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An Experiment Testing the Influence of Oral Interpretation on Entertainment and Persuasion

Shane M. Semmler¹, Megan Swets, Bailey Quanbeck, & Blake Warner
The University of South Dakota

A post-test only experimental design evaluated the empirical influence of three 2016 National Forensic Association final round oral interpretation performances (two Dramatic Interpretations and one Prose Interpretation) on entertainment (parasocial interaction, identification, and narrative transportation); the capacity of entertainment to elicit enjoyment; and the capacity of entertainment to elicit persuasion (i.e., changes to attitude valence and attitude importance) through the mediating process of reduced counterarguing against subjective interpretations of arguments in the oral interpretation performances. The influence of oral interpretation on entertainment, enjoyment, counterarguing, and persuasion was substantially similar to that found in the larger body of empirical scholarship investigating other mediated forms of narrative persuasion.

Keywords: oral interpretation, persuasion identification, parasocial interaction, and narrative transportation

Harris, Kropp, and Rosenthal (1986) observed a divide between the practices of competitive forensics and the theoretically-driven research edifying the larger field of communication studies. They suggested using “the forensic tournament” to study links between rhetorical theory and practice for the purpose of substantially enhancing “the image of forensics both within the field of speech communication and in the larger academic context” (p. 14). Croucher (2006) lamented that “from a communication theory point of view ... forensics research leaves much to be desired” (p. 1). Cronn-Mills and Croucher’s (2013) content analysis of over 400 pieces of communication scholarship substantiated the insularity of forensics research. Three themes dominated what they called the “carousel” of forensic scholarship: general forensic, general debate, and argument theory. Of the 25 themes uncovered by Cronn-Mills and Croucher (2013), none included the empirical effects of narrative performance as a form of narrative persuasion (Green & Brock, 2000) or entertainment education (Brown & Singhal, 1999; Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

The study of narrative persuasion edifies a substantial body of communication studies scholarship dating back to the formation of the National Association of Academic Teachers of Speech in 1914. The Payne Fund Studies of the 1920’s combined content analyses of motion pictures with interviews and observational studies to investigate filmic narratives as “powerful instruments of education, attitude change, [and] emotional impact, [on] health and behaviors” (in Bryant & Zillmann, 2009, p. 12). Cultivation

1. This manuscript was presented on a competitive paper panel of the NFA Division at the 2017 meeting of the National Communication Association in Dallas, TX.

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theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) replicated the Payne Fund approach with televised narratives. Cultivation research demonstrates the sociological impact of television by relating quantitative analyses of television content to surveys of television viewers. Although cultivation theory has not convincingly explained the processes of television influence, it reliably shows that television viewing positively predicts television-world values and beliefs. Relying on principles of medium theory, Postman (1985) argued that television is inherently a story-telling medium; and given that the average American spends more than five hours per day watching television (Koblin, 2016), advancing the understanding of how narratives influence audiences is important for understanding how American culture is formed, maintained, and influenced. In that spirit, narrative persuasion studies occur under the rubric of entertainment education (Brown & Singhal, 1999; Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

Moyer-Gusé (2008) defined entertainment education as narratives “promoting healthy and/or prosocial behaviors and/or negatively portraying ‘risky behaviors’” (p. 409). The study of entertainment education was inspired by the powerful and visible influence of *Simplemente María*, a Peruvian telenovela depicting a domestic servant who, after becoming impregnated by the wealthy son of her employer, succeeds in a daring enterprise to raise her daughter alone, learn how to read, become a successful fashion designer, and marry the man of her dreams. In country after country where the program aired, there was greater support for protections of domestic servants, an increase in sales of Singer sewing machines, and an explosion of interest in literacy training (Singhal, Obregon, & Rogers, 1994). Researchers have long acknowledged the potential of entertainment education programs, like *Simplemente María*, to promote various prosocial causes (Brown & Singhal, 1999), but attempts to develop theoretical explanations for the persuasive influence of entertainment education are relatively recent. Moyer-Gusé’s (2008) entertainment overcoming resistance model (EORM) represents one of those attempts. It posits that narratives persuade in a two-step process. First, they elicit one of several forms of entertainment; and second, the experience of that entertainment reduces resistance to persuasion.

