media classes, it is vital that instructors discuss ethical decision making and personal ethics when it comes to producing any type of media intended for the public.

This activity was designed to teach students moral theory perspectives to generate discussion about how each can be applied to careers in media. Students are asked to identify and explain the unethical decisions made by a media team and are asked to reflect on how they would handle the presented situation differently by referencing moral perspectives. This activity has been used in a Media Studies course but could also be used any class that discusses media writing and dissemination or public relations.

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A Model for Individual Ethical Decisions (MIED; Dominick, 2013; adapted from Potter, 1972) is discussed to guide students' thinking about how to approach ethical decisions they may need to make in media careers. Part of this model involves learning moral perspectives put forth by various moral theory philosophers. After watching the Netflix documentary, "*Fyre Fraud: The Greatest Party That Never Happened*", students apply items from lecture to what they observe in the film and additionally, reflect on their own moral positions. This activity can assist students in considering the consequences involved in unethical decision making by the media to help promote critical thinking they may need for their future careers.

Activity Description

Day One

Students receive instruction on both a model for decision making and several perspectives on morality. The model used is the MEID (Dominick, 2013; adapted from Potter, 1972), which teaches students to consider different ethical dimensions when they need to make decisions in media professions. The model consists of five parts: (a) Definitions—defining the situation including the facts and potential actions to be taken; (b) Values—considering what one values and how those values relate to actions; (c) Principles—determining which ethical lens one wants to operate through (see descriptions below); (d) Loyalties—determining who and/or what one is loyal to; and (e) Action – deciding the best course of action with all other dimensions considered. It may help students to have the instructor provide an ethical dilemma (real or fictional) as a practice example of how to walk through the model step-by-step.

Next, the instructor needs to present students with different moral perspectives that are typically discussed in moral philosophy, which students then consider as part three of the aforementioned model.

First, the *Principle of Utility (Utilitarianism)* developed by philosopher Jeremey Bentham and John Stuart Mill is a consequentialist theory meaning that it requires people to think about the welfare of the self and others and to maximize that welfare at all times (Timmons, 2011). The principle considers the utility of an action, which is determined by the net value of all of that action's consequences. The amount of happiness or unhappiness people would feel as a result of an action determines its utility. Overall, considering an action to be right or wrong depends on how it would affect the happiness of others.

Second, philosopher Immanuel Kant offers what he calls *The Humanity Formulation.* This perspective posits that behaviors can only be considered right if people are treated as an ends and not just as a means; we must not coerce or deceive them thereby using them as an instrument for our own purposes (Timmons, 2011). Overall, we need to treat people with dignity.

Third, Kant also established *The Universal Law Formulation*, which states that behaviors can only be considered right if the person performing the action could conceive of and will that every other person could do action as well, meaning they could conceive of and will that the action becomes a universal law that everyone must follow (Timmons, 2011). If so, an action is right.

Fourth, *The Golden Rule* states that people should treat others how they wish to be treated (Flew, 1979). This classic and simple rule means that if one does not want a person to behave in a certain way towards them, they should not behave that way towards others themselves.

Finally, political philosopher John Rawls describes *The Veil of Ignorance* stating that when decisions are being made about social, political, or economic issues, everyone should be placed behind an imaginary veil that serves as a barrier (Rawls, 1999). This barrier means that the people making decisions should not know about the social standing or demographic information about the people who would be affected by the decisions (the self included). Without information about social class, race, age, and so on, a more just and fair decision can be made.

Days Two and Three

As a class, watch the Netflix documentary, "*Fyre Fraud": The Greatest Party That Never Happened*" (Gabai, Purzycki, Smith & Smith, 2019). The documentary interviews the media teams involved in the advertising and production of Fyre Festival, a luxury music festival created by entrepreneur Billy McFarland and rapper Ja Rule in 2017 that turned out to be a scam. Through an impressive promotion of the festival using Instagram influencers and major celebrities, the festival quickly gained popularity and grossed hundreds of thousands of dollars in ticket and accommodations sales. However, due to rushed and poor planning, a lack of funds, and the obtainment of a site not capable of hosting a sold-out festival, all plans for the festival were pulled. The news that the festival would not happen did not come until all patrons were already flown to the island of Great Exuma in the Bahamas. Festival attendees were thus trapped on the island with a lack of food, transportation, and shelter temporarily.

