Podcasting Business Learning: Addressing the New Learning Styles for Generation Y

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Abstract

The quest for an ideal medium to deliver business content to Gen Y learners has led instructors to consider the Internet, since digital content that exists in databases can be manipulated by a range of programming services (Shim *et al*., 2006). Shim et al., have also asserted that web development has been hampered by bandwidth and difficulties of "back end integration," consequently, impacting the presentational aspects of data and user interfaces (Yang & Tang, 2005). Innovations in computer and software technologies appear to have ameliorated the technical difficulties, resulting in the emergence of new media such as podcasting, webcasting, videostreaming, blogging, and Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL) technologies (Shim, 2002). These new media streams can be integrated into traditional lectures, thus enhancing the educational environment (McLaughlin, 2006), particularly for Gen Y learners. This paper discusses the efficacy of podcasting in business education, reviews the characteristics of Generation Y (Gen Y) learners, discusses learning styles and theories that support mobile learning, reviews learning styles of Gen Y learners, and discusses whether adaptations are necessary to address the updated needs of this new generation of learners in the business communication context.

Introduction

The optimum delivery format of information and instruction to a new generation of business learners has continued to generate discussions among business instructors. Studies such as those by Callaghan *et al*. (2000) show that traditional lectures can be one of the least effective methods of teaching. Also, of significant concern is the current demand for accountability and assessment in higher education, and the call for greater acceptance and appreciation of individual differences. Studies have suggested that an integration of multimedia and instructor-led guidance would improve educational outcomes (Braun, 2002; Garcia-Morales & Llorens-Montes, 2006; Littman, 1995; Pagell, 1996; Smagt, 2000). Therefore, business instructors are now re-examining their commitment to teaching and learning and searching for new ways to improve teaching, particularly for a new generation of learners—Generation Y (hereafter referred to as Gen Y). As Canfield (1992) aptly stated, "knowing the kinds of learning experiences that students most value may help business instructors develop alternative course structures that provide a better fit between their instructional goals and the learning style preferences of their students" (p. 1).

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The quest for an ideal medium to deliver business content to Gen Y learners has led instructors to consider the Internet, since digital content that exists in databases can be manipulated by a range of programming services (Shim *et al*., 2007). Shim et al., have also asserted that web development has been hampered by bandwidth and difficulties of "back end integration," consequently, impacting the presentational aspects of data and user interfaces (Yang & Tang, 2005). Innovations in computer and software technologies appear to have ameliorated the technical difficulties, resulting in the emergence of new media such as podcasting, webcasting, videostreaming, blogging, and Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL) technologies (Shim, 2002). SMIL is markup language for describing multimedia presentations. These new media streams can be integrated into traditional lectures, thus enhancing the educational environment (McLaughlin, 2006), particularly for Gen Y learners. This paper discusses the efficacy of podcasting in business education, reviews the characteristics of Gen Y learners, discusses learning styles and theories that support mobile learning, reviews learning styles of Gen Y learners, and discusses whether adaptations are necessary to address the updated needs of this new generation of learners in the business communication context.

Podcasting defined

Podcasting is the process of capturing an audio event, song, speech, or mix of sounds and then posting that digital sound object to a Web site or "blog" in a data structure called an RSS 2.0 envelope (or "feed") (Meng, 2005). RSS stands for Real Simple Syndication and is an accepted standard of XML tags used to define objects which can be subscribed to through an "RSS news reader." Using specialized news readers like iPodder or iPodderX, users can subscribe to a Web page containing RSS 2.0 tagged audio files on designated web pages and automatically download these files directly into an audio management program on their personal computer like iTunes, Windows Media Player, or MusicMatch. Even though the term "podcasting" implies that an iPod is required to podcast, they can be used on a variety of digital audio formats and play on almost any MP3 player or portable digital audio device, as well as any brand of desktop computer or laptop. When a user synchronizes his or her portable audio device with a personal computer, the podcasts are automatically transferred to that device to be listened to at the time and location most convenient for the user.

Podcasting originated from the so-called Web 2.0 that depends on push technologies to deliver content. Push technologies is terminology used to define the breadth of technologies used to send out information to users, whether or not they are tuned in. The updating process is usually an inconspicuous one. With that in mind, Podcast creators can have their content delivered to subscribers as soon as it becomes available, without typing a URL to download the information. Students can subscribe to podcasts and have the content delivered automatically to their device management software. This allows for the asynchronous delivery of content, much like TiVo for TV (Dixon, 2006). Many have compared podcasting to Tivo or a DVR (digital video recorder) because of it's "time-shifting" ability (Meng, 2005, p. 1). In some aspects it is similar, but it is also different in that the recorded content is delivered in its final format to a portable device that is independent of the recording device.

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Podcasting in business education

According to Salomon (1979), context, task, and learner are all factors in the selection and effectiveness of a specific medium for pedagogy. Hence the call to explore how different media might interact with and influence various processes of learning (Kozma, 1994). The vast and diverse population across the Internet supports the "narrowcasting" of specific information, including podcast programs, to a new generation of learners, particularly Gen Y. Podcasting also has the ability to transcend constraints of time and scheduling by offering what has often been referred to as "radio on demand" (Bongey, Cizadlo, & Kalnbach, 2006). This could be one explanation for the medium's enormous popularity and applicability in the face of even the most esoteric of topics. According to a recent Bridge Ratings research, podcasts are "catching on with iPod users" (Bridge Ratings, 2005, p. 1).

The increasing popularity of podcasting has been captured in *The Horizon Report* (2006), a collaborative effort of EDUCAUSE and The New Media Consortium. Personal broadcasting, including podcasting, has been listed among the top two technologies being implemented in higher education today. *The Horizon Report* also predicted a "Time-to-Adoption Horizon" for this technology of one year or less, and concluded that personal broadcasting was at the leading edge of a wave that will last for the next several years. This trend also includes image-enhanced podcasts and video podcasts (vodcasts), which are viewable on a PC using podcast receivers like iTunes or Juice and are also fully portable using the Video iPod. The existence of Apple's iTunes University, the efforts of Purdue University to podcast over 90 courses (Read, 2005, p. A32), and the expansion of the lexicon to include previously unheard of words –- such as course-casting -– are clear indications of the apparent efficacy of podcasting for educational purposes (Apple, 2006).

Podcasting is differentiated from webcasting in that it uses an aggregating RSS (Really Simple Syndication) web feed, or enables downloading and saving from a URL (Holtjana & Fiona, 2004). A podcast has a persistent site, capable of synchronizing with a portable multimedia device, such as an MP3 player or iPod, whereas webcasting is streamed from the internet and requires the user to be connected to the internet while playing or viewing the webcast files. VODcasting (also called "vlogging") - the "VOD" stands for "video-on-demand" - is almost identical to podcasting.

The current understanding of podcasting is strictly related to audio content and differentiates from video format by introducing terms such as "VODcasting" (also called "vlogging") or "video-on-demand podcasting" (Meng, 2005, p. 1). The difference is that the content is video versus audio, and the content is more likely to be played on a laptop than a PMA (personal media assistant) due to vodcating's newness and relative expense. However, the distinction between podcasting and VODcasting is starting to blur, since podcasting can refer to both audio and video output for a comprehensive understanding.

Among the latest trends in information technology, podcasting has emerged as technology of keen interest to academics, practitioners, and other technologists (McLaughlin, 2006) as both a trend in communication technology and a new paradigm (Anderson, 2006; Bourges-Waldegg & Hoertnagl, 2005). Many universities are currently evaluating podcasting, and some have

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launched a variety of programs which utilize the technology. The implications of the podcasting technology are beginning to be realized. For example, the most common current university podcast usage is providing university or department news to staff and students using RSS feed to supplement the traditional paper versions of newsletters. Universities are also utilizing podcasting technology to make guest lectures available to wider audiences, such as staff, students, and alumni who were unable to attend the lectures.

Podcasting has revolutionized education and particularly higher education by enabling up-to-date content, addressing multiple intelligences and allowing for the anytime/anywhere delivery of instructional content. Podcast content can include but is not limited to audio and video recordings of lectures, incidental content (e.g. interviews, narrations) and generally any audio and video content. For example, Stanford University offers audio lecture content, but also offers videos of their sports activities. Other extensions also allow for the updating of content via the telephone and attaching podcasts to blogs. Much as the so-called Web 2.0 is evolving, the use of podcasting in academia continues to adjust to these changes and the ways podcasting can impact Gen Y, the net generation.

A cursory look around today's college quadrangles depicts students tuned in with earbuds securely fastened, a laptop and PDA in their backpacks, camera-phone affixed to their belts. Campus life now includes downloading lecture notes, viewing course videos and taking quizzes via class web sites; checking e-mail every 15 minutes, interacting with friends locally and globally courtesy of IM (Instant Messaging); blogging; MMORPGing (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Play Gaming); downloading music/video files in MP3/M4A formats; sharing multi-megapixellated jpeg photos with online friends via highspeed Internet connections. Podcasting popularity has been on the rise since 2004. As Table 1 shows, eMarketer claimed that by 2008 podcasting in the U.S. will have an audience of 25 million and an estimated 50 million by the end of the decade (Matthews, 2007).

Table 1. US Podcast Audience, 2006, 2008 & 2010 (millions)

Year	Total podcast audience of individuals who hav

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eve
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oad
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a
pod
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t
Active podcast audience who download an average of one or more podcasts per week

2006
10.0
3.0

2008
25.0
7.5

2010
50.0
15.0

Recently Apple iTunes 4.9 added podcast subscriptions and also allows information marketers the ability to have their podcasts listed in their vast directory in order to target more customers.

Just how big is the potential reach of podcasting? Consider these numbers: More than 22 million US adults own an iPod or other MP3 player 13% of men and 9% of women, 20% of the lucrative 18- 28-year-old market owns an iPod or other MP3 player, and 29% of the people who own an iPod or MP3 player have downloaded a podcast (Rainie & Madden, 2005). This translates to 6 million U.S. adults who have downloaded podcasts; a truly impressive figure considering podcasting is still a relatively new technology. The keys to the early success of podcasting are that it offers great choice and convenience, attributes that lend themselves to increased use by Gen Y learners.

Gen Y learners—An overview

Who are these Gen Y learners? This cohort is known by different labels which include: Generation-D, Net Gen, Millennials, Newmills, Nexters, Thatcher's Children, Generation Next, Echo Boomers, and Digital Generation (Sweeney, 2005). They are the first ubiquitous cohort of learners raised on and confirmed experts in the latest, fastest, coolest, greatest, newest electronic technologies on the planet. By many accounts, the beginning and ending dates defining the

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parameters of Gen Y vary from beginning dates from 1977-1982 to ending dates from 1994-2003. Estimates of the size of the group vary as well with figures ranging from 73 million (The Millennials, 2004) to 100 million (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Regardless of the definitive figure for the population of Gen Y, all normalizing population guesstimates reflect that this generation is the most influential generation, at least in terms of size, since the Baby Boomers.

Gen Y learners utilize abundant technologies for studying, social networking, and "edutainment" (Kvavik & Caruso, 2005). This reality is also buttressed by Junco & Mastrodicasa's (2007) survey results of U.S. college students presented in Table 2. As Table 2 shows, there is a high penetration of technologies students can use for podcasting. Using technology in and out of the classroom provides multiple benefits of convenience, connectivity, and control in the learning process. Kvavik & Caruso also found that specialized technological skills such as online-library searching, mandatory for numerous course requirements, concomitantly demands additional improvements from the service provider side. Moreover, EDUCAUSE discovered that the instructor's IT skills posesthe greatest challenge upon student engagement and learner satisfaction. Therefore, to interface successfully with Gen Y, business educators must adopt and become proficient using learning technologies themselves; in other words, business educators must keep apace technologically with their students.

Table 2. US Students' Use of Technology

Percent
Own a computer 97%
Own a cell phone 94%
Use Instant Messaging (IM) 76%
Have a Facebook account 75%
Own some type of portable music and/or video device such as an iPod 60%
Download music using peer-to-peer file sharing 49%
Use websites as their primary source of news 34%
Own a blog and 44% read **blogs**

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28%

IM users logged on 24 hours a day/7 days a week
15%

Howe and Strauss (2003) identified seven core traits reflecting the general personality characteristics of Gen Y. These traits are special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving. The first three traits are inextricably linked to the parents of Gen Y who are typically nurturing to a fault, and personally have financially invested in their children, earning the title, "Helicopter Parents," for their frequent and intense involvement or hovering in many aspects of their children's lives.

Members of Gen Y feel internal and external influences to perform at the very highest levels, and they manage to achieve success, whether that success comes in the form of athletic, academic, financial, social, or whatever form. Frand (2000) created a list of expectations, beliefs, and behaviors of the members of Gen Y. These qualities include the belief that technology is important but that computers are not obligatorily considered technology, since they have always been a part of their lives. Examples of technology would include recent advances along the lines of such innovations as: Podcasting, Blue Tooth, RSS, Wi-Fi, and a multitude of ring tones from TV's Family Guy to the latest pop hit. Other mindset criteria for Gen Y include the preference of using the Internet (web browsing) over television watching; the ability to perform different activities at the same time (multitasking), and staying connected. Gen Y students often multitask by listening to a lecture while checking their e-mail and text-messaging their friends. Frand (2000) asserts that Gen Y students prefer to type than write anything by hand. Because information is constantly changing, what a Gen Y student can do is considered more important than an accumulation of knowledge that may soon become outdated.

Other attributes that lend themselves to Gen Y using podcasting as an educational tool, including the following: (1) They are gamers and as such are used to trial-and-error as a way to get to the next level whether the next level is found on the latest version of Halo or life in general; (2) with the introduction of digital manipulation of images and data, they may have difficulty discerning fact from fiction even though they are more fluent in visual literacy than any other generation; (3) patience is not one of their virtues as they are used to instant gratification and have zero tolerance for delays; and (4) they are well aware of branding as they have been aggressively pursued by advertisers and marketers since early childhood (Frand, 2000). As a result, Gen Y people know the power of being a consumer and will switch to any competing brand that meets their needs. A consequence of a life lived within a bubble of brands and consumerism is a blurring of ownership. Many Gen Y students confuse processes like cutting and pasting with creating, finding with production, and/or buying with the nuances of ownership. Rationalizations heard frequently include: "Why should I rewrite something I agree with – just click on the link and read the original"; "I found this web site so I decided to use it"; or "I bought this so the information belongs to me." They are unapologetic digital cognoscenti, connoisseurs: Digerati (Shih & Allen, 2007). All these pose significant challenges to business instructors as they attempt to teach Gen Y students using traditional classroom techniques with little attention for

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their affinity to mobile learning which podcasts provide. We will now examine learning styles that support podcasting as a form of mobile learning.

Learning styles and theories that support mobile learning

Most pedagogical theories fail to encapsulate the unique qualities of mobile learning. This is because they are theories of teaching, centered around the assumption that learning occurs in a classroom environment, mediated by a trained instructor.

Any theory of mobile learning must embrace the considerable learning that takes place outside the classroom which can be personally initiated and structured. It must also account for the dynamic nature of learning. A relevant theory of learning must embrace contemporary accounts of the practices and development of learning. Learning is a constructive process, involving the active construction of knowledge. Hence, theories of learning must meet the following criteria: They must account for both formal and informal learning, they must analyze the dynamic context of learning, and they must theorize learning as a constructive and social activity (Edirisingha & Salmon, 2006).

Additionally, the Sociocultural Theory of Learning (Rogers, 2002) posits that learning takes place in a social context, and the forming and re-forming of concepts need not necessarily take place only at the level of the individual, but that collaborative group work and sharing with peers (and others) can be a powerful way of confronting one's own conceptions (pre-conceptions), contributing to the need to restructure one's cognitive schemas. So learning is perceived as being as much about communication as it is about content. Of course, communication is not confined to peer-to-peer. It can involve teachers, experts, experienced colleagues, workmates, friends, and family. The mobile environment makes a significant contribution to this process. By facilitating the rapid access to other users any time/any place, sharing content, knowledge, experience and gossip, Gen Y learners can develop 'communities of practice' (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002) as well as informal discussion groups, as and when needed to optimize their learning processes.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983) compartmentalizes the way people learn into eight categories: Musical, rhythmic, spatial, mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and natural. This theory has been used as the launching pad in the design of instructional and curricular content. The theory provides instructors with specific indicators and their corresponding strategies to best serve students who show one or more of the intelligences.

Along with the theory of multiple intelligences go the learning styles; learning styles refer to the ways people learn, which then are categorized in three areas: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Visual learners are the type of learners who need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the information that is conveyed. These types of learners, characteristic of Gen Y, learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated

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textbooks, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and handouts. Auditory learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. Auditory learners often benefit from reading text aloud, listening to audio books, listening to music and using a tape recorder to record narrations or lectures. Tactile or kinesthetic learners learn best through a hands-on approach, moving, doing and touching. These learners are very active in exploring the physical world around them.

Podcasts, therefore, are attractive to Gen Y learners because they can learn at their own pace, listen to the audio or video object as many times as they want to, and rely on time shifting to attend classes as well as to learn. With all this said, podcasting technology is of particular use to auditory and visual learners. It serves auditory learners who have shown musical and verbal intelligence, thus allowing them to retain up to 90% of the information received.

Similarly, it is believed that podcasts can influence the level of interaction within a class. In an online course, podcasts can trigger discussion around the audio or video object, or assist in developing or enhancing searching skills. The defining attribute of podcasting has to do with the independence the Gen Y learner experiences as a result of a course enhanced with audio or video files that convert the learning experience into a portable one (Morales & Moses, 2006).

Learning styles and Gen Y learners

In the 21st Century classroom, the student wants to control the how, what, and when a task is completed. Social media and other web-based technologies are well suited to provide avenues for students to engage in a social, collaborative, and active dialogue in the online learning environment with their peers and instructor. A study conducted by the UK-based NESTA FutureLabs reported that education should be reversed to conform to the learner, rather than the learner to the system, and that social media should be used to enable learners to study and be assessed according to their own learning style (BBC, 2005).

Online learning theory and pedagogical practice also center on the concept that learning needs to be situated in a social and collaborative context. Discussion among peers can make the often invisible community threads more visible and accessible, and may lead students to find others in the group who share the same interests (BBC, 2005). Gen Y students are hardwired to look at the variety of available technologies and then construct their own learning path and content based on their intrinsic learning needs. As students go through process of choosing, utilizing, integrating, and sharing content it provides opportunities for them to be actively engaged, provide and receive feedback, as well as acquire, share, and make use of community knowledge.

More importantly, this new digital pedagogy emphasizes providing students with a broad range of technology tools, thus allowing them to use them as a means to construct their own understanding and knowledge. As a result, students are highly motivated to discuss content, solve problems together, and apply new concepts which relate to their own practice. This approach also provides students with access to flexible, self-paced, customizable content, on-demand opportunities for learning, and the ability to create and share student-generated content (BBC, 2005).

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The use of social technologies provides students with an opportunity to self-assess their understanding (or lack of) of the current course topic with their peers. Moreover, as students utilize social technologies to share their thought processes and provide feedback to their learning community, they are able to help each other work through cognitive roadblocks, modify their perceptions, and negotiate their own views while simultaneously building a collaborative peer support system. In addition, collaborative project-based learning environments help students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills—both essential skills for Gen Y to compete in a global knowledge-based society (Edirisingha & Salmon, 2006).

Implications of podcasting in the business communication context for Gen Y

As stated throughout this paper, Gen Y population is believed to have unique characteristics that are different from preceding generations such as Gen X (those born between 1961 and 1981) and Baby Boomers. This belief in generational uniqueness has been acknowledged historically. According to historians Hollander and Germain (1992), marketers as early as in the 1920s recognized the value of the "youth market" (Giles, 1922), and they regarded the college market as one of the most coveted of all segments (Burns, 2000; Dumont, 1929; George, 1920). The college market is particularly attractive for studying the behavior of the younger generations for a variety of reasons: (1) their sheer size makes them an important market; (2) they are often trendsetters; (3) they acquire preferences for goods and establish brand loyalties that continue long after the college years; (4) they are expected to attain a high standard of living after graduation; (5) they set examples to the remainder of the population by being more receptive to new products (e.g., students tend to be early adopters); and (6) they influence parental choices for major purchases (Russell, 1926).

The pedagogical implications of podcasting and are numerous. There are some simple and obvious uses, like recording classroom lectures and making them available for student notes. Even though this is technically easy to do, not only would a standardized recording process have to be set up, but more importantly, a permissions based distribution architecture would have to be established to limit access of the class content to approved class members. This could be done through WebCT and Blackboard architecture, or something completely new -- pointing to the fact that global content management and distribution in the academia is a growing issue.

Beyond simple recordings of lectures, a variety of other uses to enhance learning can be imagined for podcasting -- in fact many of these are already being tested. Here are some ways that podcasting might be used in a business communication course:

Writing/Grammar: Students can receive frequent grammar exercises and revision material via podcasts in a self-paced environment to assist them with the frequency of practice required for the purposes of continuous writing improvement.

Business Presentations: Student-generated podcasts can allow business communication instructors to include a peer evaluation component to the impromptu business presentation assignment which can in turn serve as feedback that can essentially help the presenter with improvements on the final speech.

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Employment Interviews: Student generated podcasts of interview role plays will enable students to not only participate in the role play interview, but also to evaluate other peer interview candidates by offering them constructive feedback while allowing for practice opportunities.

Team Projects: Both the capabilities of mobile devices and their wide context of use contribute to their propensity to foster collaboration. Mobile devices can easily communicate with other devices of the same or similar type, enabling learners to share data, files and messages. Given the social context within which collaborative team work is carried out, students can have rapid access via podcasting to team members any time, any place, while sharing content, knowledge and experience in a 'community of practice,' as well as informal discussion groups, as and when needed to optimize their learning in a collaborative environment.

The common denominator that enhances the efficacy of podcasting for GenY learners irrespective of subject matter is the uniform attraction that podcasting holds for this optimally social networked generation. For now, it is safe to say that other business learners can also benefit from this new technology. However, beyond the technical opportunities and issues, podcasting raises other broader significant issues for academia such as the following:

- How does podcasting challenge the current "talking head" model of classroom lectures? If all lectures are available via video and/or audio, do students need to go to class? How often? Why? How do we keep students in class?
- Who owns the content, the school, the instructor, or the user? Can this content be used outside of the university community? How is it protected or secured to the owner or subscriber?
- Who's going to edit the content? What are the guidelines for editing? What's real; what's not?
- How is copyrighted material tracked and/or verified?
- Can we make money from this?

Conclusion

This paper has examined the efficacy of podcasting as a possible learning delivery method for Generation Y, and discussed whether adaptations are necessary to address the updated needs of this new generation of learners in the business communication context. The podcasting movement has provided an excellent delivery medium for instructors, students, and staff. Students have been able to unleash their creativity in many ways. From narrations and video recordings, to radio shows and home-made recordings, to spontaneous archival of audio and video, learning has found the perfect ally in podcasting to create an on-demand anytime/anywhere delivery of instructional content that will also serve place-based learners.

A small but growing number of easy-to-use tools have emerged on the market. This is encouraging. However, issues such as ownership and privacy of the content continue to limit the scope of use of the technology in academia. Many institutions such as the University of

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Chicago are establishing studios where podcast-caliber content can be produced both by faculty and students. Once the content has been created however, there is still a fragmented process to make the content available. The process, while not difficult, is cumbersome enough to prevent some from adopting the technology into their curriculums. This is unfortunate. However, this is not seen as a particularly strong deterrent to those who are convinced of its worth, and have a model for its use.

Educators are turning PowerPoint presentations into podcasts, while others are using it to provide detailed audio explanations of frequently asked questions or as a tool for students to practice their vocabulary at home. Students can also create their own podcasts to interact with instructors or other students. In short, podcasting for educators adds a new dimension to teaching by making it a "cool" interactive communication between teachers and Gen Y students.

The implication of podcasting for business communication is quite simple. It enables instructors to reach students through a medium that is perceived as both "cool" and a part of their daily lives. For a technology that only requires a computer, microphone and internet connection, podcasting has the capacity of advancing a student's education beyond the classroom. Educators need to perceive devices like iPods and other portable media devices not as distractions to learning; rather, capitalize on it and turn them into effective tools for learning.

Podcasting and VODcasting, and their pending derivatives, are not fads. They are very real and very practical distribution technologies. The ability to time-shift content versus traditional broadcast distribution models has the potential to expand business communication teaching and learning opportunities significantly. The supporting technologies are relatively inexpensive and surprisingly easy to use.

The rapid evolution of audio-photo-video recording capabilities through phones and proliferation of inexpensive hand-held devices will create a flood of multimedia content. They will be immediately adopted by the current class of students and will be looked at with disinterest or uncertainty by many of the current faculty. Both distribution technologies will quickly create demand for more bandwidth and storage for that content, both for academic purposes and student social activities. They will intensify the need for a centralized content management and monetization infrastructure, as well as an education support architecture to assist business communication faculty in integrating these technologies into their courses.

But in this challenge is also the opportunity to provide all new classes of services for on-campus, distance and lifelong learners. In fact the greatest opportunities for these technologies are in the ways they will be used that have not been imagined yet. The portable and on-demand nature of podcasting makes it worth pursuing, implementing and supporting.

The use of podcasts in business communication is sure to expand as business communication instructors are now designing and delivering hybrid business communication courses that have online and offline modules. Hence, more pressure will be put on vendors and implementers to provide easy to use, stable, rights-protected, and secure podcast platforms. While integration of podcasting in business communication is nascent, it is an area that warrants more research.

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Podcast technology alone may not change much; however, how it is used, who uses it, and where it is used in delivering pedagogical content will continue to stimulate much scholarly inquiry.

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New Course Management System Enhances Academic communications: How Technology Advances the Classroom Experience, The Case of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus

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University of Puerto Rico/University of Puerto Rico

The objective of this paper is to establish the effectiveness of implementing the use of web-based course management software in enhancing the classroom experience. Students were surveyed on the experience of using two platforms, Vnet and Blackboard.

The rise of web education

Over time, educators have sought new ways to improve teaching techniques, to help the students in the learning process, and to face the emerging challenges in a dynamic environment. Technology offers a variety of new opportunities that were not available in the past. The Web provides viable means to increase access to education. Web-based Instruction could be used as an adjunct to teacher-led classrooms as well as in distance education (Owston 1997). "…Web-based tools can facilitate course assessment by transforming a dauntingly cumbersome task into a feasible one, thereby making possible an interactive approach to course assessment", Celina Byers.

Vnet's features

In the search for new ways to teach our courses, in January of 2007, the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, invited a group of professors from different disciplines throughout the campus to participate in a pilot program utilizing Vnet, a Web-based platform which allows professors to record their class and have them available for students' review, just minutes after the class is over.

After the group's first meeting we learned that Vnet was founded in 1997 to assist educators in bringing to the classroom the necessary technological tools to present class material in a more efficient way. Vnet implements 3D and animation technologies to help professors improve make their presentations more appealing. It also applies sophisticated desktop videoconferencing capabilities to reach the students in a different way.

Vnet is easy to use. The training process was simple. It only required a Tablet PC and an in-focus. The video recording software used by Vnet takes only a few steps to record a class and to have it available for students after the class is over. This allows the students to recapture all class

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details, review class material, and evaluate their participation in class. It also provides professors a space to improve their lectures.

Vnet's experience

From previous research at the University of Houston we learned that Vnet improved learning outcomes especially in the math and science departments. In business administration, more specifically, in business communication courses taught in English, the experience has been unique. For example, in the oral business communication courses, the students at first felt intimidated because the class was being recorded. But, after they got the chance to listen to themselves, they found a new way to learn from their mistakes. This experience has also been encouraging for us instructors, since we get to listen to our classes, share them with some of our peers and continuously look for new ways to enhance our teaching techniques. This promotes better communication with our peers as well as with our students.

Vnet provides the students with the possibility to download their classes to their Ipods, giving them an additional tool to review their class work while performing other activities such as exercising or commuting. If the professor authorizes it, the students could also print out some class material or supplemental material posted on the site.

Methodology

To determine students' feedback on the benefits of this technology, students taking business communication courses in English were given an objective questionnaire, while students taking the information systems course, were given a subjective final report where they had to comment on several technological aspects. Students in information systems courses have an advantage over those in most other subjects, due to technology-based course content, in that their assessment can be more profound. The questionnaire consisted of eighteen questions and a total of eighty-three (83) students participated on this survey.

Results

The first question inquired about the place where the students accessed Vnet's content from. Most of them accessed the information from their homes; others accessed it from a university location such as a computer lab or library. A few students accessed Vnet from work or a friend's house.

Next, students were queried about their experience with Vnet's features and interface. Their responses indicate that 80% watched each class video at least once (see Figure 1). This shows that students are taking advantage of the recorded classes.

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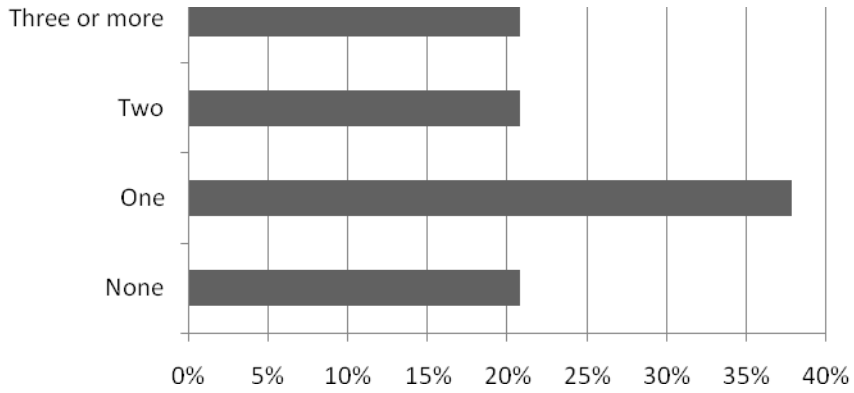


Figure 1: Student responses to the question: *How many times have you watched each class video on average?*

With regard to their responses on ease of use, only 7% considered it complex. The other 93% considered it to be within normal computer software use. Students in the Business Communication courses come from different backgrounds in terms of technology; their answers reveal that Vnet's interface is standard.

Currently, the University standard software in course management is Blackboard. We surveyed the students' opinion regarding the ease of use of Vnet versus that of Blackboard. The responses varied; still 24% said that Vnet was easier to use than Blackboard while 35% said both were easy to use.

We also assessed the students' opinion on Vnet's appeal. If it was considered appealing, students would feel more compelled to browse and use it. While 42% considers it very appealing, 53% considered it somewhat appealing. This reveals that students in general consider Vnet to be up to current webpage esthetics standards. Next, we asked students to compare Vnet's appeal with Blackboard. The responses indicated mixed feelings, with 39% saying Vnet is more appealing than Blackboard, 22% reporting that both were appealing, and 17% saying that Blackboard is more appealing.

An interesting aspect of making class video available to students through Vnet is the possible impact on study habits. We ascertained information regarding the impact of class attendance, homework, exams, and note taking. Regarding class attendance, we feared the implementation of Vnet could possibly reduce students' attendance to class, since students might think they could skip class and make up by watching the video later. Surprisingly, 69% of the students answered that this feature increased their willingness to go to class. Business Communication courses require in-class interaction, and Vnet seems to motivate students to watch themselves and their classmates' interactions with each other and the professor. Attendance sheets show that most students had excellent attendance records.

On the other hand, students' sentiment regarding the impact Vnet had in their in-class exam preparation was less than we expected. Although answers were diverse, 29% expressed that they prepared fully or mostly from their textbook and/or notes, 23% used Vnet and the traditional studying methods, but mostly textbook and notes. Similar results were found for homework/take home exam preparations: 32% of the students answered that they prepared mostly from their

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textbook and/or notes and 22% used videos and their textbook and/or notes but mostly the latter. Further investigation could yield information regarding the reasons students still rely more on traditional studying methods.

Note taking results are interesting as well: 42% take notes as they would normally do, 39% take notes without worrying if they miss something, 10% take fewer notes, 8% consider the possibility of not taking notes, and 1% stopped taking notes. Vnet has not been intrusive in the note taking process, and seems to have given the students more confidence in their notes.

The questionnaire then focused on assessing students' recommendations on Vnet's use in procedure-intensive courses and in Business Communication courses for students whose first language is not English. As shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, Vnet was regarded as favorable for both types of courses and for Business Communication courses in particular.

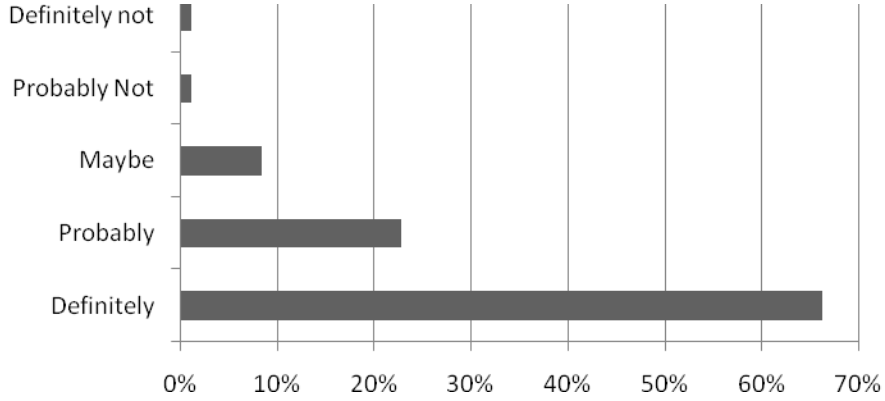


Figure 2: Student responses to the question: *Do you think Vnet's feature to watch past classes would be an asset in procedure-intensive courses?*

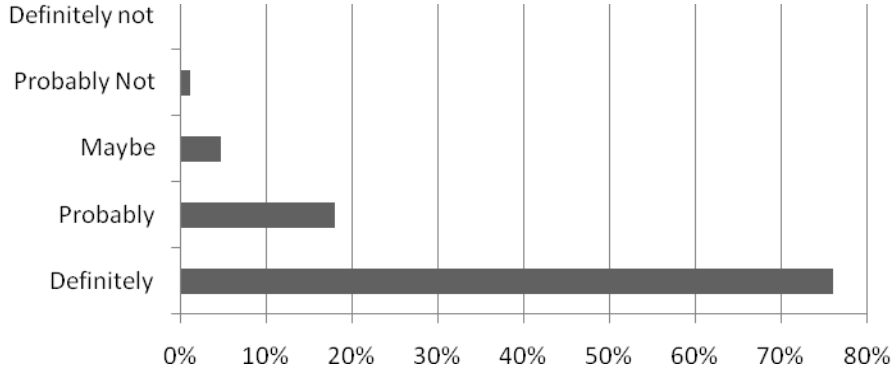


Figure 3: Student responses to the question: *Do you think Vnet's feature to watch past classes would be an asset in business communication courses?*

With regard to the general question concerning students' opinion on whether Vnet should be used in more courses at The University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, the responses received were very favorable, which has encouraged us to continue with the pilot program and increase the project's scope (see Figure 4).

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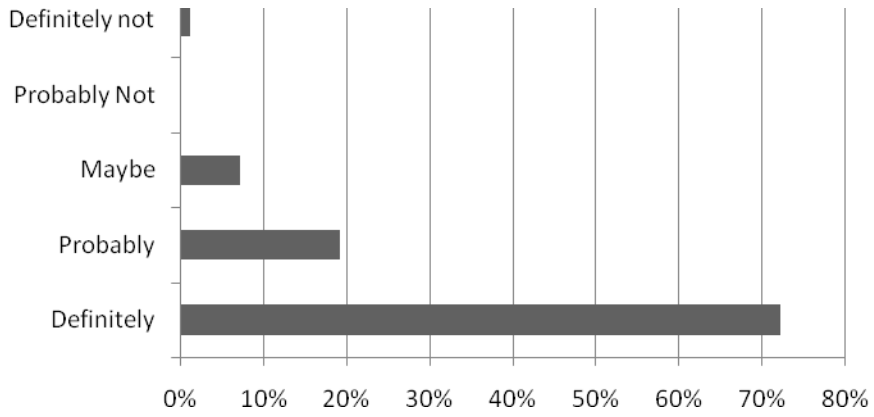


Figure 4: Student responses to the question: *Do you think Vnet should be used in more courses?*

The questionnaire then addressed Vnet's success in enhancing the course experience, contributing to the syllabus' general and specific objectives and facilitating the course specific skills.

When asked if Vnet had enhanced the course experience, 89% gave positive responses. Vnet also seems to have served to positively reinforce the course specific skills, such as writing, and verbal and non-verbal communication, as indicated by the 89% who gave a positive response to this question.

According to students' feedback, it seems clear that Vnet and its features also helped fulfill the course objectives as 92% answered positively to this question. What was more important, however, was whether students thought that Vnet improved or enhanced their learning process. Strikingly, 86% agreed that Vnet was able to achieve this.

We tried to gather which obstacles tarnished the Vnet experience in order to learn from possible mistakes or technical drawbacks. We would like to share this information, as it might save other implementations of Vnet or similar software the trouble experienced here. Unfortunately, in Puerto Rico, not everyone has access to broadband Internet speeds as Internet Service Providers (ISPs) do not offer coverage in all towns. Almost 50% of the student sample said that they had slow Internet connections (dial-up) and that this affected their Vnet experience. Although Vnet streaming video feature, for example, has a low bandwidth option, video quality is inferior and in a dial-up connection, it can still take a substantial amount of time. We think this is a region specific problem; therefore, the implementation of Vnet in a place with better Internet infrastructure should not be detrimental to the course experience. As stated by Ronald D Owston, "providers of on-line educational programs must ensure that ample technical support is available for participants, particularly in the early stages of the program when participants are most likely to encounter the greatest number of problems."

Another issue commented on was the software requirements to use Vnet. In order to view the streaming videos, Quicktime® and a specific codec for video software are required. Sometimes, students did not understand this or had problems getting the specific software from the Internet. Both are free and downloadable, but the student must acquire them. Another problem that we

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experienced was the release of Microsoft® Internet Explorer 7. This browser had many compatibility issues with the streaming video feature which, if installed, prevented the user from viewing the video. Many times users downloaded it and installed it inadvertently with other updates from the Microsoft Automatic Update feature of their operating systems. We recommend that a small training session be given to students who are about to start using Vnet in which information such as this is provided so they can understand and troubleshoot their own problems.

Below, we will list some of the comments students made about their experience with Vnet:

> "Vnet is good and the option to watch past classes is really wonderful"
>
> "Students should use Vnet in all their courses; it will be definitely an instrument that will enhance our learning experience"
>
> "Vnet, excellent job. I would like to continue working with this pilot program. Thank you for the experience"

Students enrolled in the Information Systems course utilizing Vnet were asked to prepare a report in which they compared Vnet's and Blackboard's functionality and other topics such as: ease of use, tool appearance, video management, document management, special features such as calendar, how the tools contribute to improve the course experience, any other advantage or disadvantage, if in their opinion recorded classes were a substitute for attendance, and a final recommendation on which tool they thought should be implemented full scale at the University of Puerto Rico. A total of forty-seven (47) reports were handed in. We will present a summary of the students' comments within their reports. The report content was examined and classified as a recommendation for Blackboard, Vnet or both. We also tagged those comments referring to a specific feature and we will mention them as well.

Discussion & Recommendations

In our analysis of the comments we have to take into consideration that Vnet is a pilot program. This implies that Vnet did not have full functionality while Blackboard did. For example, students accessed Vnet using a public course account, instead of having their personalized account. As a result, features such as grade book, were not available for students using Vnet; however, they were available for students using Blackboard. In fact, some students submitted their final recommendation choice for Blackboard, using this feature as a tie breaker.

> "I could not find a place to check my grades on Vnet, which puts it in a great disadvantage to Blackboard. This is one of the main reasons why we use these web pages."

Also, some students felt more comfortable using Blackboard while Vnet was something new to them. Since Vnet is a pilot program, its' content was replicated in Blackboard as well. This led some students to using Blackboard only, as they admitted in their final work:

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> "I consider that Blackboard is easier to use since it is the only course management system I have used, and I get around in it pretty well"

Unfortunately, technology users define in terms of black and white whether something is good or bad, or whether they can or cannot make it work. Some students could not install properly the software required to see the streaming video feature and concluded Vnet was worse than Blackboard. One student commented on this as follows:

> "In Vnet, I never found the way to access the documents… and I could never watch the videos since it is too complicated."

The first topic the students had to discuss was ease of use. It was found that 34% of the students stated Vnet was their choice considering ease of use and 38% said both Vnet and Blackboard were easy to use. We also looked in the text to see if we could determine whether the students found Vnet easy to use regardless of which platform they chose and found that 89% remarked in one way or another that Vnet was easy to use.

The next topic we investigated in the reports was appearance. Vnet was considered to have a better look and feel than Blackboard, 68% of the students mentioned that they preferred Vnet's appearance over Blackboard and 21% said both were appealing. Some students even mentioned that Vnet looked "very modern", "felt like using Windows", and looked "extremely organized", and "sleek", among other remarks. We also looked in the text to see if we could determine whether the students found Vnet appealing regardless of which platform they chose and found that 87% remarked in one way or another that Vnet was appealing. We probed further and counted how many students made comments about Vnet's tabs or colors. Vnet's tabs were mentioned by 21% of the students and 47% said they liked Vnet's colors. In fact, the colors and tab organization received praise from several students with comments such as these:

> "When I first saw Vnet, I could perceive this site was newer than Blackboard, it is bright which gives it a touch of freshness, which transmits the idea that what is modern predominates. It appeals to young people…"

Video management and streaming are some one of Vnet's greatest and more attractive features. Some students commented they had problems installing software or downloading the video. Still, for those who could, they were astonished at how quickly video streaming started to play a video versus having to wait for a complete video download. About 69% of the students mentioned Vnet as their choice for video management, 75% mentioned it was easy to download and watch a video via Vnet, regardless of their platform choice, and 69% mentioned in their reports a positive remark about the video streaming. One student commented:

> "Vnet manages video much better than Blackboard. It is so evident; I could never see a video downloaded from Blackboard, whereas, I could quickly start watching a video in Vnet."

Another one of Vnet's strengths is document management. Only 30% of the students mentioned that Vnet was their choice for Document Management, 38% said that any platform was a good

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choice and 28% preferred Blackboard. About 81% of the students mentioned that Document Management in Vnet was easy to use. We also found that students liked certain document management features such as information content of uploaded documents, (15% commented on this), and document extension logos, i.e. Microsoft® Word documents show a word logo, etc., which again 15% commented on. Several students pointed out that Vnet also shows how many times each file has been accessed.

Students also had to discuss several Vnet features and compare them to those of Blackboard. One feature widely discussed was the Calendar, although students were not specifically required to do so. Vnet provides a calendar where important dates, such as due dates for assignments or exams, are automatically updated as soon as the professor assigned them. Blackboard's calendar is not as accessible and does not update with information provided by the professor. The calendar feature on Vnet was mentioned as something positive by 85% of the students, while 40% specifically mentioned that they liked the feature that the calendar was automatically updated when the professor assigned a homework or exam via Vnet.

Another feature discussed was the professor's photo and contact information. Vnet is designed so the professor's photo and contact information can always be seen when the course is accessed. To our surprise, 62% of the students directly mentioned the feature and described it as positive. Many of these students perceived the professor as being more accessible than when they used Blackboard to access the course content. Also, it served to reassure that they were looking at the correct course content.

> "When you enter, the first thing you see, is the professor's picture, which makes it more personal."

Additional features included in Vnet are Vmeeting, a chat tool, and Vreservations, a tool to coordinate equipment borrowing such as TVs, laptops and projectors. About a 69% of students found Vmeeting advantageous and 21% found Vreservations desirable. One student commented about Vmeeting:

"This is very useful because students can work in teams without having to physically meet."

Vreservations would be a great asset at our University since equipment borrowing lists are kept manually. Through Vnet, students and professors alike can check any time if the desired equipment is available and can make the necessary arrangements with time.

The next topic students discussed was whether course management software improved the learning process; 98% of the students said yes and explained why. Their reasons included not having to worry if they misplaced papers, having homework and video accessible if they missed class, professors being able to announce if they had to cancel class, keeping in contact with the professor and fellow classmates.

However, 98% of the students also argued that recorded classes are not a substitute for real classroom interaction. They agreed that course management software such as Vnet helps

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enhance course experience and enables students to review past classes, watch their classmates and themselves participate, go over the professor's explanation, get first-hand information in case they missed class are a great advantage but do not replace the real experience. Several students' comments on this are:

> "In fact, to be able to see a pre-recorded class is not enough for me; it will never be the same as the classroom experience"

Finally, students had to recommend either Vnet or Blackboard as the University's official course management software. The results show that 56% of students chose Vnet, 28% Blackboard and 17% did not make a decision. We will present comments that show the level of satisfaction students had with Vnet:

> "I consider Vnet to be more up-to-date, accurate, graphic, and easier to use"

Conclusion

From our experience and the students' feedback we learned several important things. First, for the implementation of any course management software, in this case Vnet, it would be advantageous if students received formal training where they could feel comfortable to ask and participate. We suggest that each professor begins each semester with a thorough walkthrough of Vnet and its main features for all of their students. This should help students to troubleshoot simple problems which are usually the most common.

Second, pilot program teams should include at least one student-oriented professor, lab technician, or any other friendly and technology oriented personnel that could help students troubleshoot their problems. It is important that students feel confident about the course management software; otherwise, they will stop using it and dissuade other students from using it. On the other hand, if they feel confident, they will be the first ones to promote it.

Classrooms should be equipped with projectors to minimize lost time in setting up the equipment for every class. If possible the classrooms should be air conditioned to reduce the level of outside noise in the recording of the class. Mounting and dismounting the equipment is a waste of valuable class time and increases the probability of equipment failure due to handling or accidents.

The pilot project to implement Vnet as new course management software has been a great success. Despite its limitations, students in the business communication and information systems courses have liked the software and its features. Students who were able to watch themselves, their classmates, and the professor whether they wished to review a class or because for any reason they missed it, have already benefited greatly from this teaching technology tool. Video streaming has filled the gap of lengthy video download.

Traditional methods of communication in the classroom setting have become insufficient as technology evolves. Online classes take advantage of new technology while sacrificing the real classroom experience. The course management system, Vnet, integrates the classroom

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experience with new technology and it certainly enhances the way we teach. The implementation of Vnet's pilot program at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus, has enabled academic interactions to transcend beyond the classroom.

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Biographies

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Using Semiotic Analysis to Determine Effectiveness of Internet Marketing

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Abstract

A well-designed Web site is essential for effective communication with potential customers and contributes to successful eCommerce. However, communication can be difficult when a Web site has broad cultural range. Because Internet marketing makes extensive use of text and visual images to affect product awareness and cultural relevance, we used semiotic analysis to reveal underlying meanings in elements of two online advertisements. This paper reports the results of our semiotic analysis of the Internet marketing efforts of two mobile phone companies and explains how potential consumers from six cultures (China, Taiwan, Sweden, Finland, India, and the US) interpreted the advertisements and attributed various characteristics to the products.

Introduction

Internet marketing is more than online advertising, because the Internet is more than a simple advertising medium or a communication channel (Goodwin, 1999). Internet marketing campaigns not only create product awareness, they often are part of the process of making an Internet purchase (Goodwin, 1999). Thus, Internet marketing reflects the next generation of advertising with benefits such as self-selectiveness, interactivity, full integration and unique one-to-one marketing capabilities (Wehling, 1996).

The fact that Internet marketing can be targeted to specific cultural groups is significant because different cultural groups react differently to the same stimulus (Janson & Tsotra, 2004). Furthermore, manifestations of culture, such as values, heroes, rituals and symbols offer insight in the way Internet marketers can organize effective Internet advertising campaigns by making these congruent with consumers' culture and ensuring that appropriate symbols are used (Luna et al., 2002). Symbols are a broad category of objects that are meaningful and unique to a particular group of people or culture (Luna et al., 2002). Especially in cases of different cultures, different symbols can activate different schemas, depending on linguistic backgrounds and cultures.

Consumers' cultural background comes into play during the design of Internet advertising strategies because this allows adapting to local cultures. Website designers can create both a standardized and a culture-specific set of materials that in turn "enables localization of marketing communication" (Luna et al., 2002). These authors also suggest that "cultural congruity" is essential for effective Internet websites. Thus, the inclusion of verbal and nonverbal content that is congruent with the culture allows for site structures that conform with and support existing cultural concepts.

Theoretical Framework

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This section describes the theory of semiotics and provides a model of the theory. The theory is then applied to two Internet advertisements, one for a Nokia mobile phone and one for an Ericcson mobile phone.

Semiotic Theory

Umberto Eco (1978) stated that "semiotics concerns everything that can be perceived as a sign." Signs constitute printed and spoken words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Individuals interpret signs as "signifying something."

According to Peirce (1894), "nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign" by being related to familiar systems of conventions. Hence, a sign is part of an organized collective of interactions and cannot exist outside such a collective. Signs function as a code between individuals and they trigger or "unlock" previous experiences (Cobley, and Jansz, 2000). In short, a human being functions as a meaning-maker who uses signs to receive, understand, and convey information.

Interpretation and understanding of signs involves physical elements of objective existence (e.g., the American stop sign) which leads to common understanding (i.e., stop the car) that is derived from socially accepted norms and rules. Hence, the hexagonal American stop sign creates a system of connotations that individuals have learned to perceive as part of everyday reality and social norms. It is important to mention that what is perceived by the senses (i.e., hexagon and the color red) and the mental concept (i.e., stop the car) constitutes an arbitrary bond.

Semiotic theory not only studies sign systems consisting of text, but sign systems of any kind. Because Internet marketing includes text and graphics we decided that semiotic theory was a proper method for our analysis. Semiotics is a particularly powerful tool for uncovering concealed meanings underlying Internet marketing because it concerns symbols such as written words and pictures. Semiotics examines how people form perceptions that are products of the surrounding culture in which respondents live and participate. Culture, as far as semiotics is concerned, is the way people communicate, both consciously and unconsciously, through cultural aspects such as visual images and language. Knowing the meaning of such elements allows Internet marketers to make "informed decisions" about how to communicate with potential consumers about a specific product (Lawes, 2002).

Often attitudes about specific items are "culture specific." Even though their meaning might be readily available, the Internet marketer often does not know the range of its possible truths until he/she studies the range of cultural context in which it exists. However, semiotic analysis of a given piece of communication can suggest a range of possible consumer take-outs, which is useful because it helps one recognize messages that one may inadvertently be communicating in addition to the message one wants to be there (Lawes, 2002).

In summary, semiotics, by studying signs, deals with the construction and maintenance of reality so as to avoid reverting to a set of mere physical artifacts - completely described in terms of rules, forms, shapes, sounds and colors. Furthermore, semiotics makes possible altering everyday reality by adding subjective understanding and a possibility to make subjective what would otherwise seem universal if the individual's experience and his or her unique way of thinking were absent.

A Model of Semiotics

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De Saussure (1965) proposed a semiotic model in the form of a dyad comprising a signifier and a signified. The *signifier* may consist of actual objects such as background or lines, whereas the *signified* is a concept in someone's mind. The distinction between signifier and signified can also be expressed in terms of form and content.

A particular signified/signifier combination does not exist in isolation but needs to be combined with other signs so as to make possible a definitive understanding of what is the signified and what is the signifier. In our earlier example of the American stop sign, *signifiers* are the hexagon shape, white letters, and red background. The driver obtains the *signified* in the form of the mental concept of stopping the car.

Semiotic Analysis of Two Internet Advertisements

Our semiotic analysis focuses on two mobile phone advertisements by Nokia of Finland (http://www.nokia.fi/) and by Ericsson of Sweden (http://www.ericsson.com/se/) (Figure 1). We analyzed the two advertisements' external characteristics and forms with the aim of constructing meaning. The point of interest is how the components of the two advertisements stand for something else, along with the social norms and group experience they represent. After a general description of the two advertisements, we then focus on specific elements such as background, color and form.

The Nokia advertisement features the following parts: 1) an actual physical object (i.e., Nokia phone), 2) an image comprising two hands extending towards each other, and 3) a brand name that appears twice (Figure 1). As Floch (2000) noted, traces of concrete reality refer directly to normal, everyday life, as it is experienced without any effect of advertisement. Because the phone is depicted against a completely white background, the advertisement fails to produce an effect of "concrete" reality.

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Figure 1: The Nokia Advertisement (left) and the Ericsson Advertisement (right)

The Ericsson advertisement features the following primary parts: 1) an actual physical object (i.e., Ericsson phone), 2) an image on the phone's screen stating "welcome home 12-June 19:03," and the name "Ericsson" on the phone's screen. Moreover, the advertisement features secondary parts that affect "concrete" reality such as the wooden table with cutting board, tomatoes, bread, metal object, and a yellow object in the right hand lower corner that looks like a bottle with oil. These items constitute concrete reality because they are all everyday, easily recognizable and identifiable objects and can be understood properly even outside the advertisement context. Thus, for example, the tomatoes are perceived as tomatoes regardless of whether they appear in Ericsson's advertisement or not.

An in-depth semiotic study should focus on the advertisements' images and background. The Nokia advertisement forwards the phone's image in favor of its background. A close reading of the two hands is suggestive of the hand of an adult/parent reaching out to a child. In short, the elements just discussed draw attention to Nokia's stated mission, that is "connecting people" and presumably families (Figures 2 and 4).

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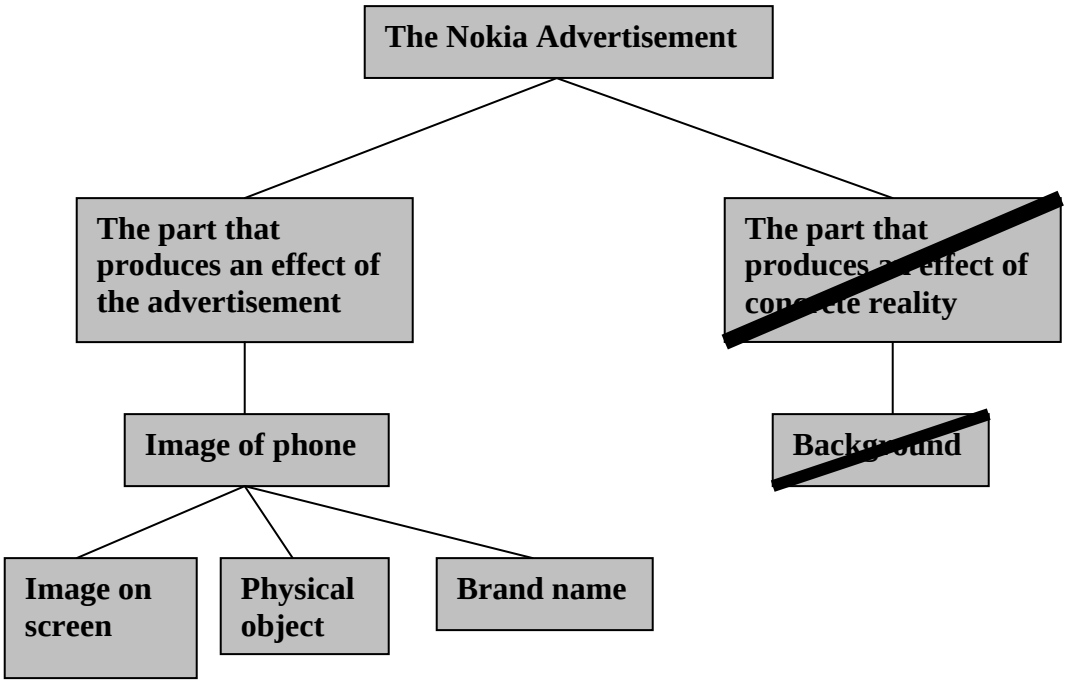


Figure 2: The Nokia Advertisement's Imagery

The Ericsson advertisement shows the time as three minutes after seven in the evening, the date as June 12, and further states "welcome home." The time and the statement "welcome home" suggest the end of the work day when family members return home for dinner. Moreover, by stating "June 12" the advertisement draws attention to summer and justifies the presence of the two seemingly fresh tomatoes (Figure 3).

The Nokia advertisement seems to lack a background; however, we may consider the color white to function as background. One of the characteristics of white is that it is not really a color and thus it helps other chromatic elements of the advertisement to be more prominent to the eye. The Ericsson advertisement has a background comprising tomatoes, bread, slices of bread, a wooden surface a cutting surface, and a metal object. These elements suggest preparation of a vigorous meal because it contains healthy components (Figure 1).

The two advertisements also differ with respect to the use of color. On the one hand, in the Nokia advertisement the cold blue color is prominent against white. The outstretched hands appear to belong to individuals of a white Northern race. Overall, the Nokia advertisement casts a cold and austere atmosphere.

The Ericsson ad, on the other hand, features mostly yellow and red colors. Red attracts attention and, along with yellow, they are warm colors. The Ericsson phone is black and, hence, the focus of the advertisement. The hard to identify metal object mirrors the black phone and thus enhances its image. Overall, the Ericsson advertisement casts a warm and family oriented atmosphere.

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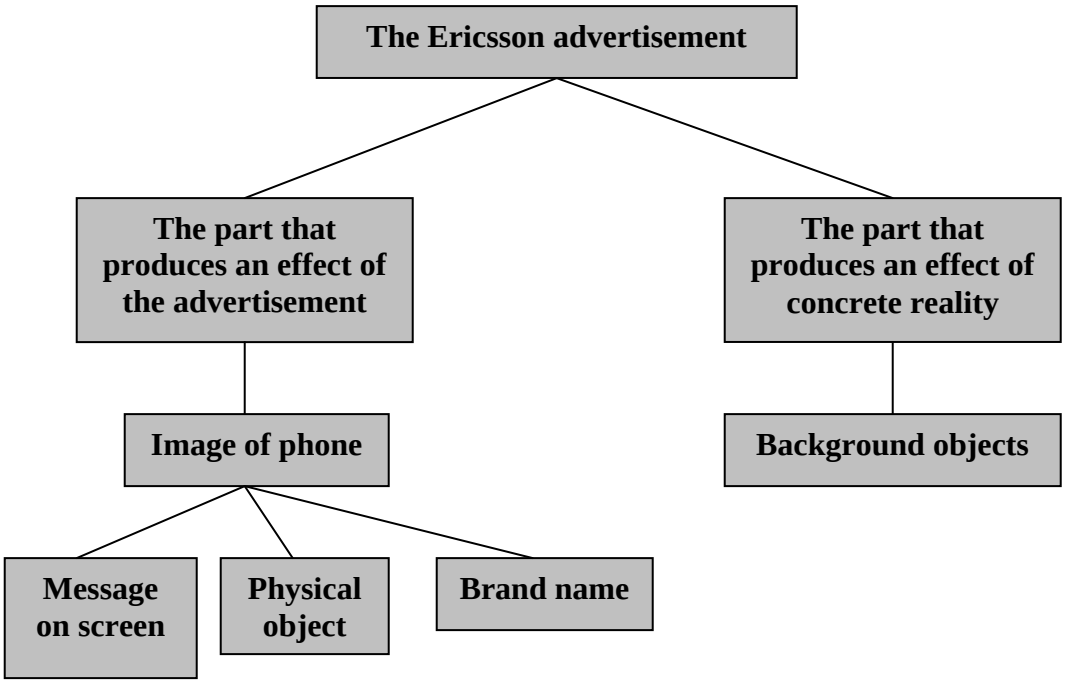


Figure 3: The Ericsson Advertisement's Imagery

Paying closer attention to the Nokia ad, it is interesting to notice that the image resembles a religious, famous picture by Michelangelo, the "Creation of Adam" (1508-1512), a symbolic depiction of the life-giving act found in the Sistine Chapel ceiling in Vatican, Italy. As a result of this connotation, the ad brings in mind the miracle of creation, the genius of Michelangelo, God and Heaven (Figure 4). These concepts are also emphasized by the colors of the ad. Blue and white remind one of heaven and sky and, by projection, they bring in mind a Superior Entity (one more connection with Michelangelo's painting). In addition, white can also be the color of the snow – Finland is covered by snow during most of the year.

In the Ericsson ad, the various elements bring in mind the end of work, when someone returns home in a relaxing environment to enjoy feelings of belongingness and a welcoming atmosphere. The colors and the date remind one of warm, summer weather and a natural lifestyle that contains simple pleasures such as a fresh, home-cooked meal and a healthy lifestyle. The ad portraits a slice of everyday life and resembles a still life.

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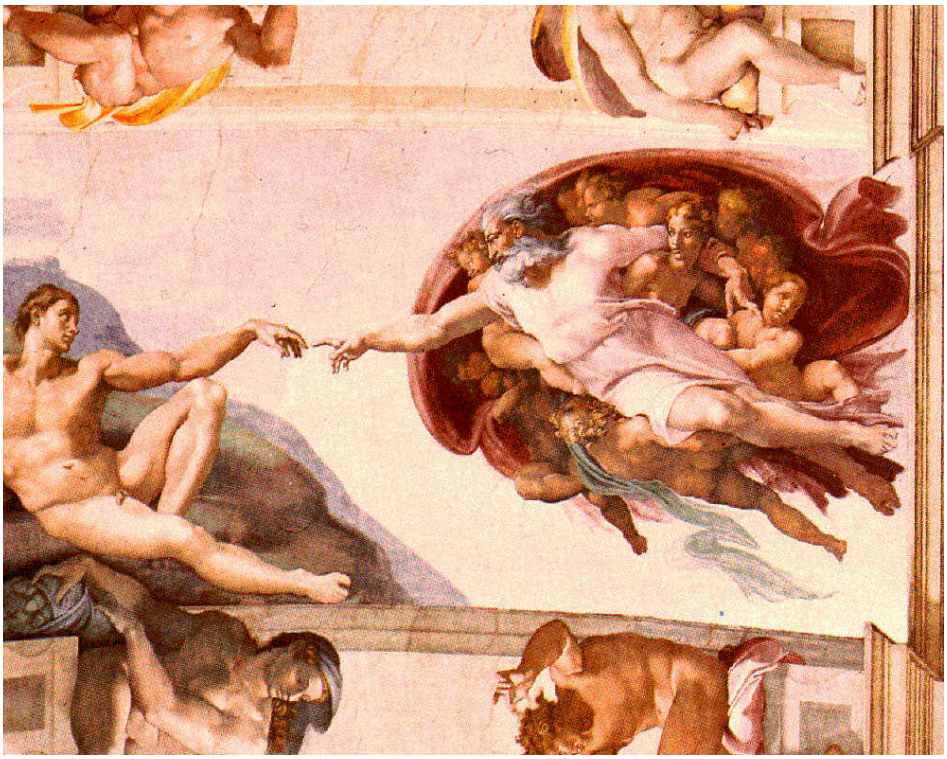


Figure 4: "The creation of Adam" by Michelangelo (1508-1512).

Using de Saussure's (1965) semiotic model to analyze the two ads, Janson and Tsotra (2004) developed the following table. (Table 1).

Table 1: A Semiotic Analysis of the Two Ads

Nokia		**Signifiers Nokia**	**Signifieds Nokia**
	Screen elements	Image of extending hands	family connectedness
		Nokia	emphasis on the brand name
	Background	White color	Sky, snow
	Colors	White Light blue Silver	Winter, cold Clean, heaven Sleek, modern
	Mirroring	Extended hands	connectedness
Ericsson		**Signifiers Ericsson**	**Signifieds Ericsson**
	Screen elements	19:03	end of work day time to prepare dinner

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		13-June	middle of summer warm weather
		"Welcome home"	end of work day coming back home
	Background	Various everyday objects	healthy diet about to eat a meal
	Colors	Red, yellow	Summer, warmth
		Black phone	emphasis on the phone
	Mirroring	Silver object	emphasis on the phone

The two ads, using different visual categories, depict different semiotic categories. The Nokia ad depicts a higher level, while the Ericsson ad depicts the human level. The visual categories that enhance these effects are presented in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2: Visual and Semiotic Categories of the Two Ads

		Nokia	**Ericsson**
Visual categories	**Colors**	Cold	Warm
	Visible message	Image	Letters
Semiotic categories		Higher level Family Mankind Ability to connect	Human level Healthy, natural lifestyle Warmth, enjoyment

Janson and Tsotra (2004) presented the above ideas in semiotic squares (Figures 5 and 6). In the following figures, Nokia is depicted on the left side and Ericsson on the right. In other words, Nokia symbolizes a non-Earth situation and the sky, while Ericsson stands for Earth and a non-sky situation (Figure 5). Nokia also symbolizes genius (Michelangelo) and not everyday life, while Ericsson represents everyday life and not genius (Figure 6).

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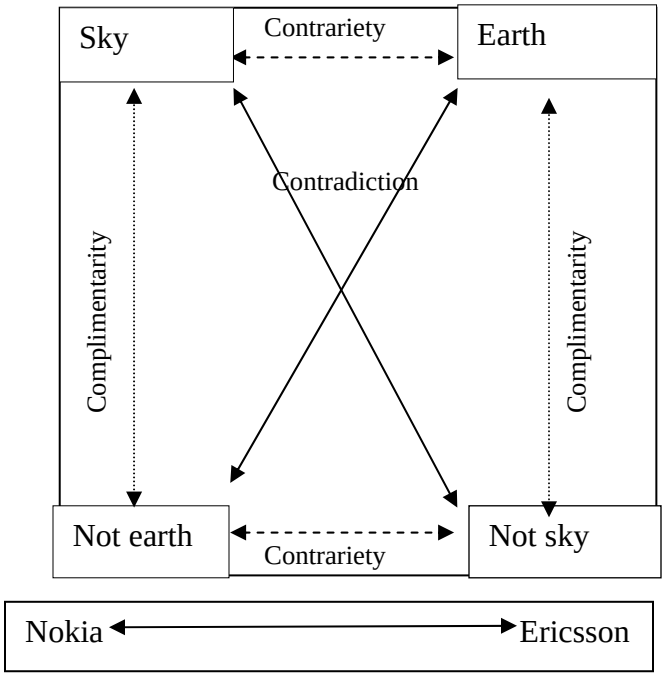


Figure 5: A semiotic square. Nokia is depicted on the left side and Ericsson is depicted on the right side. Nokia symbolizes a non-Earth situation and the sky, while Ericsson stands for Earth and a non-sky situation.

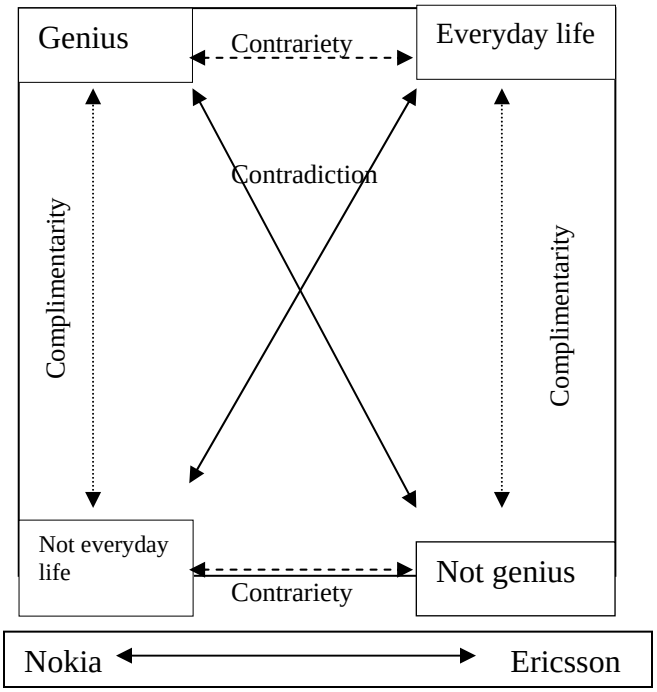


Figure 6: A semiotic square. Nokia is depicted on the left side and Ericsson is depicted on the right side. Nokia symbolizes genius (Michelangelo) and not everyday life, while Ericsson represents everyday life and not genius.

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Cultural assumptions also seem to play a different role in the two ads. Generally speaking, in semiotic analyses, culture can be used to disconnect and reconnect spaces. For example, the Ericsson ad seems closer to the Mediterranean climate, bright sunshine and colors, a natural life style with healthy food (tomatoes, oil, home-made bread) and simple pleasures, where family and home are important. Generally speaking, this ad seems to reflect the recent tendency in the Swedish culture to return to a healthier/natural lifestyle and way of living and eating (according to information found on the official Swedish tourist site http://www.sverigeturism.se)

The Ericsson ad also reflects the company's ideology in terms of ability to use the phone while doing other things and enjoy "colorful, easy-to-use" services.

"Watching cartoons, doing the laundry, taking photos, playing with the kids, …sitting in traffic, …chatting in the gym, ….enjoying mysteries, love stories, soaps and playing games, solving puzzles, glimpsing life-changing news, organizing a life lived seamlessly on the move, checking shares, opening an account, walking in warm rain, just wondering aloud…Every moment of every day millions of consumers are accessing fast, colorful, easy-to-use mobile Internet services like the ones above … around the world, around the clock." (http://www.ericsson.com/network_operators/mobilesystems/buildarticle.asp?ArticleId=31425BCE-5282-11D6-99C3-0030474E2F8A)

The Nokia ad, on the other hand, can be interpreted in terms of genius (Michelangelo), connection and communication in a non-Earth environment. The idea of connection is also the company's ideology according to information in the Nokia website, where the slogan that appears everywhere is "Connecting People." In addition, the feeling of connectedness that a mobile phone promotes can be especially useful in a country where sometimes victims from ski accidents depend on their cell phones to call for help. The existence of the snow throughout most of the year promotes a connection with the sky and a higher level of existence, rather than earth bound.

Finally, in a country like Finland, connection with other people can be important since:

- winters last more than six months and the snow prevents easy transportation
- the sunshine can last only one hour per day during the winter, a fact that causes high levels of depression among Finnish people
- distances between places and cities are long and people can feel lonely

As a general conclusion, it is interesting to notice that both countries are geographically next to each other and have the same climate, yet marketing strategies for similar products are completely different.

Research Questions

Semiotics provides a theoretical framework for analyzing the appeals and strategies used in two Internet advertisements for mobile phones. While interesting in itself, the theoretical framework also serves a heuristic function. We wondered whether intended viewers of the advertisements would interpret the signs and symbols in the same way that semiotics suggests. Further, we wondered to what extent viewers' culture influenced the way that viewers interpreted the meanings of the signs and symbols used in the Internet advertisements.

Therefore, this study sought answers to the following Research Questions:

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RQ1: What meanings do viewers ascribe to the contextual elements of Internet advertisements?

RQ2: To what extent does semiotic analysis coincide with intended viewers' interpretations of signifiers used in Internet advertisements?

RQ3: How does the culture of intended viewers influence their interpretations of signifiers used in Internet advertisements?

Method

A Nokia mobile phone advertisement and an Ericsson mobile phone advertisement that were published on the companies' Web sites were shown to interviewees from six cultures. Respondents were asked to interpret the advertisements' external characteristics and forms, including the text, images, colors, and objects. Respondents were also asked which ad they preferred and why. Results were compared for each cultural group and for each advertisement. Our interview protocol appears as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Sample

Fifteen graduate business students from two major universities, one in the Midwestern US and one in the Southwestern US, volunteered to participate in this study. The researchers conducted semi-structured, private interviews with each of the participants, using the same interview protocol. Interviews also were conducted in Europe and the U.S. with 17 respondents who are native of five countries -- Finland, Sweden, Taiwan, India, and China. The total number of respondents representing six cultures was 32. Our sample is considered a convenience sample, one not selected scientifically or even randomly, to represent a population.

Results

Analysis of the elements and signs of the online advertisements shows that individuals belonging to different cultural groups create meaning in starkly different ways. The following sections describe reactions to each ad.

Nokia Advertisement

The Chinese, Indian, U.S., and Taiwanese respondents' first impression of this ad was positive. They all agreed it was "clear," "neat," "clean," "simple," and "businesslike." While the U.S. respondents thought the phone looked "heavy" and "standard," the Chinese felt it looked "high tech." The Swedish respondents reacted to the simplicity of the ad negatively, considering it "boring" and old fashioned.

The predominant blue and white colors, recognized by the Finnish respondents as their country's flag's colors, provoked a positive impression. Further, the Finns found the colors "reliable," "natural," "trustworthy," and "comfortable." By contrast, the Chinese and Taiwanese respondents said that white is a funereal color for them, creating a negative impression. The Swedes recognized that blue and white are "Finnish colors" and rejected them as "boring" and "cold." The respondent from India thought the colors warm and summery. The U.S. respondents were inconsistent about whether the blue and white colors were warm or cold, summery or wintery. Interestingly, several Americans connected the blue and white colors to "unlimited freedom" and "innovation," which no informants from other cultures mentioned.

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The outreached hands on the phone screen had universal appeal, reminding all the respondents of parents and children, connecting, and helping. The Chinese went further, saying the ad is "based on humanity and love." However, the Chinese and Taiwanese were unfamiliar with the Michelangelo painting and did not perceive any spiritual or godlike imagery in the Nokia ad. While the Finns acknowledged the God imagery, they disregarded it and focused primarily on a "safety" factor, explaining that while outdoors driving or cross country skiing in winter, Finns count on their cell phones to summon help. The Swedes and Americans also recognized a resemblance between the outreached hands and the Michelangelo painting, but the Swedes were particularly unimpressed. The U.S. respondents liked the allusion to a deity and parental help. Going further, they interpreted the Michelangelo reference as "a high attention to detail" that makes the phone look like it's "empowering you with information and knowledge."

Ericsson Advertisement

Across all cultures in our study, the first impression of this ad was one of brightness, warmth, summer, and "everyday life." But these reactions were not always positive. The Finnish respondents did not like the Ericsson ad, calling it "silly," "messy," "crowded," "strange," and "complicated." They denied a connection between the food imagery and a cell phone, criticizing it as "quite Swedish." The Chinese and Taiwanese also did not see a correlation between the food items and the phone. They recognized that the ad gave an impression that the phone is part of home life, but did not like that connection, saying that the phone belonged on an "office table," not a kitchen table. The Americans also found the ad disagreeable, "small town," and "bland."

The predominant yellow and red colors of the Ericsson ad universally were interpreted as "warm" and "homey" colors, which the Indian respondent especially liked. But the Chinese did not like the colors of the ad because they are "just so personal," preferring more "serious" colors for a product that they consider appropriate for business only. The Chinese also reacted negatively to the "welcome home" message on the phone's screen, saying that Chinese never say "Welcome home [among family]. They only say this word when a guest comes or when you go to the hotel; then we say Welcome….Welcome to Beijing."

The U.S. respondents agreed with the Swedes that the mixture of images was "normal" and "homelike," even developing dramatic scenarios that could explain why the phone was sitting on a kitchen table among food items at dinnertime.

Consumer Preferences

Not surprisingly, our Finnish interviewees preferred the Nokia ad, while the Swedish preferred the Ericsson. Most cited loyalty to their culture and familiarity with the product as their primary reasons.

More interesting were the preferences of respondents from the four other cultures. Across the board, they preferred the Nokia ad. The Chinese said they like the Nokia ad because it is clear, simple, timeless, and focused. In China, Nokia phones have a reputation for quality. Our Asian respondents considered the phone to be "serious" and good for business, but not for personal use or for fun. The Americans concurred that they could "relate to" the Nokia because it was more for business, "efficient," "cool looking" and "technologically advanced."

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The U.S. respondents agreed with the Chinese in considering the Ericsson phone to be more "suited to home life…you know, for the kids or for the wife." One U.S. respondent predicted that his mother would like it.

Discussion

Tables 3 and 4 show summary analyses of our interviews with individuals from Finland, Sweden, the United States, and China. In effect, the tables corroborate the predictions of semiotic theory concerning the signs and symbols used in the two Internet advertisements.

Nokia's advertisement with the characteristics *Color, Hands, Phone, Michelangelo Painting,* and *Culture* were meaningful to all interviewees regardless of country of origin (Table 3). Even though interviewees assigned a different meaning to the colors in the ad, they all felt an affinity to the colors used. Furthermore, the meanings reflected by the two hands in the Nokia ad have meanings that appear independent of the interviewees' country of origin. Next, the Finnish, Swedish, and Americans' interpretations of Michelangelo's painting were very rich, with Nokia's phone taking on mythical characteristics. Our Chinese interviewees were unfamiliar with Michelangelo, but they still connected the painting with new life. In conclusion, our analysis shows that Nokia's ad has global appeal.

Ericsson's advertisement elicited widely disparate responses from our interviewees with respect to C*olor, Phone, Text, Imagery,* and *Culture* categories (Table 4). The typical reaction to the phone itself was that it is Swedish, ordinary, and inexpensive. Moreover, our Chinese interviewees concluded that the phone does not belong in a kitchen environment. The meanings of the text "Welcome Home" ranged from 'it is a nice message' through 'I don't know what Ericsson is telling me' to 'In China we only say 'welcome home to hotel guests.' The ad's imagery gives rise to meanings that show a common focus on everyday life and a cozy familiarity, but the reaction to those meanings varied from positive to negative among the interviewees. The disparate cultural meanings and their emotional reactions suggest that the Ericsson ad is not well-suited for global presentation.

Comparisons of the respondents' reactions to our two Internet advertisements confirm the fundamental precept of semiotic theory, that culture plays a key role in assigning meaning to symbolic elements. Their universal appeals as well as ties to certain cultural values will determine the effectiveness of symbols used in online advertising. Our respondents overwhelmingly preferred the Nokia ad to the Ericsson ad, providing evidence that its elements are broadly appealing.

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Table 3 – Summary of Reactions to Nokia Phone Advertisement

Characteristic	Finland	Sweden	United States	Chinese
Color	*White is snow, blue sky, lakes *White/blue are colors of Finnish flag, Finland *Blue refers to summer, white to winter *White & blue refers to nature	*I don't like color – cold *Connection between land & sky *I think it is comfortable	*Warm *Summer *Attractive & capable *Makes the phone heavenly *Freedom & innovation	*Boring- need red or yellow *Blue gives cozy feeling
Hands	*Helping each other, trust *Contact relatives, friends *Keep in touch	*Suggest connection *Reaching out to someone *Small v. large hand = child helping an elderly person.	*It is a fatherly figure, a deity *Larger hand is Nokia reaching out to the customer	*Parents/Children *Help & cooperation
Phone	*Nokia is a quality phone	*I see not only the phone but also the Nokia symbol that stands for connecting people	*It looks like the phone I have *Sleek, stylish	*Nokia enjoys a good reputation *Nokia is a business phone
Michelangelo Painting	*Phone takes on mythical proportions *Suggest genius of Finland designers. *Finns are familiar with picture	*If you don't have the phone you are not really alive *The hand could help some poor man on earth *It's like connecting to God *I don't see any connection	*It can give you life *God imparts knowledge to Adam, Nokia empowers you by information and knowledge	*New life *Connection with world *Chinese do not know the picture.
Culture	*Phone reflects Finns' pride in their technology *Phone reflects Finns' pride in their industrial design *Phone reflects Finns' love for nature	*The helping hands are global *The picture is global but I don't know about the hand's color in Africa	*I don't know of a culture where one would not know the painting – so it [ad] is global *Finnish & Swedish culture is high tech.	*Europeans like simplicity *Europeans are more abstract [than Chinese] *White implies death

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Table 4: Summary of Reactions to Ericsson Phone Advertisement

Characteristic	Finland	Sweden	United States	China
Color	*Warm colors	*Dark blue – I like it	*Very warm *Summer *Very light	*Makes you feel bright
Phone	*Screen is pretty small *It is a Swedish phone *I don't like it	*Looks like an old model	*Phone is not a luxury item *Ordinary *Not a phone for business	*Modern [appliance] does not belong in a kitchen *Inexpensive
Text	*I don't know what Ericsson is telling me.	*Someone was on a journey & came back *Nice message for my girlfriend	*Maybe wife welcoming husband home	*'Welcome Home' gives warm feeling *Chinese say welcome only to hotel guests
Imagery	*Text suggests everyday life *Phone is as essential as bread *Why is phone in a still life?	*Someone left in a hurry and forgot phone *[Phone] suggests in peace with nature & environment	*Basic level of human familiarity *Phone is as basic as food *Everything has a shiny warm glow *Laid back setting	*I see food but I don't know what it is *Sense of daily life *Not a business [phone]
Culture	*Need to change background for Asian market.	*Swedes don't like technology and [the ad] places technology in a natural environment	*Don't think Chinese eat bread *It is old world style	*Yellow & red are pleasing to Chinese *Chinese don't feel a connection with the food

Conclusions

One of the advantages of Internet marketing is its ability to target promotion and marketing to audiences in new and innovative ways. A thorough semiotic analysis of the elements and signs of two Web site advertisements shows that individuals belonging to different cultural groups create meaning in starkly different ways. Our semiotic study demonstrates that alternative visual categories are relevant to different groups. Because semiotic categories affect perception even when perceived unconsciously, the use of appropriate semiotic elements is essential to effective Internet advertisements.

Miia Koski, a Finn who worked in Nokia's marketing department, explained the company's advertising strategy as a balance of global and local appeals:

> Koski: They want to keep their brand consistent so you have always certain elements … because [if] people … see [them] so many times, then they are remembered. Of course you sort of have to customize your advertisement….[But] this can lead people to think, 'Okay this is targeted to certain people and I'm not part of that group.' When making global [ads] you should even be much more cleaner [*sic*] in these ads. There are so little [*sic*] elements which you can accent.
>
> Janson: Does Nokia do that where they aim at local cultures too?

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Koski: They aim more to global. But of course, they make savings with that. But you have to find a balance because if it is too global then it doesn't reach anyone. ….And then if you localize more it is very – you have to work hard. You have to update those….There are more possibilities to make mistakes.

The results discussed above warrant further validation. Our study has several obvious limitations. First, the number of respondents was just 32. Some of the six cultures were represented by only one respondent, while others were represented by 15 respondents. Another limitation is that only two Internet advertisements were studied. Both represented a single industry. A third limitation is that we used a convenience sample, making no attempt to scientifically select the interviewees.

Nevertheless, results of our study imply that semiotics can improve the impact of promotional techniques by:

- Helping Internet marketers design product ads appropriate to specific markets
- Helping develop communication strategies that are culturally, socially, nationally, and historically sensitive
- Helping develop online ads with worldwide reach that should appeal to the product but also to the experience associated with the product

Finally, semiotic analysis provides a methodological tool that helps consumers critically analyze Internet advertisements and, hence, escape being unduly influenced by them.

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Biographies

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Appendix 1 – Interview Protocol for Ericsson Advertisement

1. When you first see the Ericsson ad, what comes to mind; what are your impressions?

2. What are your thoughts when you look at the Ericsson phone screen?

3. The screen has the words "19:03," "13-June," and "Welcome Home." What meanings do these words have for you?

4. The Ericsson phone is part of what artists call a "still-life." It contains bread, a bottle of oil, bread slices, tomatoes, and some shiny object that reflects the phone. How do all these items relate to the Ericsson phone?

5. When you look at the ad what does it suggest about what people should think about the Ericsson phone in relation to the other objects? Is it something special or is it ordinary?

6. When you look at the ad does it give you a warm or a cold feeling or impression? Does the ad remind you of summer or winter? Can you explain?

7. Can you say something about the Ericsson ad and its relationship to Sweden, the company's home country, or Swedish culture, its nature, its climate, its history, or its technology?

8. Do you think the Ericsson ad is effective? For example, would a person be more likely to buy an Ericsson phone after he sees the ad than before he sees the ad?

9. What are your thoughts about the effectiveness of the Ericsson ad in the international market? Thus, for example, would Asian people react in the same way to the Ericsson ad as Swedish or European or American people would?

10. To what extent does this ad reflect your culture?

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Appendix 2 – Interview Protocol for Nokia Advertisement

1. When you first see the Nokia ad, what comes to mind; what are your impressions?

2. What are your thoughts when you see the two outstretched hands? What meaning do the outstretched hands have for you?

3. Do the outstretched hands remind you of some great artwork? *(Show Michelangelo mural)* If so, how does that relate to the Nokia phone?

4. Does that impact or change your thoughts about or impressions of the Nokia ad?

5. Can you say something about the Nokia ad and its relationship to Finland, the company's home country, or Finnish culture, its nature, its climate, its history, or its technology?

6. When you look at the entire ad – the Nokia phone against its white background - what is your overall impression? Would the ad give you a warm or a cold feeling or impression? Does the ad remind you of summer or winter? Can you explain?

7. Do you think the Nokia ad is effective? For example, would a person be more likely to a buy Nokia phone after he sees the ad than before he sees the ad?

8. What are your thoughts about the effectiveness of the Nokia ad in the international market? Thus, for example, would Asian people react in the same way to the Nokia ad as Finnish or European or American people would?

9. Which ad reflects your culture better – the Nokia ad or the Ericsson ad?

10. If you saw the Nokia and Ericsson ads which phone would you most likely buy? Why do you think so?

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Reviewer Bias and Credibility in Online Reviews

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Abstract

This paper examines a sample of 640 online reviews of products and services to see whether reviews exhibited positive bias; indeed, over 48 percent of the 640 reviews that were sampled from two Web sites received the highest rating—5 stars. The paper also investigates the ways that reviews manifested reviewers' concern for establishing credibility. It examines two reviews' varying degrees of careful editing via organized content, correct punctuation, and correct spelling, and it examines reviewers' assertions and displays of expertise. Both of these two reviews—one of a product with low consumer risk and one of a service with high consumer risk—displayed spelling errors, and both reviews signaled reviewers' expertise. The paper concludes with some ideas for developing a richer system for analyzing computer-mediated communication (CMC) genres like online reviews, particularly in relation to reviewers' signals of expertise.

Introduction

In the emerging computer-mediated communication (CMC) genre of online reviews, lay people, as opposed to professional writers, evaluate products and services, and they receive no pay for their time or effort. Glowing reviews like this review of a recipe for Chicken with Grape Tomatoes and Fried Basil, written by GIGI9801, commonly appear on sites like Allrecipes.com:

> DELICIOUS!! Restaurant quality dish! and I couldn't believe how incredibly easy!! The whole family LOVED this!! I used chicken thighs instead of breasts (we prefer dark meat)and followed the recipe exact. The chicken was super tender and full of flavor! As others said, the only problem is this doesn't call for enough rice. Double the rice to 2 cups, serve with some fresh steamed broccoli and you've got yourself an incredible meal!! This is a must try!! Thanks for the wonderful recipe Amanda!! :)

Clearly, this reviewer was pleased with the recipe she/he found, but are most reviews so complimentary? That is, to what extent are online reviews positive, like GIGI9801's review of the chicken recipe? Prior research on consumer reviews of products and services suggests that

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reviewers exhibit a positive bias called the positivity effect. This effect stems from consumers' choosing products and services only when they believe, as Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) say, "there is a high probability of enjoying the experience" (p. 345). This study examines a sample of 320 online reviews of recipes from the site Allrecipes.com to determine whether the online reviews of this popular cooking site display positive bias. This analysis is interesting in that recipes are in general low-risk products: consumers who use these online reviews do not need to trust in them as much as they do reviews of pricier, and therefore, riskier products. Thus, in addition, this paper examines 320 online reviews of riskier products, such as laptop computers and DVD players, from another popular reviews site: Epinions.com.

This paper also examines the extent to which reviewers use language that appears designed to build and maintain readers' trust. It asks the following question: to what extent do reviewers try to construct credibility, the "characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message" (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41)? After all, reviewers will have little influence on readers if their evaluations are not perceived to be credible. Indeed, studies of third-party testimonials have shown that source credibility is a clear determining factor in the extent to which readers attend to and follow reviewers' advice (Ohanian, 1990). To investigate this question, this paper analyzes the credibility of two online reviews that theoretically would require quite different levels of consumer trust: one review of a recipe, taken from Allrecipes.com, and a review of a tour guide service, taken from Epinions.com. In investigating credibility, this paper analyzes signals of reviewers' careful editing (see Petelin, 2002) and reviewers' assertions and displays of expertise.

Method of analyzing reviews

To obtain the sample of 320 recipe reviews from Allrecipes.com, I gathered 20–22 recipes appearing as "Recipes of the Day" for 15 randomly selected days. (Each day, 20–22 recipes from different content categories, such as "Appetizers and Snacks," "Main Dish," and "Drinks" appeared as recipes of the day.) The reviews were preceded by star rating on a scale of 5 stars (best) or 1 star (worst). Figure 1 shows a 5-star rating.



Figure 1. A 5-star rating from Allrecipes.com.

Similar rating scales appear in most other sites that invite user reviews, such as Amazon.com. The status of these recipes as recipes of the day was not correlated to the recipes' overall star rating (evident in the fact that recipes with an average 1-star rating were listed as recipes of the day).

I also gathered a sample of 320 reviews from Epinions.com. These reviews were about computers and electronics products that ranged in price from US$500 to US$4000. On

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Epinions.com and some other sites devoted to consumers' reviews of products and services, reviewers can rate products on several criteria; for example, in Epinions.com, reviewers can rate an Audiovox portable DVD player for sound, ease of use, picture quality, and durability. These criteria ratings are averaged to create one overall rating. I used the products' overall ratings in this study. I tallied frequencies of star ratings, such as 5-star ratings, to gauge possible positive bias in the 640 Allrecipes.com and Epinions.com reviews.

Results of the review analysis

The results of this study correspond with Chevalier and Mayzlin's (2006) findings from their study of book reviews on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com. Based on reviewers' star ratings from Allrecipes.com and Epinions.com, the reviews in the present study were overwhelmingly positive. In fact, 507 reviews (79.1%) assigned a 4-star or higher rating, and 309 (48.2%) assigned a 5-star rating, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1. Star ratings of recipes in online reviews.

Star rating	Allrecipes.com		Epinions.com		Overall	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
5	174	54.3	135	42.1	309	48.2
4.5 – 4	99	31.0	99	31.0	198	31.0
3.5 – 3	27	08.4	47	14.7	74	11.5
2.5 – 2	11	3.4	19	6.0	30	4.7
1.5 – 1	9	2.9	20	6.2	29	4.6
Total	320	100.0	320	100.0	640	100.0

Table 1 also shows that in terms of 5-star ratings, reviews from Allrecipes.com were more frequently positive than the Epinions.com reviews of riskier products: 174 of the Allrecipes reviews assigned 5-star ratings (54.3%), whereas 135 (42.1%) of the Epinions.com did the same. This result may stem from Epinion.com reviewers' ability to use a more nuanced rating system. As mentioned before, Epinions.com reviewers could rate products on several scales, and those ratings factored into an overall rating, an overall rating that could manifest a half star (e.g., a 4.5-star rating). Even so, both sites contained mainly positive reviews. In Allrecipes.com, 273 recipes (85.3%) received either a 4- or 5-star rating; in Epinions.com, 234 (73.0%) received a 4-star or higher rating.

In addition, in the sites' combined reviews, only 29 contained 1-star or 1.5-star ratings (4.6%). Epinions.com reviewers, reviewing higher risk products, were more likely to give low ratings, a result that may stem from a stronger sense of responsibility for users' decisions about higher-risk

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products. Just 9 (2.9%) of the Allrecipe.com reviews contained a 1-star rating, but 20 (6.2%) of the Epinions.com reviews displayed 1- or 1.5-star ratings.

Clearly there was a bias toward positive reviews in both the Allrecipes.com and the Epinions.com samples. One example from Epinions.com is rt66explorer's 5-star, positive review of an eMachines desktop PC:

> Pros: Speed, price, looks, quiet, has 3 fans, has pc3200 memory not pc2700
> Cons: has cheapish speakers and mouse that work fine
> Not bad looking either. Very striking. We got this unit refurb at Tiger direct for $399.00 and it is great so far. It's my second emachine refurb. Other one is still going strong 2 yrs later. I feel even better about this one. This unit has three fans in it and the advertised memory of 512 megs of pc 2700 is actually 512 of pc 3200. Nice touch! It is also very quiet for having all that air moving. Well laid out too. No floppy drive, but I can't remember the last time I needed one anyway, so I guess it's like having an ashtray if you don't smoke. I too think the speakers and mouse are less than great, although I think the keyboard is fine. At least they throw something in there to get you going. That's the main thing.

In contrast, far fewer reviews were negative, like vivaconcordia's 1-star rating and negative review of the recipe for Flounder Zucchini Bundles:

> The fish was so mushy, I couldn't eat more than 3 bites. I found that it had to be baked longer than 25 minutes. The flavor wasn't too bad but I feel that mushy fish coupled with the mushy zucchini left much to be desired.

In general, reviewers of quite different products—products involving very different levels of consumer risk—displayed positive bias in their reviews.

Creating credibility with careful editing

This section of the paper analyzes two online reviews—each requiring a different level of credibility from the reviewer because of the trust required from the consumer.

A review of a recipe

This analysis of credibility in online reviews begins with a positive recipe review. This 5-star review of Slow Cooker Salisbury Steak displays a relative lack of careful editing:

> Soooo good! I was looking for something quick and easy and this was perfect...it cooked all day and when my sons football practice was done we were ready to eat! It is definately more of a fall winter food, but really good anytime! I loved the gravy and may try to double it next time! I did add mushrooms just for something additional. I served it with redskinned garlic mashed potatoes (which I thought I got off this site, but now I can't find the recipe), my whole family loved it! This will definately be a favorite this winter!

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This review by momagain3 appears to have been spontaneously created. That is, it is not organized in any particular order or around a central theme. For example, a sentence about the ease of preparing the recipe is followed by a sentence about the time of year that the recipe is most useful. That sentence is in turn followed by a sentence about a change that the reviewer made in preparing the recipe again. It seems that momagain3 made no attempt to subordinate ideas or to group them.

This recipe review displays few of the characteristics of edited language that help generate credibility. For example, a lack of editing is evident in punctuation errors, such as a comma splice (after the parenthetical statement), lack of a possessive apostrophe ("sons football practice"), lack of a forward slash or a hyphen ("fall winter"), as well as in a spelling errors ("definately"). In short, the reviewer has not signaled credibility to establish readers' trust, but this finding is not very surprising given that it is a review of a product that brings little risk to the consumer. In sum, this reviewer's drive to signal credibility via careful editing does not appear to be strong.

A review of a tour guide service

At Epinions.com, reviewers can rate not only electronics and computers, but also nearly any product or service, including service providers like tour guides. The Epinions.com review below, written by the reviewer sewell1591 about a tour service in Beijing, China, is longer than a typical Allrecipes.com review (and hence has been shortened from the original; ellipses mark the places where words have been cut):

> I've made several trips to China, including Beijing, over the past 3 years, including tour (with a different operator) and independent travel. . . . We were met, as promised, just outside immigration at the Beijing airport by a representative of GT, who spoke very good English and had us whisked off to our hotel right away. We stayed at the Prime Hotel, at the northern end of Wangfujing, about a 10 minute walk from the main shopping district and convenient to restaurants My group had scheduled some extra days, and the extensions were at the same rate at the hotel as on the tour and were quite reasonable. Some members took advantage of a $400 add-on and took a day trip to Xian, which included transfers to and from the airports, guide services in Xian, roundtrip airfare from Beijing, and lunch. All reported this to have been a good value and well handled. . . . There was some confusion about coordinating with other members of my party and the exact days we'd be touring. . . . When I reported these problems in a followup after the trip, GT was very apologetic and provided an extra travel credit for another trip. I was satisfied with the professional and speedy way they acknowledged the glitch and feel they have likely taken steps to eliminate the issue in the future. . . . I'm very satisfied with GT and would recommend them to anyone wanting a tour in China! I plan on using them again, myself.

In terms of its editing, this review contains spelling errors ("knowlegable" and "followup"). However, this review displays far more content planning than the Allrecipes.com review analyzed previously; sewell1591 seems to have organized the review by content type. First, the reviewer relates his/her prior experience in China and with other tour services. Then, he/she groups positive evaluations together (e.g., the GT representative "spoke very good English" and

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the prices of extensions were “quite reasonable”). Then he/she explains the negative evaluation (i.e., there was “some confusion” about the tour dates). The reviewer concludes with an overall evaluation of the tour: “I’m very satisfied…” In ending with a general, positive evaluation after stating and explaining a negative evaluation, sewell1591 follows a review pattern seen in other discourse genres in which one participant evaluates: face-to-face tutoring interactions (Mackiewicz, 2005) and academic book reviews (Mackiewicz, 2007). The same pattern also seems to appear quite frequently in reviews of electronics and computers, but further research is needed to test this observation. Related to the organization of its content, judging by sheer number of words, this review took more time to write than the shorter recipe review, suggesting the reviewer’s thoughtfulness about the topic and concern for the reader and establishing credibility.

To sum up the findings of this section, online reviewers may not be concerned with possible negative effects of spelling errors on their credibility: both reviews examined here display such errors even though they evaluated products/services of quite different consumer risk. However, reviewers of riskier products may be more inclined to organize the content of their reviews to generate credibility.

Creating credibility with signals of expertise

Online reviewers established credibility by asserting their expertise with a product or service. In doing this, they justified their right to make evaluations, whether positive or negative. For example, in a review of Italian Beef Sandwiches, Bonnie R. says that she/he is from a city, Chicago, where such sandwiches are common. Claiming Chicago as a hometown signals Bonnie R.’s familiarity with the subject matter, affording her/him credibility, at least in relation to this recipe. In addition, this reviewer says that she/he has experience in making these sandwiches, which also lends to her/his expertise:

> Thank you! You should rename this one the ONLY REAL Italian Beef Sandwich Recipe! We also moved away from the city of Chicago, and couldn't believe what they were passing off as “Beefs” in our new locale; shredded or loose meat with only a hint of seasoning, and carrots! AAAGH! I came up with this method too after trial and error. I also use flavoring in the water added to the roasting pan, usually a little Worcestshire and a teaspoon of ready-to-use beef bouillon. . . . My recipe calls for an herb/spice rub, with an eight cup each basil, oregano and parsley in dried form. . . . Put on half of this before inserting the garlic and half after. An easy way of doing the garlic is to make shallow scorings lengthwise down the tenderloin and then pat in minced garlic from a jar. . . . Proceed as you do with Dick's recipe, but with a whole tenderloin (sometimes called eye of round) you might need longer for the larger size -- we usually leave it in the oven for 4 hours. The first time we used the recipe, we put it in a roaster for a 70-person grad party, and it was the most requested entree, around 12 pounds completely gone right down to the gravy. Hope the "tweaks" will help..Salute!