Because Prose and Dramatic Interpretation use argumentative introductions to frame unified narratives involving clear dramatic structures, this study examined them as forms of entertainment education. The National Forensics Association (NFA) defines the purpose of Prose Interpretation as the development of a story and the purpose of Dramatic Interpretation as the development of a character in a dramatic context. While the two events differ in their source material and relative emphasis on plot or character, Prose and Dramatic Interpretation are forms of persuasive storytelling (Koeppel & Morman, 1991). Furthermore, Prose and Dramatic Interpretation finals are typically among the most well-attended final rounds at the NFA national championship. While audiences might attend finals for a variety of reasons, most are simply seeking to be entertained, making those rounds ideal laboratories for the study of narrative persuasion as a form of entertainment overcoming resistance to persuasion.

With Miller’s (2002) definition of persuasion as symbolic transactions capable of modifying beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors, the persuasive intent of successful Prose and Dramatic Interpretation performances is plain. In the three decades since Koeppel and Morman (1991) extended Macksoud’s (1968) observation that Prose and Dramatic Interpretation performances are rhetorical transactions designed to “channel the

listeners' responses toward [a] thesis, with proper subordination of all that is not relevant to that thesis" (p. 71), intercollegiate drama and prose interpreters use a propositional introduction to frame their pieces in terms of a moral, political, social, and/or critical argument. For example, the 2016 National Forensics Association champion in Prose Interpretation, Abigail Onwunali (UT Austin), told a story illustrating her highly personalized request for the audience to reconsider their reverence for whiteness (modification of attitudes). Additionally Onwunali's championship Dramatic Interpretation, from that same year, used an introduction conveying research demonstrating the American medical industry's general indifference to the pain and suffering of people of color (modification of beliefs). The purpose of this study was to demonstrate that, in part, the success of national championship oral interpretation performances is explicable with the processes of narrative persuasion articulated by the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). To that end, we used digitally recorded final round performances from the 2016 National Forensics Association Championship to investigate the processes by which narrative speeches (i.e., Prose and Dramatic Interpretation) entertain and persuade audiences as specified by the theoretical propositions of the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

Literature Review

Resistance "hounds persuasion the way friction frustrates motion" (Knowles & Linn, 2004, p. 3). That resistance reflects a natural and adaptive drive to maintain the integrity of one's existing subjectivity (Festinger, 1957; Sherif & Hovland, 1961). The EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008) provides a predictive framework for explaining how various forms of narrative entertainment overcome the attitudinal inertia presumed by many theories of persuasion. One such form of resistance is counterarguing (Slater & Rouner, 2002).

Because the many processes of narrative persuasion are unique to the particular qualities of specific narratives and/or characteristics of the receiving audience, Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) argued that researchers should limit their investigations to a subset of entertainment forms and modes of resistance. Following that recommendation, this study limited its investigations to the influence of narrative speeches on entertainment defined as parasocial interaction (PSI) (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985), identification (Cohen, 2001), and narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000). In addition, this study examined how those forms of entertainment elicit both enjoyment (Tauer & Harackiewicz, 1999) and persuasion through a process of reducing counterarguing against persuasive messages conveyed in narrative speeches (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Investigating the influence of entertainment (PSI, identification, and narrative transportation) on enjoyment might have practical implications for explaining how prose and dramatic interpreters gain an advantage over their competition; but such an investigation might also have theoretical implications for the construct and ecological validity of the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

PSI and Enjoyment

PSI is the process of applying imaginary friendship considerations to a mediated personality (Rubin et al., 1985). Horton and Wohl (1956) articulated the concept of PSI and Rubin and colleagues (1985) validated its first measure. PSI was originally conceived (Horton & Wohl, 1956) and measured (Rubin, et al., 1985) as a *compensation* for audiences with poor social skills or a lack of opportunities for social interaction. That hypothesis came to be known as the *compensation hypothesis* (Tsao, 1996), but empirical research failed to confirm it. An alternative was the *complementary hypothesis*. It posited that normal affiliative behaviors and aptitudes moderate PSI. Eventually, Tsao (1996) definitively validated the complementary hypothesis when he showed that various social skills and orientations were necessary preconditions for engaging in PSI.