This documentary provides an example for students to discuss media ethics because it features the media team who was responsible for continuing to promote the festival and take money from customers even when they knew it would not be possible for the festival to happen. As the documentary progresses, it becomes clearer that the media team felt a sense of guilt, but they continued to promote the festival in fear of losing their jobs. Getting insight into the ethical and moral debates the team had allows for the above perspectives to be applied well to this massive marketing and public relations scam.

Day Four

Before class. Students next reflect on the aforementioned model and perspectives. Provide students with a three-part reflection sheet. First, students are asked to pretend as if they were on Billy McFarland's media team and to walk through the MEID mentioned above. In doing so, they need to define the details surrounding the festival promotion in light of evidence that the festival could not possibly happen, they discuss what they personally value as well as what they value as a team, they use the five perspectives discussed in class and decide which ones they could use to help them make right decisions instead of immoral ones, they determine where their loyalties lie, and finally, they decide their course of action. Second, they reference specific instances from the documentary when there were moral violations by the team based on the five perspectives and provide explicit ways the team could have changed their behavior to be more in line with what each perspective would consider to be moral actions. Finally, students write up a short analysis of what can happen when media companies are unethical in what they broadcast to the public. They have to cite the consequences faced by the public in the film including not just the customers, but all people who were involved with the festival in any capacity. They also discuss the bigger implications outside of the film, explaining how media companies might use social media and other forms of technology in consequential ways.

During class. Class time is reserved for discussing students' responses to each part of the reflection sheet and for students to debate.

Debriefing

Debriefing occurs during class discussion on day four. This time can be used to discuss students' individual ethics, to compare and contrast individual models of ethics that exist across students, to connect the film and reflection back to course material, and to discuss the implications of deception in media practices.

When discussing the MEID, the most conversation generated comes from reflecting on the different values and loyalties that students possess. For example, some say their loyalty lies with the public and the public's right to honest media whereas others say their loyalty is to their team and team's leadership. Students enjoy debating with each other about the model, but typically they settle on the same course of action—that they would inform the public that the festival was a scam. Students also are enthusiastic when they share the moments in the film they saw each of the ideas described by the moral perspectives violated and comment on what they would have done differently. There are many violations of morals in the film, producing a lot of discussion. This is also a great time to ask them some variation of, "What if, as a customer, this happened to you?". Ending on this question generally brings students to the conclusion that unethical media practices must be avoided.

Debriefing is also a great time to discuss codes of ethics by different professional associations such as the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ; 2014) or the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA; n.d.). For example, the code of ethics of the SPJ emphasizes truth, reducing harm, working independently, and being accountable. When reaching and reflecting on the values and loyalties parts of the MEID, this is a time to discuss how having a media career and having your work in the public eye comes with standards and the expectation of moral practices. Being a part of these media fields often means accepting certain values or loyalties that protect society at large, which this activity attempts to emphasize to students.

Finally, discussing fundamental ethical issues in the field of mass communication is also appropriate at the end of this activity. Neher and Sandin (2017) offer great talking points about these issues. The authors separate the ethical issues into three categories: the media are gatekeepers, there are stereotypes in media, and media are supposed to be truthful and accurate. The *gatekeeping function* means media are supposed to look for and report the truth while actively working to reduce harm. *Stereotypes in media* refers to the importance of recognizing that media shape society and in doing so, they need to reduce prejudice and provide context to the public. Finally, *truth and accuracy* mean that all content put forth by media should not distort the accuracy of media messages. Looking at mass media ethics under each of these categories allows for generating discussion about the effect making ethical decisions in media can have on society. In the example in this activity—the Fyre Festival—we can see that truth, accuracy, and fairness were all missing while harm, distortion, and lies were abundant. Students can reflect on these fundamental media issues after having the chance to view dishonest media and consult their own individual ethics with the MEID process.

Appraisal

There are several variations to this activity. First, any piece of media can be used to walk through the MEID, the moral perspectives, and the implications of dishonest media. If the film is too long for your allowance for media viewing, using shorter videos, newspapers, etc. that would work well. You may wish to use current events rather than this documentary. Second, if four days is too much time to take away from class, you could also opt to do this as an online discussion forum as a homework assignment. Students can debate with each other by replying to each other's posts as part of their grade. Lastly, only five moral perspectives were discussed here, but there are many more you could apply to media situations.

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