In claiming Chicago as a hometown (“We also moved away from the city of Chicago”) and describing experience in making these sandwiches (“I came up with this method too after trial

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and error" and "we usually leave it in the oven for 4 hours"), Bonnie R. indicated that readers could trust her/his evaluation.

It is interesting that recipe reviewers like Bonnie R. note their experience in the same way that reviewers of more costly—and thus more risky—products do. For example, in his/her review of General Tours, sewell1591 began the review by noting that he/she has traveled to China before ("I've made several trips to China, including Beijing, over the past 3 years") and by noting that he/she used a tour on one of those previous trips ("including tour (with a different operator) and independent travel"). This background knowledge establishes sewell1591's qualifications for reviewing. That recipe reviewers point out their experience attests to reviewers' sense of establishing and maintaining an identity, particularly an expert identity, within an online community, regardless of the cost of the products or services under review.

Clearly, just as reviewers create credibility with edited language, so too do they create credibility by displaying expertise. Of course, the extent to which reviewers see themselves as part of the CMC community for which they have written their review will influence the extent to which they establish and maintain credibility. It is likely the case that long-term users of sites like Allrecipes.com and Epinions.com work to establish and maintain credibility online.

Conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed an emerging variety of CMC—laypeople's online reviews of products and services. It examined of 640 reviews to determine whether reviews of risky and not-so-risky products and services manifested the positive bias associated with self-selection of reviewed products and services (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). The reviews strongly displayed a positive bias: over 79% assigned 4-star or higher ratings and over 48% assigned a 5-star rating. Thus, reviews of both low-risk and high-risk products generated the positivity effect.

I also closely examined two online reviews to determine the extent to which they displayed characteristics of careful editing that help create credibility. Analysis of two suggests the reviewers did not consider a few spelling errors to be a great threat to credibility. However, the two reviews differed in the extent to which they displayed organizational planning of content.

This analysis revealed some other language characteristics that might help determine the extent to which reviewers signal or fail to signal credibility, such as using emoticons, which have been discussed previously in CMC literature (Krohn, 2004; Walther & Kuc, 2001). Reviewers also employed spelling (e.g., Soooo) and punctuation (e.g., !!) in unconventional ways to achieve their aims. That is, reviewers used repetition of orthographic symbols for emphasis. Other reviewers achieved the same effect via repetition of words, such as "Yum, yum, yum" in recipe reviews. Identifying such repetitions could facilitate analysis of careful editing and credibility.

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In sum, this study suggests that through their reviews, reviewers may indeed manifest a bias toward positivity. To demonstrate credibility, reviewers rely more on carefully edited language and signal their expertise. Further analysis can investigate the extent of positive bias in other review Web sites as well as signals of reviewer credibility. This emerging variety of CMC is worthy of much further analysis as business communicators can use it to analyze how consumers view their organization's products and services.

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Biography

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Using Project-Based Learning to Connect Theory to Practice in Teaching Accounting Communication

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To prepare students for on-the-job writing, we use individual assignments that increase in difficulty, team reports and presentations to teach collaboration and adaptation to different audiences, and timed in-class case exams that require students to write memos and letters. The body of knowledge about project-based learning tells us that the best way for students to learn is through project-based rather than inquiry-based learning. With feedback from the business community who interview and hire our students, we offer a business communication class that connects theory to practice through project-based instruction.

According to Bransford and Stein (1993) project-based learning (PBL) is designed to engage students in sustained, cooperative investigation. Within this framework, students construct their own artifacts (i.e. formal report, consequential task, or PowerPoint presentation) to represent what is being learned (Blumfield, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991). Both peers and professors can provide feedback to assist students with producing a better product. Within this context, the activity becomes authentic, and encourages students to reflect on and extend their knowledge, and ultimately to revise their artifacts (Blumfield et al., 1991; Brown & Campione, 1994; Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1992).

Aside from students' construction of artifacts, a key difference between project-based learning and inquiry-based learning is the emphasis on collaboration. In most traditional settings, inquiry-based learning is often an individual task (Blumfield et al., 1991; Bradford & Stein, 1993). While individual work accounts for 60% of students' work, all but the exams in the accounting communication course are project-based.

The major projects (Risk Analysis, Payroll Work Papers, Not for Profit Fund Raiser Persuasive Proposal) require both individual and team assignments. The "team" model of collaboration emphasizes student ownership over the successful completion of their assignments. Within this instructional design, instructors' roles shift from the traditional lecturer imparting knowledge to the masses, to guide and coach. This shift requires extensive up front preparation on the instructor's part.

Since accountants spend a great deal of time communicating in written reports and oral presentations, this course was designed to improve their communication skills so that they are able to present financial and business information effectively. Both content and execution are included in instruction.

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Project-based learning as a teaching tool

During the last half century, educators have struggled to find the most effective teaching, learning, and assessment strategies for students. Since the process of effective teaching is sensitive to the educational context, the process and the product must be carefully designed and assessed (Gulbahar & Tinmaz, 2006). As several researchers have noted, using project-based learning (PBL) to "teach more effectively" is a learner-centered approach which requires students' active participation in the construct of their own learning (Gulbhar and Tinmaz, 2006; Frank, Lavy & Elata, 2003;Thompson & Beak, 2007; Doppelt, 2003). Instructors have witnessed how this "hands-on" approach has increased student involvement and has enhanced students' learning (Thompson & Beak, 2007; Thomas, 2000; Gulbahar & Tinmaz, 2006). This may explain why project-based learning has become a popular teaching tool during the past decade.

Thomas (2000) defined project-based learning as "a model that organizes learning around projects" (p. 1). Other researchers have defined project-based learning as learning by doing (Thompson & Beak, 2007), and as student-driven investigations of complex, real-life questions or problems (Blumfield et al., 1991; Helm & Katz, 2001). Some projects are long-term investigations spanning the entire semester, others are shorter units. However, all projects require teamwork and collaboration among students, and are designed to culminate in a substantive final product (Thompson & Beak, 2007; Thomas, 2000; Mishra & Girod, 2006).

Rhodes and Garrick (2003) noted that project-based learning is the way most people learn on the job. Therefore, effective project-based learning activities are grounded in practical activities that mirror real-world conditions. Outcomes attached to PBL activities include the development of appropriate workplace skills, and the potential to increase students' sense of responsibility for and control over their own learning (Thompson & Beak, 2007; Callison, 2006). In other words, project-based learning is a transformative experience that provides a rich context for connecting classroom experiences with "real life" workplace expectations. Mishra and Girod (2006) pointed out that real life experiences embedded in PBL learning activities assist students with honing the collaborative skills they need to actively participate in the development of learning artifacts such as publications, presentations, instructional software, simulations, and case studies within a team configuration (p. 209).

Several researchers have suggested that PBL is an effective teaching tool because it is situated within the dynamic of active student involvement (Frank, Lavy, & Elata, 2003). In other words, the context of PBL forces students become part of the construct of their own learning; students will "learn by doing" (Thompson & Beak, 2007, p. 280). There is evidence to suggest that active involvement in the learning process results in students learning at deeper levels, and retaining what they have learned longer than students who are "passive" participants in their learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Rueda & McIntyre, 2002). In addition, the research suggests that PBL projects may contribute to a deeper understanding of key concepts because project-based learning projects deal with "real-life" problems which many students find more engaging than the traditional lecture/discussion format (Thompson & Bea, 2007).

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Frank, Lavy and Elata (2003) pointed out that adapting the project-based learning approach requires immediate change to the curriculum, to instruction, and to assessment. The new role of a project-based instructor is no longer "…lecturing to passive students" but involves "…encouraging motivation, tutoring, providing resources, and helping learners to construct their own knowledge" (p. 280). Making this change is initially labor intensive for the instructor because it requires greater commitment and organization. Solomon (2003) emphasized the importance of establishing a classroom environment that is "risk-free…in which students can use a variety of earning styles, learn from mistakes, and give and get honest, non-threatening feedback" (p.22). Solomon also suggested the need to implement a variety of assessment mechanisms to provide feedback to students and instructors on a regular and predictable basis.

Thomas (2000) articulated five criteria for PBL activities.

1. PBL projects that are central to the curriculum, not peripheral.
2. PBL projects that are focused on questions or problems that "drive" students to encounter the central concepts and principles of a specific discipline.
3. PBL projects that involve students in a constructive investigation.
4. PBL projects that are student-driven to a significant degree.
5. PBL projects that are realistic, school-like.

The role of collaboration in project-based learning

Collaborative interaction among students provides an alternative to the traditional "sage on the stage" model. Because PBL is student-centered and student-directed, instructors will be required to make a shift in how they think about classroom structures, teaching roles, classroom environment and student assessment (Thompson & Beak, 2007). Instructors will have to move away from the traditional model of the "guru" leading "passive" learners down the path to enlightenment. PBL requires students to take the lead as "active" participants, while instructors' roles will shift to managers, facilitators, and coaches.

PBL activities tend to be complicated and challenging and require teamwork among students. Typically, PBL activities require longer time for completion because of their complexity and interactive nature. Many instructors may find that while students may initially be disturbed during the early stages of implementation of PBL, as time passes students' frustrations tend to dissipate as they release their "habit of waiting for step-by-step instructor-based commands" and embrace their freedom to learn by doing within a "team" context (Gulbahar & Tinmaz, 2006, p. 310).

We have observed our accounting students became more motivated as the semester progressed. We believe this is because they became more comfortable with the new dynamic of PBL, and embraced their "freedom" to manage their time more effectively, to think reflectively about their experiences, and to make the connections between their classroom work and what is happening in the workplace (feedback from students' end of the year evaluations).

Students would like more step-by-step instruction such as project templates and models, of course. However, the six-unit accounting courses do not provide them either, so eventually

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students begin to understand that they are learning strategies that they will be able to use on future projects at work, where they will not have a teacher to guide them.

After assessing and reviewing our students' work, we found that PBL collaboration enhanced our students' skills in several ways. First, students learned the value of being active participants in the classroom and within their teams. Their PBL assignments required them to learn from one another and to teach one another within this collaborative learning environment. Second, students learned firsthand what steps were required to complete a large project from start to finish, and they gained the satisfaction inherent in successful project completion. Third, students acquired valuable interviewing skills because they were required to interview business managers during their payroll project. Fourth, students received hands-on experience using content analysis to consolidate the information they gathered for both their risk analysis paper and their payroll project papers. Both projects required presenting their findings in an oral report to the class, and in a coherent paper. Fifth, students' communication skills were enhanced each time they met face-to-face with a business manager or leader during their investigation of the payroll process, and again when they met within their individual teams to sort out their findings. Sixth, students' communication skills were enhanced because they needed to use communication skills during numerous team meetings, class discussions, and oral presentations. These discussions culminated in the added bonus of emphasizing student ownership of their PBL assignments. Seventh, students used and honed their critical thinking skills to consolidate their findings for each of their PBL assignments. Eighth, students learned about specific aspects of research. Ninth, students learned that the value of feedback was to use it to create a better product. Tenth, students learned about the complexities of team work and their chances for developing collaborative and leadership skills were enhanced.

According to Thompson and Peak (2007), collaborative learning is a positive predictor of personal development, understanding of science and technology, appreciation for art, analytical skills, and openness to diversity.

How the accounting curriculum uses project-based learning

A communication course, Reporting for Accountants, has been part of the accounting curriculum at SDSU since 1980. In 1995, we began teaching a four-unit version of this course that includes three oral presentations and emphasis on small group communication. The revised accounting curriculum also includes more emphasis on improving communication skills both in writing and speaking to prepare students for career needs to explain technical accounting material to various stakeholders from peers, to clients, to regulators. This was one of the first such courses nationwide; a course objective is to prepare them to talk about accounting information both analytically and descriptively.

Our accounting curriculum, revised to meet Accounting Education Change Commission goals, now uses teams extensively both in and out of class to teach students problem-solving and interpersonal skills. In keeping with the AECC recommendations (1990 Objectives of Education for Accountants: Position Statement #1), developing stronger computer and communication skills is also stressed. One strong point of our program is that subsequent Accounting courses require students to use the communication skills taught in the Reporting for Accountants course.

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Integrating writing and speaking in several courses rather than offering communication only as a separate course is a very effective way of improving students' skills. Our students get several courses in which to apply what they have learned about critical thinking, problem solving, information competency listening, working in teams, and effective informational, analytical, and persuasive communication, both written and oral. Using assignments that include narrative and budgets, flowcharts, and accounting formats begins to give accounting students a simulation of writing skills required in their future careers. Team presentations of project findings give students needed practice in presenting accounting information clearly to a variety of audiences. They also learn to evaluate business sources, use professional document and visual design, and communicate technical material clearly to a variety of audiences. Critical thinking, active listening, and professional proofreading are important in fulfilling the assignments successfully.

The individual and team assignments in the reporting for accountants course

Accountants need to be able to communicate financial information in such a way as makes others understand and grasp the concepts represented by the numbers. Two major theme projects (article-based and not for profit) in our course have inter-related or nested individual and team assignments that require students to communicate and report accounting information. In addition, students complete the individual company risk assignment and team payroll work papers, two in-class case exams, and a final exam over the two texts and handouts on the course software.

Portions of each project are designed to overlap, in order to simulate a real-world time management dilemma. This helps students develop their abilities to juggle and prioritize a variety of assignments. We make this aspect of time-management explicit to the students and allow them to vent their frustrations with the multiple, overlapping demands. At the same time, we are aware of other course exam times and work to accommodate the students' schedules, so that projects are not due on the same day as other major exams.

These projects are structured in terms of the student role and the required components. We also provide students with copies of the rubrics used to grade the projects. The projects are open-ended within the structure provided, so that students are given an opportunity to make choices about organization, strategy and project goals.

Memo applying the content of an article to a reader's needs

One assignment requires students to first research, write, and turn in a typed memo summarizing a professional article for an accounting audience (for example, the accounting staff members in a controller's office or public accounting firm). The article summarized must be from a professional publication dated within the last few months and must be of interest to both accountants and their clients (for public accounting) or managers (internal accounting). Each memo will be graded as part of an individual's grade.

Meeting in teams, students read each others' summaries and discuss any points that are unclear. They then choose ONE of the team's summaries and revise it for a different audience (either clients or non-accountant managers within a firm). This revised summary is then given to each

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of the other teams. All students read all the summaries and prepare for a day of oral presentations designed to occur in an office environment. The other class members are required to prepare questions as would a client (these are handed in and are part of a team's grade). Teams present their summaries and field questions from other class members.

Report to accounting firm on the company and industry risk of a potential client

Potential industry groupings used by large accounting firms include financial services, health services, entertainment and media, government and not-for-profit, retail merchandising, computers and software, and communications. Using different subgroups and different companies gives this assignment a different flavor every term (and encourages students to produce new work).

One major individual assignment is the company/industry report. Each team is assigned an industry category (for example, Utilities) and students each choose a different publicly traded company from an assigned list to follow during the semester, with a goal of assessing business risk and audit risk for a potential new client. An individual report limited to three single-spaced pages assesses these risks (students are asked to use headings and to make these papers look like professional reports). Possible attachments include a list of references used to collect information (required), comparative industry/company ratios from Factiva, Mergent, Standard and Poor's NetAdvantage, Datamation, or another business database, Value Line pages on the company and its industry, several years' results from the Form 10K, or information on product market share and competitors.

In addition to teaching business research skills (among more traditional sources, students use EDGAR, the SEC electronic filing Web site), this assignment integrates accounting course information into the communication course, reinforces team work skills, and gives students real-world experience in preparing information for business audiences. Report writing, document design, graphics development, and other communication topics become more relevant to students when they apply this material to accounting topics.

Payroll process interview, workpapers, and presentation

For this assignment, students contact a company and arrange an interview. This local company is usually one that a team member works for, but it can be a university auxiliary or department or a business close to campus. The team prepares questions to help obtain an understanding of the company's payroll cycle. We discuss writing effective questions about the various parts of the payroll process, such as employment activities, timekeeping, check preparation, and check distribution. The best early questions are open-ended (Can you tell me how you keep track of employee's hours worked?) rather than closed (Do you have a Kronos timeclock?). Teams then turn in a payroll work plan memo to the instructors detailing the interview company, date, time, contact person, and plan for individual work paper section assignments; the list of questions is attached to students' work.

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The returned memo, with instructor comments included, is eventually placed in the finished work papers with appropriate headings required by the assignment. Based on information obtained in the interview, the team then documents the payroll system, using narrative descriptions, flowcharts, and strengths/weaknesses/recommendations parts in each section, followed by documents (company forms). The work papers show the team's analysis of the company's internal controls, strengths and weaknesses, and make appropriate recommendations. The completed paper includes an overall evaluation of the company's payroll process, complete strengths and weaknesses/recommendations charts with cross-referencing to the pages where the area was discussed, and a management letter to the company. The culmination of the project is a team presentation to the class acting as the accounting firm, in which each team describes the findings of the payroll process analysis of their companies.

In addition to giving students practice in using an interview to obtain information, the payroll project exposes them to formats used in accounting firms, gives them practice in flowcharting, teaches clear writing about a process with which the reader is not familiar, and requires them to write a tactful negative letter to a client.

Briefing memo, persuasive proposal, and presentation on a planned not for profit event

This project contains four segments that help students learn more about the not for profit community, fund raising, and persuasion. Students write *individual briefing memos* about self-chosen not for profits: (What does this organization do? Who else deals with a similar population or projects? What amounts of money come in and go out of the organization? Where does the money come from [large donors? lots of grants?]? Where does the money go [percentage to administration, fund raising, to actual projects?]? What projects has the organization accomplished lately?)To obtain this information, students perform Internet research, collect actual newsletters and brochures, and often interview organization employees and beneficiaries.

In teams of four to six students, students then choose one of their not for profits and develop a *persuasive proposal to a corporation* to obtain seed money for a fund raiser for the chosen organization. The proposal includes a persuasive letter to a specific person at the corporation; a two-page executive summary outlining the organization's goals, needs, fund-raising event, and the corporation's donation; a budget for the event showing all income (including in-kind donations of good and services) and all expenditures (including how the money earned at the event will be used); and attachments about the planned event (invitations, brochures, flyers, newsletter, program, schedule) and the capability of the not for profit to carry it off successfully (resumes, letters offering assistance, articles about previous successful events).

After delivering a copy of their proposal to another team assigned as their corporate board, each team gives a *10-12 minute board presentation* to the class and their board. Students need to reorganize their written proposal to be able to present it effectively, adding visuals that "sell" the proposed event and motivate the audience to donate to the chosen cause. After the presentation, the *board asks questions* written from members' reading of the complete proposal.

Students evaluate each team presentation through ballots that rate importance of cause, establishment of need, planning of event, and thorough budget, ending with the question: how

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much money would you give this group? Instructors also give each team a feedback form to review immediately after the presentation. Final grades are posted on the course software later that week after all presentations have been completed.

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How students learn through projects to present financial information effectively

Some of the accounting communication course learning outcomes include the following three:

- Analyze and interpret numbers' meaning appropriately for various audiences; *think* with the numbers.
- Identify economic, broad business, and financial risks of an industry/sector; competitive advantages; financial and non-financial performance. Use facts and information to create meaning and analysis rather than just list facts.
- Analyze the quality of information and evidence; find and evaluate relevant research sources, both print and electronic databases online, for three projects.

Project-based learning helps students conceptualize writing as something created for an audience rather than for a university class. In the company risk analysis, the not for profit briefing memo, and the persuasive proposal, students must use specific numbers to support their stated analysis and conclusions. One of the texts used, *A Plain English Handbook: How to Create Clear SEC Disclosure Documents*, published by the U. S. Securities and Exchange Commission, explains that "a plain English document is easy to read and looks like it's meant to be read." (U. S. Securities and Exchange Commission [SEC], 1998, p. 5)

By actually producing a risk analysis of a real company, gathering data from company records publicly available on the Internet and experts such as *Value Line*, then drawing conclusions about the gathered information, and writing it up in a memo report, students learn that companies within an industry share some risks and create others for themselves through their business model or circumstances of geography, personnel, acquisitions, or product development. They also begin to see that a company's results are fairly meaningless by themselves, but need to be compared with industry averages, with competitors, with previous years, to be truly meaningful in analyzing risk.

Writing a briefing memo about a local not for profit organization requires students to learn about the Internal Revenue Service's Form 990, the main tax reporting of not for profits. Using just the numbers in the revenue and expense sections don't give the full picture; it requires percentages and comparison to outside information such as the Better Business Bureau's recommended standards to actually show the boss how useful the not for profit is to the community. The not for profit persuasive proposal also requires students to write about financial details clearly as they use the budget designed for the planned event to show a potential corporate contributor how well-thought-out the fund raiser is and how successful it is projected to be.

The assignments created for the accounting communication course increase in difficulty as the semester progresses, giving new levels of understanding of how to communicate with clients about financial areas in which the clients are not experts.

Connecting theory to practice

The local accounting community that hires our students is very enthusiastic about the accounting communication course. We have three accounting firm principals who come to speak to the combined classes each semester about the importance of communication to accountants, how to

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interview for information, and how to analyze a not for profit. These people and others in the accounting profession have told us that current students are now better prepared to communicate with clients and to perform the writing and speaking tasks asked of them on the job. Using realistic projects designed in collaboration with the accounting faculty and local accountants, our students are ready to succeed on audit teams, in tax practices, and in government and corporate offices because of project-based learning.

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Dr. Anderson-Cruz currently teaches in the IDS Department at San Diego State University. During 2001 – 2003 she was a member of the Language Arts Advisory Board for the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Since 2003 she has served on an Accreditation Review Panel for this commission. Her research interests are the interactive relationships among language, social processes, instructional delivery, and academic achievement. Some of her recent work has explored emergent literacy development, how literacy experiences have shaped the construction of identity and success, and the role of literacy in the assessment of learning in urban classrooms.

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ABC President in 1990, Dr. Vik has taught at San Diego State University since 1975. Her primary areas of research and publication are accounting communication, technical communication, and teaching business communication. She also regularly teaches an on-line class for regulatory affairs graduate students. She has also written business communication texts for McGraw-Hill Irwin with co-authors C. W. and Dorothy Wilkinson and Jeanette Gilsdorf.

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Collaborative Writing, Document Cycling, and Gatekeeping in a Fortune 500 Company: A Case Study and its Implications for Business Communication Instructors

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Abstract

Since the early 1990s, an extensive corpus of research has persuasively demonstrated that document cycling—the drafting of a document by a single writer, with subsequent review by supervisors and other stakeholders—is the most common form of collaborative writing in workplace environments. However, these studies have not examined the processes by which document cycling actually achieves its intended purpose: the transformation of a document, originally composed by one author, into a text that represents a pronouncement of the corporation. In order to examine this process of transformation, a case study was conducted during a nine-month period commencing in January 2006. The study focused upon the work of two writers, employed in a Fortune 500 Company, who generate documents intended to define and communicate corporate policy to 23,000 employees worldwide. The research method selected for this study is that of participant-observer ethnography. The study concludes that document cycling successfully accomplishes its communicative purpose if (1) the process of cycling occurs within the context of an hierarchy of power relations, comprised of clearly demarcated sets of roles and responsibilities and (2) "gatekeepers" within the organization are assigned responsibility to grant corporate authority to documents that meet specific criteria. Thus, cycling is not merely a form of collaborative writing; rather, this process is one among many activities—such as establishing budget priorities and making purchasing decisions—that depend upon the review and approval of authorized members of an established corporate hierarchy. Therefore, business communication instructors must not view the cycling process as a writing task divorced from its broader organizational context.

Introduction

In 1985, the term "document cycling" entered the lexicon of business communication. In a case study describing writing practices at Exxon ITD, Paradis, Dobrin, & Miller explicated a process involving supervisory review of documents composed by staff writers. This practice, designated by the term "document cycling," was defined as "the editorial process by which they [supervisors] helped staff members restructure, focus, and clarify their written work" (p. 285). The supervisory review may involve editing for content, style, organization, tone, or grammar (pp. 300, 301). Additional reviews may follow as the writer further refines text in accordance with the supervisor's recommendations; the document is "cycled" several times prior to final approval. At Exxon ITD, document cycling played a key role in making the individual's work advance the organization's established objectives (p. 293).

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In their seminal study, Paradis et al. (1985) did not suggest that cycling is a phenomenon that may apply to writing practices beyond workplaces specializing in research and development tasks. However, subsequent researchers indicate that "document cycling" may be the most common form of collaborative writing in business and professional environments (Adam, 2000; Couture & Rymer, 1991; Couture & Rymer, 1993; Debs, 1993; Locker, 2006; Lunsford & Ede, 1990). Several studies indicate that this process may involve not merely a writer and supervisor or manager; document cycling can also encompass review by many individuals, including peers and stakeholders throughout an organization (Adam, 2000; Couture & Rymer, 1993; Locker, 2006; Smart, 1993; Weber, 1991).

Since the early 1990s, an extensive corpus of research, including case studies and surveys, has explored the practice of document cycling from multiple perspectives. Attention has especially focused upon the effects of cycling, both positive and detrimental, upon interpersonal relationships between writers and their reviewing supervisors (Couture & Rymer, 1993; Locker, 1992; Palmeri, 2004; Paradis et al., 1985; Smart, 1993). However, little research has considered the processes by which document cycling actually achieves its intended purpose: the transformation of a document, originally composed by a single author, into a text that has attained the sanction of corporate authority. Studies of the cycling phenomenon have not examined the organizational dynamics involved with the evolution of writing that originates as the voice of its original author and ultimately emerges as a pronouncement of the corporation.

Researchers have long recognized that organizational dynamics provide a broader context within which the document cycling process is sustained. However, identification and examination of these dynamics have often been relegated to the indefinite direction of "future research." Paradis et al. (1985), for example, comment that the editorial reviews that occur during cycling serve to shape documents composed by individual writers into texts that are "fitted to the organization's needs" (p. 306). Paradis et al. also note "we need a better understanding of how this process actually takes place" (p. 306). Debs (1993) asserts that we have only a "limited understanding of authorship as it is shaped in the workplace and the significance of the organization's role in authorizing tasks produced by its makers" (p. 160). As a result, Debs insists, we need "to unveil the organization, to identify more carefully the relationships that exist between the individual and groups within society" (p. 170). Locker (1992) maintains that "research on collaborative writing in the workplace cannot focus simply upon the group's activities but must consider the larger organizational context as well" (p. 59).

This study is intended to identify and investigate specific elements of the cycling process that permit—or inhibit—the gradual transformation of texts produced by individual writers into documents that represent the pronouncements of corporate authority. To borrow Debs's metaphor, the study attempts to "unveil" organizational dynamics that facilitate, or impede, the process of document cycling as a strategy intended to achieve corporate goals.

The results of a case study involving two writers who work in a Fortune 500 company will be presented. Both writers are employed in the information security function, the division of the organization responsible for the confidentiality, integrity, and accessibility of information processed and stored by the Company's computer systems. These writers were selected for this

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study because (1) both are experienced with the process of document cycling and (2) these persons generate documents addressed to the Company's 23,000 employees and intended to define and communicate corporate policy. The study examines the invention and drafting processes of these writers. However, attention is primarily focused upon the organizational roles occupied by the authors and their reviewers and the manner by which power relations represented by these roles contribute to, or detract from, the ability of document cycling to attain corporate goals.

The study is guided by three research questions:

1. Has the cycling process, as exemplified by the two writers in this case study, resulted in the generation of documents that effectively contribute to organizational needs?
2. What elements of the cycling process facilitate, or impede, the transformation of single-authored texts into documents that have been granted corporate authority?
3. What are the pedagogical implications, if any, of the analysis of the document cycling process emerging from this study?

Method

The research method selected for this study is that of participant-observer ethnography, similar to that adopted by Smart (1993) in his examination of the writing processes used by policy and administrative staff at the Bank of Canada.

Between January 4 and September 18, 2006, I met daily for 20 minutes with two writers, Dan and Larry (pseudonyms, although both are male) to discuss the processes by which their texts are drafted, reviewed, revised, and, ultimately, published for corporate readership. In this timeframe, I conducted a total of 123 interviews; they focused upon the following issues:

1. What are your responsibilities within the organization?
2. What is your role in the corporation, especially in relation to your supervisor, other levels of senior management, technical specialists, reviewers of documents, and readers?
3. What documents currently occupy your time?
4. What are the purposes of the these documents, and who are the intended readers?
5. Have you recently met or communicated with technical specialists concerning the content of documents that you are currently drafting?
6. Are the contents of the documents sufficiently clear in your mind that you can compose a cogent and structured text?
7. How much time did you devote to writing during the previous day? What phase of the writing process (e.g., planning, drafting, editing, reviewing) was the focus of your attention?
8. Have you communicated with your supervisor or other reviewers concerning their reactions to the document? What suggestions or other comments have they offered?

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9. Have you incorporated the comments of your supervisor and other reviewers into the draft document?
10. What obstacles, if any, have you encountered while preparing the document for publication? How will these obstacles be surmounted?
11. What feedback, if any, have you received concerning a published document?
12. Do you feel that the document cycling process generally results in the publication of documents that meet the organization's needs? Why or why not?

I retained written notes of the responses gathered during all interviews.

During the nine-month span of the study, Dan published 42 texts and Larry generated 20 documents. Frequent interaction with the writers was possible because I am a co-worker, employed in another department of the Information Security function. My work is not directly related to the work performed by Dan or Larry, although all three of us report to the same supervisor. I am also a friend of these colleagues, having known each for several years.

I informed Dan and Larry that their responses to interview questions and copies of any documents supplied to me—including electronic mail correspondence with supervisors and reviewers—would remain confidential.

In addition to the interviews, I was provided access to drafts of all documents generated by the writers, and also to copies of written comments prepared by reviewers and to the responses to these comments. In addition, I conducted two interviews with the writers' supervisor and other major stakeholders responsible for reviewing the documents (e.g., the Head of Internal Audit, the Global Compliance Officer assigned to Information Security, and Information Security Officers assigned to all affiliates and subsidiaries of the Corporation.) These interviews focused on the following topics:

1. As you read the documents submitted by Dan and Larry, what are your primary concerns—grammar, the mechanics of writing, accuracy and thoroughness of content, clarity of written expression, the potential reactions of other readers?
2. When you suggest changes to a text, do you propose alternate wording, offer a general direction for improvement, or both?
3. Do you expect all your suggestions to be reflected in the published documents?
4. Do you feel that the document cycling process generally results in the publication of documents that meet the organization's needs? Why or why not?

I also retained written notes of all responses to these interview queries.

Dan: Developer of corporate policy

Dan is currently 59 years old; he has worked in the field of information security for 22 years, the last seven of which have been at the Fortune 500 company. During the past five years, his work has focused entirely upon the production of written texts. Dan's experience and training is that of an information security specialist, not a professional writer. Like many employees in business

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environments, he has been assigned writing tasks because management has determined that he "has a way with words."

His current work consists of developing the Company's information security policies and standards. As he explains, a policy is a "broad statement of the company's position concerning information security practices, such as appropriate email usage." A standard is "a more detailed description of provisions by which the company ensures that the policies are implemented. For example, the Company has an 'Authentication' standard that describes, among other details, the minimum length of passwords used to access computer systems."

Currently, the Company has six information security policies and 24 standards; each policy is approximately 10 pages in length, and standards are usually 4-8 pages long. Most documents consist of a numbered, and sometimes bulleted, list of rules that must be enforced throughout the Company to assure the security of corporate information processed by or stored in computer systems. One or more of the policies or standards are revised on a monthly basis, depending upon the concerns of senior management. According to Dan, these documents are developed because "they provide guidelines by which information technology professionals and employees in business units understand and comply with a set of authorized rules; the policies and standards ensure that acceptable practices—such as the minimum length of a password—do not have to be reinvented whenever a problem arises."

Most of Dan's writing consists of revising existing standards to resolve issues that, in the opinion of management, have become controversial or are perceived to fill gaps in current rules. Although Dan occasionally generates some of these revisions on his own initiative, most of the assignments originate from his supervisor, the Head of Information Security. This individual is also designated the corporate "owner" of all information security policies and standards and is considered responsible, by the organization's senior management, for the content of these documents. When a specific rule requires modification, Dan and his supervisor meet face-to-face and the supervisor describes a desired revision. This description is not usually an explicit formulation of the written rule; rather, the supervisor explains the problem requiring resolution and suggests general wording for the rule change. Prior to commencing a draft, Dan often must consult with technical specialists in order to clarify specific issues or to acquire a coherent, structured arrangement of ideas that can be comprehended by non-technical readers. Often, this phase of clarification is quite lengthy. "Once," Dan admitted, "we were developing a policy concerning the security of wireless networks. The topic is so complex, and is evolving at such a rapid rate, that I had to meet with telecommunications personnel for nearly a year before writing one word of the first draft."

Following his meetings with technicians, Dan drafts a proposed text, based on the supervisor's recommendations. During the drafting process, as the proposed text reveals logical gaps or transitions, Dan may further consult with other information security or technical specialists to obtain additional information. After the draft is prepared, Dan returns to his manager to review the wording. At this meeting, the supervisor may approve the whole of Dan's document, suggest further modification, or reject the proposal and recommend a re-write. Dan usually accepts these changes, although he occasionally proposes alternate wording that may further clarify the rule. The manager considers Dan's comments before making a final decision concerning the wording;

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however, Dan cannot proceed with the cycling process until his supervisor has approved the document. On average, a document will be cycled, or reviewed, two times before supervisory approval is granted. In some instances, however, a single sentence may require a full month to draft.

After obtaining his manager's authorization, Dan forwards an email message, with the proposed rule change attached, to 16 members of the Information Security Steering Committee (ISSC). Members of this group comprise stakeholders throughout the Corporation whose functions involve oversight or implementation of the Company's information security program. These stakeholders include representatives of the Compliance Division, the Internal Audit function, and information security managers in all corporate subsidiaries throughout the world. Dan's email message requests each member to review the proposed text, to offer comments or alternate wording, and to email his or her suggestions to Dan within a few days.

Although the individuals belonging to this committee are all concerned with developing a strong security program, the members do not interact as a group. Rather, they are expected to offer responses that reflect the unique concerns and practices of their own divisions or geographic locations. Most members of the committee provide no feedback. However, whenever Dan forwards a "request for comments," at least one individual offers a response. In many instances, the comments are editorial—requests to modify one or two words. Occasionally, stakeholders will propose alternate text that modifies the meaning of the original draft.

Dan develops a summary of all responses and reviews this summary with his supervisor. Suggested editorial changes are generally accepted, unless they are clearly inaccurate or inappropriate. Together, Dan and the supervisor discuss responses that may alter the document's original meaning; if the proposal represents an improved formulation of the proposed rule, and if it preserves the intent of the rule, the suggestion will be approved. However, if a comment alters the purpose of the rule, the supervisor will reject it. In these instances, the supervisor will personally contact the individual who has objected to the rule and negotiate a settlement. Although the supervisor would prefer that a final policy reflect a consensus of stakeholders, complete agreement is not always possible. In these instances, Dan's supervisor—the Head of Information Security—has a corporate responsibility to ensure that suggestions that are not technically feasible, or impossible to implement due to resource or other constraints, will not be incorporated into corporate policy.

After this final session with his supervisor, Dan incorporates all approved changes into the revised policy and forwards it, via email, to the bank's Compliance Division for publication. "I'm always careful," Dan mentioned, "that the email message contains the sentence: 'This modification has been approved by the senior management of Information Security.' Also, I always send a copy of the final document to my supervisor." Within two days, the new text is published in the Company's Policy Directory, a Lotus Notes database accessible to all employees worldwide. Dan's name does not appear on the document; however, the title of his supervisor, the "Head of Information Security," is described as the policy "owner."

Larry: Corporate security educator

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Larry is 55 years old and has been employed at the Company for nearly 30 years. During his first two decades with the organization, Larry worked as a programmer and as a supervisor of information technology personnel. He joined the information security function about 10 years ago, and has been writing security awareness bulletins for approximately half that time. Like Dan, Larry is assigned to writing tasks because his managers are pleased with his clear prose and its conversational tone; however, Larry's formal education and training is that of a technician, not a writer or professional communicator.

Larry's awareness bulletins are written for an intended readership of all Company employees, nearly 23,000 worldwide. These bulletins, called "Smart Tips", are brief messages—usually no more than two full computer screens in length—intended to provide instruction concerning good security practices. Many of these practices are applicable to computer users in any organization: never share your passwords with another person; don't open email messages from an untrusted source. Occasionally, however, the messages refer to policies unique to the Company: always select a password that is at least eight characters in length; never divulge personal information concerning customers to non-employees.

Larry writes at least one awareness message each month. His supervisor frequently selects the topics of these bulletins, although any employee of the Company can suggest potential subjects. Occasionally, Larry develops topics on his own initiative.

His writing process proceeds in defined stages. First, he selects a title intended to draw the reader's attention (e.g., "Have You Been Spoofed Lately?"). Then, in the first paragraph, Larry relates an anecdote or describes a recent event that serves as "lead-in" to the basic lesson. As he explains, "I try to adopt a conversational tone that will be friendly while, at the same time, cause the reader to become engaged with the subject." After the first paragraph, Larry introduces a specific "best practice." He explains why employees should adopt this practice and often provides "how-to" instructions if the topic describes a behavior or procedure. The Smart Tip concludes by informing employees that they may send an email to Larry if they have additional questions or request further assistance.

In the process of composing his message, Larry may require clarification concerning Corporate policy, legal issues, or technical matters. When this specialized information is required, Larry consults with subject matter experts within the organization. As with Dan, this process of obtaining information is often time-consuming. "One of my Smart Tips," Larry explained, "dealt with the importance of employees making copies of information stored on their Company-owned laptops. Unfortunately, there was no authorized method for making these copies. Dan and I had to meet with seven different technical specialists before I could write a document that described one method that all could agree upon. These meetings took nearly two months!"

After completing his first draft, Larry sends a copy via email to his supervisor. Only rarely does the manager correct spelling, grammar, or mechanical errors. Rather, the supervisor reviews the document to ensure that information is accurate and that the text conveys its intended message. Sometimes, the manager eliminates specific words and substitutes new terms or phrases deemed more appropriate. Larry occasionally discusses these suggestions and persuades his supervisor that the original wording is more consistent with the document's purpose. More frequently,

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however, Larry accepts the manager's recommendations. As with documents produced by Dan, Larry's work will usually be reviewed an average of two times prior to approval.

When the supervisor's review is complete and Larry has revised the document to conform to the recommendations, he forwards a copy of the document to a representative of the Corporate Communications Division. Corporate Communications is responsible for reviewing and approving all documents sent via email to employees. Even though Larry's Smart Tips will be transmitted under his own name, Corporate Communications must ensure that the text contains no content that may deemed offensive or inappropriate.

Several years ago, when Larry commenced writing his security awareness bulletins, he frequently encountered conflicts with Corporate Communications. "They really didn't understand why or what I was writing," he confessed. "At first, Corporate Communications felt that the content and tone of many messages conveyed subtle, inappropriate subtexts. When I wrote a message explaining that employees should not share their passwords, the Communications Division claimed I was implying that the employees were careless and oblivious to the need for confidentiality. When I prepared a Smart Tip about the dangers of opening email messages from unknown sources, Communications said that I should not frighten the staff." Apparently, the Information Security and Communications Divisions maintained divergent perspectives concerning the anticipated reactions to security awareness messages. In fact, these perspectives were sufficiently dissimilar that Larry's supervisor was required to meet with Corporate Communications personnel and clarify the needs of Information Security. The meeting was successful, and these conflicts were not repeated. Since that time, the reviews conducted by Corporate Communications have consisted primarily of correcting grammatical errors and copyediting text to replace infelicitous wording. For example, Larry once introduced a sentence with the phrase: "The Bank's employees." Corporate Communications, recognizing that the organization includes subsidiaries and affiliates that are not banks, altered the phrase to a more inclusive "The Company's employees."

Larry says that his supervisor "doesn't want to see the revisions made by Corporate Communications, because they have the final approval concerning the contents of documents. I am ready to publish after Communications completes its edit." Thus, following any corrections and modifications made by the representative of Corporate Communications, Larry forwards an email copy of the message to all Company employees. He is clearly attributed as author of the text, and many employees respond to him directly if they request clarification of the contents.

Discussion

1. Has the cycling process, as exemplified by the two writers in this case study, resulted in the generation of documents that effectively contribute to organizational needs?

Since April 2003 Dan has written 30 policies and standards and also composed 192 revisions to these documents; Larry has published 86 SmartTips during the same timeframe. The policies, standards, and security awareness bulletins have received favorable review from Internal Audit, the Company's external auditors, and from state and federal bank examiners. In addition, senior managers from other financial service organizations have contacted Dan and Larry to obtain

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advice concerning methods for producing policies and security awareness bulletins. All individuals interviewed—including the two writers, their supervisor, and major reviewers—agreed that the document cycling process exemplified by Dan and Larry resulted in the generation of documents that effectively contributed to organizational needs. Most respondents indicated that document cycling was an efficient method of generating text when time constraints are a significant consideration. Also, the majority of persons interviewed believed that cycling ensures that individuals most affected by policies will have an influence upon the contents of finished documents. Assessed by these factors, it seems that the document cycling process, as practiced by these writers, is an effective method for generating text that has a "strategic impact" (Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004, p. 95) upon the Company.

2. What elements of the cycling process facilitate, or impede, the transformation of single-authored texts into documents that have been granted corporate authority?

An integral element of the cycling process, as exemplified in this study, is the role played by corporate "gatekeepers" during the cycling process. For Dan, the primary gatekeeper is his supervisor; for Larry, Corporate Communications performs this function. A "gatekeeper" may be defined as an individual responsible for granting approval for the publication of a document. In this capacity, the gatekeeper has authority to determine content, to make editorial corrections, and to reject wording that is deemed inappropriate. Gatekeepers retain the power to transform text written by a single individual into a document that reflects and articulates a corporate perspective. This power is not a merely arbitrary assumption of authority. Rather, the gatekeepers who oversee the work produced by Dan and Larry are also individuals held responsible by their senior management for the contents of documents. Dan's supervisor, for example, is considered the owner of information security policies and is accountable for their effectiveness. Similarly, Corporate Communications has been granted authority to ensure that all email messages transmitted to employees accurately represent a corporate perspective.

An equally significant element of the document cycling process exemplified by Dan and Larry is that all participants occupy unique roles within the organization and these roles are structured within a hierarchy of power relations. The most obvious of these power relations exists between Dan, Larry, and their supervisor. However, relationships of power are not necessarily determined by the structure of a formal corporate organization chart. For example, the representative of Corporate Communications holds the title of Managing Director, the same title held by Dan and Larry's supervisor. Yet the supervisor recognizes that Corporate Communications retains ultimate authority concerning the publication of awareness bulletins. The reviewers of policy documents, even though they may retain high status on a formal organization chart, recognize that Dan and Larry's supervisor is usually responsible for the contents of security policy; therefore, the reviewers defer to the supervisor as the final arbiter concerning the contents of policies and standards. It seems, therefore, that the hierarchy of power relations—and the concept of "gatekeeper"—are both based upon the assignment of corporate responsibility for a specific function. The Head of Information Security, for example, is held accountable for the contents of policies; the Corporate Communications function is assigned responsibility for messages transmitted to all employees. The document-cycling process must occur in accordance with these recognized power relationships.

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3. What are the pedagogical implications, if any, of the analysis of the document cycling process emerging from this study?

Collaborative writing, as described in many business communication textbooks, is often described as an effort involving a group of authors jointly contributing to a single document. However, as mentioned previously, research does not sustain this view. Indeed, most prior research concerning collaborative writing in workplace environments emphasizes that document cycling—single-authored documents reviewed by supervisors and other stakeholders—is the most common form of collaboration. From this perspective, the case study of Dan and Larry has potential pedagogical significance.

The process of document cycling, as described in this study and in prior research (Adam, 2000; Couture & Rymer, 1993; Freedman & Adam, 2000; Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004; Paradis, et al., 1985; Paré, 2000; Smart, 1993), involves individuals who are assigned specific roles within an organization. In turn, these roles are structured within formal or informal power relationships. Although Dan and Larry may engage in dialogic interaction with their supervisor and others, the writers recognize that they do not retain authority to transform their texts into pronouncements that reflect corporate perspectives. Only the "gatekeeper" can perform this function.

From a pedagogical perspective, this form of document cycling may be simulated with exercises that incorporate specific roles, a power hierarchy, and a gatekeeper. For example, the instructor can divide the class into groups of three. One student in each group assumes the role of a staff writer, one represents the writer's supervisor, and the third adopts the persona of a representative of Corporate Communications. All students are presented with a checklist of guidelines that specifies the major concerns of each role. Checklists will include a description of the document purpose (the text should have broad corporate implications, such as a Human Resources policy), its approximate length (perhaps no more than 250 words), and its intended audience (e.g., all employees). Additionally, the writer's checklist will explain expectations concerning language and style. The supervisor's list will include the task of assessing accuracy of contents. Corporate Communications is charged with ensuring that documents will not reflect adversely upon the organization or any employee and also that text is grammatically correct. Each member of the group will receive a copy of all three checklists.

After completing an acceptable draft, the "writer" will submit the document to the "supervisor" for review. Face-to-face discussion of the supervisor's comments will occur, and the writer will have an opportunity to negotiate differing views with the supervisor; however, the latter retains authority concerning the contents of the document. In addition, both writer and supervisor must consider the likely reactions of Corporate Communications, the third reviewer, when conducting their revisions. The writer and supervisor continue to cycle, or review, the text until an acceptable product is generated.

The representative of Corporate Communications, the ultimate gatekeeper, will next review the document. Suggestions and comments should reflect the perspective of this function; however, the writer and supervisor will retain the right to dissent and offer persuasive arguments regarding alternate views. However, only Corporate Communications has authority to grant approval for publication.

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The full simulation is intended to focus upon the process of revising texts multiple times, a process driven by the needs and expectations of individuals who occupy differing roles within a corporate hierarchy. Students are thus provided an opportunity to experience the manner by which textual content and rhetorical features of written documents are influenced by the roles and responsibilities assigned to individuals within an organization. Most important, the exercise focuses upon the significance of a gatekeeper who must approve the completed text in order to grant to it the status of an authorized corporate statement.

This process is repeated two more times within the group, to provide an opportunity for each student to assume one of the roles. Evaluation of each group's effort will consider the adequacy with which members have assumed specific roles, the appropriateness of reviewers' suggestions, the effectiveness of personal interaction between the writer and reviewers, and the extent to which the final written product addresses its originally stated purpose.

Conclusion

Commencing with the publication of the Paradis et al. (1985) study that identified document cycling as a integral element of writing in the workplace, numerous researchers have examined cycling as a method of conducting collaborative editing. This study identifies an additional function performed by cycling. More specifically, the case study of Dan and Larry demonstrates that document cycling serves to transform single-authored texts into pronouncements that reflect and articulate a corporate perspective. Two major factors contribute to this transformation: (1) the presence of an hierarchy of power relations, comprised of clearly demarcated sets of roles and responsibilities and (2) the existence of "gatekeepers" who are assigned responsibility to grant corporate authority to documents that meet specific criteria. Document-cycling, as exemplified by Dan and Larry, occurs within the broader context of the organizational dynamics created by these power relations. Thus, cycling is not merely a form of collaborative writing; rather, this process is one among many activities—such as establishing budget priorities and making purchasing decisions—that depend upon the review and approval of authorized members of an established corporate hierarchy.

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Biography

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Management Ethics and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

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Questionable management ethics, as typified by the 2002 business scandals, is hardly a new phenomenon in America. Indeed, a glance at the past reveals that management and vested self-interest have been bedfellows for at least a century. An examination of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, an entirely preventable disaster that claimed 146 lives, illustrates how greed blind-sided the owners to issues of worker safety. This paper explores the incident, the owners' indifference, and ethical issues suitable for classroom discussion; the goal is to equip instructors with enough information to acquaint their students with management ethics case that differs from the current crop and to dramatically portray the pitfalls of obsession with material wealth.

The Triangle case is quite compelling for classroom presentation and discussion, providing an excellent example of why regulations and oversight are essential. Sources are readily available, both in hard copy and on the Web; the following are the most accurate and will provide students with detailed information (please consult References for full publication information): David Von Drehle, *Triangle: The Fire That Changed America* (2003); Patricia L. Pence et al, "And All Who Jumped Died" (2003); and Douglas O. Linder, "The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire" (2002). For visual images, which have a far greater impact than words, two websites are useful: "The Triangle Factory Fire" at Cornell University=s Kheel Center (this site also serves as a repository of primary documents), and "The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Trial" at University of Missouri, Kansas City, School of Law's "Famous Trials" site.

Precursors

Four items set the stage for the Triangle fire: the Iroquois Theater Fire, the development of fire prevention measures, engineering ethics codes, and union activism.

In 1903, a terrible fire at the "fireproof" (O=Brien & Benedict, n.d.) Iroquois Theater in Chicago killed 602, mainly women and children attending a matinee. A century later, it is still deemed the worst single-structure fire in US history (Arnold, 2005). Investigations revealed that fire prevention measures, such as an asbestos curtain designed to curtail the spread of a backstage fire to the cavernous auditorium, were ineffectual, and the design of the structure itself prohibited efficient egress: labyrinthine corridors were difficult to negotiate in darkness; bolted and/or inward-swinging doors trapped the panicked crowd inside (Brandt, 2003). The fire had

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major impacts on Chicago fire codes, including revised building codes and requirements for posted floor plans clearly identifying exits. In fact, theaters worldwide retrofitted with fire prevention measures (Zasky, Burning, 2000-5). Improvements did not, however, extend to factories.

Most of the fire prevention devices we associate with buildings today existed at the turn of the 20th century, including firewalls and alarms, automatic sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers, and emergency exits, as did steel-framed, fire resistant structures (Wermiel, 2000). What differed, however, was building codes. Fire prevention measures--even something as simple as fire drills--were not required, and owners were reluctant to pay for expensive extras. Triangle owners Harris and Blanck, for example, refused to pay $5,000 for an automatic sprinkler system, despite the fact that the contents of their factory, primarily fabrics and patterns, were extremely volatile (At Least 96 Killed, 2003). But the real reason may lie in indifferent, or even hostile, attitudes about the recent immigrants, especially Jews, who comprised the bulk of garment industry's workforce; as one business owner stated, "Let 'em burn. They're a lot of cattle anyway" (Pence et al., 2003, p. 418).

Triangle-era engineering ethics codes, such as the one developed by the American Institute of Consulting Engineers, also are helpful in defining the ethos of the times. They focus solely on the behavior of individual engineers and interactions between engineers and clients. The 12 clauses of the AICE code detail caution in financial arrangements, conflicts of interest, and competition, especially in regards to bidding practices (1911). Protection for workers and the general public is not addressed, and the field of safety engineering did not exist then.

Finally, the Triangle factory itself was controversial. Before the fire, it had received enormous publicity due to a workers' strike in 1909. Slave labor conditions in Manhattan's burgeoning garment district gave rise to discontent as workers, typically young, immigrant women, toiled 10-12 hours a day, six or seven days a week, for about $6. Factory conditions ranged from dismal to deplorable, and management typically locked exit doors, to prevent workers from taking extra breaks or pilphering materials. In fact, as noted on the AFL-CIO website, "It is estimated that more than 100 workers died every day on the job . . ." (n.d.).

By November 1909, desperate to improve working conditions and aroused by the stirring speeches of Samuel Gompers and Clara Lemlich--a 15-year-old Ukrainian-born worker--at a meeting of the International Ladies Garment Workers= Union, thousands of workers from 500 factories, led by the Triangle ladies, went on strike in the streets of Manhattan, demanding decreased hours and increased wages (AFL-CIO, n.d.). The strike, dubbed "The Uprising of 20,000," lasted 14 months, and while more than 300 factories capitulated to labor demands, Triangle was not among them (Lower East Side, 2005).

These four conditions provide a backdrop and social context for the disastrous 1911 fire. The Chicago fire of 1903 underscores the inadequate application of fire prevention measures of the

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time, more buoyed by hope than substance; engineering ethics codes avoid mentioning public safety; and labor unrest made management more obstinate about acquiescing to implementing additional safety precautions.



Figure 1. The Gibson Girl=s waist-and-skirt attire influenced fashion for more than 30 years (Thomas, 2001-7).

The Incident

Saturday, March 25, 1911, dawned bright and beautiful in New York City, with clear skies and warm weather. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, owned by "Shirtwaist Kings" Isaac Harris and Max Blanck, occupied the top three floors of the steel-framed, 10-story Asch Building, located in Manhattan's Lower East Side, in the heart of the garment district. It was one of more than 800 "loft" buildings, standing between 8 and 20 stories high, that had sprung up between 1901 and 1911 in response to the growing demands of the garment industry: cheap labor, inexpensive fabrics, and new technology, combined with the "Gibson Girl" ideal of the independent woman (see Figure 1), resulted in a doubling of blouse manufacturing within a decade (Von Drehle, 2003).

The high-ceilinged loft buildings were perfect for manufacturing concerns such as Triangle, for they allowed the owners to pack a maximum of workers into a minimum of space and provided the required 250 cubic feet of airspace per person. Triangle owners divided the floors according to function: cutting on the eighth, sewing on the ninth, and administrative offices and shipping on the tenth. The floors were serviced by two 12-person elevators, two stairwells measuring 33" in width, and one very flimsy fire escape, not nearly enough, in retrospect, to support the quick evacuation of more than 500 workers. Exit doors were inward-swinging and generally locked during operating hours (Von Drehle, 2003).

On this day, the factory was a beehive of activity, even at closing time. At 4:40 p.m., eighth floor cutter Isidore Abramanowitz noticed a tiny flame in his scrap bin, the result, apparently, of a carelessly discarded match or cigarette. At

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Triangle, workers collected scraps in large bins, which fit under the cutting tables; debris was hauled away every two months or so by rag dealer Louis Levy, a ton at a time (Von Drehle, 2003). The large bins, however, served another purpose: they provided hiding places at inspection times for the "cleaners," children hired to snip extra threads from the blouses (Pence et al., 2003).

Despite a water dousing, the flame persisted, fed by volatile fabric scraps and tissue paper patterns draped over tables and hung about the room. When the fire reached the airshafts, it exploded on the top two floors (Von Drehle, 2003) and became an inferno. In 15 brief minutes, 146 Triangle workers, aged 13-23, were dead, their bodies scattered throughout the factory's ninth floor and littering the sidewalks of surrounding streets.

Floor by Floor

Workers on the eighth floor were lucky: all, save one, escaped, either by crowding into the small elevators, clambering down the narrow staircases, or exiting via the flimsy fire escape.

Tenth floor workers, including the owners, likewise escaped. Warned by a message sent from the eighth floor through the teleautograph, an early fax device, many fled to the roof. But the Asch Building was stories shorter than adjacent buildings. Their plaintive cries alerted Frank Sommers, a professor at nearby New York Law University (Von Drehle, 2003); he and his students lowered ladders to the roof and rescued 150 people (Pence et al., 2003).

Workers in the sewing room, however, faced a grim fate, attributable to room arrangement. The ninth floor featured continuous rows of sewing machine tables, 75 feet long, with no walkways except around the perimeter. The 240 workers sat with their chairs back-to- back, with little walking space between. Tables were separated by a trough, into which the workers placed finished pieces. The few who survived managed to squeeze through the sole open exit before the panic-stricken crowd rendered the inward-swinging door inoperable. Those seated at machines in the middle of the room were doomed.

Escape via the stairwells meant running through a formidable curtain of fire, and the main elevator was stalled at the ground floor, held fast by the weight of 30 women who, in desperation, jumped down the shaft. Operator Joseph Zito described the scene in chilling detail: "They kept coming down from the flaming floors above. Some of their clothing was burning as they fell. I could see streaks of fire coming down like flaming rockets" (Von Drehle, 2003, p.154). The jingle of coins accompanied the thuds of falling bodies; Saturday was payday at Triangle, and wages rolled out of pay packets as the women jumped to their deaths (Beedle, 1996).

Some ingenious male employees formed a "human bridge" to the window of an adjacent building, and several women crawled across to safety. As panic set in, however, the weight of the fleeing workers collapsed the bridge, and all fell to their deaths (Pence et al., 2003). Two

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dozen more died when the fire escape collapsed; they were either impaled on an iron fence or crashed through a glassed section of sidewalk into the building's basement, their flaming bodies igniting more fires (Von Drehle, 2003).

Those remaining in the workroom were faced with a daunting decision: to burn or to jump. Some 63 chose the latter, hurtling 85 feet to the pavement below. Observers initially thought that the flaming bundles were bolts of cloth. As they unfurled, however, they were clearly people. Firefighters positioned safety nets and blankets to no avail: the bodies hit with a force of 11,000 pounds, tearing through the nets and the sidewalks beneath (Wallechinsky & Irving, 1975-81). Most leapt in pairs or groups, their combined weight further rendering the nets useless (Beedle, 1996).

Union Press reporter William Shepherd was out and about, enjoying a late afternoon stroll in the pleasant spring weather, when he came upon the biggest story of his life. Transfixed, he watched the human downpour in horror: "Down came bodies in a shower, burning, smoking, lighted bodies, with the disheveled hair of the girls trailing upward" (Von Drehle, 2003, p.159).

An hour later, it was all over. Inside, a nightmare awaited the firemen: 19 bodies melted to a locked door (Pence et al., 2003), a heap of 50--some with arms clasped about each others= necks--who sought shelter in a dressing room, others strewn about the room, suffocated by heat and toxic fumes "so intense that they dropped where they stood as flowers might wither," fire marshall Edward Beer later testified (Von Drehle, 2003, p.186). Fire chief Edward Croker described a grisly scene on the ninth floor, "bodies burned to bare bones, skeletons bending over sewing machines" (Linder, 2002).

Bodies were laid out in a makeshift morgue, awaiting identification by relatives. More than 100,000 mourners participated in the funeral procession, with another 250,000 silently observing the solemn parade (Hoenig, 2005).

Aftermath

Two days after the fire, New York City officials launched an intensive, two-week investigation that resulted in the indictments of Harris and Blanck for manslaughter (Linder, 2002). Three days after the fire, the Shirtwaist Kings reopened Triangle at another location (Pence et al., 2003).

The trial began on December 4; as Harris and Blanck entered the crowded courtroom, they were greeted with shouts of "Murderers! Murderers!" from victims' angry relatives. The court even brought in extra policemen to quell the disturbance (Linder, 2002).

Prosecutor Charles Bostwick called 103 witnesses, including Triangle employees (Linder, 2002). However, Harris and Blanck had the savvy and finances to hire a brilliant lawyer, Max Steuer, whom *The New Yorker* described as "born to be a lawyer as Mozart was born to music" (Von

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Drehle, 2003, p. 224). Using ingenious, albeit ethically slippery, logic, he managed to cast doubt on survivors' eyewitness testimony and convinced the judge to give the jury an impossible charge: not only were they to determine if exit doors were locked, but that Harris and Blanck knew they were (Von Drehle, 2003).

The trial lasted for three weeks, and after deliberating less than two hours, the jury delivered its verdict of not guilty. Exonerated, Harris and Blanck had a police escort out of the courtroom back door but were chased down a subway station by an angry crowd screaming for justice (Von Drehle, 2003).

Twenty-three families filed civil suits for damages. Harris and Blanck collected $200,000 in insurance for loss of the factory (Pence et al., 2003). By the time suits were settled in 1914, each plaintiff received a payment of $75 (Wallechinsky & Irving, 1975-81), a paltry sum to compensate for the loss of a life.

The Owners

Triangle owners Isaac Harris and Max Blanck were self-made men, cut in the classic Horatio Alger mold. Born in Russia in the 1860s, they emigrated, separately, to America in the 1880s and set up a partnership about two decades later. It was Blanck who made the initial foray in the garment trade, as a "bundle" contractor with a small shop. By 1895, his business expanded and his three brothers became involved. A few years later, Harris fell in love with Blanck's wife's cousin, a move that brought him into the family business. In 1900, Triangle was born, and by 1906, the Shirtwaist Kings were firmly ensconced in the Asch Building (Von Drehle, 2003).

Their timing was fortuitous, for by 1909, Americans were spending the contemporary equivalent of $23 billion annually on ready-made clothing (Von Drehle, 2003), and Triangle was one of the largest manufacturers of ladies' blouses, producing 10-12,000 shirtwaists a week (Hoenig, 2005), worth about $21 million a year (Zasky, Fire, 2000-5), in contemporary dollars.

Also by 1909, labor unrest was coming to a head. Harris and Blanck led the management response by promptly hiring thugs to assault the striking workers, whom they later fired. In their stead, their hired prostitutes, "to show," as John Hoenig suggests, "their contempt for the strikers" (2005, p. 22). Considering their own immigrant roots, Harris and Blanck's attitudes towards their workers was ironic at best, contemptuous at worst. Pauline Newman, who started work at Triangle when she was eight years old and escaped the fire, captured the workers' frustration in a National Public Radio interview:

> And you worked seven days a week. If you didn't come in on Sunday, you were fired on Monday. If you were caught talking to the girls next to you, you were fired. The attitude of the employers was that you are no human being, you just have two hands, and your two hands, to them, weren't worth more than what they paid. In other words, it was a damnable place to work, but there was no alternative. The others were just as bad (Baker,

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1999).

In retrospect, Hoenig explains, “Blanck and Harris were not decent businessmen. They were dishonest, vicious, cheap and unrepentant” (2005, p. 21). And they were all too familiar with fire, paying premium insurance rates due to their involvement in four prior fires, including two at Triangle. The Asch Building itself had hosted seven fires (Von Drehle, 2003). Some suggest that the two concocted small, early morning fires at their factories to get rid of end-of-the-season inventories and thus enhance profits (Hoenig, 2005). But the 1911 fire was different, bringing to the forefront of public attention squalid working conditions and, more importantly, locked exits that doomed the ninth floor workers.

Ethical Issues

From this brief recounting of the case, students are quick to discern a number of obvious ethical issues involving the owners, treatment of workers, and general business disposition. Less visible are the engineering-related issues. Engineering, however, is the environment that we live in; therefore, it behooves us to try to understand the workings of structures in which we spend our lives. And in the Triangle case, it was the interplay of business and engineering that resulted in disaster.

Greed

The overriding ethical issue in the Triangle case is greed. Not only did Harris and Blanck pay pitiful wages for excruciating work in wretched conditions, they actually benefitted from the fire to the tune of $445 per victim. Their high insurance premiums paid off: they collected nearly $65,000 in excess of the value of the factory=s contents (Pence et al., 2003).

Indeed, their greed was a catalyst for the loss of life, as the primary reason for the locked exit was to prevent employees from stealing fabric and lace from the factory. During the trial, however, Harris admitted on the stand that the total cost of stolen goods amounted to less than $25 over five years (Linder, 2002). Even by today’s standards, this amounts to only $100 a year.

It is tempting to think that, as a society, we have outgrown such adolescent selfishness, that we are more altruistic now. However, as Mike Nixon of the *St. Louis Daily Record* (2006) points out, there are certain similarities between the Triangle fire and the Enron scandal: both cases resulted in substantial damage to employees, management was clearly responsible, and the public was outraged. But with Enron, Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling were found criminally liable. Hopefully, Nixon contends, the Enron verdicts will have the same type of impact on financial and investment safety as Triangle had on physical safety.

Callousness

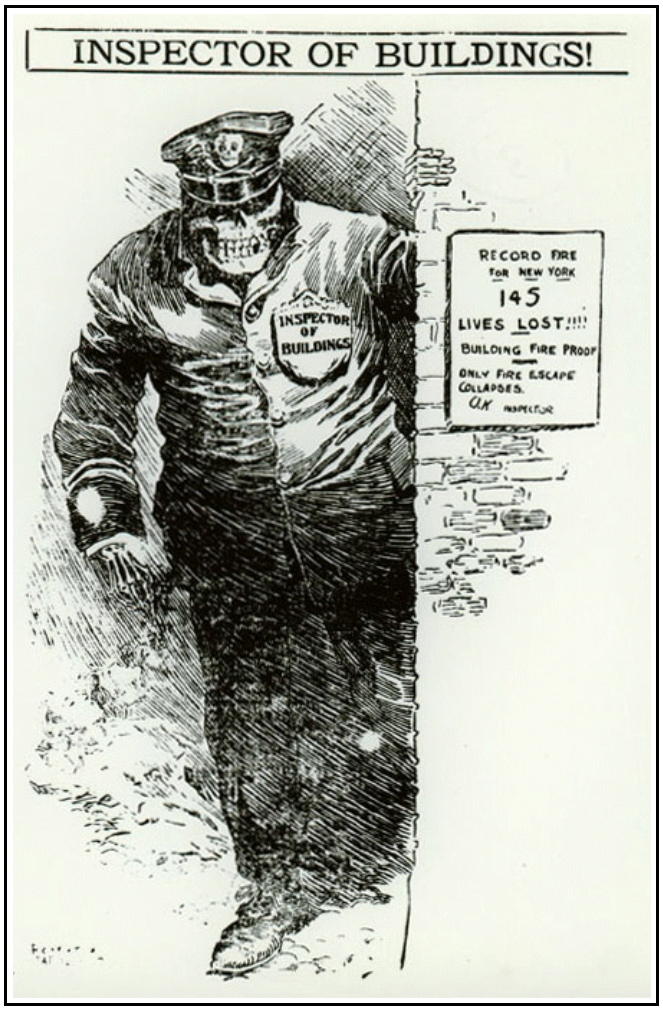
After the Triangle fire, New York fire chief John Kenyon stated his belief that “no life would

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have been lost" if the factory had an automatic sprinkler system (Davis, 1988, p.7). One of the most disturbing elements of this case is that the Shirtwaist Kings simply did not care about the welfare of their employees. Had they shown the least bit of compassion and concern, they would have invested the paltry amount necessary to equip the factory with fire prevention measures such as firewalls and automatic sprinkler systems.

Or they could have conducted regular fire drills at minimal cost, something they flatly refused to do, even though insurance inspector Peter McKeon suggested two years before the fire that such a move would be prudent (At Least 96 Killed, 2003). This simple measure would have alleviated much of the confusion at the time of the fire and saved lives, giving the ninth floor workers the additional three minutes required to escape (Von Drehle, 2003).

However, due to a seemingly endless supply of immigrant labor, especially Jewish tailors, factory workers were viewed as expendable (Behrens, 1983). Owners could, in fact, fire their entire workforce on one day, as happened in the Triangle strike of 1909, and hire a new crew the next. According to Leon Stein in *The Triangle Fire*, an early seminal work, "the women who produced the shirtwaists were both figuratively and literally invisible to the owners who profited from them" (1962, p.161).



Labor supply aside, Harris and Blanck had a moral obligation to provide for the safety of their workers, and they simply failed to do so. Fat wallets were apparently more important than human lives.

Inspections

In the public outrage that erupted after the fire, city building inspectors were pilloried in the press once it became known that the factory had regularly passed inspections. Figure 2 shows a typical editorial cartoon that clearly places the blame on a cadaverous inspector.

While the city building department vigorously defended itself by noting that few staff were available to inspect and that construction documents on file complied with the law, others

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suggested that inspectors were “grossly incompetent” (Blame Shifted, 1911, p.1).

In truth, were it not for the tragic loss of life and subsequent trauma to New York’s collective psyche, inspection oversights at Triangle were so egregious as to be a comedy of errors. Although inspector McKeon expressed concern about the locked exits and recommended fire drills two years before the fire, no one commented on the grossly inadequate escape routes: the narrow, rickety fire escape that would hold, at best, two people, or the 33" wide spiral stairways and tiny elevators that would make mass evacuation of hundreds of workers virtually impossible. Internal fire prevention measures were likewise ignored: valves on water faucets were frozen and the fire hose fabric was fraying. Perhaps the most flagrant oversight that affected all of New York City’s 800 loft buildings was the fact that not one single fire truck had a ladder that would reach beyond six stories (Von Drehle, 2003), making firefighting a futile effort. Willful indifference to worker safety apparently extended beyond factory management.

Figure 2. An incompetent inspector proclaims Triangle factory fireproof (Triangle Shirtwaist, n.d.)

Building Codes

Lenient building codes of the times also seemed to reinforce apathy to the largely immigrant workforce. The Asch Building, and, by extension, most of the loft buildings, barely met code: had the floor space been slightly greater, another exit staircase would have been required; had the building been slightly taller, another fire escape would have been added, and the wooden floors, trim, and window frames would have been replaced with concrete and metal, thus affording more protection. In two respects, building designers failed to meet code: the fire escape ended at the second floor, over a skylight, and a major exit door swung inward (The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Trial, n.d.).

Building codes, however, are minimal expectations, and history is littered with examples of regulations loitering behind technology. The Titanic sank the year after Triangle burned, and it too met minimal expectations; in fact, the Titanic had more lifeboats than required by the British Board of Trade. In an ethical universe, however, just meeting the letter of the law is insufficient.

Conclusions

When Triangle burned, people thought it would be remembered forever; all of those young women dying for no reason is pathetic, in the classical sense. The fire was a pivotal event in labor reform, women’s emancipation, and New York City fire code revisions: Triangle is the reason why doors in public buildings open outward and why structures are equipped with automatic sprinkler systems. In reality, though, Triangle is but one entry on a growing list of tragedies that could have been prevented, had those in charge exercised more compassion for

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their workers and less concern for their pocketbooks.

As business instructors, however, we have the power to resurrect the past and reignite the passion and indignation of 1911, through vigorous analysis and discussion of this very sad case. Students, at least in my experience, tend to react viscerally to the Triangle fire, and when an emotional connection occurs, intellectual understanding often follows. Students who understand and practice an ethics of caring will, hopefully, become more enlightened managers and perhaps help to stem the tsunami of greed that currently engulfs the corporate world.

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Biography

Marilyn Dyrud is a professor in the Communication Department at Oregon Institute of Technology and regularly teaches courses in business and technical writing, rhetoric, public speaking, and professional ethics. She has been a member of ABC for more than 20 years, has served on the board of directors and, currently, chairs the Teaching Committee. In 2006, she received the Distinguished Member Award. In addition to ABC, she is active in the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics and the American Society for Engineering Education.

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Documentation Methods for AACSB Learning Assurances

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Abstract

In 2003, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) redefined their accreditation and reaffirmation standards to move from a traditional outcome-based system to a systematic process-based review. Documentation is required to assure student learning in several core areas, including communication. This paper outlines the data collection procedures and documentation methods used to document one university's business communication learning assurances.

We assessed students' communication skills in three distinct skill areas: written, oral, and general knowledge. The assessment began during the spring semester of 2005, and we collected a total of three semesters' worth of data in all three skill areas prior to our accreditation review in October of 2006. We included at least one section taught by each business communication faculty member during all three semesters of the assessment process. We assessed students' written skills using an in-class writing assignment requiring students to apply their bad-news writing skills; two faculty members separately assessed each student's written work. We evaluated students' oral skills during short team presentations, also assessed by two faculty members. The two-faculty rater procedures demonstrated no meaningful differences in faculty grading measures. We assessed students' general knowledge through a standard objective test.

The faculty prescribed 70% as the minimum pass rate to determine that students had satisfactorily met the learning goals. Our AACSB report presented data both by major and by class standing. This paper outlines our assessment techniques, methods of data collection, the study's findings, and conclusions for continual AACSB assessment procedures.

Introduction

When the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) redefined their accreditation and re-affirmation standards in 2003, they included a significant focus on the documented inclusion of learning assurances. Although their mission and standards have remained consistent during the transition, the framework of a traditional outcome-based system changed to a systematic process-based review. This change reflects a significant attempt to focus on continuous improvement in higher education (Miles, Hazeldine, & Munilla, 2004). For business communication faculty preparing for their institution's AACSB accreditation reaffirmation, this means that we need to provide specific evidence that documents that our students achieved the objectives of the business communication course beyond simply providing a summary of students' grades. Although grades are a general indicator of how well students

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performed in the class, AACSB requires additional proof that the students not only learned the specified content by demonstrating their competence in the identified skill areas, but that they reached quantitative levels of performance as predefined by the faculty. In effect, the AACSB change from an outcome-based review to a systematic process-based review requires that student assessment focuses on the process of students' learning. This is exemplified by AACSB's emphasis on "learning assurances."

This study focuses on the AACSB learning assurances documentation methods conducted by a school of business at a regional state university in the southeast. AACSB awarded our initial accreditation in 1979. Although our institution was not one of the first to prepare for reaffirmation of their AACSB accreditation under the new framework of learning assurances, we began our preparation for reaffirmation before many other institutions had experienced the new requirements. Therefore, we did not have the opportunity to seek guidance from other institutions who had previously found successful methods of documenting their students' learning assurances. In the spring of 2005, the dean of our school of business charged the faculty with the task of determining the best methods to assure student learning in several core areas, including communication. The business communication faculty created a system of assessments that they implemented over the course of three semesters in each section of business communication. This paper outlines the assessment areas we deemed appropriate based on the objectives of the course, the methods used to collect student performance data, an analysis of our data, and conclusions.

Assessments

Brennan and Austin's (2003) research addresses the need to determine a management process in preparation for higher education accreditation measures. They stated, "The first step is to establish a project team, with a faculty leader as the project manager and a representative cross-section of the faculty in the group" (p. 58). We appointed the senior faculty member in our department with the most years' experience teaching business communication as our project leader. Given the small number of faculty in our department, all faculty members who taught business communication participated in the project team. We met during the first few weeks of the spring 2005 semester and were able to embed the assessment procedures within that same semester. These procedures included an in-class writing activity to assess written skills, a short team presentation to assess oral skills, and a unit exam to assess general knowledge. We used these assessments during the three sequential semesters: spring 2005, fall 2005, and spring 2006.

Written skills

When the faculty team initially discussed the assessment procedures, all faculty indicated that they planned to incorporate a bad-news letter as an activity within their individual business communication sections. We asked each faculty member to suggest a bad-new case study for the project team's review. We selected several case studies during the initial semester, many of which were modified slightly from exercises provided in the textbook (all sections of business communication used the same textbook). Once we identified the case study, the only adjustments that we needed to make were to ensure that all students completed the bad-news letter within the same time constraints (50 minutes) and within the same week during the semester to safeguard

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any possibility of students sharing their feedback from the assignment outside of class. Although we used the same case study in all sections within a semester, we used different bad-news case studies during each of the subsequent semesters to ensure students did not pass along their graded work to other students.

In each section, faculty provided instruction about the elements of an effectively written bad-news letter and demonstrated at least two practice case studies as either group work or homework before we assigned the in-class writing activity to assess writing skills. In all sections, we presented the bad-news material approximately mid-way through the semester, which meant that students had experienced at least five previous writing assignments. We felt it was important to provide students with a foundation of basic writing skill instruction prior to the writing assessment.

Oral skills

During the initial project team discussions, all faculty members indicated that they used oral presentations in their business communication classes near the end of the semester. We were able to agree that the last full week of classes prior to final exams would be earmarked as the "presentation schedule" for all sections. As we developed the assessments during spring 2005 semester, we decided that students would make short (ten-minute) presentations in teams of two on a specific topic. We felt the small team size would require individual students to be more accountable for their collaboration efforts. In our experience, oftentimes students are able to "hide" within a larger group. Because we evaluated each student individually during the team presentations, the smaller group size facilitated easier assessment methods for faculty.

We re-evaluated our assessment procedures after the first semester and decided that although the use of time limitations and two-person teams needed to remain constant among all sections, the topics did not. We determined that since the agreed upon presentation rubric focused on the assessment of students' organizational and delivery skills, the specific presentation topics did not matter. In all subsequent semesters, faculty assigned different presentation topics without affecting the two-faculty rater system, which are discussed in the methods section.

General knowledge skills

The final skill area that we assessed to document students' learning addressed their general knowledge of business communication. Because every section of business communication at our institution used the same textbook, we were able to agree easily that the textbook's automated test bank would serve as a foundation for the general knowledge skills assessment. Our initial discussions leaned toward using a unit exam that covered the foundational aspects about business communication theory, which we address in the first few chapters of our textbook. However, after much deliberation, we agreed that students often do not perform well on their first test in a class. Although we disagreed as to the reasoning of this observation – whether it was due to lack of familiarity with the content or the vagueness of the material as compared to chapters on specific writing situations – we agreed on the outcome of the experience. Therefore, we used a unit exam covering the chapters on writing routine messages, persuasive messages, and bad-

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news messages. We provided approximately the same amount of instructional time and practice activities prior to the assessment, which we conducted midway through the semester.

The general knowledge skills assessment used 50 randomly selected multiple-choice questions from the textbook's test bank, which we administered on Blackboard. All business communication students completed the unit exam within a 50-minute time constraint in the same computer lab during the same week of the semester. Faculty were able to assign different points per question based on their own grading scales and course point systems; however, all exam results used for the AACSB data collection purposes were assigned one point per question, or 50 points for the entire exam.

Methods

As described by Vice and Carnes (2002) in their research on developing, implementing, and evaluating the effective use of rubrics, or checklists, to assess students' business writing skills, assessment techniques can be very subjective. Below is a discussion of how we determined the best methods of grading the assessments for each of the skill areas.

Written skills

Although the organizational elements of placing specific content within specific areas of a message are rather straightforward, grading students' use of tone and style in a business document often is more subjective. During the first semester of our assessment procedures, the faculty spent several weeks discussing how we typically grade students' written work. Although we discovered that we each used a different point system, we all valued the same elements of format, content, organization, and style. Initially, we attempted to create a grading rubric for the writing assessment that worked well for every faculty member; however, this was unsuccessful due to a variety of issues, most of which focused on the assignment of points per error.

To determine how similarly the faculty would grade the same work, each faculty member contributed two samples of students' work that had not yet been graded, but had been assessed for quality. Each faculty member provided one well-written example and one poorly written example. We made photocopies, and every faculty member graded every example. When we compared our assigned grades, which were tabulated by percentage to conform to the wide variety of point systems, we discovered that the outcomes were very consistent. None of the faculty's assessments varied more than 5 percentage points or half a letter grade from each other. For consistency in our data reporting, however, we agreed that two faculty members would grade every assessment.

Oral skills

Unlike the written assessment, we were able to create a grading rubric for the oral presentations that everyone agreed would be useful (see Appendix). We divided the criteria into four categories of presentation skills including organization (15%), content (20%), delivery (45%), and visual aids (20%). Although students conducted their presentations in teams of two, we evaluated each student individually. Therefore, each faculty member used two evaluation rubrics

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for each team presentation. For consistency, two faculty members evaluated each team presentation. The rubric used a three-point Likert-scale system with a total of 60 points. Faculty multiplied or divided students' total points as needed to fit the rubric into their existing course point systems. As with the writing assessment, none of the faculty's evaluation scores varied more than half a letter grade.

General knowledge skills

As indicated previously, we used Blackboard's assessment tools as the method of data collection for general knowledge skills. We tabulated the students' objective test scores and combined our data for analysis.

Analysis

One of the unique aspects of the AACSB learning assurance directives was that the criteria by which an institution deemed itself as successful was based on whether it effectively met its own goals and standards. AACSB "explicitly acknowledge(s) that each candidate institution has a distinct mission, unique sets of stakeholders, and resource bases with different outcome expectations" (Miles, Hazeldine, & Munilla, 2004, p. 29). We decided that to be successful, we needed to document that at least 70% of our students performed at 70% or better on each communication assessment area. We chose these percentages based on our consensus that 70% of the students presented a majority of our students and that a "C" grade (e.g., 70%) represents an average grade. We presented the data for each skill area within the variables of students' majors and class standing.

Written skills

The data revealed that the students reached the targeted goal; at least 70% of the 336 students who participated during the three-semester data collection performed at 70% or better on their bad-news letter assessment. We found no meaningful differences among the two-rater faculty evaluations. Overall, the scores of the instructors of record averaged 75%, and their colleagues' assessments of the same students were 74%.

Table 1 demonstrates the number of students by major who passed (74%), which indicates that we met our target goal. Although average grades are provided by major, our AACSB reports focused on the percentage of each major that met the target goal of at least 70%. In some cases, such as the business education (100%), economics (82%), and finance (84%) majors, the percentage of students who passed was higher than the group's average grades (84%, 76%, and 74%, respectively). In other areas, the opposite is true. The average grade for transportation majors was 70%, but only 53% performed at that level or higher. The wide range of scores in the lower-performing groups evidences these deviations.

Additionally, some majors performed better than others did. For example, 100% of the business education majors (n=8) passed the written skills assessment; however, only 53% of the transportation majors (n=15) passed the assessment. In both sample sizes, the representation of

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these majors is small compared to others, such as accounting (n=83) and management majors (n=108).

Table 1
Writing Skills Pass Rate Averages by Major

Major	Total (n)	Average Grade	Passed (n)	Percent Passed
Accounting	83	75%	59	71%
Business Administration	9	67%	5	56%
Business Education	8	84%	8	100%
Economics	11	76%	9	82%
Finance	32	74%	27	84%
Management	108	75%	81	75%
MIS	11	70%	7	64%
Marketing	59	75%	43	73%
Transportation	15	70%	8	53%
TOTAL =	**336**	**74%**	**248**	**74%**

We also analyzed students' written skill performance by class rank. As a 300-level course at this institution, the business communication course is populated by a majority of students who are in their sophomore or junior years. As indicated in Table 2, the higher the class rank, the better the students performed. This is true for both average grades by rank as well as the percentage of students at each level who met target goal of 70% or higher (i.e., passed the assessment).

Table 2
Writing Skills Pass Rate Averages by Class Rank

Major	Total (n)	Average Grade	Passed (n)	Percent Passed
Freshman	17	73%	11	65%
Sophomore	111	72%	79	71%
Junior	160	76%	121	76%
Senior	48	77%	37	77%
TOTAL =	**336**	**74%**	**248**	**74%**

Oral skills

A total of 399 students participated in the oral skills assessment, which required pairs of students to conduct a ten-minute professional presentation. We believe more students completed the oral presentation assessment (399) than the writing skills assessment (336) because the presentation represented a larger percentage of the students' final grade. In most classes, the writing skills assessment was one of many writing assignments throughout the semester. We found no meaningful differences among the two-rater faculty evaluations; instructors of record averaged 86%, their colleagues' evaluations averaged 84%.

Table 3 lists the oral skills pass rate averages by major. It is interesting to note that the students performed much better on their oral skills assessment than on the writing skills assessment. All

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of the majors met the targeted goal. Two majors achieved a 100% passing rate; every marketing major and transportation major who participated in this study scored at least 70% or better. The average scores were 87% for marketing majors and 88% for transportation majors.

Table 3
Oral Skills Pass Rate Averages by Major

Major	Total (n)	Average Grade	Passed (n)	Percent Passed
Accounting	110	83%	105	95%
Business Administration	13	85%	10	77%
Business Education	11	86%	10	91%
Economics	14	84%	12	86%
Finance	40	87%	39	98%
Management	118	86%	116	98%
MIS	11	82%	10	91%
Marketing	66	87%	66	100%
Transportation	16	88%	16	100%
TOTAL =	**399**	**86%**	**384**	**96%**

When we analyzed the oral skills pass rates by class rank, we noticed an interesting difference between students' written skill performance and oral skill performance. Whereas the average writing skill grades improved from freshman to senior levels, the average oral skill grades declined (see Table 4).

Table 4
Oral Skills Pass Rate Averages by Class Rank

Major	Total (n)	Average Grade	Passed (n)	Percent Passed
Freshman	21	89%	20	95%
Sophomore	147	84%	140	95%
Junior	177	87%	172	97%
Senior	54	84%	52	96%
TOTAL =	**399**	**86%**	**384**	**96%**

General knowledge skills

Table 5 indicates the general knowledge skills pass rate average by major. A total of 430 students completed the general knowledge skills assessment. The difference in the number of students who took the general knowledge skills assessment (430) as compared to the oral skills assessment (399) is based on the time during the semester when we administered these assessments. Students took the general knowledge skills assessment in the middle of the semester prior to the posting of midterm grades. We documented that 29 students dropped their business communication class after taking the general knowledge skills assessment but prior to the oral skills assessment at the end of the semester. The remaining two students were unaccounted. Because student names were not recorded with the data collection procedures for this study, we were not able to remove those students who did not take all three assessments. Further, we were

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not able to track students' performance across all three assessments. This was a limitation of this study; we have modified our current data collection procedures to facilitate this analysis.

As indicated in Table 5, none of the majors successfully reached our target goal of 70% performing at a minimum of 70% on the general knowledge skills assessment. The average grade was 62% for all students in all majors. Only one-third of the students scored at least 70% or better on the assessment. This is an area in which we need to "close the gap."

Table 5
General Knowledge Skills Pass Rate Averages by Major

Major	Total (n)	Average Grade	Passed (n)	Percent Passed
Accounting	119	63%	39	33%
Business Administration	12	62%	5	42%
Business Education	12	65%	4	33%
Economics	16	66%	9	56%
Finance	41	65%	15	37%
Management	128	59%	31	24%
MIS	14	65%	6	43%
Marketing	71	65%	31	44%
Transportation	17	56%	4	24%
TOTAL =	**430**	**62%**	**144**	**33%**

Table 6 lists the general knowledge skills pass rate averages by class rank. The juniors had the highest average grade (64%) and pass rate (38%), but they also represented the largest group of students (n=198, which represents 46% of all students in the study).

Table 6
General Knowledge Skills Pass Rate Averages by Class Rank

Major	Total (n)	Average Grade	Passed (n)	Percent Passed
Freshman	20	58%	6	30%
Sophomore	156	61%	43	28%
Junior	198	64%	75	38%
Senior	56	63%	20	36%
TOTAL =	**430**	**62%**	**144**	**33%**

Findings

We were successful at documenting that at least 70% of our students passed the written and oral skills assessments. However, we found that we need to address students' general knowledge skills. The faculty project team is continuing to research best practices for "closing the gap" for learning assurances. We address students' deficiencies with general knowledge skills differently depending on our individual testing strategies. Those faculty members who use unit exams work with students who perform poorly on their initial tests. Other faculty members whose testing strategies incorporate weekly quizzes rather than unit exams provide online drill and practice

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opportunities to help students prepare for their assessments. On-going data collection in this area will help us determine whether these methods are effective.

Conclusions

In her study of achieving a successful communication program, Barrett (2002) suggested important criteria including providing individual mentoring opportunities for students with apparent deficiencies and constant re-evaluation of the assessment techniques. Our approach to documenting AACSB learning assurances accommodated both of these aspects of Barrett's conclusions. We address each of these issues as part of our effort to "close the gap" between those students who successfully completed the assessments and those who did not.

With respect to providing individual mentoring opportunities for students with apparent deficiencies, we use two intervention techniques. First, if students continue to perform poorly after the second graded writing activity, they are required to meet individually with their business communication instructor to review their work and discuss methods for improvement. Although this usually encourages the students to work on enhancing their writing skills, additional meetings are often required. Second, rather than waiting until the end of the semester to assign a single graded oral presentation, we encourage faculty to integrate short oral briefing opportunities throughout the course to prepare students for the formal oral report that we use as the learning assurances assessment. Our efforts to address the general knowledge skill deficiencies are discussed in the findings.

Finally, the most important aspect of our learning assurances initiative is constant re-evaluation of our assessment techniques. The faculty agreed that to demonstrate continuous quality improvement, we need to fine-tune the assessment process over time to eliminate redundancies and facilitate adjustments. As stated by Brennan and Austin (2003), "including assessment provisions for processes is an extremely important aspect of institutionalizing a commitment to continuous quality improvement" (p. 54). Therefore, the assessment procedures that began in the spring of 2005 were assessed and modified as needed for use in the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2006. The AACSB review team visited the university in the fall of 2006 and approved our assessment techniques. To support continual quality improvement and prepare for future reaffirmation visits, the communication assessments will continue to be implemented in the spring semester of every academic year. We will consistently review and revise our instructional opportunities to meet students' needs and assure their learning success.

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Biography

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APPENDIX

EVALUATION RUBRIC

BUED 360: TEAM PRESENTATIONS

STUDENT NAME: _____

	  
ORGANIZATION (9 points / 15%):	**POOR - OK - GREAT**
1. Was the introduction unique; did it grab the audience's attention?	1 2 3
2. Were the main points in the body clearly identified and supported?	1 2 3
3. Did the closing summarize the main points and make conclusions?	1 2 3
CONTENT (12 points / 20 %):	
4. Did the presenters clearly articulate their purpose?	1 2 3
5. Did they provide adequate information or supporting evidence?	1 2 3
6. Did they identify how the data impacts the audience (WIIFM)?	1 2 3
7. Did they cite credible sources?	1 2 3
DELIVERY (27 points / 45 %):	
8. Were the words clearly enunciated and at an appropriate volume?	1 2 3
9. Was there an appropriate balance between the two speakers?	1 2 3
10. Were the presenters able to talk without reading from prepared text?	1 2 3
11. Did they use proper vocabulary and grammar?	1 2 3
12. Did they have limited use of fillers (umm, like, ah, etc.)?	1 2 3
13. Was their body language professional?	1 2 3
14. Did the presenters make good use of eye contact with their listeners?	1 2 3
15. Were the students professional in their manner and attire?	1 2 3
16. Did they appear to be well prepared / rehearsed?	1 2 3
VISUAL AIDS (12 points / 20 %):	
17. Was written text easy to read?	1 2 3
18. Was it professionally written (no typos, grammatical errors, etc.)?	1 2 3
19. Was the use of color (text, background) appropriate?	1 2 3
20. Was the use of graphics (clip art, images) appropriate?	1 2 3
TOTAL POINTS =	/ 60

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Assurance of Learning: Implementing a Uniform Assessment Process Across Multiple Sections of a Managerial Communication Course

Gary May, Michael Tidwell

Clayton State University

Abstract

This case study documents how two business school professors worked together to design and implement a process for uniformly assessing learning outcomes across all sections of a managerial communication course. The study demonstrates and provides examples of the answers to the five questions in the school's assurance of learning process model. The study also provides prescriptive tips for administrators and instructors on how to avoid the typical pitfalls of implementing an assurance of learning process.

Introduction

Assurance of learning is a hot topic in higher education. State legislatures, regional and professional accreditation agencies, and employers are asking a key question: are we graduating students who actually have the knowledge and skills that we promise (Martell & Caldron, 2005; Suskie, 2004)? Reflecting this movement, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has established new accreditation standards requiring business schools to produce direct evidence of learning in their courses and programs (AACSB, 2003).

Implementing and maintaining the type of on-going comprehensive assessment plan called for in the AACSB standards presents many challenges related to time, resources, and culture and often generates significant resistance by faculty. In many cases, faculty perceive the increased emphasis on assessment as a threat to their academic freedom, an additional demand on their time, and another tool to be used as a form of performance evaluation (Walvoord, 2004).

One especially challenging issue is requiring different faculty who teach different course sections to agree on the same measurable learning outcomes, assessment methods, and a process for collecting, analyzing, reporting, and responding to the assessment data.

This case study documents how a team of business school professors collaboratively designed and implemented a process for uniformly assessing learning outcomes across all sections of a managerial communication course as part of the school's comprehensive assessment plan. The process represents an application of the assurance of learning model developed by the Clayton State University School of Business assessment committee and approved by the faculty (see Figure 1). This case demonstrates and provides examples of the answers to the five questions in the model. We will conclude with prescriptive tips for administrators and instructors on how to

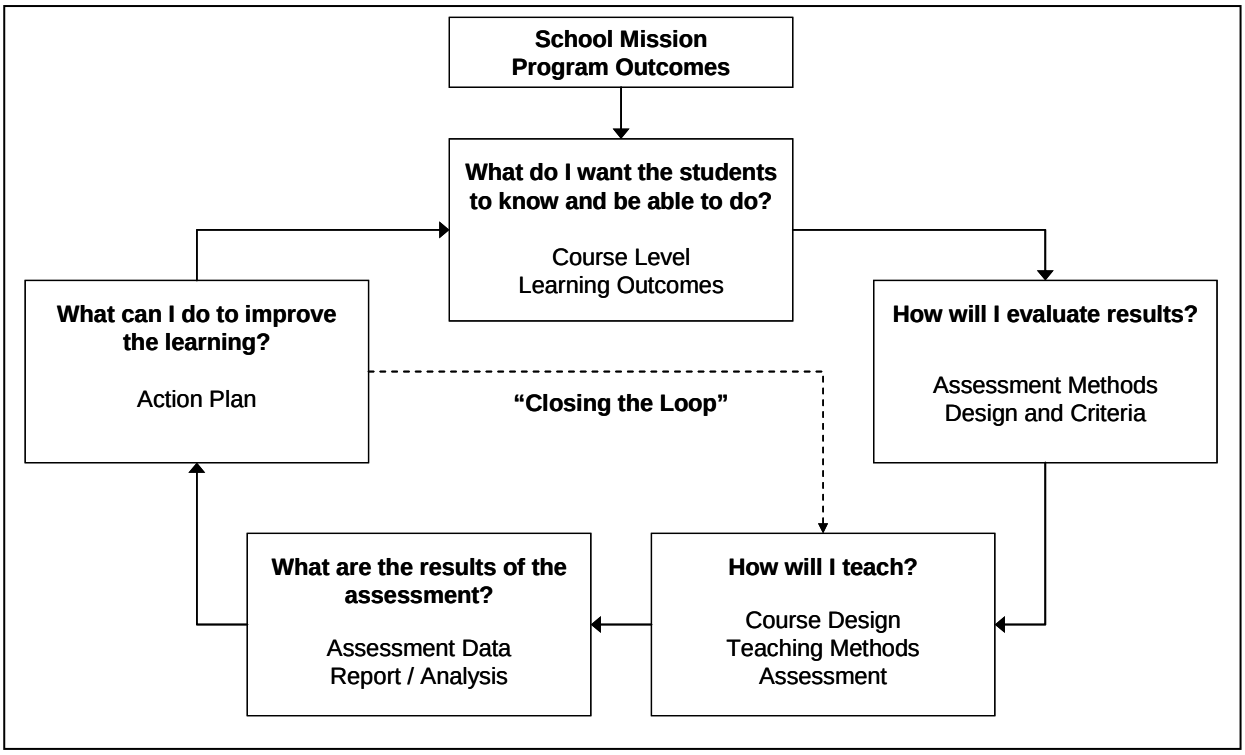
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avoid the typical pitfalls of implementing an assurance of learning process at the course level. Before we share our experience, it will be useful to set the context by providing some background on the school.

Contextual background

Thinking about contextual variables is important when attempting to generalize or compare assessment practices. Smaller schools with a primary mission of teaching have a different set of concerns and challenges at the faculty level regarding assessment than large research-oriented institutions. For example, small school faculties tend to have heavier teaching loads and access to fewer support resources. On the other hand, gaining faculty buy-in and coordinating faculty efforts is more difficult in large schools due to the number of faculty and the expected focus on research (AACSB, 2007). The context for this study is a small business school environment.

Figure 1
The Assurance of Learning Process at the Course Level



Clayton State University (CSU), a unit of the University System of Georgia, is primarily an undergraduate institution with a mission focused on teaching excellence. CSU serves the southern metropolitan area of Atlanta with an enrollment of about 6,000 students. While student dorms are on the drawing board, CSU is currently a commuter school, with approximately 65% of the students classified as non-traditional (typically students working full time and with families). The average age is 28.

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The School of Business, with 23 full-time faculty, is AACSB accredited and offers four majors (Accounting, Marketing, Management, and General Business). The School has been working on adapting to the new AACSB assurance of learning standards since 2004. The organizational structure is flat, with a Dean and Associate Dean. All faculty members report directly to the Associate Dean. An assessment committee, made up of a chair and four members representing the different disciplines, guides the assurance of learning effort with full faculty involvement. The committee's responsibilities include:

1. developing a long-term assessment plan
2. researching best practices
3. designing systems and processes, including data capture and reporting
4. educating the faculty on the basics of assessment
5. mentoring, coaching, and motivating the faculty

Because of the importance of communication skills to employers, written and oral communications are at the top of the School's overall program outcomes. Therefore, the faculty has spent a great deal of time building a robust assessment process for these important skills. It has been an iterative process, with many adjustments along the way, and is still a work in progress. The School's Managerial Communication course serves as the primary assessment vehicle for written and oral communication skills. This required course is usually taken at the junior level. The two professors who teach the Managerial Communication course led the work on the assessment design and implementation with support from the Assessment Committee and input from the whole faculty. The first task was to agree on course learning outcomes.

Course learning outcomes

Table 1 provides the current learning outcomes for the Managerial Communication course. We emphasize the word current because the outcomes are being continually refined as we complete each assessment loop. The outcomes, which must be clear and measurable, are the product of much discussion and debate. We learned to avoid vague phrases that are difficult to operationalize, such as "have familiarity with," and the use of vague qualifiers such as "very" or "completely."

Beyond the need for measurable and clear learning outcome statements, the most important lesson learned for this stage was to limit the number of primary learning objectives for formal assessment purposes. We subscribed to Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) concept for establishing learning priorities within a course. Wiggings and McTighe use a three-circle model with the outer ring designated "worth being familiar with," the next ring labeled "important to know and do," and the center ring labeled "enduring understanding." The term *enduring* "refers to the big ideas, the important understandings, that we want students to . . . retain after they've forgotten many of the details" (p. 10).

The Managerial Communication course has a number of learning objectives, but we determined that the "enduring understanding" we wanted our students to take from this course as it relates to the School's program outcomes on communication included:

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1. knowledge of the principles of effective business writing based on the first five chapters of Locker (2006).
2. the ability to write a clear, concise, and correct message that accomplishes a given purpose, and
3. the ability to design and deliver an effective persuasive oral presentation.