PSI is now one of the most widely studied concepts in media research (Giles, 2002). Conway and Rubin (1991) showed that PSI is a superlatively consistent and strong predictor for consuming a wide variety of media content including soap operas (Rubin & Perse, 1987), television situation comedies (Eyal & Cohen, 2006), and even political talk radio (Rubin & Step, 2000). In other words, PSI is a widely demonstrated source of enjoyment for media consumers. Although PSI has not been demonstrated with public speakers embodying a narrative character, audiences often parasocially interact with characters in narrative formats (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Furthermore, Giles (2002) extended Horton and Strauss' (1957) argument that PSI with public speakers is both possible and consistent with the original meaning of the PSI construct. Giles (2002) concluded that, although untested, "a form of PSI exists even in face-to-face social situations where there are large audiences (at a show or a lecture)" (p. 287). Because video-mediated national final round oral interpretation performances contain elements of both audiovisual narrative, which has been empirically linked to PSI (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Rubin & Perse, 1987), and public communication, which is theoretically linked to PSI (Horton & Strauss, 1957; Giles, 2002), it was reasonable to posit the following hypotheses:

H1a: A narrative speech elicits PSI with the speaker.

H2a: Greater levels of PSI with the speaker of a narrative speech predicts more enjoyment of the speech.

Identification and Enjoyment

Cohen (2001) articulated a definition of identification, drawing from and narrowing previous definitions, including Freud's introduction of identification as a psychological phenomenon and Wilson's arguments that identification is a form of perspective taking. Consistent with these assumptions, Cohen (2001) defined identification as "a mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if events were happening to them" (p. 245). Identification consists of four dimensions including emotional empathy, cognitive perspective taking, goal adoption, and absorption. The empathic dimension involves audiences experiencing the character's emotions. The cognitive dimension concerns the

audiences' perspective-taking ability, which allows them to comprehend a character's point of view; and the motivational dimension includes the audiences' internalization of a character's goals. Finally, absorption refers to the degree to which an audience's subjectivity unites with a character's point of view.

Identification has been demonstrated with a variety of narrative characters, including those in film (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010), reality television (Tsay-Vogel & Oliver, 2010), and situation comedies (Moyer-Gusé, Chung, & Jain, 2011). Cohen (2001) argued and researchers have demonstrated that identification is particularly well suited for understanding the enjoyment of narrative characters (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010; Tsay-Vogel & Oliver, 2014). Therefore, we posited the following hypotheses.

H1b: A narrative speech elicits identification with the speaker.

H2b: Greater levels of identification with the speaker of a narrative speech predicts more enjoyment of the speech.

Narrative Transportation and Enjoyment

Gerrig (1993) conceptualized narrative transportation as a journey in which audiences feel as though they are traveling to narrative worlds. It involves losing one's awareness of reality by feeling absorbed within a story. Gerrig further analogized the feeling of narrative transportation to going "some distance from the world of origin, which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible" (p. 10). As Batat and Wohlfeil (2009) argued, consuming narratives involves a purposeful escape from a present reality. Green and Brock (2000) expanded the definition of transportation by dividing the mental experience of transportation into three categories: "attention, imagery, and feelings" (p. 701). People thoroughly engrossed in a narrative are cognitively and emotionally engaged in their perceived interaction with the environments and characters of that narrative. Green and Brock (2001) likened narrative transportation to the pleasurable experience of flow (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and found it to be an inherent component of narrative enjoyment. Therefore, we posited the following.

H1c: A narrative speech elicits narrative transportation.

H2c: A greater level of narrative transportation into a narrative speech predicts more enjoyment of the speech.

Persuasion

Effective persuasion shapes responses to an object (Miller, 2002). Those responses could be beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors, but attitudes are a particularly useful outcome of persuasion research as they represent a psychological tendency to evaluate "a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1), predict behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and guide information processing in terms of attention, perception, and retrieval (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Attitudes are complex entities including considerations of both valence and strength (Krosnick & Petty, 1995).

The positivity or negativity of an attitude is its valence, but valence is only one dimension of an attitude (Miller, 2002). To understand an attitude's persistence, resistance, information processing guidance, and consistency with behavior, researchers must consider both its valence and strength. Consistent with extant entertainment overcoming resistance to persuasion research, this study operationalized persuasion in terms of attitude valence (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004) and attitude strength (Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). As attitudes represent important components of the self, their holders often resist modifying them in response to explicitly perceived persuasive efforts (Knowles & Linn, 2004).

Counterarguments are an important form of resistance to persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Slater and Rouner (2002) defined counterarguments as “thoughts that dispute or are inconsistent with a persuasive argument” (p. 180). Their Extended-Elaboration Likelihood Model (E-ELM) describes counterarguing as a “key obstacle to persuasive efforts” (p. 180). Like the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), the E-ELM (Slater & Rouner, 2002) posits that the absorbing nature of entertainment processes occupy or preempt the cognitive resources needed to counterargue against the persuasive features of a narrative.

PSI and Persuasion

Moyer-Gusé's (2008) EORM argues that PSI increases narrative persuasion through the mediating mechanism of less counterarguing. She reasoned that one is less likely to argue with perceived friends than mere acquaintances; however, the relationship between PSI and counterarguing is untested. Nevertheless, there is extant research showing the persuasiveness of PSI (Rubin & Step, 2000; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes). Given the logic of the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), reduced counterarguing might explain that persuasive influence. Therefore, we posited the following hypothesis.

H3a: The relationship between PSI with a narrative speaker and more persuasion is mediated by less counterarguing.

Identification and Persuasion

Character identification is the degree to which “audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from inside, as if the events were happening to them” (Cohen, 2001, p. 245). The loss of self-awareness imposed by identification is incompatible with the subjective distance needed to argue against a narrative. For audience members engaged in identification, the narrative script is not open to debate. It is encountered as if it were a direct experience, no more debatable than touching a hot stove is painful. In other words, audiences vicariously experience narrative lessons as though they were the character for whom they are consequential. Under such conditions, counter argumentation is nearly inconceivable.

Consistent with the conceptualization of identification as preempting counterarguing through absorption, existing empirical research shows identification's negative relationship with counterarguing against narrative persuasion. As Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) revealed, more identification with characters in both narrative and non-

narrative programs predicted lower levels of counterarguing; however, reduced counterarguing did not result in greater levels of persuasion for either program. In other research, however, narrative persuasion has followed the path predicted by the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), with identification eliciting less counterarguing and less counterarguing predicting more persuasion (Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011; Semmler & Loof, 2019). Thus, there is some mixed empirical evidence to support the theoretical expectation that identification reduces counterarguing and reduced counterarguing increases persuasion; however, the preponderance of theorizing and evidence suggests the following hypothesis.

H3b: The relationship between more identification with the speaker of a narrative speech and more persuasion is mediated by less counterarguing.

Narrative Transportation and Persuasion

The absorbing nature of narrative transportation reduces awareness to the bounded confines of a narrative, elicits enjoyment, and prevents audiences from counterarguing against a narrative (Green & Brock, 2000; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Despite several studies showing a positive relationship between transportation and narrative persuasion (Cohen, Tal-Or, & Mazor-Tregerman, 2015; Deighton et al., 1989; Green & Brock, 2000), evidence for the relationship between transportation and reduced counterarguing has been elusive (Green & Brock, 2000; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) explained that the reliable detection of reduced counterarguing against entertainment education might require a more specific measure of counterarguing, including an open-ended component allowing respondents to report their own thoughts on the narrative. Referencing that argument, Semmler and Loof (2019) published a narrative counterarguing measure asking respondents to define the narrative message against which they might counterargue. That measure proved reliable in an EORM study relating entertainment processes to reduced counterarguing and persuasion. The present study employs the Semmler and Loof (2019) counterarguing measure. Given its reliable capacity to detect counterarguing and empirical findings supporting the relationship between narrative transportation and persuasion (Cohen, Tal-Or, & Mazor-Tregerman, 2015; Deighton et al., 1989; Green & Brock, 2000), this study offered the following hypothesis.

H3c: The relationship between more narrative transportation into a narrative speech and more persuasion is mediated by less counterarguing.

Method

Participants & Recruitment

Students at a mid-sized Midwestern university (~10,000 students) earned course credit in exchange for participation in an online-administered study entitled “Perceptions of Public Speaking.” Interested students emailed the first author who responded with a link to a randomized post-test only experimental design administered by the online

platform surveymonkey.com. Consenting respondents were randomly assigned to one of three digitally recorded oral interpretation performances hosted on the first author's private *YouTube* account. After viewing the videos, respondents were presented with several questions: open-ended interpretation of the speech's perceived message, counterarguing against the speech's perceived message, evaluation of the speech's perceived message, importance of attitude toward the speech's perceived message, identification with the speaker, PSI with the speaker, narrative transportation into the speech, biological sex and political ideology. A total of 87 respondents participated in the study, but 14 were removed for providing response sets or failing to complete the entire survey instrument. The final sample consisted of 73 respondents assigned to one of three final round oral interpretation performances from the 2015 National Forensic Association Championship (speech one = 22, speech two = 28, and speech three = 23).