We have also found the format of the learning outcomes shown in Table 1, with the primary objectives at the top together with the assessment plan and the secondary objectives listed at the bottom, provides a useful template for our faculty. This arrangement does not mean the secondary objectives are unimportant – they certainly will receive time and grading in the course – but it simply means that secondary objectives are primary objectives somewhere else in the curriculum. Indeed, another lesson in this process is the need to map both program outcomes and discipline outcomes against the matrix of individual courses to make sure all the learning outcomes are being addressed in an appropriate number of courses at the appropriate level. The next step, after agreeing on the learning outcomes for Managerial Communication, was to determine the appropriate assessment methods and design the assessment instruments.

Table 1 *Learning Outcomes for MGMT 3120: Managerial Communication*

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:	**Assessment Method**
1. Know, comprehend, and apply four principles of effective business communication: a. building goodwill, b. adapting the message to the audience, c. making writing easy to read, d. using a process to plan, compose, revise, and edit a message.	Exam with embedded questions keyed to knowledge, comprehension, and application of the four principles.
2. Demonstrate written communication skills by writing a clear, concise, and grammatically correct memo that accomplishes a given purpose and meets the seven criteria for effective writing as defined by the grading rubric.	Grading rubric keyed to seven criteria for effective writing.
3. Demonstrate oral presentation skills by preparing and delivering a persuasive oral presentation using PowerPoint® that meets criteria in five performance elements as defined by the grading rubric.	Grading rubric keyed to five performance elements.
In addition to the primary course outcomes, this course will enhance students' ability to:	
1. Think critically by completing a PAIBOC analysis (purpose, audience, information, benefits, objections, and context) for various communication situations. 2. Explain and demonstrate principles for building interpersonal rapport. 3. Demonstrate an understanding of team processes and group dynamics by working collaboratively in a diverse team to produce both written documents and presentations. 4. Use basic communication technology appropriately in a business context (e.g., e-mail, Web-based discussion boards, and PowerPoint®). 5. Identify their "ideal" job and produce a targeted resume that meets specified criteria.	

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Assessment methodology

When we formally assess, we are seeking valid and reliable evidence of learning. To comply with assurance of learning standards, AACSB expects direct methods of assessment. Direct methods include such techniques as standardized tests, program exit exams, and course-embedded assessment. Indirect methods, such as satisfaction surveys of alumni, can be part of the assessment process but are considered weak evidence of learning. For course level assessment, properly designed *classroom-based* techniques provide the strongest evidence of learning. Out-of-class projects and assignments can certainly be used as part of a comprehensive assessment program, but because we can never be sure the student is doing his or her own work, the evidence is less compelling. Given the learning outcomes, we chose two different assessment techniques. To assess the knowledge objective, we embedded the same carefully selected questions in the exam for each class section (delivered through the assessment module of WebCT). For the performance-based objectives, we designed rubrics and used outside assessors.

Embedded assessment questions

Guided by the operational definitions of the first three levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), we selected questions (true-false, multiple choice, and short answer) from the text's test bank to measure knowledge, comprehension, and application for each target principle. We applied the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, and application) in the performance tests for writing and presentation. Table 2 provides an example of our test matrix. The test matrix insures balanced coverage of content.

Table 2
Test Matrix

Taxonomy >	**Knowledge**		**Comprehension**	**Application**	
Question Type >	True / False	Fill in the Blank	Multiple Choice	Multiple Choice	
Point Value by Type >	1	3	2	2	
Learning Outcomes (Principles)	*----------	Number of Questions		----------*	Grade Points
L1: Building Goodwill	2	1	4	4	21
L2: Adapting Message	2	1	4	4	21
L3: Making Easy to Read	2	1	4	4	21
L4: Using Process	2	1	4	4	21
Sub Totals	8	4	16	16	84
Other Questions (Custom)*	1	1	3	3	16
TOTAL EXAM POINTS					100

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Each question is coded for learning outcome, knowledge level, and type of question within the hidden title in WebCT for ease of sorting and analysis after the exam. Note that some room is provided for professors to add questions that relate to their custom content taught in the course.

Rubric for Writing Assessment

Our writing rubric was developed by a team consisting of two business school professors, an English professor, and two external professional business writers. The rubric assesses eight performance elements: knowledge of the subject, awareness of the reader, organization, format, punctuation, sentence structure, and style. The rubric can be tailored to specific writing assignments. Table 3 provides an example portion of the rubric.

Table 3
Written Communications Skills Rubric (Sample Element)

Performance Element	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Knowledge of the Subject			
✓ Content requirements	❑ Fails to address the important requirements of the assignment	❑ Fulfills the most important content requirements	❑ Exceeds assigned content requirements (e.g., evidence of supplemental research)
✓ Range of knowledge	❑ Displays limited knowledge of the subject; makes factual errors	❑ Displays adequate knowledge of the subject	❑ Displays good range and quality of knowledge
✓ Alternative viewpoints	❑ Lacks awareness of alternative viewpoints (when alternate viewpoints are expected)	❑ Demonstrates awareness of alternative viewpoints	❑ Demonstrates awareness and understanding of alternative viewpoints

Rubric for Oral Presentation

A team consisting of two business school professors and two external business professionals developed our oral presentation rubric. The rubric assesses five performance elements: opening, body, closing, visuals, and physical delivery. The rubric can be tailored to specific oral presentation assignments. Table 4 provides an example portion of the rubric.

Course design and assessment

Within the constraints of the agreed upon core knowledge for the course and the performance skills framed by the rubrics, each instructor is free to adapt the course design, content coverage, and teaching methods to fit his or her style and personal preferences. This flexibility is important to gaining faculty buy-in. However, the administration of the classroom-based assurance of learning assessments must be uniform across all course sections.

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All professors administer the writing skills assessment near the end of the course during a regular 75-minute classroom period using MS Word on laptop computers (all CSU students are required to have laptops and Microsoft Office). Students in all class sections are given the same business case situation and instructions. They are required to prepare a one-page PAIBOC analysis (purpose, audience, information, benefits, objections, and context) and write a one-page memo following the genre pattern required by the case (e.g., a persuasive direct request message). Each student uploads his or her completed document to the WebCT Assignment Drop Box. The assignment counts for 10% of the course grade and the professor grades the submission using his or her normal point system. An ungraded copy of each student submission is also forwarded to an external assessor (one of the writing professionals who helped design the rubric) for the assurance of learning assessment using the rubric.

Table 4
Oral Presentation Rubric (Sample Section)

Performance Element	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Opening			
✓ Attention	❑ No attempt to gain audience's attention	❑ Gains audience's attention with a startling statement, anecdote, question, or quotation	❑ Gains audience's attention with a startling statement, anecdote, question, or quotation and establishes common ground
✓ Purpose and Benefits	❑ No clear purpose statement or indication of benefits for the audience	❑ Provides a general statement of purpose and identifies at least one benefit for the audience	❑ Describes the problem, the questions to be answered, the benefits to the audience, and the rhetorical purpose of the presentation
✓ Overview	❑ Does not provide an overview of the presentation	❑ Provides a general overview of the topics to be covered	❑ Provides a general overview of the topics to be covered,; notes the expected length of the presentation, suggests a plan for handling questions, and asks for affirmation

The oral presentation assessments follow a process similar to the writing. The last portion of the semester, students work independently to design and deliver a persuasive oral presentation based on a case situation. This assignment also represents 10% of the course grade and is graded by the instructor at the time of delivery. The presentations are captured by digital video and uploaded to a Web site, allowing an external professional to assess each student's presentation with the rubric. This project is currently in the pilot stage and we are continuing to refine both the rubric and the process.

We designate one member of the School's assessment committee to be the coordinator for the communication skill assessments. Each semester, he or she collects the exam data from the

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instructors and the completed rubrics from the external assessors and, with the help of an administrative assistant, enters the data and prepares the reports.

Data analysis

Table 5 displays an example tabulation of the results from the embedded exam questions at the summary level. Additional levels of detail, including a breakout of individual course results and the detail on individual questions, are also available. The results help determine the extent of actual learning produced in the course for each specific learning outcome. Our benchmark at this point is that at least 70% of the students should answer each question correctly. Scores less than 70% require investigation and provide the focus for continuous improvement efforts. For example, examination of Table 5 suggests that Learning Outcome Number 3, Making Writing Easy to Read, is below par for both comprehension and application.

Table 5
Example Tabulation of Summary Assessment Results for Embedded Exam Questions

MGMT 3120 Spring 07: Three Sections (N = 73 Students)

Exam: Embedded Questions		Number of	% of Students with Correct	
Learning Outcome	Question Type	Questions	Answers	
L1: Building Goodwill	Knowledge	3	83.3%	
	Comprehension	4	89.1%	
	Application	4	73.6%	
	Composite	**11**	**82.0%**	
L2: Adapting the Message to the Audience	Knowledge	3	85.5%	
	Comprehension	3	86.4%	
	Application	4	90.7%	
	Composite	**11**	**87.6%**	
L3: Making Writing Easy to Read	Knowledge	3	81.8%	
	Comprehension	4	63.7%	*
	Application	4	69.3%	*
	Composite	**11**	**71.2%**	
L4: Using a Process to Plan, Compose, Revise, and Edit a Message	Knowledge	3	68.2%	*
	Comprehension	4	75.7%	
	Application	4	70.0%	
	Composite	**11**	**73.2%**	
Total: Assurance of Learning Questions		**44**	**78.5%**	

** = < 70% Investigate and take corrective action as necessary*

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Table 6 provides an example summary tabulation of the seated writing assessment for each of the eight performance elements. Again, we want at least 70% of the students to score satisfactory or better on each element. Assessment results for the five performance elements of the oral presentation (which is still in pilot phase) would be presented in the same manner as the writing assessment.

Table 6
Example Tabulation of Summary Assessment Results for Writing Assessment

MGMT 3120 Spring 07: Three Sections (N = 66 Students)

Writing Assessment Performance Element	# of Students Scoring Satisfactory Or Outstanding	% of Students Scoring Satisfactory or Outstanding	
Knowledge of the Subject	43	65.2%	*
Awareness of the Reader	44	66.7%	*
Organization	60	90.9%	
Format (includes spelling)	30	45.5%	*
Punctuation	20	30.3%	*
Sentence Structure	48	72.7%	
Style	47	75.7%	

** = < 70% Investigate and take corrective action as necessary*

Recommended actions

The foregoing data analysis leads to the ultimate purpose of assessment – developing and implementing action plans for continuous improvement of learning. Armed with the data, we can "close the loop" by focusing our efforts in the next teaching cycle on improving selected areas of our course.

For example, the data from the embedded exam questions (Table 5) indicates that students are having some trouble with comprehending and applying the principle "making writing easier to read." This section of the course includes a number of important concepts in business writing such as use of active voice and eliminating unnecessary words. The instructor would typically follow a two-step process in the investigation of the problem. First, he or she would review the item analysis (discrimination index generated by WebCT) for that portion of the exam to see if one or more questions need to be edited for clarity. Next, the instructor would review the teaching plans with an eye toward providing more emphasis on the relevant text chapter. This could involve adjusting a number of instructional strategies and methods, such as additional homework assignments with graded feedback and / or more time-on-task activities in class (i.e., less lecture and more active, collaborative, and problem-based learning).

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The writing assessment data (Table 6) points to students having particular problems with format and punctuation. The format element includes such factors as spelling, use of abbreviations, numbers, caps, hyphens, and italics, as well as document format. The punctuation element includes all forms of punctuation. Our standard for punctuation is high. A two-page document (one-page PAIBOC analysis and one-page memo) with more than three punctuation errors will receive an unsatisfactory rating for the punctuation element.

Writing errors related to spelling and punctuation are common in higher education today and a continuing challenge to improve (Quible, 2004). In our case, the Managerial Communication course is supposed to focus on teaching business style, not writing mechanics. Also this problem cannot be solved in just one course but requires involvement of all the faculty and University support systems. After reviewing several iterations of our writing assessment data with the whole faculty, we are in the process of implementing the following action plan:

1. Adding a writing assessment to our School of Business entrance exam. We no longer admit students who cannot pass the writing assessment after three attempts.
2. Using adapted versions of the writing rubric in selected classes at the sophomore level to give students more feedback on writing errors.
3. Administering a "knowledge retention" test on grammar and punctuation the first day of class in Managerial Communication. We refer students who do poorly on this test and their first week writing assignment to our Center for Academic Success (CAS) for tutoring. Students who complete the required assignments in CAS are allowed to revise and resubmit their first assignment for extra grade points.
4. Including five grammar and punctuation questions to each weekly quiz in the Managerial Communication course to drill the students on the most common writing errors.

In addition, students who do not earn at least 70% on the formal writing assessment at the end of the Managerial Communication course are now required to enroll in WLAB 2999, a structured and graded laboratory administered by the English Department. Students must enroll in WLAB 2999 for their next term of attendance and in each subsequent term until they have passed by earning a grade of C in the course. Our intent is not to allow a student to graduate who does not have basic writing skills. Based on these initiatives, we expect assessment results for writing skills to improve over time.

Lessons learned

Based on our experience to date, we can share our "top ten" nuggets of advice for other small schools working to improve their assurance of learning processes.

1. Have patience. This is a journey, not a destination. Remember: no one has asked us to assess everything all at once. Develop complexity over time and with experience.
2. The goal is to develop an assessment plan that is sustainable, cost efficient, and useful to both the faculty and the school.
3. Don't think assessment must be perfect to be useful.
4. Begin by making sure your program outcomes support your mission and have faculty and stakeholder (e.g., employer) buy-in.

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5. The process must be faculty driven; the conversations should be about student learning.
6. Start with program level outcomes and focus first on the obvious and less complex. Every school has a program outcome related to written and oral communications. Communication knowledge and skills are easier to access than the more affective goals such as "appreciation for diversity." Members of the Assessment Committee (who hopefully are the "early adopters") can lead and coordinate this initial effort.
7. After processes are in place for assessing program level outcomes, begin to work with individual faculty on assessing knowledge outcomes within each discipline. We have found three keys to getting individual faculty on board:
    a. Sharing results of the program level assessments gets everyone involved and interested; the value of collecting data in a meaningful format and taking action to improve learning becomes more obvious.
    b. Assigning each member of the Assessment Committee as a "mentor" to several faculty provides a personalized way to coach and encourage faculty.
    c. Providing workshops on assessment techniques and procedures builds faculty skills and confidence. For example, we offer workshops on writing learning outcomes, developing exams to capture assessment data, and designing and using rubrics.
8. After faculty become comfortable with managing assessment at the course level, begin having course-level meetings to reconcile learning outcomes and assessment methods across different sections.
9. Be careful about using analysis to create paralysis. Just do it, fix it, try it again.
10. Do not make assessment *results* part of the faculty evaluation process; however, *participation* in the assessment process should be part of the minimum performance expectations for all faculty. Assurance of learning is part of our job as professionals.

In summary, the assurance of learning movement is not going away. Market forces will dictate systematic "process and product" improvements, like those found in business. Corporations stay competitive by using total quality systems such as six sigma; this paper examines a similar tool for educators seeking to improve the "process and product" of higher education. Developing and maintaining a comprehensive assessment plan is hard work and takes multiple years of effort, but assurance of learning is part of our responsibility as teaching professionals. Can you imagine a business saying it doesn't have time for total quality?

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Biographies

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Communicating with the Press Release: Teaching Undergraduates the Basics

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Abstract

Communicating with stakeholders is a concern for every organization. The press release allows firms to convey a message to the public without exorbitant advertising fees and has greater impact than a paid ad because it appears less one-sided. As undergraduates leave academia for the workplace, they become more valuable to employers if they have had practice composing clearly written press releases that achieve the goals of an organization. Teaching the press release allows business communication instructors to reinforce key writing skills such as audience awareness, purpose, clarity, and conciseness. It can be integrated into the syllabus as part of a unit on persuasive writing or taught as a separate genre. Instructors who teach the press release will need to address its core elements: the concept of newsworthiness; conveying the company's main message in the headline and first paragraph; composing in the "inverted pyramid" style typical to journalism; creating compelling quotes for attribution; and designing the document. Classroom activities and assignment ideas are provided.

Introduction and Rationale

Communicating with stakeholders is a concern for every organization. The press release (also called a news release) allows firms to convey their message to the public without exorbitant advertising fees and has greater impact than a paid ad because it appears less one-sided. Even when the company has a separate, in-house public relations department or outsources the public relations function, employees are often called upon to write or rewrite press releases. In today's marketplace where employees are often asked to multitask, the worker with the ability to compose a press release has become increasingly valuable. No matter the size of the company, getting the word out about its news—i.e. publicity—can be relegated to the closest body with a computer who can write a sentence. Therefore it makes sense for business communication instructors to teach students about writing a press release, the backbone of all publicity and public relations.

The importance of writing skills for public relations practitioners is well established. The Commission of Public Relations Education published a report that concluded public relations writing to be "essential to a strong undergraduate education" and further found that public relations specialists and PR instructors rank writing skills as critical to hiring for entry-level

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positions (King 2001). PR practitioners themselves consider writing skills highly valuable. In one study, 93.5 percent of public relations experts felt written communication skills were important to success (Napoli 1999). Because PR depends heavily on the needs of the media. practicing professionals also believe students should be well trained in writing for public relations with special attention paid to journalistic technique (Hardin & Pompper 2004). Indeed, well written press releases can help a business diffuse difficult situations (Sklarewitz 1991), but only if they are written clearly (Markin 1994). Employers and recruiters agree that for those in the field of marketing in particular, both written and oral communication skills are integral to success (Young & Murphy 2003). According to Pride and Ferrell, nearly one in three jobs is related to sales and marketing (2003). Public Relations, often the department responsible for issuing news releases, falls within this category, making good writing skills especially important to future employees in these fields.

This paper will provide instructors with classroom-tested information to confidently teach the press release in an undergraduate business communication course.

Genre Definition and Classroom Application

Simply stated, a press release is an organization's message written in a style to appeal to news media outlets in hopes that those outlets will disseminate the message. That message can take many forms. It may be news about a recent hire, an employee's promotion, a product, or an event the company is sponsoring. Press releases are often used to put a company's "spin" on bad news about earnings, product problems, or other events that reflect negatively on the business. They contain information that may be overlooked by the media but that the company wants to publicize, or "release." Both non-profit and for-profit businesses routinely use this form of public relations communication.

Press releases are designed for both broadcast and print media. Whether sent in digital or print form, they are intended to be published or "picked up" by a news outlet such as a newspaper, radio station, magazine, or television news broadcast. Therefore it is imperative that any press release contains an element of *newsworthiness*. Yet there is a difference between the content in a press release and actual news. Press releases contain carefully crafted messages that promote a company's point of view, whereas news, in theory, must be more objective. The press release must catch the eye of the editor with its newsworthiness and objectivity while it also promotes the company's perspective.

Teaching the press release can fit into an introductory business communication course as part of a unit on routine or persuasive news messages, or it can be taught separately. If teaching an informational interview, students can use the information they gather to write a release announcing that individual's promotion or that the person has accepted a new position in XYZ Company. The press release as an assignment also works well as reinforcement of basic good business writing that stresses audience awareness, clear purpose, conciseness, accuracy, adherence to format, clarity, and grammatical correctness. And finally, the press release assignment can be attached to any research project in which students delve into an organization's structure.

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Types of Press Releases

Although all press releases contain the same elements, they are used to promote varying objectives. Below are commonly used press releases that would make appropriate teaching scenarios.

Publicity Release. This type of release announces information about a business or organization that has news value to local or national media. A publicity release may announce internal promotions, upcoming or past events, new hires or appointments, awards, honors, and mergers or acquisitions.

Product Release. These releases contain information that is generally targeted to trade publications and relate news about the introduction of a product, an addition to a line, or a modification to an existing product.

Bad News Release. When an organization must tell the truth about a negative situation, it issues a bad news release. This document must always be straightforward about negative news, providing facts in an honest, forthright fashion to establish credibility with the media.

Financial Release. The financial release disseminates information about a company's earnings or other information of interest to shareholders. While national media such as *The Wall Street Journal* or *ABC Nightly News* may be interested in reporting news about large, publicly held organizations, local media tend to report on firms headquartered in their distribution area.

Press releases can be written in either a hard or soft news style. Hard news is timely and has immediacy. A university would issue a hard news release to announce that it has hired a new chancellor. Soft news focuses on people or issues that affect people's lives. A soft news release, for example, might take the form of a feature about a child whose life was saved by a new drug, with the issuing company being the drug manufacturer.

The publicity release is the most common type used in a real-world scenario, but any of the types of press releases can provide excellent learning opportunities.

Press Release Learning Objectives

Teaching the press release reinforces many of the objectives stressed in an introductory business communications course in addition to some that are specific to the genre.

1. Create audience centered documents targeted to a specific trade or consumer news media outlet (digital, print, or broadcast.)
2. Define a company's purpose, or main message, for the press release and reflect that purpose in both the headline and the lead.
3. Write a lead (first paragraph) that contains several news values.
4. Compose documents in the "inverted pyramid" used by journalists.

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5. Design documents in standard press release format that contains all the required elements.
6. Practice using quotations and attributions in the body of an article.
7. Create a company "boilerplate" paragraph that reflects the business's mission and basic identifying information.
8. Reinforce the principles of good business writing practices.

Elements of Teaching the Press Release

Teaching the press release can be broken down into the elements below.

Audience/Purpose

Teaching a press release is a perfect way to reinforce the concept of audience centered writing that has a clear purpose. It is helpful to supplement any classroom discussion with textbook readings such as those found in *Business Communication: Process and Product* by Dr. Mary Ellen Guffey.

To drive home the concept of audience and purpose, the following hypothetical situation may be used. Ask students which college has a reputation as a "party school." Then ask them to assume they are employed by the city the campus is in. (For example, UCSB is a known "party school." If using this example, students would be "working" for the city of Santa Barbara.) Their assignment is to compose a press release to all high school newspapers in their state with the purpose of encouraging students to apply for admittance to the college or university. Ask the class what kind of content will encourage 17- and 18-year-olds to make the desired decision. (In the UCSB example, students offer responses such as good weather, proximity to the ocean, financial aid, easy transfer from the local junior college, many majors, Nobel laureates on staff, and so forth until someone offers the party-school reputation.) Of all the reasons students bring up, the party atmosphere is the clincher for the would-be freshmen. Discuss how audience needs and a firm's purpose dictate content.

Next tell the students that they have another press release to compose. This one will be aimed toward parents, who the city hopes will urge their children to apply for college admission in their city. Ask what kind of information should be included in this document. Of course there will be some crossover; both parents and future students like the idea of financial aid, many majors, easy transfers, etc. But parents may be interested to know about factors that are not of great interest to the future student. (In the UCSB example, parents will want to know about the city's low crime rate.) If the press release is to accomplish its goal, all agree that discussing the party atmosphere so attractive to students is contraindicated in the release aimed at parents.

However the instructor approaches the concept of audience and purpose, this idea forms the basis of a module on the press release. Next students need to understand the distinct needs of the media as the audience for a release. Ask students to define the media. Some will have taken communication courses and will volunteer examples. Introduce the various players in the media: broadcasters, digital media, and newspaper and magazine publishers (both trade and consumer).

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Discuss how news is obtained. Reporters go to a scene of an incident (city hall, an accident scene, a sporting event, etc.) uncover facts, and report the event as objectively as possible in written or oral format.

Explain that the editor chooses which stories run and where they are placed in the news vehicle (front page, buried in the middle of the business section, etc.) Often times, however, editors need to fill a hole in their publication or broadcast; this is where the press release comes in. The press release provides editors with story ideas they may otherwise overlook. Editors are busy and do not want to give a business free publicity, so the savvy press release writer will give the editor a well written, factual, and accurate piece of news that will be of interest to the editor's readers or viewers.

From the perspective of an organization, the purpose of the press release is simply to convey a message to the masses without paying excessive advertising fees. A press release may originate from a university that wishes to publicize winning a large grant; a non-profit that is organizing a fund-raising event it hopes to publicize; or a business that is informing the public of a staff promotion, a new product, earnings, or a problem. In any case, the press release must cross the delicate line between serving the purpose of the issuer and the needs of the media.

Newsworthiness

Newsworthiness is the next concept students must understand before writing a press release. To those who routinely read newspapers or watch the nightly news, an item's newsworthiness is obvious. But few students regularly read a newspaper, and they consequently have a poor understanding of what constitutes news. Expect to dedicate time to this concept. It may be useful to complement discussion with classroom activities such as those described later in this article.

Writing the Press Release

Press releases are written in a distinct format and contain the following elements:

- Headline and sometimes a subheadline
- Lead or first paragraph that includes a dateline (a dateline is the city and state where the news originated)
- Body written in the inverted pyramid style
- Quotations with attributions
- "Boilerplate" paragraph that ends the release with information about the issuing organization

Depending on how much time is devoted to this module, the instructor can combine these elements into one, two, or more classroom sessions. Combining a lecture with some classroom activities and then "workshopping" with students in the computer lab provides practice for the techniques discussed in class.

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The Headline ("Head,") Subhead, and Lead

The purpose of the headline is to concisely capture the main idea of the release. Headlines are written with present tense verbs and omit the articles "a," "an," and "the." The headline in a press release is crucial, because if it does not clearly appeal to the editor and get across the message that an item is newsworthy, the release will be ignored. The headline is essentially the "sales pitch." It should use clear, concrete language and avoid vague, unspecific words. The headline should not mimic the lead paragraph; it should use different wording to get across the main idea of the release.

The "secondary head" or "subhead" is often a complete sentence that uses a full verb and the articles that are frequently omitted from headlines. The subhead assumes the presence of the headline and gives additional information to the story that provides another layer of detail. It should not repeat the first headline and is not mandatory.

The lead, or first paragraph, is the most important part of the release. Although many lead styles exist, the most common is the *summary lead*. These leads focus on *news values* or the *five Ws and one H*—who, what, where, when, why, how—which are familiar to most students. The lead often has a focus or an "angle" to make it newsworthy. The following are the main factors writers consider to emphasize newsworthiness:

Timeliness. For an event to be considered news, a small window of opportunity exists; an event is only newsworthy just before or directly after it happens.
Prominence. Prominent figures and celebrities help publicize anything.
Proximity. The local angle is a great "hook." (Editors say that if it happens to *our* community, it's news.)
Significance. The number and type of people who will be affected can make an item newsworthy.
Unusualness. Any bizarre or odd event will capture an editor's eye.
Human Interest. People like to read about other people, so this angle is frequently used.
Newness. "Free" and "New" are key words that help generate interest in a news item.

The order of information related in a lead should reflect the company's goal in writing the release, but it must also keep in mind the needs of news organizations. Leads do not need to include all the news values.

After this lesson, instructors may want to reinforce this complex idea with a classroom activity (some are suggested later in this article) before moving on to the next component of teaching the press release.

The Body: Inverted Pyramid Style, Integrating Quotes, and the Boilerplate Paragraph

The body of most press releases is one to two pages (occasionally up to three.) The body features relatively short paragraphs, although too many short, choppy paragraphs are discouraged. Like any good writing, the body of the document should be concise, clear, and accurate. Sentences

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should be varied and have good rhythm. However, press releases also possess the qualities of good journalism and use journalism's "inverted pyramid" style of writing. This means that the body is organized in descending order of importance; the most important elements are placed at the top, and the least important are placed toward the bottom. Editors use this style because when deciding how much space or time to devote to an item, they cut from the bottom. By writing in the inverted pyramid style, writers are helping the editor.

After the lead paragraph summarizes the release's main element of newsworthiness, the second paragraph contains the next most important part of the news. What follows in subsequent paragraphs is less important, and so on. After all the points of the release have been covered, many releases add a paragraph that contains background information the reader may need to fully understand the significance of some aspect of the preceding story.

Most press releases contain a quotation from someone in the company. For example, if the release is about a new hire or a promotion, the division manager may be quoted. If the release is about a new product, some other company official will make a statement that is quoted in the press release. Oftentimes these quotes are created by the public relations professional (in which case the quote is always approved by a superior.) The purpose of using a quote is to combine information the organization wants to impart but to add a personal perspective to that information. Quotations add life to a story that a disembodied statement does not and can be direct or paraphrased.

When quoting, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Use the exact spelling and title of the person being quoted.
- Use the first and last name the first time a person is named. Use only the last name thereafter.
- Put commas and periods inside quotes.
- Put other punctuation marks within the quotation marks if they are part of the quote (Example: The Chancellor asked, "Do all students binge drink?")
- Attribute each quote.
- Introduce each person quoted (Example: Mark Elliot, a junior and recipient of this year's award, said, "I am grateful for the opportunity to serve my campus.")
- Use "said" rather than "laughed," " snorted", etc. in hard news press releases.
- Use "according to" when referring to a study or a group, not a person.
- Use an indirect quote only when the person making the statement has not used smooth wording.

The final paragraph of most press releases is the "boilerplate," a 50-or 100-word summary (often including company mission) that provides background information about an organization. It may include what the company produces, the number of employees or outlets is has, its stock trading information, or its corporate philosophy.

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It's easy to download copies of current press releases to use in the classroom. The first two Web sites listed below contain hundreds of releases from issuing companies. The third is a clearinghouse for college press releases. Most colleges or universities have a publicity office that routinely issues press releases, and most business Web sites contain current and past press releases.

1. http://www.prnewsire.com
2. http://www.businesswire.com
3. http://www.cpwire.com

Document Design

Press releases follow a specific format. Print releases are issued on company letterhead, should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman, and must include the following information and stylistic elements:

Company Address: Name, street, city, zip code, phone number, fax, Web site.
Contact Name: Name of person to whom questions about the release may be directed with phone number, e-mail address, and fax.
Release Date: If the release is meant to be distributed upon receipt, write "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE." If the release is to be embargoed, write, "EMBARGOED UNTIL 1-1-20XX." Releases are embargoed only when the issuer does not want that news to precede an announcement or, in the case of a scientific study, that study's publication in a peer-edited journal. Use caps and boldface for both immediate and embargoed release dates.
Date of Distribution: The date the release is prepared. The date of distribution appears either under the release date or as part of the dateline.
Headline: Uppercase, underlined, boldface preferred.
Dateline: City and state of event's location followed by a dash that goes directly into the lead paragraph.
Double Space. Body copy is double-spaced; all paragraphs except the lead are indented.
Bullets. Use plain bullets rather than numbers for lists or to itemize facts.
Page Numbering. The word "more" must appear at the bottom of each page unless the release is only one page. A page slug (page 2 of 2) should appear at the top of the subsequent page, flush left.
Boilerplate. Should appear after the news.
End Marks. Use end marks "# # #" or " –30– " to indicate the end of the release.

Electronic press releases are shorter than print releases so that they fit on one or two screens, but they adhere to the same rules as print releases except for the following:

- The subject line of the e-mail should contain the main idea of the release.
- The release should not be an attachment; it should be contained in the body of the e-mail.
- Company name (because it does not appear on letterhead) and contact information appears at the top of the electronic release and again at the end of the message.

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- One space is added above and below the headline. Body copy is single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs, flush left.

Professionalism

Perhaps the most valuable teaching lesson the press release offers is that of professionalism in business communication. The press release must appeal to a very skeptical audience, most of whom are writers reading dozens of these documents each day. Audience awareness demands that those composing the press release keep good writing practices foremost in mind, making this a perfect assignment to enforce a zero tolerance for typos and misspellings at the very least.

The degree to which the instructor grades down for adherence to format and mechanics in this assignment depends on each class and the instructor's objectives. Certainly in the "real world," a writer who sent out a press release full of errors wouldn't hold on to a job for long!

To learn more about the profession, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) maintains an excellent Web site at http://www.prsa.org as does the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) at http://www.ipra.org/.

Classroom Activities and Assignments

Below are a few classroom activities and assignments that can help reinforce the concepts behind writing a press release in an undergraduate business communication classroom.

Reinforce the Concept of Newsworthiness. Break students into groups. Provide them with articles from the student newspaper, your local newspaper, a national news source, or a press release. Using a handout on which you leave blanks to answer your prepared questions, have the students isolate the newsworthiness angle and news values to see how the news is reflected in the headline and the lead. Use specific questions such as, "Which news values are used in the lead?" and "How many words does the lead contain?" Discuss the findings with the entire class.

Practice Headlines and Leads. Create your own list of facts or break down an actual article or press release to obtain facts. Have students practice composing leads and headlines from these points. This is an excellent workshop exercise to do in a computer lab.

Analyzing Press Releases. Take a press release issued by your campus, a local organization, or a firm's Web site that has been picked up by the local newspaper. Ask students to isolate the various elements of the press release including the lead and news values, how the facts are written in descending order of importance, where background information appears, how the release ends, and the boilerplate. Compare the release to the article your local newspaper has written from information contained in the release. Discuss how the journalist used the information the release provided, and ask how the journalist may have obtained any additional quotes or information.

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Press Release Assignment. There are two ways to approach this assignment. In the less demanding method, the instructor provides all the information in bulleted format. The student is told to write the release using the given information and/or to do some supplemental research for background. An open-ended approach is a more demanding assignment because it requires students to create information rather than simply arrange and format points that are provided. In this method, one approach is to have students assume they work for the campus information office. Their task is to write a release announcing a new study that a campus professor has published, a promotion, a new building, or any other newsworthy event having to do with the campus. An even more advanced approach is to allow students to choose from any of the release styles discussed earlier. In this scenario, students may opt to write about financial earnings from a local or national organization, to publicize a charity event, to explain an organization's bad news, or to introduce a new or improved product.

More sample assignments and rubrics are available by downloading the "News Release Teaching Module" from the site for instructor at <http://www.meguffey.com>.

Conclusion

As the professional world continues to demand more of employees, providing students with instruction in the basics of the press release will enhance their marketability. In fact, students who have learned the genre have made the following comments: "The skills I learned in class have proved very useful. Today I explained the difference between a product and feature press release to the VP!" and, "I have written press releases for my summer internship. Having the experience in class made it so much easier for me to succeed with these real-world projects." Teaching this vital business genre will give students an edge that is likely to elicit similar responses.

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Biography

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A Rhetorical Tool and a Link to Composition: The Appeals of Narrative in Professional Writing Pedagogy

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Introduction

Narrative is a valuable genre to use in composition classes to help students understand their own identity, develop writing skills, including understanding how to structure and use personal experience with a rhetorical purpose in an essay or argument. Once they get to upper division writing courses, however, students are exposed to writing that places less emphasis on that personalized, subjective genre and moves toward the impersonal. Such writing limits the use of narrative, which is generally perceived as highly personal and subjective because it generally conveys only the narrator's perspective. Narrative includes precise details of an event that occurred in the past which are reported in the same order in which they occurred, as well as an observation or evaluation of the information by the narrator (Rentz, 1992). Narrative, generally, is distinguished from argument in its concern with the particular instead of with generalizations. However, elements of narrative occur in business writing, and it is important to link genres used in developmental and composition pedagogy to professional kinds of writing as well; such a link reinforces what students have learned and encourages them to refine skills related to it.

The notion of using narrative in business writing pedagogy is not new (Rentz), and scholarship has discussed the rhetorical value of narrative in professional writing (Blyler, 1995 and 1996; and Jameson, 2004). Jameson observes that narrative contributes to "a hybrid, internally dialogic language that fulfills a social purpose by reflecting human relationships even when the subject matter is impersonal and technical." Narrative can be used to effect persuasive rhetoric while also acculturating students to professional writing. In spite of this scholarship, narrative is still largely devalued within business and professional writing pedagogy (Beemer, Bowels and Shaver, 2005). This paper considers narrative's use in writing composition pedagogy and how it has been perceived in business writing pedagogy; it then reports on how narrative functions as rhetorical appeals in professional settings and it also discusses how, consequently, narrative can be used pedagogically to transition students from the composition-level writing to discipline-specific writing.

Narrative in Composition Pedagogy

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Narrative has had a conflicted past in the field of composition studies. Summarizing the debate surrounding the use of narrative in writing pedagogy, Duffy (1998) explains,

> Because the personal narrative urges students to focus on their own experiences, critics argue that it is useless to students. To supporters, personal narratives serve not just as a record of events, but they offer students the opportunity to explore what they know, make decisions concerning their writing and perhaps learn something about themselves along the way. Other supporters argue that the personal narrative is extremely relevant to students. They agree that skill in writing narratives progresses toward skill in exposition, so that the skills build upon each other to produce better writers Narrative is taught at several levels of writing instruction. (p.1)

As narrative returned as an acceptable genre for composition pedagogy, its value has increased. Instructors are able to use it various ways at different levels. Kies (2007) observes that it is used at community colleges and four-year institutions primarily in developmental and basic writing courses and first year composition courses. In these settings it is used to help students express their own experiences and to encourage reflection on those experiences. It is also used in four-year institutions in advanced exposition courses in the form of memoirs and folk tales (p. 1).

Because of its versatility in being used at multiple levels of writing instruction, narrative is useful to engage students so that they share experiences while developing their writing skills. Kies explains that, "narrative offers writers a chance to think and write about themselves, to explain how their experiences lead to some important realization or conclusion about their lives or about the world in general" (Kies, p. 1).

People learn about themselves through experiences, and narrative offers an opportunity to reflect on an event and how that event affected the narrator, as he or she shares the story with others. Students are free to express themselves through story-telling. Composing a narrative requires little advanced training in rhetoric. These attributes make it appealing for composition level pedagogy.

Narrative can be expressed in a single paragraph or as an entire essay. Oftentimes, in the basic writing or composition course, students are asked to develop a personal narrative, comprising an entire essay. However narratives can be integrated as a single paragraph within a larger essay or message. Kies states that,

> a narrative paragraph can be an effective, interesting way to integrate significant background information into a variety of different essay types. Even if the essay as a whole primarily uses another method of development, the narrative paragraph can be incorporated into an essay to support a topic sentence in a particular paragraph and to establish a bit of ethical appeal at the same time. (p. 1)

Composition theory indicates that people like to share stories about themselves. This is among the reasons narrative is valued as a genre for teaching composition. Blyler (1995)

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alludes to the "intersubjective" nature of rhetoric—the communication of equals who attempt to understand each other" (p. 291). As a subjective genre, narrative facilitates communication between persons who then apply meaning to shared stories. We value our own experiences, and we appreciate when others share their experiences with us so that we might learn from those experiences or compare them with our own to arrive at some negotiated meaning of an event and its implications.

Treatment of Narrative in Professional Writing Pedagogy

Narrative has long been considered negatively in business writing pedagogy. Its subjective, informal style is often perceived as unprofessional. Even writing centers that cater to business writing students push students away from its use in their writing. Beemer, Bowles and Shaver (2005) explain that the transition from composition to business writing is difficult for many students because business writing pedagogy tends to move away from those less formal genres students practice in composition classes. The move from academic writing to professional writing is a difficult transition if the two are not linked. Pedagogy that devalues a genre that students have been encouraged to use previously creates a challenge for students as they try to link what they have learned to new forms of writing. Writing about a writing center that developed in collaboration between the Department of English and the College of Business at Miami University (Ohio), they explain that students struggle to adjust to an apparently different set of forms of writing than that which they have experienced:

> They are often surprised by the advice we serve up: Get rid of the introduction and begin with your "Big Idea"…Use headers instead of in-text transitions…Get to the point as soon as possible…Use bullet points…Keep the length to two pages or shorter…Lose the flowery language. Students sometimes have a hard time swallowing such advice; after all, it contradicts much of what they learn in their college composition courses. Indeed, the advice we offer students in the Writing Center often contradicts the advice we give students in our own composition classes. In any case, because students are adept at writing academic-ese (thorough introductions that begin with a "hook," narrative arguments that build up to the big finale, smooth transitions, sum-it-all-up conclusions), the biggest challenge many of them face is making the transition from academic writing to business writing. (Paragraph 2)

While formatting a document is important to the professionalization of writing, students also need a means to help them understand a link to prior writing they have learned. Business writing textbooks include sections about descriptions, instructions and persuasion; pedagogy about which is also offered at the composition level. However, studies of how managerial audiences read documents find that few read an entire document and most prefer a highly structured document that places important information in easily accessible locations. With these studies in mind, business writing pedagogy has moved away from expository forms of writing and toward more concise and formal presentation. Rentz (1992) observes that this pedagogy has lead to the "devaluation of narrative, in which information is not divided into clearly marked

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categories, the chronology of events as they occurred is pretty much left intact, and the key point, if stated, may well come at the end" (p. 293). Students must change their style to accommodate more concise expression of information and professionalization of their writing through format, which makes information more accessible to the reader.

Very few business writing textbooks explicitly discuss the use of narrative as a rhetorical tool. However, many textbooks integrate examples of business forms of writing that include elements of narrative, though they do not discuss that use of narrative. A review of four recent texts used for business writing and technical writing pedagogy (four texts published between 2006 and 2007 and authored by Kolin, Oliu et al, Markel and Gurak and Lannon) finds that the word narrative is neither indexed or used, even though in the business writing textbooks (Kolin and Oliu et al) forms of narrative are used in characterizations and examples of incident reports (Kolin, p240), trip reports (Kolin, p.236; Oliu et al, pp. 360-361), persuasive writing (Oliu et al, p. 440) and implied in characterizations of instructions (Kolin, p.207; Oliu et al, p. 409). Kolin list questions that a trip report answers; among them are: "Whom did you see? What did they tell you? What did you do about it?" (p. 236). These suggest attributes of narrative in telling about details of an event. Oliu et al also imply narrative in their example of a trip report: "I further inspected the engine to determine whether other parts may have been harmed and discovered that the following moving parts were damaged…" (p. 360). Oliu et al even lists trip reports among "Informal Reports", suggesting that it can accommodate less objective, informal style. Oliu et al, in their chapter about proposals (Chapter 13) include an example that integrates a brief generalized narrative, characterizing a process and its typical consequences: To dump this metal, the tow motor operator raises the rack over the edge of the scrap-metal bin…this method has resulted in two tow-motor tip-overs" (p. 440). Finally, when discussing instructions, Oliu et al encourages writers to "Learn to perform the operation yourself"(409). This implies using that experience as a guide to develop step-by-step instructions; suggesting that narration be used as a tool for writing steps of a process. Kolin, integrates a description of writing steps that includes similar elements found in narratives: "Put the steps in their correct order…"; and put only the right amount of information in each step" (p. 207). Kolin offers no guidelines to determine what may be "right", suggesting that this is subjectively determined by the writer within the parameters of their audience analysis.

Kolin's example of an incident report (p.240) offers the clearest example of narrative, though he makes no mention of the word narrative or narrate. In the section of the report titled "Description of Incident," which is two paragraphs long, he includes the following statements:

> At 7:20am on March 3, 2006, I was driving Engine 457 traveling north at a speed of fifty-two miles an hour on a single main-line track…Weather conditions and visibility were excellent. Suddenly the last two grain cars…jumped the track. I notified Supervisor…at 7:40a.m., and within forty-five minutes he and a section crew arrived at the scene. The section crew removed the two grain cars, put in new ties, and made the main-line track passable by 9:25a.m. At 9:45a.m.a vacuum car arrived…and its crew proceeded with the cleanup operation. (p.240)

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This illustration includes several attributes identified above by Rentz as elements of narrative. It provides details of an event that occurred in the past as they occurred; and, while in the tips for such messages Kolin emphasizes objective style and fact over opinion, the sentence "Weather conditions and visibility were excellent" suggests subjective evaluation. While the details are presented with a formal tone, the statements combine to form a narrative of the incident.

The authors of the technical writing textbooks integrate examples in such sections that emphasize more formal, objective language. Narrative is not used in examples of other forms of reporting in either set of textbooks. This suggests either a conflicted attitude of authors of such textbooks to refer to the narrative genre explicitly, though they recognize the genre as useful. This suppression of the word narrative in these textbooks, when combined with their explicit use of other genres also found in composition pedagogy; e.g.: description, instruction, persuasion, suggests agreement that narrative as such not be used in professional and scientific writing. Another possibility for this is potential confusion about what constitutes narrative.

It is difficult to distinguish narrative from many other forms of discourse because various elements of narrative occur in other genres as well. Rentz states, "we understand much, if not all, of our experience in narrative form, so that even those things we write that do not take the shape of narrative have been distilled from our original narrative-like understanding of what we are writing about"(p. 299).

Rentz acknowledges that narrative includes: details of an event that occurred in the past and reported in the same order in which they occurred; an observation or evaluation of the information by the narrator; precise detail to facilitate visualization of the event; and she asserts findings that indicate narrative provides some insight into the narrator's character (p. 296). Rentz further distinguishes narrative from argument as opposites by characterizing narrative as concerned with the particular instead of with generalizations, holistic rather than a composite of different parts, and providing a quality of reflection (p. 297). What is missing from this characterization is whether the style must be formal or informal or what constitutes objective language. The Kolin example certainly uses more formal style as events associated with the incident are listed, and the "excellent" weather conditions may be based on what members of the author's and audience's discourse community considers to be professional, objective standards associated with such an assessment, rather than on personal subjectivity. However, all of narrative's attributes are involved in the passage.

According to Rentz, narrative is among the only genres that limit generalization because of their emphasis on describing a particular event (p. 297). She further indicates that the telling of a story helps an audience visualize an event. This visualization can extend to conceptualization of issues as well. Rentz observes that in her studies managers actually prefer to include narratives because it helps them include much valuable information (p. 294).

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Linking Narrative and Business Writing Pedagogy

The attributes identified above link narrative to a number of genres of business and technical writing, including: writing instructions that include safety tips, as well as to analytic writing and claim letters. Also, a number of the attributes of narrative are useful in proposal writing; these attributes give narrative qualities that meet the appeals of logos, pathos and ethos, qualities that will be discussed later. Rentz asserts further that narratives are a form of discourse tool, and Blyler acknowledges that narratives are valuable because they are related to the communities in which we live; as such it has ethnographic qualities about it and social organization is maintained through stories (p. 295).

As mentioned above, Oliu et al encourage readers of their text to become familiar with the process about which they are to write instructions. As one performs a task, he or she goes through certain steps, which are then written down and drafted for a particular audience. This gives writing instructions an attribute of narrative; one essentially narrates an event (task performance) in the sequence in which they performed it, considering information needs of the audience and appropriate details for the audience. The writer, further, reflects on potential hazards involved in the process and integrates safety tips to help readers avoid such hazards.

As presented above in the excerpted example from Kolin, narrative may take on a more formal tone in business writing settings than it does in composition-level or less formal writing settings. However, it maintains the attributes that characterize it.

Narratives help us understand ourselves and our community. Blyler (1996) encourages teachers to show students narratives of professional discourse to acculturate them into the professional community. As students are exposed to narratives of professionals who are communicating with each other, they can come to learn the kinds of activities/experiences associated with a particular kind of career as well as learn the discourse of a given community. Blyler (1995) states that, "Narrative can give understanding of how people conceptualize their existences in concert with others…

> Shared narratives are means by which events in a group's communal life are given significance…(they) are not neutral but rather always interpret, slant, suggest and persuade…in doing so they accommodate the community to the images that accompany its unfolding history by bringing new events into line with the overall values and emotions expressed in the communities rhetorical vision…Narratives build group consciousness and create social realities. (p.300)

She also connects narrative to postmodernism: that is, narrative brings a local flavor to a discussion. Because it conveys shared experiences it considers dynamics more local to community (p. 333). As such it helps readers understand a given community's perspective and what it considers to be reality. One's world is represented within a local construct—that construct reflects the immediacy of interaction with one's world/reality. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) describe the notion of reality as a socially

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constructed phenomenon. Reality is socially constructed through the sequence of statements by members of a community, and this collection of statements is interpreted a certain way and valued by a social group. Reality is reflected in messages conveyed by various people who represent members of a given group. The more people within the group who assimilate with a given event as expressed through multiple narratives, the more that representation is perceived as a truth or reality. If several people in a hearer's discourse community convey similar statements/assertions, the assertion is further advanced as a reality. Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca explicitly acknowledge that their concern is "not an objective description of reality, but the manner in which opinions concerning [reality] are presented"(p. 262). Once a community considers something to be a reality, it is valued as a fact or truth. Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca further assert that decisions regarding actions that depend on judgments of reality and value judgments depend on the speaker's personality and are left to his or her discretion (p. 514). Consequently, a set of narratives from a single community provides an ethnographic study of that community and its discourse.

Jameson (2004) asserts that "a business document is an artifact—a representation of reality, not reality itself" (p. 230). This echoes Blyler's point about how a collection of narratives represents a community's reality, helping readers understand the perspective of one within that community and to learn realities of that community. Jameson goes on to state that, "business prose that achieves you-attitude artfully juxtaposes the writer's voice (perspective) and the reader's vision (perspective) and thus demonstrates a relationship in which the writer expresses an understanding of the reader's vision"(p. 247). This further recalls Blyler's point about the "intersubjective nature of rhetoric--communication of equals who attempt to understand each other." As such, narrative appeals to an audience that shares similar experiences, giving it persuasive qualities.

Rentz specifically identifies four advantages to using narrative in business writing. These are: 1) narrative seems to be a faster read than expository prose and is more easily understood and remembered, 2) narratives are more persuasive than non-narrative prose, 3) narratives provide a more complete description of an occurrence than other modes of discourse do, and 4) narrative allows a reader to go beyond information processing. Readers find narrative more appealing than expository prose that reports only facts and draws conclusions and recommendations from those facts. While expository prose is more formal than narrative, it also is impersonal.

In business writing pedagogy, students learn to apply various arguments to develop a proposal. The proposal genre especially permits writers to express their position regarding a problem and ways to address it. This allows the proposal to include a narrative with a social purpose whether in a professional setting or civic environment. The reader can easily relate to an experience presented in narrative. This is what makes narrative popular in composition level courses, and it can be used to transition students into upper division, professional writing coursework. In fact, narrative is versatile as a rhetorical element accomplishing all three forms of appeals in argument. Professional writing and technical writing pedagogy tends to value development of argumentative and persuasive writing skills, which include understanding how to apply various appeals.

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Proposals that affect the public should integrate narrative to help the public relate to business concerns and needs, as well as to understand the implications of that being proposed, and narrative should be encouraged in business writing courses as a means to link the kind of writing students learn in their composition courses with upper-division writing that is to prepare students for workplace writing.

The following sections describe applications of narrative in various forms of appeals that may be used in persuasive writing in particular, such as that found in proposals; it is important to note that none of them is derived from an explicit business or professional writing application or textbook. This is largely because lengthy examples of narrative are rare in such textbooks, yet examples in such texts include elements of narrative in shorter passages. Even though the examples below are taken from outside explicit business writing settings, each can be applied to a business-related setting.

Narrative as Ethos

A number of studies indicate that narrative contributes to establishing a speaker's/writer's character (Rentz, Kies, Jackson and Blyler). An ethical argument is one that emphasizes the trustworthiness of the writer/speaker. If an oncologist reports that empirical studies link smoking to cancer, the relationship between smoking cigarettes and cancer is valued. Because of the speaker's background, he or she is considered trustworthy. If, however, a tobacco farmer asserts that there is little connection between smoking and cancer, that person's assertion may be considered less trustworthy because of their economic interest in establishing that no relationship between smoking cigarettes and cancer exists.
As an ethical tool narrative helps a writer or speaker to assimilate with an audience, giving the audience the impression that the speaker/writer understands their background and sympathizes or empathizes with them, enabling speaker to gain audience's trust.

Dorothy L Sayers spoke in 1938 about women's rights, and this speech was reprinted in 1971. Near the end of it she uses narrative to appeal to her audience. She relates,

> A man once asked me…how I managed in my books to write such a natural conversation between men when they were by themselves. Was I, by any chance, a member of a large, mixed family with a lot of male friends? I replied that, on the contrary, I was an only child and had practically never seen or spoken to any men of my own age until I was about twenty-five. "Well, said the man, "I shouldn't have expected a woman to have been able to make it so convincing." I replied that I had coped with this difficult problem by making my men talk, as far as possible, like ordinary human beings. This aspect of the matter seemed to surprise the other speaker; he said no more, but took it away to chew over. One of these days it may quite likely occur to him that women, as well as men, when left to themselves, talk very much like human beings also.
> Indeed, it has been my experience that both men and women are fundamentally human. (p. 49)

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The appeal comes within a speech intended to persuade the audience to pursue women's equal rights. With this description, she relates to her audience by asserting that she uses the same understanding of women to help her formulate a dialog between two men. A male was unable to detect her lack of experience with discourse between males in what he thought were successful descriptions of such discourse; this contributes to her credibility as a speaker of women's equality. Because women are the same as men, she is able to use her experiences with women to create an effective discussion between only males. The narrative, consequently also reinforces that women should have equal rights as men do.

Narrative as Pathos

Because narrative also conveys a narrator's attitude or feeling about what occurred, narrative also can have an emotional appeal. A pathetic argument appeals to an audience's sense of what is right and what is wrong. One may argue that an action should occur because it is right to do so in that situation. One can use narrative as a pathetic argument to make the audience feel kinship with writer in terms of being able to relate to frustrating experience in establishing why action to address something is needed.

In a book that is primarily used in composition-level pedagogy, Faigley and Selzer (2006) use the example of Demarcus Taylor, a student from the University of Texas at Austin who wrote about insufficient health coverage for students in an effort to encourage the University administration to change their policy or create better language to articulate the policy to illustrate persuasive use of narrative. In the example, Taylor wrote:

> Let me tell you a story. During my second semester at the University of Texas, I began having headaches. Taking Tylenol helped, but the headaches returned. So, I made an appointment with one of the doctors at University Health Services...The doctor...recommended that I get an MRI to rule out any serious physical problems... I would have to go off campus to a radiology facility to have the procedure done. I had the MRI and the results brought a sigh of relief--no brain tumor. To my surprise, however, I received a bill for $1642 that my student medical plan did not cover. I called the accounting office and was told that I had to have purchased additional coverage to pay for the MRI. I had improperly assumed that my medical fees would cover any procedures directly ordered by the health center. In fact, these fees only cover minor treatment and office visits, though the specifics are quite vague and answers are hard to find. (p.152-153)

The student presents this narrative to illustrate the consequences of the ineffective, unclear language of the existing policy document. It acknowledges that he had read the document but misunderstood what was covered and what was not covered. This misunderstanding resulted in his having to pay a large sum of money for an MRI, which could have caused him, or any other student in a similar situation, not to be able to attend classes subsequently. This, of course, has economic implications for not only students but also the institution; if students are not able to attend classes after experiencing something similar to this, the institution will be losing students and money as well.

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The student uses this example to illustrate what may be considered representative of others in a similar position. The pathetic approach appeals to others who can relate to his experience.

Narrative as Logos

A very basic quality of narrative is that it reports facts and interprets them. Logos refers to the argument presented generally; that is, what facts or other information are being used to appeal to an audience's reasoning. A narrative, when offered with other narratives that assimilate each other, provides a reason why action should be taken; a narrative states a specific example/incident that, when combined with other specific examples/incidents, can be used to persuade an audience that something is disagreeable to a given community, necessitating action. Recalling Blyler's observations about shared experiences as representations of fact and reality, a series of narratives acts to represent the reality perceived by a given community.

An example of this occurred recently at a large Midwestern institution when students protested the University's implementation of a dual grading system, which afforded instructors the opportunity to use plus/minus grades instead of straight letter grades if they so chose. The straight letter grading system had been in place for several years, and in order to pass a resolution permitting the use of plus/minus letter grades, the resolution had to be presented to the faculty senate as an option of using either. Faculty would be ale to choose to use either grading system for their classes.

After the first semester in which the dual system had been implemented, the campus newspaper reported experiences of several students who felt the option was unfair. Among the reported experiences were students explaining individual experiences in different classes and comparing with friends: "I fought really hard for an A in one of my classes, but only got an A minus, which lowered my GPA and really pissed me off. If they're giving out B pluses, they ought to give A pluses, too. I had a 98% or 99% in Spanish but still got a regular 4.0 for it." This comment was followed by, "My instructor used plus/minus grading and my friend's instructor used straight letter grades. I got an A- from this instructor in x course, and my friend got an A from another instructor in same course. In effect, I did worse than my friend did in the class" (Rader 2006).

Each of the above statements represents a student's own story about their experience and why they feel the option is unfair. When combined with other similar narratives, the narratives reflect what the community of students feels to be a reality; that a dual grading system is unfair and should be changed to a single grading system. This illustrates Blyler's and Jameson's point about narrative writing as representative of a community's reality.

Again, while these examples are derived from non-business-specific texts, they have applications to business settings: arguments about women's rights continue to occur

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before policy-makers; and arguments regarding language of policy and improvements to policy occur on a regular basis in workplace settings.

Conclusion

Narrative is generally used in developmental writing classes to help student practice basic writing skills by engaging them in writing about something they know and understand most—themselves. At the freshman composition level, narrative is used as a means to help students reflect on how events have affected them and to give teachers some insight into their students as a short of audience analysis tool to guide their pedagogy for a given group of students. However, pedagogy beyond the composition level tends to devalue explicit use of narrative in favor of a more formal and impersonal style. Rentz asserts that narrative acts as a rhetorical tool for use in business writing settings, and Blyler and Jameson acknowledge the value of narrative as a tool to help students understand discourse in professional settings and as a tool for ethnographic study. This essay has posited that narrative also be used to transition students from composition-level writing to discipline-specific forms of writing. Students are exposed to narrative in composition courses and should be encouraged to refine their narrative skills for rhetorical purposes in their writing.

Authors of business writing and technical writing textbooks can accomplish this inclusion of narrative by:

> 1) integrating explicit references to narrative in examples of persuasive writing as well as a tool in developing instructions, and
> 2) integrating references to attributes of narratives in sections explaining style components and distinguishing narratives from more formal, objective forms of reporting information, and
> 3) showing examples of narrative-style persuasive writing and contrasting it with an example of non-narrative-style writing.

Instructors of business writing and technical writing can foster narrative as a transitional tool for students by:

1) including exercises that have students narrate their process in doing a given task, and
2) encouraging in an exercise or assignment interviews with other students or faculty that integrate narratives of events as a logical appeal in a proposal, and
3) asking students to bring a narrative they composed in a previous writing course and develop it into a proposal, trip report or set of instructions, giving it an alternative rhetorical purpose.

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Biography

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What First-Year Composition Textbooks are Beginning to Say about Writing in Business

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Despite increasing concern from employers about college graduates' communication skills, as reported in articles and in surveys by the National Association of Colleges and Employers and other organizations, colleges and universities have been reluctant to revise first-year composition programs to explore ways to prepare first-year students for writing in their careers as well as in their studies. However, first-year composition textbooks have begun to include information about business writing, especially in discussion of common forms such as letters and resumes, less so in discussions of style and rhetorical strategies. As more composition textbooks discuss business writing (and do so more fully), business writing instructors will increasingly find that their students have received some instruction in business writing in their composition courses. So it will be useful for the instructors to know what students were taught about business writing in composition courses.

Method

To illustrate the nascent coverage of business writing in first-year composition texts, this paper examines three texts widely used in colleges and universities in the United States: The St. Martin's Guide to Writing, The Bedford Guide for College Writers, and The New McGraw-Hill Handbook. Representative of most first-year composition texts designed as a combination rhetoric, reader, and handbook, they are comparable in price: $72.95 retail for The St. Martin's Guide to Writing; $68.95 retail for The Bedford Guide for College Writers; and $52 net (about $66 retail) for The New McGraw-Hill Handbook. Many other first-year composition texts are available, however, and in many composition programs the text for a section is chosen by its instructor, not by the Program Director or a committee; therefore, many different titles might be in use in a large composition program. The descriptions of these three texts in this paper are by necessity brief, designed to illustrate the type and amount of information found in these composition textbooks but not to examine them in depth. The descriptions are provided so that business writing instructors might have a sense of what their students might have been taught about business writing before they enter the business writing course. Also, with knowledge of these three composition texts, business writing instructors might be ready to engage in conversation with composition instructors about what they do to prepare composition students

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for career writing, and ready to examine at greater depth the composition text(s) used in the first-year program at their school.

The composition textbooks examined in this paper all address essential topics in writing instruction: critical thinking, research methods, audience analysis, invention, argument, revising, grammar, documenting sources – topics that have traditionally been taught in composition courses and that underlie effective business writing as well as effective academic writing. This paper examines the textbooks' coverage of aspects of writing that have tended not to be examined in composition courses but instead in business writing courses, such as types of documents commonly created in business and government, the use of graphics in reports, and developing a good style for workplace writing.

Review of the literature

In 2006, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) issued a press release stating, "Employers say they consider communication skills to be important in job candidates, but find that many potential employees don't have them" (2006). A discussion of the literature on employers' assessments of graduates' writing skills is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is generally recognized that many employers are concerned about graduates' writing skills. NACE annual surveys asking service sector, manufacturing, and government/nonprofit employers to identify "soft" skills and qualities they seek in applicants have indicated for several years that employers value communication skills more highly than teamwork skills, a strong work ethic, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, motivation, computer skills, leadership skills, and other qualities. "'Communication skills have topped the list for eight years, and honesty and integrity have tied for the top spot for the last three years,'" said Marilyn Mackes, the NACE executive director, in a recent press release (2007). The press release stated that "the ideal candidate needs to be more than an articulate straight arrow, according to the survey results. Employers also cited strong interpersonal skills, motivation and initiative, the ability to work well with others and a strong work ethic as key attributes," all of which scored 4.5 out of 5 = extremely important (2007).

Most studies that address the connections between college writing and writing instruction, on the one hand, and writing in business and government are limited because many composition instructors and program directors are not familiar with workplace writing. Studies by composition researchers such as Dias et al. (1999) base their rhetorical analyses on sound understanding of situational writing in academia but incomplete understanding of situational writing in business and government. Most composition researchers are temporary observers of writing in non-academic settings rather than professionals engaged in business writing as part of their career.

Few scholars and teachers have discussed using first-year composition courses in colleges and universities to prepare students for career writing. Most articles focus on teaching composition in two-year colleges, as do Elizabeth Tebeaux's "The Trouble with Employees' Writing May Be Freshman Composition" and "Freshman Composition Can Prepare Students for Real Life,"

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which appeared in Teaching English in the Two-Year College (1988). Some research has suggested the importance of preparing college-bound high school students as well as non-college-bound students for writing in their work (Samson 2006); however, textbooks for high schools have for years addressed "workplace" writing to prepare primarily non-college-bound students for work.

In the 1970's and 1980's, the emphasis in first-year composition pedagogy shifted from helping students learn to employ traditional rhetorical modes (analysis, comparison and contrast, definition, etc.) and to make their writing clear and correct, to asking students to construct personal narrative and engage in self-exploration, with less and less emphasis on expository writing. Recently, textbooks have reverted to emphasis on the "modes," as is apparent in the three texts discussed in this paper, and in other texts such as Dietsch's *Reasoning and Writing Well* (2006).

Discussion

Although writing skills are in demand in business, first-year composition programs at most schools tend to focus on preparing the students for academic writing rather than on preparing students for the kinds of writing they will do in their careers. At many schools, first-year composition programs are still literature-based; students develop writing skills by writing about literature. At many colleges and universities, students do not take a writing course after their first year, so they have limited opportunity to learn about writing in business or government and may leave college without a solid base for success in writing in their work. In essence, most college students are taught how to write for success in academic settings (where they are to show how much they know to an audience who knows more than they do) rather than prepared for success in writing in business or government, where they often are challenged to inform readers who know less than they do about their subject, and sometimes persuade readers. These basic differences in purpose and audience, which writers in business and government must recognize to be successful, warrant greater emphasis in first-year composition textbooks.

In composition courses, students are still taught how to write traditional research papers even though fewer and fewer college courses (outside of second-semester composition) require them, and few students will go on to write research papers in their work. Of course, students do need to be able to conduct research effectively and to incorporate the results of their research in reports, but writing a first-year composition "research" or "thesis" paper may have little transferable benefit unless the project is in the student's major.

As employers increasingly express concern about the communication skills of college graduates, colleges and universities will have to respond to help their graduates be competitive in the job market. Schools will have to change how they help students develop writing skills. They could offer more business or technical writing courses at the junior or senior level (which many schools would find cost-prohibitive), or they could change the emphasis of their first-year composition courses to help students develop writing skills for their careers as well as their studies (which would cost nothing). Pressure from employers to improve graduates' writing

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skills might translate into directives from state agencies, trustees, or accrediting agencies to do so, and colleges and universities across the United States might have to shift their focus in composition instruction away from academic writing to a blend of academic and career writing.

One reason that few first-year composition programs address writing for students' careers may be that first-year composition teachers at most universities sometimes are the least experienced teachers in the English Department; some may be graduate students only three months removed from being undergraduate English majors themselves. Most will not have had an opportunity to discover what students need to learn (or practice) in a writing course to be successful in their writing in their careers.

Increased call for assessment of college courses, including writing courses, may drive composition programs to greater uniformity in texts and assignments, but in the near term (and perhaps forever, if the storm over accountability blows over) the students in a section of business communication may have used one of several different textbooks, each with its own degree of emphasis on topics related to business writing. So it might be useful to see what three widely used composition textbooks do to support instruction in business writing.

Business writing coverage in The St. Martin's Guide to Writing

The St. Martin's Guide to Writing is touted by the authors, Rise Axelrod and Charles Cooper, as "the most widely adopted text of its kind in the nation" (v). It illustrates many of the changes taking place in first-year composition textbooks: it is large (over 1000 pages in hardcover, including the handbook), and it serves as rhetoric, reader, research paper manual, and handbook. The rhetoric/reader section (851 pages) has six parts, on "Writing Activities" (553 pages), "Critical Thinking Strategies" (39 pages), "Writing Strategies" (86 pages), "Research Strategies" (92 pages), "Writing for Assessment" (25 pages), and "Writing and Speaking to Wider Audiences" (44 pages).

Axelrod and Cooper organize the "Writing Activities" section into ten chapters focusing on writing tasks such as "Remembering an Event," "Explaining a Concept," and "Arguing a Position." At the beginning of each of the first nine chapters, three half-page anecdotes describe an example of the task "In College Courses," "In the Community," and "In the Workplace." Although in these nine chapters (which occupy nearly 500 pages of the book) some prominence is given to writing in the workplace, and the anecdotes do focus on business writing situations rather than "workplace writing" (which term seems to have developed as a way to refer to the writing that administrative assistants and technicians do), there is little focus on business communication until Part Six, "Writing and Speaking to Wider Audiences," which occupies 43 pages of the 851 pages (versus 92 on "Research Strategies" and 55 on "Interpreting Stories"). As the authors indicate, the focus is on academic writing: "We have focused our efforts on better preparing students for writing in today's academy, including enhanced coverage of working with sources, working online, and considering document design and other visual aspects of writing" (v).

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Part Six has chapters on "Designing Documents" (27 pages), "Oral Presentations" (5 pages), "Writing with Others" (6 pages), and "Writing in Your Community" (5 pages). The first, which has the greatest focus on writing in business, invites students to ask about the readers' expectations and use of the document, and it discusses very briefly such elements of design as fonts, heading formats, displayed lists, the use of white space, and chunking. The discussion of visuals describes the common types of graphics in only two to four sentences each, and it presents guidelines on labeling, calling out, and placing visuals. It does advise students to determine the appropriate type of visual for certain information, and it admonishes them to "avoid 'chart junk'" and to "use clip art sparingly."

Memo and letter format are discussed and illustrated, each discussion shorter than the discussion of the use of "e-mail"; resumes are discussed in slightly less than one page, and job application letters and lab reports in less than half a page each. Web page design is covered in slightly more than a page. The information in the chapter is accurate (representing what is commonly found in business writing textbooks); however, there is not enough discussion to inform students sufficiently on any of the topics.

The sample graphics and documents in the chapter on "Designing Documents" occupy 14 of the chapter's 27 pages, leaving little room for fully developed discussion, but the chapter does serve as a good introduction to some document types and design issues, and students might take from their use of the book some basic principles and familiarity with types of graphics and documents. The discussion in the chapter is so cursory, however, that it would not really prepare students for creating documents in their work.

The chapter on "Oral Presentations" (5 pages) summarizes briefly four basic types of presentations (impromptu, extemporaneous, scripted, and memorized), discusses assessing audience and purpose in nine sentences, and spends half a page on "cues to orient listeners," one page on effective visuals, and a page on delivering the presentation. The information is all sound but sparse. The one sample visual (an "overhead transparency") is an idiot chart with faulty parallelism in its two-item bulleted list.

In an example of a writing team at a pharmaceutical company charged with developing a proposal to a state legislature and a local school board, the chapter on "Working with Others" (6 pages) offers useful advice on managing the collaboration process. Good information is presented about managing the process (one page), but the discussion of how the hypothetical team overcame challenges (such as anticipating objections) does not contain enough specifics to help students see how to go about meeting such challenges.

"Writing in Your Community" (5 pages) focuses almost exclusively on writing related to service-learning project but has value in its identifying some differences in audience (and consequently document design) in writing in/for organizations.

Business writing coverage in <u>The Bedford Guide for College Writers</u>

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The Bedford Guide for College Writers has 944 pages, including a rhetoric section (383 pages), a readings section (156 pages), a research paper manual (124 pages), and a handbook (145 pages). X. J. Kennedy and the three co-authors have divided the Rhetoric section into four parts: "A College Writer's Processes" (37 pages), "A Writer's Situations" (144 pages, including essays by professional writers and by students), "Special Writing Situations" (62 pages), and "A Writer's Strategies" (140 pages). The Readings section is arranged by topics: "Families," "Men and Women," "Popular Culture," "The Workplace," and "Education." The seven essays in the Workplace section critique the American work ethic, offer a tribute to blue-collar workers, make a case against chores for children, and (in four essays) discuss problems with benefits and/or wages. The selections are from such publications as Utne Reader, Newsweek, The New York Times Magazine, and Working Mother.

Chapter 13, "Writing in the Workplace," has only 15 pages, over five of which are illustrations. The chapter presents guidelines about purpose, audience, tone, and presentation (conciseness, clarity, and organization), with short "Discovery Checklists" for writers to use to review a completed document. The authors present guidelines and formatting instructions for letters, memos, email, résumés, and letters of application; for each type of document, the limited discussion presents the usual suggestions. Surprisingly, only two sentences examine the subject of purpose in business writing, but ten address tone. Two sentences in the presentation section address chunking of information.

The ten-sentence discussion of business letters (versus application letters, discussed later) contains good advice, encouraging brevity, specificity, courtesy, and correctness. Nearly two pages, however, are devoted to discussing the different parts of the letter. Modified block format is recommended for most letters, with block style recommended for use with letterhead. Two annotated sample letters, each about a page, illustrate the discussion.

The discussion of résumés presents the usual suggestions: to provide headings, to rely on clauses rather than complete sentences, to use action verbs and active voice, and to use bold type for emphasis. The sample resume (paired with the sample letter of application) follows conventional practice, unfortunately using bold type to identify the employer at the beginning of each item in the Experience section rather than achieving greater emphasis on the writer's experience by stating the job title (perhaps in bold) at the beginning of each item.

Regarding the Objective, the authors offer only two statements: "This optional section allows personnel officers to see at a glance your priorities and goals. Try to sound confident and eager but not pompous or presumptuous." (230) A good suggestion, but most students will be left wondering, "How?"

The discussion of résumés does, however, argue that a writer should prepare different forms of his or her résumé – a text file for emailing, a scannable version, and a Web version for posting – as business writing texts recommend, so students who have used this book should be aware of different ways to submit a resume and the need for appropriate format.

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The chapter's discussion of memos provides general information, including the possible range of formality and guidelines for format (including the suggestion to use *Subject:* rather than *Re:*), and a sample memo of nearly one page is annotated.

Email guidelines emphasize brevity and remind readers that email isn't private. Email is still "e-mail," as it is in the other two composition texts and in Guffey's Essentials of Business Communication and Ober's Contemporary Business Communication. Other business communication texts such as Lehman and DuFrene's Business Communication and composition texts such as Faigley's Writing: A Guide for College and Beyond use "email." One might wonder why "e-mail' has not become "email" as "on-line" (as an adjective) became "online" and as "book-keeper" became "bookkeeper."

The discussion of the letter of application recommends the three-paragraph format: identifying the position and summarizing qualifications in the first paragraph, expanding on qualifications in the second paragraph, and requesting an interview and providing contact information in the third – which invites one to wonder when textbooks will emphasize that content should drive organization, rather than vice-versa.

The chapter on "Writing in the Workplace" has 15 pages versus 28 for the preceding chapter, "Responding to Literature," and 124 pages for the section "A Writer's Research Manual." The text is clearly designed to support the research-paper component of a composition course, but as with the other texts it exhibits a tendency to begin to address business writing.

Business writing coverage in The New McGraw-Hill Handbook

The New McGraw-Hill Handbook, by Elaine Maimon, Janice Peritz, and Kathleen Yancey, has over 1000 pages in 13 Parts, including "Writing and Designing Papers" (139 pages on the writing process), "Researching" (96 pages), "Documenting across the Curriculum" (123 pages), "Editing for Clarity" (79 pages),"Editing for Word Choice" (45 pages), and "Sentence Punctuation" (86 pages). Part 5, "Writing beyond College," is the most relevant to business communication. It contains, however, only 26 pages, with 8 pages of sample documents: a brochure, a newsletter, two letters on community issues, a resume, a letter of application, an email message, and a letter of adjustment.

Part 1 on "Writing and Designing Papers" includes discussion of the use of visuals in a section on developing ideas. It identifies types of visuals that are useful with particular rhetorical strategies such as description of classification. A separate section on revising visuals presents additional guidelines for effective graphics. In Part 2, "Common Assignments," Chapter 13 on "Oral Presentations" (six pages) has precious space taken up by two pages of PowerPoint slides but does encourage audience analysis and offers some suggestions for presenting. The longer Chapter 14 on "Multimedia Writing" (22 pages) discusses linking in hypertext essays, using presentation software, creating a website, and blogging. In Part 3, "Researching," Chapter 17 on "Finding and Creating Visuals" has five pages of illustrations and one page of sidebars; it focuses more on finding good illustrations (especially on the internet) than creating them to

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illustrate discussion. Integrating visuals into the text of a document is discussed in Chapter 22, "Writing the Paper."

The New McGraw-Hill Handbook is different from many texts in incorporating discussion of visuals at appropriate points in the discussion of the writing process, rather than having a separate chapter (which might reduce the sense that graphics should support discussion in the text). Uniting discussion of graphics with the discussion of text might help students see that both graphics as well as text should be considered when planning and drafting a document. This text has greater coverage of graphics than the others, but it appears in several places, as the Index reveals, making general discussion of graphics less convenient. Also, in an attempt to appeal to the students, valuable space is taken up by a nearly full-page photograph of Kurt Cobain.

The authors' discussion of brochures, newsletters, and posters (with samples) occupies most of the short chapter on "Service Learning and Community-Service Writing." It invites the student to consider their purpose and audience but does not discuss those tasks. The chapter on "Letters to Raise Awareness and Share Concern" offers the usual advice regarding format, conciseness, and a strong opening, in two pages of text followed by two sample letters.

The final chapter, "Writing to Get and Keep a Job," is the longest of the three in Part 5, "Writing beyond College." It encourages students to explore internship opportunities (offering suggestions of what to do during the interview) and provides half a page of advice about résumés, one page of guidelines for writing one, and a sample résumé in a sans-serif font, with references listed and no elaboration on the writer's studies or work experience.

One page of guidelines for letters of application precedes a sans-serif letter coordinated with the sample resume; here, the authors recommend limiting the letter to three or four paragraphs and "informing the reader that you are anticipating a follow-up to your letter" (513). Half a page of discussion of how to prepare for an interview precedes discussion of writing at work, with two sentences on business letters, two sentences on reports and proposals, three sentences on evaluations and recommendations, and two sentences on presentations. A one-page discussion of writing "a letter of protest" (an adjustment letter) is illustrated by a 1.5 page sample, and less than a page of discussion offers suggestions for writing "a letter of praise."

Scattered throughout The New McGraw-Hill Handbook are "Writing beyond College" boxes intended to link the discussion in the text to writing in non-academic settings. Many of the situations/examples, however, are more closely related to academic writing than to business communication. Also, in some chapters where one might expect to find such a box – such as "Finding and Creating Effective Visuals," "Evaluating Sources," and even "Plagiarism, Copyright, and Intellectual Property" – there is not one.

Conclusion

These three popular first-year composition textbooks vary slightly in what they say about writing in business, but generally they offer similar advice (and similar amounts of it). Often, subjects to

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which entire chapters are devoted in business communication texts are given a few sentences in these texts. Perhaps the authors of composition texts are beginning to recognize a need for materials to support instruction in career writing – or perhaps publishers have encouraged authors to include some discussion of writing in business so that the publisher's campus representatives can try to sell the book for adoption by claiming that it "has coverage of business writing." Any instructor with experience teaching business writing or experience writing in business would see quickly that the coverage of important topics (especially persuasive writing and common types of business documents) should be expanded, but because most first-year composition instructors lack such experience they might not see how limited the coverage of business writing is.

The coverage of business writing in composition textbooks might create a pedagogical concern for business writing instructors: some students might enter a course in business writing thinking that they already know how to create effective business documents. But their experience with the research paper, which is usually the culminating assignment in composition, sometimes suggests that the specifics of proper documentation are more important than learning about writing situations, style, and documents. To find out what students have done in composition courses and have been taught about business writing, business writing instructors might ask their school's Director of Composition or individual composition instructors which text(s) they use and then examine the text(s) to see what is said about business writing generally, and more specifically about topics that are central to business writing, such as types of documents and messages, writing in an organization, oral communication, and other subjects.

Nearly all studies of the job market and of business in general acknowledge that success in business and government requires the ability to communicate well. As DiSanza and Legge (2003) point out, effective communication in business and government is crucial to motivating employees, managing change, ensuring creativity, and enabling each worker to be successful in his or her career. In many businesses, it is essential also to attracting clients, maintaining good client relationships, developing and maintaining good relations with the community, preventing claims or lawsuits, and achieving other goals. To address growing concern that college graduates are not prepared adequately for writing in their careers, first-year composition instructors need to rethink what they teach and consider carefully the texts they use to teach it, to help the students develop the skills they will need to meet employers' insistence on good writing skills.

Authors of first-year composition textbooks have *begun* to provide those instructors with information they need to help students develop career writing skills. In the near future, textbooks with increased focus on business writing will be an important resource for composition instructors. However, if colleges and universities require more emphasis on career writing in composition courses, composition instructors will need additional information and guidance about business writing situations and strategies, and about types of documents common in business. Business writing instructors may be called in to consult with staff of first-year composition programs to offer information and advice about developing students' skills for

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success in their writing in business and government. So it is useful for business writing instructors to have a sense of the coverage of business writing in composition textbooks.

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Biography

DON SAMSON teaches professional writing, technical editing, and Shakespeare at Radford University, in Virginia. His PhD is from UNC - Chapel Hill. A former proposal writer in aerospace and instructional designer for software

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The Impact of EQ Training on Collaborative Professional Writing

Lucia S. Sigmar, Tab W. Cooper, Geraldine E. Hynes, Kathy L. Hill

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Introduction

Over the course of each semester, students in 300-level business communication courses can expect to produce a number of various types of messages and reports with emphasis on the psychological development of the message. Although education has traditionally demanded an individual approach to most writing tasks in order to assess student performance, most practitioners in the field of business communication recognize the importance of collaborative writing as a necessary skill in preparing students to enter the job market where teams rather than individuals are the primary work unit (Yost & Tucker, 2000). But why do so many students seem to have difficulty working not only with each other on collaborative writing tasks, but also with the various business-writing scenarios that supposedly simulate what they will also encounter in the workplace? Such collaboration demands the development of sophisticated social and emotional skills (Lopes & Salovey, 2004). However, it is precisely in this area of skills development that modern society, and by extension, our students are lacking.

Most of us recognize the benefits of collaborative writing for our students. We know that collaboration provides opportunities for students to gain new knowledge and abilities, and that it develops intrapersonal and interpersonal skills for working effectively with others. We also know that our students gain valuable experience in working as a team toward a common goal and gain satisfaction in contributing to the performance and product of the group (Webb, 1995). Moreover, evidence shows that cooperation promotes more frequent use of higher-level reasoning strategies, higher achievement, and more accurate perspective than do competitive or individualistic efforts. These cooperative learning experiences also result in students being more mature in their cognitive and moral decision making and in considering the viewpoints of others when making decisions (Johnson & Johnson, 2004).

Incorporating social and emotional skills (EQ) training into the business communication curriculum is an important step in preparing our students to function effectively in a global workplace with its complex informal networks, teams, and participatory leadership, where they must constantly learn new skills and adapt quickly to changing technology (Lopes & Salovey, 2004) and where mastery of interpersonal and group skills are needed to interact effectively with others (Johnson, 2003; Johnson & F. Johnson, 2003). If, as Daniel Goleman believes, professionally successful people have high emotional intelligence in addition to the traditional cognitive intelligence or specialized knowledge (1998c), we can better prepare our students by teaching them not only the cognitive knowledge they will need, but by teaching them the social and emotional skills that will ensure their success personally and professionally.

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This study investigates the impact of EQ training on student satisfaction with the collaborative writing process and also analyzes its effect on the writing product. Although previous studies have discussed the importance of incorporating these soft skills into training models for academic and business applications (Mills, Myers, & Rachael, 1991; McGraw & Tidwell, 2001; Greenan, Humphreys, & McIlveen, 1997), little work has been done on its effect on either the process or the product of collaborative writing itself.

Social and Emotional Intelligence

So what exactly is social and emotional intelligence? Researchers have long recognized that there is another form of intellect other than cognitive. The vast body of literature on social and emotional intelligence suggests a number of various interpretations and terminology for the concept including: emotional quotient; emotional literacy; personal intelligence; multiple intelligences; interpersonal intelligence; and intrapersonal intelligence. With this plethora of terms, a working definition of the concept of social and emotional intelligence becomes necessary so that we can become aware of and recognize specific skills competencies for the business communication classroom.

Social Intelligence

While it is generally recognized that the term *social intelligence* originated with E. L. Thorndike (1920), extensive research by Dr. John "Jack" Blakeman, a protégé of Dr. Carl Rogers (1951, 1961), resulted in a practical understanding of social intelligence.

Blakeman's social skill set model illustrates the type and relationship of the different components of social intelligence: 1) *assessing* (arranging the environment, positioning, posturing, observation, and listening), 2) *communicating* (responding to content, responding to feeling, responding to feeling *and* meaning, and asking questions), and 3) *controlling* (making and handling requests, and reinforcing behavior). More advanced social intelligence skills include *initiating skills, personalizing skills, confrontation techniques,* additional *verbal techniques,* and interpersonal *problem-solving skills* (1984).

This model, based on theoretical constructs, is unique in its practical application of social and emotional skills for use in a professional setting. As such, it provides an important foundation for social and emotional skills instruction in the business communication classroom.

Emotional Intelligence

Harkening back to Thorndike's initial concept of social intelligence and based on Gardner's notion of multiple intelligences (1983), the term *emotional intelligence* (EI or EQ) was first used by Peter Salovey and John Mayer when they defined the concept as a type of intelligence in their seminal paper on the subject in 1990.[1] The term has been most recently popularized in the common vernacular by Daniel Goleman's landmark publication, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) and has sparked much critical inquiry with its personal, professional, and scientific implications.

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Each researcher variously defines and measures EQ as to his/her purpose, but the concept has been generally recognized equally as, if not more, important than intellectual intelligence (IQ) as an indicator of personal and professional success (Covey, 1996; Goleman, 1998a, 1998b). Salovey and Mayer define this concept as a [cognitive] "ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (1997, p. 10). For others, emotional intelligence constitutes "an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities, and competencies that influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures" (Martinez, 1997, p. 72). Daniel Goleman's five competencies of emotional intelligence, however, are generally considered to be the accepted starting point for discussion and include: the ability to become self-aware in managing emotions and controlling impulses; to set goals and perform well; to be motivated and creative; to empathize with others; to handle relationships effectively; and to develop appropriate social skills (1995). Mastery of these competencies greatly impacts the way an individual perceives and reacts to internal and external events.[2]

Also essential to an understanding of emotional intelligence is the development of a comprehensive emotional vocabulary. These words are important for communicating not only at an emotional level with others (i.e. articulating the feelings of others), but for increasing emotional self-awareness in oneself (Carkhuff, 1993). Recent scientific research indicates that the use of such *affective* language not only has a physical effect on the brain, but can also alleviate negative emotions (Lieberman et al., 2007). This ability to perceive, understand, manage, and most importantly, to articulate emotions in ourselves and others is necessary in relating to other people on a social and emotional level.

Social and Emotional Skills and Team-Building

A growing body of educational-based research points to the importance of social and emotional competence in the development of effective teams. Certainly, over the last ten years, a large number of professional development specialists have developed and successfully marketed EI-specific courses for business and industry. And because more businesses are using teams at hierarchical levels, educational institutions are also recognizing the need to prepare students for real-world group decision-making and functioning within the team structure (Kaplan & Welker, 2001). Todd Boyle and Shanna Strong, for example, have proposed a list of key skills for Enterprise Resource Planning, among them interpersonal and team-building and interpersonal skills. Business schools that already have ERP programs can use the list to determine how well they meet industry needs (2006).

Some evidence indicates that these team-building efforts may facilitate and reinforce emotional and social skills learning. Research conducted at the Dublin City University Business School shows that development of team-skills through experiential learning and focus on process results in an increase in emotional intelligence among undergraduate test subjects. These findings suggest that the more time spent on facilitating self-awareness results in deeper self-awareness, and perhaps, a higher level of emotional intelligence competencies (Moriarty & Buckley, 2003).

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Conversely, emotional and social skills development may, in turn, facilitate team-building efforts. Researchers at Yale University compared teams with an identical aggregate IQ and found that teams with high emotional intelligence outperformed teams with low emotional intelligence by a margin of two-to-one (Welch, 2003). Similarly, Yost and Tucker (2000) tested the relationship between emotional intelligence and team effectiveness in a problem-based study in which nineteen teams participated in a service industry project. Their findings suggest that high emotionally intelligent teams are more successful, specifically in regard to higher problem-solving abilities, better performance, and better grades. Druskat and Wolff (2001) further assert that emotional intelligence in groups can determine organizational effectiveness. They maintain that, like individuals, the most effective teams are ones that are emotionally intelligent.

This research supports training guru Stephen Covey's beliefs that organizations must be effective at the personal and interpersonal levels. However, Covey believes that personal and interpersonal skills are not enough. To be truly effective, teamwork and synergy must be highly valued by everyone in the culture and individual initiative and maintaining individual responsibility must be rewarded. It is also imperative that team performance objectives focus on desired results and identify guidelines, accountability, resources, and consequences. At the same time, however, people must be allowed the freedom to choose the methods for their own planning, budgeting, evaluation and compensations (Covey, 1996).

Many business schools, recognizing the value of team-building skills training, have already implemented such programs for their students (Moriarity & Buckley, 2003; Thomas & Busby, 2003; McGraw & Tidwell, 2001; Greenan et al., 1997; Mills et al., 1991). Proponents agree that information should not be conveyed solely in lecture-format, but that emotional skills should be taught in an experiential context as well (Kremer & McGuiness, 1998; Dwyer, 2001). Some practitioners have taken it a step further, and urge the use of a team approach to teach interpersonal skills to produce a final acceptable product or attain a pre-determined goal (McGrew & Lewis, 1998).

Few of these studies, however, have actually undertaken an analysis of process *and* product. Rozell, Pettijohn, and Parker explore the measurement of emotional intelligence in undergraduate business majors and discuss the implications for their findings as they relate to management development. In that discussion, the authors raise the question of whether or not EI relates to output measure of student performance (2001). Other researchers argue that it does and maintain that EQ constructs can be managed more effectively by performance analysis than paper and pencil tests (Duelwicz & Higgs, 2000). But despite the predominance of literature on emotional and social intelligence and team building little, if any, research deals specifically with the effect of emotional skills training on the collaborative writing process (of which teamwork is clearly a part) and a resulting performance outcome before and after training.

Purpose and Methodology

This study proposes to address the issue of performance outcome by not only examining student satisfaction with the collaborative writing process but by also examining the writing product generated by student groups before and after EQ training. Our hypothesis is that student awareness of EQ strategies (developing sensitivity to non-verbal messages, defining and

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understanding the skills used in articulating an emotional vocabulary in themselves and others, and applying these skills for the purpose of managing business scenarios more effectively) enhances their communication behavior in work groups and improves the quality of response to various business writing scenarios.

Students in four sections of a required business communication course at an AACSB-accredited state university participated in this study during the spring semester of 2007. The study was divided into four sessions: a pre-training collaborative writing task and survey; two EQ training sessions of 1.5 hours each; and a post-training collaborative writing task and survey. In performing these collaborative writing tasks, students were able to practice and to develop the social and emotional skills learned during the training sessions. The survey instrument measured student satisfaction with the collaborative writing task during the pre- and post-training stages; an independent evaluation measured the quality of the writing produced by each group in the pre- and post-training stages.

Test-groups in this experiment, ranging from 3-8 students each, were composed of 88 undergraduate business degree students (55 males; 33 females) ranging in age from approximately 19 to 28. Test-groups were as evenly distributed as possible with males and females to ensure heterogeneity.

The groups were given a general description of emotional and social skills (EQ), and were told that the researchers were investigating the effect of EQ training on the collaborative writing process and product. They were also told that participation was voluntary, and that the study would be divided into a pre-training collaborative writing task and survey; two EQ training sessions of 1.5 hours each; and a post-training collaborative writing task and survey. Initially, some students expressed anxiety about the project, perhaps expecting more of a pedagogical, lecture format, rather than a self-led, non-directed, group learning experience. This sort of reaction is not uncommon. Often students in self-led learning situations experience confusion and dissatisfaction before they settle and develop confidence in the technique (Luynk-Child et al., 2001). Once the idea was accepted, however, and the groups formed, they began to function in various degrees of self-management.

In the first of the four sessions, and without any prior training in professional writing or EQ skills, the groups were given a business scenario (claims message) taken from Lesikar and Flatley's *Basic Business Communication* (2005, pp. 160-61)) that required a written response. Without guidance from the instructor and functioning independently as a team, students were given 50-60 minutes to formulate a group response to the scenario and to put it in the form of an effective business message. Students were then asked to complete a collaborative writing satisfaction survey during the remaining 20 minutes.

The next two class sessions involved EQ training in both a series of brief theoretical lectures followed by experiential learning conducted by a professional trainer in this area for leadership development with non-profit organizations. The trainer drew heavily on Blakeman's and Goleman's work in the areas of social and emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication skills for the content of his training sessions (Appendix 1). Recognizing that "[c]ognitive skills can be taught by lectures, but emotional skills need personal involvement

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where the learner experiences the emotional context" (Dwyer, 2001, p. 317), the trainer was also careful to model the behavior for the groups and to incorporate simulations, well-orchestrated role plays, and meta-cognitive exercises into the training sessions. In this way, the groups' experiential knowledge of social and emotional skills supported theoretical knowledge gained in the short lectures. Students were also given a list of emotional words to use in training exercises to quickly develop their emotional vocabularies and stimulate affective brain activity (Appendix 2). Following the seminar, participants were encouraged to think about their own strengths and weaknesses and ways in which they could improve and facilitate their team dynamics and their responses to the writing scenarios based on this basic knowledge of social and emotional skills.

In the fourth and final class session, and without any prior training in professional writing but following the three hours of training in EQ skills, the groups were given another business scenario (claims message) taken from Lesikar and Flatley's *Basic Business Communication* (2005, p.160) that required a written response. Again, functioning independently as a team, students were given 50-60 minutes to formulate a group response to the scenario and to put it in the form of an effective business message. Students were then asked to complete a collaborative writing satisfaction survey during the remaining 20 minutes.

The results from pre- and post-EQ training collaborative writing satisfaction surveys, along with the independent analysis of pre-and post-EQ training writing samples were then compiled and analyzed.

Results

Research Question 1. Did students' satisfaction with their group and satisfaction with their own contributions to the group change as a result of the EQ training intervention?

A 27-item survey was developed to measure students' satisfaction with their group interactions and also satisfaction with their own contributions to the group's work. Means were calculated for the responses to each item on the survey, which was completed immediately following the groups' completion of the collaborative writing task, both pre- and post-EQ training. T-tests for paired two-sample means were calculated. The results show significant differences for eight of the 24 items on the survey (see Table 1 below) ($p<.05$, $df=64$)).

Table 1: Significantly Different Pre- and Post-Training Means for Student Satisfaction Survey Items

Survey Item	**T-statistic**	**P-value**
Group Effectiveness Scales		
Ideas/opinions synthesized effectively	-1.74	0.043
Ideas/opinions encouraged	-1.82	0.037
Good rapport	-1.92	0.029
Tense moments relieved	-2.48	0.007
Equal impact on outcome	-2.82	0.003
Nonverbals noticed by others	-3.44	0.001

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Student's Behavior Scales		
Encouraging	-2.35	0.010
Contributions Scales		
Intuitive/emotional contributions	-2.46	0.008

The student satisfaction surveys attempted to capture students' perceptions about their group's dynamics as well as their own behaviors and contributions as the group worked collaboratively on the writing tasks. Results for each of these survey sections are discussed below.

Thirteen survey items asked about the student's group's effectiveness. Table 1 shows that responses to six of the 13 items in this section of the survey significantly differed between the pre-training and post-training writing tasks. For each of these six items, the students' perceptions of their group's effectiveness improved after the training. The factor showing the most improvement was "nonverbal behavior being noticed by others" ($p<.001$), a finding that was not surprising because of the emphasis on nonverbal communication during the EQ training sessions. Also significant were students' perceived improvements in their group's ability to share equally in the outcome of their writing product ($p<.003$), their group's ability to relieve tension ($p<.007$), their group's ability to maintain rapport ($p<.029$), and their group's ability to encourage and synthesize everyone's ideas and opinions ($p<.037$ and $p<.043$).

A second section of the survey consisted of ten items about the student's perceptions of their own behaviors during the group task. Only one item in this section showed statistically significant improvement between the pre-training and post-training satisfaction scores: "encouraging" behavior ($p<.01$). Thus, it appears that students' satisfaction with their own performance on factors such as listening, responding, resolving conflict, and noticing others did not significantly improve as a result of the EQ training.

The third section of the survey consisted of four items concerning the student's contributions to the group task. The items asked for respondents to rate their satisfaction with their own intuitive/emotional contributions, logical/analytical contributions, engagement with the group, and level of independent work. Although the mean scores improved for all four of these items, only one item in this section showed statistically significant improvement between the pre-training and post-training satisfaction scores: "intuitive/emotional contributions" ($p<.008$). Considering that the EQ training stressed emotional and social skills, this result was predictable.

In summary, the data support an affirmative answer to our first Research Question. The students' satisfaction with their group and satisfaction with their own contributions to the group significantly improved on a number of dimensions as a result of the EQ training intervention.

Research Question 2. Did the writing quality of the documents composed by each group change as a result of the EQ training intervention?

Each student group composed a writing sample based on a business case taken from their course textbook. The writing samples were assigned immediately before and after the EQ training

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sessions. Because this study was conducted at the beginning of the semester, the students had not received any instruction in business writing principles or practices until after this research project was completed. The project was designed to minimize any potential impact of factors other than EQ training on the students' writing ability.

An independent expert in business writing evaluated each writing sample using a rubric developed by the researchers. The rubric consisted of sixteen items: three concerned the document's organization, two were about content, six were about diction and grammar, and five concerned the document's tone and "you-viewpoint." The evaluator assessed each writing sample on all 16 items using a four-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

Change scores were computed (pre- v. post-training) for each item on the Collaborative Writing Sample Assessment for each student group. Means for each of the four categories of items were computed, and overall change scores were compared for each document using a paired two-sample t-test. Results show that ratings of the post-training documents improved for eight of the 16 items. Of particular interest were changes in the "tone" category, since we expected that the EQ training would potentially impact students' sensitivity to language and emotional tone. While the writing samples composed post-EQ training rated higher than the pre-training samples on three of the five items in the "tone" category, none of the differences reached statistical significance ($p<0.05$).

In summary, the data support a negative answer to our second research question. The students' writing did not improve significantly as a result of the EQ training intervention.

Implications and Discussion

From these findings, we can conclude that the EQ training intervention significantly increased the students' level of satisfaction with the collaborative writing process, particularly in the area of group effectiveness. Improvement in groups' ability to relieve tension and to maintain rapport, and to encourage and synthesize everyone's ideas and opinions enabled the participants to share equally in the outcome of their writing product. Not surprisingly, the training sessions also significantly influenced individual behavior within the group, primarily in the areas of non-verbal communication and intuitive/emotional contributions. Students were better able to communicate at a more emotional level, to perceive an emotional vocabulary in others, and to manage their own emotions and those of others. Consequently, they felt that they became more effective in communicating within the group and more cohesive as a group.

While the effects of EQ training on the process of collaboration are significant in this study, there appear to be no differences in measurement one way or the other as to the quality of the writing product generated by the test groups. We had expected that a greater appreciation of empathy might perhaps have an appreciable effect on the development of *you-attitude* in these writing samples. And although an analysis of the Gunning/Fog Indexes on pre- and post writing samples indicated a slight movement toward writing clarity in the latter, to conclude that this outcome resulted from our EQ intervention would be over-reaching in the context of this study.

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Other limitations, though, may have affected the performance outcome of this study. For example, all writing samples were written at the beginning of the business communication course, before students had studied any business writing strategies and skills. The fact that no differences in writing quality were found between the pre- and post-training writing samples is explainable by this circumstance. Because the objective of this research is to help students apply their newly acquired EQ skills to group work as well as to business writing tasks, we hypothesize that sustained EQ training over a longer period of time will make a difference in the writing product generated by these groups.

Future research will continue with additional test-groups. We will examine the impact of EQ training sessions over the course of a semester, so that the internalization of these social and emotional skills becomes more second-nature to the participants. In this way, the groups will have more time to put these skills into practice and more time to internalize them in the process of writing. In addition, we plan to further refine the student satisfaction survey and the writing samples assessment instrument in order to identify pre- and post-training differences that could not be captured with the current macro scales.

Conclusion

Significantly, although no quantitative measures were used, the instructors involved in this study noticed an overall improvement in the students' attitude toward the course and in their response to business scenarios and the writing process. We can conclude that increased proficiency levels in social and emotional skills, coupled with training in making and handling requests, can perhaps be directly related to students' academic success and perception of success in business communication.