Measures

Individual Differences

Political ideology and biological sex were measured as control variables. Given the influence of political ideology on various attitudes (Bishop, 2008), respondents were asked to rate their political ideology with a single Likert-type item (1 = *liberal* / 7 = *conservative*, $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.69$). Those failing to report ideology were assigned the scale's mid-point ($n = 8$, 11%). The measurement of biological sex (*female* = 43, 59%) was justified by its potential to influence narrative persuasion (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010).

Enjoyment

Enjoyment (Tauer & Harackiewicz, 1999) was measured by asking respondents to rate how much five adjectives gauged their level of enjoyment: interesting, boring (*reverse coded*), enjoyable, a waste of time (*reverse coded*), and fun ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.32$, $\alpha = .89$).

Identification

Identification with the speaker was assessed with Cohen's (2001) 10-item Likert scale. It included items like "when the speaker suffered, I felt sad;" "while viewing this speech, I wanted the speaker to succeed in achieving their goals" and "while viewing this speaker, I forgot myself and felt fully absorbed" (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree; $M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.14$, $\alpha = .88$).

PSI

PSI with the speaker was measured with eight items (Rubin & Perse, 1987) adapted for PSI with a public speaker. Illustrative items were "I would like to meet this speaker in person;" "if I saw a story about this speaker in a newspaper or magazine, I

would read it;” and “the speaker made me feel comfortable as if I was with an old friend” (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree; $M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.44$, $\alpha = .90$).

Narrative Transportation

Green and Brock’s (2000) 11-item transportation scale was adapted for transportation into a speech. Illustrative items were “while watching this speech, I could easily picture the events in it taking place;” “after finishing watching this speech, I could easily put it out of my mind (*reverse coded*);” and “this speech affected me emotionally” (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree; $M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.09$, $\alpha = .83$).

Subjective Interpretation of the Speech’s Message

Because audiences read texts through the lens of their subjective experience (Fiske & Hartley, 2003), respondents were given the opportunity to report their own interpretation of their speech’s message with an open-ended item.

Counterarguing

Counterarguing against the speech’s message was measured with a four-item Likert scale used in previous investigations of narrative persuasion (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010) but adapted for respondents’ particular interpretation of the narrative message (see Semmler & Loof, 2019). Respondents were asked to rate their agreement (1 = strongly disagree / 7 = strongly agree) with statements like “I found myself actively agreeing with this speech” (*reverse coded*), and “I was often looking for flaws in this speech” ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.09$, $\alpha = .64$).

Persuasion Outcomes

Consistent with other investigations of the EORM (Semmler & Loof, 2019), persuasion was measured in terms of both attitude valence (i.e., changes in the favorability toward a speech’s message) and attitude strength (i.e., importance of attitude toward a speech’s message).

Attitude Valence. Attitude valence was measured with a global attitude scale (Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, & Montgomery, 1978) asking respondents to rate how much a series of adjectives described their subjective interpretation of the speech’s message (1 = not at all / 7 = completely): foolish (*reverse coded*), wise, immoral (*reverse coded*), moral, bad (*reverse coded*), good, unacceptable (*reverse coded*), acceptable, wrong (*reverse coded*), right ($M = 5.44$, $SD = .99$, $\alpha = .89$).

Attitude Strength. Attitude strength was measured with an attitude importance adjective rating scale (Zaichkowsky, 1985). As a unique dimension of attitude strength, attitude importance is significantly associated with other consequential dimensions of attitude strength, like persistence resistance (Fine, 1957) and attitude-behavior consistency (Jaccard & Becker, 1985). Respondents rated the importance of their subjective interpretation of the speech’s message with a series of adjectives (1 = not at all / 7 = completely): unimportant (*reverse coded*), important, irrelevant (*reverse coded*),

relevant, insignificant (*reverse coded*), significant, means nothing (*reverse coded*), and means a lot ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.10$, $\alpha = .92$).

Stimulus Materials

The oral interpretation performances used in this study were intentionally selected from digital recordings of the 2016 National Forensics Association Prose and Dramatic Interpretation final rounds. In an effort to minimize differences between the experimental conditions, we chose these performances for their important similarities. All three performers were women of color with performances highlighting various forms of injustice culminating in emotions of sadness or anger. Tiffany McLarty (Western Kentucky University, 3rd place in Dramatic Interpretation) performed speech one; Abigail Onwunali (UT Austin, 1st place in Dramatic Interpretation) performed speech two; and Alexa Thomas (UT Austin, 6th place Prose Interpretation) performed speech three. Finally, each introduced their speeches with arguments relating to particular concerns of women: Onwunali highlighted the medical industry's mistreatment of women of color; McLarty argued that women in America's prisons lack adequate mental health; and Thomas drew attention to Western European standards of female beauty in American art. We randomly assigned respondents to view one of the three performances. Given their similarities, we expected the performances to operate similarly in terms of their capacity to entertain and overcome resistance to persuasion. That expectation was tested with a combination of one-way ANOVAs, correlations, and r to z tests of significant differences between correlations.

The one-way ANOVA results showed that the three speeches did not differ on ratings of attitude valence, $F(2, 69) = 1.77$, $p = .178$, attitude importance, $F(2, 69) = .250$, $p = .780$, counterarguing, $F(2, 69) = .142$, $p = .868$, PSI, $F(2, 69) = 1.02$, $p = .367$, identification, $F(2, 69) = .271$, $p = .764$, or narrative transportation, $F(2, 70) = .389$, $p = .679$; however, there was a significant effect for enjoyment, $F(2, 70) = 3.36$, $p = .040$. Adjusting for Type I error with Tukey's HSD, it was revealed that there was a significant difference for Onwunali ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.47$) versus Thomas ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.30$) on enjoyment, $p = .040$. The potential for that difference to produce interactions on the relationship between entertainment and enjoyment was probed with Fisher's r to z comparisons of partial correlations of PSI and enjoyment for Onwunali, $r(18) = .65$, $p = .001$, and Thomas, $r(19) = .76$, $p = .001$, $z = .24$, $p = .810$; identification and enjoyment for Onwunali, $r(18) = .70$, $p < .001$, and Thomas, $r(19) = .67$, $p < .001$, $z = .94$, $p = .347$; and transportation and enjoyment for Onwunali, $r(18) = .84$, $p < .001$, and Thomas, $r(19) = .66$, $p = .001$, $z = .68$, $p = .497$. The lack of significant differences between correlations for Onwunali and Thomas on enjoyment and entertainment demonstrates that enjoyment was not conflated with the process of entertainment and persuasion posited in this study. Therefore, the greater elicitation of enjoyment for Thomas must have been due to another factor unrelated to this study.

Results

Three regression analyses evaluated H1's prediction that narrative speeches are associated with significant levels of PSI (H1a), identification (H1b), and narrative

transportation (H1c). Using one-sample *t*-tests, levels of PSI, identification, and transportation were compared to their scales' midpoint (i.e., 4). PSI was above the midpoint, but the relationship was only marginally significant, $t(71) = 1.81, p = .074$. On the other hand, respondents reported significant levels of identification, $t(71) = 7.19, p < .001$ and narrative transportation, $t(72) = 2.93, p = .004$. H1 was confirmed for identification and narrative transportation but only marginally for PSI. Nevertheless, the narrative speeches elicited acceptable levels of all three forms of entertainment to consider them a potential influence on enjoyment and persuasion.

H2 posited that engagement with a narrative speech elicits enjoyment. A single regression analysis revealed that, controlling for biological sex and political ideology, H2 was confirmed for narrative transportation, $b(SE) = .45(.17), p = .008$ and PSI, $b(SE) = .32(.13), p = .017$, but not for identification, $b(SE) = .04 (.15), p = .810$. Nevertheless, the final model accounted for a significant and large amount of the variance in enjoyment, $R^2\Delta = .46, F\Delta(3, 65) = 22.25, p < .001$,

Ultimately, PSI (H2a) and narrative transportation (H2c) predicted significantly more enjoyment, but identification (H2b) was not a significant factor in the enjoyment of narrative speeches. Therefore, H2 was confirmed for narrative transportation and PSI but not identification.