More importantly, however, the importance of preparing our students to enter a job market where project collaboration is expected and excellent communication skills are in high demand cannot be overemphasized. Business schools should consider including a required course in social and emotional skills as a part of the business communication curriculum. Such a course must necessarily include not only course content, but also ample opportunity for experiential learning and internalization of those skills along with their practical application in a business context.

Endnotes

[1] Certainly, multiple intelligences exist and as such social and emotional intelligence are not mutually exclusive. They are linked inexorably with other forms of intelligences such as musical, spatial, kinesthetic, and logical-mathematical (Gardner, 1983). Research suggests that *both* social intelligence and emotional intelligence skills are essential for personal and professional success. Our investigation of EQ training and its impact on the collaborative writing process and product, however, focuses primarily on social and emotional intelligence (interpersonal and intrapersonal) as described above and refers to those various skills that help us connect emotionally to ourselves and other people or events, learn behavior and emotional responses

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from others, create the ability to share positive and meaningful experiences with others, and relate to how they are feeling.

[2]Victor Dulewicz and Malcom Higgs have compiled an excellent table which details emotional intelligence in terms of self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, relationships, communication, and personal style, and further itemize specific elements within each category according to the major proponents in the field (2000, pp. 343-345).

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Appendix 1: EQ Training Key Competencies

Interpersonal Communication Skills
Persuading and Influencing Others

- Social skills
- Emotional intelligence skills
- Verbal techniques
- Rules of confrontation
- Interpersonal problem-solving

Non-Verbal Communication Skills
Increasing Probability of Productive/Desired Outcome

- Kinesics
- Proxemics
- Paralanguage
- Haptics
- Facial expression
- Chronemics
- Appearance
- Context

Social Skills
Facilitating, Managing and Building Relationships

- Arranging
- Positioning
- Posturing
- Observing
- Listening

Communication Skills

- Responding to content
- Responding to feeling
- Responding to feeling and meaning
- Asking questions

Controlling/Supervising Skills

- Handling requests
- Making requests
- Reinforcing behavior

Emotional Intelligence Skills
Used in Conjunction with Non-Verbal, Social, and Intellectual Skills

- Developing emotional vocabulary
- Raising emotional self-awareness
- Demonstrating empathy
- Self-motivating
- Regulating and managing emotions
- Managing other people's emotions

Managing Interpersonal Conflict

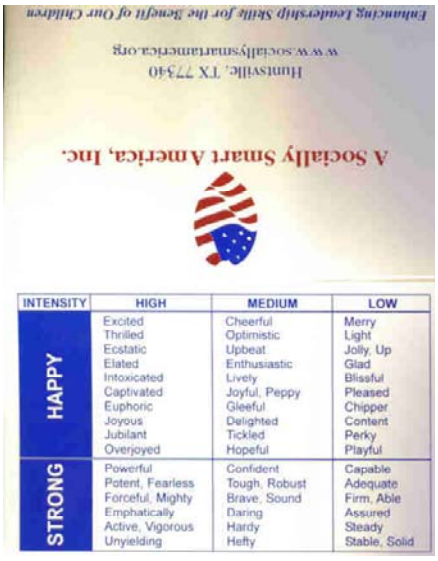
- When to confront
- Confrontation ground rules
- Destructive versus constructive conflict
- Conflict tactics
- Managing conflict

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Appendix 2: Emotional Words

Intensity Levels of Some Emotional Words

INTENSITY	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
CONFUSED	Bewildered Disoriented Stunned Baffled, Amazed Perplexed Flabbergasted Astonished	Puzzled Doubtful Surprised Perplexed Befuddled Distracted Disorganized	Misled Undecided Uncertain Lost Dazed Unsure Indecisive
SCARED	Terrified Overwhelmed Panicked Petrified Alarmed Fearful	Worried Tense, Dread Shaken Anxious Afraid, Panicky Panicked	Startled Surprised Uneasy, Edgy Apprehensive Hesitant Uncomfortable
ANGRY	Furious, Raging Irate, Hateful Incensed Hostile	Aggravated Irritated, Irked Mad, Annoyed Offended, Sulky	Perturbed Hassled Bothered Fuss
	Indignant Outraged Exasperated	Ticked off Sullen, Fuming Provoked	Fret Displeased Peeved
SAD	Grieved, Crushed Gloomy, Hopeless Heartbroken Devastated Despairing Distraught Heavyhearted Miserable	Dejected Dismayed Hurt, Hurting Disillusioned Downcast Forlorn, Glum Cheerless Melancholy	Down Disappointed Blue Discouraged Low Somber Sorry Unhappy
WEAK	Ashamed Exhausted Powerless Anemic Decrepit Frail, Useless Depleted	Vulnerable Inept, Fragile Inadequate Worn out Helpless, Spent Run down Sluggish	Unable Tired Limp, Soft Weary Feeble Wimpy Ineffective



INTENSITY	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
HAPPY	Excited Thrilled Ecstatic Elated Intoxicated Captivated Euphoric Joyous Jubilant Overjoyed	Cheerful Optimistic Upbeat Enthusiastic Lively Joyful, Peppy Gleeful Delighted Tickled Hopeful	Merry Light Jolly, Up Glad Blissful Pleased Chipper Content Perky Playful
STRONG	Powerful Potent, Fearless Forceful, Mighty Emphatically Active, Vigorous Unyielding	Confident Tough, Robust Brave, Sound Daring Hardy Hefty	Capable Adequate Firm, Able Assured Steady Stable, Solid

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Walking the Talk: Working on a Faculty Interdisciplinary Team to Develop Internet Workspaces for Student Project Teams

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For years I have been successfully teaching teamwork (team building, planning, managing people, building leadership, resolving conflict), project report writing, and oral presentation skills. Nonetheless, serving on a year-long project team at my institution still taught me valuable lessons about how teams work and how they use technology. This paper describes these lessons and my teaching materials. In doing so, the paper tells the story of two team projects: 1) the team graduation project completed by my students, and 2) the TEK (Technology-enabled Knowledge) Grassroots project I completed with my colleagues to develop better ways to guide these students through their project. The paper begins by providing the background on these two team projects.

Background on the Student Team Project

The Mining and Mineral Exploration Technology Program at the British Columbia Institute of Technology is a full-time, two-year post-secondary program. Graduates work in the engineering, geology, surveying, blasting, environmental, mineral processing and management departments at mines. They work with geology crews in exploration, with engineering consulting companies, in assay labs, and in technical sales and support with companies such as mining-related computer software developers, and blasting and equipment manufacturers. Approximately three-fourths of the students have attended other post-secondary institutions. A number already have undergraduate degrees in fields such as engineering, geography, and computer science. Some students have graduate degrees. A three-year institute survey of program graduates from 2003-2005 indicates that 96 percent of graduates found the program useful for getting a job. Most graduates described the program workload as very heavy.

In the January – May, final term of their graduation year, student teams complete a pre-feasibility study for developing a mineral deposit. As a graduation project, the study requires students to integrate the knowledge they have acquired on deposit geology, exploration methods, resources and reserve estimates, mine planning and design, mineral processing, site layout, environmental reclamation, and project cost estimates and economics. Each team is required to complete a well written and technically accurate project report. Each team also delivers a formal oral presentation to an audience of invited institute faculty and administrators, and representatives of the mining industry, who also serve on the program's advisory committee. The committee's purpose is to help ensure the program remains up-to-date and able to meet employer and student needs in future years. Student project presentations are scheduled to coincide with the program advisory committee's annual meeting.

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The students' final-term, 4.5-hour-a-week mining project course teaches them the additional technical skills they need to complete the project and ensures they receive academic credit for their project work. In addition, work related to the project forms 70 percent of their 4.5-hour-a-week communication course for that term. The students also complete a 45-hour introductory communication course in their first term. Both communication courses integrate mining content into standard communication topics such as progress reports, field reports, and proposals. Trade publications, such as *Tracks and Treads* serve as resource material for "industry terminology and actual equipment models/specs" (Dicenzo, 2003, p. 7). The mining project course and the final-term communication course represent about twenty percent of the students' credit hours for their final term. The students are divided by the faculty into teams of four to seven students. The teams are selected to reflect a mix of abilities (Roebuck, 1998) and to match in diversity the groups the students can expect to encounter in their future workplaces (Grant, 2004). In addition, teams are mixed by gender, first language, and temperament. Grouping ESL and non-ESL students produces more inclusive groups (Vance & Fitzpatrick, 2007). To prevent sub-teams from forming, close friends are not placed on the same team (Roebuck, 1998). Because all teams complete their studies on the same mineral property, they all are given access to the same project resources. However, in order to ensure that each team works independently of the other teams, each team's work, including specific questions it may choose to pose to resource professionals, must be kept private from that of other teams. The mineral property exists in British Columbia, although the name of the property is fictional. The information the students are given is based upon an existing industry feasibility study. Students are asked to assume roles in their teams similar to those they would assume if they were completing an actual feasibility study for that property. Typical roles are project geologist, civil engineer, mining engineer, process engineer, and environmental engineer.

Students faced four major challenges in their projects. They needed to integrate information from several disciplines and areas of expertise. They needed to work with peers and accommodate different attitudes and approaches. They needed to access and share a variety of large computer files and paper documents. Finally, they faced competing demands from their other course work, which constituted the remaining eighty percent of their credit hours.

Background on the TEK Grassroots Project

The TEK (technology-enabled knowledge) Initiative is a series of integrated projects designed by my institute to encourage the use of technology by teachers and students. The five-year initiative is led by the institute's IT (Information Technology) Services and Learning and Teaching Centre (LTC). The first projects were completed in the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

In March 2006, at my suggestion, a Mining and Mineral Exploration Technology Program faculty member and I submitted a joint Expression of Interest for a TEK Initiative Grassroots Project. In April, our Expression of Interest reached the second level. We met with an Instructional Development Consultant and a Technical Advisor from the LTC to review our proposal and identify a possible project team. Final selection occurred at the end of May, and our project, "Building Internet Workspaces for Project Teams," was one of only 17 projects across

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the institute accepted for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. To implement the project we were awarded 28 days (14 days each), to be taken as release time or as additional paid hours. We were also assigned an LTC Instructional Developmental Consultant to work with us on our project and develop a project plan to provide resources and training for us and for our students. Faculty collaboration and support, as well as adequate training in the technology, have been shown to be critical for successful integration of technology (Rea, Hoger, & Rooney, 1999; White & Myers, 2001). Thus, the teamwork and training to be provided by the TEK project were important features. The LTC consultant assigned to the project managed the project, chaired project meetings, and assembled the project team, inviting additional members as necessary. Thus, the project had a teaching faculty team that consisted of the Mining and Mineral Exploration faculty and me, and a project team, that consisted of the teaching faculty team and the LTC and IT consultants.

The project, "Building Internet Workspaces for Project Teams," was to provide an online community of practice for students to collaborate on their projects, develop their communication skills, and share resources and materials. The project had four phases: Design (September – November 15, 2006), Development (November 15 – December, 2006), Implementation (January – March, 2007), and Showcasing (April – May, 2007). The design phase included IT training of the teaching faculty team. This training included presentation of the available technology and discussion of its suitability for the project. The second major component of the design phase was for the teaching faculty to redesign their existing materials and learning activities to fit the new technology. The development phase included uploading the developed course content into the internet sites and training other faculty in the tools and approaches to be used with the students. The implementation phase was to train the students to use the technology. The final showcasing phase was for sharing and providing feedback on the project. This final phase was to extend past the life of the project.

Faculty faced four major challenges in the TEK project. They needed to integrate information from several disciplines and areas of expertise. They needed to work with peers and accommodate their different attitudes and approaches. They needed to choose appropriate technologies from those available for the project, become proficient in using the technologies, and determine how the features of the technologies could be used to help the students with their projects. Finally, they faced competing demands from other work, since the 14-week project release time represented a little less than ten percent of a full-time faculty workload.

The TEK project was completed successfully, although all four phases involved over 100 emails to schedule meetings and share information, more than 20 hours of 16 meetings, and hours of work that seemed interminable – a January 7th email refers to "finishing off the project," as does a March 7th email. Despite the fiscal year-end in March, the last project meeting was in April.

Revealed in this discussion of the backgrounds of the graduation project completed by my students and the TEK Grassroots project I completed with my colleagues is how remarkably similar the challenges were for both projects. One important similarity is the success of both. All student teams completed their project reports, and their work was remarkably well received by the members of the advisory committee who attended their presentations. The faculty team succeeded in learning and adapting the technology, developing and uploading the curriculum

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materials, and training other faculty in the technology that contributed to the students' success. In addition, the faculty team developed new working relationships and a deepened sense of collegiality that have extended well past the life of the project. Additional similarities – and also some important differences between the two projects – will become apparent in a discussion of the phases of the TEK project and of the communication teaching materials.

Design, Development, and Implementation of the TEK Project

At our first TEK project meeting we decided to use WebFiles, an internet-based file management system. We also decided to use Lotus QuickPlace, a web-based workspace, for students to have team discussions, track progress, schedule events, and assign tasks. A major component of the design phase became the faculty training in WebFiles, and most of the project meetings were discussions of how to use this tool for the mining student projects. Our project team consisted of a member of the mining program faculty and myself as project leads, a project manager and instructional designer, a technical writer, a graphic artist, technical advisors, and, later two additional teaching faculty in mining. The diversity of the project team had two important implications for the project: 1) The two project leads were required to explain thoroughly both the student project and our TEK project and 2) I had the opportunity to answer a number of different questions on the projects and listen to a variety of perspectives. In addition, because the technical advisors, who also did the training, were not always available for team meetings, the other team leader and I often had to repeat our explanations during the training sessions. At first, I was impatient with repeating explanations of information that I felt was available in the original project proposal. However, re-explaining the project for different audiences and hearing the project re-explained by the mining faculty widened and deepened my own understanding of the project. The mining faculty likewise benefited from hearing it explained from the point of view of the communication faculty.

I also grew to appreciate the opportunity of listening to the responses of the others in the team. For example, the curriculum designer valued the student project highly because the students were taking on realistic, career-based roles that required them to take on different perspectives and thus to achieve much deeper learning than would have occurred without the project. This response by the curriculum designer to the project reinforced my commitment to a context-specific, discourse-oriented, learner-centred, practical approach to teaching business communication. Listening to the mining faculty member's summary of the project clarified my questions and also gave me useful quotes to use with the students when they asked me about the value of the project. I also learned to appreciate again the differences in presentation styles I had noticed when I first began teaching at an engineering and business institute. For instance, the mining faculty member produced a set of block diagrams that clearly demonstrated the way the student project was organized, the way the files needed to be organized on WebFiles, and the way that WebFiles and QuickPlace were connected, diagrams that he continued to refine throughout the course of the project.

An even more pronounced difference in approach to the TEK project became evident as the mining faculty member proposed instituting a major test procedure to ensure that we understood how WebFiles worked, that it did work, and that we had made wise decisions about how to use WebFiles for the student project. I was impatient with this approach for a number of reasons. It

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forced me to spend more time using WebFiles when I would rather have moved on to what I felt was a more important and certainly a more comfortable and rewarding stage: the designing and adapting of my own teaching materials. The test procedure also resulted in a constant re-opening of decisions already made as those decisions were tested and found to be less effective in practice. Finally, for me personally it represented too much of an attempt at control, and the abandonment of the spontaneous, forget-the-rehearsals, let's-take-it-on-the-road-before-a-live-audience approach that I favour. However, a sobering thought was how similar the mining faculty member's approach was to the way, for example, a mining process would be designed: build a model, test the model, make the required modifications, and retest. As the mining faculty member proceeded to download files from last year's student project; assign various roles to different members of the project team, such as that of faculty, outside resource person, and students from different teams; assign us tasks to perform; and then call us to a meeting to discuss the results, I realized that his approach was remarkably similar to the approach the mining faculty and I were using in assigning the student project. I wonder if my impatience and skepticism were also similar to that experienced by the students as they undertook their project.

Another difficulty encountered in the TEK project, one whose positive side was even less apparent, was the turnover of people involved in the project. Over the course of the project we had three different technical advisors. In addition, in January two other mining faculty joined the project. As a result, a number of decisions had to be revisited. The institute was still developing its customization of WebFiles, and more detailed and much improved instructions for its use became available only later in the project. When a decision unraveled as new members of the team suggested better approaches and when better instructions became available that would have made our training easier, I became frustrated and felt I had wasted valuable time. However, I realized that was because I was viewing the TEK project as a product rather than as a process. I had forgotten that part of the improvements in the customization of WebFiles and in the instructions had been instituted because of my team's concerns and questions. For example, we had objected that students would be able to see the faculty member's institute identity number when they logged in, so that was changed in WebFiles.

I also realized that some of our difficulties were inherent in the fact that we were doing practical, not theoretical work. For example, WebFiles is user-based, not project-based at our institute because the institute needs to track individual user accounts, whether student or faculty. As a team we needed to accept and work around that wider institutional requirement and not waste valuable meeting time in regret. At another team meeting when we were wasting considerable time arguing about how to do something in WebFiles, the technical writer suggested we call in the technical advisor rather than discuss endlessly what we did not know – the technical advisor should have been at the meeting but we had a terrible time scheduling meetings when everyone could be available, particularly as team membership expanded. Fortunately, the technical advisor was able to drop by and solve the problem in minutes. Rather, than complain about my wasted time, I decided to use that moment as a valuable lesson that people are less efficient when they are tired and under stress and apt to forget guidelines that they have been taught, such as how to run effective meetings, whether from the front or the sidelines. I reminded myself that working on a team increases the likelihood that someone will remember an important precept and guide the team back onto the right track. I remembered the wisdom of what one of my mining students had told me in class: "Making mistakes is the only way you learn."

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The team spent a great deal of time and energy on the important decision of whether to grant students administrative rights over their team folders in WebFiles. The three main advantages of WebFiles for the student project are that 1) files are available over the internet so students can work from their homes or elsewhere on campus, 2) versioning control is possible so that student teams collaborating on a document can keep track of changes made by members of the team, and 3) access control allows one team to keep its documents from being read by another. Access control also allows faculty to post large data and text files of project resources as "read-only" documents that the students are able to read and download but are not able to alter. The mining faculty and I had administrative rights over the project resource files, which would allow us to upload, alter, and delete files and also to decide who would be able to only read or also to alter them. The question was whether the teams should also be given administrative rights over their team files so they could make these same decisions in regard to their files. If teams were given administrative rights, teams could block faculty from viewing their project files. According to the TEK project Expression of Interest, a rationale for the project was that providing an internet workspace for each project team would allow faculty to monitor and guide each team. The technology would create a record of the student learnings. Faculty would be able to access this record in order to monitor, guide, and evaluate the students' work. The metaphor used in the Expression of Interest was that the student project was a banquet and the internet workspace would provide the ingredients, cooking instructions, utensils and the table settings, while the students would prepare, cook, and serve the haute cuisine. Yet, if faculty gave the student teams administrative rights, faculty could be barred from the kitchen and thus would be unable to evaluate the students' cooking skills except as evidenced in the final meal. A major function of the technology was to help faculty track student work, an important one for a communication teacher (Eastman & Swift, 2002; Kaiser, Tullar, & McKowen, 2000). This function could not be exercised if the students could evade tracking. An additional objection focused on the degree to which the institute is responsible for student activities on the internet and thus to which faculty is responsible for monitoring them. However, notwithstanding these arguments, the original model the TEK project team tested, in which student teams were *not* given administrative rights, proved unwieldy in that teams would have to apply to faculty to manage their own team's files and would not be able to use versioning control – the ability to lock a file, prevent access to that file, while one member of the team is working on it, and to produce a clear chronological record of the various changed files. As a file-sharing and collaboration tool, WebFiles is designed to allow users to manage and share files. In order to allow the student teams full use of the tool and thus control over their workspace, faculty needed to limit its use of WebFiles as a tool to monitor and evaluate students. The student project teams needed to be free to distribute administrative rights in their teams. This decision parallels that taken by the institute in regard to student activities on the internet. The institute WebFiles Usage Policy is part of the institute Responsible Use of Information Policy. The policy holds the students responsible for ensuring that Webfiles are used to store institute-related files only and no inappropriate material. Another parallel related to this decision regarding student project autonomy is that of the dual nature of both the student project and TEK project teams.

As discussed earlier in this paper, the dual nature of the TEK project team was that it was composed of the mining faculty member and myself, who first proposed the project, and the team that consisted of us and the various consultants and advisors assembled by the project

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manager. Because the mining faculty member and I would be the ones teaching the course, our major goal was to teach that particular course to those particular students. The larger team, on the other hand, was focused on developing uses of technology that could be applied to other courses and other projects across the institute. The mining faculty member and I, whenever possible, met separately immediately before meetings with the larger team. We also exchanged private e-mails confirming our shared understanding of various project issues. We never overtly discussed the reason for these separate meetings and e-mails except for the original suggestion that it would be best to clarify our own needs and concerns before communicating with the larger group. A major implication of this reasoning is that a united front was necessary because the wider interests of the larger group could impede the achieving of our own more focused interest. The student project team also had a dual nature in that it was composed of the students assigned to the team and, as necessary, the faculty and various outside resource people. For example, during their scheduled mining project course time, student teams would meet separately with the mining faculty to report on their progress and to ask questions and voice concerns. They would also meet with outside advisors, for example, an expert from a mining software company. The team of students had as its major goal to produce the project report and oral presentation, whereas the larger team was focused on other goals, such as ensuring the students were applying knowledge from their other coursework, were learning how to learn from outside experts, and were practicing various teamwork and interpersonal skills. The common dual natures of the TEK project team and the student teams suggest that the students may likewise have needed to have a private space under their own control that excluded the larger team. Allowing student teams to manage their WebFiles team workspace thus would have helped meet that need.

For Lotus QuickPlace, which was used for the Mining Project Communication Centre, I, as the communication faculty member, managed the site. Student teams were encouraged to post records of their individual progress for their team to read. Students were also required to submit team progress reports. As site manager, I arranged team spaces and class-wide spaces. I also granted access to faculty to all spaces. I developed two activities for the QuickPlace site. The first activity was for the student QuickPlace training session. Students were required to post an individual message to their team suggesting or confirming the logistics for team meetings, reporting their individual progress to date, giving their personal assessment of the team's progress, identifying any problems and suggesting solutions, assessing their team's effectiveness by specifying one thing the team has done well and one thing the team could do to improve, and suggesting an agenda for the next team meeting. The team was then to collaborate to produce a team document responding to the individual team members' submissions. Students were provided with a rationale and evaluation checklist for the assignment. All information regarding the activity was posted as a WORD attachment in the activities folder of the QuickPlace site. Each student team had its own team area on the QuickPlace site, in which I had placed activity folders for the team members to post their assignments. A second, later activity using QuickPlace was to submit a team progress report. All activity assignments were graded.

Students did not post any other messages except for those required for these two activities. When I asked them where they were posting the almost daily messages that would be required to complete their mining project, they told me that they were using their own e-mails and MSN. They also told me that while they were using WebFiles when necessary to access the project resources, they were using their own WORD files for drafts of their sections of the mining

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project report and attaching them to email messages to each other. As in the case of QuickPlace, students completed the required WebFiles activities: they set up team folders for the various sections of the report, and they submitted assignments that were required to be submitted on WebFiles, including the final drafts of their project report and oral presentations. However, they claimed that, as in the case of QuickPlace, they were using their own system for their student projects, a parallel system to the technology tools that the TEK project had developed for them. This student preference for using their own system except when required to use WebFiles and QuickPlace parallels TEK project team behaviour. The TEK project team communicated exclusively through the institute E-mail system. The team did not develop a CoP for the site. While all team members were issued user accounts in WebFiles, these were used to implement the WebFiles simulation test procedures and not to distribute files on the TEK project or to produce a TEK team project report. Instead, for all communications associated with the TEK project we used our usual channels, with which we were more comfortable. The TEK project team rationale for our technology use appeared remarkably similar to that provided by the student project team. Nor is the students' behaviour unusual in projects using technology: Zhu, Gareis, Bazzoni and Rolland report that students in their project frequently used their personal e-mail even though it meant leaving the Blackboard group environment they had constructed for the students (2005).

Communication Teaching Materials on Teamwork and the Project Report

TEK project team experiences also influenced my development of the communication course materials for the student project. Three folders were created in the read-only Project Resources folder to reflect the student project topics covered by the communication course: Report Format and Style, Project Planning, and Teamwork. These appeared in the same listing as the other student project resource folders such as Civil, Costing and Cashflow, Processing, and Environmental, so that the students would realize that their communication skills were directly related to the other more apparently mining-related project resources. Because of its ability to handle large files, WebFiles was ideal for uploading PowerPoint slide shows. Earlier Mining student feedback had indicated that they really liked the use of visuals because they found they "really help with understanding [the] topic." Because research indicates that teachers may overestimate the value of PowerPoint for helping students learn, I tried to offset this by using the slides to enhance interactions with students (James, Burke, & Hutchins, 2006). In addition, PowerPoint allowed me to modify slides quickly and easily according to student input in class. I added comments and even scanned documents from the students. Students also reported that they found that PowerPoint slides allowed them to absorb the material in succinct, useable chunks.

The communication course materials related to the student project were organized as training packages in order that their communication class time would more resemble a training workshop, the kind of "class time" they would experience in industry. The five packages, which complement the students' teamwork manual, *Teams That Work* (Harley, & Robson, April 1998), are as follows:

Training Package 1: Making Better Team Decisions.

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This package had two parts, Part 1: Participate in a crash-survival simulation and Part 2: Discover your personality profile. Part 1, which takes 120 minutes, consists of an introduction giving the rationale and objectives for the exercise; a simulation involving a plane crash at an abandoned mine site and the need to prioritize a list of items for the group's survival; and a debriefing in which students reflect on what would have happened had they followed a five-step problem-solving process. For Part 2, which takes 50 minutes, students take personality tests and develop profiles of the members of their teams. The test results provide the students with a common way to describe and thus to compare themselves without labeling some traits as "good" and others as "bad." The students do not have to accept the validity of the personality test or the relevance of its results. They merely have to use it as a basis for reflecting on themselves in regard to the personality categories measured. The goal of Part 2 is to teach the students to use personality differences in a team as a source of strength and to encourage participation of all team members in decision making. Students learn how to identify and encourage behaviours that help a team. They also learn how to respond to behaviours that are troublesome in teams. At the end of training package 1, students complete a graded, written assignment in which they reflect on what they have learned and discuss how they can use it to complete their mining project successfully.

Training Package 2: Planning a Project.

Students learn how to follow a seven-step method for planning a large team project. They learn how to complete a project schedule and a team charter that sets the ground rules for their teams. Each student team also completes a force-field analysis to identify and compare the forces or factors that support or work against the successful completion of their project. They identify these resisting and driving forces, characterize them according to their relative strength or weakness, and then brainstorm ways to reinforce the positive factors and eliminate or reduce the negative ones. Each student team also completes a graded project plan.

Training Package 3: Collaborating on a Written Report.

Students examine sample reports in mining to learn about the format and style of a formal written report in their field. They learn about the specific challenges posed by the team project report. Related to this package is a slide show on how to write a technical description including how to describe a property.

Training Package 4: Resolving Conflicts in Teams.

Students take a conflict management style survey, participate in a simulation, learn to identify and resolve the most common types of conflicts that occur in teams, and learn the stages of team development. Students complete a graded reflection on what they have learned about conflict resolution and how to apply it in their teams and in the workplace. They also complete an exercise on listening skills, a problem area that has been shown to pose a challenge for students working in groups online and face-to-face (Scalia & Sackmary, 1996).

Training Package 5: Team Oral Presentations.

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Students review what they have learned about individual oral presentations and examine the differences between individual and team presentations. Students respond to a record of past audiences' comments on mining project presentations, critique sample slides, and deliver practice and graded individual and team presentations.

The most important lesson I learned from the TEK project that influenced the development of the teaching materials described is that project work is hard work, and project management and communication skills are critical. Just as I worked extra hard in an attempt to perfect teaching materials that would be appearing in a shared space that my colleagues as well as students could access, I also seasoned them with real-life examples from my own TEK project team meetings.

The most important lesson I learned from the student project that promises to change my understanding of education and technology is that it is no longer enough to realize that students bring with them varying levels of technological literacy (Rea, Hoger, & Rooney, 1999). When the students' activities are initiated by a problem or project, they will use the various tools and resources at their disposal to support their problem-solving processes (Dalsgaard, 2006), whether these tools are authorized or not. Likewise, faculty members in the face of a "loss of control in the development and delivery process and even their own content and teaching materials" (Sammons & Ruth, 2007) will engage in their own problem-solving activities as they experience a tension between the students as independent learners and their need to monitor, evaluate, and control learning (Sims, 2006). The positive outcome, for me, was the developing of new interdependent relationships among teaching faculty, students, and technology teams.

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Biography

KATHLEEN VANCE, PhD, University of British Columbia, MA, California State University, BA, Phi Beta Kappa, University at Buffalo, is co-author with Dale Fitzpatrick of *Writing for Success* (ERPI/Pearson Longman, 1988) and of four English language and communication textbooks and an instructor guide produced for the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education (2003) and is currently developing and teaching online business communication courses.

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Creating Significant Learning Experiences in the Business Communication Classroom

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"Last fall, when I signed up for Business Communication, I thought I would get nothing out of the class. I falsely believed that because I was a second-semester senior with a job, I could not possibly learn anything more about communication."

"This class is somehow similar to marketing in my mind. . . . Before the class began, I thought that marketing was only common sense. We didn't really need to take a class to learn that."

These are several quotations from students in my business communication course, and from speaking with colleagues over the years, I believe this is a common belief of many of our students and a challenge that many instructors must overcome to be successful in the business communication classroom. The purpose of this paper is thus threefold: to explain how to use active learning techniques to first persuade students that they do have more to learn about communication by observing people (and themselves) in action, to engage students in the learning process more fully so that they might learn more in the class, and to provide them practice in effective communication skills that they will hopefully take with them into their careers. A final goal of the course discussed in this paper was to show students how the concepts and skills that we were learning in the class were relevant to their career success.

The student quotations indicate that students often believe that they have excellent communication skills and thus are not in need of working on their improvement. However, as many of us understand, learning to communicate effectively is a lifelong process. One of the primary challenges of teaching it seemed to me was to increase students' self-awareness of the quality of their communication skills. My suspicions about students' lack of accurate perceptions of their communication abilities was supported by the initial results of a research program that I undertook with a colleague to study intercultural group communication. Our first step was to gather student attitudes about their teamwork skills using a survey instrument. The results of that survey indicated that students consistently believed themselves to be high contributors to group discussions and as consistently acting as leaders in groups (Walker & Aritz, 2006). However, as a second part of that study, we also videotaped the team discussions for which we gathered the survey data and transcribed them, and our analysis found that their actual contributions to the discussion did not mirror the survey results (Walker & Aritz, 2006). These studies and the contradiction they revealed cemented for me the problem with student accuracy regarding their perceptions of their communication skills.

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It is difficult to explain why this discrepancy between self-perception and actual skills exist, and that is not the purpose of this paper. Instead, it is to suggest ways to help students develop more accurate perceptions of their communication skills so that they might have the opportunity to improve those skills. More precisely, the purpose of this paper is to discuss my approach to helping students develop what Gudykunst (2005) calls "mindfulness". But before that could happen, certain contextual problems of the classroom environment had to be dealt with, using some of the principles of his anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) theory of effective communication. The paper will then discuss how active learning principles and methods can be used in the classroom to help students learn "mindful" communication practices and will provide student reactions to their experience to help show their progress toward this goal.

Mindfulness

According to Gudykunst (2005), much of the time when we communicate we are not highly aware of our behavior. Langer (1989) also made a similar observation that we communicate mindlessly or automatically. We do, however, pay sufficient attention to recall key words in the conversations that we have (Kitayama & Burstein, 1989). Thus, we can improve our conscious awareness of our communication to become more mindful. Langer (1989) argues that mindfulness involves "1) creation of new categories, 2) openness to new information, and 3) awareness of more than one perspective" (p. 62). Consequently, becoming more mindful not only enables us to become more aware of the quality of our own communication and thus more able to improve it, but it also enables us to become more aware of the potentially differing perspectives of others and thus to be better able to understand them and to communicate in meaningful ways with them.

Langer (1989) elaborates on these aspects of mindfulness. First, he contends that the ability to create new categories works against our natural tendency to categorize or to "eliminate the perception of differences" (p. 154). Being mindful involves making more distinctions and thus enables us to create new categories that are more specific to individuals and individual encounters. In other words, the more categories we use, the more personalized the information we use to make predictions about the behaviors of others (Gudykunst, 2005).

Mindfulness also involves being open to new information, which enables us to focus on the process that is occurring rather than just the outcomes of our interactions (Langer, 1989). According to Gudykunst (2005), when we focus on the outcomes of communication, we are more like to miss subtle cues that may lead to misunderstanding.

Finally, mindfulness involves the ability to understand the perspectives of others (Langer, 1989). When we are "mindless," we tend to assume that others interpret our messages the way that we intend. When we are mindful, however, we are able to recognize that others may interpret our messages differently than we do. Being mindful thus enables us to better see the choices we have when communicating with others (Langer, 1989, 1997).

The goal of the course design presented here is to move students' from a position of often being "mindless" about their communication to a place where they have the opportunity to become more "mindful."

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Active Learning and the Importance of Reflection

Traditionally, "the majority of college teachers do not seem to have learning goals that go much beyond an understand-and-remember type of learning….In-depth, sustained discussions where students respond to other students as well as to the teacher are extremely rare" (Fink, 2003, p. xi). As many of us who teach communication know, research shows that lecturing has limited effectiveness in helping students retain information after a course is over, develop an ability to transfer knowledge to new situations, develop skills in thinking or problem solving, and achieve effective outcomes, such as motivation for additional learning or a change in attitude (Fink, 2003, p. 3). Courts and McInerney (1993) studied student attitudes about instruction and found that students were not self-directed learners, sensed they were not learning as much as they should, believe instructors do not care about them or about promoting their learning and interacting with them, and consequently, they do not engage energetically in their learning.

To solve these problems, according to Spence (2001), the role of the professor must change from being simply a teacher to that of becoming designers of learning experiences. Barr and Tagg (1995) echo this call, claiming that there needs to be a shift in the role of the teacher from being primarily lecturers to "faculty being primarily designers of learning methods and environments" (p. 18). Campbell and Smith (1997) also present a new paradigm for student learning in which knowledge is jointly constructed by students and faculty; the student is an active constructor, discoverer and transformer of knowledge; the faculty's purpose moves from a classifier and sorter of students to that of developing student competencies and talents; and the context of learning moves from a competitive, individualistic one to cooperative learning in the classroom and the empowerment of students.

Fink (2003) proposes an integrated approach to learning, which means that having students engage in an experiential exercise becomes more potent when it is linked with reflective dialogue. Authentic assessment becomes even more meaningful when it is linked to opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment (Fink, 2003, p. xiii). According to Fink (2003), significant learning experiences have both a process and outcome dimension (p. 6). The process is characterized by engaged students with a high energy level, while the outcome is characterized by significant and lasting change and value in life (Fink, 2003, p. 7). Smith (1998) echoes this sentiment, arguing that we "only learn from activities that are interesting and comprehensible to us; in other words, activities that are satisfying. If this is not the case, only inefficient rote learning, or memorization, is available to us and forgetting is inevitable (87).

In constructing this "integrated approach to learning," Fink (2003) builds upon Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning to create a new one. The first item in that taxonomy (as it is in Bloom's) is foundational knowledge, which involves understanding and remembering information and ideas. The second is application, which involves the development of skills, thinking, and managing projects. The third is integration, which involves making connections between ideas, people, and different realms of life (school and work). The fourth is the human dimension, which involves learning about one's self and others; the fifth is caring, which involves developing new feelings, interests, and values; and the sixth is learning how to learn, which involves becoming a better student, learning how to inquire and construct knowledge and becoming a self-directed

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learner. (Fink, 2003, pp. 30-32). A self-directed learner needs to consider multiple and alternative ways of understanding the meaning of each experience and the key to this is critical reflection (Fink, 2003, p. 53).Without linking the process of learning through reflection, the activity does not lead to an enhanced capability to autodidaxy for the purpose of enhancing personal autonomy. (Autodidaxy means knowing how to learn what one needs to learn in life) (Fink, 2003, p. 54)

Through the use of this taxonomy, Fink (2003) believes that students will learn more and retain it if they learn how to apply the content, can see how it connects with other knowledge, understand the human implications of what they have learned, come to care about the subject, and about learning how to keep on learning (p. 57).

An important part of Fink's integrated course design is feedback. Fink says feedback should be frequent, immediate, discriminating (based on criteria), and delivered lovingly (2003, p. 83). Frequent feedback should occur in every class if possible or at least once a week. Immediate feedback should occur during the same class. This process also helps students to learn how to monitor their own progress. Good teachers also try to find ways to incorporate feedback from other students and experts, if possible, according to Fink. Feedback should involve a back-and-forth dialogue.

As for assessment, Fink claims it should be forward-looking, which means it should take into account how students will put their skills and knowledge into practice in the real world. Wiggins (1998, p. 22-24) suggests ways to create forward-looking assessment: 1) activities should be realistic 2) should require judgment and innovation 3) ask the student to do the subject 4) replicate or simulate the contexts in which they will use the subject 5) assess the student's ability to use a repertoire of knowledge and skills 6) allow opportunities for students to rehearse and get feedback.

Active learning is more effective and involves students doing things and thinking about the things they are doing (Bonwell and Eison, 1991, p.2). These are experiences (which include doing and observing others) and reflection (reflection can be done in groups, too) and they should occur after students receive information. Reflection involves in-class discussions and writing papers. Another form would be asking students to reflect on the learning process itself. Instructors can, for example, have students write about critical incidents in class and their reactions to those incidents. To get students to read, they must know they will be held accountable. Ways to do that are to give in-class quizzes or to have an activity that draws on the information.

An extended form of reflective writing is the learning portfolio. These usually include a narrative that describes and explains the learning experience and an appendix with materials that illustrate and support the comments in the narrative. Fink also proposes the use of a process portfolio. In these students are asked to reflect and write about three considerations: 1) The content of the learning: What did you learn about the subject (about the content of the learning experience? 2) The context of the learning: How does your learning fit into the larger context of your life (work, social, etc.)? 3) The learning process: What have you learned about how you learn or how you could learn more effectively?

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The Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory

Two challenges that I faced when instituting the active learning model described above were the problems of competitiveness and performance anxiety. The competitiveness problem was probably due to at least two factors: the individualistic nature of U.S. culture and a business school policy that required that the grade average for all courses be no higher than a "B". Students also generally experienced some degree of performance anxiety about participating in activities that required them to perform and to potentially make mistakes in front of their peers. (This performance anxiety may have been enhanced by the first factor, competitiveness.) To decrease the competitiveness issue, none of the exercises or activities in the course were graded, although, students did receive points for participating in the activities. To deal with the anxiety issue, I used Gudykunst's anxiety and uncertainty management (AUM) model of effective communication.

In this model, Gudykunst refers to the processes underlying our communication with people we do not know; he calls this process "communicating with strangers". Interacting with strangers is characterized by anxiety and uncertainty, which can inhibit communication if they are not kept between minimum and maximum thresholds. Gudykunst's theory has been modified over the years and includes a number of axioms aimed at predicting communication behavior, axioms which only hold true if anxiety and uncertainty are kept between those thresholds.

When designing my course, I relied upon several axioms from AUM. Axiom 13 proposes that "an increase in our tolerance for ambiguity will produce a decrease in our anxiety" (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 298). To improve students' tolerance of ambiguity, some exercises involved situations where students did not have clear directions on what the "correct answer" was. This put them in a position of trying to discover the answer for themselves, a situation that involves ambiguity and one which they will experience many times in the workplace.

Another principle used to help them to overcome their anxiety was Axiom 23: "An increase in the cooperative structure of the tasks on which we work with others will produce a decrease in our anxiety and an increase in our confidence in predicting their behavior" (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 301). To institute this principle, I reminded students at the beginning of each exercise that the activity was intended to help them as a class to improve their communication knowledge and skills and over time, they became more confident as they learned that others in the course would not be unduly critical of their efforts. Many of the activities also involved small group work and cooperative - rather than competitive - tasks.

Finally, I relied upon Axiom 24., which states that "an increase in the normative and institutional support for communicating with others will produce a decrease in our anxiety and an increase in our confidence in predicting their behavior" (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 301). Berger and Calabrese's (1975) Uncertainly Reduction Theory (URT) posits that the more verbal communication in which we engage with others, the less uncertainty we have about their behavior. In addition, URT also suggests that the greater the intimacy of our communication with others (e.g., nonsuperficial contact), the less uncertainty we have about them. Consequently, the regular and numerous in-class activities helped the students to become more comfortable performing in front

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of each other as well as helped them to develop relationships with their classmates. A final consequence was that the students found the class to be engaging and even fun as one student said in his final learning portfolio, "Among all the classes I have taken [at] USC, I feel that BUAD 302 (this class) is one of the most quintessential, enriching and fun classes, which has created a deep impact on my future."

Reducing anxiety and uncertainty leads to the development of the ability to practice mindfulness, according to Gudykunst (2005). "It follows that the more contact we have with others and the greater the quality of that contact, the more information we are able to collect about them and their groups and the less uncertainty we will experience" (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 302). The use of reflection activities and principles from AUM was intended then to help to also develop mindfulness in the students.

Course Design

In his final learning portfolio, one student summarized the basic structure of the class very clearly:

> "The course was structured around Bloom's Learning Theory, which divides thinking into six hierarchical categories: Knowledge, conceptual, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. For every topic that was covered throughout the semester, this theory was used in order for us (the students) to fully comprehend [it]. The process was composed of initially doing the reading assigned for a particular topic before class. . . . A quiz would take place. Following the quiz, we would have a discussion. . . [to gain] a deeper and better understanding of what was supposed to be taken from the reading. As we moved along, we usually formed small groups in an attempt to apply the subject matter. Each group would have its turn at applying the material, which served [sic] to be beneficial due to the fact that we would learn most from each other's mistakes. After we all had a chance, the professor would guide us into the higher orders of thinking."

The higher-order thinking that this student is referring to is perhaps more accurately described as reflection about what course participants had practiced and observed during the exercise. What is impressive to me about this description, though, is the preciseness of the student's understanding of the structure of the class and the rationale for its design and how that design was applied. It thus serves as demonstration of how effective the process was in teaching students how to learn, one of the goals of the active learning model discussed here.

Students were asked to keep a journal of their observations and experiences during the exercises. This journal was to be used to help them construct their final learning portfolio, but I also hoped that it—along with the exercises—would help to increase student "mindfulness" of effective communication principles, techniques, and behavior through reflection.

The course covered many of the typical topics addressed in business communication courses: employment messages, oral presentations, group and interpersonal communication, strategic

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communication practices, and some topics from organizational communication. There was little focus on writing, since this skill is covered in a separate course, but this learning goal could easily be incorporated into the active learning model described here.

A large part of the actual course was devoted to students working alone but primarily in groups completing exercises and activities that were designed to help them practice particular communication skills and to observe their own and others' skills in these areas. These activities were of multiple types proposed by Fink (2003) to encourage active learning among students: role plays, simulations, case studies and small group learning. One resource that made this goal easier to achieve was the experiential learning laboratory that we have at the Marshall School of Business. The lab allows students to practice various communication skills, be videotaped, and to review those activities for the purposes of learning what they did well and how they might improve. However, this lab is available to instructors on a limited basis, so the majority of the exercises took place in a traditional classroom setting.

Students were involved in exercises every course period. No lecturing occurred on a daily basis, other than explanations of the quiz topics and answers. However, at the end of each unit, I did hold a review session in which I explained the topics that had been covered, their relationship to one another, and their potential application in the business world. The review sessions were intended to attempt to ensure student understanding and to help students integrate the information.

A unique aspect of the course was the so-called "no-grading" policy regarding the exercises. As explained earlier, this was implemented to reduce the focus on competition and to create a more cooperative learning atmosphere in the course by reducing performance anxiety. Students did receive grades on the quizzes over the assigned readings, participation in the exercises, and for the final paper, the learning portfolio. The learning portfolio was a reflection exercise intended to increase students' retention of information, deepen their learning of the materials, and to encourage mindfulness in the area of communication. In the learning portfolio, students were asked to address three issues broadly: 1) The content of their learning: What did they learn about this subject? 2) The context of their learning: How did their learning fit into the larger context of their lives, particularly their future professional life? 3) The learning process: What did they learn about how they learned or how could they learn more effectively? These three topics were taken from Fink's suggestions for a process portfolio.

Results—Student Feedback

Students' final learning portfolios contained no negative comments about the active learning model used in the course. This result could be due to the fact that students were asked to focus on what they learned. But other evaluations indicated that the course design was successful. At the mid-way point of the course, I asked our director of learning at the business school to conduct an oral evaluation of the course and her feedback included the comment that "it was the best evaluation of a course that I have ever received." In addition, the final student ratings for the class instruction raised more than half a point over previous courses taught using a more traditional model that involved lectures, graded assignments throughout the course and exams.

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One of the most helpful aspects of the course was the use of the experiential learning laboratory, particularly the use of the videotaping facilities for it enabled students to observe their communication behaviors and to identify areas that could be improved. It also helped to accomplish one of the primary tasks that I set about achieving in the design of the course: providing opportunities for students to gain a more accurate assessment of their communication skills. This opportunity was recognized by students in a number of their learning portfolios. One student said about one of the exercises designed to allow them to observe their oral presentation skills:

> "I had the chance to see how others saw me. Although, I had [delivered oral presentations] in the past, I never had the chance to observe myself. I was oblivious to the unnatural body movements and the awkward pauses that I saw on the screen and I began to reflect on some other weaknesses that I may be unaware of."

Another student said about one of the exercises designed to help them identify effective group communication skills:

> "I specifically remember my group experience because it was one of the most supportive group climates that I have ever been a part of, and as a result, was one of the most enjoyable and productive. Interestingly, though, I feel like I gained the most valuable knowledge about the various aspects of group work from viewing the brief clip of my group, rather than actually participating in the exercise. Viewing the clip from a third-person perspective provided me the opportunity to really see the specific qualities of my fellow group members that contributed to a developed that supportive climate. More specifically, I was able to see the various group member roles that were mentioned in the textbook in my peers and recognized how those roles helped to foster such a positive, supportive group climate."

These comments also are evidence of the importance of reflection to effective learning. As these comments indicate, the focus on reflecting about what was learned in each exercise appeared to increase students' mindfulness during communication situations. The usefulness of reflection as an important part of the learning process is illustrated in many of the student examples used in this paper. It is clearly addressed in the following statement from a student's learning portfolio regarding a mock interview exercise:

> "I was asked to answer various questions starting from "tell me about yourself." The [start] was OK because we prepared for this question in [a] focus statement activity. . . . But when unexpected questions were asked, I had awkward moments of silence not knowing what to say. As I got more nervous, I kept saying [the] same thing over and over and felt that I had failed this activity. But I realized after the mock interview exercise that I did not fail this activity; rather, I aced it because I learned [a] very important lesson. . . . If it was a real interview and I made so many mistakes like I did in this activity, I would have never gotten the job. But through this, I could learn what my weaknesses are and [that] I need to be

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> preparing more thoroughly for upcoming nervous events, interviews for my full-time position."

Some students even discussed the value of the learning portfolio as a tool for reflection:

> "As I look back on the class, I do not know exactly when I started to realize that this class could offer me a lot, but as I began to plan the [learning portfolio], I figured out exactly how much I did take away from this. I really believe if all the classes had a project similar to this, I would remember a lot more from them, because I would say I have forgotten more from my classes than I have remembered."

As to the value of the active learning model, a number of students commented on this approach. One student said:

> "The hands-on and active learning approach that took place in my business communication classroom/Experiential Learning Center (ELC) room gave me a better understanding of, not only the skills I already possessed, but also an idea of what I would need to continue to work on to better prepare myself for my career and overall goals in the future."

The importance of exercises and activities that focused on real-life situations was mentioned by another student:

> "This past semester, I took several courses that have provided me with a variety of useful tools and essential skills that can prove to be beneficial as I make my way into the professional world. Although I was exposed to a significant amount of information, most of these courses lacked a sense of realistic situations in which the concepts taught would be applicable, essentially, simply learning the material but not placing it into context and truly understanding [sic]. However, the business communication course that I took allowed me to become very familiar with the content and apply the concepts into real-world scenarios."

Some students also commented on how the "no-grade" policy for the exercises and activities also contributed to creating an environment for learning. One student even commented on how it helped him to recognize that he was responsible for his learning:

> "The no-grade policy instituted in this class gave me a new perspective on my learning process. If I am "in it" just for my benefit, removing the need to say "just what the professor wants to hear", changes the dynamic. It allows me to be interested in even boring material if I feel it is more for my benefit than a grade. After graduation, I will capitalize on this and make it my lifelong perception of continued learning."

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Other students commented on the focus on "learning how to learn" with the idea that this will be helpful to them, not only in their careers, but also as they make vocational changes throughout their lives.

> "This course not only improved my previous skills . . . , it also gave me insight into the way that I actually learn. The fact that my learning will not stop after I complete my time at university was a notion that I had not readily considered until it was pointed out by Professor Walker. This compelled me to discover how exactly I best learned, because I realized how important it will be for me to be able to learn constantly and effectively, especially after I graduate and begin my career."

But perhaps some of the most gratifying comments from students were in regard to their newfound valuing of communication skill:

> "Perhaps more important than the actual internal content of the class—the sections contained in the textbook and reinforced in the lectures and ELC activities—is the reality that studying communication as an academic discipline really drove home to me how crucial communication is to business success. . . . Specifically, I had my 'Eureka' moment when it dawned upon me how much *more* important communications skills are than the so-called 'hard skills' that are traditionally studied in much more extensively in academic environs. . . . What our teachers I think have by and large overlooked, however, is the incredible significance of 'soft skills'—communication being a major part of them—in determining professional success."

Not only were the learning portfolios useful for students in helping them to reflect upon the learning experience, but it also served as a useful means of feedback for me in terms of what students found valuable in the course. This information will help me to make adjustments to improve the course design in the future.

Conclusion

Based upon the feedback that I received from students, there are some changes I will make in the course. Rather than suggesting that students keep a journal about their experiences and observations in the course on which they might draw to write their final learning portfolios, I will provide a more structured approach to the learning portfolio. In other words, I will ask them to write their reflections about their learning in each of the topic areas that are covered in the course and for several of the most important exercises. I will then add another opportunity for reflection by asking them to review their writing over the course of the semester and prepare a final integrative summary of their learning. These changes will provide a more systematic approach to the reflection aspect of the course as well as institute an added layer of reflection with the hope of increasing the depth of student understanding and their "mindfulness" in the area of communication.

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I will also continue to use the student feedback that I received throughout the course, including that given in the learning portfolios, to continue to create and improve the exercises and activities used in the course to create the active learning environment.

Finally, I will drop the periodic review of course materials that I had included in the first version of the course, because student feedback indicated that these reviews were not necessary. Apparently, students were taking away more from the initial activities and discussions that I suspected, making the reviews redundant.

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Biography

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FEMA and DHS's Response to Hurricane Katrina through the Lens of Structuration Theory

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Hurricane Katrina was the biggest natural disaster in the U.S. history, claiming over 1300 lives and destroying property worth an estimated $96 billion (White House, 2005, pp. 5 & 7). The federal response to the hurricane by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), an agency under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was widely criticized as shockingly poor. Not surprisingly, FEMA's Katrina response became the subject of several congressional investigations and a White House review. At a hearing of one such investigation, Senator Susan Collins called FEMA's response to the hurricane a "failure" and added that DHS shared the responsibility for the failure (2006,"*Statement"*).

DHS was created after 9/11 as a unified department to deal with national emergencies of all types, be they natural disasters or terrorist incidents. Prior to DHS, FEMA had been the main federal agency "charged with preparing for and responding to both natural and man-made disasters" (www. fema.gov). However, FEMA could not on its own prevent or prepare for possible terrorist incidents, which required involvement of law enforcement agencies (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). Therefore, FEMA was merged into the newly-created DHS, which also included departments and agencies concerned with law enforcement (www. dhs.gov).

FEMA's merger with DHS created problems typical of organizational mergers. Conflicting views prevailed over the areas for which FEMA was responsible and the resources to which it was entitled" (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). For example, Michael Brown, FEMA's chief when Hurricane Katrina struck, told *The Washington Post* that DHS, due to its focus on preventing terrorism, had divested FEMA of most of its "preparedness functions" (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). These functions, according to Brown, enabled FEMA to train and exercise its "first responders," emergency workers at local and state level who are the first to respond to emergencies (Grunwald & Glasser, 2005). Brown also told the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs that "there's the whole clash of cultures between DHS' mission to prevent terrorism and FEMA's mission to respond to and to prepare for responding to disasters of whatever nature" (Collins, 2006, *"Statement"*). Additionally, Brown complained of "structural problems stemming from FEMA being made a part of the Department of Homeland Security" ("Brown says," 2006). Likewise, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs concluded in its report that "Hurricane Katrina exposed flaws in the structure of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that are too substantial to mend" (2006, p. 607).

This paper investigates the "cultural clash" and "structural problems" emanating from FEMA's merger with DHS using Anthony Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration. Structuration theory

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provides a useful lens with which to examine the mutually dependent relationship between structure and agency in organizations. The mutual relationship between structure and agency may help us understand organizational communication better rather than approaches that emphasize either agency at the expense of structure (hermeneutics) or vice versa (structuralism) (Giddens, 1984, p. 26). Framed in terms of structuration theory, my paper asks the following question: How can professional communication explore some of the structural problems FEMA faced from its subordination to DHS during their Katrina response while also highlighting the agency exercised by the respective heads of FEMA and DHS during their response to the hurricane?

To answer this question, I analyze using structuration theory two memos written by the respective heads of FEMA and DHS during their response to Hurricane Katrina. My reasons for selecting these two memos are both simple and strategic. At the outset, these were the only two FEMA and DHS memos I found on the internet. More importantly, however, these memos are written by the heads of FEMA and DHS and provide valuable if partial insight into the leadership discourses of these organizations, thus throwing inevitable light on issues of agency, power, and ideology in these organizations. Furthermore, both memos were written in response to Hurricane Katrina, thus providing a common— hence comparable—context for my analysis of the memos.

The following sources provide contextual information for memo analysis: reports on the federal response to the hurricane by various congressional investigations and a White House review, press reports and articles on the subject available online, the National Response Plan (NRP), and the websites of DHS and FEMA. In what follows, I first provide a brief overview of structuration theory, followed by a description of my use of the theory as an analytical framework. Next, I analyze the memos through the lens of structuration theory, supplementing my analysis with contextual information surrounding the memos. I conclude with a brief summary of my analysis and its limitations.

Structuration Theory: An Overview

Structuration theory proposes a "duality of structure" that empowers structure as well as agent (Giddens, 1984, p. xxi). The theory posits that structure is both an outcome of acts of agents and a medium through which those agents act (Giddens, 1984, 374). Put differently, structure both provides the framework for agents' acts (as a medium) and is reproduced as a result of those acts (outcome). Giddens (1984) links structure and agency through power, which according to him enables as well as constrains agents (p. 175). All agents, including those in subordinate positions, have some power and can effect changes to structure (Giddens, 1984, p. 16).

Structure consists of organizational rules and resources (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). Rules are of two types: those that give meaning and those that regulate (Giddens, 1984, p. 18). Resources are "authoritative"— an individual's authority over and ability to interact with other agents—and "allocative," an individual's access to material resources (Giddens, 1984, p. xxxi).

Organizational and management communication scholars have long used structuration theory to examine relationships between structures and agents in organizations (Sillince, 2007; Dennis,

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2006; Luo, 2006; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Murphy, 2002; Fairhurst et al., 2002; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992; Filby & Willmott, 1988; Knights & Willmott, 1987; Riley, 1983). In comparison, although rhetoric and professional communication scholars have acknowledged the usefulness of the theory to examine organizational discourses (Suchan, 2006; Amidon, 2005; Winsor, 2003; Schryer, 2000), few have used it as an analytical framework to examine these discourses.

Among studies in rhetoric and professional communication using structuration theory as an analytical framework, Herndl (1993) analyzed a scientific article to show how the article's excellent "descriptive" analysis of a scientific discourse failed to highlight power and ideological issues of the discourse. Herndl and Taylor (1993) also presented a paper discussing a discursive struggle at a missile range site using structuration theory as an analytical framework. Herndl and Taylor (1993) emphasized the usefulness of the theory in understanding and implementing resistance to dominant discursive structures (p. 7). Suchan (2006) echoed Herndl and Taylor in describing structuration theory as a "useful lens to understand how communication routines and norms form and why they may be difficult to change" (p. 47). It is clear from my brief literature review that structuration theory as a framework for analysis of organizational discourses has not been sufficiently utilized by rhetoric and professional communication scholars. Next, I describe the framework for my analysis of the memos.

My Analytical Framework

My analytical framework includes Giddens's three interlinked "dimensions of structure," namely, "signification," "domination," and "legitimation," and related concepts of "ideology" and "reification" (Giddens, 1984, pp. 30-31). "Signification" refers to communicative "signs" or "modes of discourse" in organizations (Giddens, 1984, pp. 31-32). Prasad (2005) provides a welcome elaboration of the term "signification" by including among the meanings of the term "rules, scripts, codes, and conventions of communication" (p. 187). "Domination" ("power") refers to control over "authoritative" and "allocative" resources (Giddens, 1984, p. 33). "Signification" and "domination" are interlinked in that "signs," as mediums, can constrain (or limit) acts of agents, but "signs" can also allow agents to gain "power" ("domination"), helping them to reproduce "signs" (outcomes) (Giddens, 1984, p. 31). "Legitimation" refers to "domination" of certain discourses ("signs") over others in organizations achieved through "ideology," or signs controlled by dominant groups in the organization (Giddens, 1984, p. 33). Moreover, signs, in their ideological form, may be subject to "reification," taking on an appearance of having fixed or "thing-like properties" (Giddens, 1984, p. 180). In summary, then, structuration theory posits that "signification" and "domination," through "ideology" or "reification," lead to "legitimation" of certain discourses over others in organizations. I now describe how I use my analytical framework.

My analysis of the two memos is divided in two parts. First, I discuss "signification" and "domination". These two go together, as they are mutually dependent, signs being means for "domination" ("power") and "domination" being a rationale for signs (Giddens, 1984, p. 31). I first identify from the memos a sign or a pair (or a group) of signs that appear to work together strategically. Then, I provide a brief analysis of how the "sign(s)"—or the rule(s), script(s), code(s), convention(s), or "mode(s) of discourse"—frames (or limits) the memo writer's actions,

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yet at the same time allowing him to use power ("domination"). I support my textual analysis of the memos with contextual evidence where appropriate.

In the second part of my analysis, I take up ideology, reification, and "legitimation", as the use of the first two achieves the third. Here, I identify from the memos, and the surrounding contextual information, signs that appear ideologically oriented or reified. Then, I discuss the ramifications of these signs for actors and structures in FEMA and DHS.

Taken together, the two parts of my analysis of the two memos show how FEMA's merger with DHS during their Katrina response created structural constraints for FEMA and allowed DHS to dominate FEMA. My analysis also shows how both Michael Brown, FEMA's head when Katrina struck, and Michael Chertoff, DHS's Secretary, used signs in an enabling manner to gain approval and power for themselves and their respective organizations. In summary, my analysis of the memos nods to the assertion of structuration theory that signs can both be limiting and empowering for organizational actors. I now turn to my analysis of the memos.

Analysis

Brown's memo (Figure 1) to his boss Michael Chertoff, Secretary, DHS, is the first of the two memos I analyze. I reproduce the entire memo here except an attached list of requirements Brown refers to at the end of the first paragraph. Also not shown in Figure 1 is FEMA's letterhead on which the actual memo is printed.

August 29, 2005
MEMORANDUM TO: Michael Chertoff
Secretary of Homeland Security

FROM: Michael D. Brown
Under Secretary

SUBJECT: DHS Response to Katrina

We are requesting your assistance to make available DHS employees willing to deploy as soon as possible for a two-week minimum field assignment to serve in a variety of positions. We anticipate needing at least 1000 additional DHS employees within 48 hours and 2000 within 7 days. Attached is a list of requirements that employees will have to meet before deploying.

It is beneficial to use DHS employees as it allows us to be more efficient responding to the needs of this disaster and it reinforces the Department's All-Hazard's Capabilities. Also, DHS employees already have background investigations, travel cards and badges, all items that normally delay filling our surge workforce. FEMA Response and Recovery operations are a top priority of the Department and as we know, one of yours.

We will also want to identify staff with specialized skills such as bilingual capabilities, Commercial Driver's License (CDL), and logistics capabilities.

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Thank you for your consideration in helping us meet our responsibilities in this near catastrophic event.

Figure 1: Brown's Memo

I first take up "signification" and "domination". Then, I analyze the memo for issues related to ideology, reification, and "legitimation".

"Signification" and "Domination"

- **The use of a FEMA letterhead and the subject line stating "DHS Response to Katrina"**

Brown's use of a FEMA letterhead (not shown in Figure 1) is interesting, especially when seen in conjunction with the memo's subject line, which reads, "DHS Response to Katrina." If one also considers the last sentence of the second paragraph ("FEMA Response and Recovery operations are a top priority of the Department . . ."), and the last sentence of the memo ("Thank you for your consideration in helping us meet our responsibilities . . ."), the contradiction becomes even more stark. In all three places or "signs"—the letterhead, the last sentence of the second paragraph, and the last sentence of the memo—the memo depicts the Katrina response operations as a FEMA task, suggesting Brown's quest for more power and "domination" within DHS. Yet the subject line declares the operations to be a DHS task (an apparent constraint for Brown).

Behind this apparent contradiction there probably lies a balancing act on the part of Brown between FEMA's need for more autonomy (power) on one hand and the need on the other hand for him to adhere to the established chain of command (a constraint for Brown). FEMA is a subordinate organization of DHS and Brown is answerable to the Secretary, DHS. Although Brown wants the response operations to be a FEMA responsibility (more power for himself and FEMA), he does not want to be seen as trying to usurp the authority of FEMA's parent organization (DHS). Put differently, Brown is unable to avoid calling the response operations a DHS task in the subject line of the memo, a prominent and visible sign (and in this case, a constraint for Brown) in the memo. Yet the mention of DHS in the subject line (a constraint) also allows Brown to use FEMA's letterhead and refer to FEMA, directly or indirectly, within the memo to declare that the response operations are essentially a FEMA task (an attempt to gain power within DHS). Thus, Brown uses a limiting sign (the subject line) in the memo to gain power for himself and FEMA by using it along with other signs (e.g., the letterhead, subtle references to FEMA within the memo).

It should be noted here that Brown's use of a FEMA letterhead and his one explicit mention of FEMA by name are ironic considering that after its merger with DHS, FEMA was rechristened as Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP&R), a term Chertoff uses in his memo written just a day after Brown's memo, as we will see.

- **Four mentions of DHS in the body of the memo versus a single mention of FEMA**

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As organizational acronyms (or codewords), DHS and FEMA are probably routinely used in these organizations' communications. However, Brown's using DHS four times in the body of the memo and FEMA just once indicate DHS's "domination" and power over FEMA, especially given that DHS is also mentioned in the subject line. In contrast, although FEMA is explicitly mentioned just once in the body of the memo, a number of first person pronoun references to FEMA (through words such as "we" and "us") in the body of the memo, coupled with Brown's use of FEMA's letterhead, allows Brown to stake a claim for more authoritative and allocative resources (power and dominance) for FEMA. Thus, an apparent constraint (more mentions in the memo of the codeword DHS) is used by Brown to gain power for himself and FEMA, because a higher visibility of the codeword DHS in the memo may be interpreted as Brown trying to be an obedient member of the larger organization (DHS). At the same time, through relatively less visible first-person pronoun references to FEMA, Brown seeks to establish that the Katrina response efforts are a FEMA task, in an effort to gain power for himself and FEMA. Similarly, Brown's request for additional DHS employees (authoritative and allocative resources) to meet FEMA's commitments is an expression to gain power, although Brown's request identifies the requested employees as "DHS employees," a constraint for Brown and FEMA.

- **A specific mention in the memo of the number of personnel required, when they are required, and the duration for which they are required**

Brown's mentioning in the memo of the number of personnel he requires from DHS, when he requires them, and the time for which these personnel are needed (a scripted request), are expressions to gain power (to act despite constraints), even though the fact that Brown has to request and be dependent on DHS for these resources is obviously a constraint for FEMA. The resource crunch faced by FEMA in the months and years preceding Hurricane Katrina has been noted by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in its report. Referring to FEMA's personnel shortage, the report stated, "Over the last few years, FEMA has suffered numerous personnel problems, hindering its ability to prepare for and respond to a catastrophic event" (2006, chapter 14, p. 216). An additional point regarding Brown's scripted request for DHS personnel is that the details of the script (the number of employees, when they are required, and the like) help establish Brown as an "expert" or a person in command, thus gaining power for him.

- **The reference to DHS's "All-Hazard's [sic] Capabilities" and the description of the FEMA recovery and response effort as a "top priority" of DHS and that of Brown's supervisor's (Secretary Chertoff's)**

The memo's reference to DHS's "All-Hazards Capabilities" is another example of Brown's use of a "sign" to gain power. Although the memo's context (a hurricane of the magnitude of Katrina) overwhelmingly justifies Brown's request for additional personnel from DHS, he still couches his request for additional personnel in terms of the phrase "All-Hazards Capabilities" ("It is beneficial to use DHS employees as it allows us to be more efficient . . . and it reinforces the Department's All-Hazard's Capabilities"). Clearly, Brown's framing of his request in terms of this particular phrase can be seen as a constraint, in that such a powerful justification for his request as a hurricane of the magnitude of Katrina is apparently not enough by itself. On the other hand, if one considers that the phrase "All-Hazards Capabilities" is akin to a mission

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statement for the National Response Plan (NRP), developed and to be implemented by DHS (www. dhs.gov), one can appreciate Brown's reasons for using the phrase. Brown uses the term to persuade his supervisor, who is the head of DHS, the organization responsible for the implementation of NRP. Similarly, Brown's description of the FEMA recovery and response effort as a "top priority" of DHS and that of Secretary Chertoff's are expressions to gain power within DHS.

- **The reference to typical communicative signs and conventions within DHS, such as travel cards and badges and background investigations**

Brown's mention of typical "signs," rules, conventions, and "modes of discourse" within DHS, such as travel cards and badges and background investigations, appears to have been intended for gaining power, because these signs have a law-enforcement angle considered important within DHS. At the same time, it is clear from his reference to these signs that there is an obvious advantage DHS employees have as far as these "signs" go, because DHS employees already possess the necessary clearances required in connection with these "signs." Conversely, the lack of requisite clearances for these "signs" among FEMA employees often delays their mobilization, a constraint noted by Brown.

- **Description of Hurricane Katrina as a "near catastrophic event"**

Brown's use of the term "near catastrophic event" to describe Hurricane Katrina in the memo's last paragraph is meant to gain power, that is, persuasion for his request. The National Response Plan (NRP) defines a category of emergencies known as "Catastrophic Events" (Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. 43). These events are defined as "any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions" (Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. 43). Brown is cautious in using this special NRP category (a "sign") to describe Hurricane Katrina, which is evident from his use of the qualifying word "near." Apparently, Brown is not sure at this point whether the hurricane deserves to be categorized as a "catastrophic event." This lack of clarity about whether the special category (a "sign") applies in the present context (Hurricane Katrina) is a constraint, in so far as Brown's ability to use this sign is concerned. However, he still uses the "sign" in an enabling manner by adding a qualifier ("near") to it. His qualified use of the sign "near catastrophic event" makes his request more powerful than it might have been in the absence of even a qualified mention of this special NRP category. I now turn to issues of "ideology," "reification," and "legitimation" seen in Brown's memo.

"Ideology," "Reification," and "Legitimation"

A key phrase ("sign") in Brown's memo relating to ideology is "all-hazards capabilities." The sign "all-hazards" is taken from the National Response Plan (NRP), the backbone of DHS, where it is defined as including "terrorism, major natural disasters, and other major emergencies" (Department of Homeland Security, 2006, Preface). Both DHS and FEMA used the sign differently. While Brown used it to mean both terrorism as well as natural disasters, for DHS the term "all-hazards approach" seems to have largely meant possible terrorist attacks. DHS's

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preoccupation with terrorism has been documented by many reports on the federal response to Hurricane Katrina. For example, Kathleen Tierney, the Director of the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado, stated that DHS rejected the principle of "integrated emergency management" and failed to achieve "all-hazard preparedness" in its zeal to prevent another terrorist attack like 9/11 (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, p. 221).

What Tierney meant was that DHS leaned so heavily towards preventing terrorism that it did not pay adequate attention to threats from other types of disasters. She also criticized DHS for deviating from the principle of "integrated emergency management," which involves four components of "mitigation," "preparedness," "response," and "recovery" (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, p. 221). The two concepts ("signs") of "all-hazard preparedness" (mentioned by Brown in his memo) and "integrated emergency management" (mentioned by Tierney) combined to create the structural conflict between FEMA and DHS.

Prior to DHS, FEMA was responsible for all four components of "integrated emergency management" for all types of disasters (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, p. 221). After DHS's creation, however, Tom Ridge and Michael Chertoff, the first and the second Secretaries of DHS, respectively, removed from FEMA its preparedness responsibilities and transferred them to another organization within DHS, thus breaking the cycle of "integrated emergency management" (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006, pp. 221-222). Brown told the House Select Committee that "these recent organizational changes have divided what was intended to be one, all-hazards preparedness mission into two artificially separate preparedness categories of terrorism and natural disasters" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2005, p. 155). The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs also concluded that separating preparedness functions from FEMA "eliminated FEMA's role in preparing for disasters" (2006, p. 222).

Thus, DHS appears to have legitimized its control of FEMA by adopting an interpretation of the sign "all-hazards approach" that considered emergency preparedness a terrorism-related issue. The sign "all-hazards approach" thus became an "ideology" allowing DHS to legitimize its control over FEMA. Conversely, for Brown and FEMA the sign "all-hazards approach" meant disasters of all kinds. The use of the phrase "All-Hazards's [sic] Capabilities" comes across in Brown's memo as a reified term for DHS and FEMA. The phrase appears to have become almost a byword for DHS, even though, clearly, the organization lacked such capabilities (as seen in the organization's disastrous Katrina response), nor did it probably have a uniform definition of the phrase (as seen in the differing conceptions of the phrase in DHS and in Brown's FEMA). Next, I turn to the second memo in this paper.

The second memo (Figure 2) I analyze is that by Michael Chertoff, Secretary, DHS. I include only select paragraphs from the memo, leaving out a bulleted list mentioning the responsibilities of the Principal Federal Official (PFO) and the closing paragraph where mere contact information is given. Also not shown in Figure 2 is DHS's letterhead on which the actual memo is printed.

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August 30, 2005
MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION
FROM: Michael Chertoff
SUBJECT: Designation of Principal Federal Official for Hurricane Katrina

As you know, the President has established the "White House Task Force on Hurricane Katrina Response." He will meet with us tomorrow to launch this effort. The Department of Homeland Security, along with other departments, will be part of the task force and will assist the Administration with its response to Hurricane Katrina.

In accordance with the guidance provided in the National Response Plan (NRP), I hereby declare Hurricane Katrina an Incident of National Significance and designate Michael Brown, Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP&R), as the Principal Federal Official (PFO) for incident management purposes during the response and recovery operations for Hurricane Katrina.

As stated in the NRP, the PFO serves as my representative locally and coordinates federal activities relevant to the response and recovery efforts. The specific roles and responsibilities of the PFO include: [the bulleted list mentioning the responsibilities omitted here].

The PFO does not impede nor impact the authorities of other Federal officials to coordinate directly with their department or agency chain of command or to execute their duties and responsibilities under law.

I am confident that Under Secretary Brown will provide the leadership necessary to ensure an effective and efficient incident response. I request that you provide him your fullest measure of support in the execution of these important responsibilities.

Figure 2: Chertoff's Memo

As with Brown's memo, I first take up "signification" and "domination". Then, I analyze the memo for issues related to "ideology," "reification," and "legitimation".

"Signification" and "Domination"

- **Starting the memo by mentioning that DHS, along with other departments, will be part of the "White House Task Force" for response to Katrina**

Despite leading the most important homeland security organization (DHS) in the country, Chertoff's starting the memo with a "script" stating that DHS will be part of the White House Task Force to respond to Hurricane Katrina conveys framing (and thus limiting) of DHS's role in the overall national effort to respond to the hurricane at the highest level. At the same time, by starting the memo with a mention of the president and the White House Task Force, Chertoff gains power ("domination") by locating himself and his department (DHS) next to the highest office in the country.

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- **Referring to NRP as a basis for his declaration of Hurricane Katrina as "an Incident of National Significance (INS)" and designation of Michael Brown as PFO**

Chertoff's reference to the National Response Plan (NRP)—a collection of "signs"—frames and guides (and therefore limits with various provisions and directives and conditions) his declaration of the hurricane as an INS and his designation of Brown as a PFO. Yet Chertoff simultaneously gains power by referring to the NRP—which is a national framework (NRP, Preface)—as the basis of his actions ("In accordance with the guidance provided in the National Response Plan (NRP) . . . .").

- **Distributing the memo to several officials (listed under "distribution" at the end of the memo), but not addressing the memo to anyone in the heading**

Chertoff's memo does not mention any recipients in the heading but lists them by their job titles at the end of the memo under the notation of "distribution." The phrase "Memorandum for distribution" is included in the heading. This practice appears to have been an organizational convention (sign) framing Chertoff's memo in a bureaucratic and impersonal mode. At the same time, this convention, when seen along with the memo's letterhead (not shown in Figure 2), allows Chertoff to show his power as the writer of the memo.

The letterhead (not shown here) displays DHS's logo together with the words 'Homeland Security" in large, bold font. Chertoff's job title ("secretary") appears on top of the prominent-looking logo and the departmental name in small, barely noticeable font. The effect is one of contrast, with the words "Homeland Security" prominently displayed on the page and the word "secretary" in small, italicized font appearing on top of the departmental name. Despite the small print showing Chertoff's job, the reader of the memo is able to perceive the sender of the memo as holding the top job in this most important of departments, as highlighted by a prominently displayed "Homeland Security." Overall, the letterhead appears to exert a dominating and legitimating influence over the recipients of the memo. I now turn to issues of "ideology," "reification," and "legitimation" seen in Chertoff's memo.

"Ideology," "Reification," and "Legitimation"

The covert ideology in Chertoff's memo seems derive from the framework (a collection of "signs") of the National Response Plan (NRP), which he mentions in the first sentence of the second paragraph and under whose authority he designates Brown as a PFO and declares Hurricane Katrina to be an Incident of National Significance (INS). Perhaps the most telling example of Chertoff's use of NRP as an ideological tool to dominate FEMA is Chertoff's not mentioning the name FEMA in his memo. Instead, Chertoff calls FEMA by its new name under DHS, which is given by NRP: Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP & R). Chertoff's not using the name FEMA even as a parenthetical reference after the agency's new name is interesting considering that only a day ago Michael Brown sent Chertoff a memo on FEMA's letterhead and with one explicit mention of FEMA in the body of the memo.

Another instance of Chertoff's use of NRP as an ideological tool to dominate FEMA can be seen in his explanation of the term (a "sign") Principal Federal Official (PFO) in the memo. Chertoff

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names Michael Brown as DHS's PFO for response to Hurricane Katrina. But he carefully delimits PFO's boundaries: 1) "The PFO serves as my representative locally . . . ," 2) "The PFO does not impede nor impact the authorities of other Federal officials. . . ." Moreover, the PFO was just one of many officials and structures ("signs") involved in the response operations. Under the framework of NRP, DHS created an elaborate network of positions and departments ("structures") to manage response operations, which failed to work together effectively in response to Katrina (U.S. House of Representatives, 2005, p. 156).

The collection of "signs" enunciated by NRP also proved problematic in Chertoff's declaration of Hurricane Katrina as an "Incident of National Significance (INS)." According to Senator Collins, the chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, the declaration was unnecessary because the president's declaration of emergency in Louisiana had already made Katrina an INS under NRP (2006,"*Statement"*). White House's review of the federal response to Katrina also stated that many aspects of NRP, especially those related to by whom and how Incidents of National Significance (INS) ought to be declared, were unclear when Katrina struck (White House, 2005, chapter 2). Thus, the NRP, which seems to have been a reified sign in Chertoff's memo and which was used by DHS as an ideological tool to legitimize its control over FEMA, proved inadequate to deal with Katrina.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown how structuration theory can help explore some of the structural conflicts between DHS and FEMA during their response to Hurricane Katrina. I have also shown how structuration theory accounts for the agencies of both FEMA's Brown (who acted despite constraints) and DHS's Chertoff (who had few, if any, constraints) during their response to Hurricane Katrina. The main contention of structuration theory is that agents are not abject receivers of structural influences. Both Brown and Chertoff used organizational "signs" and "modes of discourse" not only to frame (and explain) their actions but also to advance their viewpoints or persuade other members of their organizations. The use of "ideology" and "reification" by dominant groups in organizations to legitimize their interests is another component of Structuration theory. The memos by Brown and Chertoff show how DHS legitimized its "domination" of FEMA by using signs such as "All-Hazards Approach" and NRP.

Structuration theory has important uses for rhetoric and professional communication scholars. The theory helps us view organizations as dynamic entities where individuals use whatever power they have to influence their environments. The theory saves us, then, from seeing organizations as monolithic or stultifying machines that simply crush or mold "innocent" agents who work for them. Finally, I want to make a brief mention of this study's main limitations.

This paper is a small, preliminary attempt to use structuration theory as an analytical framework to understand the interdependent roles of structure and agency in organizations and the relationship of these roles with organizational discourses. As a small, preliminary step, this paper has many limitations. Its main limitation is using only secondary data for analysis. Interviews with the writers of the memos or with other DHS and FEMA members involved in the response efforts to Hurricane Katrina would obviously lend the study more depth and credibility. Moreover, my sole reliance on the memos for my analysis, albeit supported with contextual

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information, may invite a characterization of this study as "positivistic" or as trying to read reality from and within a handful of artifacts. In response to such criticism, I quote Alvesson and Skoldberg, who said, "Empirical material cannot unambiguously falsify or verify theories, but it can generate arguments for or against the championing of theoretical ideas (p. 275). In the end, this paper joins scholars such as Herndl (1993) and Suchan (2006) in urging more use of structuration theory in rhetoric and professional communication. As Herndl (1993) says, structuration theory can create in both us and our students a deeper appreciation for the role of agency in organizations amidst structural constraints and ideological struggles (pp. 354-355).

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Biography

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UNspeak in Tsunami Recovery Reports

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Context

"Societies should be judged ultimately on their ability to deliver to their citizens most of their human needs: food, shelter, health, education, a clean environment, a sense of community and a sense of purpose in life," is the verdict of a thinker from Southeast Asia, Mahbubani (1998:184).

This quotation tragically lists what thousands of Asians lost in 2004, and also what donors to tsunami relief and the government of Sri Lanka hoped to give back to the survivors. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami brought immense suffering to Sri Lanka, the pearl of the Indian Ocean. The unofficial statistics of the disaster are loss of 40,000 lives, but authoritative sources such as *The Economist*[1], claim the loss of 35,000 lives. However, the official and the unofficial statistics concur that the deaths were by and large of the very poor living in the coastal areas of Sri Lanka.

The Tsunami Recovery Reports of the second anniversary of the tsunami were published by the Sri Lankan government, various United Nations (UN) organizations, INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organizations) such as the American Red Cross, and combined forces of donor agencies as in the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) report. This paper examines the content, strategy and techniques of these reports. The investigation is based on the premise that these reports have spawned or are in the process of spawning their own discourse for communication across borders.

Approach and methodology

The Tsunami Recovery Reports are analyzed in an eclectic approach of content and discourse analyses, within the framework of business communication theory (Bazerman & Prior 2004, Swales 2004, Munter 2002). The analysis is based on the definition of "discourse analysis as a method for analyzing the ways that specific features of language contribute to the interpretation of texts in their various contexts" (Barton, 2004: 57). Furthermore, concepts of business communication are used in the analysis. Finally, the pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed in terms of their usefulness for the teacher and the student.

[1] Briefing Sri Lanka: "A war strange as fiction," *The Economist*, June 9th – 15th 2007, pp. 23-26.

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Data

Of the many Tsunami Recovery Reports available, this study focuses on five reports representing two kinds of writing. This classification is based on the structure and tone of the overall message in each report.

1. Promotional writing as in the Tsunami Recovery Program report of the American Red Cross and UNICEF report or 24 Month Update.

2. Problem-Solution writing as in the TEC report named "Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities," and "Approaches to Equity in Post-Tsunami Assistance," the report of the Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery.

The RADA (Reconstruction and Development Agency) report will also be referred to, since it has some features of both types of reports and is the government of Sri Lanka report on Tsunami Recovery, in conjunction with some donor agencies, such as the UN.

Findings

According to Mahatma Gandhi, as quoted in Chu (1998:143), "Divine guidance often comes when the horizon is … blackest." The overall message of the Tsunami Recovery Reports is of the blackest hour in recent history and appreciation for divine guidance in the form of abundant aid showered on the grief stricken island. Within this framework, different types of report writing can be found.

Another shared feature of the Tsunami Recovery Reports is the new discourse of NGOs, donor agencies, UN organizations, and language of governance, as demonstrated in the following extract.

> The purpose of this evaluation is to 'determine the impact of the international tsunami response on local and national capacities for relief and recovery and risk reduction.' … This evaluation is based not only on consultations with formal stakeholders in government and aid agencies but also on a survey of more than a thousand claim-holders in affected communities.
>
> (Parakrama, TEC Report 2006: 10)

In an interview with the authors of the TEC Report, the primary author, Professor Arjuna Parakrama said that the creation of the term "claim-holders" in the context of tsunami recovery reporting is a coinage, loaned from the discourse of human rights. "Claim-holders" in the tsunami relief context is used only in the TEC report.

Promotional Writing in Tsunami Recovery Reports

The American Red Cross report and the UNICEF 24 Month Update can be called promotional writing because of the focus of the reports. Just as much as they are about

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tsunami recovery, they are also about themselves or the organizations they represent. Shared characteristics of these reports are as follows.

Missionary Tone & Mission Statement Style

The 'missionary' tone of doing good and noble deeds and embracing worthy causes is reflected in these reports, as in "The program's mission is to build on the strengths of communities…" from the American Red Cross report, p 4.

> Recovery centres on the construction and renovation of health facilities, as health and nutrition workers return to work and strengthen community-based care. UNICEF continues to support the provision of safe water and sanitary latrines, which together with the promotion of hygienic behaviour contributed to maintaining a low level of disease.
>
> (UNICEF 24 Month Update, p. 6)

As in mission statements, purpose, strategy, values, policies and behavior standards can be identified (Campbell 1992). An example is the extract above where UNICEF gives itself a pat on the back for maintaining a low level of disease, which is part of its purpose and strategy, reflecting values and policies.

Effective Visuals

The promotional reports use some of the most moving and delightful pictures of tsunami recovery. The visual appeal is consistent with the promotional nature of the reports. Most of the pictures are either of smiling children or of adults near homes constructed by the aid organizations. The inclusion of pictures of aid workers with tsunami survivors is another common feature.

Another aspect of the use of visuals is the anecdotal style of writing. The promotional reports use anecdotes and personalized stories to match the pictures in the reports. This journalistic technique is not found in the other reports.

Positive Language

Possibly in keeping with the missionary zeal of the promotional reports, the language is very positive. An upbeat tone is created by the choice of positive vocabulary, with connotations of noble deeds and action oriented verbs, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Creation of an Upbeat Tone

Organization	Verbs	Nouns
American Red Cross	Leads, help, overcome, restored, assisted, engaged, funded, enhanced, expanded, enables, builds, prioritize, maximize, guarantees, fosters, better equipped, directs, protects, implement	New skills, survivors, significant progress, sustainable recovery, strength and resiliency, humanitarian mission, recovery programs, community participation, good stewardship, survivor needs, collaborative effort, lives and dignity,

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		relief activities, satisfaction
UNICEF	Accomplished, rebuild, restoring, regain, strengthened, improving, upgrading, help ensure, supporting, expanding, create, increasing, constructed or upgraded, constructed and renovated, strengthen, established, provide, facilitate, empowering	Raising standards, much improvement, gains, better sanitation facilities, newly constructed, tremendous support, sustainable projects, restoration, promotion

As Table 1 demonstrates, the tendency is to demonstrate a sense of achievement and rebuilding as in the use of "restored," "fosters," and "better equipped" among the verbs and "new skills," "newly constructed," "good stewardship," and "sustainable projects" among the noun phrases.

Direct Approach

Directly addressing the audience is a feature of the promotional reports. For example, the American Red Cross report ends its "Introduction" with the sentence, "Thank you for your trust in our humanitarian mission." Similarly, it concludes with the direct appeal "You can help those affected by countless crises around the world…"

This feature of the promotional reports is in keeping with their agenda: the Tsunami Recovery Reports are one instance of accounting for the funds they have received; in the nature of their work there will be several instances of asking and accounting for aid. The problem-solution reports on the other hand, are not in the process of asking for more, they are only accounting for what has been given.

Veiled Criticism

The promotional reports seem to shy away from direct criticism. This again, is in keeping with the agenda of the organization which is dependent on the goodwill of the government and the powers that be for permission to function in a particular country. In this context, the criticism of the government for instance, is muted, and generalizations are used to mask specific critical comments.

> Political uncertainties and security concerns in several tsunami-affected countries have impeded the delivery of some humanitarian assistance. However, the American Red Cross is committed to reaching people most in need, wherever they are.
>
> (Two year report, Tsunami Recovery Program, American Red Cross, p. 23)

Problem-Solution Writing in Tsunami Recovery Reports

According to Swales and Feak (1994: 57), "… general-specific passages tend to be descriptive and expository. In contrast, problem-solution texts tend to be more argumentative and evaluative." They also make the point that the authors of the former "position themselves

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as being informed and organized; in the latter as questioning and perceptive," (ibid). Although Swales and Feak are giving advice on academic writing to graduate students, the descriptions of the text can be used for some Tsunami Recovery Reports too.

The TEC report and the UN Special Envoy's report on Sri Lanka use the technique of problem-solution writing. The reports also reflect the "questioning and perceptive" tone of the authors. Surprisingly, the RADA report too, uses the same technique sporadically, but the problem created by the use of this technique in a government document is, how can the authors (i.e. the government itself and donor agencies) question the government's handling of tsunami relief funds? The critical tone of the following extract for example, highlights the problem of 'who is the author?' and 'whose voice is this in a government document?'

> Coordination of the stakeholders at all levels and the development of partnerships between the government and partners posed an additional challenge, as did the lack of a clear attribution of government responsibilities between division, district and central levels. The large number of stakeholders and the scope of recovery work required also led to cost inflation. Meanwhile, although the government was able to quickly restore basic services, it struggled under the pressure of the post-Tsunami demands and it is unclear to what extent it has strengthened its capacity for future planning, facilitation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up.
>
> (RADA Report, 2006: viii)

While lauding the government for such perceptive comments, such examples also suggest that the RADA report, although it bears the seal and approval of a government document has been authored or 'hijacked' to some extent by the donor agencies. It is highly unlikely that a report authored by the government of Sri Lanka, would refer to its performance as "unclear to what extent it has strengthened its capacity for future planning, facilitation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up."

The TEC report also provides examples of problem-solution writing, but its claims and perceptions demonstrate clear 'ownership.' It is the opinion of the authors based on the survey of 1000 tsunami-affected "claim-holders."

> Just as the tsunami itself was without precedent, so too was the speed, breadth and magnitude of international support for survivors in Sri Lanka. This abundance, even excess, of resources created a new experience for the international agencies engaged in the tsunami response. International nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) were able to obtain funds directly from the (first world) general public and, therefore, became less dependent on traditional (bilateral) institutional donors. Here, then, was an unprecedented opportunity to respond to this complex humanitarian emergency, without the usual debilitating resource constraints. For once, INGOs had the luxury of designing and implementing programmes as they wished, which, coupled with the learning from

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> Rwanda and elsewhere, provided an opportunity to demonstrate best practices in the humanitarian sector, thereby silencing critics of the international system. Thus, very early on in the crisis it became clear that the established humanitarian relief system was being tested in the crucible of the Indian Ocean Tsunami.
>
> (Parakrama, TEC Report 2006: 9)

This extract is a sample of problem-solution writing being argumentative, evaluative, questioning, perceptive and dramatic. While the promotional reports used more pathos than these reports, this extract shows an unusual blend of appeals of logos, pathos and ethos, not generally found in the non-promotional reports dealing with the consequences in the "crucible of the Indian Ocean Tsunami."

In addition to the problem-solution technique, these reports share the following characteristics.

Balanced Approach

An outstanding characteristic of the problem-solution reports is the balanced approach and neutral tone they adopt. This of course, lends credibility to their reporting as in the following example.

> Within the tsunami IDP group, affected communities in the east and, particularly, the north have experienced a slower pace of progress than those in the south and west of the country. This pattern is, again, partially related to practical constraints, many arising from the more difficult conflict context constraining delivery in the north and east, while stronger infrastructure and private sector support has favoured faster delivery in the south.
>
> (Grewal, UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery 2006: 2)

The balanced approach is also achieved through the use of hedging as in "a slower pace of progress," "partially related to," and "many arising from."

Overt Criticism

Despite the balanced approach or because of it, the problem-solution reports are also highly critical of the government's and donor agencies' handling of tsunami relief. The criticism is not veiled as in the promotional reports; it is direct and hard hitting. However, it is responsible criticism which highlights both the problem and the reasons or context and subsequently provides a solution. Of the three reports discussed in this section, the TEC report is the most overtly critical and direct as the statement in the Executive Summary under "Findings" says, "Overall results of the claim-holder survey in Sri Lanka show declining satisfaction with the tsunami response," and follows it with a Figure showing the results of the survey.

This 'no holds barred' approach is possibly due to two reasons: one is the strength of the report, that it is based on survey data, and is not impressionistic, and the other may be the

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strategy of the donor community in financing its own tsunami recovery report, independent of government reports.

Grounded Claims

While the promotional reports too, back their claims with statistics, the problem-solution reports have the additional advantage of making evaluative comments based on the consultative approach of a survey. Both the TEC report and the UN Special Envoy's report are based on consultations with stakeholders. Therefore, comments such as the following enhance the stature of the report and give credibility to the findings because the claims are grounded on factual evidence.

> By contrast, from the beginning, all former householders in the tsunami IDP group were eligible for housing assistance and by early 2006 the entire group had secured commitments to ensure that their homes were partially or fully rebuilt according to agreed minimum government standards. In addition, by early 2006 new government schemes were being rolled out to ensure that all tsunami IDPs who were previously landless would be given support to buy land and access housing assistance.
>
> (Gerwal, UN Special Envoy Report 2006: 12)

Moralistic Tone

One of the features of the problem-solution reports is the moralistic tone they adopt. This is part of the problem-solution mode, which requires identification of errors and recommendation of solutions. Therefore, while the promotional reports display missionary zeal, these reports are more akin to showing that they occupy the high moral ground by nature of the recommending tone.

The judgmental language is reinforced with the use of "should," "must," "require," and expressions such as "It is imperative that…" The following extract reflects the moralistic tone, using the clause "what is required."

> Gender-based violence is a serious concern throughout the region. The majority of programmes have adopted a 'gender neutral' or 'gender blind' policy, whereas what is required is specific targeting or affirmative action.
>
> (Parakrama, TEC Report 2006: 17)

New Discourse

The abundance of acronyms and compound nouns in the Tsunami Recovery Reports suggests that special language is used to discuss this special situation, leading to the assumption that it is emerging discourse of the genre of report writing for international purposes. The situation is unusual because the tsunami knew no boundaries in

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geographical terms, and its aftermath is somewhat similar in terms of Tsunami Recovery Reports for international consumption.

Acronyms

In addition to the internationally known acronyms such as ADB (Asian Development Bank) and HRBA (Human Rights Based Approaches) the tsunami relief and recovery efforts have spawned or given new life to another set of acronyms as listed below (from the TEC report).

Box 1: 'New' Acronyms in Tsunami Recovery Reports

CNO	Centre for National Operations
DSD	Divisional Secretary Division
GA	Government Agent
GN	Grama Niladhari
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
KPNDU	*Koralai Pattu* North Development Union
P-TOMS	Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure
TAFREN	Presidential Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation

Compound Nouns

In the formation of compound nouns, some nouns from other domains and contexts may have been transferred to create a different meaning in the context of tsunami recovery. Such a word is 'actor'. In the emerging discourse 'actor' seems to denote UNspeak, the language of Tsunami Recovery Reports, as shown in the following example.

> The Capacities Evaluation in Sri Lanka seeks to assess how the spectrum of international actors and their national partners fared in delivering goods and services, in enhancing the access of affected populations to the relief and recovery process, and in holding themselves accountable to claim-holders.
>
> (Parakrama, TEC Report 2006: 10)

Some of the 'new' nouns are "capacities evaluation," "international actors," "national partners," "affected populations," "relief and recovery process," "national capacities," "elite capture," "claim-holders," and "all stakeholders."

Other examples from the Tsunami Recovery Reports which suggest the emerging discourse are "capacity misrecognition," "conflict sensitivity," "breakout of expenditure," "individual interventions," "beneficiary groups," "beneficiary targets," "scaling up," "imperfect disaster response frameworks," "post-tsunami context," "tsunami IDPs," "conflict impacts," "building back better," and "lack of subsidiarity."

UNspeak

This study suggests that most of these new creations stem from the range of reports emerging from the United Nations Organization, leading to the term 'UNspeak.' This

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view is substantiated by professionals[2] involved in consultancies and report writing for the UN. However, Professor Parakrama, the main author of the TEC report says, "In the selection of "claim holder" over 'duty bearer,' we felt that "claim holder" represented the human rights aspect better." He also added that the terms 'enabling environment' and 'downward accountability' rather than 'bottom up accountability' were terms carefully chosen by his team to write the TEC report. The new terminology he believes is the impact of rights and stakeholder dialogue on report writing.

Pedagogical Implications

Reports have turned out to be the principal means of communication and documentation between the multiple "claim-holders" of tsunami recovery. It is the channel used by the government to account for the millions received for tsunami recovery, it is the channel used by the donors to record and account for the millions given, and it is the channel used by critics in search of accountability of tsunami funds. It is also the channel to showcase nobility on the part of the giver, and gratitude on the part of the government and donors who received unstinted aid in the wake of the tsunami. It is also the channel used by international organizations to examine the state of affairs of victims of the tsunami and conflict in Sri Lanka.

In light of the above, report writing earns its place in the curriculum of business communication courses. Furthermore, teachers and students need to be aware of at least two main kinds of report writing approaches in disaster recovery. Choice of approach and justification of choice would depend on the objective and audience of the report.

Business Communication: Audience

The Tsunami Recovery Reports analyzed in this study are written for the 'outsider.' In the context of tsunami recovery the outsider is the donor, the donor agency, the INGO, the NGO, the foreign government, the international media and other such forces who helped in the recovery or documented the disaster of Boxing Day 2004. The reports are for the outsider because it is the outsider (by and large) who provided the majority of funds and wherewithal for tsunami recovery. It is because of the generosity of the outsider that the reports are constructed as a means of stock taking and accountability.

As reports written for the outsider, the Tsunami Recovery Reports, including those written by the government of Sri Lanka, tabulate accounts using US $ figures and not Sri Lankan rupees. Since the aid was given in US $, it is logical for the accounts and documentation to follow suit, but it also reflects the acceptance that accountability is not for the citizens of Sri Lanka, it is for the outsider. The following extract from the TEC report narrates the evolution of the audience for the reports.

> However, with the increase in resources came an equivalent increase in profile and public visibility. The Western public wanted to know how their money was being spent. The media followed up with detailed stories from affected areas, including assessments on the three-month and six-month anniversaries. Agencies faced pressure to scale up

[2] Malathie Weerasooriya, Assistant Representative UNFPA, Professor Parakrama, Head, Department of English, University of Peradeniya, Dr. Tara de Mel, former Secretary, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka

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> immediately in order to include new sectors, geographical areas and adopt new
>
> administrative regimes so as to spend the additional money received…
>
> (Parakrama, TEC Report 2006: 9)

This confirms the choice of audience, "the Western public" for whom the reports were written.

From a teaching perspective, audience analysis would require a study of whose money is being accounted for and who is responsible for spending the money for what specific purpose. An analysis of the agenda of the report formulating agencies is also required because the style of writing would depend on whether they are including promotional aspects, adopting a prescriptive style or presenting accounts.

Business Communication: Channels

The choice of channel for tsunami related information is a crucial finding of this study. This finding is not confined to Tsunami Recovery Reports, but refers to the whole context of the tsunami and its aftermath.

For example, the tsunami warning system used on that fatal day in 2004 was not simply inappropriate but showed a cavalier attitude on the part of the senders. According to newspaper reports of late December 2004, a message was sent by e-mail to the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, informing the laboratory personnel that a tsunami might be heading towards Sri Lanka. This was followed by a telephone call, which was unanswered. An analysis of channel choice is a learning experience in this context. The day in question was Sunday, December 26. Sundays are holidays in most countries, and the day after Christmas is also a holiday in most former British colonies. To add to this, December 26 was a full moon day. Full moon days are holidays in Sri Lanka which observes Buddhist practice of following the lunar calendar. In such a situation, an e-mail to a university would not reach the recipient, particularly in the Third World where most people do not have home computers.

Another example of channel choice is revealing and more positive: the role of blogs in Sri Lanka. An undergraduate dissertation[3] on blogging in Sri Lanka highlights the role of journalism blogs in the telecommunication breakdown after the tsunami. The blog SEA-EAT (South East Asian Earthquake and Tsunami) published messages sent from affected areas, enabling bloggers to provide useful information.