H3 posited that entertainment by narrative speeches initiates a process of overcoming resistance to persuasion through reduced counterarguing against subjective interpretations of the speeches. Two sets of regression-based Model 4 PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) analyses were calculated to examine the posited paths of persuasion. One set of analyses operationalized persuasion as attitude valence (unfavorable versus favorable evaluation of the speech's message), and the other operationalized persuasion as attitude strength (importance of the evaluation of the speech's message).

Controlling for sex, political ideology, and the other two forms of entertainment, the final regression models for attitude valence were significant for PSI, $R^2\Delta = .06, F\Delta(2, 64) = 3.59, p = .033$, identification, $R^2\Delta = .05, F\Delta(2, 64) = 3.19, p = .048$, and narrative transportation, $R^2\Delta = .09, F\Delta(2, 64) = 5.66, p = .005$. Furthermore, the expected path of influence was significant for identification, 95% CI [.0130, .2351] and PSI, 95% CI [.0073, .2149] but not for narrative transportation, 95% CI [-.0292, .1940]. Rather than influencing attitude valence through the mediating factor of reduced counterarguing, narrative transportation directly increased persuasion. Figure 1a through Figure 1c display the regression coefficients and significance levels for the analysis of H3 with respect to persuasion defined as a more favorable attitude toward the narrative message (H3a).

Figure 2a through Figure 2c shows an identical pattern of results for persuasion defined as attitude strength. Controlling for sex, political ideology, and the other two forms of entertainment, the final regression models for attitude strength were significant for identification, $R^2\Delta = .09, F\Delta(2, 64) = 8.61, p = .002$, PSI, $R^2\Delta = .079, F\Delta(2, 64) = 6.13, p = .004$ and narrative transportation, $R^2\Delta = .22, F\Delta(2, 64) = 17.33, p < .001$. Similarly, the hypothesized paths were significant for PSI, 95% CI [.0294, .2806] and identification, 95% CI [.0114, .2882] but not for narrative transportation, 95% CI [-.0491, .1983]. Again, transportation directly increased persuasion defined as rating one's attitude toward the narrative message as important.

H3 was confirmed for PSI and identification but not for narrative transportation. Nevertheless, transportation predicted greater levels of persuasion for both attitude valence and attitude strength. Whereas PSI and identification's persuasive effect was indirect, transportation's influence was direct.

Figure 1

Influence of Being Entertained by Narrative Speeches on Counterarguing and Attitude Valence¹