The role of blogs and their contribution to tsunami recovery are not discussed in any of the Tsunami Recovery Reports, possibly reflecting an age bias in the reports.

Another aspect of channel choice is linked to audience choice of the report writers. The Tsunami Recovery Reports analyzed in this paper have not been translated into the other languages of Sri Lanka, Sinhalese, Tamil or Malay. In the words of the TEC report, "the fact that this document still remains unshared with the communities whose very needs it

[3] Undergraduate dissertation entitled 'Discourse in the Blogosphere – An Exploration of Blogging Communities.' University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2007.

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claims to present/analyse" (TEC Report, p. 82); the same can be said of the reports themselves. The claim-holders of tsunami recovery, that is, the majority in the coastal areas are marginalized in not being part of the audience, since their knowledge of English is not adequate to reading such documents.

From a teaching perspective, sharing of information, particularly among the disadvantaged is the duty of the report writer, and this right can be discussed with students in terms of content analysis, and the purpose of business communication.

Conclusion

Tsunami Recovery Reports have been used to clear the air, in that the major recipient of aid, the government of Sri Lanka has shown its willingness to be accountable and to be criticized in UNspeak in the international arena. But in the final analysis the ordinary "claim-holder," from the coastal areas of Sri Lanka has no access to the Tsunami Recovery Reports, and has no idea whether "bottom up accountability" or "downward accountability" shows more "beneficiary focus" enhancing "local and national capacity building" or whether s/he has appeared in the blogosphere. At the same time, if not for the Tsunami Recovery Reports, the community of donors, spanning the globe, would not be aware of crisis management at ground level, and how the millions were spent.

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Biography

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The Rhetoric of 9/11 and Federal Personnel Management Reform: An Analysis of Metaphor, Presidential Rhetoric, and Public Administration Policymaking

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The events of September 11, 2001 changed the context, priorities and goals of public sector management reform. One event that illustrates the impact of 9/11 on public sector management reform is the enactment of the personnel management provisions of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (HSA). This legislation introduced significant changes to personnel policy in one government agency, and the current study explores how presidential, post 9/11 rhetoric played a key role in its passage into law.

Public management reform in the federal government is generally a subject only attended to by managers and employees within the system, government agencies tasked with personnel matters (such as the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), for example), unions representing federal employees, and legislators whose constituent interests include those of federal workers. However, civil service reform in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), an agency created as a result of the HSA, was uncommon in that an issue that would normally have been isolated to those immediately affected by management reforms was instead thrust into the public realm. The key reason that this debate moved into the public realm was that President Bush, in campaigning for key Republican legislators in the 2002 mid-term elections, raised the issue of personnel management reforms as key to providing national security (Bush 2002a, 2002b, 2002c).

Business and technical communication researchers have previously investigated rhetorical resources deployed within public institutions to persuade constituent interests that a particular change or course of action was justified (e.g., Dayton, 2002; Graham & Lindeman, 2005; Harrison & Young, 2005). However, the DHS/HSA case represents a circumstance in which the American public became the audience for an issue that would normally have only been debated within the community of public sector management. 9/11 marked a change in the rhetorical situation in a way that Bitzer (1968) would say gave rise to a new "exigence" or "imperfection marked by urgency" that calls forth a rhetorical response (p. 63). As such, this case provides an important look at how localized issues are reframed for the public audience, a change that simultaneously invited the audience to consider specialized topics not normally in their frame of reference and attempted to persuade them that one course of action was preferable over another.

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Reform debates in federal personnel management predated those that occurred as part of DHS/HSA in 2002. Previous administrations had proposed broad changes in the civil service laws, but none had been enacted by the Congress. While the HSA contained many more issues than those concerning management reform, the personnel management provision was perhaps the most contentious of the proposed law, delaying final passage of the legislation until after the 2002 mid-term elections and resulting in a tough battle between federal employee unions and the Bush Administration for support on Capitol Hill (Brook & King, 2007). Ultimately, the legislation passed, and the management reforms were written into law on November 25, 2002.

In an analytic study of the DHS/HSA case, Brook and King (2007) explored why the legislation passed and what role 9/11 played in the outcome. Their analysis suggested that "national security" was a key rhetorical lever in the debate and was instructive in understanding why the legislation was successful: "the most powerful explanation for the outcome rests with the argument that the personnel management policy was created and made relevant by the events of 9/11 and the rhetoric of national security" (p. 405). The Bush administration and its supporters on Capitol Hill repeatedly cast the argument over personnel management flexibility as a matter of national security. Brook and King's (2007) analysis of arguments made by previous administrations, dating back to the Reagan Administration, found that large-scale personnel management reforms had been repeatedly proposed to Congress only to be consistently defeated or ignored. By examining all published arguments made for and against personnel management reforms, both before and after 9/11, "national security" was found to be the only argument unique to the debate that resulted in the reforms actually passing into law.

The current paper moves beyond the Brook & King's study to investigate the national security argument in HSA/DHS case in more detail, drawing on Ivie's (1987) method of metaphorical analysis. By examining the rhetorical force of "national security" in arguments from both sides of the debate, this study further explores the communication that led to the most sweeping civil service reform since 1978. This analysis provides insight into the rhetorical resources brought to bear in a public argument for an audience that likely had little previous knowledge or interest in the topic of the debate.

The paper begins by providing background of the case, followed by an overview of the literature on presidential rhetoric and influence, and subsequently describes the materials and methods undertaken in the analysis. Results demonstrate how the framing of three issues—strategy, protection, and power—was key in the rhetorical force of the arguments for the public audience. Each side in the debate drew on different metaphors in their arguments, which are analyzed against the context of a post 9/11 America. This study suggests why some metaphors were more persuasive than others and concludes with recommendations for future research.

Background: The Homeland Security Act

The HSA created the DHS by combining 22 existing agencies and 170,000 federal employees into a new cabinet-level department—the largest and most complex

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reorganization of the federal government since the creation of the Department of Defense nearly six decades earlier. The legislation included authority for DHS to initiate new approaches to personnel management outside many of the normal rules of the federal civil service. This new personnel management authority was potentially the broadest and most significant change in civil service law since the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978 (Brook and King, 2007).

Most of the key issues in the debates over reform were well-traveled terrain for both sides. Those in favor of reforms had long argued for the need to more strategically manage human capital. Specifically, reformers were interested in managers having the flexibility to move personnel where needed to respond to agency needs, a pay system that was based on performance, better systems for recruiting and retaining employees, and adjustments in labor relations rules to enable the various flexibilities being proposed (James, 2002; Shiplett, 2001; United States GAO, 2001; United States GAO, 2002). Those against the reforms primarily argued that most, if not all the flexibilities were available under the current system. Further, opponents argued that additional flexibilities would deny federal employees their rights to collective bargaining, represented a regression back to an older system where favoritism substituted for a civil service system based on merit principles, and gave the Administration unprecedented control over employees without the checks and balances provided by union representation (Harnage 2000, 2001; Kelly, 2002; Schwemle, 2002).

However, the introduction of "national security" as a reason for reform was unique to the HSA/DHS legislation. Because this new argument was based on national concerns rather than those localized at the federal management level, the debate was thrust into the public realm. Once there, the debate centered around presidential rhetoric, affected a national election, and brought about unprecedented involvement of the general public in the federal management reform controversy.

Presidential Rhetoric and Influence

By many accounts, the contentious battle over the personnel management reforms was over as soon as the returns came in on election night, 2002. Colleen Kelly, President of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) and a key spokesperson against the reforms, noted the elections as pivotal to passing the legislation: "In the end it went through because of the mid-term elections . . . I knew that night what was going to happen . . . within two weeks they acted on the legislation" (Brook and King, 2007, p. 403). While there were a few key mid-term winners who tipped the balance in the Senate, there was also a general feeling that the election results signaled a powerful force in public support for legislation in support of national security. In particular, Max Cleland, the democratic incumbent in Georgia, was a key senator to lose his seat. One irony in his defeat was that Cleland—a triple amputee, decorated Vietnam veteran—was portrayed in Republican campaign ads as anti-national security because of his alignment with the Unions on the personnel issue (Lowery, 2004). John Gartland, director of legislative affairs at OPM, noted that after Max Cleland was defeated, "it sent a message back here. A bunch of other Democrats and Republicans, they quickly got along, and they passed

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that bill" (Brook and King, 2007, p. 403). Another researcher, James Lewis of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, also argued that the national security argument held tremendous power: "Neither party is going to want to get caught with the other one saying, 'Look, they're obstructing homeland security.' That's where they're not going to be as willing to question or criticize as much as they would otherwise" (Williams and Nather, 2002, p. 1642).

It is well understood that members of congress are consistently concerned with reelection, and Kernell (1997) argues that they are more likely to support a popular president who uses the bully pulpit to advocate policy positions, as long as it is clear that citizens support the presidential positions. Therefore, some argue that going public with policy positions can be an effective way for a president to gain compliance from those legislators who oppose his positions. Speechmaking and campaigning are some ways that presidents take arguments to the public, and some research has demonstrated that presidential speech making has a positive relationship to legislative success at the macro level (Barrett, 2004; Canes-Wrone 2001; Kernell, 1997).

Other research, however, suggests otherwise. For example, Powell and Schloyer (2003) argued that "there is little if any presidential influence gained by implicit electoral threats delivered through public appeals," (p. 133). Other researchers have suggested that presidential appeals also have little effect on the public. For example, Edwards (2003) has argued that "presidents usually fail in their efforts to move the public to support them and their policies," and he calls for more studies that focus directly on the effect of presidential leadership on opinion. One way of examining these effects is through rhetorical criticism and analysis (p. 26).

Language philosopher and rhetorician Kenneth Burke (1950) described the function of rhetoric as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (p. 41). To study the effects of presidential rhetoric, then, is to examine the discourse a president uses in his attempt at influencing attitudes and inducing particular actions. Political science and public policy researchers have argued elsewhere that policy change depends on a politician's skill in framing issues in particular ways to advance their position on an issue (Abolafia, 2004; Kingdon, 1984; Myers, 2000). Other scholars go even further, suggesting that language can effectively create rather than simply reflect reality. For example, noted presidential rhetorician David Zarefsky (2004) argues that presidential rhetoric may suggest "possibilities and . . . issue invitations" (p. 610) to audiences for seeing the rhetor's position as aligned with their own interests. These invitations, through language, influence how people view a situation: "Because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication, the president, by defining a situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public" (p. 611).

This study examines the Bush administration's communication that linked personnel management reform with national security, and seeks to understand why those language choices may have been effective in persuading audiences of his position in a post-9/11 world.

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While the president wields particular influence over his audiences, there are opposing forces that also emerge. In this case, the public employee unions were a strong, vocal counterpoint to the administration's arguments in favor of personnel management reforms. Unlike an individual or even a citizen-led group opposition, these unions have a history of political power and influence in government. In the case of personnel management reforms, the unions also had a history of success in defeating similar legislation in the past; this history meant that they could draw on arguments that had a track record for killing management reforms. Because the current study focused on how this legislation passed when it had failed every time before, it was important to examine both the administration's arguments in favor of the reforms as well as the union's arguments against the reforms.

One useful way to examine rhetorical force is through the examination of metaphors. Particularly in political discourse, the use of language and metaphor can influence the receivers of the message, possibly influencing how people vote or adopt a position on a particular issue. George Lakoff (2002) has written about the relationship between metaphor and politics, arguing that metaphors affect unconscious reasoning and inference making. This paper argues that underlying metaphors, within the arguments from reform advocates and opponents, played a role in shaping public opinion, thus clearing the way for reform legislation that had repeatedly failed prior to 9/11.

Materials

To examine the arguments for personnel management reform in the post 9/11 period, the author and two graduate students consulted materials in the public record that illustrated both sides of the debate. The search probed research databases such as Lexis Nexis, Proquest, JSTOR, and the Homeland Security Digital Library, resulting in a variety of materials including newspapers, scholarly reports, speech transcripts, congressional hearings, and other public accounts. In all, the authors consulted 85 different sources, containing nearly 200 quotes that contained direct references to the debate. The authors reviewed all the collected quotes, jointly categorizing them into 14 initial themes: Strategic Human Capital Management; Accountability; Efficiencies; Broad-banding / Paybanding; Performance Based Pay / Performance Measures; Modernization; Recruitment/Retention; Public Perception; Flexibility; Union Busting; Unions Good for government; Whistle-blower protections; Partisianship Issues; and National Security. Building on Brook and King (2007), the authors selected only those quotes related to National Security for further analysis. Of the 200 original quotes, 37 contained references directly to National Security. Those 37 quotes provided the basis for the current study.

The study also included data gathered in qualitative interviews with key participants in the debate, including members of the Bush Administration, legislators, and public union representatives. Although the interview data was consulted to gain general background into the debate, the actual data set for the study was limited to only those arguments that could be directly attributable to a specific source and were available in the public record. By limiting the data to directly attributed material, there was a reduced risk of imposing

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third-party interpretation of specific arguments. Instead, the data only included the terms of the argument as made by the original author/speaker/organization. In many cases, the evidence for arguments was in the form of direct quotations taken from hearings, speeches, press briefings, or other public events. In other cases, the data were drawn from sources such as "talking points" representing the official position of a participant in the debate, such as the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) union. In all cases, only those arguments in the public record counted as data for the study. There is a particular utility in restricting the data to only those arguments made publicly; namely, such arguments would most likely be those which were circulated in the public sphere. It was important to view the debate as the public viewed it in order to examine the potential effects of the arguments on those audiences.

Method

Once the quotes on National Security were isolated for analysis, the quoted statements were categorized as either for or against personnel management reforms. Then, the statements were closely analyzed using Ivie's (1987) rhetorical method for metaphorical criticism.

Metaphoric analysis

One effective approach for analyzing arguments and their potential effect is to examine the metaphors embedded within them. Far from being mere ornament, metaphors structure how people think in that they invite audiences to view persons, places and situations in particular ways (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). Robert L. Ivie (1987), in his article "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War 'Idealists," provides a useful approach for examining the persuasive and rhetorical effect of metaphors. According to Ivie, metaphor provides a key for understanding rhetorical invention, whereby an image conveyed in an argument "produces an … interpretation of reality, with which the intended audience is invited to identify" (p. 351). Through metaphor analysis, we can gain insights into how arguments may invoke particular audience responses and, consequently, we can better understand some of the persuasive characteristics that may have impacted the successful outcome of the legislation.

Using Ivie's (1987) method, the metaphors were identified and then grouped into themes or "metaphorical concepts" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1981, pp. 289-292). To improve reliability, the author and two graduate students had to reach full agreement about the match between specific quotes the metaphorical concept to which they were assigned in order to count as data for the final analysis.

Next, each metaphor was examined within each theme to identify patterns of usage. To increase validity of the findings, this study drew from Philipsen's (1989) two principles of validity in his "objectivist approach" to investigations of ethnographic communicative practices: (1) "To the degree the investigator's claims about the practices studied are evidenced in the behavior of the interlocutors studied, those claims can be given

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credence" and (2) "To the degree the investigator's claims about the practices studied are congruent across multiple means of observation and analysis, those claims can be given credence" (p. 252). While this study focuses only on direct quotations rather than other kinds of communicative behaviors, these principles illustrate the commitment to the discourse of the interlocutors as the means of evidence, with multiple examples providing credibility for the claims offered in the analysis.

Finally, the metaphors of the proponents and opponents were compared to examine differences and gain insight into which arguments may have resonated with audiences. In this part of the analysis, key factors were considered in assessing the rhetorical force of particular metaphors; namely, the rhetorical situation, the unique circumstances following 9/11, and the culture of fear (see Faredi, 2007) that was present in America at the time of this legislation. Finally, in some cases, the interview data with key government officials offered additional insights to supplement the rhetorical claims in this paper.

Findings

Upon the review of the data, a pattern emerged as to how both sides in the controversy were constructed in the arguments. Although there were many quotes from different spokespersons on each side, the collective perspectives gave rise to what are termed as two representative *agents* for each side, one representing reform advocates and one representing reform opponents. The reform advocate agent, for example, included perspectives expressed by President George W. Bush and his administration, various representatives of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and others who argued for an overhaul of the existing personnel management system. On the other side, the reform opponent agent included perspectives expressed by union leaders, legislators who supported the union position and others who opposed the sweeping reform measures being proposed by the Bush Administration. The multiple perspectives, within each side of the debate, shared similarities such that a unified agent for that perspective emerged as the embodiment of a position either for or against personnel management reform. The analysis revealed two distinct agents that we label as follows: The Administration Agent (the advocates of reform) and the Union Agent (the opponents of reform).

The Administration Agent (hereafter referred to as "Administration") is the proponent for civil service reform. This agent is constructed as one who expressed concern with national security and the protection of the American people against an external foe. By establishing the objects of its protection—the American people—the Administration assumes and establishes the credibility and authority to act and speak on their behalf.

The Union Agent (hereafter referred to as "Union") is the opponent of sweeping civil service reform.[1] This agent is constructed as one who is concerned with the protection of

[1] It is important to note that some of those who comprise the Union agent are in favor of some personnel management reforms in federal government; however, collectively, we characterize this agent as "reform opponents" because they oppose the sweeping reforms being proposed by the Bush administration, specifically those reforms that would restrict union power and union representation.

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federal workers against an internal foe, one who would compromise workers' rights and freedoms in service to fighting a war. By establishing the objects of its protection—primarily unionized federal workers affected by the proposed changes—the Union assumes and establishes the credibility and authority to act on their behalf.

The utility of collapsing each side's views into a representative agent is that it provides a collective representation of the primary opposing arguments. While the nuances and differences between members on the same side are not necessarily unimportant, the audiences of this debate as a whole likely conceived of the arguments in broader terms. It is against that backdrop of the debate, broadly conceived, that this study directs its focus. Given the establishment of these two agents, the next section focuses on the analysis of metaphors and examines the rhetorical force of the national security argument.

Metaphor Analysis

Within our corpus of data, several metaphoric themes emerged among the arguments presented. Those metaphors were evident in three primary issues relevant to this debate: strategy, protection, and power. Within each of these key issues, there were metaphoric references that illustrated the perspectives of the two competing agents; a careful comparison provided insights into the potential impact on the audiences of the arguments. First, the issue of "strategy" emerged as a key concept; that is, how each side characterized its efforts toward an ultimate goal. Second, the issue of "protection" emerged in which each side identified both the method for and the object of its protection. Third, the issue of "power" emerged; that is, how each side expressed and conceptualized its power relative to each other and national security. These three issues—strategy, protection, and power—were arguably important to Americans in the post-9/11 world. Furthermore, each side in the debate addressed these issues, and a comparison of their differences was useful in assessing the effectiveness of the arguments.

Throughout the following analysis, italics are used to highlight particular words or phrases that were important in the interpretation of the data. Therefore, all use of italics should be considered added emphasis rather than the original quoted authors' unless otherwise noted.

Strategy.

A strategy, understood as a plan for successful action, implies intent on the part of the entity engaging in it; however, strategies are often implicitly rather than explicitly stated. Within the corpus of data, each agent exhibited its own strategy, underlain with metaphors that supported its own and refuted the other's strategic intentions. How these strategic intentions are expressed, and the principles they illustrate, can provide insight into responses by audiences—that is, which strategies the audience may judge as rational and in their best interest. So, it is important to look at both the strategies that were expressed by each agent in the controversy, as well as the metaphors they drew upon to convey their strategic perspectives and rationales.

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The Administration presents their strategy as one that requires them to have more control over federal personnel in order to provide national security and protect America. For example, President Bush (2002a) argued that he needed the freedom "*to put the right people* at the *right place* at the *right time* to protect the American people." The metaphor of physical placement—to "put" federal workers in particular places at particular times—is rationalized as a strategy to protect America, much like one would move a Bishop or Knight in a chess game to protect the King. This physical placement metaphor was also picked up by the news media. In one summary of the issues, an article in the *Washington Post* noted, "The White House wants to retain the ability to *remove* some employees from unions for national security reasons," and "Bush wants the ability to *move* workers from one part of the department to another to meet rapidly changing needs (Miller and Eilperin, 2002b). Then DHS Secretary Tom Ridge argued that "the legislation proposed by the Administration provides that when the Department is established, employees represented by unions will continue to be represented because their bargaining units *will move* with them" (McCallion, 2003, p. 2). This metaphor of physical placement suggests that the Administration requires a particularly high degree of power and control over personnel, but that degree of power is presented as rational and justified in light of national security. To the extent that the audience is concerned about national security, then they are invited to see the Administration strategy—in this case, its need for power over personnel—as one that is consistent with that concern.

The Union critiqued the Administration's strategy in several ways. First, the Union asserted that the Administration's strategy was disingenuous. The Administration argued for the need to bypass union protections in order to place, move, or remove federal personnel where they were needed for national security purposes. The Union asserted that the Administration was instead anti-union, a claim they argued using metaphors of destruction and elimination. For example, John Gage, current AFGE president, questioned the connection drawn between union rights—including the right to control where personnel are placed—and national security; In a *Washington Post* editorial, Gage was quoted as asserting that such claims were "disingenuous." The editorial went on to echo some of Gage's concerns, noting, "It would be nice to believe the administration's fervent denials of a plot to *destroy* the mostly Democratic unions. But before we do, we'd like to see some clearer arguments from the administration about what the *elimination* of union bargaining has to do with either the nation's safety or civil service performance" (Civil service reform, p. A20). In another example from AFGE (2001a) *Talking Points*, the Union asserted that the Administration's strategy represented "longstanding efforts to *bust* federal employee unions." Former AFGE president Bobby Harnage also critiqued the Administration's strategy using similar metaphors: "*Destroying* the rights of federal employees will, in turn, *destroy* any attempt to provide skilled, well-trained, professional employees to guard our nation and its citizens" (McCallion, 2003). The Union asserted that the Administration was destroying the rights of the workers and, thus, positioned the Administration's strategy as negative and destructive. These examples illustrate the Union's perspective that the Administration strategy will destroy and eliminate the rights of workers, a move that will harm national security.

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In addition to arguing that the Union position helps rather than hinders national security, the Union also argued that the Administration's claims about national security interests were a tactic to gain compliance for controversial personnel reforms. The Union charged the Administration with premeditation and drew on a metaphor of perseverance in arguing this claim. For example, Rhode Island Senator Chaffee, a Republican who sided with the Union in the controversy, stated, "The President and his allies knew exactly what they were doing in *holding out* on this issue" (Firestone and Bumiller, 2002, p. A1). The writers who quoted Chaffee went on to report on the perspectives of reform opponents, noting that "Many members of Congress from both parties now say that the Administration was *politically clever* in inserting the personnel requirements, foreseeing an opposition from the Democrats and an opportunity to defeat them in the face of national security" (Firestone and Bumiller, 2002, p. A1). To "hold out" on an issue and to be "politically clever" implies conscious intent; as a critique of the Administration's strategy, it illustrates the Union argument that the Administration was consciously strategic in their use of the national security argument and "knew exactly what they were doing."

Implied within their critique of the Administration's strategy, however, is the Union's own strategy to preserve workers' rights to organize, to bargain, and to be heard. Underlying this strategic perspective is a battle metaphor which suggests that federal workers are already engaged in the war on terror. For example, Harnage said that the "*fight* against terrorism, in which federal employees have always been on the *front lines of the homeland*, is about preserving our freedoms—including our right to organize—not destroying them" (Barr, 2003). Colleen Kelly, president of the NTEU, also asserted that it is important to have "*frontline* employees with a real voice in how the work gets done" (Barr, 2002b). In these examples, the Union drew upon a metaphor that suggests that employees are already in a position to support national security, and this metaphoric depiction challenges the physical placement needs espoused by the Administration.

So, here we have two strategies, from each side in the debate, both of which are supported by potentially powerful metaphors. Each side presents their strategy as right, just, and in service to what is critical and important. However, there are some key differences between the two positions that could potentially affect audience response. One key difference is the object of protection. In the case of the Administration, the focus of protection is the "American people." In the case of the Union, the primary focus of protection is a subset of the American people, the federal workers. So, while the Administration expressed a need to physically place the federal worker, the power they seek is expressed as a means to protect the larger group of Americans; that is, *all* Americans. The Union uses powerful metaphors to describe the problems with that power—destruction of the Union and the rights it affords workers, challenges of disingenuousness, and powerful depictions of federal workers as already on the frontline of the national security battle—but ultimately their strategy is directed at a subset of Americans. Thus, the various audiences being addressed may see their interests being more directly served by the Administration's strategy than by the Union strategy. To put it another way, in a post-9/11 world, audiences might simply be more moved to accept various strategies in service to their own safety versus the protection of workers' rights.

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Similarly, an audience might not be moved by critiques of the Administration's strategy, even if the critiques were credible, if they did not view the Union's purported objective as more important than the Administration's purported objective.

The issue of protection—that is, defining the objects of protection and who needs what kind of power to ensure it—is a critical issue in this debate. The next section explores this issue in more detail.

Protection.

9/11 generated a great deal of fear in the American public, an emotional preoccupation that was clearly an issue for HSA and the personnel management reforms contained within it. A critical question in this debate was who or what needed to be protected. The Administration expressed its intention, need, and ability to protect the average American citizen. The Union expressed its intention, need, and ability to protect the federal worker.

It is interesting to explore the ways that the Administration refers to the object of its protection. For example, the Administration consistently made references to "the American people," (Bush, 2000b, 2000c; Firestone, 2002; Friel, 2002; Miller and Eilperin, 2002a), a collective and inclusive reference that applies to everyone. Additionally, there were numerous references to "homeland" (e.g., Falkenrath, 2005; Friel, 2002; Mitchell, 2002), including but not limited to references to the Department of Homeland Security. For example, Bush noted in a speech, "We're doing everything we can to protect the *homeland* against an enemy that hates us," (Friel, 2002). Although there are many definitions of the term "home," as a metaphor it may invoke its more common connotation of the physical and personal home in which one lives. As an object of the Administration's protection, "homeland" simultaneously draws upon both the personal and national senses of that term; nonetheless, the personal connection invites the audience to view the object as valuable, for what is more valuable than one's home and its inhabitants? Another reference to the object of protection is "you" (Bush, 2002b, 2002c; Nakashima and Miller, 2002), as expressed, for example, in a Bush speech in which he asserts the "Department [of Homeland Security]. . . is being created to secure *you*" (Bush 2002c). In this case, he is not referring literally to an individual, but rather is drawing on "you" as a metaphor in addressing a collective. In doing so, however, he establishes a connection that invites the audience to identify with the object of protection as he describes it; it is not an abstract entity, but rather *you* who are the object of concern.

The Union, in contrast to the Administration, depicts the object of protection as primarily the federal worker and only secondarily the American public (e.g., Ballard, 2002; Barr 2002b; Friel, 2002; Harnage, 2001, 2002; McCallion, 2003; AFGE 2001a, 2001b). Consider these comments from Harnage, for example: "When *public employees*' rights and protections are compromised, so too is the safety and security of *the public they serve*. . . . Homeland security requires a *secure work force*. . . . Destroying the rights of *federal employees* will, in turn, destroy any attempt to provide *skilled, well-trained, professional employees* to guard *our nation and its citizens*" (McCallion, 2003). In this example, the federal employees are foregrounded as needing protection so that they, in

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turn, can protect the public. The protection they need draws upon the concept of security, but primarily in the sense of the federal employee's own personal security rather than the security of the homeland per se. The reference to personal security involves protecting (rather than destroying) their rights as workers. Once the Union ensures protection for workers' rights, only then will those employees be able to "guard our nation" and all who comprise it.

In addition to foregrounding federal workers as the primary object of protection, the Union also depicts the public—the secondary object of protection—differently than does the Administration. For example, in the Harnage quote above, he referred to "the public" and "our nation and its citizens." As compared with the "American people," the reference to "the public" is abstract and does not draw upon the same connection with the audience. Additionally, this reference to "the public" is couched within a reference to the primary object, the federal employee, in that it is not simply the public, but rather "the public *they serve*." Again, then, the federal employee is still prevalent and connected to concerns involving the larger populace. The second term of reference, "our nation and its citizens," is also somewhat abstract compared with references by the Administration. While "*our* nation" creates some personal connection, the reference to "its citizens" reintroduces an abstract tone. In contrast to the directness of the term "you" as used by the Administration, "our nation and its citizens" asks the audience to place themselves within the third person reference rather than as a direct respondent of the message.

In speculating the persuasive effect of how each side in the debate dealt with the key issue of protection, it is important to closely examine how each side depicted the *objects* of that protection. The Administration cast a wide net that encompassed all the American people, while the Union expressed their primary concern as protecting federal employees, a move that they presented as a necessary first step to protecting the public. Additionally, the Administration drew upon metaphors and concepts that emphasized connection, whereas the Union drew upon concepts that were more abstract. The audience, therefore, may have been drawn to the Administration argument because they were invited to see themselves and their interests as being served more directly.

Power

Each agent in the controversy expressed an intention, need and ability to offer protection for its respective objects of primary concern. The ability to protect, however, necessitates that the agent possess the power to carry out the actions they see as necessary to provide that protection. Both agents in this debate expressed conceptions of its respective power, but each did so in different ways.

One key difference was in how they each portrayed the holder of power. In the case of the Administration, such holders were primarily emphasized as individuals or second person references to groups of people. For example, the Administration argued that "a time of war is the wrong time to weaken *the president's* ability to protect the American people" (Miller and Eilperin, 2002a, p. A01), and "I don't think you'll ever be able to say that you've done all you can do to enhance security of this country if you don't give *a*

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new secretary . . . flexibility" (Nakashima and Miller, 2002, p. 15). In numerous other instances, Bush relied on the use of personal pronouns: "*I* need to have the ability to put the right people at the right place at the right time" (Friel, 2002), "*I* would have the capacity . . . to suspend those rules" (Bush, 2002c), and "*I* need the flexibility to be able to look at the American people and say *we're* doing everything *we* can to protect the homeland against an enemy that hates us," (Friel, 2002). In all these cases, the holder of power is an identifiable entity, one who can be held accountable—at least through identification—for the power and subsequent actions the agent takes. The Union, however, portrays the holder of power primarily as a system or abstract collectivities. For example, "the *merit system*" is held up as an entity which can ensure "protection for whistleblowers who alert Congress and the public to fraud, abuse, mismanagement, and *threats to national security*" (AFGE, 2001a). In other examples, systemic collectivities are emphasized as the holders of power: "*Federal employee unions* have formally represented the vast majority of the federal workforce for forty years. *Union membership* has never been inconsistent with national security" (AFGE, 2001b), and "[one of] the most important things needed to improve homeland security [is] *frontline employees* with a real voice in how the work gets done" (Barr. 2002b, p. B02). In these examples, the holders of power are union leadership and union membership, systemic collectives that are not as easily identifiable and, thus, do not carry the same perception or degree of direct accountability. From the perspective of the audience, it is plausible that the Administration's call for more power, in service to protecting the American people against threats to national security, was persuasive because of the direct relationship being drawn between the threat and who, specifically, was taking action to combat that threat. In the case of the Union, their portrayal of the entity that holds the power added another level of abstraction. As we saw previously, the first level of abstraction was that the object of protection was primarily the federal worker, a subset of the American people. Now, the second layer of abstraction is introduced: the holder of power portrayed by the Union is a system or collective that is taking responsibility for providing national security—a characterization that introduces a diffused entity and, therefore, only indirect accountability.

In addition to differences between depictions of the holders of power, each side also dealt differently with how it characterized its actions on behalf of national security. The Administration drew on action metaphors to describe and rationalize their need for power. For example, the Administration argued for personnel management changes so that it could "*create* a modern, flexible, and responsive program" (Bush administration analysis, 2002), "*put* the right people at the right place" (Bush, 2002b), and "*run* this department" (Friel, 2002). The Administration also repeatedly linked its actions directly to the needs of national security or the American people. Consider these examples: "I would *have the capacity*, for the *sake of national security*, to *suspend* collective bargaining rules" (Bush, 2002c), and to "*retain the ability to remove* some employees from unions for *national security reasons*" (Miller and Eilperin, 2002b, p. A08), and finally "I will *not accept* a lousy bill that makes it impossible for the president . . . *to do what the American people expect*, and that's to *protect the homeland*" (Firestone, 2002, p. A21). In all of these examples, the Administration portrays its efforts in active terms,

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often linking those actions directly to the protection of the American people and the needs of national security.

The Union also describes its actions drawing on active verbs, but often in service to the federal employee or the union rather than the American people. Additionally, when national security is addressed, it is often done so secondarily. For example, AFGE talking points argued, "Federal employee unions have *formally represented* the vast majority of the federal workforce for forty years. Union membership has never *been inconsistent with national security*." (AFGE, 2001b). In this case, the act of formal representation is an active move, but it is taken on behalf of the federal workforce. Additionally, the link provided between the actions of the federal workforce and ensuring national security is more passive than active. That is, rather than characterizing the federal employees as directly impacting national security, in this instance their actions are such that they are not "inconsistent" with efforts to ensure national security. This lack of direct connection between actions and national security concerns is evident in this example as well: "Federal employee unions have *helped* to keep the *homeland secure*" (AFGE, 2001b). While "help" is an action, it is a much weaker action when compared with the Administration's efforts to "create" and "run" a department or "do what the American people expect" in service to national security. Importantly, there are instances in which the Union describes stronger actions. For example, consider the connotations of the metaphor "stand up" in this instance: "No one who *stands up* for the rights of collective bargaining should have their patriotism questioned" (Barr, 2002a). However, here again, the strong action is associated not directly with national security, but rather with a worker's right to collective bargaining. The issue of collective bargaining is presented here as separate from one's commitment to the nation. Though such a distinction may be credible, the power of the Union agent and its associated actions is still more directed toward protecting the federal employee than national security or the American people.

Finally, in addition to the difference between the Administration's relatively strong actions and the Union's relatively weak or potentially self-serving actions, each critiqued the other in ways that served to bolster these initial characterizations. Bush, for example, argued that those who opposed management reforms wanted legislation that "*strips* me of authority" (Friel, 2002), and wanted him "to *forfeit* power" (Bush, 2002c). Bush also argued that "A time of war is the wrong time to *weaken* the president's ability to protect the American people," and that he wouldn't accept legislation that "that *limits or weakens* the president's well-established authorities" (Miller and Eilperin, 2002a, p. A01). These critiques by the Administration do two things: first, they cast the opposition as making unreasonable demands that would compromise national security, and second, they reestablish the Administration's strong power position. By drawing on metaphors of removal, forfeiture, and weakness as so clearly damaging to the power necessary to protect the nation, the Administration effectively bolsters its own argument that it needs the power it seeks and should rightly retain the power it already possesses.

The Union also offered its own critiques of the Administration's actions. Their harshest criticisms, as defenses against the power sought by the Administration, actually served to reestablish Administration authority, even as the Union was fighting against it. For

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example, the Union argued that "We see the administration's use of 'flexibility' as a code word for *denial of due process* to federal employees" (Lunney, 2002), and that "merely because an employee performs work related to homeland security should not automatically mean that his union membership should be *outlawed*" (AFGE 2001a). In each of these cases, the Union implicitly acknowledges the power of the Administration to, in one case, "deny" due process, and in another case, to "outlaw" union membership. The empirical reality of these executive powers aside, the discourse directs the attention back to the primary power holder—the power holder who has repeatedly linked its actions with concerns about national security and the protection of the American people—as, in fact, already possessing some of the very power it seeks. In the old self-help mode of "acting as if" one *is* something as a route to actually becoming it, the Union critique in this instance actually serves to bolster the Administration argument and its need for (continued) power.

Conclusion

Why did large-scale civil service reform get enacted in 2002 when past attempts had failed? This analysis provides insight to the outcome given the context of a post-9/11 environment. A significant and controversial public management reform was adopted because it became associated with broader concerns of the American public. The analysis of how each side presented its perspective on strategy, protection, and power suggests both the rhetorical force and persuasive appeal of the arguments linking public management reform to an issue of national concern. The Administration emphasized deliberate, accountable actions that they needed to take to protect the American people against a threat to national security. The Union mounted a defense against the Administration's arguments, emphasizing the need to protect the federal worker as a necessary prerequisite to any ability to provide true security for the nation. While each side presented strong metaphors to underscore their positions, ultimately the debate centered on the needs of the "American people" vs. the needs of the "federal worker."

In the post-9/11 environment, audiences likely identified more directly with the Administration's arguments than the Union's arguments. Arguments that had existed in personnel management debates prior to 9/11 took on new rhetorical force against the backdrop of national security. New arguments related to national security were unique to the debate and appear as the most influential, evidenced by the reforms passing into law. Additionally, the characterizations of the agents in the controversy were also rhetorically significant for audiences of this debate. Given the new rhetorical landscape, audiences were likely more persuaded by agents who exhibited strong, decisive, almost paternal action in the face of known and unknown threats to the "homeland." Conversely, the Union's arguments for worker protections, systemic remedies for problems, and solutions that depended on collective over individual action were not as effective as they had been in the past. Quite simply, the events of 9/11 changed the criteria by which the various positions in the personnel management debate were judged. Additionally, the new rhetorical situation provided the opportunity for new rhetorical resources to be deployed in a conflict over federal personnel management reforms, a fight comprised of arguments that had remained largely unchanged over numerous presidential administrations. As

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Bitzer (1968) argues, it is the rhetorical situation "which calls the discourse into existence" and further allows the "creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (pp. 60-61). Given this new rhetorical situation, the force of the Administration's arguments was likely a factor in influencing those elected in a national election, which paved the way to achieving new personnel management authority as part of the HSA.

This case illustrates the utility and importance of rhetorical criticism in exploring how a previously localized argument changes and gains new traction when brought to a broader, less specialized audience. For business and technical communicators, this case has implications for understanding the role of communication in organizations when the audience broadens beyond those immediately affected by a proposed organizational or policy change. This case, in particular, demonstrates the need for rhetorical criticism in understanding the various ways communication can affect public policy and influence public opinion. Carolyn Rude (2004), for example, points out the importance of civic knowledge for technical communication students and practitioners who can "contribute their knowledge of rhetorical situations, audiences, genres, media and language to the tasks that engage citizens in debate on policy" (p. 271), and this case adds to scholarship that seeks to understand the connections between communication and the public sphere. Additionally, however, this case also alerts business and technical communicators how the rhetorical force of a previously successful argument can change in light of a new rhetorical situation.

Whereas this study provides a careful examination of rhetorical resources deployed in the DHS/HSA fight over personnel reforms, future research should more closely investigate the details of the post 9/11 rhetorical situation that gave rise to a new reception of arguments. Additionally, while the DHS/HSA case is illustrative, future research should investigate other personnel reform attempts, post 9/11, to investigate the differences or similarities to rhetorical resources employed. For example, the National Security Personnel System, with many of the same provisions and changes that appeared as part of the personnel system in DHS, became law only a year following the DHS passage. Additional investigation into the arguments for that legislation would help inform the conclusions derived in the current study.

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Collaborative Crisis Communication in Rural Settings: A Public Information Case Study

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Abstract

As a result of successful resource collaboration, the first ever joint-press release between four Southern Illinois public health departments was published in a preventative measure to control a possible mumps outbreak. Public information officers, nurses and emergency response coordinators worked collaboratively to gather information and distribute it to the public to control misinformation, provide education and inform the public of the Illinois mumps condition. The purpose of the presentation is to educate agencies and organizations on the importance of collaborative communication and joint information sharing in rural emergency planning.

Introduction

In early April of 2006, a mumps outbreak affected rural Southern Illinois. Due to effective planning and training related to crisis communication, local health departments were able to successfully respond and provide information to local residents, organizations and officials. The response consisted of a joint news release to a fourteen county area across Southern Illinois; the first such news release in the history of the Illinois Region 5B Public Information Officer (PIO) Workgroup.

The Illinois Region 5B PIO Workgroup consists of representatives from Egyptian Public and Mental Health Department (covering Saline, Gallatin and White counties), Franklin-Williamson Bi-County Health Department (covering Franklin and Williamson counties), Perry County Health Department, Jackson County Health Department, and Southern Seven County Health Department (covering Hardin, Pope, Johnson, Pulaski, Alexander, Massac and Union counties). In total, the PIO Workgroup covers the fourteen southernmost counties in Illinois, forming a link between Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky and Indiana. A map of the region by county is provided as Figure 1.

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Figure 1: Map of Southern Illinois by County (Maps of World, 2007)

In general, the publics for the workgroup are very similar in nature. These are rural counties, with limited human, capital and financial resources. There were some natural differences, such as the existence of higher education facilities in four of the counties; three community/junior colleges and one university. Otherwise, the publics were quite similar in terms of makeup of community profiles and membership.

By April 20, the mumps scare had spread across seven states, with over 1,000 cases reported (Lee, 2006) in Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Wisconsin (Wilson & Stobbe, 2006). At least 80 of these cases had been reported throughout the state of Illinois, with the majority of cases (800) in Iowa (Wilson & Stobbe, 2006). Although relatively small in scale, the handling of public information during the crisis in Southern Illinois was an integral element in the Midwest's overall handling of the mumps outbreak and related public information.

Implementing a Collaborative Crisis Response

According to the Seeger (2006), panels of experts have developed ten best practices of crisis communication. These include the following:

- Process approaches and policy development;
- Pre-event planning;
- Partnerships with the public;
- Listen to the public's concerns and understand the audience;
- Honesty, candor, and openness;
- Collaborate and coordinate with credible sources;
- Meet the needs of the media and remain accessible;
- Communicate with compassion, concern, and empathy;
- Accept uncertainty and ambiguity; and
- Messages of self-efficacy.

Relative to the current case analysis, specific elements of these definitions are essential for successful crisis collaboration for rural organizations, agencies and emergency response personnel. Each of the best practices is detailed below:

- *Process approaches and policy development.* Most organizations have policies pertaining to strategic planning and development. However, some decisions are

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not made until after the risk and crisis is over. By having communication strategies incorporated into decision-making processes, higher-quality decisions can be made as it relates to crisis communication. Seeger (2006) also suggests that this type of communication policy development is most effective when it is part of an integrated and on-going process.

- *Pre-event planning.* The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005) offers guides on public health emergencies, to remind us of potential emergencies and crisis response. Seeger (2006) reemphasizes the importance of having a good plan to enhance "overall mindfulness regarding risks" (p. 237). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002) provides guiding questions for public officials to enhance the quality of crisis messages. An example includes "What are obstacles to effective communications and how can they be minimized?" and "What information is crucial to convey in initial messages in order to prompt appropriate public responses after a crisis situation?" (pgs. 3-4).

- *Partnerships with the public.* Seeger (2006) believes that the public can serve as a resource, rather than become burdensome, especially in risk and crisis management. Having positive relationships with media personnel, as well as emergency response coordinators, can alleviate some of the pressure on rural agencies.

- *Listen to the public's concerns and understand the audience.* Seeger (2006) makes an important point stating "whether accurate or not, the public's perception is its reality" (p. 239). Acknowledging the public's concerns is one of the most strategic ways that emergency personnel can use to demonstrate empathy and understanding of their audience.

- *Honesty, candor, and openness.* The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002) reports that combination of factors including crisis, heightened public emotions, limited access to facts, rumor, gossip, speculation, assumptions and inference equals an unstable information environment. It is essential to provide accurate, clear information that addresses public concerns.

- *Collaborate and coordinate with credible sources.* Developing a pre-event workgroup, such as the Southern Illinois 5B Public Information Workgroup, is one way to provide effective coordination and collaboration among credible sources. Examples such as the pre-event group development establish a clear basis for the collaboration and coordination of local stakeholders, each with access to relevant sources of information that would not likely be available to any one of the individual members of the group; thus increasing resource collaboration.

- *Meet the needs of the media and remain accessible.* The media can be an asset to any crisis situation. Television stations, newspapers and radio frequencies can provide access to information spanning a large geographical area. Seeger (2006)

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reinforces the confirmation that "the media are the primary conduit to the public and, during a crisis, are obligated to report accurately and completely" (p. 240).

- *Communicate with compassion, concern, and empathy.* The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002) suggests easing public concern and giving guidance on how to respond to the crisis. Seeger (2006) acknowledges that these techniques can significantly enhance the credibility of the message and the messenger. Newsome, Scott & Van Slyke Turk (1992) state that "collective perceptions about an organization by its publics, based on what it says and does, constituted its image" (p. 169). To that end, McKnight's (2006) model dictates that an organization must communicate clearly and decisively in order to maximize public perception and maintain a positive organizational image.

- *Accept uncertainty and ambiguity.* Sometimes scientific situations such as risk and crisis can be uncertain. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002) remind us that officials many times try to take on additional tasks of explaining limitations and uncertainties to the public, when it is more appropriate to admit the ambiguity of the situation. An old axiom states "admit when you don't know the answer."

- *Messages of self-efficacy.* Public health literature has emphasized the importance of messages that provide specific information that helps audiences to understand what they can do to reduce risk or harm. Seeger (2006) states "message of self-efficacy can help restore some sense of control over an uncertain and threatening situation" (p. 242).

Timeline of Events

April 3, 2006

On Monday, April 3, an Egyptian Public & Mental Health Department (EHD) official contacted PIO Workgroup via email about three possible cases of mumps at a local college (Southeastern Illinois College) over the previous weekend. Specific to the college situation, a Communicable Disease (CD) Nurse worked with college & monitored developments on campus. Due to travel requirements, the PIO representative for Egyptian Public & Mental Health would be out of the office the remainder of the week. A back-up PIO for EHD received all relevant case information, as well as necessary contact information for the primary EHD PIO.

Simultaneously, the Franklin-Williamson Bi-County Health Department (FWBCHD) also received calls for the public about further possible cases – particularly within a local school district. (See Figure 1 for a map of the geographic relationship of each of these counties.) Based upon these developments, FWBCHD made decision to draft a preliminary Mumps News Release.

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During this time, the role of the CD Nurse was to collect laboratory samples from suspected cases of mumps and submit them to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Regional Immunization Coordinator for analysis. Once collected, these samples were submitted on the afternoon of April 3. Upon receipt of the collected samples, the IDPH Regional Immunization Coordinator verified the need for information to be provided to the public. Information was immediately faxed related to the detection of mumps to area physicians and hospitals.

By the late afternoon of April 3, a representative from FWBCHD called two of remaining four Region 5B local health departments about developed news release. Representatives from the other two local health departments had responded previously with affirmative declarations regarding the press release.

April 4, 2006

On April 4, 2006, the PIO personnel representing FWBCHD called all four Region 5B local health departments. Although calls were placed to all local health departments that constituted the PIO Workgroup, only one Public Information Officer was immediately available. The FWBCHD representative left messages for all remaining PIO Workgroup members.

Meanwhile, FWBCHD continued to receive calls from and related to the local public and school district. Based on a lack of general information for the public, FWBCHD personnel developed & faxed Mumps Fact Sheet to involved school district. The fact sheet would later be a formal element of the formal information packet submitted to public and media outlets.

By noon, all members of the PIO Workgroup had responded to initial communications from FWBCHD. Approval to move forward with the joint press release was granted by four of the five PIO representatives. One approval was still pending and outstanding at this time. More specifically, the point of contact that represented a county with a university population of approximately 20,000 students was hesitant to release information in hopes of avoiding unnecessary panic.

By 3:30 p.m., FWBCHD faxed/e-mailed the Joint Mumps News Release to various media outlets, with four of the five local health departments having approved (approval was not granted by the final local health department representative). Because of the news release, immediate interviews were granted with area newspapers, with other media outlets scheduled for the following day.

April 5, 2006

On April 5, laboratory results identified confirmed and probable cases in three of five Region 5B LHD jurisdictions. The regional newspaper, the Southern Illinoisan, issued an article, based upon initial press releases, as well as supplemental data, such as laboratory test results. Because of the wide ranging scope of the story, various public health

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department and other officials continued conducting interviews with local media outlets, including television, newspaper and radio. Additionally, the process was simplified for local officials because of the joint press release, as the information released was consistent with other officials and organizations.

Media Utilized in Creating the Press Release

A variety of communication media were utilized in the development of the news release. Because so many individuals were involved in the process, it is impossible to catalogue every individual communication engaged during this process. Primarily, individuals corresponded by wireless and office telephones, with the majority of written correspondence coming via email, with faxes used when signatures were required.

Summary

From an overall perspective, the Southern Illinois Region 5B PIO Workgroup chose to take a proactive approach rather than a reactive one. The reactive nature of the Workgroup was a result of the early formation and diligence in training by the group, and proved essential to collaborative communication in times of crisis. The Workgroup discovered that the crisis situation at hand developed into the cohesiveness of positive relationships between multi-county local health departments; thus forming positive relationships throughout the region. In today's society of bioterrorism and constant national risk, the mumps case provided joint-information experience in the event that a major national disaster should strike Southern Illinois. The group was ultimately successful in its goal of disseminating accurate and critical information in a timely fashion, which addressed concerns and alleviated anxieties.

Because this was an initial effort from the Workgroup, the events described in this case are difficult to analyze. Certainly, one would assume that the workgroup will become more efficient in creating joint news releases, etc. over time. For an initial effort, the workgroup does appear successful overall as their individual constituencies' information goals were met.

Analysis of the PIO Workgroup's Collaborative Crisis Response

Seeger's (2006) guidelines for implementing a crisis response have been previously listed and discussed in the present case. The following section represents a short analysis of the degree to which the Workgroup accomplished each of these guidelines.

- Process approaches and policy development – Certainly the workgroup is lacking in terms of policy and formal process. This is largely due to the fact that the Workgroup is in its relative infancy. In retrospect, the group's efforts in the present case are virtually a pilot for the PIO Workgroup in Southern Illinois. As the group gains experience and perspective, it will need to formally verbalize a protocol that stresses process and policy.

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- Pre-event planning – As this was the initial work produced by the PIO Workgroup, relevant training appears to have been successful. While the planning for this specific response (mumps) was not undertaken, the goal of the workgroup was simply to have an established protocol for how to relate information from one agency to another, and not to have a comprehensive set of guidelines for each separate potential crisis situation.

- Partnerships with the public – Certainly the relationships of the local higher education institutions played a crucial role in the manner in which information was, and was not, released in the present case. These relationships also dictated the manner in which one member of the PIO Workgroup failed to approve the press release. In the present case, it appears that these partnerships were present; perhaps to the extent that they were a hindrance to the Workgroup and its ability to complete its goal.

- Listen to the public's concerns and understand the audience – Because of the membership of the workgroup, and the way that each of the potential stakeholder groups were represented by individuals who served on the PIO team, this appears to have been a successful element of the initial PIO Workgroup collaboration.

- Honesty, candor, and openness – The workgroup was at a distinct advantage in the present case in relation to honesty and openness. The mumps case does not present an illness to the public that is perceived on the same level as others that could potentially occur; such as West Nile Virus, Bird Flu, etc. Because of the relatively low anxiety levels of the community, it was much easier for the PIO Workgroup to meet audience expectations for honesty and openness of relevant information.

- Collaborate and coordinate with credible sources – The workgroup's ability to collaborate among one another, and thus validate differing relevant stakeholder concerns and perspectives, serves as one of the primary rationale for the existence of the PIO Workgroup. The group must work in the future to collaborate with sources of information that are outside of the workgroup, and continue to cultivate these relationships.

- Meet the needs of the media and remain accessible – This may have been the most successful element of the PIO Workgroup's collaboration. Not only was the information readily and speedily available to media outlets, but in most cases, the information was released to the media prior to any requests for the information. Thus, the workgroup appears to have been ahead of the media timeline in this regard, which increased their ability to control the public's perception of the crisis.

- Communicate with compassion, concern, and empathy – Because those affected by mumps were students, their names and other relevant demographic information was withheld from press releases and the media. This fact helped to ensure that the PIO Workgroup's response was not only timely, but compassionate and

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empathetic as well. Additionally, members of the local communities were not affected in most cases, which again relieved the burden on the part of the team.

- Accept uncertainty and ambiguity – In the present case, there was not sufficient uncertainty or ambiguity to properly evaluate the workgroup's success in this area. Cases of illness that are so well-known and controlled are mumps do not present an adequate opportunity evaluate this. Had this been a less familiar disease, this would be a more appropriate measure for analysis.

- Messages of self-efficacy – In the present case, this appears to have been of relatively little importance. Certainly, members of the public had access to relevant information to make informed decisions and choices. However, again due to the perception that mumps is not a serious disease, members of the local communities did not place a great emphasis on messages of self-efficacy. To properly assess the Workgroup in the present case would be difficult. A more reliable and valid manner to measure this would be to investigate the PIO Workgroup in future news releases where the perceived risk of community members is increased.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations for Practice

The events represented in this case study were the first opportunity for the Illinois Region 5B Public Information Officer (PIO) Workgroup to collaborate. The PIO Workgroup was conceptually developed in 2004, in order to consider the role of the PIO as it relates to incident command. As such, the Southern Illinois mumps information case provided some valuable lessons – both for the immediate stakeholders in the case, as well as for public information officers in general. More specifically, lessons learned through this analysis include:

1. Perceived credibility increases because of message unification and consistency across various sources, media and channels. In the present case, points of contact for the local health departments were able to more clearly, more consistently provide information to the public and in a timelier manner because the information was consistent with information releases from fellow local health department personnel. This increased credibility by ensuring that various publics, stakeholders and affected parties received consistent messages throughout the regional communication campaign.

   One of the strengths apparent in the current analysis was that the PIO Workgroup personnel were well connected to one another and able to move swiftly to address public concerns, but still covered a large enough geographic region to remain relevant. But because one health department within Southern Illinois (Southern Seven) was not represented on the PIO Workgroup, their public's concerns were not a part of the decision making process. It is recommended that all stakeholders have representation in such groups, to insure that message content is valid and reliable for all potential audiences within the appropriate geographic boundaries.

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2. Advanced planning and preparation is essential to overcome variations in protocol between and among independent organizations and agencies. Standards of acceptable operating policies and procedures were found to be inconsistent among organizations and agencies in the beginning. Through emergency response planning, organizations and agencies learned the incident command structure, which educates emergency responders and health department personnel on collaborative communication procedures. Due to variations in protocol and incident command structures, message content, channels or audiences may need to be adapted to fit a specific organization's or agency's objectives or goals.

   The incident command structure provides guidance for a leader of the collaborative effort and subsequent subordinate roles within the collaboration. When utilizing the incident command structure, there are specific roles to which personnel adhere by, and when utilized in a uniform manner across local health departments, roles of similarity are found, which has been shown to propose consistency. Organizations and agencies would benefit from implementing the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (2007) incident command structure and training opportunities. The National Incident Management System offers structural guidelines into roles for Incident Commander, as well as clarification of the Public Information Officer's goals and objectives.

3. Various organizations must address concerns of independent public interests. Because of diversity of stakeholders, goals and purposes of organizations will vary, leading to potential conflict. In the present case, one of the five PIO Workgroup officials, representing a local health department that differed in demographic makeup, was forced to consider that population differently than other demographic groups, even though they were in the same region with other PIO Workgroup representative's constituencies. While the conflict was minor, it did delay the decision making process for the press release, and could easily have escalated into a situation that would have delayed the timeliness and effectiveness of the message that was delivered to the regional media outlets.

   Each independent local health department exercises actions that help it to meet its mission and objectives relevant to the respective publics. However, because of the varying degree of similarity between and among the local health departments' missions and objectives, it is recommended that the PIO Workgroup draft a working mission and subsequent objective statements (based on principles that are representative from across all PIO Workgroup members' local health departments) that help guide normative behavior in crisis situations, as well as guiding principles in these situations. Such a document would provide a framework for meeting all stakeholder missions, goals and objectives in times of crisis.

4. In crisis situations, members of the public seek all types of authority figures for accurate information. If those sources do not send consistent with messages,

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chaos can result. One of the intricate elements of the present case that added complexity to the situation was, because of the nature of the emergency (mumps within public school districts and college systems), there were various authority figures available to send messages to various stakeholder and public groups. School and college officials, public health departments and agencies, personal and family physicians, clinics as well as media outlets were some of the information sources for public questions or concerns. Thus, if any of these information sources were to have issued information that was inconsistent or otherwise invalid or unreliable, then all of these sources would have lost the perception of credibility with specific publics.

When members of the public seek information from a variety of authority figures, those figures need to have the tools and information necessary to meet those information needs. Training is provided in a multitude of arenas; one such is provided by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (2007). Relevant trainings include, but are not limited to Public Information Officer workshops; Emergency Planning; Emergency Operations Centers; and Incident Command Structure for Law Enforcement. When there is a collaborative effort between law enforcement, city officials, educational systems, hospitals, and other stakeholder groups, a unified and consistent message concerning the public's safety can be delivered to the audience.

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CSR Communication

A SME-oriented Approach

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Introduction

A case study of Danish SME managers' understanding of CSR and CSR communication conducted in the beginning of 2007 concluded that CSR communication in SMEs is a practice rather than a corporate strategy (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2007b). SMEs still have a long way to go towards learning how to act strategically (see also Murillo & Lozano, 2006). The case study was motivated by an increased focus on SMEs and globalisation issues, particularly supply chain management[1].

The case study showed that CSR seems to be a question of SME managers' personal values and mindset in respect of ethical concern and commitment. On the one hand, the preferred communication strategy is "silence", and personal ad hoc communication. On the other hand, the concept of corporate communication and related concepts seem to influence the discourse of SME managers. Many of the key issues which dominate the corporate communication profession (reputation management, corporate identity, relationship management, etc.) are indeed perceived as relevant to managers in SMEs.

One interesting question or dilemma raised by the case study was whether a more dedicated approach to formalising or planning CSR communication in SMEs is possible without compromising the authentic and human enthusiasm SMEs tend to demonstrate in their internal and local environment. The case study concluded that a more focused or SME-oriented approach was required. Thus, the purpose of this article is to examine CSR communication issues and challenges described in the literature and, on the basis of this examination, propose the key elements of an approach to CSR communication which takes into consideration the operational context of SMEs. In order to achieve this goal, we have looked into the emerging strategic CSR communication literature (e.g. Morsing & Beckmann, 2006) focusing on four perspectives, i.e. management, marketing, public

[1] We used quantitative and qualitative data from the People & Profit project managed by the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency. The quantitative data consists of 1,071 replies from SME managers who participated in an Internet-based questionnaire survey of a representative cross-section of SMEs in Denmark (cf. TNS Gallup report 2005: 1-54). The qualitative data consists of semi-structured interviews with three of the managers from these SMEs. The interviews were conducted and transcribed by Mette Haugaard Kristensen, The Danish Commerce and Companies Agency. We wish to express our gratitude to Mette for having left the transcriptions at our disposal.

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relations and stakeholder perspectives. We have also studied the operational context of SMEs both in the literature and in our case study.

The structure of our paper is as follows: firstly, we present our theoretical framework consisting of CSR management theories and CSR communication theories and literature, considering the former as a conceptual basis for the latter. The purpose of this presentation is to pave the way for a discussion of central issues and dilemmas associated with strategic CSR communication. Secondly, we give a short outline of the operational context of SMEs. This outline allows us to discuss strategic CSR communication issues and dilemmas in a SME perspective and examine the key elements of a SME-oriented approach to CSR communication.

CSR management approaches

Which management system or approach should corporations in general choose to support their key CSR themes? A useful framework is proposed by Garriga and Melé (2004) who argue that the most relevant CSR theories and related approaches are focused on one of the following aspects of social reality: economics, politics, social integration and ethics (see also Carroll 1999). They classify the main CSR theories and related approaches in four groups: instrumental theories, political theories, integrative theories and ethical or value theories. Their assumption is based upon Parsons (1961) who argues that four aspects can be observed in any social system: adaptation to the environment (related to resources and economics), goal attainment (related to politics), social integration and pattern maintenance or latency (related to culture and values).

Instrumental theories understand CSR as a mere means to gain profits (Friedman, 1970). It is assumed that the corporation is an instrument for wealth creation and that this is its sole social responsibility. In this group the focus is on meeting objectives that produce long-term profits and on themes such as: maximization of shareholder value, strategies for achieving competitive advantages, and cause-related marketing (Garriga and Melé, op.cit.). *Political theories* emphasize the social power of corporations. This leads the corporation to accept social duties and rights or participate in certain social cooperations. In this group the focus is on using business power in a responsible way (ibid.). *Integrative theories* usually argue that business depends on society. As a consequence, corporate management should take into account social demands and focus on integrating them in such a way that the business operates in accordance with social values. Basically, the theories of this group are focused on the detection and scanning of, and response to, the social demands that achieve social legitimacy, greater social acceptance and prestige. Central concepts are: social responsiveness and issues management, public responsibility and public policy, stakeholder dialogue, etc. (ibid.). *Ethical theories* consider that the relationship between business and society is embedded within ethical values. Corporations ought to accept social responsibilities as an ethical obligation above any other consideration. Main approaches are: normative stakeholder theory, universal rights, sustainable development and the common good approach (ibid).

The above framework enhances our understanding of CSR communication approaches and systems which ideally ought to be embedded within corporations' management approaches and systems.

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CSR communication approaches

What are, in general, the challenges of strategic CSR communication, and which issues, dilemmas or approaches are highlighted? Considering CSR communication as a research field within corporate communication[2], we draw on insights from three main forms of communication composing corporate communication: management communication; marketing communication and organisational communication (van Riel 2005, see also Cornelissen 2004, Goodman 2006), the latter comprising disciplines such as public relations, public affairs, investor relations, environment communication, corporate advertising and internal communication. In this article we have grouped the organisational communication literature under the headings of public relations and stakeholder relations.

The management communication perspective on CSR communication

Management communication can be defined as the communication of managers at different levels with internal and external target groups (van Riel 2005: 22). According to van Riel, research has shown how essential the role of managers is in the realisation of a positive communication climate and a positive reputation. According to van Riel, one main problem is that not all managers are aware of the role they play in communication or they are simply not aware of the fact that they assume the role as communicators. Instead they believe that departments such as marketing and public relations can assume this role alone.

Contributions which we find particularly relevant to our perspective have primarily come from researchers interested in disciplines such as leadership (see conceptual review in Kakabadse, Rozuel and Lee-Davies 2005: 295-297) and employee relations (e.g. Morsing 2006). Researchers generally acknowledge the role of leaders in organisations as very important in ethical issues, especially because of their key influence on the organisational culture (Kakabadse, Rozuel & Lee-Davies, op.cit.). Leadership shapes and orients the organisational climate so that the expectations of organisational constituents match more socially accepted norms of behaviour (ibid.). Leaders must for example embody CSR values, promote and support them through their own behaviour and attitude (ibid). Consequently, 'leadership' is required at more than one level in an organisation, which suggests that not only top executives but also middle managers and further must fully endorse the values of the organisation (ibid.).

The marketing perspective on CSR communication

Marketing communication can be identified as direct sales-supporting communication aimed at influencing customers and increase sales (van Riel, op cit.). The Danish consumer researcher Suzanne L. Beckmann (e.g. Beckmann 2006; Beckmann & Langer, 2003)

[2] Cees B. M. van Riel (2005) defines corporate communication as "the orchestration of all the instruments in the field of organizational identity (communication, symbols and behavior of organizational members) in such an attractive, realistic and truthful manner as to create or maintain a positive reputation for groups with which the organization has an interdependent relationship (often referred to as stakeholders) (Van Riel 2005: 22).

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demonstrates that the most important marketing approach to CSR communication is grounded within consumer behaviour studies, where the "green" segment research stream from the early 1980s introduced studies of the green movement (green products, energy conservation, waste handling, knowledge measurements, motivation, peer influence, cost-benefit, etc.) (Bechmann, 2006: 168). Consumer reactions to CSR initiatives in terms of awareness, attitude, purchase, etc. have thus been subject to several studies (e.g. Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004a/2004 b; Yoon & Gürhan-Canli, 2004; Davar & Klein, 2004; Creyer & Ross, 1997). The characteristic of this range of studies is their focus on developing methods which can explain and measure the effect of corporations' CSR initiatives on consumers. A website study of Fortune 500 corporations shows that more than 80 % of the corporations address CSR issues, proving that business leaders tend to believe in CSR not only as an ethical imperative but as a business case (Bhattacharya & Sen, op cit.:9). This emphasis on ethics is supported by the results of a survey on Corporate Citizenship from 2000, concluding that 84 % of American consumers are willing to switch from one brand to another for ethical reasons providing price and quality are similar (ibid.).

At the marketing strategic level cause-related marketing (CRM) is presented as the most common marketing strategy for advocating CSR to consumers (e.g. Kotler & Lee, 2005; Brønn & Vrioni, 2001). CRM is considered as a beneficial means to build brand equity and to "help marketers to stay in tune with the mood of the public" in that it appears more concerned with society than other marketing strategies (Brønn & Vrioni, op cit.: 215).

To the strategic marketing approach, one should add a communicative stream studying the use of sales supporting material for consumer oriented CSR communication. Studies focusing on communication channels (Schlegelmilch & Pollack, 2005) reflect on the effectiveness of CSR communication vehicles. According to Schlegelmilch and Pollack it appears that due to lack of credibility, corporate advertising does not prove to be the most effective channel for conveying CSR messages, particularly not in cases where the CSR issue is not part of or is in contradiction with the core business (op cit.: 276), e.g. the 100 million anti-smoking campaign launched by the tobacconist Philip Morris. Media coverage, corporate websites and corporate reporting are connected with higher credibility than advertising and can handle more complex information. However, media content is out of control for organisations and corporate web communication suffers from its status as pull information. (op.cit.: 278). In conclusion, all communication channels seem to have both positive and negative CSR communication potentials, but they should be adapted in each case to the contextual environment and the CSR issue and the goal to be achieved (ibid.).

The public relations perspective on CSR communication

Public relations aims at creating mutual understanding between an organisation and its public, but public relations can also be conceived as an indirect sales-promotional tool based on image and reputation-enhancing activities.

The last 20 years of public relations research bear witness to a shift from a functional towards a relational framework, where relationship building through relational communication and dialogue as a means to understand and interact with the public has

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replaced a utilitarian and instrumental approach to public relation research and practice (Botan & Taylor, 2004).

This shift of focus has added a societal aspect to public relations (see e.g.: Grunig, 2006; Kotler & Lee, 2005; Daugherty, 2001; Esrock & Leichty, 2000 and 1998; Maignan and Ralston, 2002) with a strong emphasis on community involvement (e.g. corporate philantrophy and sponsoring) as a response to the increasing influence of communities on businesses (Daugherty, op cit.:389). Societal contribution is thus significantly higher than 30 years ago and consumers, investors, employees, environmentalists, the general public, etc. are emergent attention-getters (ibid.). Today's public relations is thus dominated by particular agendas such as e.g.: socially responsible corporate policies, supporting initiatives for human rights, forced labour, the environment and safe working conditions, etc. which have a significant impact on corporate behaviour. Corporations and non profit organisations depend on society's acknowledgement of them to gain legitimacy of their planning and doings. If they fail to meet these expectations, gaps between public expectation and their performances will occur and they risk loosing their legitimacy (op cit.: 390). Therefore, in order to avoid legitimacy gaps, it has become important for corporations to work with and observe a range of basic business rules: fair pricing, product quality, responsible advertising, timely resolution of customer complaints, community responsiveness, and environmental management, etc.

Public relations researcher James Grunig not only establishes a link between public relations and the practice of "public responsibility" (Grunig 1997). He also claims that public relations should provide an important framework for ethical decision making in organisations (Grunig, 2006: 165). This increasing 'responsibility' component of public relations can also be traced back to Grunig's basic functional distinction between public relations as *dialogue* and public relations as *persuasion*. While *public responsibility* is anchored in the dialogical and two way-symmetrical approach to communication, irresponsible public relations belongs to the persuasive and one-way communication approach (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig 1997). Two way communication and dialogue involve the concept of responsibility in the sense of *responsiveness*, indicating corporations' willingness to present honest facts in order to meet expectations from the public (see above).

Concerning relevant areas of public relations, Schlegelmilch and Pollact (op.cit), see ethics communication (which we consider as public relation communication) as something which should include issues that people can relate to (Spickett-Jones et al. 2003 in Schlegelmilch and Pollack op.cit.: 270). Consequently, certain issues such as e.g. damage control in the form of bribery, deceptive packaging, or price fixing are considered to be too self-evident for image communication, whereas other issues that are classified as non self-evident, such as e.g. "refusal to produce military weapons" or a "boycott of suppliers from certain countries", etc. are worthy for communication in the sense that they may have a positive impact on organisations' image amongst stakeholders (op.cit.: 271). In other words, companies' selection of CSR issues to be communicated is delicate and can do more harm than good if not appealing to the public's conception of credible communication acts.

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The stakeholder management perspective on CSR communication

Stakeholder theory as it has evolved in recent years has begun to focus attention on the importance of the relationships that companies have with stakeholders (Andriof & Waddock, 2002: 19). In this article, we follow Andriof and Waddock (2002) who state that perspectives on stakeholder theory have moved away from an entirely corporate-centric focus in which stakeholders are viewed as subjects to be managed towards more of a network-based, relational and process-oriented view of company-stakeholder engagement, where at least there is consideration of mutuality, interdependence and power.

Drawing on business in society, stakeholder and strategic relationships theories, Andriof and Waddock (ibid) provide a framework that enhances the understanding of the dynamics of and rationale for the increased levels of stakeholder engagement and communication witnessed today. The first insight we gain from their work is that modern companies must move from reactive compliance-oriented management of social issues through proactive boundary-spanning functions that cope more effectively with external matters and into operating policies and interactive engagement strategies with a range of stakeholders (op.cit.: 42). Stakeholder engagement can thus be viewed as a process for managing a company's social risk and connect with stakeholders. Next, we learn that such collaborative strategies depend on the establishment and maintenance of social capital (e.g. meeting stakeholder demands and expectations) and on the creation of a network of ongoing relationships. In this way, stakeholder engagement can also potentially provide critical strategic information. The third insight we get is that stakeholder engagements and partnerships are trust-based collaborations between actors with different objectives. The basis for successful partnerships is an agreement about rules for co-operation. A higher consensus or agreement, achieved through interaction, means less regulated partnering because of a minimised conflict potential and can best occur when social capital exists.

Within the above framework, researchers have focused on topics such as CSR communication strategies and stakeholder engagement or involvement (e.g. Morsing & Schultz 2006), stakeholder dialogue (e.g. Kaptein and van Tulder 2003; Rahbek Pedersen 2006) and new social partnerships (Zadek, 2001; Andriof 2001; Googins and Rochlin 2000). Our focus being on SMEs, the topic of corporate social reporting (see a review of the literature in Gray, Kouhy and Lavers, 1995; Nielsen & Thomsen 2007a) is not taken into consideration in this article.

CSR communication issues and challenges

From a theoretical perspective the greatest challenge to corporations in respect of CSR communication is to make decisions about how to handle CSR from a strategic point of view, including which perspective to choose (management, marketing, public relations or stakeholder perspective) and which CSR issues to integrate in the overall strategy and communication planning. With the breakdown in recent research and practice of the boundaries between internal and external communication on the one hand and marketing and PR-communication on the other hand, the way has been paved for the strategic and integrative approach, which we find anchored in the concept of *corporate communication* (e.g. Cornellissen, 2004 and van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). This leaves corporations with a

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big dilemma: how to communicate consistently about CSR? In line with this, issues taken up in the literature on CSR communication are for example whether corporations should at all communicate CSR externally, and whether CSR communication should be one-way or two-way, personally or mass oriented, direct or indirect. CSR communication is a delicate issue. It needs to be handled in a subtle manner that may prove traditional marketing and PR tools insufficient, the problem being that corporations are encouraged to engage in CSR to build strong reputations, but at the same time stakeholders are reluctant to receive too much information about their CSR engagements (Morsing 2003: 150).

Firstly, as we have seen above, stakeholders have different types of interests and engagements in corporations' activities and are not equally concerned with CSR. Investors, NGO's, financial experts, etc. may pay particular attention to corporate accounts, whereas consumers and the public as such are not necessarily attracted by this genre of information. Secondly, a scrupulous selection of CSR communication issues is crucial. Adopting a wrong CSR strategy in terms of scope of interest and issues can do more harm than good if it is not an integrated part of the core business. Gaps between the walk and the talk may arise and cause CSR to be conceived as window dressing. Organisational values such as "human respect" or "trust" become hollow if they are not practiced by fair treatment of employees, clients, suppliers etc. Thirdly, communication form and channels should be adapted to contextual parameters such as: situation, message, target group/stakeholder, goal to be achieved, etc. One-way mass communication may provoke or create awareness about an issue among unaware stakeholders, but it is instrumental and inappropriate for creating attitude change or debate. As stated above, lack of credibility is also connected to mass communication, which calls for more third party endorsement channels in order to reach public stakeholders. Finally, the organisation of CSR communication within organisations should be considered in order to attribute a strategic and measurable function to CSR conceived as a fundamental value embedded in the management of the organisation. In other words, corporations making use of CSR as a promotional instrument without integrating it in their value set and overall strategy cannot expect that CSR can have an increasing impact on their image and reputation.

It is characteristic that the CSR communication literature relates more to the integrative and ethical CSR value logics than to the instrumental and political value logics, focusing on building and maintaining good relations with primary stakeholders. It is also characteristic that the challenges highlighted in the literature are more internally oriented than externally oriented - focusing on topics such as values, culture, indirect or third-party endorsing approaches, etc., which can probably be explained by the fact that CSR has until recently been dominated by big multinational companies to whom credibility is a bigger challenge than to SMEs.

The context of SMEs is different from the context of big corporations. SMEs constitute a very heterogeneous group in terms of size, number of employees, turnover, line of business, etc. In the editorial to a special issue of the Journal of Business Ethics on SMEs & CSR, the editors give an outline of existing research on SMEs and responsible business practice (Moore & Spence, 2006). They highlight a number of SME contextual factors which we consider relevant in a strategic CSR communication perspective. We focus on three of them.

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Firstly, a basic antagonism between capital and labour is considered to be inherent in the employment relationship in small firms. Together with this basic antagonism are elements of co-operation since employers need to secure workers' willingness to work while workers rely on the firms for their livelihoods". Moore and Spence (2006) argue that "It is perhaps the keen awareness of the employees' reliance on the employer for their livelihood that is different from the larger firm, where decision makers will not normally have personal contact with the individuals who are affected." (Moore & Spence, 2006, p. 221).

Secondly, Moore and Spence (op.cit.) highlight the focus on owner-managers of SMEs, arguing that individuals who own their business are both principal and agent and hence are at liberty to spend the business' money as they see fit. According to Moore and Spence, this justifies an emphasis on the personal ethical attitudes of owner-managers, attitudes which are assumed to influence the business. Moore and Spence also establish a link between the personal ethical attitudes of owner-managers and the start-up phase of a small business and the owner-manager's relationships in terms of help, harm, trust and morality. In line with this, SMEs generally have good relations with local communities. Proximity is one of the factors that increase the likelihood of moral behaviour.

Thirdly, it is argued that there is not a general orientation towards maximisation of profit in small organisations. Competitors are often treated as (moral) stakeholders rather than just adversaries in the marketplace. In other words, SMEs are different in nature, not just in size, from large firms and unlikely to adopt marketing tools, or strategic approaches using "management speak". Most SMEs are product focused not having the time or necessarily the skills to think about functional and organisational issues like responsible business practice. This does not mean, however, that they act irresponsibly, only that what they do is not codified in the way it might be in a large firm. Moore and Spence state for example that normal environmental management systems are not found to be readily adopted by small firms which tend to take more of an ad hoc and reactive approach to environmental issues. The last argument is supported by the results of our case study (Nielsen and Thomsen 2007b).

Key elements of a SME-oriented approach to CSR communication

Our theoretical framework consisting of CSR management theories and CSR communication theories and literature has paved the way for a discussion of central issues and dilemmas associated with strategic CSR communication. The insights obtained from SME literature and the case study above allow us now to discuss CSR communication issues and dilemmas in a SME from the four perspectives above: *management, marketing, PR and stakeholders*.

From a *management perspective* the corporate CSR profile of SMEs is entirely determined by the top manager's personal values. SME managers seem to incarnate strong ethical values and to embody and support these values through their own behaviour and attitude. Their communication style is direct and informal. Internally the manager typically speaks the language of the employees, most likely because he originates from and belongs to the same environment as they do. Since everybody in the company knows each other and spend the majority of the working hours together, they do not need formal communication

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procedures. The direct contact between them is very straight-forward and practical, allowing them to communicate in a friendly and informal tone and to give every single task a personal touch. Externally, most leaders are more or less invisible leaving the floor to marketers or in larger SMEs to PR employees. Consequently, a strong CSR oriented profile calls for managers who have a more strategic, dialogue-oriented and visionary mindset.

From a *marketing perspective* marketing and advertising communication has a strong product focus and is often in the hands of product managers and sales representatives who hold the dialogue with customers and competitors in face-to-face arrangements, product seminars, annual exhibitions and fairs, etc. Corporate advertising is not systematically practiced although most of the investigated SMEs have invested massively in environmental innovation and product solutions by which they could promote themselves much more on environmental concern and sustainability than they do towards critical consumers and future job candidates. As marketing resources are more restricted in SMEs than in larger companies, they could also collaborate more systematically with stronger partners, building up networks and partnerships with local authorities or NGOs in order to reach social responsible consumers in a more authentic way by using a cause-related marketing approach.

From a *public relation perspective*, SME managers tend to adopt a strategy of silence. They admit that strategic communication might strengthen their image and reputation. Yet, they are reluctant to use self-promotion and public relations strategies in order to become more visible actors in their local and global environment. Unsystematic ad hoc management may prove to be fruitful and sufficient for day-to-day operations and informal interactions, but image-enhancing and reputation management based on CSR should be subject to much more strategic and long-term PR communication planning procedures than the ones SMEs apply today (op. cit.).

Finally, SMEs seem not to be aware of the *stakeholder oriented approach* to communication management, which could bring them a step forward towards exploring important information sources, networks and potential partnerships. SME managers are driven by product development and the production cycle of their business. Most SMEs tend to oversee the potentials beyond internal and local informal communication networks. SMEs thus seem to have an ambivalent attitude to CSR communication in the external environment. An important challenge for SMEs is thus to widen up their narrow CSR scope, often restricted to employee concerns, which is valuable in itself, but only a single aspect of what may be defined as a strong stakeholder and CSR communication profile.

How to overcome these challenges? Which key elements should be included in a more holistic SME-oriented approach to CSR communication?

First, it is no surprise that some of the challenges from our empirical study of SMEs tend to overlap with the challenges highlighted in the CSR communication literature. The biggest challenge is probably related to breaking the silence of SMEs without bragging CSR and risking to compromise the authenticity and credibility of the source which is a dilemma for both large corporations and SMEs. In CSR communication it is essential to distinguish between potential communication strategies which take into account both the context and

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strategy of the actual company as well as which stakeholders are interested in which kind of information. CSR should not be considered an appendix to be added to the already existing strategy of the individual company. CSR must be integrated in the overall business strategy of the company in order to become an inherent (and not artificial) part of the company. This means that CSR should be integrated from inside and out rather than vice versa. In this way the company will be able to appear consistent in its action patterns (Schultz et al. 2004).

Secondly, it is important for SMEs – as well as for all other kinds of enterprises - to conceive a strategy that matches the interaction needs of the individual SME with its stakeholders. SMEs that do not use chemicals in their production are not in dialogue with environmental authorities and NGOs to the same extent as chemical production companies, but they may be suppliers or customers to such companies. Such circumstances influence to what extent the SME should prioritise CSR descriptions on websites, in brochures, in reports, etc. The same goes for information on employee relations, job agreements, local sponsorships, etc. The SME will often be better off with communicating this type of information through media targeted directly at employees and the local community rather than through media channels for consumers and the public in general. Schultz et al. (op.cit.) distinguish between direct and indirect communication when describing this issue. Direct communication is often arranged for through external and formal channels such as reports, brochures and websites, whereas indirect communication often takes place through other channels than the external ones, e.g. journalists at local daily papers and through mouth-to-mouth from employees, consumers and local community persons. Reputation-wise, the PR value of using a so-called third party legitimisation is generally significantly greater than when the company itself is the sender of more or less concealed messages about CSR activities (op.cit.).

Thirdly, for SMEs, who only use formal external channels to a very limited extent, emphasis must be put on strengthening the indirect CSR communication through relevant stakeholders and networks at local and national levels.

Conclusion

Inspired by a case study on communication practices in SMEs and on the basis of a literature review on strategic CSR communication, we have examined how corporations in general deal with CSR communication issues and challenges. Taking into account the SME context, we have discussed SMEs' potiential for adopting a strategic CSR communication approach, and we have finally proposed a set of key elements allowing SME managers to profit more explicitly from the ethical commitment they already seem to demonstrate with employees, customers and local agents. The key elements were presented from four perspectives: *management, marketing, public relations* and *stakeholder perspective.*

From a *management perspective*, a strong CSR oriented profile calls for managers who are more visionary and concerned about building and maintaining a strategic, dialogue-oriented relationship with external stakeholders. From a *marketing perspective*, SMEs might gain from leaving their product focus adopting a corporate marketing approach in order to promote the entire organisation in the marketplace. They might also gain from collaborating more systematically with stronger partners, building up networks in order to

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reach socially responsible consumers. Finally, from a *public relations and stakeholder management perspective*, SMEs might be able to strengthen their image and reputation by adopting more strategic and long-term PR communication planning procedures allowing them to intensify and systematise the dialogue with their stakeholders. An important challenge is to widen up their narrow CSR scope, often restricted to employee concerns. However, it is important for SMEs to find a reasonable balance between the internal and the external engagement. What they need is a more dedicated approach to formalising communication management and planning without compromising the authentic and human enthusiasm they demonstrate in their internal and local environment. The holistic approach to managing and operating communication activities, which is embedded in the field of corporate communication, may be a relevant and realistic approach for SMEs to adopt in order to use their fruitful relationship management behaviour from a more strategic perspective.

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Rhetorical Leadership in Communicating Change in Business Environments: The Case of the AirTran vs. Midwest Airlines Takeover Struggle

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Effective leadership always has involved actively sharing and managing the meaning of confusing situations for and with others who have a stake in the outcome (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996, p. 2). Smircich and Morgan (1982) wrote:

> [L]eadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others. . . . Through these diverse means, individual actions can frame and change situations, and in so doing enact a system of shared meaning that provides a basis for organized action. . . . [L]eadership involves a process of defining reality in ways that are sensible to the led. (pp. 258-259)

Under twenty-first century conditions of fluid organizations, shared power, diffused responsibility, and expanded information access (see Bryson & Crosby, 1992; Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1992; Olson, 2006), critical management and analysis of meaning—and the preparation to recognize and seize the rhetorical moment—are the essence of leadership, argued Fairhurst and Sarr (1996, pp. 2, 10). Rhetoric, the ways in which symbols influence people and so create and exercise power, is key to leading or to critiquing leadership effectively in such circumstances. Whether or not one holds a position of authority, contemporary businesspeople must be prepared to "inspire and motivate followers through persuasion, example, and empowerment, not through command and control" (Bryson & Crosby, 1992, p. 21).

Situations involving change usually are conflicted and confusing, requiring effective business leaders to employ rhetoric to make sense of their preferred course of action in a way that also makes sense "to the led." Internal and external stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, shareholders, neighbors, watchdog agencies) often do not participate directly or extensively in such a decision, yet their cooperation, buy-in, and coordinated action is vital to its ultimate success, whether pursuing or resisting major change. The success of or resistance to a proposed change rests on inspiring and motivating such stakeholders to embrace an interpretation of events and its implied action course by showing that it makes more sense for them—not just for the leader--than do the proposed alternatives. This paper draws on the scholarship of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca as well as Burke for rhetorical strategies by which a leader might meet the challenge of rallying support among stakeholders who do not participate directly in the decision over change, but

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whose cooperation is essential. These strategies and their implications are illustrated through the case of AirTran's recent hostile attempt to acquire Midwest Airlines.

AirTran vs. Midwest

The main players in this takeover struggle hardly could be more different. In fact, the main commonality between AirTran and Midwest is that both rely heavily on the Boeing 717 for their fleets; they sponsor complementary rather than overlapping routes (Adams, 2007; Daykin, 2006a; Hirschman, 2007c). AirTran is one of the nation's newer and largest "low cost" carriers; its objective is similar to that of other such carriers (e.g., JetBlue, Southwest): to compete by offering lower fares than "legacy" carriers like United, American, and Northwest (Daykin, 2006a). To accomplish this goal, it must move more people per flight to pump profits and strip down service to cut costs. AirTran is much larger than Midwest with approximately 700 daily flights compared to Midwest's 345 and 8,000 employees compared to Midwest's 3,500 (Daykin, 2006a; Fredrix, 2007). Unlike discount carriers, Midwest flies under the slogan "The Best Care in the Air," offering wide two-across business seating, gourmet food, award-winning service, and chocolate chip cookies baked in flight. The airline started as a service for Kimberly-Clark executives in 1969 and went commercial in 1984; it moved its base from Appleton, Wisconsin, to Milwaukee and became a publicly-traded company in 1995 (Daykin, 2006a; Fredrix, 2007). Founder Timothy Hoeksema is Midwest's long-time chairman, CEO, and president (Daykin, 2006a). Midwest enjoys a loyal following due to its service and hometown devotion as it links Milwaukee to many smaller cities (e.g., see Bauer-King, 2007).

The most recent takeover drama began in late 2006, the only active proposed deal in the airline industry that year, despite predictions of merger mania (Adams, 2007). Midwest's board of directors had turned down several prior offers from Orlando-based AirTran (Hirschman, 2007c; Midwest CEO, 2007). In October 2006, AirTran offered about $300 million, which the Midwest board flatly rebuffed in early December 2006; so, AirTran turned to Midwest shareholders and repeatedly upped the ante for outstanding common stock tendered in hopes of increasing pressure on the board to reconsider (Daykin, 2006a). AirTran continued to raise its offers and extend the deadlines for tendering shares. At this writing in mid-July 2007, AirTran was offering $15 per share or $389 million and had extended that offer until August 10 (AirTran's Takeover Bid, 2007; Midwest Air Warns, 2007). It also pursued its case in public "by taking out full-page advertisements in Midwest's hometown paper [the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*], courting local officials and appealing to passengers and shareholders to urge the board to reconsider" (Fredrix, 2007). Midwest fired back at the hostile takeover bid with a $2.6 million "Save the Cookie" campaign that included not only T-shirts and online petitions but also full-page ads featuring a letter from CEO Hoeksema and press releases of polls showing that certain indirect stakeholders (e.g., frequent customers, Kansas City and Milwaukee corporate travel planners) strongly preferred that the AirTran acquisition not occur because they feared decreases in service quality and desirable flight options (Garcia, 2007; Midwest Airlines, 2007a, 2007b; Midwest Air Warns, 2007). Subplots in the drama included a failed legal maneuver by AirTran to gain access to Midwest

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shareholder information under a New York law and a debate over who should control Milwaukee's airport (Bar, 2007; Sandler, 2006).

In June 2007, AirTran succeeded in unseating three incumbents and getting its slate of three elected to Midwest's board of nine directors by securing the votes of approximately two-thirds of the shares (Daykin, 2007b; Rovito, 2007). Though constituting a minority of the nine decision-makers, this move leveraged an AirTran presentation to the Midwest board on July 16 regarding the advantages of joining forces. When the results were in, Hoeksema responded, "If today's election says anything at all, it says that our shareholders want us to listen, and that is what we intend to do" (Rovito, 2007). Midwest's senior vice president for corporate affairs Carol Skornicka concurred with Hoeksema's assessment of the election results, but also warned that "nothing has changed" and listening did not portend merger: "But the board has expressed no interest in engaging in any negotiations. They have consistently maintained unanimously that the offer is inadequate . . . . The fact that three new directors have been elected does not change the analysis" (Adams, 2007; Lank, 2007).

Midwest also appealed to its responsibility to consider the interests of stakeholders in addition to shareholders in making the decision. Wisconsin law encourages a board "to take into account the interests of other groups, including the broader community, employees and suppliers, when considering a sale" (Lank, 2007). Concomitantly, the airline minimized the tally of shares tendered as merely a "straw poll" and the board election as representing a minority opinion (only 40 percent among its outstanding shares) on the grounds that almost 40 percent of Midwest's outstanding shares failed to vote at all in the pivotal proxy battle (Adams, 2007; Hirschman 2007a, 2007b; Lank, 2007; Midwest: Only 40, 2007). AirTran, meanwhile, contended that if there is such a thing as "corporate democracy," the board election results should be a powerful indicator that the majority of Midwest shareholders want to do a deal (Lank, 2007). Whatever the results of AirTran's July presentation to the board, Midwest still had some potent tools to avoid a takeover, including a legal provision that would prevent AirTran, should it acquire 10 percent of Midwest stock, from buying the company for three years without the board's approval and a "poison pill" provision that would allow Midwest's board to drive up the cost by flooding the market with more shares if AirTran acquired 15 percent of its stock (Hirschman, 2007b, 2007c; Lank, 2007)

Each side publicly lined up supporters. AirTran released a letter from its union partners (e.g., National Pilots Association, Orlando Teamsters) endorsing the Midwest takeover (AirTran Unions, 2006). Then Institutional Shareholder Services, "an influential corporate governance watchdog group," supported AirTran's efforts to elect three dissident directors and criticized the lack of turnover in Midwest's board (an average of 14 years of service for current directors and Hoeksema at the helm for 23 years) (Hirschman, 2007c). Midwest, which has a hub in Kansas City, received the endorsement of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's board to maintain its independence as well as support from the president of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (Daykin, 2006a; Rovito, 2007). Concerned citizens/customers individually expressed their support for Midwest's independence on websites, through

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letters to the editor, and in interviews with reporters (Bauer-King, 2007; Daykin, 2006b; Fredrix, 2007). More than 32,000 people signed an electronic anti-merger petition on Midwest's "SaveTheCookie.com" website (Hirschman, 2007a, 2007b). Midwest also secured support for its continued independence from Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle and the state's congressional delegation (Adams, 2007). Wisconsin Senator Herb Kohl, chair of the U.S. Senate's Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights Subcommittee, vowed to pounce on any anti-trust violations by AirTran (Skiba, 2007). Understandably, Midwest's pilots union chose to remain officially neutral, since their members would have to work with whichever company won the contest (Daykin, 2006b).

The AirTran vs. Midwest takeover attempt is an instance in which the main players publicly prioritized different values and each needed to persuade stakeholders with little or indirect input into the decision yet whose cooperation would be essential to success either way (e.g., Midwest shareholders, employees, and customers) that its interpretation was superior. Midwest was particularly reliant on effective rhetorical leadership among these groups as it had more to lose and the board and directors themselves controlled only 7.3 percent of Midwest's shares compared to the approximately 60 percent of shares promised to, but not yet acquired by, AirTran (Hirschman, 2007c). Midwest's spokespeople repeatedly stressed that the consequences of choice affected not only its stockholders, but the broader community, employees, and suppliers and that the board was looking out for all concerned (Daykin, 2006b; Hoeksema, 2007; Lank, 2007). The rhetorical concepts of *loci communes* and transcendence are useful in examining how and why public discourse might tip stakeholder support to embrace or resist a change, especially when both business positions have some merit.

Loci Communes and Transcendence in Arguing about Change

Loci communes provide rhetorical ways of organizing reality that do not depend on any particular situation or subject matter; they are general enough to be available in all circumstances and hence are "common places" for grouping and inventing relevant material (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 83). As common premises regarding what is desirable, good, or preferable, *loci communes* "function as the constitutive principles of our discourse, i.e., as the bases for our interpretation of general values in situated moments of decision and action" (Cox, 1982, p. 228). From necessity, "all audiences, of all kinds, have to take *loci* into account," argued Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, p. 85). Because *loci communes* involve matters of interpretation not certainty, the parties addressed may reject a *locus*, and the speaker who invokes a particular *locus* may be required to justify it and defend its superiority to interpretations funded by alternative *loci* (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, pp. 84-85). Furthermore, even very general *loci* invite confrontation by contrary alternatives, such as the value of the enduring confronted with the value of the precarious and fleeting (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 85). Because these general premises about what constitutes the preferable are so, well, *common* in how both speakers and audiences daily make meaning and decide close practical questions, people seldom appreciate their argumentative and critical potential (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 84). And, because *loci communes* form the most general premises that play a part in justifying most

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human choices, they often remain implied or unspoken as an enthymematic warrant or backing in an argument (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 84).

The reason *loci communes* are so pivotal in struggles that involve change is that they provide premises for intensifying commitment to or establishing hierarchies among competing desirable values and hence conflicting courses of action (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 83). Although values in theory may be relatively independent, their fulfillment often comes into conflict in a specific context where competing values both cannot be served equally well: "The reason why one feels obligated to order values in a hierarchy, regardless of the result, is that simultaneous pursuit of these values leads to incompatibilities, obliges one to make choices" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 82). In fact, though many values are shared by most people (who wouldn't like both quantity and quality, both cheap fares and business-class service?), in situated practice one often must privilege some values over their contraries; the key to whether a stakeholder accepts one interpretation and its related action course over another is the relative intensity with which s/he adheres to various values or the hierarchy by which s/he prioritizes them when they seem incompatible in a particular situation (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 81).

Loci communes are advanced as bases of choice only when a particular value hierarchy must be defended and one of the contrary values subordinated or sacrificed at least temporarily (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, pp. 80, 83). Consequently, contests among contrary *loci communes* are not pitched battles that vilify the opponent or the alternative course as evil or completely unworthy. Rather they offer responsible rhetorical approaches for prioritizing or deciding between two reasonable, independently desirable alternatives (neither of which is unequivocally better for all concerned), which offer distinct kinds of benefits and which are practically incompatible in a particular situation--without totally devaluing the basis from which one's opponents interpret things (Cox, 1982, p. 228). Thus, understanding *loci communes* offers rhetorical leaders a civil and practical approach for appealing to direct and indirect stakeholders who are choosing where to stand and why in a contest between two valued, yet incompatible options. This view also flexibly recognizes that value hierarchies cannot and should not be set in stone, but constantly are renegotiated depending on the range of stakeholders and the unfolding situation. The AirTran-Midwest dispute concerned the relative prioritization of the *loci* of the possible and the existent as well as of the *loci* of quantity and quality. Both sides tried to reconcile the resulting tension between quantity and quality, while still privileging one value over the other, though they used different rhetorical tactics to do so.

The Possible vs. The Existent

Public rhetoric in the AirTran-Midwest struggle brought the existent, one of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's six *loci communes*, into a contest for stakeholders' prioritization with its situated contrary, the *locus* of the possible. The *locus* of the existent affirms "the superiority of that which exists, of the actual, of the real, over the possible, the contingent, or the impossible" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 94). Midwest, of course, argued for the supremacy of staying with that which currently existed: an

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independent airline with its proven benefits for a range of stakeholders. Meanwhile, AirTran asserted that Midwest had not realized the full potential of the Milwaukee area and that its acquisition would lead the airline and community to new levels of success. Midwest countered with the impossibility or unlikelihood of AirTran delivering on those promises and a plea to consider both the longevity of its demonstrated yields and the riskiness of forsaking a proven, home-grown airline.

In defending Midwest's record and likelihood of continued success, Hoeksema (2007) wrote in an open letter:

> For more than two decades, Midwest Airlines has been Milwaukee's hometown airline, offering passengers "The best care in the air." . . . Our unique approach to service, our experience serving Milwaukee, and most importantly, our own business model speak louder than AirTran's words. We've built a better airline. . . . Midwest's business model will succeed. For the past 23 years, we've enjoyed some success, weathered downturns and adapted to a changing industry. The decisions we make today are based on the knowledge we've gained from listening to our customers and working hard to provide Milwaukee a high level of service.

In a different but also publicized letter to Midwest shareholders, Hoeksema stated, "AirTran has failed to show a profit in three of the last four quarters, while Midwest has been profitable in three of the last four quarters"(Daykin, 2007a). In a full-page newspaper ad, Hoeksema implored stakeholders to believe in Midwest's business strategy: "For our entire history, we've had to overcome the skeptics who said we were too small or our business model couldn't work, and we've always emerged as the exception that succeeded" (Fredrix, 2007). Midwest's independent expansion plans included adding six new destinations and 12 new routes in 2007 (Midwest CEO, 2007).

AirTran stressed the possible benefits to all stakeholders that were contingent on it absorbing Midwest. Kevin Healy, vice president of planning, noted that AirTran's acquisition of Midwest "would bring nearly $1 billion in economic benefit to Wisconsin, create more than 1,100 jobs and expand service by 74 flights and 29 destinations" (Skiba, 2007). AirTran's chairman and CEO Joe Leonard predicted that the combined company would realize $3.5 billion in revenues and have 15,000 employees by the end of 2007 and offer 1,000 departures a day in 74 cities (Fredrix, 2007; Midwest CEO, 2007). AirTran contended that merger would strengthen both airlines and spur growth (Adams, 2007). CEO Leonard noted that AirTran's aggressive growth plans promised to expand opportunities for Midwest pilots, flight attendants, and other employees (Daykin, 2006b). A statement by AirTran spokesman Tad Hutcheson touted the desirable future economic possibilities for both indirect and direct stakeholders: "AirTran's plan is focused on jobs and economic growth in the Milwaukee community, . . . and we will continue to push our proposal which we believe will create greater value for Midwest shareholders" (Daykin, 2007a). Because it would replace Midwest's two-across seats with a standard two-by-three set of narrower seats and so accommodate more passengers per flight, AirTran predicted that it could lower fares enough to attract to Milwaukee more passengers from the Chicago area who currently use O'Hare Airport (Daykin, 2007a).

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By contrast, Midwest, contended Leonard, is just "too small" to continue to compete effectively in a time of airline consolidations, let alone to deliver comparable benefits (Daykin, 2006b). AirTran protested Hoeksema's publicized negative assessment of its expansion plan, calling his comment "out of line and inconsistent with the reality of the market" (Daykin, 2007a). Healy and other AirTran spokespeople warned that the fact that Midwest had revised its 2007 earnings projections downward twice before the board of directors' election (see Daykin, 2007c) indicated that its plan to remain independent was flawed and the company was in need of rescue from its "risky go-it-alone plan" (Hirschman, 2007b; Lank, 2007; Midwest Air Warns, 2007). AirTran claimed that the transition to gain the projected benefits would be feasible, even easy. In ads, AirTran argued that merger "makes sense" because of the airlines' similar aircraft and complementary routes and hubs. (AirTran's hub is Atlanta). CEO Leonard further claimed that the two airlines' reliance on Boeing 717s could make the merger "seamless" (Fredrix, 2007). All these arguments depended on auditors' valuing the possible or the contingent above the existent.

The purported gains of an acquisition are exaggerated or misleading, but the loss of established benefits is sure, countered Midwest, pointing up the value of the existent. Midwest VP Skornicka claimed that the AirTran takeover likely would jeopardize over 700 local maintenance and administrative jobs and would be unlikely to increase greatly flight service out of Milwaukee (Daykin, 2006b). AirTran's claims that Milwaukee currently is underserved are untrue, charged Midwest, and its promised flight schedules and route map (based on population figures that include much of suburban Chicago) are "unsustainable based on Milwaukee's actual size and passenger demand" (Daykin, 2007a; Hoeksema, 2007). In his letter to shareholders, Hoeksema characterized AirTran as "desperate to buy Midwest to stave off further erosion of its business" and accused AirTran of leaving "a trail of broken promises in markets it enters with great fanfare," citing the example of Dallas/Fort Worth (Daykin, 2007a).

While AirTran's glittering possibilities would not be realized, argued Midwest, existing benefits surely would be sacrificed in the change. After detailing Midwest's superior customer service, customer programs, and onboard amenities, Hoeksema (2007) warned,

> These and the other amenities you've come to expect from Midwest would all disappear in an AirTran takeover. . . . Additionally, under the AirTran plan, service to the smaller cities we currently serve—such as Appleton, Madison and Green Bay—would likely disappear over time.

The Midwest CEO also cited Milwaukee's loss of economic clout and pride and Wisconsinites' loss of a voice or priority in future decisions should the hometown airline be overtaken by outsiders (Hoeksema, 2007). And he grimly predicted to the Associated Press that an acquisition would rob his airline of its "charm" and require more seats, less leg room, and giving up perks like Midwest's trademark chocolate chip cookies:

> I think their vision, based on what you read, is to convert it to a commodity carrier that does not have the focus on service that we do and to make it into a high-

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> density, low-cost product, eliminate some of the things that we offer . . . and turn it into AirTran. (Midwest CEO, 2007)

While much of AirTran's appeal rested implicitly on the *locus* of the possible and hopes for the future dividends of taking a chance on change, Midwest championed the comfort and superiority of the existent, the proven commodity, the bird in the hand in this case and so exhorted stakeholders to resist change.

Quantity vs. Quality

Contests over change often involve more than one pair of competing *loci*. As much of the already-cited discourse suggests, a second struggle existed in this case over relatively prioritizing the *loci* of quantity and quality. Both AirTran and Midwest claimed that they provided both quality and quantity, but each clearly favored a different value as the determining basis for the merger decision. The *locus* of quantity is obvious, yet more complex than "bigger is necessarily better" and "more of any good thing is better than less of it." It can take various forms, including advocating the superiority of the action course that serves the greater number of people, that is more durable and lasting, or that is more widespread, more common, or more prevalent already (see Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, pp. 85-89). "More often than not," wrote Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), "a *locus* relating to quantity constitutes a major, though implied, premise, without which the conclusion would have no basis" (p. 85). In the case of a business decision, the notion that quantitatively more is the goal is likely assumed.

AirTran's position rested on precisely this assumption. Its key public reasons for merger were all quantitative (e.g., *bigger* airline, *more* jobs, *more* flights, *more* destinations, *lower* fares, *more* passengers, *more* economic growth, *more* profits, a *majority* of Midwest stockholders on their side; on profits, see also AirTran Beats, 2007). Meanwhile, the airline merely refuted charges that quality would decline precipitously after merger rather than citing improved quality as a reason for action. For example, VP Healy refuted critical comments about AirTran by Wisconsin's Senator Kohl with merely "I'm not sure who wrote these remarks for the senator, but clearly they have never flown with AirTran. AirTran Airways does have low fares, but we are far from no-frills" (Skiba, 2007). Likewise, AirTran VP Hutcheson proclaimed, "We don't want to destroy Midwest;" had they, he said, we would have moved into Milwaukee and competed directly (a negative instance of the *locus* of the possible, which the company eschewed). Quality still will be available after the acquisition, AirTran claimed. Hutcheson noted that AirTran had promised to keep serving cookies and that those customers who want more service can pay extra to fly business class (Midwest CEO, 2007). Even when AirTran approached the subject of serving stakeholder interests beyond the narrow category of shareholders, it focused on the quantitative. For instance, AirTran's president and COO Bob Fornaro worried publicly about shareholder profit as well as service reductions, lost jobs, and reduced economic activity for Milwaukee and higher travel prices for consumers if Midwest rejected AirTran's offer. He concluded, "On all three scores [i.e., the interests of shareholders, employees, and the community], our bid wins"

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(Reed, 2007). This side's broader perspective essentially added up, rather than integrating, various quantitative aspects of the different interests.

Conversely, Midwest's spokespeople stressed the greater relative importance of quality. The *locus* of quality claims that the truth does not necessarily lie in the more numerous or the more common or popular, but requires dealing in a higher order, beyond and incomparable to numerical assessments (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 89). Unlike the premise of quantity, business advocates who appeal to quality usually need to defend this premise explicitly. In this case, an early statement by Hoeksema contended Midwest's singularity, "We are successful because we provide customers with an exceptional travel experience. . . . Our product and service are unique, and are not readily compatible with a merger with another carrier" (Daykin, 2006b). At a news conference, Hoeksema elaborated that Midwest prefers to be known primarily for its brand and service, not low prices: "The bottom line is we are not a commodity carrier" (AirTran Unions, 2006). VP Skornicka explained one special touch: "We tell our flight attendants that their job is to treat their customers as if they were a guest in their own home" (Fredrix, 2007). In his open letter, Hoeksema (2007) made this quality comparison: "Midwest has been recognized as the best domestic airline more than 45 times in the past 17 years by a variety of ratings surveys. AirTran ranks poorly, if at all, in many of the same surveys." Key passages of that public letter detail the unique, qualitatively superior features and flight experiences offered by an independent Midwest. The unique is upheld as not only precarious and at risk (as established through the existent vs. possible opposition), but also rare and unlikely to recur, therefore precious and worth preserving (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, pp. 89-91).

Throughout the drama, but especially once 60 percent of its shareholders expressed themselves by backing AirTran's board candidates, Midwest stressed that, though representing a minority opinion, its original board knew what it was doing and had considered thoroughly AirTran's proposals (Daykin, 2006b; Midwest CEO, 2007). This board uniquely knows and is committed to the Milwaukee market, Midwest spokespeople claimed, and its stand-alone expansion plan is the one that will be more profitable than a "naïve" jump at AirTran's "opportunistic" promises of quick money (AirTran Beats, 2007; Hirschman, 2007c). Even under the threat of three AirTran candidates displacing incumbent board members, Midwest remained publicly steadfast about the superiority of its position. VP Skornicka claimed that the new board members would be welcomed, if elected, and predicted, "When they learn details of our strategic plan, they'll be persuaded of the long-term value of remaining independent, just as other board members have been" (Hirschman, 2007b). Thus, like AirTran's defense of its quality, Midwest defended its quantitative profitability, while still maintaining that quality should be the main decision criterion and setting up "long-term value" as its transcendent term.

Transcendence

Each company claimed to offer, just differently prioritize, both quality and quantity, yet their arguments set up measures that put the two in practical opposition. Consequently, each side needed to negotiate the tension created by how they had framed the situation.

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Both airlines did this, somewhat clumsily, by adopting a "both-and" position. Essentially, this argument left quantity and quality as separate considerations and claimed that both could be fulfilled simultaneously, though to different degrees; hence there was no need to sacrifice one value completely in pursuit of the other, even though one clearly must be subordinated. Midwest pointed to its existent profitability and affordability, though this argument suffered when the airline performed worse than expected and twice revised its 2007 predictions downward, while AirTran exceeded expectations (AirTran Beats, 2007; Daykin 2007c; Midwest Air Warns, 2007). Hoeksema's (2007) public letter argued, "Midwest customers already enjoy low fares. Because Midwest's unit costs are comparable to those of low-cost carriers, we are able to offer both low fares and award-winning service." Hoeksema also noted that Midwest's plan to add flights as well as increase passenger capacity would bring "significantly greater growth in profitability" (Daykin, 2006b). He claimed that the board's long-term expansion plan promised more quantity as well as continued quality: "We're probably in the strongest position we've ever been in from a competitive point of view in terms of low cost and good service. . . . And that, I think, is the secret for success going forward" (Midwest CEO, 2007).

AirTran spokespeople could not point to an established track record of quality, in spite of VP Healy's defense of his airline as "far from no-frills" (Skiba, 2007). In April, AirTran President Fornaro implied that, in itself, his company's expansion (a quantity measure) indicated an acceptable quantity-quality balance: "Our revenue performance was better than expected and reflects a balancing of capacity in the marketplace as well as demand for our product" (AirTran Beats, 2007). AirTran again relied on the *locus* of the possible to claim that it *could* add more quality service features, *if* it acquired Midwest. Early in the struggle, CEO Leonard stated, "Together we can create a stronger, more competitive airline that offers more employment opportunities, a solid nationwide route network and exceptional customer service" (AirTran Unions, 2006). He speculated that AirTran "might adopt some of Midwest's service features, like the on-board meals from Mader's restaurant" (Daykin, 2006b). For many stakeholders, Midwest's warm chocolate chip cookies were the synecdochic emblem of that airline's overall quality, so they became a symbolic flag that AirTran tried to capture or at least neutralize (see Lank, 2007; Midwest CEO, 2007). In January, VP Hutcheson tried to persuade stakeholders that AirTran would take a hard look at Midwest and even learn from its customer service practices; he specified that AirTran would bake cookies on its flights should merger occur: "That's a distinctive hallmark of Midwest service and we have to keep it" (Fredrix, 2007).

While each side used the "both-and" bridging device, Midwest, which needed something more rhetorically given its vulnerability, also offered a more sophisticated view through the transcendent term "long-term value." When A and B are perceived as practically incompatible, as this struggle set up quality and quantity, transcendence can offer a viewpoint from which the two cease to be opposites. "When objects are not in a line, and you would have them in a line without moving them, you might put them into a line by shifting your angle of vision," wrote Burke (1984, p. 224). Transcendence is more than a rhetorical "both-and" move that leaves A and B intact and adds them together; the "all-important ingredient (what even the articulate French might be willing to call a *je ne sais*

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quoi) that makes all the difference between a true transcendence and the empty acquisition of the verbal paraphernalia" involves somehow blending the two to make a persuasive and subsuming third term (Burke, 1984, pp. 336-337; see also Olson, 1989). Midwest exercised this rhetorical option effectively.

By promoting "*true value*" as the transcendent term that subsumed and blended quantity and quality and acknowledged both direct and indirect stakeholders' interests, while simultaneously differentiating long-term and short-term perspectives, Midwest provided a complex way to see it remaining an independent airline as the better overall bet, even after its 2007 profit shortfall and the pro-AirTran vote in the board of directors' election. Midwest maintained that stakeholders, including but not limited to shareholders, would see "*greater value* [italics added]" and "better *long-term value* [italics added] by sticking with Midwest's own growth plan" (Daykin, 2007a, 2007b). In his public letter, Hoeksema (2007) explained,

> The Midwest plan is not only sound and achievable; it is in the best interests of those who live, work and travel in Milwaukee and Wisconsin. And it's because of the long-term value inherent in this plan that AirTran's offer does not reflect the true value of our airline to our shareholders, customers, employees and the community.

A June statement from Hoeksema elaborated, "It is all about value. . . . We believe the strategic initiatives, particularly those recently announced, will unlock value not reflected in the current share price or in the AirTran offer" (Daykin, 2007b). This tack allowed Midwest to discount "appearances" that AirTran was preferable even quantitatively and called stakeholders to look at a "truer" (i.e., more comprehensive, inclusive, and long-term) perspective on value, something that included both quality and quantity and multiple interests integrated in a more organic way than merely summing the accounting columns. This is how Midwest justified resisting the "common sense" June vote by shareholders as based on false appearances. The contrast in comprehensive perspectives is why stakeholders should side with Midwest and against change. Hoeksema argued: "The Midwest board of directors is fully committed to creating long-term value for Midwest shareholders, while AirTran's primary goal is to engage in an opportunistic transaction" (Hirschman, 2007c). After the directors' election, "Midwest proponents continue[d] to insist that AirTran's offer is less than the value of the company in the long term" and predicted that the new board members ultimately would be persuaded that rejecting AirTran's offer was the wiser decision (Hirschman, 2007b; Lank, 2007). Although AirTran's Hutcheson occasionally used the term "greater value," he treated it as a synonym for greater quantity alone (i.e., bigger profits for shareholders) rather than a nuanced synergy between quantity and quality (see Daykin, 2007). Transcendence to this richer understanding of "true value" helped Midwest resist AirTran's position, which sought to turn the "normal" or default or common into a proactively normative basis for decision (see Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 88).

Conclusion

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The AirTran-Midwest case offers several lessons for rhetorical leaders in business during times of potential change. First, more than one *loci* may be at work in the arguments on either side of a controversy. In this case, the rhetoric involved not just quantity vs. quality or the possible vs. the existent but an interaction among the four. The resulting tangle required Midwest to use more sophisticated rhetorical attempts at transcendence to reconcile the tensions and justify its "uncommon" business position. Second, *loci* must evolve during the debate with relation to both the situation and the counter-arguments launched by one's opposition. Midwest, for instance, needed to develop its transcendent term as the struggle developed and AirTran scored some victories. An argumentative position cannot be totally blocked out in advance but must remain dynamic and responsive to repeated change. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) declared,

> The argumentative situation, which is essential in the choice of *loci*, embraces both the goal the speaker has set for himself and the arguments he may encounter. The two elements are actually closely connected; the desired goal, even when this is the initiation of a well-determined action, is simultaneously the alteration of certain convictions and the refutation of certain arguments, alteration and refutation, which are essential to starting the action. (p. 96)

A corollary to the need for an argumentative position to remain supple throughout a conflict is the lesson that the same *loci* do not necessarily pair well together across situations nor do audiences necessarily respond the same way to the same combination of *loci* in different situations. For example, Midwest fruitfully paired the *loci* of the existent with quality to resist change, though often the *loci* of the existent and quantity go together (e.g., when iterations of the already extant and the more common coincide), and quality is typically a strategy used by reformers rather than defenders of the status quo (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, pp. 89, 97). Careful analysis of the unfolding rhetorical situation rather than any enduring preferences of the advocates (e.g., for quality over quantity arguments or possible over existent arguments) must guide the dynamic development of *loci* and transcendence strategies in each unique case. Thorough rhetorical training can help one discern the possible effective combinations for a given situation.

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Biography

KATHRYN M. OLSON is Professor of Communication and Director of the Rhetorical Leadership Graduate Certificate/Concentration Program at University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. Professor Olson has published more than 40 scholarly essays. Her numerous research awards include two National Communication Association Golden Monograph Awards and the Stanley L. Saxton Applied Research Award.

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Uncertainties and Resistance to Change

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Introduction

This paper aims to fill a gap between knowledge and practice about the effectiveness of rhetorical strategies in the communication of change inside large private organizations. The issue addressed here is that rhetorical strategies for communicating change can help overcome resistance to change in highly changeable organizational settings. My contribution to the knowledge of business communication arises from the application of both rhetorical communicative tools and concepts of communication uncertainty and change to a real business situation. A case of leadership change in the British subsidiary of Procter & Gamble has been investigated to demonstrate how to transform uncertainties into competitive advantages. Specifically, this case of best practice suggests that the rhetoric used in communication can help to overcome the problem of *"interpreted perceptions"* (Driskill & Goldstein 1986) or the unsharedness of organizational meaning in environments of routinized instability. Thus, a model of legitimization of uncertainties is suggested here in order to improve effectiveness in leadership "*in settings where conflicting forces are tolerated; where decision makers can live with tension and paradox*" (Weick & Ashford 2006, pp. 727-728). The gain to be made in attributing a positive connotation to uncertainties lies in the awareness that change is part of the business reality of flexible and adaptive organizations. As Suchan (2006) pointed out, there is no agreement about the concept of change in current scientific literature, which is mainly focused on the dichotomy of ongoing change vs. planned change in organizations. Feldman (2000) found out that organizational routines or varying regularities have a potential for change in their internal dynamics and in the thoughts and reactions of the people involved in such procedures. Other researchers have focused on strategies of reducing uncertainty about change by improving communication, so as to allow smooth adjustment of employees in the transition process (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois & Callan 2004).

A persistent variation in organizational settings (Levinthal 1991, Wall 2004, Weick 2006), "*unanticipated consequences of purposive social action"* (Merton 1936) and finally an *"organizational becoming"* (Tsoukas & Chia 2002) are basically the theoretical framework of the case-study explored in this paper. Thus, the illustration is framed according to the above described concepts of change as being constitutive of organizational reality. The rhetorical strategies adopted by the change agent to lead the transition have shown how large organizations can succeed in highly uncertain business environments. The practical importance of this investigation relates to the implications for learning and creativity for leaders communicating under stable conditions of uncertainty. From the perspective of communication uncertainty theories, a theoretical shift towards uncertainty has been highlighted as an ongoing organizational situation (Driskill & Goldstein 1987, Grant 2001, 2007, Baecker 2003, Kouzes & Posner 2002, Babrow 2001). However, the traditional approach in organization science analyses the factors that guarantee stability (Simon 1991) in order to eliminate uncertainty (Cyert & March 1963) or to reduce uncertainties (Berger &

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Calabrese 1977). Admittedly, the concept of uncertainty applied to change describes realities that are inherently unpredictable and unavoidable. Crozier & Friedberg (1977) claim that unpredictability is not an exception; it is the starting point for understanding the limits and real meaning of constraints in organizations (p. 44).

To conclude, rhetorical communication appears to be an effective instrument in the construction of common understanding over new organizational practices in uncertain business environments characterized by ongoing changes.

Routinized instability: Uncertainties and change in organizations

The concepts of uncertainty and ambiguity have in common the occurrence of an unstable communicative process. Uncertainties happen when individuals are unable to assign meaning to the events or to predict future actions, whilst ambiguity is linked to the possibility of assigning multiple interpretations to the same event (Kramer 2004, p. 76).

Uncertainty Avoidance is a concept that first appeared in the literature of the American Organization of Sociology. Specifically, Cyert & March (1963) hold the view that organizations in any country need to handle uncertainty and have to live with it as the future is inherently uncertain (p. 166). Different modes of coping with uncertainties have related to the intention to find solutions to perceived problems; uncertainties and ambiguities have been envisaged as something to be reduced, avoided or managed in order to control them. For example, Cyert & March emphasize the crucial role of uncertainties in organizations by describing them as a *"feature of organizational decision making"*, suggesting negotiating with the environment – competitors, suppliers, customers – in order to make it controllable, "*so as to eliminate uncertainty"* (p. 168). Cyert and March are aware of the existence of uncertainties as elements of business practices but they fail to consider uncertainties as a positive quality of organizational procedures.

In psychology the debate around uncertainties started with an exploration of the initial entry stage of interpersonal interaction; Berger & Calabrese (1975) elaborated a theoretical framework grounded in the assumption that reducing uncertainty is crucial in communication: "*Central to the present theory is the assumption that when strangers meet, their primary concern is one of uncertainty reduction or increasing predictability about the behaviour of both themselves and others in the interaction"* (p. 100*).* Berger & Calabrese emphasize that communicators try to predict others' behavior in order to reduce the uncertainty that results from "*a number of alternative ways in which each interactant might behave"* (p. 100). It follows that the receiver selects the response from a range of possible alternatives according to the prediction. A formulation of seven axioms generated a considerable body of work in organizational and psychological literature to validate or to challenge Berger & Calabrese's model. For example, these axioms have been applied to political campaigns (Kennamer & Chaffee 1982, cited in Kramer 2004), to health fields by measuring the doctor-patient interactions (William & Meredith 1984, cited in Kramer 2004) and to organizations (Miller & Jablin 1991, cited in Kramer 2004). In general, there is agreement within the disciplines that reducing uncertainty is a human need which permits the prediction of others' behaviour in communication processes.

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To sum up, Berger & Calabrese (1972) assert that individuals exchange information aimed at reducing uncertainty by constructing predictions and explanations based on the behavior of others. This analysis is somewhat faulty because one can find some communicative performances of information exchange which are not driven by a search for predictability. For example, the interaction in occasional relationships – in the private sphere or in business, could be of this kind; insofar as the interactants do not intend to establish a lasting relationship with others, they are somehow indifferent to predictions or explanations of the others' behavior. It follows that in this case they are not motivated to predict future events. The issue addressed here concerns the possibility of considering uncertainties as a positive quality of communicative performance in situations where interactants choose not to manage the future events by searching for predictability. Rather, the interactants wait to see if future events will be better or worse than the *status quo*.

Austin Babrow (2001) suggests that the most widely discussed misconception is that uncertainty is bad or that *"uncertainty is uniform and uniformly negative but also on the mistaken assumption that its reduction is possible"* (p. 563). Indeed, uncertainties cannot be avoided, since future events are inherently unpredictable.

In the field of business communication one can note that uncertainty includes phenomena captured by terms such as 'change' and 'adaptation'. These concepts are consistent with uncertainty inasmuch as they describe realities that are inherently unstable and unpredictable. Tsoukas & Chia (2002) hold the view that organizational change is so pervasive and unavoidable that it can be named as an *"organizational becoming"*, because change is constitutive of reality, since it occurs without necessarily intentional managerial action. As such, we need to learn to love changes and become "*Protean organizations"* as postulated by Wall (2004): *"The Greek God Proteus could alter his shape at will to elude his pursuers. When he chose, he could transform himself into a tree, a pillar of fire or a wild boar, a gift he used strategically to further his own ends. Modern organizations need to become 'protean' in the same way in order to respond to competitive threats or to pursue new opportunities"* (p. 38). The ability of Protean organizations to adapt to change is a result of a legitimization of uncertainties based on their inevitable occurrence. It has been demonstrated that to obtain better organizational outcomes or a successful adaptation of employees in situations of transition, change implementers have to reduce uncertainty about change through improving the effectiveness of communication (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois & Callan 2004). However, this investigation relies on strategies to reduce uncertainty about change, which implies a defence against uncertainties. Instead, the legitimization of uncertainty as a positive quality of organizational performance is crucial in improving business effectiveness in environments of unpredictable change.

The peculiarity of the uncertain organisational patterns is that they never settle down to a stable position, because of continuous adaptation to the changeable events or practices, which take place either within or outside of organizations. Levinthal (1991) emphasizes that the persistent variation in organisational settings is the result of both adaptation and selection from a number of alternatives viewed as *"fundamentally interrelated processes of change"* (p. 144). It follows that a positive connotation attributed to uncertainties is crucial in allowing the *"organizational becoming"* (Tsoukas & Chia 2002) or to "*respond to competitive threats"* (Wall 2004). Managing uncertainties should be like balancing institutionalized routines that tend to persist with unpredictable new opportunities that are useful to the health of the business. Thus, it is not by chance that business experts are gradually implementing research on the best strategizing process based on the planning of scenarios (Van der Heijden 2005).

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The conceptual shift moves managers away from the prediction of one best solution towards the discovery of causal occurrences of some events to face up to the uncertainty. So far, the uncertainty about change need not be reduced or eliminated because it is result of the essential unpredictability of changeable business settings. It is not possible to exploit business opportunities without uncertainty.

Decision making and interpreted perceptions

In the field of business communication Driskill & Goldstein have defined uncertainty as *"an interpreted perception*" (1986: p. 45) because there is no shared meaning attributed to organizational actions and events. For example, the communication expert Grant argues that the individual interpretation of signs or the attribution of meaning as a reaction to open appeals is uncertain as "*statement A will never be received as statement A by the receiver"* (2001, p. 48). The transmission channel of communicative performance is inherently uncertain because of the unshared exchange of signs between speaker and hearer. Consequently, uncertainties *"need to be reduced by fictional codes constructed to simulate or impute 'shared knowledge"* (Grant 2007, p. 107). The need for predictability urges human beings to construct fictional realities in order to solve the problem of anxiety over the unknown future. In the field of strategy management Lorange notes *"We can no longer use the same old communication models, particularly the over-simplified concept that our messages go directly to our intended receivers with little or no interference"* (2005, p. 55). So, communication channels are noisy because interference is part of the normal communicative pattern in the operation of communicative selection of different options. Thus, meanings correspond to multiple possible interpretations, which are constructed as a reaction to open appeals or '*acoustic phenomena'* represented in the classical 'Organon model of language' (Bühler 1990: 30-39). Meetings, negotiations, telephone conversations, video conferences, announcements and speeches are examples of uncertain communicative performances. Lorange makes a list of communication obligations linked to the manager's job which involve communicative interferences:*"Transmit information from top management, Obtain feedback from employees, Transmit information from "down" to "up", Motivate, inspire and encourage personal development, Profile and market units, Speak at meetings, Carry out periodic evaluations of employees, Give feedback, criticism and praise, Speak personally with staff, Negotiate, Present unpopular decisions" (p. 55*). The above mentioned communicative interactions correspond to the everyday activity of managers since work environments are inherently unstable. In a sense, managers engage in uncertain communicative activities because transmitted messages can be interpreted in different ways according to the receivers' perceptions.

Cyert & March (1963) suggest that decision making takes place under risk and uncertainty with respect to the behavior of the market, the behavior of competitors and the future actions of governmental agencies (p. 166). There is currently an amplification of routinized instability due to the expansion of markets in international environments. According to Baecker (2003), the ideology of rational organizational planning aimed at absorbing uncertainties cannot work at present because of unforeseen economic and political events which gradually become routine (p. 36). Mergers, acquisitions, cutting costs, leadership change, response to regulatory change, response to competitive threats, response to consumers' boycott, adoption of new technologies, quality improvement and entry into new markets are the most important factors

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of change. One can note that these changes are uncertain due to their inevitable unpredictability, as previously highlighted.

A crucial question is to what extent human beings are capable of transforming the disadvantage of living on the brink of an unknown future into a competitive advantage. Kohlrieser (2006) is aware that *"most people are driven by fear or by avoidance of pain. Only a few are driven by the benefits"* (p. 22). It is thus emphasized that *"The brain is hardwired to survive by looking for danger and pain. We can override this instinctual aspect of the brain to look for the positive and for ways to act with personal power"* (p. 18). Thus, personal power in highly uncertain business environments must be used to improve managerial confidence and to foster positive ways of constructing unstable organizational realities. Legitimization of uncertainties occurs when an increase in personal power contributes to avoiding organizational *inertia*. Crucially for Kouzes & Posner (2002), "*the study of leadership is the study of how men and women, in times of constancy and complacency, actively seek to disturb the status quo and awaken to new possibilities. They search for opportunities to change, grow, innovate, and improve*" (pp. *176-177).* It follows that organizational routines can be considered as organizational *inertia* because a stable managerial job implies a barrier to innovation and growth. Kouzes & Posner constructed the concept of leadership by using words such as 'uncertainty', 'adversity', 'hardship', 'disruption', 'transformation', 'transition' and 'new beginnings' to stress the importance of taking challenging – or uncertain business decisions (p. 177). Ironically, a leadership gap is a result of stability, such that continuity is guaranteed through routines. Thus, legitimization of uncertainties is useful for improving leadership effectiveness in business contexts of changeable settings. Developing sound and healthy organizations means embracing uncertainty to avoid organizational *inertia*. It is necessary to experience failure and success in order to be active in business activities.

A case of leadership change: Corporate clause and sharedness of meaning

The aim of this work is to demonstrate the communicative effectiveness of rhetorical strategies in highly uncertain business environments.

On one side, the legitimization of uncertainties is necessary to avoid organizational *inertia* for the health of the business. On the other side, the adoption of rhetorical strategies refers to a straightforward means of communication, where the risk in not sharing meaning is high. It is in avoiding the construction of multiple interpretations that rhetoric can help create a common sense of reality amongst the organizational members. In particular, the Aristotelian terms of *ethos* and *pathos* have been used to explain the rhetorical communicative style adopted to create some zones of common meaning, as described in detail in the following paragraph.

The research question can be stated as follows "To what extent can rhetoric help organizations to face the uncertainty of leadership changes?" The appropriate research strategy to answer the above question is the case study; here, a case of leadership change in the British subsidiary of Procter & Gamble in the period July 2004 – July 2007. It is a timely topic today insofar as small, medium and large companies are increasingly expanding their businesses in global markets. International managers have to manage cross-geographically and multi-divisionally while engaging in local businesses or in global units. Procter & Gamble is a Fortune 500, American global corporation based in Cincinnati, Ohio, that

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manufactures a wide range of consumer goods and holds about 60 subsidiaries and four headquarters around the globe.

In general, a leadership change appears to be a structural change because of the large disruption produced in the organizational experience of workers, employees and managers. Expatriates taking over their new assignments in their international career are expected to demonstrate specific skills in leading the change. In the case of Procter & Gamble one can say that leadership changes are a normal pattern of the organizational experience. As such, leadership changes can be considered as a routine taking place on average every three/six years in different departments of subsidiaries and headquarters worldwide. The method of a case-study has been chosen to allow an empirical investigation of the communicative competence of the change agent, the managing director, responsible for the British local business in the period July 1994 – July 1997. This is a real business context explored using multiple sources of evidence to gain an in-depth understanding of the communicative performance of the change agent. The data collection methods employed are mainly my notes taken in the direct observation of the managerial activity of the mentioned leader, then my participant observation of events and organizational ceremonies of many kinds as well as in-depth interviews with the managing director to gather detailed information on the communication strategies. Furthermore, the analysis of an internal survey conducted in the period January-March 2007 to investigate the employees` job satisfaction was useful to test the communicative effectiveness of the change agent. Similarly, Madlock (2008) has empirically investigated the link between leadership style, communicator competence and employee satisfaction to prove that both task and relational leadership styles are positively related to subordinate job and communication satisfaction. Indeed, the adoption of rhetorical strategies to communicate change can be considered as an appropriate communication tool of a relational style of leadership. Other researchers have investigated the role of rhetoric in influencing academic commitment to multiple goals across a sample of cases in the UK by highlighting the relationships between rhetoric and context (Jarzabkowski & Sillince 2007). However, these contributions do not directly relate rhetoric strategies to organisational patterns of uncertainty in changeable organisational patterns.

In highly changeable work environments leaders have to be skilled communicators to achieve a good reputation inside the organization and gain trust from organizational members. According to Lorange (2005) *"the organization must sell its strategy to its own employees, further implying that a primary function of managers is to do just this. This takes communication competency. Possessing the set of skills that makes managers effective communicators is part of strategy implementation today"* (p. 54). It follows that employees of large multinational companies are stakeholders to the extent that they are the vehicle of transmission of a good company image worldwide. An internal effective communication seems to be crucial for business success in the global marketplace. In short, a new leader has to deliver sustained growth and profitability for the corporation by re-thinking the work activity and adjusting the corporate values to fit the local subsidiary. To do so implies the definition of new strategies and the implementation of meaningful changes to deliver the new goals. The introduction of "adjusted" corporate values opens up issues related to the improvement of common understanding and perceptions, because the transition requires agreement over new organizational patterns. The organizational members are expected to develop adapted models of behavior to fit in with the new goals. Employees of multinational companies carry different constructions of realities, which have to be diverted into a restricted area of possible interpreted perceptions. This is in practice the aim of an effective communication or in Lorange's words, *"to communicate in understandable terms with each*

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other, and with a certain level of precision" (2005, p. 55). A creation of some zones of shared organizational meaning is crucial in overcoming resistance to change. The adjustment of corporate principles is a process of change because organizational members have to re-learn work activities and to re-commit to new work patterns. The transition phases leading to the final stage of new beginnings can be defined as a re-construction of consensus over new meanings.

The role of rhetorical communicative tools is relevant to help create some areas of common ground so as to avoid conflicts in the transition process and foster positive feelings of shared perceptions. So, this study addresses both issues of rhetoric and of communication uncertainty through an example of managerial effectiveness in the communication of change.

Effective rhetorical communication: A progressive adoption cycle

Traditional studies of Rhetoric derive from the ancient Greek. Rhetoric has a communicative connotation, since it is generally considered as the art of persuasion through language. Contemporary practices of rhetoric highlight the relevance of meaning as well.

In the field of business communication Sillince (2006) suggests that *"Rhetoric is the particular use of language deployed when a speaker addresses an audience in the form of a proposition about a controversy"* (p. 189). In the case of a leadership change the controversy relates to the search for consensus over new corporate values. The aim of rhetorical communicative tools is to reach a coordination of meanings between speaker and hearer thanks to the perception of belonging to a unique community, a work environment of trust and sincerity. Rhetorical communicative strategies can help create shared meanings by reinforcing the sense of belongingness to the corporation – a sense of 'we'-ness. The change agent has to avoid communicative misunderstandings or the production of multiple interpretations of the organizational reality by creating some zones of common meanings. It is within conditions of uncertainty that rhetoric defines the practice of people arguing their different projects (Holt 2006). The reference to the Aristotelian terms of *pathos* and *ethos* was useful to explain the communicative performance of the change agent. *Ethos* relates to the character and credibility of a speaker for the audience while *pathos* refers to the use of emotional appeals such as metaphor and storytelling to evoke feelings shared between the speaker and the audience. Holt (2006) argues that the Aristotelian *ethos* can refer to the possibility that managers can and should act morally to create an organizational awareness of their own conception of the common good. It is then taken for granted – to distinguish rhetoric from sophistry, that the Aristotelian's *ethos* is not meant to be an emotional manipulation of others in the service of exploitative interests. In addition, Holt (2006) claims that a good rhetorical communicator develops a publicly appropriate sensitivity to imagine the stories that the audience would like to tell taking advantage of emotional devices (*pathos*).

The rhetorical communicative approach investigated in this case-study follows the conceptual frameworks of the Aristotelian concepts of *ethos* and *pathos,* as previously described. The credibility or reputation of the new leader (*ethos*), reinforced through the use of emotional appeals (*pathos*) was crucial in overcoming resistance to change. According to Holt (2006) organizational procedures relate to a person's life stories. Consequently, the rhetorical performance of the change agent worked because in understanding others' perspectives an effective transmission of the proposed organizational procedures was possible. Suchan (2006)

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notes *"Change agents need to carefully frame the change message to minimize worker defensiveness. Frames are language-created windows and lenses on organizational experience that focus workers´ perception and understanding"* (p. 26). Thus, the change agent tried to frame the change in the British subsidiary by creating a new organizational experience that helped employees and managers to minimize the pain of the transition process. The aim was to change both the perception and the understanding of the job experience by means of new organizational words and slogans, a different office location, a new reward system and finally, gatherings or events to reinforce the sense of belongingness to the corporation. This transition process was characterized by the dominant adoption of rhetorical communicative strategies, firstly to overcome resistance to change and then, to reach the majority of organizational members and avoid the risk of distortions in the communication process caused by the transmission of information through intermediaries. This direct communication from the top manager to employees and managers was possible thanks to the straightforward nature of rhetorical communication and to its easy access to a large number of people. The assignment period of this change agent lasted three years and it was named as a "Progressive-Adoption Cycle" to describe the three stages of the transition:

1. Denial phase
2. Acceptance phase
3. Support phase

Denial Phase

The first phase of change was characterised by the introduction in the British subsidiary of the adjusted corporate values which fitted the new goals and did not clash with the standardized corporate values of the multinational company. The routine was gradually altered in transitional stages towards the new organizational patterns. Employees experienced a sense of loss and hurt by remembering the "good old days" and there was an instinctual attitude of refusal of new information. In this initial stage of confusion and chaos there was the necessity to transmit a visual image of the change by means of a material transformation of the work environment. New values needed to be continuously communicated through visual images and through re-inventing corporate and business language, and were made tangible through a change in the office environment. The new leader proposed a slogan "*Winning STAR Behaviors*", which stood for:

- *See reality*
- *Take decisions quickly and boldly*
- *Act with excellence and discipline*
- *Review and learn*

"See reality" refers to the value of seeing things for what they are without being defensive. As unpredictability is inherent in human life and in organizational patterns, managers should be persuaded of their managerial ability to take clear decisions without delay. To avoid organizational *inertia* one needs to strike a balance between the search for predictability to take advantage of new opportunities or to prevent mistakes, and the need for fast decision making. So, managerial confidence in decision-making has to be improved to face uncertainties related to risks of error, lack of information and time pressures. These risks constitute what Merton (1936) names as *"the unanticipated consequences of social purposive action"* in his well-known sociological article. Merton suggests that social purposive action is unpredictable because of lack of adequate knowledge, error, imperious immediacy of interest

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and value. Merton's conceptual framework can be applied to business communication since business decisions are an example of purposive action. In business terms one can suggest the following questions:

- *"How much information do managers need in order to take a decision? ("lack of adequate knowledge")*
- *To what extent does the fear of making errors impact on a business decision? ("error")*
- *What is the impact of time and of hierarchical pressure on decision-making? ("Imperious immediacy of interest")*
- *To what extent do subjective and own cultural values influence a business decision? ("value").*

These questions investigate the uncertainty of the decision-making process resulting from the unpredictability of future events and actions. Thus, the manager's job is to take challenging decisions as uncertainties cannot be eliminated or reduced. This communicative challenge relates to the ability to legitimize uncertainties in order to get to fast decision making.

Acceptance Phase

The second phase of transition in this leadership change of the British subsidiary set out to build emotional involvement and a sense of integration in new organizational patterns. In this stage employees and managers can see possibilities, build up energy to explore alternatives and learn new skills. Memorable initiatives foster feelings of belonging to a unique community crucial in overcoming resistance to change.

Yearly events were organized to communicate the past company results and the future planned achievements to a public of 850 people – British and Northern Irish employees and managers. Shared understanding was built through *pathos* or the heightening of emotional involvements occurring in magnificent places such as the 'Park Lane Hotel' in Central London or the new London Stadium 'Wembley Arena'. Moreover, the rhetorical tool of metaphors was deployed through story-telling to build up feelings of group-belonging; the change agent told the Aesop's fables to align common perceptions of the organizational reality. This is an example of a rhetorical performance that demonstrated sensitivity and an *"understanding of others' perspectives"* (Holt 2006).

Support Phase

A final rhetorical tool to definitively overcome the resistance to change was the construction of a company *ethos* through a clearly expressed reward system that celebrated outstanding performers and which was effective in developing employee commitment and feelings of ownership. Public recognition of any small accomplishments was useful in conveying enthusiasm and progress. For example, monthly conference meetings were organized to hand out *"Recognition Shares Certificates"* signed by the CEO of the company.

In conclusion, a measure of the effectiveness of the above mentioned rhetorical tools was shown in the results of an opinion survey conducted internally in the British subsidiary in the third year of the managing director's business activity. Results demonstrated a change in the behavior of employees, which implied the acceptance of the values called *"STAR behaviors"*, as previously described. For example, 88% of employees and managers agreed on the item *"I am encouraged to see reality on my business and raise potential issues"*, and 81% of

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interviewees declared *"I am empowered to make decisions that enable me to do my job effectively"*. So far, the transition has been conducted through an effective communicative performance: the rhetorical approach, proved by the high rates of agreement on items containing the "adjusted" corporate values proposed by the change agent. This case-study was useful to demonstrate that a leader can achieve communicative competence through the adoption of rhetorical strategies used to reach consensus over a new organizational experience. Admittedly, a task and relationship leadership style (Madlock 2008), which is by definition direct and straightforward as well as being sensitive to the others' perspectives, is crucial to the agreement on shared goals through a relational communication.

Concluding notes

This paper set out to combine rhetorical communicative tools and concepts of communication uncertainty to improve effectiveness in the communication of change in private corporations. A case of leadership change in the British subsidiary of Procter & Gamble showed how to overcome resistance to change by legitimizing uncertainties. This case of best practice investigated the rhetorical communicative performance of a change agent in the transformation of uncertainties into competitive advantages. Thus, the creation of some zones of sharedness of meaning was useful to improve common understanding of work practices and norms amongst a large number of corporate members through the rhetorical practice of *ethos* and *pathos* in Aristotelian terms. This entailed an effective transmission of the new organizational practice by the leader who could connect with the others' stories and points of view through the heightening of emotional involvement and the sense of belonging to the corporation. It is indeed in work environments characterized by *"organizational becoming"* (Tsoukas & Chia 2002) that people develop *"interpreted perceptions"* (Driskill & Goldstein 1986) insofar as they inter-subjectively make sense of their own business reality, which is *"an imputation of shared knowledge*" (Grant 2007).

A survey conducted internally in the organization in the last period of the assignment of the leader demonstrated wide consensus from the employees as well as the managers over the new adjusted corporate values proposed at the beginning of the transition process. This is the proof of the communicative effectiveness of the change agent, who was able to reach a wide number of organizational members directly thanks to the adoption of rhetorical strategies. This case has demonstrated that rhetorical strategies are particularly useful to executives eager to communicate directly with a large number of organizational members and to be aware of the perspectives of their audiences. Effectiveness of rhetorical approach implies a communicative competency crucial for strengthening the reputations of leaders inside large organizations.

However, it is relevant to point out that Procter & Gamble is an adaptive organization, which is open to new opportunities as to align with internal and external environmental threats. Consequently, the organizational members are used to ongoing changes. So, a leadership change in flexible and adaptive companies is not only a structural change, because of the involvement of big efforts and resources, but also a routine practice because of the high frequency of occurrence. Indeed, workers, employees and managers of Procter & Gamble active in subsidiaries or in headquarters constantly have to cope with uncertainties. The habitual practice of working in an uncertain environment of a routinized instability helps to attribute a positive connotation to uncertainties. The high occurrence of a practice, such as

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that of changeable organizational procedures, generates a situation of routine, where the future is apparently predictable or known because of similar events in the past. Consequently, people do not resist change when there is an identification of the change with the routine, which is likely to occur quite often. Crucially for Kohlrieser (2006), change is not the event to avoid in the mindset of people. It is the painful process that leads to the transition from one state to another that causes a barrier to change.

To sum up, organizational members working in highly uncertain business environments have to learn to keep up with conflicting forces and be adaptable, flexible and creative. This is important in the maintenance of healthy business settings capable of balancing institutionalized procedures with routinized instability.

It is important to address an important limitation of this paper. Attitudes and opinions of employees and managers about the change agent and the proposed changes have not been directly investigated. This case-study primarily highlighted the communication of change solely from the perspective of the change agent. One future direction for further research could be an in-depth analysis of the impact of change on the audience: to what extent do employees and managers cope with the uncertainties related to the high occurrence of leadership changes? The aim should be to find out symmetries and asymmetries in the communicative interrelationship between change agents and audiences.

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Biography

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Communication Strategies for Implementing Organizational Change

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Abstract

This work advances a stronger conceptual and empirical understanding of two broad, conceptual communicative treatments for implementing change: *programmatic* and *participatory*. These theoretical approaches are elucidated respectively through established communication models, activities, and strategies advanced by previous scholarship within the communication and business disciplines. In addition, conclusions are drawn about the supposed limitations and benefits of using these change implementation approaches in applied settings. This article concludes with potential strategies for advancing for research in this arena.

Introduction

The implementation phase is perhaps the most critical stage of change. As Real and Poole (2005) advise: "Without implementation, the most brilliant and potentially far-reaching innovation remains just that—potential. It is in the implementation that organizations perfect the promise of innovation. In implementation, organizations put ideas, designs, and visions to work" (p. 64). Communication plays a critical role during throes of the implementation phase; for, at its root, organizational change is a communication problem. Organizations do not change through automation. Rather, change is implemented and sustained through human communication.

An extant body of research has attempted to conceptualize the various approaches for implementing organizational change (for a full review see, Lewis & Seibold, 1998). Yet, much of this literature is problematic. Although insightful, such conceptualizations are disparate and fraught with disagreement about the base approaches for implementing organizational change. This dissertation synthesizes the general conceptual and empirical treatments of organizational change implementation into two broad theoretical categories: *programmatic* and *participatory*. The programmatic approach emphasizes the transmission of monologic communication about organizational change in a top-down manner to generate stakeholder compliance and/or stimulate desired positive attitudes and beliefs about the planned change. Alternatively, the *participatory* approach

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leverages dialogic communication so as to involve most or all stakeholders through solicitation of their ideas and input about the change and the implementation process.

Although communication is crucial in the success or failure of an organization's change effort, little is known about these two implementation approaches. Therefore, this work aims to advance a stronger conceptual and empirical understanding of these two treatments of change communication. While the following discusses the two implementation approaches of programmatic and participatory change independently, this is not to suggest that they are automatically mutually exclusive. A fusion of these approaches by implementers is indeed possible. Still, they are set apart by their internal logic or coherence (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001). Therefore, autonomous examinations of these approaches will be presented. Separate examinations of these approaches will allow for theoretical critical analyses of each of their unique strengths and limitations on both theoretical and practical levels. Specifically this work seeks to clarify the unique natures of these two implementation approaches by: a) defining each communicative approach; b) categorizing established communication models, activities, and strategies under each rubric; and c) leveraging previous scholarship to draw some conclusions about the anticipated limitations and benefits associated with each implementation approach.

Programmatic Change Communication

The primary characteristic of programmatic approaches is that they are focused on "telling and selling." Such approaches emphasize the top-down dissemination of information to "tell" employees about the change and delivered in such a way so as to "sell" them on why they should be committed to implementing it. As Lewis (1999) notes, a key component of programmatic approaches is "the dissemination of information, which concerns the downward dispersal of knowledge, ideas, training, facts, and requests or directives for action concerning the change" (p. 48). From this perspective, a high degree of fidelity is sought where the message sent is identical to the one received.

Implicit in these approaches is that implementers (who are the formal decision-makers or at least have an alliance with them) hold the power and that gaining the compliance of stakeholders is of utmost importance. Programmed implementation "assumes that implementation problems can be made tolerable, if not eliminated, by careful and explicit preprogramming of implementation procedures" (Bermann, 1980, p. 205). The logic behind this perspective is that the "right" message communicated using the "right" approach can diminish or circumvent implementation challenges including employees' resistance. To this end, compliance is often sought from organizational stakeholders who have a "stake" in the operational execution of the implementation of the planned change. From the implementers' perspective, compliance is perceived as essential to achieving their vision of successful change implementation.

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Fairhurst (1993) describes programmatic internal campaigns as "planned, organized efforts to mold corporate images, manage issues, and articulate values" (p. 334). In this sense, programmatic approaches emphasize the cognitive aspects of change implementation efforts. That is, do employees comprehend and understand the essence of the organization leaders' vision? Further, these approaches emphasize the importance of employees perceiving the vision as being relevant, practical, and urgent to their job and immediate responsibilities. Information and knowledge are perceived as primary catalysts for diffusing innovation throughout organizations.

Communication Models

A number of communication models identified in the landscape of literature on organizational change fall under the programmatic rubric. Such models are often tagged with disparate names such as *"commander"* (Bourgeois & Brodwin, 1984),*"edict"* (Nutt, 1986, 1987), *"persuasion,"* (Nutt, 1986, 1987), and *"rule bound"* (Marcus, 1988). However, such models share some basic core characteristics. For instance, such models utilize highly centralized, controlled, and prescribed communication approaches toward change implementation. That is, because these models presume change is most effective as a top-down approach, there is little to no organizational participation. Most or all control is held by a few decision-markers, usually at the top of an organization's hierarchy. Further, little to no power or influence is held by the employees or those who may have some expertise in the areas being changed (e.g., subject matter experts). When using these implementation models, organizational leaders explicitly articulate central direction for what is to be changed and how it will be changed vis-à-vis the delegation of highly programmed tasks.

Communication Activities

Communication activities classified under the programmatic umbrella include: presentations, general information meetings, memos, newsletters, pamphlets/brochures, posted information (e.g., posters, signs, bulletin boards, charts, dashboards, scorecards, and so on), one-way media (e.g., websites, listservs, videos, and podcasts), and informal small group information meetings as well as word-of-mouth (interpersonal communication about change that informally trickles downward in the organization). A recent survey of 76 implementers found that the two most commonly used channels to disseminate information during organizational change were small informal discussions and general information meetings (Lewis, 1999).

These types of programmatic communication activities are typically used to disseminate information in a one-way fashion—a linear transmission from source to receiver. This linear transmission creates a sense of monologic organizational communication where messages are sent downward to lower echelons, but rarely,

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if ever, upward. The objective of using programmatic activities is not to solicit input, but rather, to convince the target population to comply with the planned change and to communicate what "right" looks like; that is, the implementers' (leaders') desired vision for the change.

Although programmatic activities are likely to have a significant impact on planned change efforts, a scant amount of research has examined their influence over the implementation process. Curiously, while programmatic approaches are the most frequently used activities in change implementation efforts (when compared to participatory approaches), they make up the smallest category of the literature that exists on implementation communication strategies (Lewis, 1999).

Communication Strategies

Because the "success" of programmatic implementation approaches rests on what change messages are communicated, the communication strategy of *"framing"* (Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997) demonstrates particular relevance. This strategy emphasizes the use of linguistics and the management of meaning to successfully diffuse change downward in organizations where managers sell and spread the word of change by providing information to help their employees "make sense" of the organizational leaders' vision for the change.

Another strategy relevant to the "success" of programmatic implementation approaches involves targeting the "right" audience in which to "receive" the carefully crafted messages about the planned change. To this end, implementers may choose to use the *"equal dissemination"* (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001) strategy by canvassing all levels of an organization, exhibiting a type of blanket-style strategy to disseminate updated and detailed information on all matters about the planned change throughout the entire process. Previous research has found that implementers use this strategy to minimize complaints from employees who decry, post-implementation, that they did not receive enough information about the change. Conversely, implementers may choose to use the *"need to know"* strategy which reflects a selective communication philosophy and audience analysis technique whereby messages are carefully chosen, edited, and adapted to appeal to the unique backgrounds and interests of diverse stakeholders. Since different stakeholders are likely to have different needs, implementers can highlight certain elements of change that are most salient and persuasive for each group. In other words, implementers can "frame" how stakeholders perceive planned change. This strategy may be used to forestall some critics' objections and/or to avoid overburdening employees with unnecessary information about the change process (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001, p. 23).

Anticipated Limitations

While implementers most commonly use programmatic approaches to bring about planned organizational change (Lewis, 1999, 2006; Nutt, 1986, 1987), they are

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deemed less effective by implementers (Nutt, 1987) and stakeholders (Lewis, 2006) than participatory approaches.

Two core limitations are associated with using programmatic implementation approaches. First, organizational change is not a one-way communication process; yet, programmatic approaches often perpetuate the obsolete model of conduit-like communication, suggesting that a message sent is identical to the one received (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). This one-way model has long been refuted by communication scholars who have underscored its neglect of negotiated meaning construction (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Further, the downward dispersal of information can also create monologic communication about change, thus limiting the level of interaction and participation between levels of an organization (e.g., between organizational leaders and employees, as well as among employees themselves).

Second, programmatic approaches may cause an avalanche or abundance of unnecessary communication; thus, overwhelming participants. Also, because traditional programmatic approaches typically disseminate information about change in a downward didactic manner they may disengage stakeholders and cause negative effects for the change, the implementation attempt, and potentially the organization itself. In this vein, traditional programmatic approaches are not likely to build consensus nor foster organizational engagement from employees since their experiences with and reactions to the planned change are often overlooked. Depending on the type of planned change and the way the information is disseminated (i.e., the source and channel), monologic efforts may backfire by fostering disengagement among employees who may resist the planned change and even become resentful of the change and the organization's leaders. As a result, employees may distance themselves from the organization by expressing dissent or exiting the organization altogether (i.e., disidentification). Because of these factors, it is questionable whether programmatic approaches actually help employees *learn* how to implement long term organizational change or simply elicit short-term compliance. Also, excessive dissemination may cause stakeholders to become flooded with information which may potentially lead to greater anxiety, confusion, uncertainty, and resistance about the organizational change effort.

Anticipated Benefits

Several benefits are associated with programmatic implementation approaches. First, previous research has found that the dissemination of formal, quality information from organizational leadership is an important variable during planned change efforts. To this end, Fidler and Johnson (1984) maintain that employees' ultimate acceptance of an innovation "often rests on the extent to which communication can act to reduce uncertainty by ameliorating such factors as risk and complexity" (p. 704). Specifically, communication about change from organizational leaders can decrease uncertainty and increase understanding about

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the change (Lewis & Seibold, 1996; Washington & Hacker, 2005), aid in the reduction of anxiety about change (K. I. Miller & Monge, 1986; Smeltzer, 1991; Washington & Hacker, 2005), decrease negative feelings about the change effort as well as expectations that the initiative will fail (Washington & Hacker, 2005), and lower resistance while increasing willingness to participate in planned change (Lewis, 2006; V. D. Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994; Washington & Hacker, 2005). In a related vein, Covin and Kilmann (1990) amassed a list of 900 major issues that participants of organizational change believed to influence the success or failure of large-scale transformation efforts. They found that "failure to share information or to inform people adequately of what changes are necessary and why they are necessary were viewed as having a highly negative impact" (p. 239).

A second benefit of programmatic implementation approaches is that they can be used to provide the perception of fair dissemination of information; that is, they can be used to create the perception that quality information was disseminated on all organizational echelons and that information was not withheld because of an employee's role or status. This is likely to foster perceptions of organizational justice and fairness as well as candor and openness from the vantage point of leaders and, possibly, employees.

Third, programmatic approaches have the appeal of high communication efficiency. That is, they can be relatively quick and inexpensive to produce and disseminate throughout an organization.

Participatory Change Communication

Curiously, participatory approaches make up the largest category of extant research, even though they are used less infrequently than programmatic approaches (Lewis, 2006; Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001). In contrast to programmatic efforts, participatory approaches invite input, using involving and empowering methods to gain the insights of various stakeholders to shape the change program and not merely to "receive it." Participatory approaches involve stakeholders in the change process through the solicitation of their input. According to Lewis (1999), "Soliciting input concerns downward requests for and active gathering of ideas, opinions, suggestions, evaluations, and reactions related to a change" (p. 50). Implementers may opt to solicit input from stakeholders during the development, decision-making processes, and/or implementation of organizational change efforts using communication-based strategies. Participatory approaches are grounded in the basic assumption that employees should be *active* participants in the change process. This approach is not necessarily about the basic act of participation, but whether employees, in the end, have a voice during planned organizational change. The logic driving this approach is employees' participation is perceived as the catalyst for implementing sustained organizational change.

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The participatory approach necessitates more dialogic communication tactics whereby input is gathered and used to shape the change, the organization, and the constituents (users/stakeholders). The objective is to build consensus and galvanize support for the change as well as to allow affected stakeholders to make improvements they feel are needed to ensure the successful implementation of the change. Thus, instead of simply hearing about change from the top, stakeholders are brought into the folds of change and invited to actively participate in the shaping, construction, and implementation of organizational change.

Participatory change processes are often grounded in the theoretical traditions of democratic workspaces. In these cultures there is a delayering of formal organizational structures; that is, erosions of traditional top-down hierarchies and attritions of job-status. In such environments, employees, despite their organizational title or role, come "to expect involvement in decisions about organizational change" (Piderit, 2000, p. 783). More specifically, in a democratic workplace, change "becomes a sweeping imperative that the whole organization is talking about and presumably doing … all employees are being asked to see themselves as entrepreneurs at the level of their jobs" (Zorn, Christensen, & Cheney, 1999, p. 12).

Communication Models

Several models advanced by previous organizational change scholarship are categorized under the participatory umbrella. These participatory models use divergent labels including: *"participation"* (Nutt, 1986, 1987, 1989, 2002), *"intervention"* (Nutt, 1986, 1987), *"autonomous"* (Marcus, 1988), *"adaptive"* (Bermann, 1980), and *"crescive"* (Bourgeois & Brodwin, 1984). Still, these models exhibit several core similarities. Most notably, these models are characterized by varying levels of involvement and input from stakeholders from myriad organizational levels; participation is not reserved for individuals in the company's upper echelons. Further, these models do not treat change as a static event. Rather, change is perceived as a dynamic process which is deemed most effective when employees flex and adapt to events and decisions as they unfold. As such, decisions are often made autonomously by an organization's lower echelons on how (and sometimes if) to implement the change. In other cases, the bottom, middle, and/or top layers of an organization collaborate on how to best implement change.

Communication Activities

Examples of participatory communication activities include open forums (large formal meetings or smaller informal ones where feedback is given and ideas are exchanged), working groups (problem solving teams, ad hoc groups, committees, councils, and task forces), informal conversations (checking in with line supervisors or lower level employees for on-the-spot feedback regarding change efforts and/or implementation processes), focus groups and brainstorming

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sessions (live or electronic), morale, attitude, and opinion surveys, formal assessments and evaluations, and unsolicited complaints or praise (verbal or written feedback; suggestion boxes).

The core objective of participatory communication activities is to build consensus among relevant stakeholders by fostering their involvement and soliciting their ideas and input. As evidenced by the preceding list of activities, implementers can use multiple channels with which to achieve this objective. The nature of these channels range from the very formal to the very informal. Input and feedback can be obtained via multiple communication channels, verbal (large or small groups, interpersonal communication) and nonverbal (written) feedback. The multidirectional nature of participatory approaches offers the potential to create a sense of dialogic communication in organizations where change messages flow up, down, and sideways.

Although seemingly versatile in nature, current research suggests that implementers typically do not use participatory communication activities to solicit input from staff (Lewis, 1999). If participatory communication activities are used, they are typically informal such as casual discussions with employees, informally checking in with staff supervisors, as well as receiving unsolicited complaints and praise about the change (Lewis, 1999).

Communication Strategies

As involvement is at the heart of participatory approaches, previous research has identified core communication strategies for identifying who to involve during the implementation process as well as when to involve them. First, the *"equal participation"* strategy advocates the integration of two-way communication to disseminate information to all relevant stakeholders about the planned change, while simultaneously soliciting input from them (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001, p. 20). From this perspective, all stakeholders are perceived as having an important and equitable voice during the change implementation.

In the second communication strategy, *"quid pro quo,"* "something of value is exchanged for the communicative access granted by implementers" (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001, p. 21). To put it a little differently, implementers extend a great deal of involvement and participation in the decision making process to stakeholders who they perceive as having valuable commodities (e.g., money, expertise, veto/approval power, and resources). Implementers who leverage this communication strategy often see a direct proportional relationship between the value and vital nature of stakeholders' contributions and their allotted participation in the change process. Often, a perceived positive correlation exists between stakeholders' contributions and the amount of involvement and participation they are allotted. Such stakeholder participation may manifest itself in directing the nature, scope, direction, and, in some cases, the very existence of organizational change (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001).

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Anticipated Limitations

Some limitations are inherent in participatory approaches. First, while traditional programmatic approaches can suffer from rigidity, lack of holistic engagement, and excessive top-down control, traditional participatory approaches can lead to significant ambiguity where the original intent of the change gets lost in the rush to involve too many actors. In a similar vein, some organizational stakeholders may prefer more explicit, parametered direction from the formal leadership team. Such direction-oriented individuals may grow weary of, and possibly frustrated with, the lack of focus and clear course of action and may, subsequently, evaluate the implementation process as inefficient and unsuccessful. To this end, it is possible that participatory approaches may incite some unintended consequences such as disengagement and other adverse feelings that at best, stall, and at worst, reverse, progress toward the full implementation of organizational change.

Second, some participatory efforts may be perceived as insincere. Thinly-veiled attempts at creating participation, such as solicitations that are executed for solely symbolic purposes (i.e., no sincere interest in employees' opinions or no follow-up on suggestions) can be quickly dubbed disingenuous and spawn distrust and resentment throughout the organization, potentially jeopardizing current as well as future change efforts. Employees take a personal risk and invest a great deal when sharing their views on organizational change. Only genuine calls for participation that actually value stakeholders' input have the possibility of bringing about organizational change (Cotton, 1993). As Cheney et al. (2004) note, "Attention to specific communicative practices (or lack thereof) will reveal whether claims by an organization to be democratic or to have meaningful employee participation are valid" (p. 224). Lewis (2006) established this link finding a positive correlation between employees' perceptions that their input was valued and their evaluations that the implementation was "successful."

Third, participatory approaches often exhibit low communication efficiency; that is, they typically require a great deal of organizational resources. For instance, participatory approaches usually require employees to spend time away from work reviewing planned changes and providing feedback, often in meetings. A great deal of investment is also made by implementers who must listen to, compile, and sort through input, making agreed-upon alterations to the change implementation process, follow-up with revisions to the involved parties, and repeat this intensive process until the desired level of consensus has been reached. In addition to being time consuming, soliciting participation and input from stakeholders can be a tedious task, complicated further by organizational politics.

Fourth, participatory approaches assume that most employees want to be involved and are intrinsically motivated to fully implement planned changes in the day-to-day operations of organizations. Perhaps for this reason, previous research has found that some employees perceive negative relationships between their

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involvement in change efforts and their evaluations of change success (Lewis, 2006). This limitation may seem counter-intuitive to those implementers who may feel obligated to solicit input and please everyone.

Perhaps it is because of the aforementioned limitations that participatory approaches are often viewed as a "nice to have" by implementers while programmatic approaches tend to be the "strategy-of-choice" in bringing about planned change in organizations (Lewis, 1999, 2006). As previously established, evidence suggests that participatory change is used infrequently since most implementers emphasize downward dissemination about change programs versus soliciting stakeholders' input (Lewis, 1999, 2006; Lewis, Richardson, & Hamel, 2003). This research finding corresponds with reports of real-world organizational practice. Young and Post (1993) reported that the formal solicitation of input was inconsistent, even in exemplary companies (as identified by peer organizations). They noted, "In some cases, top managers should enumerate the types of upward communication available, but lower level employees could not. In other cases the commitment varied among managers with the same company" (p. 36).

Anticipated Benefits

Previous research has indicated that participatory approaches are likely to be perceived as more effective in implementing planned organizational than programmatic approaches (Lewis, 2006; Nutt, 1986, 1987, 1989, 2002). As such, participatory approaches are linked to several anticipated benefits.

First, participatory approaches can help stakeholders achieve several desired "stakes" including "access to information, opportunities to participate in conversations about critical operations, involvement in decision making, and access to channels for influence" (Lewis, Richardson, & Hamel, 2003, p. 401). In the context of planned change, the facilitation of employee participation and input has been predicted to be an important variable during planned transformation efforts (Cotton, 1993). Studies on this topic have typically found that facilitating participation among stakeholders is beneficial in minimizing resistance while enhancing motivation to implement planned change efforts (Argote, Goodman, & Schkade, 1983; Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001; Lewis, 2006; Nutt, 1987; Sagie, Elizur, & Koslowsky, 2001; Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994), increasing accuracy in stakeholders' perceptions about the rationale behind change initiatives and related goals (Brown, 1991), enhancing overall satisfaction with the change initiative (Coyle-Shapiro, 1999; Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994), reducing uncertainty while increasing a sense of control (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2004; Mainiero & DeMichiell, 1986) and enhancing employees' perceptions of implementation success (Lewis, 2006).

Second, on a more theoretical note, participatory change can enable leaders and their constituencies to socially construct the change together. Through participation, leaders and constituencies have the opportunity to collectively

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discuss their shared visions of the planned organizational change. This shared collusion or collaborative framing process can allow leaders to tap into the perceptions of the receivers of their change-based messages. In turn, employees can have the opportunity to provide feedback on the direction of the organization as well as discuss specific opportunities and challenges related to the change implementation (Ruben, Russ, Smulowitz, & Connaughton, 2007). Such interactions may have the potential to create metaphoric organizational "dinner tables" where ideas are exchanged across levels and realities are co-constructed, fostering employee commitment versus compliance. This dialectical process may help frame the context and rationale for organizational change, the negotiation of change-related behaviors, as well as shared-meanings of successful and unsuccessful change implementation.

Conclusion

Because the implementation process is often fraught with problems that are communicative in nature a great urgency exists to identify approaches for effectively bringing about planned change in organizational settings. As such, this article has sought to advance a stronger conceptual and empirical understanding of two communicative treatments for communicating change: *programmatic* and *participatory*. The articulation of these two communicative frameworks lays the groundwork for future scholarship to measure the efficacy of these implementation approaches in applied organizational settings; a promising and fertile field of future academic research.

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Biography

TRAVIS L. RUSS, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Business and Professional Communication in the School of Business Administration at Fordham University. As a professional consultant, he has designed and facilitated learning solutions for clients in the corporate, educational, and non-profit sectors on myriad topics including organizational change, business communication, leadership, and diversity. His research has been published in a number of journals including *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, Communication Education,* and *Communication Teacher.*

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A Transformative Typology of Pragmatic and Ethical Responses to Common Corporate Crises: Interaction of Rhetorical Strategies, Situational Contingencies, and Influential Stakeholders

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Scandals, accidents, product problems, criminal activity, deception or fraud, misconduct, harassment, discrimination, financial or regulatory improprieties, malfeasance, misappropriations, or ethical breaches can not only damage the reputation of corporate executives but can reek financial havoc on the value of a company's brand "assets." When companies face these types of crises they are compelled to act quickly and decisively in order to limit their brand and image losses and seek to repair the "black eye" to their corporate "face" as effectively as possible. Although companies will attempt a wide range of actions and messages as symbolic appeals to that organization's constituent publics, there is little certainty about what types of actions and messages are persuasive (Benoit, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper & Dirks, 2004; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998).

This study uses William Benoit's (1995) widely cited typology of image restoration strategies employed in corporate crisis communication. The Benoit typology is divided into five macro strategies: denial, evading of responsibility, reducing the offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. Fourteen specific message strategies fall within these five broad categories. Silence, or no comment, was dropped as a possible rhetorical response in early explorations of this typology (Benoit, 1995; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004). However, in the case of Enron and elsewhere silence impacts negative perception and is connected with social morals (Rogers, Dillard, & Yuthas, 2005; Trinkaus & Giacolone, 2005). Discussion of the use of silence in image repair and crisis communication literature has been sparse beyond the recognition that this strategy should be an area examination (Kim et al., 2004). Table 1. Provides summary definitions for the 14 strategies and also for silence.

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Table 1. Summary Definitions of Crisis Communication Rhetorical Strategies

	Categories	Strategies	Working Definition
1	Corrective Action		Restore situation or prevent reoccurrence
	Denial		
2		Simple Denial	Contradiction of accusation
3		Shifting Blame	Pass the guilt to another party
	Evading of Responsibility		
4		Accident	Unintentional action or effect
5		Defeasibility	Didn't know about or not in control
6		Good Intentions	Motives were good
7		Provocation	Responding to an offensive act
8	Mortification		Admission and acceptance of responsibility
	Reducing the Offensiveness		
9		Bolstering	Relate positive features of the offender
10		Minimization	Reduce importance of the offense
11		Differentiation	Less offensive than other actions
12		Transcendence	Viewed favorably in larger/different context
13		Attack	Counterattack accuser
14		Compensation	Reimburse victims
15	Silence		No comment or ignoring accusation

Little is known about which rhetorical strategies are perceived by crisis management stakeholders to be pragmatically attractive and/or ethical (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Kim et. al, 2004). It seems reasonable that individuals in journalism/news media, legal, and public relations professions might have different views concerning their pragmatic utility, desirability and ethicality (Seitel, 2001). Therefore this study advances the following research questions.

- Research Question # 1 – Do different communication stakeholders differ in their view of crisis strategies?
- Research Question #2 – Do different communication stakeholders vary in terms of their strategic ranking?
- Research Question #3 – Does the type of crisis make a difference in terms of pragmatism and ethicality among different communication stakeholders?

Method

A survey instrument was designed using a five point Likert-type scale. It asked respondents to rate 15 image repair strategies in four situationally distinct corporate crises. Respondents rated each strategy for effectiveness, their likeliness to recommend, and ethicality. The survey was prepared in a matrix format so that all strategies were simultaneously rated in regard to their respective crises. This produced an instrument encouraging relative comparisons (rankings)

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between rhetorical strategies. Rankings are viewed by some as a more robust estimator of survey values even though they may produce some analytical difficulties (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). The instrument was successfully pilot tested for face validity and usability (Chandler, Ferguson, & Wallace, 2001).

Career-path students (public relations, journalism, and law) were selected to participate. Each student received a packet of items that contained a survey instrument along with contextually similar situations varying only on the nature of a severe crisis event. The crisis events were an unintentional accident, illegal activity, product safety and social irresponsibility. A hypothetical company was used to help control for historical or perceptual moderating factors (Coombs, 2004; Dean, 2004; Kim, et al., 2004; Pfau et al., 2004).

The use of students has the typical limitations. Since classes were within the respective majors these students are seen as already aligning themselves with the views of their prospective vocations. If nothing else, they can be viewed as representing how various stakeholders view different rhetorical strategies. Surveys were distributed at the end of the academic semester so that respective venues and disciplinary frames of reference would be expected to have the maximum effect. Sixty-nine completed instrument packets were returned. The completion rate for the three surveys varied from 62 to 69, depending on which of the strategies was examined. Serendipitously, 23 returned instrument packets were received from each group.

The instrument used a five point scoring system. Categories ranged from highly unethical to highly ethical. Computational scoring ranged from one for highly unethical to five for highly ethical. Pragmatic saliencies of "effectiveness" and "likelihood to recommend" were scored the same way. Significant differences were calculated with analysis of variance within strategies and between scenarios. Scheffe's multiple comparison procedure was used because of its relative conservative estimation of differences and ability to account for compound comparisons (Reinard, 2007).

Pragmatic and ethical views

Research Questions were addressed in several ways. First, it was determined if there were any differences between professions holistically across all scenarios and saliencies. The appendix provides a breakdown of saliencies with the mean scores of strategies between professions. Second, data was transformed into hierarchical rankings to expose order preferences among the rhetorical strategies. Lastly, contextual differences were examined for consistency. Stakeholders were examined for differences across all scenarios to determine if there was an overarching difference between them. Concerning effectiveness differences were found in 6 of the 15 strategies. These were corrective action ($F=3.333$, d.f. 2, 261, $p\leq.05$), compensation ($F=4.678$, d.f. 2,261 , $p\leq.01$), bolstering ($F=13.442$, d.f. 2,261,$p\leq.001$), minimization ($F=10.559$, d.f. 2,261, $p\leq.001$), differentiation ($F=10.319$, d.f. 2,261 , $p\leq.001$), and silence ($F=5.067$, d.f. 2,261 , $p\leq.01$).

Likeliness to recommend had seven strategies with differences. These were corrective action ($F=4.182$, d.f. 2, 261, $p\leq.01$), compensation ($F=4.760$, d.f. 2,261 , $p\leq.01$), mortification

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(F=3.169, d.f. 2,261, p≤.05) bolstering (F=12.027, d.f. 2,260,p≤.001), minimization (F=3.879, d.f. 2,261, p≤.05), provocation (F=7.113, d.f. 2,259, p≤.001), and shifting the blame (F=4.477, d.f . 2,261, p≤.01).

Ethicality had five strategies that were significant. These were minimization (F=3.194, d.f. 2, 260, p≤.05), provocation (F=8.307, d.f. 2,257, p≤.001), shifting the blame (F=6.665, d.f. 2, 260, .002), silence (F=3.523, d.f. 2,261, p≤.05), and simple denial (F=3.946, d.f. 2, 259, p≤.05).

Stakeholder differences

Post hoc procedures revealed that the most common differences occurred between law and one of the other stakeholders (see Table 2.). Only two strategies showed differences between journalism and public relations. These were bolstering and silence.

Table 2. Mean Differences between Stakeholders

	Effective			Recommend			Ethical		
	Law	PR	Jour	Law	PR	Jour	Law	PR	Jour
Corrective Action	4.56	4.80	4.79	4.6a	4.81	4.84b	4.71	4.8	4.81
Compensation	4.14a	4.47b	4.47b	4.24a	4.48	4.58b	4.62	4.53	4.64
Mortification	4.08	4.08	4.34	3.86	4.18	4.28	4.49	4.46	4.54
Bolstering	3.08bbb	3.92a	3.3bb	3.31bb	3.87a	3.08bb	3.75	3.73	2.97
Good Int.	2.76	2.88	3.16	2.81	2.64	2.97	2.45	2.66	2.57
Minimization	2.43a	3.26bbb	3.02bb	2.71a	2.56b	2.78	2.6	2.5	2.51
Defeasibility	2.76	2.75	3.08	2.34	2.64	2.76	2.59	2.38	2.47
Differentiation	2.31a	3bbb	2.94bb	2.36	2.83	2.46	2.45	2.39	2.12
Transcendence	2.41	2.75	2.64	2.50	2.60	2.40	1.99	2.35	2.08
Accident	2.23	2.30	2.54	2.30	1.98	2.13	1.97	1.86	1.79
Provocation	2.44	2.28	2.16	2.35a	1.85bb	1.82bb	2.14a	1.74b	1.62bb
Attack Accuser	1.99	2.39	2.25	1.74	1.94	1.99	2.02a	1.65bb	1.79b
Shifting the Blame	2.20	2.07	2.26	1.98a	1.6bb	1.61bb	1.64	1.75	1.62
Simple Denial	1.77	1.47	1.91	1.69	1.44	1.72	1.6a	1.32	1.29b
Silence	1.67	1.58a	1.74bb	1.58	1.35	1.36	1.34a	1.23	1.13b
Different letters differ significantly	b =p≤.05 bb =p≤.01 bbb=p≤.001								

Stakeholders and Rhetorical Strategy Hierarchy

Table 3 ranks the mean scores in the saliencies within the three professions based on aggregate means across all scenarios. This was done to more clearly expose hierarchy of items rather than a

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particular valence. Rank standard deviation is used as a measure of variation among the stakeholders.

Table 3. Profession Ranks of Image Restoration Strategies

	PR			Journalism			Lawyers			Rank St. Dev		
	Eff	Lik	Eth	Eff	Lik	Eth	Eff	Lik	Eth	Eff	Lik	Eth
Corrective Action	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Compensation	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	0	0	0
Mortification	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	0	0	0
Bolstering	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	0	0
Defeasibility	7	6	8	5	5	7	5	5	6	1.15	0.58	1
Minimization	9	9	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	2.08	1.73	0.58
Good Intentions	5	5	9	7	8	9	8	8	11	1.53	1.73	1.15
Differentiation	6	7	5	8	7	5	10	10	7	2	1.73	1.15
Transcendence	8	8	7	9	9	8	9	7	7	0.58	1	0.58
Accident	11	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	12	0.58	0.58	1.15
Provocation	12	12	12	13	12	12	7	9	9	3.21	1.73	1.73
Attack Accuser	10	11	11	12	11	12	13	13	13	1.53	1.15	1
Shifting the Blame	13	13	14	11	14	14	12	12	14	1	1	0
Silence	15	14	13	14	13	10	14	14	10	0.58	0.58	1.73
Simple Denial	14	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	0.58	0	0

Contextual variations

When crisis situations were taken into account there were few differences. Because of the sheer number of comparisons those with no significant difference are not detailed here. Those that differed included bolstering, minimization, differentiation, and provocation. Table 4 displays the significant findings among crisis events.

Table 4. Strategic Mean Differences Between Professions

		Accident	Illegal Activity		Product Safety			Social Irrespons.
		Bols.	Bols.	Min.	Bols.	Diff.	Provo.	Diff.
Effective	PR	4.22 a	3.87 a	3.35 a	3.96 a	3.26 a	2.48	2.95
	Jour.	3.57	3.32	3.18	3.23	2.73	1.95	3.05 a
	Law	3.35 b	2.90 b	2.29 b	3.05 b	2.24 bb	2.52	2.19 b
Recommend	PR	4.17 a	3.87 a	2.57	3.83 a	2.70	2.09	2.65
	Jour.	3.52	2.95 b	2.50	2.91 b	2.36	1.55 a	3.00
	Law	3.30 b	3.29	2.43	3.33	2.05	2.48 b	2.33
Ethicality	PR	4.09 a	3.64 a	2.09	3.74	2.70	2.04	2.85
	Jour.	3.26 bbb	2.68 bb	1.86	3.18	2.55	1.64	2.55
	Law	3.43 b	3.14	2.10	3.29	2.29	2.33	2.57

Different letters differ significantly within salience
b =p≤.05
bb =p≤.01
bbb=p≤.001

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Discussion

This study examined a range of rhetorical message strategies employed in organizational crises, which vary in their relative transformative nature of organizational perceptions. While organizational stakeholders include many constituents, three primary groups were targeted. These included stakeholders representing the journalism, law, and public relations professions. Both pragmatic (effectiveness and recommendation likelihood) and ethical issues were examined. These were contextualized within four common reputation crisis scenarios (Accidents, Product Safety, Illegal Activity, and Social Irresponsibility). Four general findings seemed to emerge from the data. First, while the level of valence differs among these groups; the hierarchal positioning (from highest to lowest) is relatively stable indicating more positively and negatively perceived rhetorical strategies. This was true for both pragmatic and ethical issues. Second, three distinct identifiable categories emerged. Positively received strategies include corrective action, compensation, mortification, and bolstering. Third, minor exceptions to this general trend were primarily between stakeholders identifying with public relations and legal positions. To simplify discussion respective professions will be used to represent the stakeholder groups.

Pragmatic and ethical differences in stakeholders

In general, PR respondents had higher (saliency rating) regard for message strategies than did Journalism/Media and Law respondents. This was true throughout pragmatic and ethical views. However, in terms of differences, those stakeholders representing PR and Law differed most. There was a clear split in the scores between PR and Law regarding perceptions of effectiveness especially in regard to bolstering. These differences were not as pronounced in likelihood to recommend and ethicality.

The number of differences where one stakeholder saw a strategy as positive and another negatively was small. For example, bolstering was seen as more effective by PR and not as effective by Law in the Illegal Activity situation. Interestingly, law stakeholders are inconsistent – although they do not see bolstering as effective, they would be willing to recommend it.

Strategic hierarchy

Some strategies were consistently seen as more salient than others. Distinctions or tiers were established by inspecting rhetorical hierarchies to see if there were clusters that consistently were ranked higher or lower within the strategic set. Exceptions were identified by categorizing rhetorical strategies within clusters and marking those that fell more than one rank outside of the cluster demarcation. What emerged were three tiers that seemed to be tapping into a similar cognitive construction regardless of salience or even type of scenario (See table 5.).

Table 5. Organizational Image Restoration Hierarchy in Pragmatism and Ethicality

Tier One	Tier Two	Tier Three
Corrective Action	Defeasibility	Accident
Compensation	Minimization	Provocation
Mortification	Good Intentions	Attack Accuser

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Bolstering	Differentiation	Shifting Blame
	Transcendence	Silence
		Simple Denial

To put this into perspective these tiers held up against the two pragmatic measures, one measure of ethicality, three different organizational stakeholders within four different crisis situations. Thirty-six different views of the hierarchy were examined and most rhetorical strategies were categorized within a single tier 100% of the time, regardless of profession, or crisis scenario. Accident (94%), bolstering (97%) and provocation (97%) varied slightly from this consensual trend. In the case of the accident strategy, while valenced negatively, it was more likely to be recommended in the Product Safety and Social Irresponsibility scenarios. Provocation, also negatively valenced, was considered more effective in the Social Irresponsibility scenario. Bolstering was the single case where there was a shift in valence and a move between tier one and tier two. This shift was in regard to recommending it as a strategy within the Product Safety scenario. Law stakeholders were responsible for shifts within the Social Irresponsibility scenario and Journalism was responsible for shifts in the Product Safety scenario.

Situational variations

As indicated in table 4 differences were rare among stakeholders and even less substantial when contextualized with hierarchy. Significant differences were only found in four rhetorical strategies. These were bolstering, minimization, differentiation and provocation. Often rhetorical choices are not based on preference but rather on availability making hierarchy a somewhat more useful measure. This caveat being understood, there were some emergent features regarding the respective stakeholders and their interactions with particular situations.

In the majority of cases, the three professions tended to have a homogenous view of the strategies across the different scenarios. However, PR respondents had significantly higher saliency for message strategies in general than did Journalism and Law. Most of these differences were with Law.

PR differed with other profession five times concerning effectiveness. All of these were with law. PR saw minimization as effective and Law ineffective in regard to Illegal Activity. A similar difference was seen in the Product Safety scenario concerning differentiation.

PR differed from the other professions in three scenarios concerning likelihood to recommend. All three scenarios involved the bolstering strategy. PR differed from law concerning the Accident scenario. They also ranked bolstering higher than journalism concerning the Illegal Activity and Product Safety scenarios.

Concerning ethicality, PR considered bolstering more ethical than either journalism or law in the Accident scenario and with journalism in the Illegal Activity scenario. Noteworthy is that in this last difference PR viewed bolstering as extremely ethical while journalism regarded it as an unethical strategy. This may be an important consideration for those crafting rhetorical strategies for media consumption.

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Journalism was more pessimistic than PR. In the five of the six strategies where significant differences were found it was the low mean. The singular exception was in terms of effectiveness. This was concerning the differentiation strategy in the Social Irresponsibility scenario where it had a valence split with law.

Journalism differed in two scenarios concerning likelihood to recommend. It viewed bolstering as less salient than PR in the Illegal Activity and Product Safety scenarios. It also viewed provocation as less salient than law did in the Product Safety scenario. Concerning ethicality journalism viewed bolstering as less salient than PR in the Accident and Illegal Activity scenarios.

Law, as previously described, differed most with PR. The only significant difference that it had with journalism was in terms of seeing the differentiation strategy in the Social Irresponsibility scenario as less effective. In the likelihood to recommend salience law differed with PR in the Accident scenario. Law was more likely to recommend provocation than journalism in the Product Safety scenario. In terms of ethicality, bolstering under the Illegal Activity scenario was laws single difference.

Different points of views among stakeholders

There were a few areas where there were not only a difference but stakeholders were also holding opposing views. Table 5 isolates these findings in a common table. While the cell sizes have as few as 22 observations the effect sizes are large and do invite some interesting speculation. PR considers minimization an effective strategy for responding to Illegal Activity whereas Law does not. Perhaps law's occupational frame for illegal acts tends to cause them to view illegal acts as inherently resistant to minimization. Perhaps, PR tends to see the valance of illegal acts as more negotiable than does law. In Product Safety, one possible speculation is that PR is concerned with public opinion and law with legal adjudication.

Table 5. Valence Splits between Stakeholders

		Illegal Activity		Product Safety		Social Irresp.
		Bols.	Min.	Bols.	Diff.	Diff.
Effective	PR		3.35 a		3.26 a	
	Jour.					3.05 a
	Law		2.29 b		2.24 bb	2.19 b
Recommend	PR	3.87 a		3.83 a		
	Jour.	2.95 b		2.91 b		
Ethicality	PR	3.64 a				
	Jour.	2.68 bb				

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In social responsibility situations, Journalism views differentiation as effective while Law sees it as substantially less effective. Perhaps one explanation for the Social Irresponsibility finding is that guilt is frequently linked to newsworthiness. Or perhaps, legal stakeholders tend to hold rigid responsibility links that are more difficult to evade or elude. In general, bolstering was regarded favorably. However, Journalism deviates from this trend and regards bolstering as less ethical in the Illegal Activity scenario. It might be that Journalism regards bolstering as a deceptive "change of topic" or more than simply irrelevant but deliberately trying to obfuscate. Perhaps this reflects a fundamental difference of agenda. It might be that PR sees overall reputation as the issue at hand while journalists tend to see the specific act, given instance, or the behavior under investigation.

Some of the differences in stakeholders might stem from assumptions of likely attributions that might be made by the public. It is possible that PR considers higher utility than the other professions in assessing the effectiveness of given strategies. For example, in terms of minimization in Illegal Activity and differentiation in Product Safety PR views the strategies as effective. Perhaps they may be figuring that audiences will tend to follow predictable patterns.

Conclusions

While many of the findings in this study invite interesting speculation they should be considered no more than that until validated by additional study. That being said there were some pronounced findings that appeared robust from a variety of perspectives.

First, while the level of valence differs among stakeholders, the hierarchal positioning is relatively stable indicating there is a general hierarchy regarding perceptions of rhetorical strategies. This was true for both pragmatic and ethical issues. In the simplest of terms this means that most rhetorical strategies are either viewed good or bad regardless of context or stakeholder.

Second, three identifiable tiers emerged regarding this hierarchy. While there was considerable shuffling within tiers very few strategies jumped far beyond the tier's border. Positively received or "good" strategies include corrective action, compensation, mortification, and bolstering.

Third, minor exceptions to this general trend tended to be between public relations and legal positions. Bolstering emerged as the locus of variation in three of the four scenarios examined. While clearly perceived superior to most, it would not be suitable to view it with the same level of ubiquity as the other "good" strategies. This study's intriguing empirical support regarding the interaction of occupational orientation, crisis situation and rhetorical strategies warrants the need for these factors to be simultaneously considered in future examinations.

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Appendix A

Effective

	Public Relations			Journalism			Law			Total		
	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD
Corrective Action*	4.80	89	0.57	4.79	89	0.57	4.56	86	0.89	4.72	264	0.70
Compensation**	4.47	89	0.71	4.47	89	0.74	4.14	86	1.01	4.36	264	0.84
Mortification	4.08	89	1.23	4.34	89	0.92	4.08	86	1.16	4.17	264	1.11
Bolstering***	3.92	89	0.97	3.30	89	1.10	3.08	86	1.26	3.44	264	1.17
Good Intentions	2.88	89	1.17	3.16	89	1.14	2.76	86	1.03	2.93	264	1.12
Minimization***	3.26	89	1.25	3.02	89	1.22	2.43	86	1.21	2.91	264	1.27
Defeasibility	2.75	89	1.27	3.08	89	1.12	2.76	86	1.04	2.86	264	1.16
Differentiation***	3.00	89	1.07	2.94	89	1.11	2.31	86	1.14	2.76	264	1.14
Transcendence	2.75	89	1.09	2.64	89	1.18	2.41	86	1.10	2.60	264	1.13
Accident	2.30	89	1.24	2.54	89	1.17	2.23	86	1.10	2.36	264	1.17
Provocation	2.28	89	1.14	2.16	89	1.12	2.44	84	1.10	2.29	262	1.12
Attack Accuser	2.39	88	1.17	2.25	89	1.10	1.99	85	1.27	2.21	262	1.18
Shifting the Blame	2.07	89	1.17	2.26	89	1.21	2.20	86	1.15	2.17	264	1.17
Simple Denial**	1.47	89	0.80	1.91	89	0.97	1.77	86	1.03	1.72	264	0.95
Silence	1.58	89	0.97	1.74	88	0.96	1.67	86	0.95	1.67	263	0.96

Likely to Recommend

	Public Relations			Journalism			Law			Total		
	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD
Corrective Action*	4.81	89	0.54	4.84	89	0.40	4.60	86	0.77	4.75	264	0.59
Compensation**	4.48	89	0.76	4.58	89	0.56	4.24	86	0.89	4.44	264	0.76
Mortification*	4.18	89	1.10	4.28	89	0.99	3.86	86	1.34	4.11	264	1.16
Bolstering***	3.87	89	0.91	3.08	89	1.19	3.31	85	1.17	3.42	263	1.14
Defeasibility	2.64	89	1.16	2.97	89	1.23	2.81	86	1.13	2.81	264	1.18
Good Intentions	2.56	89	1.25	2.78	89	1.17	2.71	86	1.18	2.68	264	1.20
Differentiation	2.64	88	1.10	2.76	89	1.41	2.34	86	1.14	2.58	263	1.23
Minimization***	2.83	89	1.18	2.46	89	1.18	2.36	86	1.21	2.55	264	1.20
Transcendence	2.60	88	1.07	2.40	89	1.13	2.50	86	1.19	2.50	263	1.13
Accident	1.98	89	1.14	2.13	89	1.10	2.30	86	1.26	2.14	264	1.17
Provocation**	1.85	89	0.97	1.82	89	0.89	2.35	84	1.19	2.00	262	1.04
Attack Accuser	1.94	88	1.07	1.99	89	0.98	1.74	85	1.05	1.89	262	1.03
Shifting the Blame	1.60	89	0.91	1.61	89	0.78	1.98	86	1.15	1.72	264	0.97
Silence	1.44	89	0.87	1.72	89	0.92	1.69	86	1.00	1.61	264	0.93
Simple Denial*	1.35	89	0.78	1.36	88	0.76	1.58	86	0.91	1.43	263	0.83

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Ethical

	Public Relations			Journalism			Law			Total		
	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD	M	N	SD
Corrective Action	4.80	89	0.55	4.81	89	0.52	4.71	86	0.81	4.77	264	0.64
Mortification	4.53	89	0.92	4.64	89	0.76	4.62	86	0.72	4.59	264	0.80
Compensation	4.46	89	0.81	4.54	89	0.72	4.49	86	0.84	4.50	264	0.79
Bolstering	3.73	88	0.88	2.97	89	0.98	3.75	85	4.54	3.48	262	2.71
Differentiation	2.66	87	0.96	2.57	89	0.98	2.45	86	1.03	2.56	262	0.99
Good Intentions	2.50	88	1.26	2.51	89	0.94	2.60	86	1.00	2.54	263	1.07
Defeasibility	2.38	88	1.08	2.47	89	1.12	2.59	86	1.08	2.48	263	1.09
Transcendence	2.39	88	1.00	2.12	89	0.95	2.45	86	1.00	2.32	263	0.99
Minimization*	2.35	88	1.14	2.08	89	0.83	1.99	86	0.99	2.14	263	1.00
Accident	1.86	88	1.02	1.79	89	0.89	1.97	86	0.99	1.87	263	0.96
Provocation***	1.74	88	0.85	1.62	89	0.79	2.14	83	1.00	1.83	260	0.91
Silence*	1.65	89	0.85	1.79	89	0.85	2.02	86	1.08	1.82	264	0.94
Attack Accuser	1.75	87	0.96	1.62	89	0.63	1.64	85	0.92	1.67	261	0.85
Shifting the Blame**	1.32	88	0.54	1.29	89	0.51	1.60	86	0.80	1.40	263	0.64
Simple Denial*	1.23	88	0.50	1.13	88	0.37	1.34	86	0.61	1.23	262	0.50

*=p≤.05
**=p≤.01
***=p≤.001

Biographies

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Business Etiquette: New Day, New Time

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Introduction

Business etiquette including communication, ethics, and teamwork has changed considerably over the years. Core values of companies are evolving. Companies now want to be the "place to work". Issues that were once taboo in the business world are no longer. This can be observed in an employee's appearance for example. The once standard business suit has been replaced with casual dress. The normal peer to peer communication has been replaced with upward and downward communication throughout the business organization.

Teamwork and team spirit are being promoted by management at all levels fused by ethical awareness. With all the changes occurring in the business world it is necessary to consider and re-evaluate how people view business etiquette. The purpose of this study was: to understand how business/industry is affected by basic business social skills at various levels; and how those social skills are projected throughout an organization. The research involved five diverse businesses focusing on professionalism and business etiquette.

How Professional Are You?

In today's business structure, professionalism is measured by perceived social appropriateness for the work environment as it relates to a main component, the firm's image. The manner in which employees conduct themselves says a lot more than people tend to realize. In the same manner, employees need to be aware of how their behavior in the workplace effects the business overall. Some examples related to professionalism include appearance, body language and attitude.

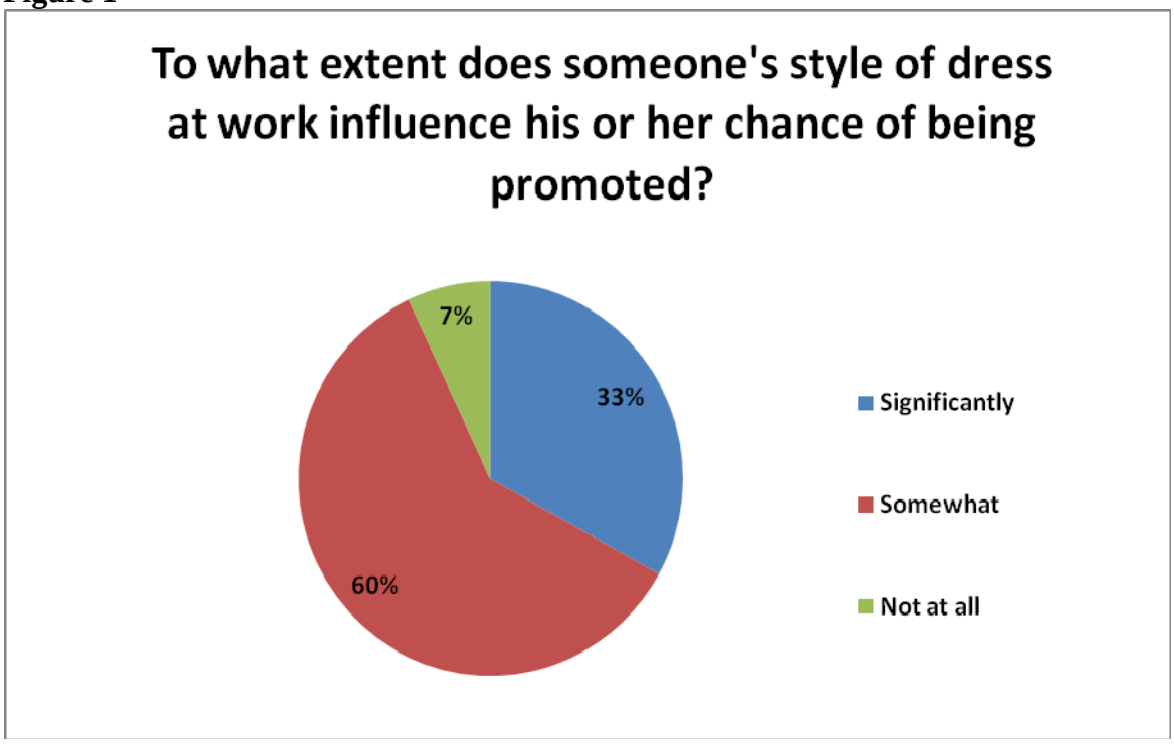
First impressions weigh heavily on determining confidence level. Customers use the first impression as a determinant of the trustworthiness of the business. Therefore, it is important to be aware of proper professionalism in business today. In order to measure the effects of professionalism, research is fundamental in determining the result of projecting professionalism, or the lack of professionalism, and how it affects businesses today.

Appearance, body language, and attitude are a strong part of overall professionalism. According to Reed (2007), *polished appearance lends credibility and may help employers envision the staff member in a role with greater responsibility*. Body language reflects confidence, capability and ability. Gallo (2007) stresses that strong and effective body language can help establish an immediate rapport with your audience, signaling confidence in your message. Even though body language is considered a small percentage of communication; it is important to remember that

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communication is 55% visual and 38% vocal (Gallo, 2007). Some of the best communicators today have strong body language in which they command attention and respect. Communicators that reflect professionalism are viewed from the outside as having charisma, being capable and confident. Figure 1 below represents the results of executives when asked how the extent of appearance influences their decisions on promotions (Reed, 2007).

Figure 1



Attitude is considered an interpersonal skill that many people in the workforce today should be aware of and understand how the effects whether positive or negative can affect the business. Attitude is cited as one of the most significant weaknesses in the workforce according to Laurie Whalen of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (2007). It is now understood how critical this skill is with regard to how it affects ones chances of advancement.

Human Resource managers are looking for employees who have interpersonal skills as part of their work ethic for jobs today. Appearance, body language and attitude are all prime components of professionalism. The ability to utilize all three components will help both the individual and firm.

Methodology

One hundred five participants (64 males and 41 females) were involved in the study. A questionnaire was administered at five diverse organizations. The first section of the questionnaire focused on demographics to identify gender, ethnic origin, and professional status. The questionnaire also contained five questions in each of the following categories:

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- *Social skills* included questions regarding behavior in business settings, offensive actions, respect for each other);
- *Communication skills* included questions focusing on phone etiquette, grammar, electronic communication, gossip;
- *Dress code* included questions relating to business causal, cleavage, men's jewelry; and
- *Teamwork* included questions focusing on the team importance, diversity, advantages.

The primary research results and conclusions will aid in the evaluation and conclusions of how business view business etiquette and professionalism.

Findings and Implications

Most professional and administrative business people feel professionalism is important and reflects the overall status of the firm. Body language, dress and attitude were addressed in the primary research and the results collected validated the importance of professionalism. In the area of attitude and body language, the question concerning being irritated when someone interrupts you while deep in thought had the following response: 74% of females and 63% of males responded being irritated, while 26% females and 37% of males responded not being irritated when interrupted. Figure 2 below illustrates those results.

Figure 2

Do you get irritated when you are in deep thought and get interrupted at work?

	YES	NO
Females	74%	26%
Males	63%	37%

Being irritated is a form of body language and attitude. There is still room for improvement in this area for those who do become irritated. Irritation in the work place can never be productive if it forms barriers to productivity and communication.

Observation results yielded the importance of telephone etiquette. Professionalism and telephone etiquette go hand in hand and reflects the attitude of the workplace. Observation results ranged from "rude and unprofessional" to "kind and professional". The initial telephone conversation with a firm will give a first impression of how the business operates. Most businesses communicate occur via telephone in many functional areas and reflecting professional telephone etiquette is important in achieving a professional image.

Behavior was also addressed in the primary research to further determine the importance of body language and attitude as a component of professionalism. The question if knowing how to behave in various business settings is critical revealed 53% responded that they "strongly agreed" that it is important to know how to behave in business settings, while 47% "agreed" it is

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important. Overall, 100% of all participants either agreed or strongly agreed on the topic of proper behavior in the workplace. Proper behavior reflects the overall professionalism of the firm.

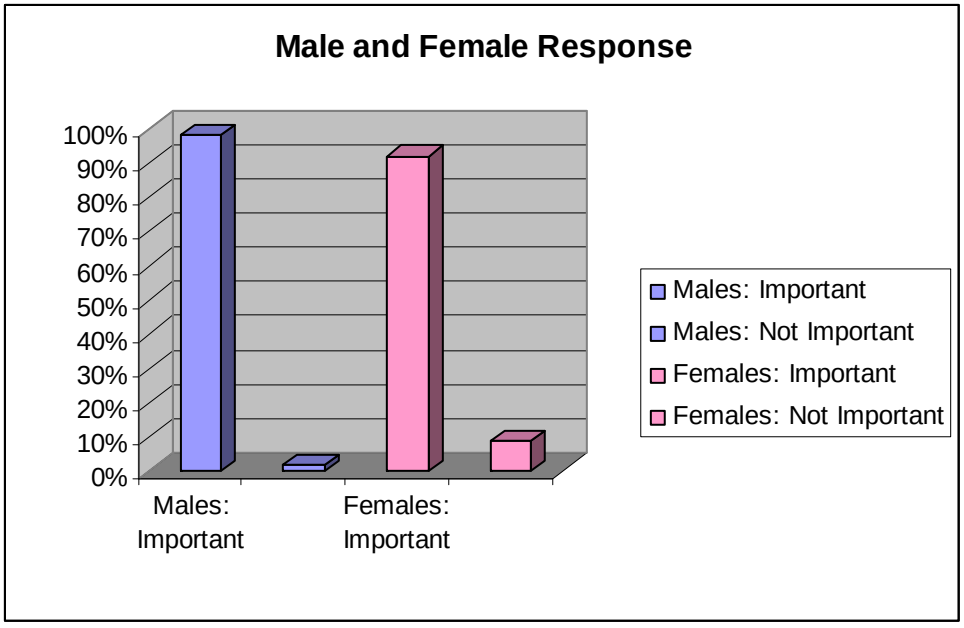
Communication

It is no surprise that communication skills are a major factor in the success of business. Research continues to prove that communication skills are the single most important factor in choosing managers, and that skills including written and oral presentations are important components to a company's success (Gallo, 2007; Jongwe, 2005; Miller, 2000). Using proper grammar and word usage is imperative to communicate effectively. The lack of correct sentence structure portrays negative perceptions of the level of professionalism being used in the company.

According to the results obtained from the study, 92% of females and 98% of males believe that grammar usage is important in the work setting and that improper grammar can lead people to assume that you are not professional and lack the education needed to grow within the company. Figure 3 below clearly illustrates the findings.

Figure 3

Do you believe the use of proper grammar is important at work?



You only get one chance to make a good first impression. Knowing how to greet potential employers, customers, or investors is extremely important in business.

Email etiquette is needed because it portrays a professional image. Emails that get to the point are more effective. Employee awareness of email risks and guidelines will help protect the company from legal implications.

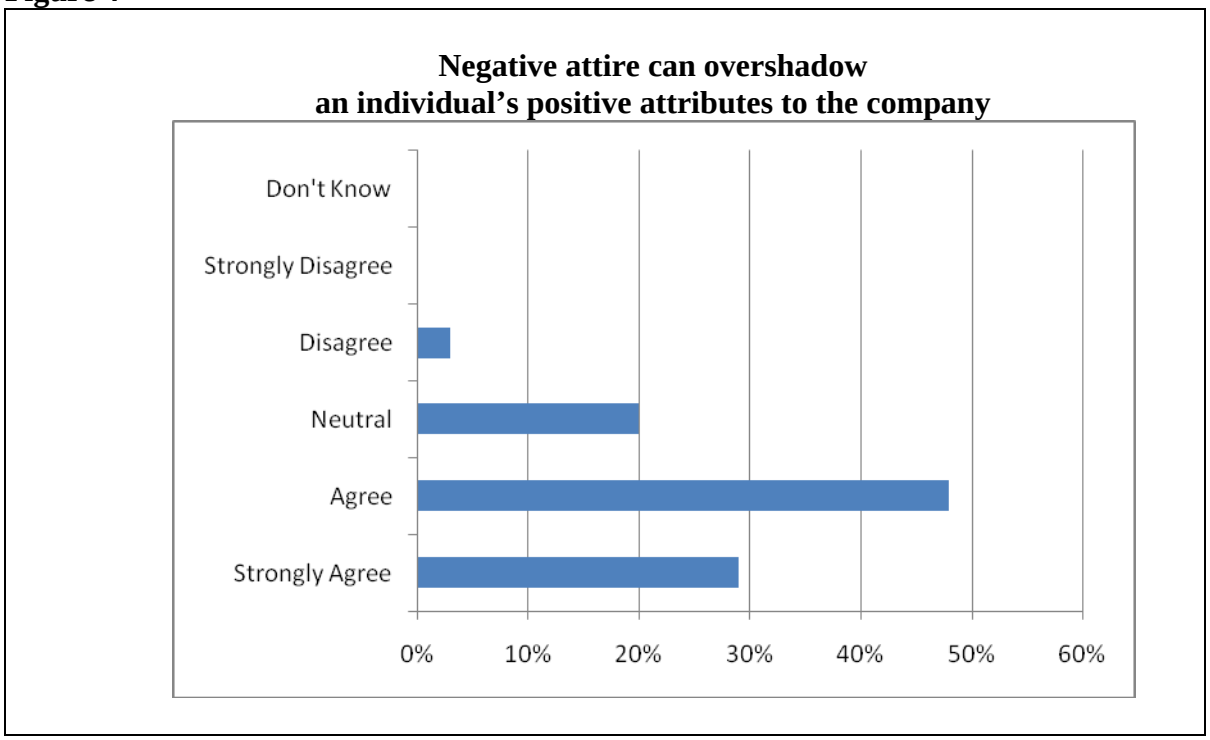
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Gossip also establishes a form of camaraderie between co-workers and instigates bonding. A reason for gossiping is that many times managers refrain from informing employees of the happenings of the company and employees do not learn of events until it is too late. When managers fail to distribute correct information, employees are left with their own assumptions. *"Left unchecked. . . . it can quickly sap energy and productivity as workers spend time speculating about things rather than getting work done"* (Jongwe, 2005). Another negative aspect of this type of gossiping is that information, as it is passed from person to person, begins to change from the original message and information can be changed or left out, leading to a different message altogether.

Dress Code

Proper attire was also researched. The perceptions of co-workers who dress inappropriately at work ranged from "sloppy and unprofessional" to "disrespectful and trashy". All of which are negative results. Figure 4 reveals the findings to the question if employees' negative attire can overshadow their positive attributions to the company: 29% strongly agreed, 48% agreed, 20% are neutral and 3% disagreed.

Figure 4



Teamwork

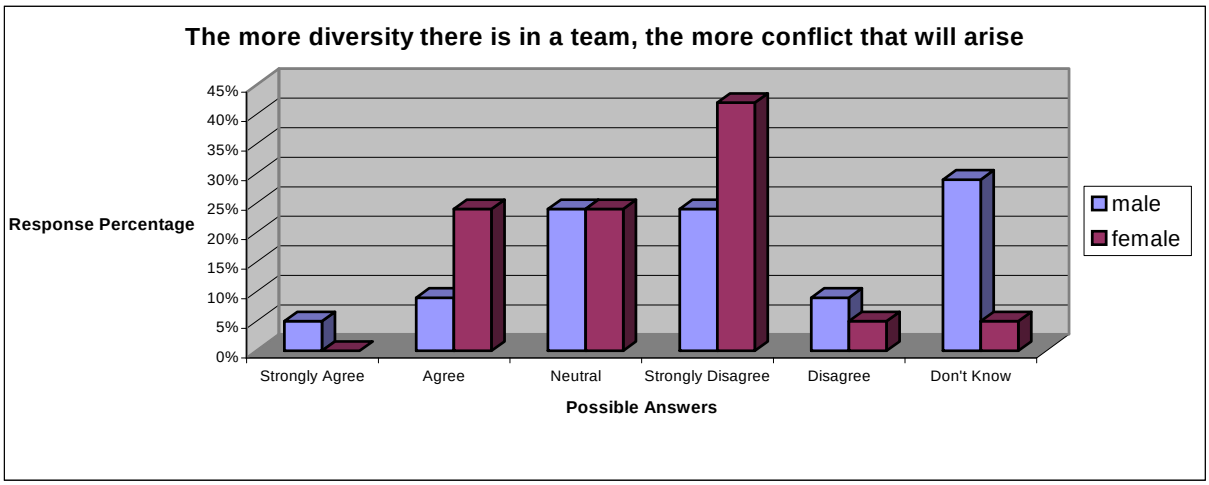
Work culture and norms differ from organization to organization. Diversity skills are a necessary tool to posses in any teamwork environment. If employees are unable to communicate effectively regardless of gender, age, race or culture, their individual success in teams will be limited at best. A decade ago, teams in the workplace were certainly not the norm amongst businesses. However, teams in the workplace have recently replaced the traditional formal

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structures for organizations (Marks et al., 2005). Many businesses today are reorganizing or reengineering to steer away from the formalities of typical organizational structures, which create boundaries and stunt creativity within the organization. Lifting these restrictions allows work to be "reorganized in cross-disciplinary teams that perform broad core processes (i.e. product development and sales generation) and not narrow tasks such as forecasting market demand for a particular product" (Lehman & Dufrene, 2006).

Many assumptions can be made about the diversity challenges multicultural teams face. For example, whether the research results shown in Figure 5 derived from assumptions or first hand knowledge, it does prove that individuals from different multicultural backgrounds can have different opinions.

Figure 5



Different styles of communication typically stem from cultural, gender, age or ethnic differences. For example, when asked, "if working in teams promotes diversity" both men and women almost equally either strongly agreed or agreed. Despite these results, there were still 31% that were either neutral, strongly disagreed or disagreed (see Figure 6 below).

There are many possible communication barriers that could lead to multicultural team challenges but once these disadvantages are disseminated, they can in turn create an advantageous team. For example, Jeanne Brett, Kristin Behfar, and Mary C. Kern (2006) believe that project teams made up of members with differing cultural, ethic, and corporate backgrounds as well as different genders can be significantly superior to homogeneous teams if properly managed. To elaborate, unlike homogeneous teams whose members tend to have similar views amongst them due to similar upbringings or exposure to the exact or similar things or circumstances, diverse teams can feed and pull from each others differences and strengths, fostering more creativity thus, leading to greater odds for project success.

Research findings from this study pertaining to teamwork and diversity found that 71% of men either agreed or strongly agreed that there are more advantages to teamwork as opposed to 10% that disagreed. The research also illustrates that 59% of women also either agreed or strongly agreed compared to a low 14% who disagreed. Figure 7 illustrates these findings below.

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Figure 6

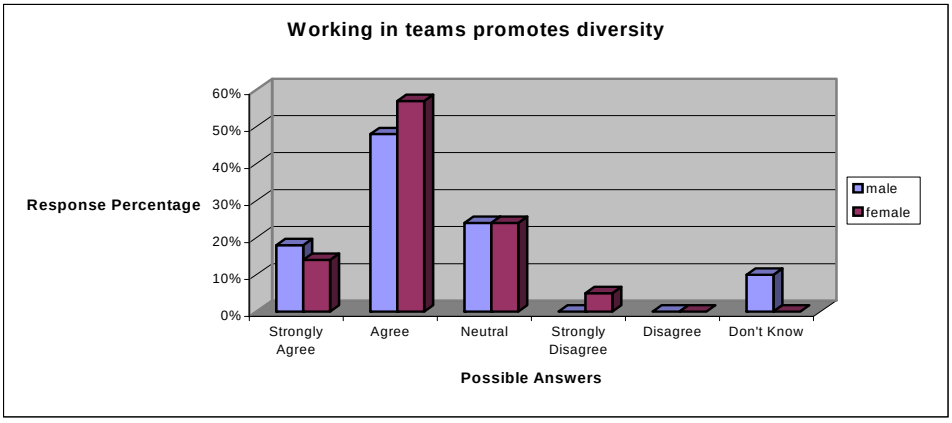
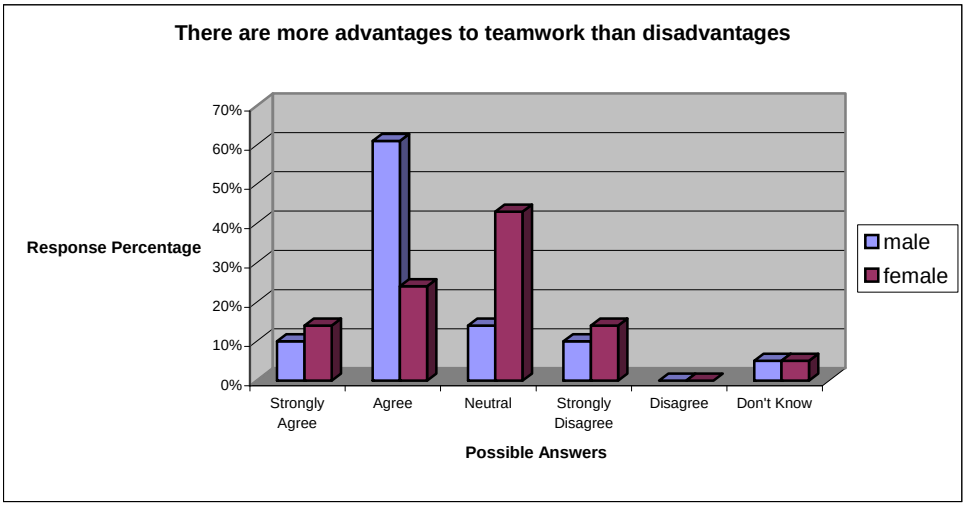


Figure 7



With the knowledge of the many advantages of teamwork along with the enactment of diversity skills the disadvantages can be overcome, thus creating and maintaining a positive, productive teamwork environment within organizations.

Conclusions

Based on the research presented, the following conclusions are drawn: behavior reflects overall professionalism and appearances, body language and attitude affect an employee's ability to accelerate. Research suggests polishing these areas and refining interpersonal skills will help individuals excel in all aspects in their career.

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Gender Differences in Employees' and Students' Knowledge of Office Politics

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Abstract

Office politics goes on in most work environments. Learning the rules of office politics helps employees of both genders reap the rewards to which they are entitled. As future employees, students must become knowledgeable about office politics to be successful in the world of work.

To determine gender differences in employees' and students' knowledge of the rules of office politics, a survey with ten statements related to office politics was administered to 265 employees and 140 university students. While t-test results revealed no significant differences (<.05) between female and male employees, significant differences were found between female and male students on three statements. When the populations were combined, only one statement showed significance between female employees and students vs. male employees and students.

Introduction

Since office politics includes oral, nonverbal, and written communication, and because of the documented differences in the communication styles of men and women (McLaurin, Little, & Taylor, 1998; Tannen, 1994, 1995), an examination of differences in females' and males' knowledge of office politics was considered appropriate. Knowledge of gender differences in perceptions of what is considered appropriate for playing the game of office politics would be beneficial for developing successful workplace relationships.

Office politics involves the strategies people in various types of organizations use to gain a career advantage (Rozakis & Rozakis, 1998). Office politics also involves understanding how things get accomplished (Cole, 1999). Getting things done necessitates building relationships with co-workers since careers are made or damaged on the basis of relationships (Frankel, 2004).

Some political maneuvering goes on in most work environments, especially in companies where influence and monetary gain are important (Fisher, 2002). This political maneuvering, usually referred to as office politics, is actually a game; and employees who do not play the game pay the price (Hawley, 2001; Reed, 1999). The game of office politics has specific rules and boundaries (Frankel, 2004). While these rules will vary with the company, some rules are invariant, including behaving ethically and treating people fairly rather than behaving in a

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deceitful, unethical manner. The game of office politics is competitive, but it does not include playing unfairly to assure winning at another person's expense (Cole, 1999).
Employees who have issues with some of the concepts of office politics need to understand that favoritism exists in every firm and that their ability or inability to use office politics effectively can advance or impede their careers (Beagrie, 2004). In fact, employees who are inept at office politics may be perceived as people who are not team players and not good candidates for promotion; they may also be viewed as persons who are untrustworthy and lack social skills and common sense ("FastCompany's Five Rules," 2003). Decisions concerning raises and promotions are not, after all, based entirely on merit; they may be a way of paying back favors or rewarding an employee for making a favorable impression on prospective clients when entertaining them (Rozakis & Rozakis, 1998).

Literature Review

A review of existing literature revealed only one study related to gender differences in office politics; in this survey conducted in Great Britain gender was perceived to play a role in office politics (Matthews, 2004). The literature review, therefore, includes guidelines offered by various authors who have studied office politics in the United States and abroad. The areas of office politics included in the review are the topics covered on the questionnaire: self-promotion, honesty and truth-telling, flattery, gossip, favors and hidden motives, attire, and business socializing and etiquette.

Self-Promotion

Office politics involves self-promotion; perceptive employees know that they must make sure that their efforts and accomplishments are recognized (Kuzmitz, Sussman, Adams, & Raho, 2002). Tooting one's own horn, when done in a low-key manner, is recommended especially when trying to convince a supervisor that a raise or promotion is deserved. Tooting one's horn too loudly, however, may result in being called a braggart, which may fail to impress influential people. The best advice for self-promotion is to document all accomplishments; this will add strength when requesting promotions and salary increases (DuBrin, 1990; Hawley, 2001). Bixler and Dugan (2001) maintain that self-promotion includes such basics as sending letters of appreciation and congratulations, being accessible, and having business cards readily available.

In addition to personal attributes, office décor, including a display of awards and certificates of achievement, can be used for self-promotion. Displays and office furnishings, however, should be business related; pictures of a child's artwork and/or other accessories that belong in a home are inappropriate for the office. According to Bixler and Dugan (2001), one's office décor should convey a message that is congruent with the person's business image and with the manner in which he or she wishes to be perceived.

Honesty and Truth-Telling

Part of playing the game of office politics is making decisions on the extent to which one feels compelled to tell the truth in all situations. Honesty and truth telling, according to Cole (1999), should be a way of life in the workplace; however, being ruthlessly honest to the extent of

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trampling on other people's feelings is not recommended. DeLuca (1999) points out that telling an employee in the presence of others that his job will be eliminated by the end of the year is demoralizing and serves no useful purpose. In some cases, employees may find that total honesty is less important than telling supervisors what they want to hear. For example, when asked how the sales report is progressing, employees may assure the supervisor that everything is on schedule even when that is not the case because a positive report is what the supervisor wants to hear. In short, what a person tells should be truthful; however, gauging how much to tell requires skill; and one's words must be chosen carefully and politically (Hawley, 2001).

Flattery

Compliments, defined as giving sincere praise in recognition of the efforts and accomplishments of others, are always appreciated (Mitchell, 1998). Flattery, defined as excessive or insincere praise, has not traditionally been viewed in a positive manner. When it comes to the office politics game, however, Rozakis and Rozakis (1998) maintain that "flattery will get you everywhere – if it's used properly" (p. 171). They further state that flattery is effective in influencing others and "creates a more pleasant office environment for everyone" (p. 171). One of the most effective ways of using flattery is perhaps giving a compliment on another person's behalf, which is then passed on. For example, an employee mentions to a colleague that he is impressed with the supervisor's business acumen; the colleague then conveys the compliment to the supervisor. Thus, a person's ulterior motive is less obvious; and the compliment is perceived as more genuine.

Gossip

While office gossip in years past has not been considered in a positive light, it is currently being taken more seriously. According to DuBrin (1990), gossip is definitely "a vehicle for building peer relationships" (p. 96). Further, it is seen as a socializing force which improves employee morale. People who spread gossip must remember, however, that it is unwise to pass along negative information about someone unless it is factual and would soon be public knowledge (DuBrin, 1990). Employees who gossip, according to Beagrie (2004), may have hidden agendas so office colleagues should take such information at face value.

Gossip may be personal or professional. The best responses to personal gossip and back-stabbing are noncommittal and limited to slow nods or short verbal responses, such as "oh, really!" Silence is an even better response (Bragg, 2004; James, 2003; Reed, 1999). While personal gossip does not deserve attention, professional gossip may be given attention since it is a technique for becoming skilled in office politics and is approximately 80 percent accurate. The most valuable professional gossip includes job changes, while the least valuable gossip is related to office romances or other personal information such as extramarital affairs (DuBrin, 1990). Sharing professional gossip with one's supervisor is simply part of office politics (Rozakis & Rozakis, 1999); information should, of course, be shared with one's supervisor before one's colleagues.

Favors and Hidden Motives

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When it comes to favors in the office, Cole (1999) maintains that they are "the absolute bottom line of what politics is all about" (p. 484). DuBrin (1990) states that "*quid pro quo* arrangements with others in the workplace are a standard way of getting things accomplished" (p. 93). DuBrin (1990) adds that exchanging favors is especially effective when favors are done with no expectation of receiving anything in return. Such generosity is usually remembered later when promotion decisions are made. Holden (2003) also emphasizes the importance of doing favors to building successful work relationships. Although the person may not be in a position to return the favor immediately, he or she may be able to repay the favor at a later time.

Sometimes when a person does a favor for someone, the recipient of the favor may question the other person's motives. The best advice is to remain friendly toward the person until a determination can be made regarding a hidden agenda. Holden (2003) cautions against hidden agendas when dealing with others. He recommends being open in one's dealings with other people; otherwise, people may sense a lack of complete honesty and may be reluctant to trust others. Regardless of the hidden motives of the person granting the favor, doing favors is implicit in the workplace politics game. When people go out of their way to do favors for other people, they are making a deposit in the "favor bank" that they can cash in later when the need arises (Frankel, 2004; Rozakis & Rozakis, 1998).

Attire

Clothing is a powerful communicator and makes a difference in how individuals are perceived (Cole, 1999). One connection people often make is between a person's manner of dress and performance: "sloppy dress, sloppy mind, sloppy work" (Holden, 1998, p. 70). The implication is that someone who is considering a large investment in an organization would question the advisability of doing so when dealing with someone wearing frayed jeans and sandals (Holden, 1998; 2003).

Dressing appropriately for the job enhances one's corporate image and lends credibility to one's ideas and accomplishments. Clothing that reflects the company culture and that is appropriate to the stage in one's career is recommended (DuBrin, 1990). If the corporate culture is casual, employees are advised to invest in high-quality casual clothing with high-quality accessories as well (Rozakis & Rozakis, 1998). According to Dobson and Dobson (2001), employees can make themselves more promotable by following the dress standards set by their organizational leaders. Employees who follow the firm's dress standards will send the message that they are aware of the importance of appropriate attire to the company's image and that they wish to conform to the standards of the corporate culture.

Business Socializing and Etiquette

The people with whom one socializes can have an influence on one's career. Networking with people during business meals can cement relationships; deals are made during business meals (Rozakis & Rozakis, 1998). Hawley (2001) advises employees to accept all invitations from those of higher rank. In addition, reciprocating invitations is important. Socializing outside of the office can increase one's power base which will ultimately help in career advancement.

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Business lunches provide employees with opportunities for showing their good manners and can, therefore, afford some political edge in the future. Using good table manners during business meals can send positive nonverbal messages about a person. On the other hand, poor table manners call attention to the person in a negative way. Poor table manners give the impression of carelessness about details, and employers know that taking care of details is an important part of business (Cole, 1999). According to DuBrin (1990), using proper table manners will be noticed; using poor table manners will also be noticed but unfortunately in a way that could block career advancement.

In addition to dining etiquette, displaying good manners in other situations can project a positive image of oneself and the organization (DuBrin, 1990). Remembering names is important when attending corporate mingling events (Rozakis & Rozakis, 1998). Standing when visitors who come by infrequently is still considered good manners. In addition, making appointments with persons of higher rank, rather than dropping in unannounced, is the mark of a well-mannered person. Being diplomatic, being sensitive to other people's feelings, and using bias-free language are just as important for people with career aspirations as are dressing appropriately and using proper table manners (DuBrin, 1990). To play the office politics game successfully, knowing and using both company and social etiquette is essential (Hawley, 2001).

Purpose and Procedures

The purpose of this research was to determine gender differences in employees' and students' knowledge of office politics. The topic merits investigation since gender differences often exist in workplace interactions, and knowledge of such differences can be useful to building successful business relationships.

A survey was developed which included ten statements related to office politics. These statements were based on self-assessment exercises developed by DuBrin (1990) and Rozakis and Rozakis (1998). The 405 respondents consisted of a convenience sample of 265 employees from selected companies in the Mid-South area, primarily employees from business and education; the student population consisted of 140 students enrolled in business communication courses at a Mid-South university. The sample was nonrandom and purposive, which is considered appropriate in situations in which a larger population cannot be easily accessed and enumerated (Babbie, 1990). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each of the statements provided using a five-point scale with five representing *Agree* and one representing *Disagree*. The t-test statistic was used to determine significance between male and female responses. The .05 level was used to determine significance.

Findings and Discussion

Slightly over half (52.1%) of the employee population was female; 37.9% of the student population was female. Slightly less than half (47.9%) of the employee population was male; 62.1% of the student population was male. When the populations were combined, 47.2% was female and 52.8% was male.

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Statistical analysis was run using SPSS, Version 13. Mean responses and standard deviations were calculated for both employee females and males and student females and males. As shown in Table 1, the statement with which the largest number of employees and students agreed was *Dressing appropriately for the job is important since appropriate attire lends credibility to your ideas and accomplishments*. The statement with which the largest number of male and female employees, as well as female students, disagreed was *Helping someone who cannot help you in return is a waste of time.* (Both responses are in agreement with office politics mavens.)

Table 1. Office Politics: Employees' and Students' Mean Responses by Gender and Population

		Population 1 – Employees				Population 2 – Students			
		Female		Male		Female		Male	
Statement	Expected Response*	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1. Smart employees know that it is sometimes necessary to play the game of office politics even if they do not approve of the game being played.	Agree	3.58	1.208	3.66	1.272	3.51	1.295	3.69	1.154
2. Tell your supervisor the office gossip, even when you are not sure it is true.	Agree	1.84	1.069	2.09	1.247	1.51	.724	1.85	.983
3. Helping someone who cannot help you in return is a waste of time.	Disagree	1.75	1.104	1.90	. 999	1.30	.607	1.61	.969
4. Practicing self-promotion is simply good office politics; make sure your supervisor knows of your accomplishments.	Agree	3.50	1.210	3.52	1.090	3.51	1.203	3.53	1.010
5. Always tell your supervisor the truth rather than what he or she wants to hear.	Disagree	3.88	1.149	3.97	1.105	4.23	1.031	3.87	1.054
6. Think of doing favors for your supervisor as an investment that you can cash in when the need arises.	Agree	2.86	1.261	2.94	1.228	2.47	1.085	2.87	1.169
7. When trying to determine another person's hidden motives, it is best to avoid being friendly until you can determine the hidden agenda.	Disagree	2.27	1.158	2.35	1.224	1.96	1.037	2.00	.854
8. Using flattery to get in a supervisor's good graces is recommended as flattery when used properly creates a pleasant work environment.	Agree	2.99	1.247	2.79	1.258	2.94	1.134	2.97	1.061
9. Dressing appropriately for the job is important since appropriate attire lends credibility to your ideas and accomplishments.	Agree	4.43	.996	4.27	.988	4.74	.655	4.60	.690
10. Using correct table manners when dining with supervisors and clients plays no role in office politics.	Disagree	2.44	1.608	2.43	1.525	1.47	.932	1.48	.729

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*Expected responses based on office politics authors Dobson and Dobson (2001, DuBrin (1990), Holden (1998, 2003), and Rozakis and Rozakis (1998).

The determination of whether statements were correct or incorrect was based on books on office politics by authors Dobson and Dobson (2001), DuBrin (1990), Holden (1998, 2003), and Rozakis and Rozakis (1998). The statement with the largest mean response indicating the greatest agreement with the statement by both female and male employees and female and male students related to the importance of dressing appropriately for the job.

As shown in Table 2, when the employee and student populations were combined, the statement with the highest mean response (the importance of dressing appropriately for the job) was rated higher by females (4.52) than by males (4.40).

Table 2. Office Politics: Mean Responses by Gender -- Combined Populations

		Employees and Students			
		Female		Male	
Statement	Expected Response*	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1. Smart employees know that it is sometimes necessary to play the game of office politics even if they do not approve of the game being played.	Agree	3.56	1.230	3.67	1.233
2. Tell your supervisor the office gossip, even when you are not sure it is true.	Agree	1.75	.995	1.99	1.151
3. Helping someone who cannot help you in return is a waste of time.	Disagree	1.62	1.008	1.78	.995
4. Practicing self-promotion is simply good office politics; make sure your supervisor knows of your accomplishments.	Agree	3.50	1.205	3.52	1.056
5. Always tell your supervisor the truth rather than what he or she wants to hear.	Disagree	3.97	1.126	3.93	1.083
6. Think of doing favors for your supervisor as an investment that you can cash in when the need arises.	Agree	2.75	1.224	2.92	1.202
7. When trying to determine another person's hidden motives, it is best to avoid being friendly until you can determine the hidden agenda.	Disagree	2.19	1.131	2.21	1.101
8. Using flattery to get in a supervisor's good graces is recommended as flattery when used properly creates a pleasant work environment.	Agree	2.98	1.214	2.86	1.182
9. Dressing appropriately for the job is important since appropriate attire lends credibility to your ideas and accomplishments.	Agree	4.52	.922	4.40	.892
10. Using correct table manners when dining with supervisors and clients plays no role in office politics.	Disagree	2.17	1.514	2.05	1.345

*Expected responses based on office politics authors Dobson and Dobson (2001, DuBrin (1990), Holden (1998, 2003), and Rozakis and Rozakis (1998).

As shown in Table 3, results of the t-test to determine significance between female and male employee responses and female and male student responses revealed no significant differences

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between female and male employee responses; however, significant differences were found between female and male student responses on three statements: *Tell your supervisor the office gossip, even when you are not sure it is true* (mean of 1.51 for females and 1.85 for males); *Helping someone who cannot help you in return is a waste of time* (mean of 1.30 for females and 1.61 for males); and *Think of doing favors for your supervisor as an investment that you can cash in when the need arises* (2.47 for females and 2.87 for males). All three were significant at the .05 level; males were more knowledgeable about two statements, while females were more knowledgeable about one statement.

Table 3. T-Value Results: Female/Male Employees vs. Female/Male Students

Statement	Population 1 -- Employees		Population 2 -- Students	
	Female vs. Male		Female vs. Male	
	t-value	Significance	t-value	Significance
1. Smart employees know that it is sometimes necessary to play the game of office politics even if they do not approve of the game being played.	-.508	.612	-.855	.394
2. Tell your supervisor the office gossip, even when you are not sure it is true.	-1.728	.085	-2.190	.030*
3. Helping someone who cannot help you in return is a waste of time.	-1.147	.253	-2.073	.040*
4. Practicing self-promotion is simply good office politics; make sure your supervisor knows of your accomplishments.	-.139	.890	-.102	.919
5. Always tell your supervisor the truth rather than what he or she wants to hear.	-.661	.589	1.937	.055
6. Think of doing favors for your supervisor as an investment that you can cash in when the need arises.	-.541	.589	-2.026	.045*
7. When trying to determine another person's hidden motives, it is best to avoid being friendly until you can determine the hidden agenda.	-.507	.613	-.233	.816
8. Using flattery to get in a supervisor's good graces is recommended as flattery when used properly creates a pleasant work environment.	1.334	.183	-.117	.907
9. Dressing appropriately for the job is important since appropriate attire lends credibility to your ideas and accomplishments.	1.370	.172	1.171	.243
10. Using correct table manners when dining with supervisors and clients plays no role in office politics.	.046	.963	-.078	.938

* Significant at the .05 level

Always tell your supervisor the truth rather than what he or she wants to hear showed significance by age group: employees under 25 years of age (mean of 3.59) vs. the 40 or above group (mean of 4.17) and between the Under 25 group (mean of 3.59) vs. the 25-39 age group (mean of 4.07); thus, (since office politics mavens disagreed with the statement) younger respondents were more in agreement with the experts than older respondents. Significance was also indicated between Administrative support (mean of 4.23) and Customer Service (mean of

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3.47) and between Manager/Supervisor (mean of 4.08) and Customer Service (mean of 3.47) in the category of position within the organization. Thus, employees in Customer Service were more in agreement with authors of office politics books than employees in Administrative Support and those in Manager/Supervisor positions. *Think of doing favors for your supervisor as an investment that you can cash in when the needs arises* showed significant by age. Those under 25 years of age showed greater agreement with the statement (mean of 3.20) than those 40 or above (mean of 2.63). Thus, younger employees agreed with office politics mavens more than older employees. *Practicing self-promotion is simply good office politics; make sure your supervisor knows of your accomplishments* was significant for Classification of organization. Those in Business (mean of 3.56) showed greater agreement with the statement than those who were Self-employed (mean of 2.59); in addition, employees in Education (mean of 3.70) showed greater agreement with the statement than those who were Self-employed (mean of 2.59). *Using flattery to get in a supervisor's good graces is recommended as flattery when used properly creates a pleasant work environment* showed significance for position in the organization; however, while this behavior showed significance, Scheffe's post-hoc analysis revealed that no two groups differed significantly at the .05 level.

As shown in Table 4, when the employee and student populations were combined, only one statement showed significance between female and male responses: Tell your supervisor the office gossip, even when you are not sure it is true. Males (mean of 1.99) were more in agreement with the statement than were females (mean of 1.75). Both genders disagreed with office politics experts, since the statement was true and the means should have been 3.5 or above to indicate agreement with the experts.

Table 4. T-Value Results by Gender: Female Employees and Students vs. Male Employees and Students

Statement	Combined Populations -- Female vs. Male	
	t-value	Significance
1. Smart employees know that it is sometimes necessary to play the game of office politics even if they do not approve of the game being played.	-.902	.368
2. Tell your supervisor the office gossip, even when you are not sure it is true.	-2.251	.025*
3. Helping someone who cannot help you in return is a waste of time.	-1.579	.115
4. Practicing self-promotion is simply good office politics; make sure your supervisor knows of your accomplishments.	-.185	.854
5. Always tell your supervisor the truth rather than what he or she wants to hear.	.400	.690
6. Think of doing favors for your supervisor as an investment that you can cash in when the need arises.	-1.346	.179
7. When trying to determine another person's hidden motives, it is best to avoid being friendly until you can determine the hidden agenda.	-.192	.848
8. Using flattery to get in a supervisor's good graces is recommended as flattery when used properly creates a pleasant work environment.	1.001	.318
9. Dressing appropriately for the job is important since appropriate attire lends credibility to your ideas and accomplishments.	1.291	.198
10. Using correct table manners when dining with supervisors and clients plays no	.887	.375

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role in office politics.		

* Significant at the .05 level

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, a certain amount of participation in office politics is necessary to receive promotions and to get along with supervisors, co-workers, and clients (DuBrin, 1990). Whether differences exist between females' and males' knowledge of office politics was the focus of this research. A review of existing literature revealed that no similar research had been conducted; however, a survey conducted abroad determined that gender was perceived to play a role in office politics (Matthews, 2004). Thus, the literature review was limited to guidebooks written by those who have studied the topic in both the United States and abroad. The topic was considered worthy of investigation since gender differences are often a consideration when interacting with others in the work environment.

In the current study, the areas of office politics with which employees and students were most knowledgeable related to dressing appropriately; employees and students were less knowledgeable about truth telling and gossip. Based on this research, the conclusion can be drawn that little difference exists between females' and males' knowledge of office politics. Differences related to the advisability of sharing office gossip with one's supervisor, helping someone who cannot return the favor, and doing favors for the supervisor. Males were more knowledgeable about two statements; females were more knowledgeable about one statement.

To reap the rewards to which they are entitled, employees of both genders would be wise to recognize that working hard and performing well on the job may not be enough to gain career advancement. Playing the office politics game, especially in some organizations, could mean the difference between career stagnation and advancement.

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Sports Etiquette

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Since most businesspeople will entertain either by participating with their guests in sporting events or being spectators at such events, it is necessary to understand the importance of sports etiquette to business success. Businesspeople will be evaluated on their demeanor during such events, and a determination is often made on their suitability as potential employees or business partners during these social outings (Chaney & Martin, in press). Students, who are future employees, need to understand the role that sports etiquette could play in their success in the business world. While the rules of sports may vary, depending on the cultural or regional preferences, the rules discussed here are generic to the majority of people in the United States who are engaging in sports as part of business. Since sporting activities can be used to help people who are currently working or thinking of working together, the events may be used as bonding experiences or to discuss business activities. Some sporting activities are more useful for discussion such as golf, tennis, or running; and some sports would not be as effective to discuss business such as working out in a gym. However, all sports can be used as a means of bonding and getting to know your business partners.

The goal of all sports is "to win, to provide valuable exercise, and to entertain while others watch" (Baldrige, 2003, p. 90). In accomplishing these goals, players and spectators should practice good sportsmanship. According to Ford (2001), "sportsmanship, like courage, is merely grace under pressure" (p. 270). Being a good sport is actually about showing kindness and consideration to others. Sportsmanship involves following the rules. Rules of the game exist for a reason; they prevent chaos and give structure and direction to the game being played. While some sports rules are for the safety and courtesy of the players, other rules exist that govern the behavior of spectators (Moore, 2003; Post & Post, 1999).

Etiquette Guidelines for All Sports

Being a good sport means playing by the rules, playing safely, and dressing in appropriate attire. One rule that applies to all sports is arriving on time, whether you are playing or watching a game; it is rude and inconsiderate to be late. Fans that are late should wait to take their seats until there is a break in the game (Bixler & Dugan, 2001; Cole, 1999). Greeting and shaking hands with each player or with fellow spectators upon arrival is another important rule. Players should be honest about their ability to play the sport and should take lessons before trying to play a game (Bixler & Dugan, 2001). Players should be gracious winners and gracious losers; they should not argue about the score or the referee's call. The loser should take the initiative in

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shaking the winner's hand to offer congratulations (Stewart, 1997). Fans and losers may applaud the winners; winners may not applaud themselves. According to Martin (2005), "Applause is a gesture by which outsiders demonstrate their approval. It should not be used to display one's own conceit, family pride, or mutual admiration" (p. 733). In addition, players and spectators should not ruin their image by using profanity, vulgarities, or drinking to excess; they should not criticize other players, the club, the court, or the surroundings (Mitchell, 2004; Post & Post, 1999).

When invited to a private club, guests should identify themselves and give the host's name at the gate or to the doorman upon arrival. Waiting for the host in the reception area is appropriate. When ordering food and drink, guests would order something similar to what the host orders. Guests would not typically offer to pay as private clubs allow only the members to pay. In addition, guests would tip only with the host's approval; they are expected to reciprocate by inviting the host to another event unless the outing is strictly business related. In both situations, however, a note of appreciation to the host is appropriate (Mitchell, 2004; Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

Being a good fan means consideration for other people. Fans should not use bad language or throw items at the players or at other fans. The ticket to the event does not give anyone the right to "offend, berate, or belittle anyone" (Keim, 2003, p. xvii). It is helpful for both the coach and players to show signs of moral decency. Research shows that the more the coach exhibits proper behavior and expects players and fans to behave correctly, the more likely everyone will be able to enjoy the event without unnecessary violence (Chaney & Martin, in press; Keim, 2003).

Player Etiquette

Etiquette for players is examined for the following sports: racquet and water sports, golf, and running, biking, and rollerblading. Gym or health club etiquette is also discussed.

Racquet Sports Etiquette

Tennis, handball, squash, and racquet ball are the most common racquet sports. As with other sports, before accepting an invitation, players should learn the rules of the game and take some lessons. In addition to following the rules of the game, players should also follow the rules that are posted by the club. Another etiquette rule includes not walking across someone's court to retrieve a ball. Balls should be returned to their owners during breaks in play so as not to interrupt the game. Prior to beginning the game, the height of the net should be checked to be sure it is at the proper height; necessary adjustments should be made since net balls are an important part of the game (Chaney & Martin, in press; Stewart, 1997).

During the game, players should be aware that their voices carry across tennis courts and should speak in a low voice. Players are expected to compliment others on nice plays; however,

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conversation should be kept to a minimum on the court. When officials are used, their calls should be respected. Questions should wait until after the game. When no official is present, the players are responsible for line calls on their side of the net. At the end of the game, players always shake hands with their opponents (Craig, 1996).

When playing racquetball or handball, players need to be sure to wear shoes that do not have black soles; many clubs do not allow black-soled shoes. Eye protection may not be required, but it is highly recommended. A common complaint of racquetball and handball players is that the opponent does not move out of the way fast enough. Players should be sure they are physically fit to play this demanding game (Chaney & Martin, in press; Craig, 1996).

Many times those who play racquet games are unequally matched in skill. Weaker players should let their opponents know their skill level. Asking for advice from an accomplished player is flattering to the better player. Likewise, advanced players should make the game fun for less accomplished players rather than destroying them (Fox, 2001; Martin, 2005; Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

Golf Etiquette

Golf has become a major sport for businesspeople to pursue. People who do not know how to play golf and who want to learn may take advantage of the numerous courses offered by universities, community colleges, and golf schools. The Professional Golf Association (PGA) has an easy-to-read rule book and CD concerning the rules of the game which every player needs to follow (Chaney & Martin, in press).

Golf and business go together. Golf can be an icebreaker and dealmaker. However, golf can also be frustrating and test a person's stress-management abilities. People do not have a good round of golf every time they play (Fox, 2001).

Some business rules of golf include trying not to outplay the boss or client; talking business only after everyone is playing comfortably, not during tense shots; refraining from making bets unless your supervisor or client suggests it; and observing proper tipping etiquette. (Tipping is done by the host; however, personal caddies may be tipped by a guest (Fox, 2001; Pachter & Brody, 1995).

In addition to the business rules of golf, a number of general rules should be followed. If men and women are playing together and the women are playing from the women's tees, then the men will hit first since their tees are further back and the women's tees are forward. The person who hits the lowest score on the previous hole hits first on the next hole. However, men will always hit before the women because of the tee positions. Talking or moving while another person, either in your group or in another group, is hitting a ball is inappropriate; also make sure your shadow does not interfere with someone's play. Cell phones should be turned to vibrate

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and should only be answered if it is an emergency. Slower groups allow faster groups to play through. If someone loses a ball, everyone in the group looks for it. The owner of the lost ball only looks for a minute, then takes a penalty stroke, and drops another ball to keep the play moving (Pachter & Brody, 1995; Stewart, 1997). Players should be ready to take their shots and should not take too long to take a shot; they should leave the golf course immediately upon finishing play. Trash should not be left on the course; trash receptacles and water are usually available on the course. Players who make a divot (a chunk of dirt or grass that is dislodged when hitting a ball) should repair it, and anyone who hits out of a sand trap should always rack the sand smooth (Chaney & Martin, in press; Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995). Players should use a ball marker on the green so that others do not have to be concerned with hitting another player's ball while putting. Players should offer to tend the pin when the hole is a long way from where the putter is standing. Not stepping on the imaginary line the ball is to traverse on the putting surface is also important (Moore, 2003; Pachter & Brody, 1995).

In addition to the preceding guidelines, rules of etiquette for drinking on the golf course were addressed by Cindy Grosso, founder of The Charleston School of Protocol and Etiquette. Grosso suggested that players should not have more than two beers or other alcoholic beverages during the game. Players who plan to have a drink at the 19th hole should limit their consumption to a single drink on the course. (Of course, if guests do not drink, neither does the host.) At other times during the game, the host provides soda or water. Players should understand that they are being watched by other players, and decisions on whether to hire a person or to do business with someone are often being made (Foust, 2007).

Since golf is a game that can reveal someone's personality, it is best for players to be on their best behavior— throwing clubs, swearing, excessive drinking, or other childish activities have no place on the golf course. Many businesspeople take potential clients to play golf so they can tell what they are really like and to determine if this is the person with whom they wish to do business. While playing golf, it is advisable to refrain from giving other people advice on their game, unless they ask for the advice (Pachter & Brody, 1995; Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

Cheating in golf, as in other sports, is not allowed. In golf, however, it is unthinkable as players keep their own scores. Knowing that a customer or one's supervisor has shaved a stroke off a hole makes it difficult to maintain composure. However, remaining silent speaks volumes about a person's character; the player can then "walk away with dignity intact, honesty unflawed, and job secure" (Bixler & Dugan, 2001, p. 216); the experience will provide important information about business behavior since how people play a sport is typically the way they conduct business. Golf enthusiasts can probably recall when Tom Kite once called a penalty on himself when his ball moved, though no one else saw it. "The informal penalties for cheating are worse than disqualification. Players who are caught cheating can be blacklisted for the rest of their lives," according to Eddie Merrins (Henninger, 2006, p. A10).

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Water Sports Etiquette

Water sports include swimming, sailing, and water skiing. Most swimming pools will ask that all swimmers take showers before they swim. Also, because water may contain germs, it is best not to go swimming in a pool with an open sore of any kind or with a communicable illness. When swimmers use a lap pool, they should keep to the right side so that faster swimmers may pass on the left (Craig, 1996). If the pool is also used for aerobics or general swimming, each group has its own area in the pool. Lifeguards can be consulted to confirm where groups are to do their swimming (Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

Sailing and motor boating can be wonderful opportunities to do business. People who have never sailed before should be honest about this fact; otherwise, what was intended to be helpful behavior may result in an unexpected swim. Whoever owns the boat is the captain and is considered the law on the boat. The boat owner should avoid inviting more guests than can be accommodated comfortably and should brief guests about what they should wear for the day, including deck shoes to avoid slips and falls. Seasickness is preventable with medication; being prepared with proper medicine is advisable for those who are inexperienced on the water (Chaney & Martin, in press; Fox, 2001; Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

Running, Biking, and Rollerblading Etiquette

A number of businesspeople are starting running clubs or joining existing running clubs. Joining these clubs is a wonderful way to network and get to know other people. Wearing reflective clothing when running is recommended; when running alone, it is important to inform someone of the route. Since runners are generally gone for an extended period of time, it is a good time to talk about business (Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

Biking and rollerblading can be good sports for business as one can talk with a fellow biker or rollerblader and bike or rollerblade at the same time. As with runners, there are generally local biking or rollerblading groups; and these are an excellent way to meet other business people (Chaney & Martin, in press).

Running, biking, and rollerblading have their rules; knowing the proper etiquette is necessary for these sports. Wearing proper attire and having the proper equipment for each sport is essential. Proper clothing will signal to others one's seriousness about the sport. Wearing protective gear with these sports is necessary to protect the body. Since these sports tend to take place where other people may be walking or driving, it is important to respect and follow the rules of the road (Chaney & Martin, in press).

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Bikers should remember to go in the same direction as the traffic. Bikes are legally subject to the rules of the road; pedestrians have the right of way. Bikers should be aware of motorists, pedestrians, and other bikers; they should pass other bikers on their left and as they come alongside say, "On your left" to inform the other biker of their whereabouts. Runners and rollerbladers should go against the traffic. Running when it is dark is dangerous since drivers may not be able to see runners (Martin, 2005; Mitchell, 2004; Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

Gym or Health Club Etiquette

While working out at the gym or health club is a personal routine, courtesy is necessary so that everyone can enjoy working out. Two towels are needed: one to wipe the brow and one with which to wipe the equipment. Towels and other supplies, such as water bottles and charts, should be kept out of the walk ways so that people do not trip over them. Also, the locker room should be kept neat and clean by not leaving items in front of other people's lockers or on the floor. The shower area must be kept clean; empty shampoo bottles should not be left behind for locker room attendants to dispose of (Mitchell, 2004). All guests who use the facilities should be considerate of others who may wish to use mirrors or other accessories provided for the use of other members. When using the steam room or sauna, guests should not take up excessive space by lying down when other people need a place to sit. After leaving the steam room or sauna, all guests should remember to take a shower before entering the pools (Chaney & Martin, in press; Ford, 2001).

When guests go through a rotation of exercise equipment, they should return the equipment to the starting position and should never leave weights where others can trip over them. In addition, guests should remember to wipe perspiration and body oil off of the equipment. Equipment is not always supervised (particularly in hotels); thus, someone at the facility should be notified if a piece of equipment is not working properly (Craig, 1996; Ford, 2001; Tuckerman & Dunnan, 1995).

If the exercise room is busy, taking turns on each piece of equipment is considerate; no one should hold up the rotation of people through the equipment circuit. It is not appropriate to jump ahead to the next machine or to talk to others when people are waiting for their turn on the machine. When it is necessary for a guest to leave briefly, they should be considerate enough to tell the next person waiting in line that they will be back shortly. Also, counting aloud should be avoided as this will be distracting to others who are counting as well. Since making grunting and moaning sounds can increase blood pressure and put strain on the respiratory system, it is not advisable to indulge in these theatrics (Chaney & Martin, in press; Mitchell, 2004).

Dressing for the gym should include comfortable, stretchable clothing and shoes that will not slide easily. Skimpy clothing has no place in a gym. Wearing appropriate footwear is important as wearing inappropriate shoes may result in a broken toe or foot (Mitchell, 2004).

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Young children should not be brought to the health club or gym unless a babysitting service is provided. The exercise floor is no place for children to play; it can be dangerous. Their presence can also be distracting to members. In addition, cell phones should not be brought into the facility as this is disruptive to others. (In fact, many health clubs do not allow them.) Excessive conversations with others who are exercising should be avoided; chitchat should be saved for after the exercise session (Ford, 2001).

When the personal trainers provided by the gym are used, they should be given 24 hours' notice to cancel an appointment; otherwise, the appointment should be paid for. While the trainer should be in control of the workout, it is important to let the trainer know immediately when experiencing pain. When arriving for an appointment, if a trainer is with another person, it is polite to wait until the trainer finishes helping that person rather than interrupting the session (Mitchell, 2004).

Spectator Etiquette

Spectators' responsibilities are to enjoy themselves without bothering other spectators or interfering in any way with the play. While it is expected that people will yell for their teams, it is inappropriate to criticize the other team. Applauding a missed shot is poor sportsmanship on the part of the spectator. Other inappropriate spectator behaviors include hissing, booing, and "coaching" from the sidelines (Pachter & Brody, 1995). Many times a host will have a business guest who is a fan of the opposing team. If the guest's team wins, offering congratulations is the correct behavior. If the guest's team loses, it is polite to offer kind remarks about the guest's team (Craig, 1996; Ford, 2001; Post & Post, 1999; Stewart, 1997).

Two points of etiquette are of special importance: proper use of cell phones and appropriate behavior during the playing of the national anthem. People who use cell phones during a sporting event are rude, self-centered, and inconsiderate. Research has shown that many people are reporting negative results with taking work calls at home and home calls at work; lines are becoming blurred between work and home. Family wants the family member to pay attention to the family when they are home and not work; and fellow employees consider too many personal calls not proper at work (Carter, 2006). Basically family and friends find it annoying when someone feels connected to work 24/7 with electronic devices. The "Star Spangled Banner," the U.S. national anthem, is sung at most sporting events. Everyone should rise and sing the national anthem. It is improper to walk, find one's seat, eat, smoke, or otherwise move while the anthem is being played. Men and boys should remove their hats and place them over their hearts. During the Pledge of Allegiance, the right hand should be placed over the heart while reciting the Pledge (Chaney & Martin, in press; Moore, 2003).

Heckling players is not an act of sportsmanship and should be avoided. While many players will ignore most verbal heckling, it is a little more difficult to avoid items that are being thrown. Noise is acceptable at certain spectator events and taboo at others. Dealing with noise is a

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challenge for many athletes. Although at times it may be distracting, noise is considered a big advantage by a home team's athletes and coaches. At spectator events such as football, baseball, and basketball, it is considered appropriate to yell and cheer for your team. It is not considered appropriate to yell comments about a player's family, race, or any other disparaging remark. In the game of golf, however, noise is disrespectful (Chaney & Martin, in press). One golfer, following a noisy tournament, commented: "I'm certainly not going to go out and disrupt a business person in their business life, and they shouldn't disrupt our game" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 1).

Another inappropriate behavior by spectators is running out on fields and floors after their teams win. While this was previously done only when a team was ranked and played a ranked team, it now happens for no apparent reason. Fans should consider taking this bit of advice: "Try winning like you've done it before" (Hummer, 2004, p. C2).

Fans should be careful not to interfere with play. Many fans are familiar with the story of the Chicago Cubs fan that cost his team the game and more. On October 14, 2003, a Chicago Cubs fan caught a ball that was not foul and that would not have made it to the stands. The fan reached out and caught the ball as it was falling into his team's outfielder's mitt. By catching that ball, the fan cost the Cubs a chance at the World Series that year. Needless to say, there were and continue to be very angry blogs on the web about the situation. Fans must remember the rules of the game, and in baseball that includes not reaching out to catch a ball that is in play no matter how much adrenaline is in their veins (Drehs, 2005).

Dr. J. Wesley Robb developed a four-step model for being a good fan. First, fans should consider their motive for attending the event. Second, they should consider how their conduct at the event is viewed by others and how they want to be perceived. Third, fans should consider the consequences; behaving unprofessionally may have a negative impact on significant people in their lives. Fourth, fans must consider the legality or appropriateness of what they are doing. If people consider their actions before engaging in inappropriate behaviors, perhaps everyone could enjoy sporting events more. Although some fans try to blame their bad behavior on alcohol, excessive alcohol consumption is not an excuse for bad spectator manners (Keim, 2003).

Integrating Sports Etiquette into Business Communication Courses

The responsibility of teaching proper behavior, once assumed by parents, seems to have shifted to the schools. Employers look to the academic world to provide instruction and guidance in developing students' social skills. Teachers of business communication can integrate the principles of sports etiquette into their course in the following ways:

- Include in discussions of etiquette the proper attire and behavior for different sports.

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- Assign students to read and report on journal articles related to the various areas of sports etiquette addressed in this paper; a chapter on sports etiquette in a recent book on etiquette is another assignment option.
- Ask students to talk for two minutes on some aspect of sports etiquette that they have found by searching online. Another idea for a short oral presentation is to encourage students to share examples of inappropriate sports etiquette, either by a player or a spectator, which they have observed.
- Invite guest speakers from local sports teams to address the class on the importance of spectator etiquette. Another guest speaker choice is the manager of a local gym or sports club to discuss gym and health club etiquette.
- Administer a self-check exercise to students, used as either a pretest or posttest, to determine students' knowledge of sports etiquette. Here is a suggested true-false exercise:

    1. Punctuality is more important for players than for spectators.
    2. Tennis players should not walk across another court in use to retrieve a ball.
    3. Players of racquet sports should be equally matched.
    4. Guests at private clubs should remember that tipping is usually done by the host.
    5. Consuming alcoholic beverages while playing golf is inappropriate.
    6. The host remains silent when his guest at a golf course shaves a stroke off the hole.
    7. Swimmers using a lap pool should keep to the right so that others may pass on the left.
    8. Runners should go in the same direction as the traffic.
    9. Many health clubs do not allow guests to use cell phones at the facility.
    10. Noise is sometimes appropriate at sporting events; at other times it is inappropriate.

Answers: 1 – F; 2 – T; 3 – F; 4 – T; 5 – F; 6 – T; 7 – T; 8 – F; 9 – T; 10 – T

In summary, business decisions are often made in non-business settings, such as while playing or watching sports. Thus, instruction in proper sports etiquette should be integrated into appropriate business courses, such as business communication, so that students will have an edge for winning in today's highly competitive corporate world. Many top-level executives maintain that the winning edge is good social skills. They have observed that employees with good social skills are assets to the organization and are probable candidates for moving up in the firm. These executives have found that behaving appropriately in business and non-business settings has influenced their own success as well as the success of the companies they represent.

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Biographies

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Word Power: Implications for Minority Managerial Candidates

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Introduction

In the corporate environment, CEOs are often rewarded on the basis of their abilities to balance human resources with the organization objectives in order to obtain performance goals. The data collected from organizations achieving these goals provide valuable benchmark indicators that may be referenced during strategic planning for implementation or improvement of organizational objectives. It is critical for organizations to utilize these indicators given changes such as: global competition, workforce demographics and rapid technological advancements. It is paradoxical when these indicators become organizational barriers. For example, diversity initiatives are often perceived as difficult to measure with respect to financial impact. Most discussions focusing on employees' satisfaction suggest perceived respect will increase the probability that an employee will remain with the organization, thus, increasing their productivity (Kochan, et al, 2003). There is a great deal of disagreement with the aforementioned findings. Primarily, disagreement exists due to the varying degrees of measurement and/or definitions used by organizations to implement diversity initiatives.

Diversity literature suggests training programs are short term whereas education and development involves a long term comprehensive approach (Bohlander & Snell, 2004). Proponents of diversity training programs contend that understanding the importance of a diverse workforce creates productive environments in which everyone feels valued, where their talents are used and organizational objectives are met. Critics contend that there is not enough evidence to adequately measure whether implementation of diversity training programs increase organizational financial success (Cascio, 2003).

Subsequently, education and development, given the transition from classic management to learning organizations, have become a more acceptable approach for diversity initiatives (Adler, 2002). This broad approach can be modified to specific needs of the organization. An often cited organizational need in the current workforce is providing educational and development activities necessary for members of specific groups to do their job and have the opportunity for advancement (Chen, et al., 2004). One example proponents use to support this approach is a study that projected an increase of women across multiple global workforces as it relates to the current talent pool of women in nontraditional leadership positions (Beck,1999; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002). The changing workforce creates opportunities for competitive advantages by utilizing a broad approach to diversity initiatives. With this in mind, we identified some specific business

communication skills which candidates need for entry-level management according to criteria of US companies.

Business Communication Skills

After review of related literature and open-ended interviews with 10 diversity experts chosen for their experience working with organizations on diversity initiatives four skills were identified: self confidence, use of oral presentation, effective team member, and utilize feedback. The skills should be integrated with the organization's education and development with respect to diversity initiatives. The open-end interviews were advantageous to this exploratory study because it allowed flexibility to probe and follow up on responses. A structured professional and friendly tone was maintained in order to provide a level of comfort; in which selected diversity experts were apt to speak freely about a sensitive subject.

Findings indicated diversity experts in this study focused on productivity and remaining competitive. These findings mirror leadership literature that focuses characteristics identified as important for leadership of diverse organizations. Examples include: an openness to change oneself, mentoring and empowerment of diverse employees, a long range and personal vision that recognizes and supports a diverse organizational community (Chemers & Ayman, 1993; Richard, 2000; Wells, 2001).

A questionnaire was developed that incorporated emerging skills. Theoretical frameworks were used to formulate working definitions of identified skills as follow.

Self confidence, able to inspire employees to change by exhibiting behavior that reflects confidence in what one is doing.
Use of oral presentation, able to communicate effectively.
Effective team member, able to promote others to work together.
Utilize feedback, able to develop others by making available resources that help improves skills.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine whether and how minority female management candidates are perceived differently on their evaluation and promotion given mastery of specific business communication skills. The questionnaire was designed to collect data concerning respondents′ views on merit and preferential hiring in general.

Findings and Implications

Participants in this study included 25 minority female management candidates tracked for traditional male leadership positions. Minorities were defined as African-American, Hispanic-American and Asian-American. In terms of sampling of organization types, candidates were from oil and gas, service, banking and finance. The research method in this exploratory study was a questionnaire developed from opened ended interviews with diversity experts from the same organization types as the candidates. Collected data was

used to construct a broader questionnaire that can be used for statistical analysis with regard to specific business communication skills.

The study's limitation is recognized due to findings that focus on soft skills. The aforementioned are skills that are non technical, abilities and traits. They include competencies such as: problem-solving skills, oral communication skills, personal qualities and work ethic, and interpersonal and teamwork skills. All of which can be partially defined by culture and subsequently assess of factors associated with stereotyping. For example, a major finding of this study is the self- perception that male counterparts believe female managers lack self confidence. These findings contradict literature focusing on leadership style. Women managers are stereotyped to use a transformational style which develop followers into leaders and bring about significant change, rather than transactional, an exchange process between leader and followers (Pounder & Coleman, 2002).

However, these findings are supported by the following data from the US Department of Labor:

- Minorities (Blacks, Hispanics and Asians), make up 15.5 percent of the total workforce, but occupy only 6 percent of management positions;
- Women make up 37.9 percent of the total workforce, but only occupy 16.9 percent of management positions; and
- At the executive level, only 3.6 percent are minority, and 6.6 percent are women (Statistics - Break the Glass Ceiling Foundation, 2003-2004).

Another major finding was minority female management candidates are perceived differently on their evaluation and promotion although perceived as effective communicators, team members and utilize feedback. Data indicated respondents' underlying perception focused on preferential hiring rather than merit. In general the respondent perceived that merit advancement would lessen the perception that they could not compete, thus required special considerations given their dual (women and minority) membership status during evaluation and promotion considerations.

Arguably, these findings provide significant insight with regards to developing a broader questionnaire. Further research could identify factors that focus on merit rather than preferential hiring as it relates to artificial barriers to equal access opportunity for underrepresented populations, specifically women of color, in management positions. Findings from this study contradicted related literature on women's management styles, which is centered on communication and building positive relationships. Interestingly, these results indicated respondents did not visualize themselves, perhaps due to the glass ceiling effect, in leadership roles. Given these findings, we believe additional research about the implication for *Word Power for Minority Managerial Candidates* can provide data that could contribute to implementation of hiring processes designed to enhance our workforce talent pool and productivity.

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Promoting Ethical Practices within Institutions of Higher Education

Mary Anne Weegar

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Introduction

The public is continually bombarded with cases of wrongful practices in the work environment. As a result, the public has lost confidence in the ability of corporations and institutions of higher education to train individuals to behave in an ethical manner (Frisque, Lin, & Kolb, 2004). Ethical practices in corporate America have resulted in institutions of higher education revisiting their ethical practices, which includes creating a learning environment where students develop the necessary skills to become ethical leaders and citizens (Couch & Dodd, 2005). Many colleges and universities have adopted codes of ethics that emphasize core ethical principles and standards for their employees.

Ethical standards are important to ensure that the university is operating within the law and is viewed by the public as an ethical institution of learning. In addition, Couch & Dodd (2005) believe that more attention should be directed towards evaluating whether the policies are achieving the intended results. Codes of ethics at universities are primarily for the purpose of promoting ethical teaching practices. The university has a responsibility to address and evaluate ongoing contradictions of ethical theory and practice within and outside the classroom (Fenwick, 2005).

Students and faculty should be encouraged to participate in academic integrity initiatives in the classroom and within the community where they live (Couch & Dodd, 2005). Universities should promote ongoing dialogue among student groups for the purpose of increasing understanding of professional codes of ethics in academia, which includes technology enhanced plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty that have increased significantly in the past thirty years. According to Couch and Dodd (2005), academic dishonesty can be reduced by establishing honor codes that send a message to students that ethical behavior is expected. The university is responsible for promoting ethical standards for their students that will guide them in their personal and professional lives. Ethical principles for college/university students should be included in student orientation programs. Universities should not assume that students come to universities understanding ethical principles and how they are applied in academia.

Ethics Defined

Ethics has been defined in many different ways in the literature. Ethics is viewed by some as the way people conduct themselves and make decisions. Macrina (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) defines ethics in the philosophical context, indicating that ethics governs how people live their

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lives. Trevina and Nelson (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) refer to ethics as the norms, attitudes, and beliefs that are reflected in the way people treat each other and the manner in which people are able to adapt to the environment in which they find themselves (Thompson, 2007). The manner in which personal ethical values are formed and developed is of particular interest to academia and the public since the moral collapse of corporate executive officers of large corporations such as Enron, Tyco and Aldelphia (Nevins, Bearden, & Money, 2007). Rawls (as cited in Thompson, 2007) believes that the occurrence of unethical events is a result of the value differences in people, which cause them to act in ways that go against what society deems moral and just.

Ethical behavior in organizations gained a great amount of media attention after the collapse of companies such as American Group International Incorporate (AIG), Enron and Tyco. AIG lost $70 billion in one month, Enron lost $90 billion in two months, and Tyco lost $40 million in two months of share holder value (Brewer, 2005). The press was quick to blame faculties in institutions of higher education, where executives earned their degrees, for not teaching their students to be virtuous (Beggs & Dean, 2007). There is an assumption by the media that ethics can be taught; whereas, faculties point out that teaching a code of ethics requires a “buy-in” from students. Faculties are still debating how this “buy-in” can be accomplished. Business education university faculties are quick to point to the need for “external forces for better ethics in organizations, represented by legislation” (Beggs & Dean, 2007, p. 15).

Based on the recent media focus on the violations of the ethical protocol in business organizations and educational institutions, the nation has demanded that governing bodies take corrective action. An example of recent legislation to reduce unethical practices in organizations is the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (Warren & Rosenthal, 2006; Beggs & Dean, 2007). The purpose of the legislation was to mandate adequate "internal controls” for corporations to make accounting practices transparent, and thereby, to ensure compliance. As a result of this legislation, the Security and Exchange Commission was given the power to police compliance issues. In addition, the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are required to certify that the financial results that are reported to shareholders are accurate.

Study of Ethics

The study of ethics has increased in academia and the corporate world in the United States. This increase is attributed to a new generation of professionals who represent the changing demographics in the work environment. In the past, ethics training in the United States was mainly for white middle-class male students who were entering the professions of business, medicine, religion and the law. Students who attend universities today represent a different demographic that includes a variety of races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds (Beggs & Dean, 2007).

There has been a continuing debate regarding the extent to which ethics is able to be taught and the degree to which the teaching of ethics influences people’s future behavior. This debate goes back to the time when Plato and Socrates debated whether or not virtue could be taught (Louden, 2000). Socrates believed that “ethics was the search for a good life in which one’s actions are in accord with the truth” (Bass, 1990, p. 905). Immanuel Kant, the last major philosopher in the

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Age of Enlightenment, believed that the teaching of ethics required structure and discipline to produce ethical human behavior (Louden, 2000; Kant, 2004).

Organizational leadership (study of organizational management) is founded on the principles of ethical behavior and social responsibility. Millions of dollars have been spent by organizations to train their employees on the principles of organizational development and a major part of this is the practice of ethical behavior. Corporations, K-12 public education institutions, institutions of higher education and religious organizations (i.e., church) establish ethical policies or codes of ethics that their employees are expected to follow.

Ethical Perceptions of Educators

The media has recently brought to the public's attention many examples of unethical behavior by educators (i.e., public school administrators, teachers, and certificated staff) who also received their degrees at institutions of higher education. Faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Teacher Education Departments have debated their responsibility in teaching ethics and whether ethics is able to be taught. Although there has been an effort to include ethical responsibilities in course syllabi, this does not guarantee that everyone who earns a degree at a university will behave ethically in their chosen profession. Accreditation agencies such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) require colleges/universities to assess pre-service teachers' adherence to ethical behavior standards before recommending them for state licensure (NCATE, 2006). Despite efforts nationwide to establish standards of professional conduct for teachers, little has been done to professionalize public-school teaching.

Barrett, Headley, Stovall, and White (2006) developed a research study to investigate "teachers' perceptions of the frequency and seriousness of different categories of teacher misconduct" (p. 421). The researchers created a 34-item questionnaire to measure how serious the teachers perceived the various categories of misconduct. These questionnaires were distributed to 235 education professionals in South Carolina. The respondents rated the degree of misconduct that they perceived had occurred for each item listed on the questionnaire. The researchers used a factor analysis to measure the degree of seriousness that professional educators had attached to each of the misconduct categories. The results of the study yielded three areas of major misconduct: "(a) student-teacher boundary violations, (b) carelessness in behavior, and (c) subjectivity in grading and instruction" (Barrett et al., 2006, p. 421). The behaviors that were judged the most serious ethical violations were engaging in romantic relationships with students (94.1 %), allowing students to engage in romantic behaviors in the classroom (94,1 %), making derogatory remarks to students about a colleague (92.6 %), awarding students higher grades for favors (90.8 %), and making sexual comments to students (Barrett et al., 2006).

The results of this research study by Barrett et al. (2006) suggest that teachers have an understanding of the underlying ethical principles of their profession. The researchers recommend that a set of principles should be compiled that mirrors those found in the code of ethics for the American Psychological Association (APA), and the American Medical Association (AMA). These principles include showing respect for others, delivering professional services, and helping others. The aforementioned set of principles could provide the guidance for

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a national code of ethics. Barrett et al. (2006) suggest that a national code of ethics would establish a standard for defining the expected ethical behavior of education professionals. The code of ethics would protect the public against incompetent educators and would also protect the educators who followed their professional code of ethics.

The question that should be considered for further investigation is whether establishing a code of ethics is the key for guaranteeing ethical conduct for professionals. In other words, is ethical behavior learned and practiced after a code of ethics has been implemented for their profession? Or does a person's ethical behavior reflect his/her religious commitment to making ethical decisions? In a research study by Knotts, Lopez, and Mesak (2000) on ethical judgments of college students, the researchers found that a dimension of religiosity-religious commitment (i.e., deals more with how religious a person is, and less with how a person is religious in terms of practicing certain rituals) significantly influenced the ethical judgments of college students in a sample of 242 (only 226 usable questionnaires) undergraduates and graduate students enrolled in business courses in the fall 1998 quarter at a medium-sized southern university.

Although there appears to be an agreement between universities and corporations that organizations need to address the topic of ethics, there is concern regarding the best way to proceed to integrate ethics into their organization. "Ethics and compliance officers, professional codes, ethics conferences, formal and informal ethics courses, and ethics hotlines are only some of the ways in which organizations have responded to the need for ethics preparedness" (Frisque, Lin, & Kolb, 2004, p. 28).

Ethical Training

Universities and corporations have used training in ethics as the common ground for educating individuals on making ethical decisions in the workplace. Frisque et al. (2004) suggest that Performance Improvement (PI) professionals provide people with the "strategies to assist with complex ethical decision-making frameworks" (p. 30). Galvin (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) stated that the results of a recent survey of 1652 companies published in the annual 2001 Industry Report found that 24 percent provided training on a regular basis, 17 percent provided training on an as needed basis, and 38 percent provided no ethics training. The percentage of companies that provided training in ethics suggest that the amount of training that employees receive is directly related to the value that management places on professional training, and they are influenced by how strongly they believe that ethical training will increase corporate sales.

Hemingway and Maclagan (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) indicated that ethical business behavior, or lack thereof, is believed to be an outgrowth of managers' personal values. In 1994, Dov L. Seidman, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of LRN, identified a need in corporate America to provide organizations with services that create ethical corporate cultures that promote self-regulation based on core values, as opposed to establishing a set of rules for employees to follow. Based on his assessment of the ethical practices of organizations, Seidman established LRN, which has been touted as being highly successful in assisting corporations to provide continuing education on how to identify and become more effective at resolving sensitive conflicts, how to apply the appropriate remedy to resolve dilemmas, and how to write carefully crafted emails. The ultimate goal of LRN is to help corporations to integrate lawful and ethical conduct into

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daily business practices (Thompson, 2007). The effectiveness of ethical training is ultimately measured by an increase in institution's ability to be more productive in increasing their competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Although institutions of higher education have not implemented ethics training to the extent that corporations have in recent years, higher education is not free from experiencing unethical practices and wrongdoings. One of the more recent scandals in an institution of higher education was discovering that faculty members falsified research data (Frisque et al., 2004). Guelcher and Cahalane (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) reported that fifty percent of business school deans said that they would accept a bribe of one million dollars to hire an unqualified applicant for a position in their department. These researchers suggest that high level administrators have a responsibility to protect the reputation of their institution and that one way that they are able to do this is through ethics training programs.

Universities that are in the process of implementing compliance-based ethics programs find new challenges in an ever-changing workplace. Universities have become increasingly diverse with students from different cultures, races, and ethnic backgrounds. Based on the changing demographics in institutions of higher education, universities are beginning to implement ethics programs that are infused into the shared beliefs and value systems of their students. Although students from a variety of cultures may have different interpretations of ethical behavior, there is an ongoing "debate and little consensus regarding whether faculty should focus their teaching objectives on relativistic values or universalistic values" (Frisque et al., 2004, p. 37). Corporate America and institutions of higher education should not loose sight of the multicultural setting that not only permeates ethics teaching and training approaches, but also contributes to the complexity of defining desired outcomes and adopting appropriate content, methodology and measurement. Whatever approach is adopted to establish ethical practices in an organization (i.e., ethics courses, ethics training, compliance or values-based programs), the desired outcomes should be made clear to the participants with the understanding that the establishment of desired outcomes is only the first step in creating an ethical workplace environment. Perhaps most importantly, leaders of organizations need to realize that acting ethically will not decrease their competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Teaching of Ethics

Many would agree that students should have learned values and ethics before they entered college. For the most part, students have learned their values in the home, school, church, and through their interaction with members of the society in which they live. Colson (as cited in Chen & Tang, 2006) argues that institutions of higher education cannot make morally corrupt students virtuous or unintelligent students smart. Chen and Tang (2006) believe that "more research is needed to identify possible ways to unlearn the unethical orientation and instill proper ethics and values among college students in the future" (p. 90).

Mintzberg and Gosling (as cited in Chen & Tang, 2006) believe that ethical managers cannot be created in a university classroom. They believe that professors are not able to teach management to individuals who are not managers and that people need to learn from their own experiences. This has caused many universities, who offer a Masters of Business Administration (MBA)

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degree, to provide first-hand experiences for their students to enhance their knowledge and wisdom acquired from textbooks. Some full-time business students are required to interview white-collar federal prisoners who are paying their debt to society for unethical practices such as "cooking the books" for the organization where they were employed.

There is an abundance of literature on the teaching of ethics in business schools that spans over a century. The literature in the past fifteen years has included suggestions for how to teach ethics, what to teach, and even questioning whether ethics should be taught at all. Ritter (2006) conducted an empirical study to determine how effective ethics materials were and how ethics could be integrated and implemented in an ethics curriculum. The study tested the notion that the implementation of an ethical program could have positive outcomes even for a small sampling of students. Interestingly, the results of the study showed that positive effects of an ethics training program only occurred with women. According to Ritter (2006), women enter college with a "higher ethical schema available for activation and use in decision making than men" (p. 161). This may be a result of women having to make changes to the "traditional business paradigm to include their gender role" and as a result, they are willing to make other concessions (p. 162). Ritter also suggests that even though men may be knowledgeable of ethical principles, they tend to follow the traditional business paradigm that values increasing their profit margin over ethical considerations.

Curricula and Pedagogical Approaches for Teaching Ethics

Warren and Rosenthal (2006) conducted interviews at institutions of higher education that offer degrees in business to determine what has been done, if anything, regarding the curricula in the ethics area and how faculties see the curricula impacting their future students. The study was prompted by the recent corporate scandals that were headed by noteworthy executives who had received a MBA from reputable colleges and universities. After interviewing faculties and administrators in the School of Business in institutions of higher education, the researchers found that many of the schools have taken different pedagogical approaches to the teaching of ethics and related courses. Based on the results of the interviews, the researchers concluded that: (a) companies are being controlled to a greater degree by government, (b) corporate productivity is decreasing since the Sarbanes-Oxley Act was passed, (c) there is a need for more codes of ethics and ethical conduct in business, and (d) colleges and universities continue to debate whether ethics should be taught as a separate course or should be integrated into the curriculum.

The writer has learned that the amount of literature available on ethics and social responsibility is overwhelming. Researchers have conducted numerous studies. A few of the most recent studies have been cited in this paper. There does not appear to be a solution to the debate over whether ethics can be taught or whether a person can be taught to be virtuous. Everyone seems to have an opinion on this subject. Ancient philosophers developed their own thought systems about virtue and present day religious leaders follow their dictates as they interpret them from the Bible, Koran, Torah and other religious doctrines. The erosion of the American society's value system is often attributed to the breakdown of "family values". There is an attitude that permeates our society that making money is what's important. Hence, parents work outside the home and the raising of children is often times left to caregivers and to the schools. The responsibility to teach

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values has shifted to the neighborhood culture where children interact with other children. The increase in gang activity is a symptom of eroding values within our society.

Causes of Unethical Behavior

There are many examples of why individuals choose to participate in unethical practices. Some of the situations that may result in unethical or illegal behavior are discussed by the writer through the following examples. Although an employee may know that he is participating in an unethical practice at work, he may be afraid of loosing his job if he does not follow the manager's guidance. When parents do not have enough money to purchase gifts for their family over the holidays (e.g., Christmas), they may feel compelled to steal rather than having their children "go without" presents. When people feel that their company has not paid them sufficient wages for the work that they do, they may steal items for use in their home or to sell. A fatal illness that requires considerable investment of money may cause a person to steal drugs or money to save the life of another human being. People who are addicted to drugs may steal to maintain their habit rather than suffer the pain they would otherwise endure.
In summation, the reason why individuals, who know the difference between "right" and "wrong", participate in unethical practices is because they experience a departure from their value system, which impairs their judgment to such a degree that they are willing to go beyond society's ethical code. This could be caused by any of the emotions (i.e., love, fear, jealousy, lust, and hate), destructive habits of excess (i.e., drugs, gambling, shopping, eating, and drinking), and perceived needs (i.e., power, greed, and self-esteem).

Chen and Tang (2006) acknowledge that managers and employees in the real world of work have increased pressure to reach organizational goals, deadlines, and quotas. As a result of these business pressures, some managers may resort to engaging in unethical practices to meet the demands of all stakeholders. Future research is needed to investigate-manager's behavior when they are facing "potential gains and perverse incentives in the real world of work" (p. 90).
Most people would agree that our society is depreciating in the areas of ethics and values. Therefore, there needs to be greater amount of attention given to the problem of ethics and not just from an academic perspective.

Chen and Tang (2006) research study examined "business and psychology students' attitude toward unethical behavior and their propensity to engage in unethical behavior" (p. 77). The researchers collected data for their study using the 32-item Unethical Behavior Scale developed by Luna-Arocas and Tang (as cited in Chen and Tang, 2006), which has "good reliability, face validity, content validity, and measurement invariance data in the literature" (p. 84). The researchers also "collected data regarding demographic variables such as sex, age, years of education, current job and total work experience in years, major (business vs. psychology), and annual income" (p. 84). The results of the researchers' study found good reliability for all measures that they used. Theft, corruption, deception, and not choosing to participate in "whistle blowing" were considered more ethical behaviors among males than their female counterparts. Therefore, females were found to be more ethical in this student sample. The researchers also found that if a situation was determined to be unethical that students are unlikely to engage in unethical behavior.

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The issue of ethics and values appear to be characteristic of a depreciating society. The headlines in the media appear to support the premise that there are individuals in the military, academia, government, and religious institutions that have participated in unethical behavior. Establishing codes of ethics, integrating ethics into the curriculum, creating honor codes, and offering training in ethics by leadership corporations, have been suggested as ways to create an environment where all people will behave in an ethical and virtuous manner. These aforementioned approaches have been tried in a great number of organizations with minimal results since unethical behavior is still a factor that organizations should be prepared to overcome on a day by day basis.

Numerous corporate scandals and corrupt business practices have been publicized in the media since the fall of Enron in 2001. Enron hired Arthur Andersen, one of the "big five" accounting firms to audit their firm. The combined greed of both of these companies for money and power resulted in the collapse of both firms. In 2002, the firm of Arthur Andersen voluntarily surrendered their certified public accounts license for their unethical handling of the Enron account. In 2002, Barbara Toffler, former employee of Arthur Andersen at Enron, was interviewed by Paul Solman, a business and economics correspondent for *The News Hour* to discuss how the driving force for financial gain and the power that more money brings to the company caused the Enron executives to participate in unethical practices.

Media spokespersons frequently make the erroneous assumption that the collapse of corporations is due to a lack of business ethics and standards. In actuality, former Enron Corporation Chief Financial Officer, Andrew Fastow, and former Chief Executive Officer, Jeffrey Skilling, attended the best schools of business in United States (As cited in Chen & Tang, 2006). It appears that their unethical actions were the result of wanting to increase their financial assets. People who desire more money may give into temptations and participate in unethical activities that often times leads to their own destruction. Chen and Tang (2006) suggested that unethical behavior is an under-represented area of research in management and should be further investigated. Researchers have conducted studies on unethical behavior that focused on workplace theft, cyber loafing, deviance, counterproductive behavior, corruption, and misbehaviors of organizations. Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matterson (As cited in Chen & Tang, 2006), provided a list of twenty-three misbehaviors at work. Included in the aforementioned list of unethical behaviors in the workplace is abuse of resources, not whistle blowing, theft, corruption and deception, blackmail, bribery, bullying, dishonesty, sexual harassment, discrimination, misinformation, and intimidation.

Although people may know the difference between "right" and "wrong", they still may engage in unethical practices depending on the situation in which they find themselves. The moral values of society are reflected in the culture in which they live. Individuals may make "wrong" choices based on their intrinsic or extrinsic needs. The educational and social service environments have ethical breeches. These ethical breeches take many forms. For example, a review of the budget may show that money is being used to pay for work done by a company who makes large contributions to finance a board member's political campaign or to remodel the private home of person employed by the educational organization.

Codes of Ethics

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The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) provide codes of ethics to guide the behavior of higher education employees in their professional work at colleges and universities. Hence, the ACPA Code of Ethics expects all individuals to be treated fairly and equitably. Arguably, individuals who are employed at a college or university have a greater responsibility to model high ethical standards (Danley, 2006).

Organizations have a responsibility to develop an ethics policy The purpose of an ethics policy should be to support a culture of openness, trust, and integrity among employees. Since employees are more apt to copy management's actions rather then choosing to adhere to the official guidelines in a manual. It is imperative that management set the standard of behavior. Brown (2000) suggests that instead of providing a written Code of Ethics, employees should be provided with information that teaches them how to access the right resources so that they can make better ethical decisions. Schmidt and Posner (As cited by Weber, 2006) believe that a strong ethical culture or set of values assists managers in providing a clear organizational direction. Kranacher (2006) suggests that the policies and procedures should be communicated throughout the organization via management training meetings, email messages, employee orientations, and the organization's policy manual.

A Code of Ethics should be a list of positive ethical traits that the organization values and expects their employees to emulate, because the institution's culture is reflected in the Code of Ethics. One of the roadblocks to creating a code of ethical values for employees is the erroneous perception of many managers. Kranacher (2006) states that some managers do not believe that employees are able to be taught ethical values, even though employees have ethical values that they continue to develop throughout their lifetime. Danley (2006) recommends that employees in today's workplace should be consistent in their responses to daily events, conflicts, and challenges, and they should base their actions on the standards of ethical behavior that have been agreed upon by the organization. According to Covey (As cited in Danley, 2006), the traits necessary for ethical behavior are courage, honesty, fairness, and empathy. Danley (2003) believes that developing habits based on courage, honesty and integrity, fairness, and generosity are the ethical traits that should be fostered in the home and in the workplace.

There are many ways that courage can be expressed by employees. One expression of courage is speaking the truth when there is no one who is willing to support you for fear of retribution by someone in the organization. When people are valued in the workplace for their courage and integrity, these behaviors become part of the corporate culture. Hence, honesty and integrity are determined through daily interactions with others, especially management. Fairness and concern are two characteristics that employees expect of ethical leaders. In other words, employees believe that ethical leaders take the time to help employees solve problems because ethical leaders value their employees. In the final analysis, employees bring to the organization their own personal, cultural, and religious beliefs and are influenced by the ethical values of their leaders. Consequently, high ethical standards established by management beget high ethical standards by their employees.

Promotion Strategies

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According to Couch and Dodd (2007) colleges and universities should:

> (a) become better informed about formal ethics related policies of institutions and initiate discussions about the effect of these policies on the creation of a ethical climate on campus; (b) support the development of an institution coed of ethics that articulates core ethical principles; (c) document inconsistencies that may exist between the explicit values communicated in written pronouncements and the implicit values that drive institutional decisions and actions; (d) collaborate with colleagues to foster a campus climate that values diversity and ensures a welcoming, supportive environment for all; (e) provide leadership to nurture an ethical learning environment that is inclusive, fair, and free from harassment and coercion; (f) become informed about the social, political, and economic issues that have ethical implications for the profession; (g) ensure that graduate and undergraduate students learn the principles and traditions required for ethical professional practice, as well as the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to become responsible citizens and ethical leaders in their communities; (h) find ways to enhance opportunities for student engagement in experiential learning activities that provide exposure to real-life ethical issues; and engage in national ethics initiatives, such as the Association of College Honor Societies project and in activities sponsored by the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics and the Center for Academic integrity. (p. 23)

Another Viewpoint to Consider

The responsibility for promoting ethics in higher education lies with the leadership of colleges and universities. Like most efforts at organizational change, the energy, financing, and inspiration must start at the top and must anticipate and verbalize a long term commitment to ethical goals. “Bottom-up” schemes for change are seldom successful since they lack the organizational influence to create a sustained, well supported plan of action.

Ethics issues permeate every aspect of university life from admissions to the classroom, from hiring to curriculum development and from research to the athletic field. To alter the ethics culture in an institution of higher education (or any organization) requires the highest level of commitment and realistic consequences for deviations.

To highlight the level of difficulty involved in implementing such a program, the writer has developed several actions for a sample program that, if implement, would have a high change of success. This program would require:

(a) verbal and written commitment of the university president/chancellor, board of trustees, alumni association, faculty and staff to the implementation of an ethics plan of action;
(b) verbal and written commitment of departments heads overseeing student recruiting and admissions policy to an ethics plan of action for their areas of concern. Some possible action items might include advertising that the student body is governed by a “honor code”, the violation of which could lead to disenrollment. The hallmark of the admissions policy would focus on the ethical selection of students to include cultural difference, gender and racial equalities, socio-economic factors, as well as, academic excellence.

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(c) faculty hiring guidelines that would include a thorough "vetting" of the applicant's qualifications and background as well as a written commitment by the applicant to fully support the ethics initiative;
(d) faulty members to commit to and undertake curriculum revisions that would include the ethical aspects of their particular discipline;
(e) students to commit to a dormitory, fraternity/sorority, off-campus life-style code ethics;
(f) faculty members to commit to ethical guidelines for the research into the publication of scholarly materials;
(g) faculty members to commit to a faculty-faculty, faculty-student ethical relationships guideline; and
(h) athletic departments to commit to ethical guidelines for recruitment and maintenance (academic and personal) of school athletes to include strict adherence to NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) regulations.

Conclusion

The writer has reviewed just a fraction of the literature available on the subject of ethics in the workplace. The literature for the most part, supports the notion that the ethical behavior is good, that ethical behavior is needed in the workplace, and that progress is possible in raising men and women above their more prurient interests.

Based on the writer's experience and discussions with university leaders, however, the notion of total commitment by all stakeholders as outlined in the sample plan is probably unlikely. Cries of academic freedom, unreasonable restraints and loss of flexibility would be echoed from the "bell towers" of academia in spite of the intrinsic "good" intentions of the plan.

All this does not augur well for the "fast track" implementation of ethics at the university level or in the workplace. Instead, progress in changing individuals towards a more ethical vision of their personal and professional life will be a plodding effort, characterized by small successes and small failures for a long time into the future.

In conjunction with the foregoing "sample plan, the writer would ask the readers to complete the following brief survey to ascertain their opinions, about the <u>likelihood</u> that university leadership would "buy-in" to this plan.

		Very Likely	Likely	Not Likely
1	Verbal and written commitment of the university president/chancellor, board of trustees, alumni association, faculty and staff to the implementation of an ethics plan of action;			
2	Verbal and written commitment of departments heads overseeing student recruiting and			

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	admissions policy to an ethics plan of action for their areas of concern. Some possible action items might include advertising that the student body is governed by a “honor code”, the violation of which could lead to disenrollment. The hallmark of the admissions policy would focus on the ethical selection of students to include cultural difference, gender and racial equalities, socio-economic factors, as well as, academic excellence.			
3	Verbal and written commitment of departments heads overseeing student recruiting and admissions policy to an ethics plan of action for their areas of concern. Some possible action items might include advertising that the student body is governed by a “honor code”, the violation of which could lead to disenrollment. The hallmark of the admissions policy would focus on the ethical selection of students to include cultural difference, gender and racial equalities, socio-economic factors, as well as, academic excellence.			
4	Students to commit to a dormitory, fraternity/sorority, off-campus life-style code ethics;			
5	Faculty members to commit to ethical guidelines for the research into the publication of scholarly materials			
6	Faculty members to commit to a faculty-faculty, faculty-student ethical relationships guideline			

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7	Athletic departments to commit to ethical guidelines for recruitment and maintenance (academic and personal) of school athletes to include strict adherence to NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) regulations.			

After completing the survey, reflect on the following questions:

(a) Is it possible to have the same areas of university life closely adhering to such a plan and other areas not?
(b) What would you say is the greatest strength of this plan? What is the greatest weakness?
(c) How many of you would be willing to "buy-in" to a program similar to the one out-lined?
(d) Based on our discussion and your own convictions, how would you describe the future progress in the implementation of ethics programs at the university/college level?

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Biography

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Identity and Cross-Cultural Communication

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Globalisation in specialised contexts

This paper originates from a research project on intercultural communication in specialist fields and its realisations in language for specific purposes funded by the Italian Ministry of Research and coordinated by the University of Bergamo, and conducted in cooperation with the Universities of Milan, Naples, Turin and IUSM Rome.[1] In this project special attention is given to legal, commercial, political and institutional discourse used in specific workplaces, analysed from an intercultural perspective. In particular, through an exploration of the international 'image' suggested by major social and economic actors, our project aims to improve the understanding of identity-forming features linked to 'local' or professional cultures, as communicated by contemporary English in various specialised domains among native and non-native speakers. The theme investigated has given rise to interesting analyses dealing with various aspects connected to it, and presented in various publications on this subject, including two volumes (Candlin / Gotti 2004a and 2004b).

Domain-specific languages are prone to the pressures of intercultural variation, as both the sociocultural factors inherent in a text and the interpretive schemata used to decode it deeply affect its realisation and interpretation within the host professional community (cf. Gotti 2005a). Moreover, intercultural communication is often made more complex by the locutors' need to make their texts as adaptable as possible to contextual features and pragmatic purposes, thus frequently originating great variation in professional genres as well as phenomena of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Bakhtin 1986, Fairclough 1992). In such a way, not only are novel (inter)texts constructed, but novel (inter)discourses also make an appearance, representing new and as yet not fully stable orders of discourse.

Globalisation in the business field

In recent years, the dismantling of cultural, disciplinary and national barriers, especially in the context of co-operation and collaboration in international trade, has accelerated moves towards the globalisation of socio-cultural, business and communication issues. This process of globalisation has certainly favoured English, and in the last century English undoubtedly became the language of international communication in most international contexts. Indeed, in several countries English has become the second language of many people who use it regularly, especially for work. This is the case in many European countries, such as the Netherlands and Scandinavia, where big companies such as Royal Dutch Shell, ABB and Nokia implement strong English-language policies. In these contexts the use of English is not only seen as favouring international communication within and outside the company, but also

[1] For more details on this research project on *Identity and Culture in English Domain-specific Discourse* cf. the website at http://www.unibg.it/cerlis/projects.htm.

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has a significant role to play in the creation of corporate culture within British subsidiaries abroad (Nickerson 2000) or in the enhancement of in-group togetherness in business meetings (Poncini 2004).

In both cases communication is seen as a tool in the strategic management of international operations, and language skills are deemed essential for performing daily activities. In these multinational contexts, however, instead of providing a better solution for internal and external interaction, the use of English as a common company language at times appears to create problems of mutual understanding. According to Bartlett and Johnson (1998), the English used in these contexts is a sort of creole language, which is more difficult for native speakers rather than non-native ones to understand. Another consequence of the use of English in multinational companies is that those able to master the foreign language tend to centralise communication within the company, probably because of the fewer problems they have in making acquaintance with all kinds of people and interacting with them in a competent way. This centralisation of communication is often associated with a concentration of power into the hands of those who can cope with communication in an autonomous way, while those who have to rely on intermediaries experience a loss of power. Therefore, language skills may become an important tool in internal company politics with consequent significant strategic potentialities.

Furthermore, in business communication the recurrent use of English – while guaranteeing an international and global dimension – is necessarily culturally marked and consequently requires some kind of adaptation on the interactants' part. This is clearly visible in discursive activities in the marketing sector, which tend to harmonise two very different corporate concerns: promote international brands on a global scale and at the same time respond to strictly local cultural constraints (Bhatia / Bhatia 2004). Thus even global professional practices, such as marketing and selling, seem to be seriously influenced by communicative norms and practices governed by local conditioning.

Cultural implications are also found in texts written in different languages, which, beyond the apparent surface uniformity linked to the specific field, are influenced at a rhetorical and textual level by the cognitive patterns and discourse conventions of the community of the speakers or writers (Yli-Jokipii 1996, Niemeier *et al.*1998, Gunnarsson 2000). These issues concern not only the language used, but also the different way of managing communication and the patterns of interpersonal behaviour in general. Indeed, although it is often assumed that the discourse and rhetoric of bilingual texts are similar, the analysis of promotional texts (Lee 2005) has shown that they are frequently characterised by differing features, since they are meant to serve readers of different social and educational backgrounds.

As intercultural differences are bound to influence the comprehension of events in people belonging to different cultures, the non-native, when communicating in English, is confronted with a psycho-cognitive situation where his/her native linguistic and cultural schemata conflict with the English schemata dominant in international professional communities, and is thus forced to negotiate and redefine his/her cultural identity in order to successfully communicate in international and intercultural settings. Furthermore, anthropological and sociological accounts of cultural interaction in international communities and organizations (Hofstede 1991) suggest the possibility of hybrid communicative schemata in which a new set of cultural values and identities – functional to communication in the wider community – is created in response to the need to communicate

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internationally. This is a counterpart of the ongoing process of economic globalisation, of which it is both an expression and an instrument.

The consequence is an inevitable move towards global communicative models. In this perspective, for the examination of written texts, genre analysis (Swales 1990, 2004; Bhatia 1993, 2004; Gillaerts / Gotti 2005; Bhatia / Gotti 2006) has proved to be particularly suited to identifying the discrepancies between global textual conventions and concrete realizations and has introduced new concepts such as *genre mixing*, *repurposing* or *hybridization* to account for generic dynamism. An example could be provided by the case of annual reports on company websites, which no longer concerns one genre, but the interaction between genres within a company's website (Garzone 2004). Investigations on a corpus of such documents have also identified recurring pragmatic and discursive features in texts produced by specific writers, showing that they can be traced back to factors correlated to cultural identity and local business practices (Garzone 2005). In most cases the annual report is embedded in a frame of promotional pages and takes full advantage of the visual/multimodal options offered by the hypermedia Computer Mediated Environment (Hoffman / Novak 1996).

The globalised use of technology too has contributed to the promotion of recent innovations in business discursive practices. For example, in corporate communication email messages are now very common. These, however, have become very complex in nature as a result of the pressing needs of business companies to enhance ease of reference and guarantee a high degree of accountability. Therefore, business emails now tend to include in them the whole chain of messages generated in response to the original message thus giving rise to a series of 'embedded emails' (Gimenez 2005) which exploit the dialogic nature of this means of communication and its adoption of the features of spoken as well as written genres.

Identity traits in specialised discourse

The main aspect investigated by our research project is the identification of identity traits typical of different branches of specialised English discourse. Within such domains, it seeks to investigate to what extent the cultural allegiance of (native or non-native) Anglophone discourse communities to their (linguistic, professional, social, national) reference group is affected by the use of English as a *lingua franca* of international communication. As the process of internationalisation of English has strengthened the hegemonic tendencies of this language, local communities are often marginalised and 'colonised', thus preventing an authentic intercultural discourse (Canagarajah 1999; Fairclough *et al.* 2007). These globalising tendencies of English have been shown to have relevant implications as they tend to hybridise local identities in favour of alternative Anglocentric textual models. In some cases, however, some virtuous trends are adopted in order to maintain participants' specificities and communicative strategies in contrast or at least in alternative to Anglocentric textual models, thus further hybridising identities.

Early results from the research carried out by our group (Cortese / Duszak 2005, Gotti 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, Garzone / Sarangi 2007) indicate that the internationalisation which makes English the preferred choice of code is coupled with textual inconsistencies and ambiguities that advise against straightforward, simplified conclusions: the apparent dominance of 'Anglocentric' models in the specialised domains considered reveals specific adaptive attitudes and evidence of cultural resistance in the textual strategies that construct identity-

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shaping differences. Furthermore, the background research by members of our research units has highlighted the complex pragmatic functions of the texts concerned, which are mostly constructed by deploying strong culturally-connoted values.

Within this wider research plan, the Bergamo unit has chosen to investigate the relationship between socioculturally-oriented identity constructing factors and textual variation in academic discourse, not only in Anglophone countries but wherever institutional and professional settings evolve in a way that transcends the linguistic, cultural and conceptual standards of their local communities. In particular, the focus is on the gradual 'globalisation' or 'hybridisation' of discursive practices first appearing in English-speaking environments but also affecting smaller languages, subject to standardising pressures in their semantic, textual, sociopragmatic and even lexico-grammatical construction.

Apart from these value-judgements, relatively few studies are devoted to the impact of globalisation on language, as identities are becoming increasingly fluid and negotiable (Pavlenko / Blackledge 2003). Our contribution to the project moves in this direction, identifying cases of language variation linked to the encounter/collision of different cultural frameworks within English academic discourse. One of the key factors of verbal behaviour is the affiliation of actors to one or more cultures (whether professional, ideological, or ethnic-geographic), which to a certain extent affects not only the language itself but also the community's thought and internal relationships. For this reason, our project also targets Italian vs. English texts and includes an analysis of interculturality in terms of conflict and the different 'positioning' of participants.

The CADIS Corpus

As corpora constitute a remarkable tool for the study of discourse, a specific corpus (CADIS = Corpus of Academic Discourse) has been designed as the core and foundation of this project.[2] Since this corpus is a vital element of our investigation and is expected to remain a major resource for years to come, in designing it we have taken into account a number of parameters (e.g. representativeness, sampling methods, balance) so as to make it compliant with international standards and best-practice guidelines.

In view of an in-depth analysis of variation in intercultural communication, our research unit has selected a range of texts produced by scholars and academic institutions in various parts of the world. To identify textual variants arising from the use of English as a first language, second language, or *lingua franca* of the scientific community, we have devised a corpus formed by English – and in part Italian – texts for academic communication. Besides including two alternative languages, CADIS represents four different disciplinary areas: Legal studies, Economics, Linguistics and Medicine. For each disciplinary area, four different textual genres were considered: abstracts, book reviews, editorials and research articles. So far, the English texts have been taken from a total of 23 peer-reviewed journals available by subscription through the University of Bergamo website. Because all the journals selected have a high impact factor, we are confident that the content of our corpus is highly representative of each specialised community from which it originated. The same principle is followed in the sampling of Italian academic texts, which are being selected from the most important journals available in each field.

[2] A detailed presentation of the corpus is given on its webpage at www.unibig.it/Cerlis.

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Indeed, apart from representativeness, the structure of our corpus follows a criterion of balance, through an accurate proportioning of its parts. More specifically, when the corpus is completed 50 texts per genre will have been collected and classified within each disciplinary area, totalling 600 texts per discipline and 600 texts per genre. For each language group – native-speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) of English, and native speakers of Italian (ITA) – a total of 800 texts (200 per disciplinary area) will have been included in the corpus. Furthermore, within the NS group, equal representation of different varieties (i.e. UK, US, Canadian, Australian English and New Zealand English) will be emphasised. When fully implemented CADIS will comprise 2,400 academic texts, reaching a total of about 2 million tokens (primarily from digital formats but if necessary also from print), selected and classified by disciplinary area, genre, language, author (i.e. NS/NNS), geographical provenance (US, UK, CAN, AUS, NZ), date of publication and source journal.

In order to be included in the corpus, a text must be homogeneous in size, with an average of 12,000 words. The samples collected in CADIS consist of entire documents rather than parts of texts, to guarantee generic integrity and representativeness. Because CADIS is a specialised corpus, its underlying factor is homogeneity. With this in mind, any text whose author, language, genre and source did not comply with our parameters has been omitted.

The structural complexity of CADIS reflects its contrastive orientation: it is in fact designed to be internally comparable, so that our researchers can analyse and contrast the chosen texts, not only by disciplinary area, genre, language and culture, but also historically. This is possible because the corpus will cover a time frame of at least 25 years, from the early 1980s to the present day. In the first phase of the selection process, priority has been given to English texts published over the last seven years, but when this phase is completed, earlier academic texts will also be selected and archived.

Current investigations carried out with the use of CADIS

A detailed description of each text selected for inclusion in the corpus has been planned so as to enable researchers in our unit to analyze the most significant macro/microlinguistic variants in terms of identity, evaluation and interpretation in the light of recent linguistic scholarship. More specifically, the data identified are meant to allow an in-depth analysis of the following aspects:
a. genre and macrostructure, with their resulting lexico-grammatical realisations;
b. speech acts expressing positive/negative evaluation, both exophoric and metatextual;
c. the pragmatic, interpersonal plane of discourse (stance, hedging, politeness);
d. evidence of popularisation and/or promotional discourse;
e. the function of verbal and lexical modality;
f. the degree of background knowledge required (content schemata);
g. the correlation with such authorial variables as gender and academic standing.
Several investigations have already been carried out with the use of CADIS (cf. the corpus webpage at www.unibig.it/Cerlis for a full list). For reasons of space, only a few of them will briefly be described in this paper.

Ulisse Belotti (forth. a) has investigated a subcorpus of abstracts from four leading journals in the field of Economics, in order to identify and examine manifestations of identity written by Italian scholars. In particular, he has focused on the authors' use of first-person pronouns and critical lexis to affirm their membership of specific social configurations or sub-groups and

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thereby orient their audience's behaviour and expectations. He has also taken into consideration the generic characteristics of this type of abstract in terms of rhetorical structures and the linguistic realizations of such structures. His findings indicate that criticism of previous studies, i.e. critical analysis of theories, models, arguments and views, and the use of first-person pronouns reveal clear instances of identity, mainly professional. Moreover, it was shown how abstractors established identity not only through the use of first-person pronouns or evaluative expressions but also by employing abbreviations and intertextual devices. As a continuation of this research, Belotti (forth. b) has examined the research articles themselves, to see if and to what extent the findings from the first analysis were confirmed in longer texts written by the same authors. As far as manifestations of identity are concerned, the pronoun *we* is far more frequent than *I* which indicates that writers of economics research articles tend to use *we* for both reducing personal attribution and establishing identity. Interestingly, the first person pronouns *I* and *we* interact with other more neutral devices, such as passive forms and metatextual devices, so that the writer's identity is established not only through the use of first person pronouns but also thorough hybrid patterns in which personal pronouns, passive forms and metatextual devices are present in the same proposition.

Larissa D'Angelo (forth. a) has explored academic discourse with the aim of furthering the existing knowledge of gender variation by analysing book reviews by male and female authors within the discipline of Applied Linguistics. While variations between disciplines in academic discourse have been widely investigated (Hyland / Bondi 2006), the influence of gender in academic writing is still largely unexplored. The few existing studies concerning this field (e.g. Kirsch 1993) seem to suggest that men and women prefer different linguistic features when they express themselves in the academia and interact with fellow researchers. However, the differences in writing styles and author stances between genders have seldom been discussed taking into consideration the age, experience and authority of the writer in the field. Analysing a subcorpus of CADIS, D'Angelo identifies significant differences between genders in the overall usage of metadiscourse, but also highlights the fact that variations due to the author's gender are not as relevant as the discrepancies found in the writing styles and in the use of interactive and interactional resources by 'expert' and 'novice' male and female writers. These features are shown to be extremely important for a scholar to establish his/her writing persona, gain authority and become a recognized member of a particular academic community. In a subsequent paper D'Angelo (forth. b) has investigated how reviewers of different nationality, within the academic discipline of Applied Linguistics, deal with positive and negative appraisals towards their peers. By examining a subcorpus of CADIS comprising 100 book reviews written in English by authors of different nationality (to which a collection of 20 book reviews written in Italian has been added), her study analyses how the use of positive and negative formulations, pragmatic-rhetorical choices and face-threatening utterances in book reviews written in Italian and English, by native and non-native speakers, are influenced by their authors' cultural identity. Her analysis shows that Italian reviews are shorter and less critical than those in English as in most cases they tend to provide neutral information about the books taken into consideration. This difference is mainly explained in terms of academic traditions with those in English more clearly adhering to the standard forms in use in international publications.

Davide Giannoni (forth. a) has taken into consideration medical editorials representative of (a) native speaker English, (b) non-native speaker English, (c) native speaker Italian to investigate their macrostructure and linguistic realisations in quantitative as well as

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qualitative terms. Their generic framework has been compared with that identified by other scholars. The corpus evidence signals that disciplinary identities in English and Italian medical settings produce different sociocultural norms and expectations: as in the related letters to the editor genre, the linguistic realisations of structural patterns are the result of intercultural styles of thought which have developed historically within the discipline. In a subsequent study, by using various sections of the CADIS corpus in a contrastive way, Giannoni (forth. b) has investigated the use of metaphoric expressions and their ability to amplify emotional response in the interlocutor. His analysis of NS English research articles published in peer-reviewed journals from four domains (economics, law, medicine, linguistics) has shown that evaluative metaphors vary considerably across disciplines, in terms of source domain, connotations and polarization, and that they are linked not only to disciplinary proclivities but also to a discipline's metaphoric identity.

The analysis of the medical subcorpus of CADIS has led Stefania Maci (forth. a) to identify an emerging genre, i.e. the Research Letter. This genre is used to report original research, as letters are not expected to duplicate material published or submitted for publication elsewhere. Moreover, research letters considered for publication undergo external peer review and have a structure which is similar to that of the Research Article: Introduction, Methods, Results, and Comment. Maci's analysis of the research letter's main features and of the rhetorical strategies employed by authors to persuade their readers has shown that they reflect the conventional criteria of scientific discourse, and that they aim at the realization of their perlocutionary function by means of an objective and impersonal style. In a subsequent study Maci (forth. b) has described how scientific discourse is organized across the genres of research articles and research letters. Based on the analysis of texts collected in the CADIS corpus, she has described the principal features of these genres and has highlighted the main metadiscursive strategies employed by authors to organize scientific discourse, involve their readers, and signal their own attitude.

The main focus of Michele Sala's (forth. a) investigation is the expression of identity in academic texts dealing with legal subjects. His analysis of a subcorpus of articles on International Law authored by native speakers of English discusses the linguistic, rhetorical and textual features revealing a particular stance on the part of the author which can be linked to a specific cultural or domain-specific identity. Indeed, the biographical footnotes accompanying the authors' names show that contributors can be divided into two main sub-groups: on the one hand, the members of the academia (professors, researchers, lecturers), who usually approach legal matters through academic and argumentative texts; on the other hand, the 'practitioners' of the law (lawyers, directors and members of legal offices and institutions), usually working with normative, performative or prescriptive kinds of texts. On the basis of this double distinction, the study shows that specific professional identities (i.e., scholars vs. lawyers) influence academic prose in a significant way. As an expansion of this study, Sala (forth. b) has investigated the issue of professional identity in legal research articles by focussing on interactional discourse features like interrogative forms. In particular, his main concern was to assess whether and how forensic language influences academic discourse when it is authored by practitioners of the legal field or by people learning and teaching how to become courtroom experts. In particular, he has compared the different rhetorical styles and strategies employed by native and non-native speakers of English and by experts of the Common Law vs. experts of the Civil Law system in discussing legal subjects. His analysis shows that the different philosophies behind the two legal systems – i.e., the adversarial approach vs. the inquisitorial approach, the principle of precedent vs. the recourse

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to the civil code, the primacy of witness examination vs. the primacy of written norms and abstract principles, the emphasis on precision and clarity vs. the recourse to a formal register and a specialised vocabulary – influence authorial styles and the choice of argumentative-persuasive strategies, especially in terms of data organization, use of quotations and interactional style.

Apart from this research based on the CADIS corpus, as a continuation on previous work on international commercial arbitration discourse (cf. Bhatia / Candlin / Gotti 2003), the present author and Patrizia Anesa (Gotti / Anesa forth.) have taken into consideration the main linguistic features of awards commonly used in commercial arbitration cases concerning transactions of Italian companies at an international level. As this method of settling commercial and other disputes is commonly considered as an efficient, economical and effective alternative to litigation, the language used in arbitration documents is usually deemed to differ from that of litigation texts. However, in recent years there has been a narrowing between the two practices as litigation processes and procedures have increasingly been seen to influence arbitration practices, with the result that arbitration discourse itself has become, as it were, 'colonized' by litigation practices, thus threatening the integrity of arbitration genres. Drawing on a corpus of arbitration awards written in Italian, they have investigated the relationship between the professional identity of the arbitrators and the kind of language used in their texts, focusing in particular on the use of legal discourse both by legal and non-legal experts. In particular, their study has shown that in some cases the different professional backgrounds of arbitrators has influenced the way in which awards were finally written, and that the arbitrator's professional identity has thus had some effect on the syntactic, lexical and stylistic choices made.

Conclusion

As has been seen in this presentation of a few investigations carried out with the use of CADIS, this corpus has already proved to be a very useful resource for the analysis of authentic discourse, and the very positive impact of this new research tool has been deeply felt in all the areas taken into consideration as part of the research programme presented above. The careful design and accurate construction of this corpus, based on sound methodological foundations and clear choices, has thus strengthened the potential of the whole research team and has enabled them to discover several aspects connected with the issues of identity in cross-cultural communication.

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Biography

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Some Philosophical Underpinnings for Communication: Western and Eastern Foundations as seen in Commonplace Principles

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Consistently over time social communication, i.e., communication at the informal person-to-person level was the main means of orally conveying information, primarily so in the Western ancient world. Plato (1968, 1994) abhorred writing—even rhetoric which he maintained moved on appearances rather than truth—and thus he philosophically focuses on theories, via his mouthpiece Socrates, on searching out sources of information and then orally transmitting those identified ideas. So did Aristotle (1932). Conversely, when communicating in or to the courts of law or within or to the church, and later in the Medieval and Renaissance world of commerce, there was need to leave social casualness for more specificity and societal hierarchical communication patterns specific to the person(s) being addressed. Social conventions, or class distinctions, and language appropriate for that social level, became associated with certain professions or offices. But there were few models to which commoners, even educated leaders and their scribes could turn. Thus the birth of collections to which individuals and groups could use as touchstones for searching out ideas, patterns, directions, forms of address—even truth.

Analogously in the Eastern world, specifically China through the writings of Confucian (Xiao, 1995) philosophies, his and other writings were passed on as anecdotal incidents for early communication examples. People tended to remember stories, narratives, and phrases, and snippets of information. China has a strong tradition in using a collection of works—as do Western communicators—from Ancient scholars, which is also seen as part of a good education.

Additionally in the East, specifically China, written classical Chinese is a totally different language style from the vernacular or spoken or informal social forms of communication in Ancient China (Xiao, 1995). However, what was recorded was only written Chinese. Vernaculars were passed on to today in the form of stories, proverbs, again similar to some early Western pedagogical examples. As the majority of Chinese people in early days were uneducated, and they could not read or write any classical Chinese, they, as did Western writers, occasionally had to communicate with imperial officials or other upper classes. A major means of education for improving communication was through the use of Commonplaces and citations, many of which were taken from Confucius.

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Thus this paper focuses on only one area of Western and Eastern philosophical underpinnings for communication, namely, the use of Commonplaces. However, it needs to be pointed out that we mainly focus on the Western tradition, while making some preliminary references to the Chinese rhetorical tradition since Chinese culture has very rich sources of foundation of rhetoric and communication (Ji & Yang, 2004; Lu, 1998). However, to our knowledge, 'Commonplaces' is a research topic that has been embarked on because of its rich traditions. In particular, we visit this singular concept of Commonplaces in two cultures: First, a brief view of the Western rhetorical tradition relating to definition/theory behind the use of Commonplaces as used in the Classical, Medieval, and the Renaissance world as the basis for communicating either orally or in written form. Second, we will briefly trace some Chinese rhetorical underpinnings of using Commonplaces, philosophies, points of view that mankind could use to communicate better, get along with people in order to achieve both informative and persuasive ends.

Definition of the Commonplaces

Mutations in the meaning of the term Commonplaces occurred over time. We begin with our definition of this genre: "a collection—more often in written form—of examples, phrases, sources, stories, narratives, arguments to which the communicator could turn in formulating a transmission to others in either an oral or written construction."

In addition to our initial definition of Commonplace noted above, the Oxford English Dictionary is also micro, in two instances:

> '**common' place-book.** Formerly *Book of common places…orig.* A book in which 'commonplaces' or passages important for reference were collected, usually under general heads; hence, a book in which one records passages or matters to be especially remembered or referred to, with or without arrangement. (OED, 2nd Ed .,1972-1986).
>
> **'commonplace'…**[A rendering of L. *locus communis* = Gr. *Koino 'j to' poj,* in Aristotle simply *to' poj,* explained by Cicero (Inv. ii. xiv. § 47 et.seq) as a general theme or argument applicable to many particular cases.] In later times, collections of such general topics were called *loci communes*…. (OED, 2nd Ed., 1972-1986).

Classical Foundations of the Commonplace in Communication

Initially, we argue, that in the ancient world the stress was on locating arguments or ideas for the tripartite forms of communication, namely the forensic (legal); deliberative (government, others); and epideictic (ceremonial). There is no doubt that when the common man, familiar with social communication customary in the streets or in the *Agora*, had to present either informative or persuasive communication in a more formal environment, he needed help: to frame arguments, to use appropriate language, to search out sources for developing his thoughts, or hire the services of a logographer, often to locate the truth.

Enter three classical rhetoricians: Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Their concepts, overly simplified here, moved on the wheels of dialectic, i.e. discovering arguments (Topics) in support of the theme of a communication. For Aristotle (1932, 1997) one had to search out arguments

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through his convoluted discussion of *topoi* or *topos*, today translated as Topics. Today we would view such an analysis as a forerunner of the later enlarging term Commonplace, an initial repository for modes of argument to which one could turn in preparing a disputation.

Cicero (1942, *De orator; De partitione; Cicero?* 195*4, Rhetorica ad herennium*) obviously moved in Latin rather than the Greek of Aristotle. There c*ommunes loci* replaced the Greek *Topoi*. His varied approach, as was that of Quintilian (1921, 1922) searched out those "places" in the mind from which one could take arguments in support of or contrarily find arguments opposing a thesis.

So the metaphor "places" or *communes loci* in the ancient world was simply a term for finding cognitive topics, ideas, data, information, and so on, that speakers, primarily, could use in the three recognized ancient modes of communication noted above. Our discussion is elementary, for in a short paper we simply wish to suggest that even in the Classical world there were attempts at providing both cognitive and physical sources for enlarging, supporting, embellishing ideas in communication, giving an initial momentum that reached a crescendo in the years that followed. Fuller discussions occur in (Lu, 1998; Kennedy, 1963; Lausberg, 1960; Xiao, 1995) and many others.

Chinese Foundations of the Commonplace in Communication

Different from the English sources about Commonplaces, Chinese rhetoric seems to have used a less explicit approach and used no similar terminology as did the ancients, to our knowledge. However, a preliminary review of practices suggests that Chinese rhetoric is also built and developed upon Commonplaces. This practice coincides with the foundations of Chinese rhetoric and philosophies which seem to pay more attention to the rhetorical practices than the terminologies (Lu, 1998).

For example, one of the earliest works on commonplaces can be found in Liu Xie's work in the Fifth Century (Xie, 1959), in which he points out the importance of Sages' thoughts and collections of ideas. According to Liu Xie, 'sages' are those who have mastered the pattern of the writing (Xie, 1959, p. 258) such as Confucius. This kind of understanding is further elaborated as Liu Xie explains that the reason for the production of good writing is that 'sages' explore and understand the principles of the universe and society, and their writings reflect these principles. They can 'use simple language to express their purposes, or use detailed descriptions to explain their meanings' (Xie, 1959, p.27). For example, Confucius wrote historical records and narratives which also contribute to the foundation of commonplaces.

Comparative Statement of Western/Eastern Concepts of the Commonplaces

A formal transition is in order. Genres over time undergo mutations. So it was with the concept of the Commonplace. What began as a respected philosophical format for discovering arguments in the Classical World, slowly morphed into a quite different concept, so different that the evolution of even the term, by today, has a connotation of negativism: a banal or hackneyed statement in place of something more semantically original and interesting. Surely one could argue that the seeds of this transformation began in the Classical period—we don't know because

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many original texts were lost to the ravages of time—but can suppose that the seats of argument infiltrated other avenues of social life rather than the traditional rhetorical triad of forensic, deliberative, and epideictic.

Armstrong (1998), Moss (1996), Havens (2001), and Lechner (1962) would support the above assertion going so far as to suggest a veritable crescendo of Common Place books inundated the world during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Indeed, at the macro level Common Place books, self-printed books, manuscripts, diaries, hand-written personal collections began to appear, among others, for the fields of law, medicine, theology, pedagogy, science, literature, and a host of other genres. Their purpose was simple: to collect sayings, maxims, apothegms, protocols, examples, quotations, procedures, grammatical intricacies, complete sermons, definitions, and endless other categories. Strangely, minimal—at least at this point—attention was given to the category of commerce, or business communication. That said after the authors contacted the above seminal researchers, and others, plus reviewing significant compilers of manuscripts, notably Griffiths and Pearsall (1989), and a German compiler Peter John (c.1972), there appears to be a diminution on business subjects, or lack of business Commonplace books in Western publications. That last assertion must be investigated further.

As noted earlier, Chinese rhetoric and philosophies tend to have a range of genres in place which address both the educated and less educated. The permeation can be related to the shared tradition of commonplaces in both the literary and vernacular traditions. A typical example of the vernacular traditions can be found in '*San zi Jing'* [three character rhymes] collected and edited by an unknown author of the 13th Century. It was written for children to memorize in their earliest education.

Many of the anecdotes and historical events were in fact serious topics dealing with a range of themes such as familial and social relations – even literature – and math. Some of these rhymes derive from other genres such as anecdotes of the 'Sages'. Take '*xi meng mu, ze lin chu*' [Mencius's mother moves house three times] as an example. Mencius' mother was a widow who was said to be very concerned about her son's studies. She observed that surroundings influenced her son's behavior and goals, thus she moved their house three times in order to find the best location for his studies. Eventually she succeeded in finding a house near an academy of scholars.

'*Rong si sui, neng rang li'* [Rong, aged four, is capable of giving best pears to other family members] is another frequently cited example within a family education, which depicts how Kong Rong, Confucius' great, great grandson gave the best pears to his family members who were all his seniors. Respecting the old and senior was thus seen as a virtue and merit and Kong Rong hence became a role model for the younger generation.

The influence of '*San zi Ji*ng' [three-character rhymes] was far and wide and had been used for children's education until after the Second World War. However, the influence still continues even up to today because of its strong foundation on Commonplaces and in its simplest genre of children's rhymes, which also help to promote the Confucian values relating to family relations and social rituals.

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Additional examples of genre permeation can be found in the collection or encyclopedia of Chinese proverbs (e.g. Gansu, 1978), which is based on the collections of anecdotes from the Sages', works and anecdotes, or simple common sayings. These proverbs tend to be composed of four characters, which resemble the styles of Chinese classical verses or poems. It would be interesting to view parallels between these proverbs with the Christian Bible. Therefore, educated Chinese tended to use the four character proverbs, perhaps analogous to Medieval and Renaissance theological scholars. In a similar way, many of the Chinese proverbs derive from a similar source with '*San zi Jing'*.

The above two anecdotal examples from the Sages are also common proverbs but in a four-characters form this time:

'meng mu san qian' (Mencius' mother moves house three times)
'kong rong rang li' (Kong Rong gives best pears to other family members)

Many other proverbs are based on more literary forms such as poems and Sages' writings. This particular genre reflects a combined source of Chinese wisdom and culture and a significant proportion is based on Commonplaces. The four or multiple character proverbs are still an important part of the Chinese rhetoric and communication and they also serve as an indication of one's knowledge and education.

Thus how to get a methodological handle on the thousands of Western Commonplaces is difficult as they indiscriminately arranged their collections. More research is needed if the same is true for Chinese collections. Locke (1706) understood the semantic morass and attempted to salvage some conformity, but his method too aroused little enthusiasm. Our approach now is to focus on Self-generated Western Common Place publications, view selected Specific Professional Commonplace Areas, and conclude with observations pertaining to business communication. Then we shall simply nod at our concepts of Commonplaces in modern communication texts, the internet, and conclude with a general discussion.

Self generated Commonplaces

What was one of the major influences that made personal and pragmatic Commonplace collections available to the world? Before we answer that question, it is necessary to define the concept of self-generated Commonplace books. Briefly, we suggest that individuals for either their personal use—even ego advancement—or for use in the classroom began to collect a wide variety of items to use in either their written or oral communication. In fact, says Armstrong (1998), "Scholars encouraged students to probe, store, and retrieve information and required them to collect excerpts from their reading under appropriate headings. When the students produced works of their own, they were encouraged to use their commonplace books as a resource, culling from them a wide range of quotations, idioms, and other passages thought instrumental in the composition of an original work."

Thus pedagogy was an influence on individuals to collect statements that could be used in the present or the future in varied communication genre. A classic source that supports the above statement is found in Clark's John Milton at St. Paul's School (1948). In other words, classroom

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exercises, or Exercises for Praxis, had many formats in the Medieval and Renaissance period. We shall note only two of the most popular, many dependent on illustrative items collected in individual Commonplace books.

Epistle. William Fulwood (1568) captured the intent of letter writing exercises perfectly: "And to describe the true definition of an Epistle or letter, it is nothing else but an Oration written." That is, the tools of classical rhetoric were applied to a school exercise years after they had been discussed in early rhetorical writings. It is easy to infer that students who became scribes, letter writers for the world of commerce and others, learned the rudiments of communication in those early classrooms.

Themes or *Progymnasmata*. Simply defined as exercises that developed a theme, primarily through the stylistic device of amplification; an idea was enlarged through numbing stylistic devices. Copiousness of thought added both figures of speech for adornment along with furthering the substance of an argument. Among the many writers on style and content one Renaissance scholar stands out: Erasmus (1569); His *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum* [On copiousness of words and ideas] was popular, went through several editions, and was imitated and plagiarized in following years.

Beyond these two often-used exercises were many others: all taught the student to more effectively communicate on a social and professional level. A good source, only as examples of class exercises is taken from Clark (1948, pp. 233-249): fable; narrative; chreia (amplification); proverb; refutation; confirmation; common place; encomium (praise/dispraise); vituperation; comparison; impersonation; description; thesis; and legislation.

While the above discussion focused on students maintaining their own Commonplace books for classroom exercises, the fourth cannon from classical rhetoric also played a part: memory. That is, Commonplace books aided one to remember set phrases, set ideas, set procedures to follow in communicating, which is also the case with Chinese rhymes as noted earlier. Students and others could turn to their own receptacles, selecting at the moment from his or her memory, appropriate phrases or ideas as the situation demanded. Whether memory is either a cause or an effect in enhancing the reputation of the Commonplace book is debatable. Regardless, Dacome (2004) argues that even Erasmus (1518, 1522) suggested that students could turn to their collections and "When a topic had to be extended in the course of a speech, the speaker could collect materials from the various places stored in the memory or in the notebook and then skillfully integrate them together into a coherent whole."

In a similar way, self-generated commonplaces to be used in communication genre of all kinds are not less common in the Chinese tradition. A good example can be found in the genre of '*xie hou yu'* [common sayings], also worth a further note. '*Xie hou yu'* is a type of vernacular and is only found in oral communication in informal contexts. With this genre, people often used metaphors to communicate meanings, with wit. For example, '*zhi ma kai hua jie jie gao*' [sesame opening flowers with one being higher than the other]. This expression often refers to an increasingly promising or successful situation such as accumulating more and more wealth. One of the authors had the experience of working on a Chinese farm for nearly three years and found that the less educated peasants used a lot more of these '*xie hou yu'* deriving from

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everyday life such as plants, weather, insects than the educated people in the city. The reason can be that they have more opportunities of developing these expressions since they have direct tangible experience of growing plants and witnessing insects—a remarkable source of developing metaphors and enriching their communication.

It is not the purpose of this paper to rehearse the hundreds, thousands? of personally collected words and ideas of others. A quick scan of Commonplace titles, and our above discussion, suggest these conclusions: (1) Some individuals collected ideas simply as a pastime; (2) Persons engaged with other persons vicariously simply through reading their words; (3) Collections ranged from simple one-two word extracts to complete statements; (4) Individuals wished to read, reread both philosophical and pragmatic thoughts not once, but several times; (5) Collectors desired to use the words and ideas of others to incorporate in their own communication or search out ideas that would support/diminish the propositions of others'; (6) Prescriptions, models, paradigms, allowed rephrasing of ideas and the adding one one's own. (7) and others.

Now to answer the opening question: what allowed self-generated Commonplaces to proliferate? There is little doubt that the invention of printing, of producing books in the West via Gutenberg's invention allowed anyone, especially those of wealth, to make public their inner selves. Whether others read these self-written and then printed collections were voraciously read by others is difficult to determine. But the fact that Commonplace books and manuscripts—and increasing research under the influence of Humanism, suggests a desire to emulate and capture the elegance and thought and rhetorical flowers of the ancient world and then apply them in the Medieval and Renaissance world, added to the importance of the humanistic individual. A final statement: our focus has been upon the English language. Commonplace works also appeared in Latin, Italian, German, and French. Mutations of the Commonplace book, or notes, or summaries were also present in Eastern countries. Those cultural homes also need more intensive investigation.

Specific Professional Commonplace Areas

As civilization became more complex, as different disciplines matured, as the world became more multinational, as the church became more powerful, as governments became democratic or autocratic, as hierarchical social stigmas arose in various cultures, as legal patterns developed, as medical knowledge increased, as intercourse between cultures intensified, as universities were founded, there arose the need for a heightened degree of communication competence to cross the professional lines separating the disciplines. Early schools, as we have seen, laid the macro foundation via class exercises'; these were generic rather than discipline specific. Of course one could argue that on entering a discipline one would learn on the job. But more was needed. And that need was satisfied, in part, through Commonplace books in specific discipline areas. One should not jump to the conclusion that a pristine commonality, a consistent taxonomy was followed. Such a common methodology in structure was absent, wholly absent, to which we now turn, limiting our discussion to two branches of learning: Law and theology, two of the four—literature and science the other two—categories noted by Havens, (2001). We end with a brief nod to business matters because of the paucity of Commonplace research in that area.

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Law. Earlier we noted that social communication, the vernacular of the streets, was adequate for casual communication. Lawyers as professionals then, as now, used a vernacular—intentional vs. unintentional?—among themselves and slowly provided Commonplace books from which others might learn both language and legal procedures. And as society became more litigious, as regulations and procedures became more complex, within cultures and with different cultures, complete books, pamphlets, manuscripts began to appear, on a variety of legal topics. Hereafter is only one example which in its title suggests the theme; other works are similar:

> --Doddridge, John. (1631). *The English lavvyer. Describing a method for the managing of the lawes of this land.*.. London: Miles Fiesher for I. More Esq. …and many others….

Professional genres can also be traced back in history. Zhu (2000) offers a detailed discussion of the historical development of professional genres which include both more formal types of '*ling*' or emperors' orders and '*shu*' which can be translated simply as letters written by common people. Liu Xie's (1959) works can be of relevance again for the discussion of '*shu*' because he was the first researcher in the study of Chinese written communication to treat professional genres as proper genres. Before his time, only literary genres including poems and prose were seen as formal genres which were worth any research. Liu Xie (1959) appropriately divides genre study into the study of '*wen*' [literary genres] and '*bi*' [non-literary such as letters and anecdotes]. It is the latter type of genres, such as 'shu' [letters] that are related to Commonplaces.

Liu Xie has not only promoted the importance of the non-literary genres, more importantly, he has also promoted the collections of the common people who were not Sages. Note that Liu Xie provides a dynamic view of the creators of wisdom which also include everyday people like you or me. Some of the writers of '*shu*' became well known and so were their '*shu*'. '*Shu*' derived from persuasive arguments advisers presented for the warriors, many of whom, during the war-lord era (200-280 CE), were involved in war. Since everyone wanted to enlarge his lands, large numbers of advisers appeared and used their power of persuasion in the running of warfare for the warriors. Subordinates used '*shu*' in the written form, keeping its persuasive nature to express their opinions to their superiors, usually from warriors of inferior positions to the emperor. Equal works on forms of address were also present in Medieval and Renaissance books printed on how to address persons of a higher rank. This kind of '*shu*' is relatively formal in style since it was used to address the emperor and others of a higher cultural rank. There are also less formal uses of '*shu*' [letters] that become an integral part of Chinese collected writings written in the genre of Commonplaces. Their writings became best-case examples and have been collected and cited by common people ever since.

Were legal Commonplace books useful in the West? One British author, Brewster, (1680); see also Havens (2001), was unequivocal in his support: "How absolutely necessary, and of what great use and benefit a common-place is in all sciences whatsoever, there is none that does not pretend to any study on letters, but sufficiently knows."

Theology. Unhesitatingly one can infer that as other disciplines began to codify and make use of others' writing and teachings, those in the service of religion would do no less. But those

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theological scholars based their collections—in their eyes—on their indisputable conclusion, ably summarized by Moss: "Quotations from Scripture is a valid and efficacious mode of theological argument, because Scripture is the record of divine revelation. The (pagan) 'philosophers' may also have knowledge of truth, but by natural reason, not by divine revelation." (Moss, 1996, p. 21). In other words, truth was automatic when choosing between the dichotomy of humanistic truth vs. biblical truth. Quoting or using the words of other theologians or pastors or the Bible guaranteed a divine dialectic in argument, firmly contrasting with employing the ancient and humanistic tools of searching for reason that only produced probabilities. An absolute scriptural status had no competitors, or so though respected theologians. The Classical concepts of *Inventio*, *Topoi*¸ c*ommunes loci*, and scholar's complex internecine philosophical disagreements in a search for truth were overridden, were simplified if one accepted the ultimate, religious, infallible truth.

How was this done? We turn again to our overused word "mutation." Tripartite canons dominated in the Classical world. That triad slowly vanished as canonical concepts enlarged to include almost any conceivable topic.

Religious Commonplace books was such a variation. Under the influence of the Humanistic influence, notable Erasmus (1518; 1522) both collections, e.g., of proverbs and analyses of scripture were made available to theology and its students. Sermons, quotations, analyses were both for seasoned preachers and students learning theological precepts. Simply as two examples, out of hundreds, are Strong's (1886) and Foxe's (1572) works illustrative of ideas usable for the theological world.

The World of Commerce. Conceivably business persons and the scribes hired to communicate with and oversee transactions of business matters also made use of the hundreds of Commonplace books during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Scribes would have been introduced to these works in school, emulated and borrowed and rewrote the illustrations for class, and applied those generic concepts to business communication. Unfortunately, we find little research on how business scribes of the day learned both the linguistic and procedural protocols needed in their duties.

Certainly grammar, arrangement of ideas, vocabulary improvement, and orthography were part of the grammar school, but one work assumes preeminence for assembling a potpourri of themes potentially useful to the businessperson: Richard Arnold's The customs of London, otherwise called Arnold's chronicle…(1811)—[the first edition was seemingly published in Antwerp in the 16th century (Arnold, 1521?)]. Of course he veered from his major business theme into other minutia of the day also found in other collections. The arte of gardening…and the phisicke helps belonging to each herb, …ye names of the baylys, custose, mayers, and shefrefs of ye cyte of Londong… Mappe mundi, otherwise called the compasse, and cyucuet of the worlde: and also the compasse of euery llande…illustrate his wide-ranging interests in informing readers.

But Arnold's seminal work, as a work relating to commerce, regardless of its imperfections, is the Chronicle. (1811). Through 351 tedious pages he cites micro examples of issues tangentially relating to business.

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Certainly his work is not original as was the case of hundreds of other general Commonplace collections. Borrowing without attribution was rampant, overt plagiarism from individuals and works, now lost to time, was common. In the "Advertisement" for Arnold's book, that writer suggests Arnold's dependence on a work found in the library of a B.I. Julius and overt dependence on a man called Robert Bale, a recorder of London in the reign of Edward IV (See Arnold, 1811, p. vii).

Several observations are in order after viewing the three above Commonplace genre: (1) Orthography has little consistency from paragraph to paragraph, chapter to chapter, book to book. English form and substance was still finding its way; (2) the prolixity of rhetorical flowers, today called ornateness and purple prose still held sway as collected and influenced by the numerous and popular *floriga* books (e.g. Mosellanus, (1526); Sherry, (1550); Peacham, (1577); Day, (1595); Erasmus, (1569); Susenbrotus, (1570); Puttenham, (1589); Crane (1954); and many others: (3) style, the third part of the ancient rhetorical triad reached its apogee during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. (4) Arnold's work is a crude vernacular textbook made accessible to the average scribe or business persons who could turn to the included exemplars for dealing with business communication; (5) the influence, though chronologically distant during this time of humanistic education suggests that the revival of neo-classical thought was still evident; (6) there is evidence that rank, or caste, demanded a level of language beyond the vernacular or social communication; (7) Plagiarism, without attribution, due to the proliferation of printing presses, and one's own egotism to have his works published made borrowing and assembling and making public one's thoughts much easier; and (8) So rampant was the borrowing that it is difficult, in many instances, to determine who was the original author of a phrase or example.

In short. The evolutionary nature of Western communication demanded movement from the social vernacular to the linguistic sophistication of professional groups, business or commerce included. That assertion holds true for today, as we turn to a discussion of the preceding brief review of Western and Eastern philosophical underpinnings of communication.

Discussion and Implications

Capturing the thin gossamer, philosophical threads on communication history, spun together over two thousand years, is difficult, especially in disparate cultures: multicultural; multinational; neo-classical rhetorical theories; vernacular linguistic shifts; accessibility to ancient texts, often in Italian, German, Latin, Greek, or Chinese; wholesale unclear derivatives and gestation into new formats; and cognitive impairment as a result of the above mutations, allow but tentative conclusions. Extensive research needs to be done to fully analyze years of underpinnings that have influenced the communication media concepts of today. Thus we have limited our discussion to the varying but enlarging genre concepts and uses of Commonplaces in hand written, oral or printed form to which persons from all walks of life could turn to improve their communication with the world about them. We offer several conclusions and implications:

> (1) What began in the Classical world as searching for truth, for underlying concepts of virtue, for valid arguments, for ideas located in metaphorical "places" of the mind, these purposes over time mutated into vast collections on almost every conceivable topic, from

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micro to macro topics. Throughout this mutation a core principle remained: writers assembled textual and oral fragments that they themselves or others could rely on, insert, remember, rehearse, borrow, steal, and use as one's own in either written or oral communication.

(2) Originality of one's own thoughts may minimally have been included in the multivariate books. But most collections were recycled material. Only rarely did the collectors mention the sources for their endeavors, suggesting outright plagiarism. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to determine who was the original author as repetitions of the same example(s) appeared and reappeared over the years. We cannot help but insert a comic's comment: if you "borrow" from one person it's plagiarism; if you depend on two persons it's research."

(3) Some of the above findings also apply to the Chinese sources for Commonplaces. Chinese Commonplaces, just like the Western tradition, are dynamic and diverse in genre and forms. However, different from the Western tradition, Chinese sources have indicated stronger reliance on Sage's works and anecdotes. Other sources such as the collection of '*shu*' [letters] and '*xie hou yu*'[common sayings] are also revealing in their contribution to form part of Chinese persuasion concepts applicable to communication.

(4) From the time of the ancients through today, classrooms depend on examples. In business classes "Cases", really, a modern variation of a Commonplace book, are vehicles of instruction, with an entire industry and a reputable university behind such endeavors. We can also seriously ask, are textbook authors—your two current authors included—that much different in intent from those pedagogues of year's ago? Add to that affirmation that the requirements/assignments we give our students today are not too dissimilar from pedagogical requirements in earlier classrooms: theme writing, business letters, beginnings and endings of letters, good-news and neutral and bad-news communication, and you know the rest (Murphy, Hildebrandt, H. & Thomas J. (1997). Today we go one step further: we add the visual element of TV as supplements to the illustration in cases and texts. In brief, the semantic topography and architecture of the collections may have changed, but the central purpose remains the same: teach readers how to apply either oral or written communication to various human situations. Today textbooks by the hundreds parallel the endeavors begun, philosophically in the Classical world, for then and now determining the linguistic appropriateness for almost any genre.

(5) Gutenberg may have been the catalyst to propel hand-written Commonplaces into the hands of the common man. Earlier we mentioned that for some individuals collecting sayings, ideas, concepts, was a hobby, perhaps an intentional diary that could be left to their heirs. Printing not only made these private collections available, but allowed those more pedagogically inclined to make available authoritative concepts and collections available to many. A prime example, not discussed in this paper, is the publication of the Bible into the German vernacular, allowing the person on the street access to information at one time known only to the church principals.

(6) During the internecine conflict between humanist and religious philosophers,

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the themes of virtues and vices—often discussed in the Classical period—found expression on church-doors to detailed treatises, even trials, on what was written and said, taken from books that collected arguments on both sides of an issue. Bi-polar extremes, either for written or oral communication, depended on collected works to support arguments.

We began this paper with the assumption that the common man used his vernacular in social communication. That was fine for the *Agora*, the communication of the street, but as civilization advanced the semantic momentum in and by the professions, the arising social hierarchical distance, the intentional or unintentional neologisms of some professions, demanded more lexical refinement and understanding to enter the realm of the enlarging intellectual genre. Such a need was met, in part, via the Commonplace book. Many of the commonplace traditions still have significant influence on today's business world as we discussed earlier. So research in this direction should be carried out in more depth since our preliminary research has already highlighted the need for this type of investigation, which, we believe, will provide further historical underpinnings for communication and managerial behavior and practices.

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Overcoming barriers in developing conversation skills:

A pedagogical perspective

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Background information

Seven years of teaching English to Omani students opened many vistas to me to understand the culture of Oman and how it influences Omani students' learning of English. The more I understood, the more I began to understand our students better. I noticed many weaknesses in students' communication and started tracing the reasons. One important reason I observed was that these students lack strong conversation skills which, in turn, is reflected in their communication. My reading of the book ' Lexus and The Olive Tree' by Thomas Fried(1999) man made me understand that the Omani culture is unique, in the sense, it is at the threshold of modernizing and acquiring the material welfare and at the same time maintaining the culture and traditions of the land as well as the Islamic values. It is still traditional when compared to its neighbours in the rest of the Arab world. (I toured most Arab countries and read a lot about their culture). In addition, most of these students are first generation learners of English. This feeling of understanding students through their culture and noticing certain weaknesses in their communication triggered off this paper.

This paper examines the relevance of culture to language learning, the meaning and the structure of conversation, the obstacles in developing good conversation skills, the impact of these obstacles on students' communication skills in the first part of the paper. The second part describes the class-room based project carried out during the spring semester 2007, and reports the findings.

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Language and Culture

The mutual relationship between language and culture, i.e. the interaction of language and culture has been well established in the writings of great philosophers such as Sassure (1966), Davidson (1999) and Chomsky (1968).

'Linguistic relativity' theorists Sapir (1962) and Whorf (1956) say that

- We perceive the world in terms of categories and distinctions found in our native language.
- What is found in one language may not be found in another language due to cultural differences.

Language and culture are 'intricately interwoven.' (Jiang 2000). She establishes this inseparable nature of language and culture using metaphors. For example, she writes that from a philosophical view, language is flesh and culture is blood and the two make a living organism. From a communicative point of view, she says that language is a swimming skill whereas culture is water and the two make swimming. The pragmatic view provided by Jiang says that language is a vehicle and culture is traffic light and the two make transportation. These metaphors are pregnant with in-depth meaning and largely confirm the intimate relationship between language and culture. Inline with this idea of language and culture, Singhal (1998) claims that 'current pedagogy stresses that language can not be taught without culture and culture is a necessary context for language use.'

Others who concur with this line of thinking are Lessaard-Clouston (1997) who said, "language teaching is indeed culture teaching." Krasner (1999) who says, "linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language." Peterson and Coltrane (2003) stress that "culture must be fully incorporated as a vital component of language learning."

The central problem

The Omani youth, by and large, like listening to English pop songs, (occasionally students are encouraged to sing songs in colleges and we the teachers hear only English songs), listen to English news to be in touch with American and British pop stars, like watching T.V. programs of English celebrities, other programs in English on Hot bird satellite dish, read news papers in English, use internet for messaging, chatting and surfing, use top model mobiles, drive Lexus

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and other top brand cars- truly representing modernity. Through these activities students only become good listeners, though they do pick up some English. But what opportunities are there for these students to interact in English?

In school, 'Our World Through English (OWTE)' (Ministry of School Education) series are used at different levels to teach English to young Omanis. These series confine language to three types-Narrative, Descriptive and Instructional. What is missing in these materials is good and generative literature, thus depriving students of developing imagination, intuition, active thinking and critical analysis skills. Another interesting finding with these materials is that OWTE series give more attention to the local culture and try to transmit knowledge about selective traditions through language. In addition to this the Teachers' Guide encourages teachers to collect text and articles, if they need to prepare supplementary materials, strictly related to the topics given in the text books and prepare materials using simple language.

{I just came to know that these series are used in General Education stream. The new materials named 'English for me' consists of one activity book with exercises meant for class work and the other Pupil's book meant for home work are introduced in Basic Education stream and I am yet to go through these books for better insights}

Yet another dimension to this problem is that Oman has crossed the local frontiers in many fields which demand Omani students to have strong communication skills in order to face global competition. Such a situation fits well into the metaphor-use olives (be local) and drive Lexus (behave global) (Friedman 1999). Friedman argues that this tension between the 'Lexus (global) and the Olive tree (local) is 'one of the defining characteristics of the new world'. Good communication skills may ease this tension and strong conversation skills may lead to developing good communication skills.

Conversation

"A good conversationalist is not one who remembers what was said, but says what someone wants to remember" (Brown 1812). Conversation in plain context means the use of speech for informal exchange of views or ideas or information, or the spoken exchange of thoughts, opinions and feelings. It needs at least two persons to carry out a conversation because it is interactive and participants take turns to exchange messages. Therefore, conversation is fundamentally a sequential activity. Strong conversation skills benefit both the speaker and the listener in several ways.

- It promotes friendship and develops confidence to express ones ideas succinctly to build rapport.

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- It also helps make better-informed decisions.
- It sharpens ones listening strategies to gain information and thus integrate confidence and competence into ones conversational behavior.
- If one has good conversation skills, one can be confident in any conversation context and eventually become an effective communicator.
-

Having good conversation starter skills are a key to success (Agar 1994). To prepare Omani students as effective communicators, there is a need to strengthen their conversation skills which will in turn, build confidence in students to speak, to have better understanding and to be understood better. This is required in order for students to first, take care of themselves by having tact, second, to develop healthy relationships. There are five main obstacles in developing good conversation skills in Omani students.

Perceptual barriers.

One of the important problems with communicating with others is that we all see the world differently. Omani students read very little because Oman does not have a reading culture. As a result, their perception of the world is limited and so they cannot think beyond certain parameters (seven years of teaching experience in Oman). An awareness of this limitation prevents them from conversing freely with outsiders.

Emotional barriers.

These are one of the chief barriers to open and free conversations. Emotional barriers include fear, mistrust, anxiety and suspicion. As a result, many students hold back from communicating their thoughts and feelings to others. The fear of what others think of them prevents their development as effective communicators. Some students (Zainab, Maher, Faisal, Ali, Alia) said that though they want to converse with teachers and friends in English, they do not do so because of the fear of making mistakes.

Cultural barriers

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Omanis feel close only when they speak in Arabic (Many students expressed it on several occasions). In addition to this, many cross-linguistic factors come in the way of effectively communicating their ideas in English. Some examples of cross-linguistic factors which pose problems to students are the absence of phrasal verbs, capitalization, silent letters and helping verbs in Arabic. Also in Arabic one word carries one meaning only unlike in English. In Arabic adjectives come before nouns. Many Omani students very frequently and inappropriately use the preposition for. These differences in Arabic and English pose problems leading to communication breakdowns.

Language barriers

Language that describes what we want to say in our terms may present barriers to others who are not familiar with our expressions, mainly idiomatic expressions. Language is a main barrier for Omani students to initiate and continue conversations in English mainly due to lack of adequate vocabulary and the differences between Arabic and English syntax.

Interpersonal barriers

Closeness is the aim of interpersonal contact where there is a high level of honesty and acceptance of each other. Most Omani students suffer from interpersonal barriers. They distance themselves from others in several ways-withdrawals, just doing routine activities with out any real contact, fear of making mistakes, lack of necessary vocabulary, and lack of broader world knowledge and so on. As a result their participation in conversations is either poor or mainly in Arabic. (Personal observations made over a period of 6/7 years). In order to help students over come these barriers and to engage them in conversations a small classroom based project was designed and carried out.

The project

Having said that strong conversation skills are necessary for effective communication and to prepare Omani students as effective communicators, there is a need to strengthen their conversation skills, which will in turn, build confidence in students to speak, to have better understanding and to be understood better. A small classroom based project was undertaken to enhance the conversation skills of students. In the light of Oman going global in various fields, especially in the business field, it is very important to prepare students, particularly in College of Commerce and Economics as effective communicators. Common sense says the ability to

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converse succinctly will be the first step to become an effective communicator. So to develop good conversation skills and to make these students confident speakers, some activities were designed. These activities are premised in four main principles.

Dale Carnegie principle

When we are genuinely interested in others, curious about them, they feel respected and valued. Implied in our interest is the suggestion that they have a lot to offer. As we show our interest, they tend to become more interested, more creative, and more capable. Dale Carnegie principle advocates developing courage and self-confidence through preparation. Good preparation keeps audience awake and pay attention to what you say. It also says that the flavour with which you say is more important than what you say. It is mainly the principle of 'Be nice' to others to win friends.

Principle of Pygmalion effect

When we act toward people as if we expect outstanding behavior from them, we are applying a principle known as the Pygmalion Effect. Basically, teachers have a huge effect, but it's poorly understood. The implication of the Pygmalion effect for teachers and leaders is massive. It means that the performance of your team depends less on them than it does on you. The performance you get from people is no more or less, than what you expect: which means you must always expect the best. Based on this principle, certain activities were designed expecting high out comes.

Principle of Bifocal vision

Many high achieving people have reported that along the way of their lives, some person has seen potential in them even when it was not obvious to others. That is, a teacher, coach, or mentor had a sense of their potential, even if that potential was not readily apparent. For example, a young student from a poor background and education may be seen by a teacher to have certain giftedness when others have written him/her off. Thus encouraged and supported, the student begins to excel. Bi-focal vision is a term that denotes our ability to see both the actual behavior and a person's potential within. When

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we act toward persons as if they are more than they appear to be on the surface, the potential within tends to emerge.

Principle of Collaboration

Collaborations often cross boundaries of age, class, race, or ethnicity. Social collaboration is unambiguously central to the work. Collaboration between speakers on different linguistic levels is one of the basic conditions for communication. Sacks (1995) see the main contribution of collaborative productions to discourse as social. For him, the syntactic possibility of constructing a sentence together is at the same time a possibility for collaboratively constructing a social unit. Following sack's interpretation, collaborative productions are a way of using syntax as a linguistic resource for social aims specially for the forming of a social group within a conversational setting. Based on these principles some activities were designed with the following objectives, to improve the conversation skills of the Omani students.

- To develop competencies to manage themselves in different conversation contexts. These competencies include self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation.

- To develop competencies to handle relationships. These competencies include social awareness and social skills such as communication, conflict management, building bonds, team capabilities and cooperation.

- To help students understand the different dimensions of communication. For example, verbal, non verbal dimensions which include the appropriate use of language and the body language, listening and responding, providing and getting feedback, and assertive communication.

The students in the first credit course (LANC 1070) showed interest in developing their conversation skills and were willing to put in extra work. So 19 students, 11 boys and 8 girls from one section of the first credit course participated in the project.

The corpus for this study was approximately 40 hours of video-recorded spoken interactions. Three types of conversational settings have been used. They are- individual student and the whole class interaction, pair interactions and group interactions. These interactions were videoed and replayed after the activity was over followed by a feedback discussion. A record of student's progress in terms of confidence, use of appropriate words, turn taking, initiating and closing conversations, and so on were maintained for the entire semester period.

Findings

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- Replaying of the recorded videos helped students to see how they talk, what mistakes they make and what to do to overcome these mistakes in their next activity.
- Many students showed huge interest to participate in the activities.
- Everyday speaking opportunities helped them gain confidence to speak and to become good conversationalists.
- Working in groups developed group spirit and students learnt how to work as a team.
- They also learnt the dos and the don'ts of a conversation. For example;

Do's

1. Look at the person or people you are talking to
2. If you haven't met before, introduce yourself and ask their name
3. Use a person's name when talking to them
4. Ask questions when you don't understand something
5. Stick to the subject
6. Say nice things about people and praise those who deserve it
7. It's fine to disagree, but disagree politely

And Don'ts

1. Don't fiddle, look elsewhere, or wander off while someone else is talking
2. Don't listen in on conversations you aren't part of
3. Don't interrupt when someone else is talking
4. Don't whisper in front of another person
5. Don't whine, rattle, brag, or say mean things about others
6. Don't ask personal questions such as how much things cost or why someone looks or dresses the way they do
7. Don't point or stare
8. Don't argue about things that aren't important
9.

Sample activities

Keeping in mind the four important principles discussed above, several activities were designed. The topics for some activities were taken from the course book and the others were taken from newspapers, magazines, and internet.

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As far as possible, the activities progressed from easy to difficult.

Activity 1. 30-seconds stimulus talks

Aims: To build confidence to talk and to express ideas freely.

Materials: Objects-bicycle bell, mobile phone, incense stand, white board and so on.

Procedure: Each student was given an object to see for 30 seconds and given another

30 seconds to describe it. At the end of the minute, the audience should guess the name of the object described and then ask questions to know more about the object.

Activity 2. Speaker of the day

Aims: Confidence building, convincingly express ideas, and fluency.

Procedure: Each student is asked to choose a topic of his/her interest a day before the talk.

Next day he/she talks about it for five minutes and invite questions/discussion from audience.

Some students chose topics from their course book. For example, 'Japan's economy' 'Sanad

Program' etc.

Activity 3. Challenge the assertion

Aims: Critical thinking, challenging and justifying assertions.

Procedure: Divide the class into groups of four. Each group will be given a statement to discuss.

For example, 'Taxes are necessary'; 'Oman should look for alternative sources for economy.'

Each member will talk for a minute in support of the statement. Members from other groups

Challenge the statement by asking questions. The group answers the questions or accept the

Challenge.

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Activity 4. Debates

Aims: Creating and presenting an argument, expressing a point of view and fluency.

Procedure: The class will be divided into groups of four. Per day, two groups will participate in the debate. One group will support the proposition and the other group opposes it. All groups will be given time to prepare their arguments. In the first round each group will present their arguments and in the second round, each group will counter the arguments of the other group. A moderator will be nominated for each group to sum up all arguments and invite audience to vote for the proposition.

Activity 5. Group presentations

Aims: To develop team work, to express ideas clearly as a team and to develop confidence and fluency.

Procedure: Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. Each group will be given a topic. Each member of the group will research the topic and collect information. Collectively, they prepare visuals to support their points. Finally the group makes the presentation and invites questions.

Activity 6. Language games

Aim: To overcome cultural and language barriers.

Procedure: A word will be written on the board. One student will be asked to talk about the word for two minutes. Half of the audience will be asked to listen to the mistakes made by the speaker and the other half will listen to the number of Arabic words used by the speaker. At the end of the talk, who ever had made less mistakes or used less Arabic words in his/her talk wins the game. A student monitors the game, and controls the game.

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Activity 7. Small talk

Aims: To overcome inhibitions and talk freely about a small topic

Procedure: As a gap filling activity, either at the end of a class or in the middle of a class, two students will be asked to ask and answer a small question/enquiry. Some of the questions asked were;

1. What do you see as the coming trends in Foreign investments in Oman?
2. What challenges do you think the future business people in Oman face?
3. Tell me about the best vacation you have ever taken.
4. What one thing would you really like to own? Why?

[Activities adapted from 'Language Activities for Teenagers' edited by Seth Lindstormberg]

Follow up activities.

After completing nearly 40 hours of everyday activities followed by feedback from the teacher and the peers, it was decided to practice everyday conversations, as filler, in many classes. To do so, several functions were elicited from students and a final list was prepared. Before starting each conversation, the required language was discussed. Each day 2 or 3 students were asked to perform the given function.

The final list of functions agreed upon for conversation practice were

1. Greeting and making polite enquiries.
2. Asking for and giving information.
3. Showing directions.
4. Making suggestions.
5. Agreeing and disagreeing.
6. Complaining.
7. Describing things.
8. Arguing.
9. Guessing.
10. Bargaining.
11. Rejecting.
12. Reminding.
13. Inviting.
14. Introducing.

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15. Placing orders.
16. Comparing.

The observations recorded during the follow up activities were very encouraging. Students exhibited confidence while conversing with peers and the teacher. There was eye contact and turn-taking. Hesitations noticed earlier were reduced to bare minimum.Students were asking relevant questins and were very enthusiastic about their participation. Linguistic mistakes were also reduced in their talks. Whenever there was a crisis, students managed it well, though they used some Arabic expressins as a last resort. They seem to understood what it means working in pairs and teams. Towards the last four activities students became very humourous and it was fun watching these activities. Slowly they were coming out of shyness, willing to talk, and often found using dictionary to get the right words. Another important observation made was girls started talking to boys and towards the end teams consisted of both boys and girls which is usually not a common feature in the Arab world. Some students expressed happiness about their participation in the project and said that they are now confident enough to converse with any body in any context, fairly well in English.

Conclusion

It needs to be reiterated that there is a need to prepare the Omani students as good conversationalists in order for them to become effective communicators in the global business world because Oman has joined the World Trade Organization, invites Foreign Direct Investment, and rapidly developing tourism sector. Some cultural aspects and the cross-linguistic factors which creep into their conversations need to be minimized in order to be better understood globally. More opportunities to speak, and everyday conversations proved certainly beneficial to students.

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Biography

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MEENA LOCHANA hails from India. She holds an M.A. (English) - Master in Education- M.Phil (Teacher development) and is currently doing a Ph.D. (Teacher development) she has taught English at various levels for 17 years and worked as teacher educator for 8 years in India. Presently she is working in the Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. She has presented papers in India and has made presentations in international conferences. Her main interest is in carrying out class room based research.

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Electronic Portfolios: For Assessment and Job Search

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Introduction

Electronic portfolios (eportfolios) have slipped silently into colleges and universities as effective assessment tools of student work. While originally conceived as methods for demonstrating student competencies and department as well as university commitment to learning, eportfolios are beginning to find their way into the world of work. This phenomenon poses interesting questions for business communication scholars and practitioners.

In the spring of 2005, my department initiated the first senior eportfolio program with three aims in mind: (1) to help students reflect on their experiences and areas of growth while at the university, in general, and in the Department of Communication Studies, specifically, (2) to assist members of the department in assessing program strengths while identifying areas for improvement, and (3) to provide qualitative measurements of student competency in four key areas defined by the university: oral communication, writing, information literacy, and quantitative literacy. The assessment aspects were well researched and planned. Students worked hard to create eportfolios that explicitly demonstrated oral and written communication skills as well as quantitative and information literacy. In designing the eportfolio assignment, I did not anticipate that students would take their eportfolios with them into the workplace, and I did not imagine employers would respond so favorably to the assessment-driven eportfolios. Most (29/56, or over 50%) students who shared their eportfolios with potential employers were offered a job (many on the spot), and many (10 students, approximately 35%) were either offered better jobs than what they applied for or were given jobs with expanded responsibilities.

Perhaps J.R. Young (2002) captures this professional notion of eportfolios, noting "an e-portfolio is an extensive resume that links to an electronic repository of a student's papers, problem sets, pictures from study abroad stints, and anything else that demonstrates the student's accomplishments and activities." Young quotes students who believe eportfolios have promise for job searches and administrators and faculty who explicitly state that eportfolios are not intended "to be just souped-up resume[s]" but rather to "breathe life into the academic-advising process and help students reflect on how their disparate activities become a well-rounded education."

In this paper, I will address briefly some of the history and theory of portfolios, describe my experiences with students, eportfolios, and employers, and then posit why eportfolios hold currency for today's business environment. I will ground my discussion in practice and share some observations gleaned from interviews with students and employers. My comments here,

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however, are preliminary. The novelty of eportfolios has not worn thin yet, and little research in this area has been completed.

Types of Portfolios

Portfolios, particularly electronic ones, are generally categorized by purpose. Greenberg (2004) identifies three categories of eportfolios: showcase, structured, and learning. As the name implies, showcase eportfolios display their creators' best work: "Students' eportfolios are intended to personalize their learning experiences, share authentic examples of work that goes beyond the grades on transcripts, help students consider career goals, and demonstrate learning from non-classroom experiences" (p. 31). Structured eportfolios seem similar to showcase eportfolios; however, they are geared toward demonstrating compliance with established requirements, such as teacher education (for example, see http://www.nbpts.org as well as individual state board requirements) or individual school or classroom expectations. Learning eportfolios are "dynamic" because they reflect change and growth as students grapple with assignments, learning objectives, and experiences both in and out of the classroom. Learning eportfolios are highly personal. All three categories that Greenberg identifies are used within higher ed to evaluate student learning and achievement.

Showcase eportfolios are similar to professional portfolios that have a long history in some fields, notably art, graphic design, interior design, and advertising, among others. Generally, fields that require visual elements beyond what can be presented in a resume encourage and tacitly require portfolios from competitive candidates. Professionals in fields that expect portfolios learned to collect examples of their work for professional "show and tells," both for professional advancement as well as for company marketing. Prospective clients want to see examples of what designers can do before hiring firms to represent their interests.

The value of portfolios is not lost on schools seeking to hire new teachers. Teaching portfolios are expected to contain sample lesson plans, including activities and assessment instruments for students, reflections of how and why the lesson plans are effective, statements of teaching philosophy that include plans for classroom discipline, and evidence of skill in using technology. Teaching portfolios are also important for promotion and tenure at the secondary level and are becoming more popular within higher ed. Community colleges routinely require comprehensive teaching portfolios that include all of the above plus syllabi and sample assignments from courses taught, and more universities are moving in this direction as a way of measuring and emphasizing commitment to teaching. Such eportfolios must "showcase" professional achievement and meet structured requirements.

Learning portfolios developed separately from professional portfolios and found strong advocates in composition studies, particularly as a way for students to practice writing process and to demonstrate improvement in writing skill. Reflection is critical to all portfolios, but especially learning portfolios. As Greenberg writes, "By exposing interactions among teachers, peers, mentors, and friends and by encouraging students to reflect on their changing understanding of what they are doing, learning eportfolios also provide opportunities for gaining a better understanding of how students think" (2004, p. 34). In building from Schon's (1983) earlier work, Yancey explains that through various types of reflection "we learn what we know

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now, and we begin to understand what we need to learn next" (p. 143). Through reflection, students take ownership for their learning and develop cognitive self-portraits that can be refined and enhanced.

Over the last three years, I have directed the eportfolio project for the department, and during that time, I have retained emails and other correspondence from graduates. Because we are a small department (56 graduates over the last three years), we are able to maintain contact with most of our alumni (approximately 95% for the last three years). In addition to gathering information from such correspondence, I have interviewed four management-type individuals: two human resources managers (one from a large international corporation, one from a smaller regional organization) and two small business owners. Interviews were informal. None of the managers had hired students from my department, but all viewed at least one eportfolio prior to our discussion. Three noted they had hired other individuals based at least in part on an eportfolio.

This is a first effort at understanding the value of eportfolios for professional communication, specifically for employment, and I am interested largely in beginning conversations on this new genre of professional communication in order to assist students in preparing eportfolios that are more appropriate and purposeful for job hunting.

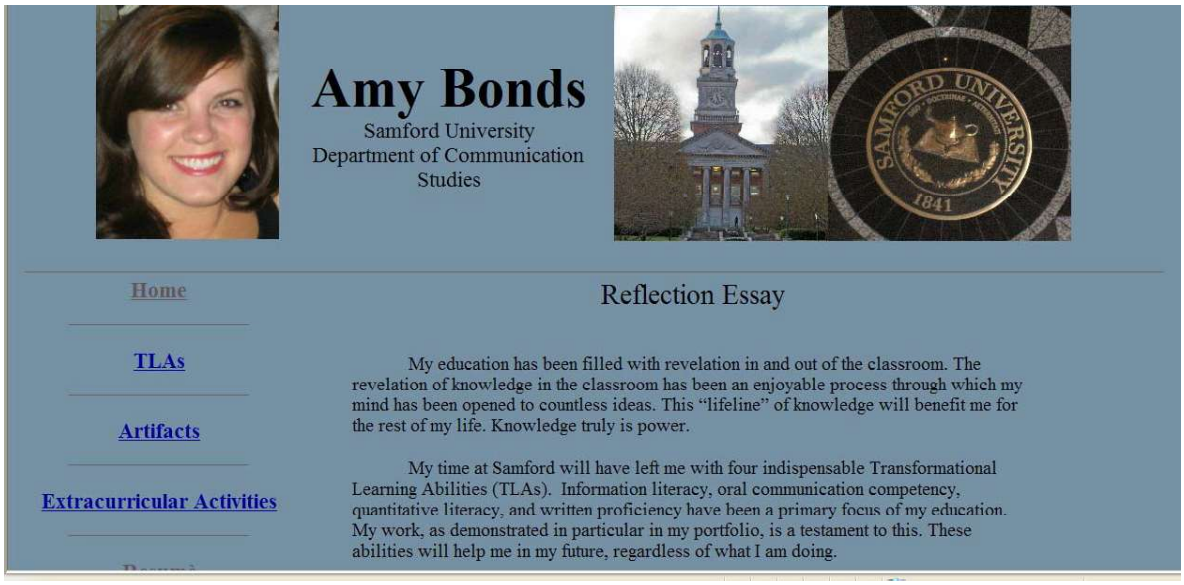


Figure 1. Amy Bond's eportfolio homepage. Note the list of links to artifacts and "TLAs" or assessment criteria on the left side of the screen shot.

Description of Student Eportfolios

Students in the department of communication studies create eportfolios to showcase their learning in accordance with departmental and university requirements. The typical eportfolio contains one or two speeches, two or three papers, and detailed reflective components that provide context for each piece and communicate a theme that connects the disparate elements. Figure 1 contains an example of one student's homepage. Students are given flexibility in organizing the eportfolios, but each portfolio is required to have a minimum of four polished

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artifacts in order to demonstrate competence in oral and written communication as well as information literacy and quantitative literacy. Amy Bonds, the student who created the homepage shown in Figure 1, selected the theme of knowledge as a powerful lifeline, and this theme is represented in the contexts she wrote to introduce each paper, speech, and extracurricular activity she included in her eportfolio. Although not shown on the screen capture of Amy's homepage, eportfolios must also include current resumes and artifacts that represent students' achievements beyond the classroom. Amy selected artifacts that showed her efforts as a math tutor and experience studying abroad. For the first two years, the eportfolios were burned on cds and were not available online. Beginning spring 2007, students used LiveText, an online eportfolio system, to create eportfolios that are viewed online and can be downloaded to cds. Importantly, these eportfolios are created primarily for student and departmental assessment; thus, students must include links to assessment criteria, as Amy does via the "TLAs" link on the left side of the screen shot.

While the eportfolios seem very structured, they reflect each student's unique talents and interests, and students who are uncertain as to what to do beyond graduation often find that the self-reflection that is crucial for creating an effective eportfolio can help them make explicit connections among their experiences within the classroom, their activities in student organizations (often as leaders of such organizations), and their roles as citizens outside the campus gates, thereby leading to vocational paths not previously considered. For example, Olivia Keaggy, a student who was unsure as to what she would do following graduation, recognized that over the four years she spent at the university, she had traveled at every opportunity and, importantly, was happiest when she was traveling. Furthermore, she recognized how frequent intercultural communication was a topic for her coursework. For example, the quantitative literacy page from her eportfolio, shown in Figure 2, explains her interest in examining culture shock she learned of as a leader for in the International Club and through her own personal travel. Olivia explored culture shock as a phenomenon in an empirical research project for her intercultural communication course, as indicated on the screen shot in Figure 2. As a consequence of her deep reflection, she began looking into careers that would allow her to travel internationally and is now leading tour groups to Africa.

Her eportfolio not only helped her to decide what she wanted to do, but it also helped her land the job: "I brought in my E-Portfolio and the COO of the company was blown away! She even brought the president of the company into my interview to show him. He was very impressed. I was shocked and proud! After she looked all through the portfolio, she told me that she thought I was qualified to take this position, rather than the one I was originally shooting for." Like Olivia, Amy was also offered a job with greater responsibility (and pay) based on the experience and skills she demonstrated through her eportfolio.

Both Amy and Olivia's experiences described above would be easy to dismiss as an exception rather than the norm, but half of our students report getting jobs or getting better jobs based in part on their eportfolios. Importantly, all of the students who mentioned eportfolios as contributing to their getting hired presented eportfolios that were designed specifically for assessment purposes. The question is why? What value do eportfolios created for assessment purposes have for businesses?

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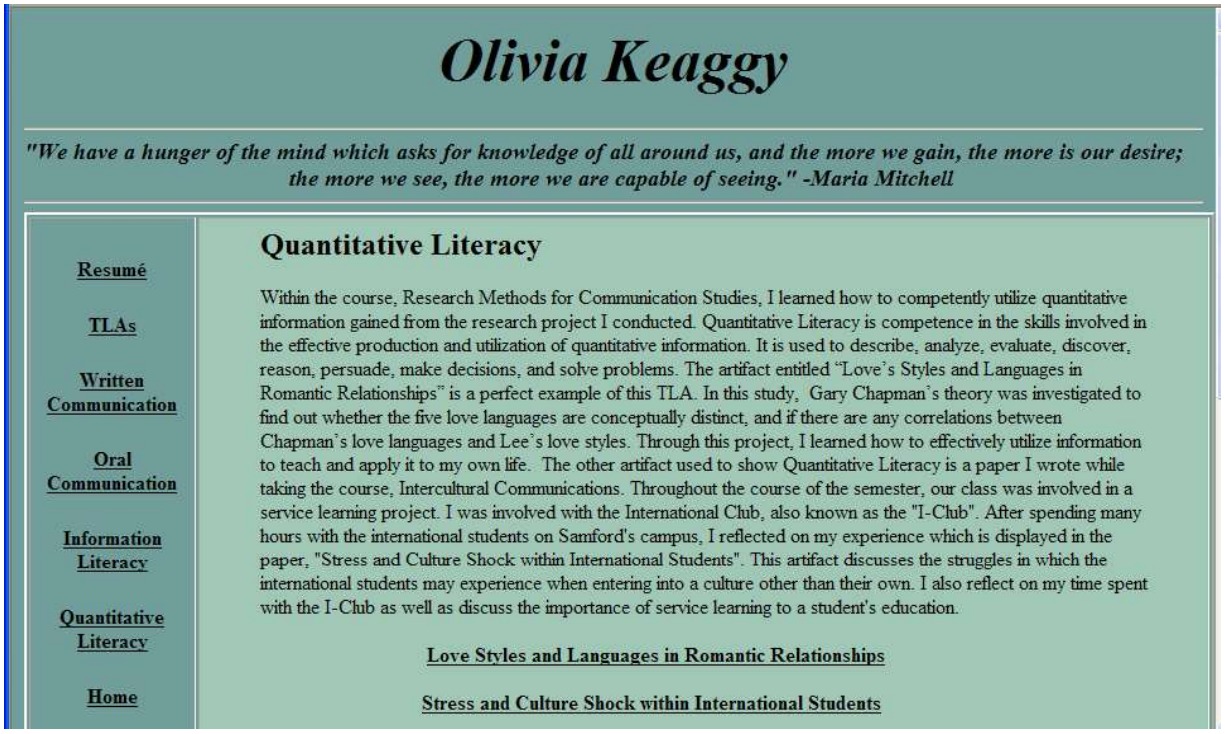


Figure 2. Screen capture of one page from Keaggy's eportfolio.

Eportfolios Versus Resumes

There is little argument that eportfolios are richer media than regular resumes—think outline versus visually rich, interactive website. While a resume provides information about degrees and dates as well as employment history and possibly a goal or impact statement, an eportfolio can provide links to the university that awarded the degree, possibly a transcript, descriptions of programs and courses, and in our students' cases, samples of course work.

When asked what employers found interesting in students' eportfolios, all four hiring managers responded with comments along the lines of "I get a better feel for who the person is" and "I can see real evidence of what this person has done and can do." The managers liked having evidence of oral and written communication skills as well as critical thinking ability.

It's no secret that employers value both oral and written communication skills, and eportfolios allow employers to see examples of both. Potential employers can see and hear students presenting material to a class or to a live audience. Most of our students accumulate impressive speaking experience beyond the classroom, usually with community organizations and nonprofit organizations, and all of our students create and present workshops for external audiences as part of their senior experience. In addition to seeing these presentations, potential employers can read examples of student writing, in a variety of styles. Every eportfolio opens to a reflective essay or letter that is somewhat informal and personal as well as personable. Voice is an important part of the reflection. From the reflection essay, viewers can access more formal papers that demonstrate critical thinking and research abilities. Most students also include artifacts from an internship

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that demonstrate professional communication skills. For example, a student may include a fundraising letter or report written for a nonprofit group.

Interpersonal communication skill and the ability to work in teams are also desirable for most employers. These skills were stressed by three of the four managers interviewed. Through the reflective components and various artifacts, students can show the results of their collaborative efforts. Photographs or even recorded group presentations and meetings suggest effective interpersonal communication. The managers in this brief study noted that they could "tell a lot about someone by the way they come across in photos." If the person in the middle is smiling and is surrounded by others, then the implication is "friendly, people-person." In contrast, someone who is photographed on the fringe and who looks anxious, exhibits either no smile or only a feeble smile, communicates less extroversion and more introversion. These impressions are important for each of the managers interviewed. Usually such impressions are drawn from interviews only. In short, eportfolios that students create to satisfy departmental requirements, primarily for departmental assessment purposes, help potential employers see a richer, multi-dimensional version of student qualifications than can be conveyed through a resume, regardless of page numbers.

Employers are curious about prospective employees. Many companies admit to using Google to learn about prospective employees, and now many are searching social internet sites for information about individuals they are considering for interviews. Searching FaceBook, MySpace, Xanga, etc, has become somewhat the norm, and career counseling centers frequently caution students to think before posting pictures and comments that could negatively impact their post-graduate prospects. Some companies are also using such sites to identify and recruit strong candidates (Finder, 2006). All four of the managers interviewed for this exploratory project admitted to using such searches as part of the selection process.

Employers have access to more information and are interested in reducing the costs of hiring and retaining productive employees, and part of that equation is hiring the "right" people, ones who seem to "fit" the organization. Schneider (1987) posits that individuals within organizations, more specifically the behavior of those individuals, affect and even determine organizational culture through the process of "attraction-selection-attrition." Specifically, "Over time, persons attracted to, selected by, staying with, and behaving in organizations cause them to be what they are" (p. 446). Individuals are attracted to organizations which they perceive will allow them to meet personal goals; similarly, organizations tend to select new employees who share attributes of other employees. New employees who do not share attributes (common beliefs, likes/dislikes, experiences) usually leave after a period of time. Saks and Ashforth (2001) found that it is important for organizations to find individuals whose personalities and values or ethics harmonize with those of the organization. In other words, organizations act to maintain cultural norms. Each of the managers interviewed for this study corroborated this finding. Each was interested in hiring only those who "fit the organization." Friendliness and "people skills" were very important to all of the managers interviewed for this small study.

Organizational fit may be particularly important in small firms. In 2004, the Small Business Advocacy group estimated that 99.7% of the 23,974,500 businesses in the United States are small businesses, and more importantly, job growth seems to be concentrated in the small

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business sector rather than in large corporations (Office of Advocacy, http://www.sba.gov/advo/stats/profiles/05us.txt). Many of these businesses employ fewer than 20, and the small group environment likely enhances the importance of group identity in order for employees to experience job satisfaction. As one of the small business owners stated, "I can't afford to have someone here who doesn't fit well and get along with the rest of us. We have to work as a team or we just can't get everything done."

In addition to finding individuals who fit the organization, recruiters also must find ones who fit the job opening. Cole et al. (2004) note that recruiters infer personality traits, such as conscientiousness or extraversion, from information gleaned from resumes, and used their inferences to determine whether individuals were not only qualified but also employable for certain job types: "applicants who were judged from their resume information to have high conscientiousness levels and who were interested in Conventional job openings (e.g., accounting, finance) received higher overall employability judgments than high-conscientious applicants interested in Enterprising jobs (e.g., marketing, human resources management)" (p. 366). Finding and identifying individuals who meet job requirements was particularly important to the two managers from larger organizations. Both organizations make substantial investments in training new employees, and both expressed the need to find prospective employees who would be able to complete the training successfully and who would have the personality types that would be satisfied with the positions: "People-people need jobs where they interact with others, but some people are happier when they have tasks that keep them in their office more. We have jobs for both. My job is to match people to jobs."

In brief, eportfolios provide richer contexts for deriving information to help recruiters decide whether to interview applicants, but such ease and richness comes with risks. Given the media-richness of eportfolios, prospective employers are likely to make more inferences about individuals—instead of relying on activities listed on a resume (e.g., fraternity/sorority social activity organizer) to indicate whether the individual is extroverted or introverted, hiring managers can "see" how the individual behaves when giving a speech before an audience. The perception may be that the individual is more (or less) extroverted than he/she actually is. From the verbal as well as nonverbal cues, managers may gain greater confidence that their perception is accurate and thereby exclude certain individuals (whom they perceive to be too "different") from interviews. In other words, eportfolios could be used to limit diversity within organizations, thereby affecting organizational viability. The social and professional risks and implications are substantial.

Implications

Employers want to know as much as possible about prospective employees, and some, at least, favor eportfolios as a way to access valuable information. Individuals on the job market must discover what skills employers desire and, importantly, what counts as evidence of this skill. One value of the eportfolio is the opportunity to provide evidence of proficiency in a variety of areas. Thus, if an employer is searching for someone with strong public speaking skills, then an astute applicant will submit an eportfolio that contains examples that demonstrate excellence in public speaking. In other words, applicants may benefit from strong knowledge of company standards in order to understand better the specific rhetorical situation and to use that information to shape

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the eportfolio, establishing criteria for what to include and what to exclude from the collection of artifacts.

Applicants are encouraged currently to research organizations in order to anticipate interview questions and to express interest in the organization. They are advised often by placement experts to display their knowledge of corporate leaders and corporate policy and culture in order to convey organizational fit. Eportfolios provide another venue for the expression of such interest. While prospective employees are advised to customize statements of purpose or goal statements on resumes, they will have more flexibility in customizing evidence on eportfolios. For example, if a candidate is applying for a marketing position at a tobacco company, the candidate would not use a speech from social policy class informing how tobacco companies misled the public in the 1960s. If the candidate also applies for a position with a health insurance organization, however, the speech could be helpful. This is a unique feature of eportfolios: evidence of skill can be tailored for each position applied for. Evidence does not equal employment history.

Current news reports frequently express concern over grade inflation and the variability in quality of institutions of higher education. Eportfolios are one way that some colleges and universities are working to verify academic integrity, and employers can use eportfolios to delve more deeply into applicant qualifications than is possible to do through resumes and transcripts. Rather than assuming a college graduate has strong writing skills, managers looking to hire new employees can request evidence. Such evidence may not provide absolute proof, but it offers employers more than they currently see.

Currently, most college graduates do not enter the job market with eportfolios, and thus, those who do stand out. One open question is whether this condition will continue. Given the curiosity of prospective employers, the growing attraction of social internet sites, and the assessment trend in higher education that is driving much of the eportfolio use in colleges and universities, I suspect that eportfolios will become more common in the hiring process. Just as my students use eportfolios to set themselves apart from others, as more institutions develop eportfolios, their graduates will also use them in job searches.

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Biography

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Web Conferencing as a Corporate Communication Tool

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Introduction

As this article is being written, corporations, individuals, and universities are searching for and embracing tools that foster and promote employee to employee, employee to employer, student to student, and student to instructor interaction. The emerging tools that focus on these interactions also provide pedagogical and theoretical perspectives.

Information technologies provide unique opportunities for higher education faculty and corporations to rethink the resources that are available to enhance their communication techniques (Beldarrain, 2006). One such opportunity for faculty members is to set up chats, require student-led discussions, and to make oral presentations through web-based conferencing. Businesses, corporations, and individuals can share information with others via visual aids, audio aids, and text. In fact, the Internet is bringing people together from all over the world in ways that were previously impossible to imagine. Web conferencing is an excellent resource for just about any business: it can bring employees and management together, no matter where people are located, and work can be accomplished over great distances with the use of web conferencing resources. This paper describes one such experience with web-based conferencing in a graduate communication course with the students over a fifteen-week course. Using this technology enhances students' skills and experiences with a technology that can be easily transferred to a corporate environment.

The Growth of Online Learning

The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C) 2005 Survey of Online Learning concludes that the breadth of online college courses may soon rival traditional face-to-face offerings. Survey results show more than three out of five institutions offering face-to-face undergraduate (63%) or graduate (65%) level courses also offer courses at the same level online. In addition, larger percentages (56%) of chief academic officers agree that online education is critical to their long-term strategy; for example,

> Colleges and universities are starting to understand that online courses help increase enrollment and improve diversity without the need for additional classrooms. It also helps address professors' needs for workplace flexibility, among other issues challenging academia (Mayadas, Sloan-C *View,* December 2005).

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In the 2006 report, *Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States,* there has been no leveling of the growth rate of online enrollments; institutions of higher education report record online enrollment growth on both a numeric and a percentage basis. Specifically, Allen and Seaman state in the report that nearly 3.2 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2005 term, a substantial increase over the 2.3 million reported the previous year. The more than 800,000 additional online students is more than twice the number added in any previous year (2006, p. 6).

Additionally, the 2006 report results show that 62 percent of all respondents rating the learning outcomes as equal to or superior to face to face instruction. There was a much larger change in the proportion over 2005 that think online is superior, growing from 12.1 percent in 2003 to 16.9 percent in the most recent survey, which is a 40 percent increase. There has been a small drop in the proportion that rank online learning outcomes in the lowest category (i.e., "inferior to face-to-face"), which is now 7.8 percent, down from 10.7 percent in the first year (Allen and Seaman, p. 11, 2006).

Along with the growth of online course offerings and the number of students enrolling in the courses will and have come the challenges of providing challenging, collaborative, and interactive experiences for students and faculty. Fortunately, technology is rising to meet these challenges.

Creating Learning Environments

Kumari (2001) states that when rethinking teaching and using technology as a tool to enhance learning, the course environment can be re-conceptualized to extend beyond the normal processes that occur in a traditional classroom. Web-based conferencing allows the instructor to think differently about the role of interaction in a course. As Couples (1996) indicates, we can "fabricate sites/places/zones/spaces" in the virtual environment to accomplish different functions. This paper makes the case that faculty as virtual architects of a course can construct digital spaces for the instructor and students where communication can be enhanced, active, real time, and stunningly effective.

As Owston (1997) argues, "the key to improved learning with the web appears to lie within how effectively the medium is exploited in the teaching-learning situation" (p. 4). He continues that the "result (of web-based conferencing) is richer, more thoughtful discussions, not because of the medium but because of the way the instructor stimulated and orchestrated the environment made possible by the medium." The instructor can employ this medium to accomplish stimulating discussions that will supplement the role of the instructor in substantial ways by accomplishing some of the instructional goals of the course.

Trentin (1996) suggests that these ideas are an innovative approach to consider particularly in the context of teacher professional development where cooperative learning occurs as a result of intensive use of interpersonal communication among faculty, tutors, and students. The experience in this course has been that both students and instructor found themselves to be engaged in dynamic conversations that had a stream of interactive content. The conversations adhered more to the transformative model rather than the transmission model of discourse—that

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is to say that the conversational flow and exchange of ideas was bi-directional between students and instructor.

Spaces that Enhance Active Learning

Active learning is defined as a strategy that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things that they are doing (Centre for Teaching and Learning). Active learning is anything that engages students in undertaking something besides listening to a lecture and taking notes to help them learn and apply course notes. There are a few teaching strategies that can be employed in active learning by an instructor, including problem solving, laboratory work, home assignments and group discussions. Even in a lecture, short, active learning activities can be introduced. Furthermore, in the case of the engineering discipline, active learning methods may include projects with class participation and hands-on experiments, or even an experimental design.

Active learning is also known as *cooperative learning*, in which students work in small teams on problems or projects in order to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for his/her learning, but also for helping teammates to learn.

Cooperative learning should be distinguished from *collaborative learning*, which refers to those classroom strategies that involve an instructor, with students placed on an equal footing, working together in searching for understanding or solutions, or in the creation of a product (Paulston and Faust, n.d.). Various active learning techniques could be implemented in almost any classroom learning activity, including lectures, tutorials, seminars and laboratory training (Nickels, 2000).

Information technologies hold the promise as technologies that can change and revitalize existing pedagogies and enable entirely new conceptualizations in higher education teaching and learning settings. Web-based conferencing, especially, allows each student to have an equal opportunity for interaction with the instructor and classmates. Use of these kinds of information technologies embody the concepts and principles implicit in active and cooperative learning—participation, engagement, and communication.

Learning benefits in the online environment result when relevant, active, interaction with content enables learners to apply skills and concepts. Technology offers options for simulations, online labs, collaborations, interactive tutorials, tests, puzzles, practice lab practicums, games, workshops, written assignments, mock trials, and using learning objects that faculty can easily adapt to create interactive content. Moore (2005) provides examples of activities that enhance learning effectiveness in the online environment in her discussion of effective practices in online learning.

The Value of Interaction in Online Environments

A wealth of literature exists about the value of online asynchronous teacher-to-student and student-to-student discussions in graduate courses. High levels of communication among students and active learning processes correlate positively with the way students judge the outcome of the course (Hiltz, 1993). The need for high-level faculty-student interaction is

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discussed by many authors as an important aspect of virtual learning environments (Chen, 1997; Cook, n.d.; Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1995; Deal, 1995; Johnstone & Krauth,1996; Kerka, 1996; Picciano, 1998; Schrum, 1995; Simich-Dudgeon, 1998.; Sullivan, 1997; and Green & Gilbert, 1995). However, relatively little research exists about the use of web conferencing in graduate courses as a means for communications activities, such as student presentations, student-led discussions, and virtual press conferences.

Thorpe & Godwin (2006) found in their study that students value content interaction and interpersonal interaction and their benefits are distinctive. This paper asserts that the implementation of web conferencing in a virtual environment can be better than the version possible in a traditional class. In a face-to-face course, the discussions and presentations are limited to 1-2 hours of lecture followed by an interactive experience with one or two voluble members of the class. From this experiment with using web conferencing for student-led discussions and presentations, interactive contact is available to more than a few voluble students and brings into play the many-many communications that are typical of online dialogues.

Designing Online Instruction for Student Interaction

Faculty preparation for teaching online measurably improves learning effectiveness and satisfaction. Thus, because learning effectiveness also focuses on faculty, faculty who understand distance education students; recognize how distance education differs from traditional resident instruction; determine course goals, learning model, and content; determine course assignments, interactions and assessments; choose delivery technology; and understand legal issues in course design can enhance the learning experience for students and themselves. Moore (2005) offers the following practical course design techniques to enhance student to student and student to instructor interaction:

- Faculty teaching online find that knowing behavior patterns improves teaching and learning, thus researchers knowing how to design learning activities and interaction to correspond to learners' energy levels, need for approval, and styles of dependence and independence is critical. Perceptions of learning effectiveness correlate with perceptions of social presence. Social presence may begin with introductions in which students complete a personal profile complete with photo that are accessible to the members of the course. Courses designed for effective discussion management via modules for readings with critiques, lesson planning, and reflective journals lead to abundant professor-student interaction.

- For effective interaction, students and faculty benefit from clear expectations about communicating; clear expectations help manage the volume and quality of interaction. Defining effective participation helps learners contribute postings that are substantive, concise, provocative, hermeneutical, timely, logical, and grammatical. Instructors who encourage student-led discussion to build complex understandings of concepts; set up discussions that require postings that are relevant, important, thought-provoking, original and timely; and devise social, cognitive and teaching presences by grading for postings that document, explain and apply information that contributes to the understanding of some issue under discussion assist students to gain insight into the subject. In this way, learners become teachers.

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- Adjustment to online learning includes understanding institutional policies for academic honesty and integrity. Providing access to resources for faculty and for students regarding intellectual property and safe and secure testing assists learners to adjust their behavior.

- Learning designed for student satisfaction that is convenient, flexible, relevant, personalized, and engaging offers learners options for activities and for controlling the pace of learning. Activities that take advantage of web conferencing networks can use real-time case method to enhance the learning experience, make use of ePortfolios as a way to evaluate learning experiences and to share reflections with peers and potential employers; provide online writing support centers; train students to pause and reflect before posting discussion responses; and manage effective synchronizing, organizing, socializing, collaborating, sharing, and feedback (p. 62-64).

Bell & Shank (March 2006) point out that designing instruction to enhance student interaction can be accomplished through virtual conferencing. Virtual conferencing allows students to have access to archived content, to engage other learners and instructor together, and can prevent "drift" in class attention.

The Context for the Implementation of Web Conferencing

The graduate course into which the web conference tool was used is entitled Managerial Communications. It is a required course for all MBA students and is open as an elective to master's students in other program areas. Other program areas could include K-12 teachers, communications majors, and visiting students from other universities.

The web conferencing tool has been used in this course for four semesters, involving a total of 66 students. Students entered the course with a diverse set of technological skills ranging from adequate to sophisticated end-users. However, 99% of the students are employed in educational institutions and for-profit or not-for-profit organizations. This semester-long course consisted of fourteen weekly interactive sessions. Students were required to attend at least five of the scheduled sessions. All of the course materials were available online since this course was being offered as an entirely online course and has been offered and taught by the same instructor in the online environment since 1998. Blackboard is the course management system used for access to all course materials and asynchronous discussions; its virtual classroom had been utilized for the weekly interactive sessions until Fall 2006.

The Decision to Use Web Conferencing

An important factor in the decision to utilize a web conferencing tool was feedback from the MBA assessment committee in the College of Business of this Midwest regional university regarding the required oral presentations in the class. Since students were responsible for setting up the audience, location, and videographer for the oral presentation (called the Story presentation), a general lack of quality in the videotaped results became evident. After being involved in a group of faculty members who were asked to evaluate a web conferencing tool, the instructor felt it was the right tool to employ to even out the difficult issues with the oral

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presentation assignment. By working with the Interim Director of Distance Learning on campus, access to the web conference tool was possible.

Online MBA students are generally comfortable when asked to think about integrating technology into the curriculum. However, because web conferencing is a new tool and concerns about network connections arise, the comfortable feeling can give way to feelings of being overwhelmed. Network connections were a strong consideration when making the decision to use a web conferencing tool. In order to participate fully in web conferencing, students are required to have a web cam and a headset. The headset is not necessary if the student is using a laptop computer with a built-in microphone.

The expected feelings of discomfort did arise before the first meeting and continued until about the third week of the course. However, after the first week in which the instructor conducts the class, students began to embrace the technology and even enjoy it. The second week of the course and for each succeeding week, student-led discussions, presentations, and the culminating press conference utilized the tool extensively. Students were able to articulate their concerns and evaluation about integrating the new technology into the virtual classroom in an instructor-developed assessment at the end of the course. Qualitative comments are provided later in the paper.

The Technology for Web Conferencing

Although other web conferencing tools were considered, Elluminate *Live!*™ 7.0 was selected as the web conferencing tool for the course. Elluminate, Inc. ensures clear two-way voice over the Internet and in-sync communications—regardless of connection speeds (including 28.8 kbps modems)—so lag time and garbled voices can be avoided. The ability of this tool to connect at any network connection speed was a main consideration in the decision, since students in the course may still only have access to dial-up connections or experience challenges with Internet Service Providers due to regional topography.

Other enhancements offered in Elluminate *Live!* include break-out rooms for live group work, recording sessions for archival purposes, a whiteboard that supports PowerPoint presentations, and access to web sites while in the room. Some application sharing of Word documents is possible. The advantages of the archives are to make the chats available to students who may not be able to attend the chat and to provide an archive of the oral presentation assignment. The presentations can be made available to the students in the class as well as to others for assessment purposes. The main conference room is illustrated below and is presented here as an example of the resources provided in a web conferencing tool.

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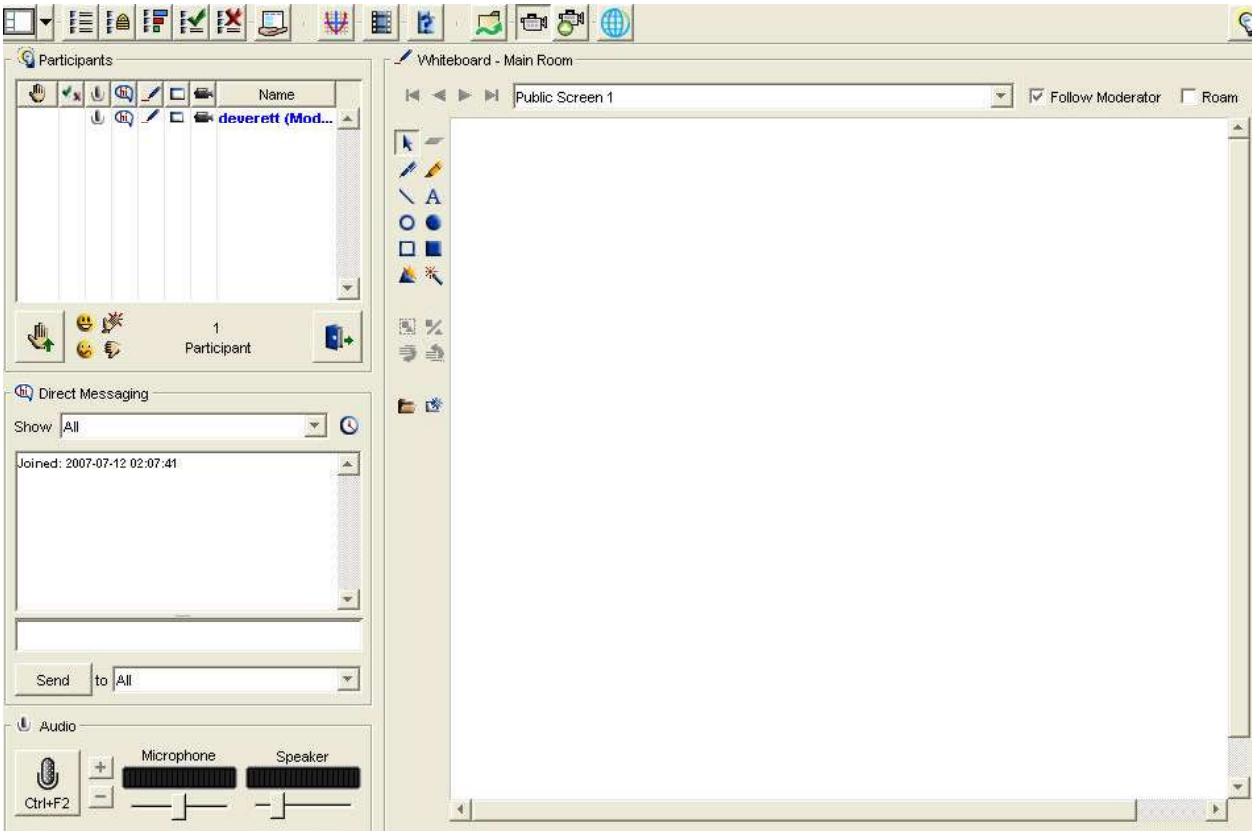


Figure 1: An image of the Elluminate *Live!*™ meeting room.

Other web conferencing/web collaboration tools available include Open Communications by Siemens (enterprise.siemens.com/open/us/OpenCommunications/); WebEx WebOffice (www.kolabora.com/tools.htm); MeetMeNow (meetmenow.webex.com); Centra (www.centra.com/centra7.asp); Cisco (www.cisco.com/); Microsoft Office Live Meeting (office.microsoft.com/en-us/livemeeting/default.aspx); and others. Low-cost alternatives to the highly expensive web conferencing solutions include Ivocalize (www.ivocalize.com/); Convoq (www.convoq.com/); Spreed.com (spreed.com/); instantPresenter (www.instantpresenter.com/); hotconference (www.hotconference.com/); Convenos (www.convenos.com/); Adobe Connect (www.adobe.com/products/connect/); and others. Information for others may be accessed at www.kolabora.com/news/2007/06/22/web_conferencing_tools_and_technology.htm.

Activities Utilized in the Web Conferencing Room

For students to successfully complete the Managerial Communications class, they were required to lead a case study discussion (called the Manager's Chair), prepare and present a formal presentation with visual aids, participate as an active member of the class, and practice the role of manager and reporter in a virtual press conference. The gamut of experiences provides experience in one of the optimum ways that may be used by organizations to educate employees and enhance their comfort in the online environment.

Since web conferencing uses a number of different techniques to share information, the material is easier to learn and master. Every person learns material differently from the next: some people

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are visual learners, some learn better by hearing lectures and still others are individuals that pick up material by reading. Visual aids, audio aids, and text allow for different types of learners to master material.

Web conferencing can also enhance distance-learning opportunities. Since the primary mode of communication for the virtual student is the Internet, web conferencing gives the teacher or trainer a number of different teaching tools to access. Message forums, shared text, shared video, or shared audio files can prove ideal when it comes time to share information. The truth of the matter is that the more communication techniques used to reach the student or employee the better. When it comes to distance learning, students do not have the benefit of the physical classroom setting—therefore, they will need to be reached by innovative means. Web conferencing and Internet seminars are an easy and effective way for people to come together, to communicate, and to learn.

Analysis and Feedback of the Web Conferencing Experience

At the end of the course, students were asked to respond to the following question: *Did Elluminate Live! enhance or detract from your learning? Explain your answer.* Postings and feedback from the students have been positive and helpful. A representative sample of the comments is noted here. Author's italics are used to highlight especially relevant student comments.

- Enhances the learning. Doing online classes are difficult to start with, having the ability to use Elluminate Live [sic] and having a classroom type presentation made the class worthwhile. It was easier not to fall behind on assignments and it kept the class together. *It was probably as close to having a regular class, but being in the comfort of your home.*
- Enhanced. Elluminate is a very important tool for this online course allowing public speaking and a venue to analyze an audience.
- I think Elluminate *Live!* is an excellent program. I did not have any trouble using it. I know that others complained throughout the course, but I guess it may have to do with there [sic] comfort level with technology and the performance at individual computers.
- In the beginning I had many reservations about the Elluminate live [sic] experience and the technical aspects of the class. I really felt that I was learning managerial communications and IT. *As the class unfolded, I became more comfortable with Elluminate and the technical problems were resolved.*
- I really enjoyed the Elluminate live experience and I am hoping that more professors use the system. *It enhanced my learning experience and added another dimension to the online class. It made me feel connected to the class and my other group members.*
- Enhance. I was skeptical at first and a little reluctant to stay in the course in the beginning because of the use of technology, but I am very glad that I did. I have gotten a great deal of knowledge about technology in excess [sic] to everything I learned just from the assignments. *The technology knowledge in many ways is probably more beneficial than the course work itself.*
- Elluminate Live! enhanced my learning experience. I enjoyed being able to talk to my instructor and fellow students. Many times in other online classes, I never correspond with my instructor, except to submit assignments. Through Elluminate I felt I got to know my

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instructor on a more personal level and it was much easier to ask questions. I learned more through the use of Elluminate because I could benefit from the other student's questions and answers. I could also get immediate feedback instead of having to wait to an email response, which was very helpful.

Summary of the Web Conferencing Experience

Comments from students supported the intent of the software: to improve the presentation assignment. Additionally, the use of the web conferencing tools extended the intent to overcome isolation encountered in an online course. Other comments from the students centered on a global view of the course and the software. Encouraging active, collaborative, and engaging student interactions provides a means of developing a sense of community among learners and broadens their experiences and perspectives.

The experience in the web conferencing classroom also reinforces the importance of access to and experience with web conferencing in the workplace environment. This appears to be the best of both worlds.

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