Figure 1a

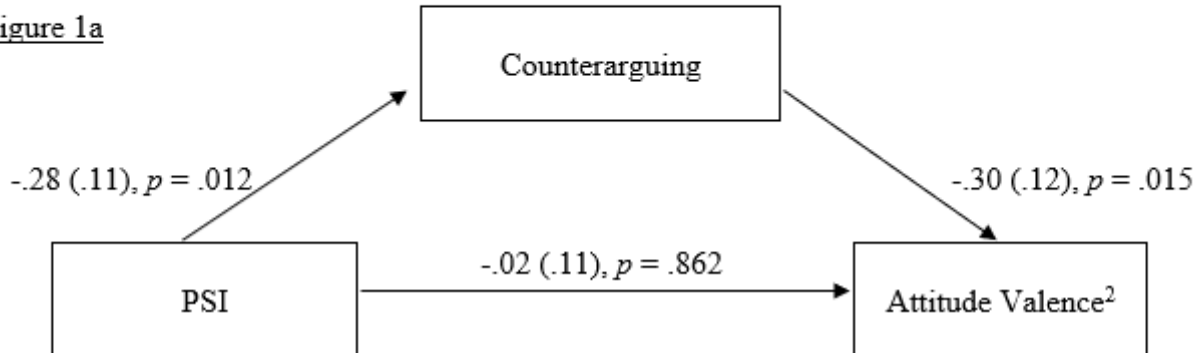


Figure 1b

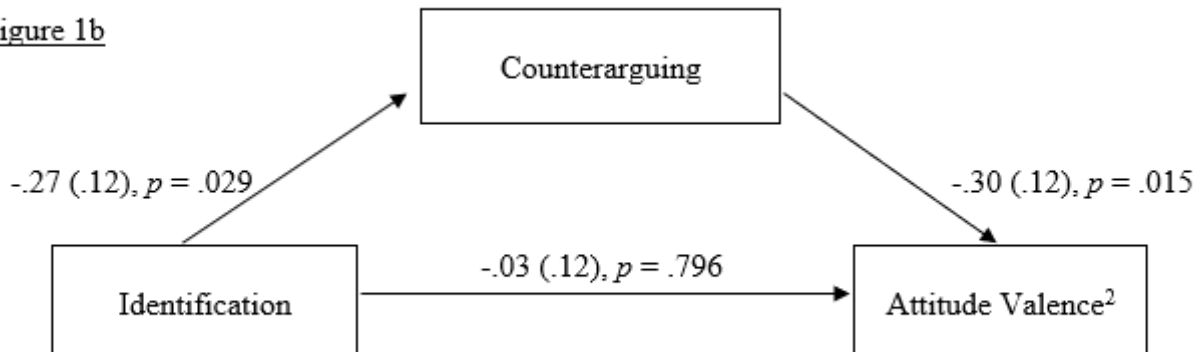
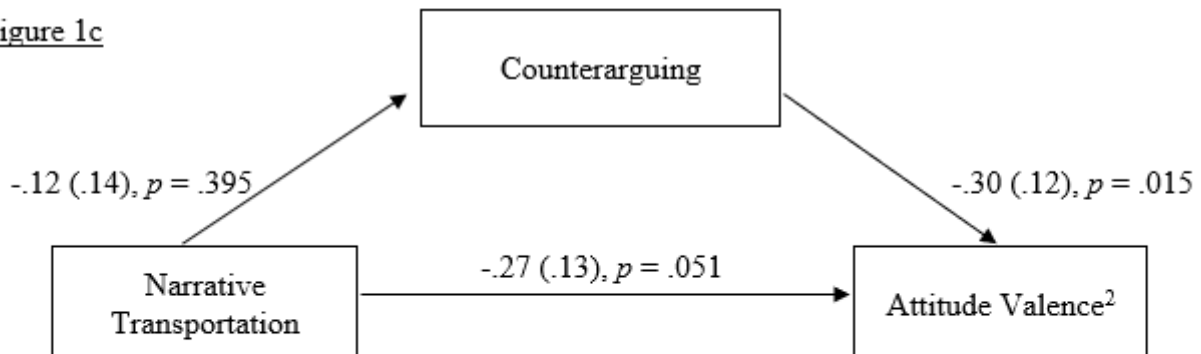


Figure 1c



Notes. ¹ All analyses controlled for the influence of biological sex, political ideology, and the other forms of entertainment not included in the analysis. ² Higher levels of attitude valence mean more persuasion.

Figure 2

Influence of Being Entertained by Narrative Speeches on Counterarguing and Attitude Strength¹

Figure 2a

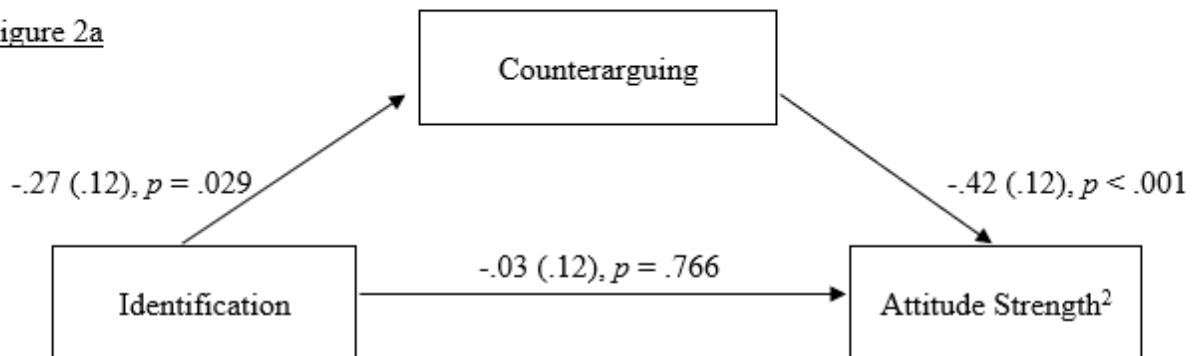


Figure 2b

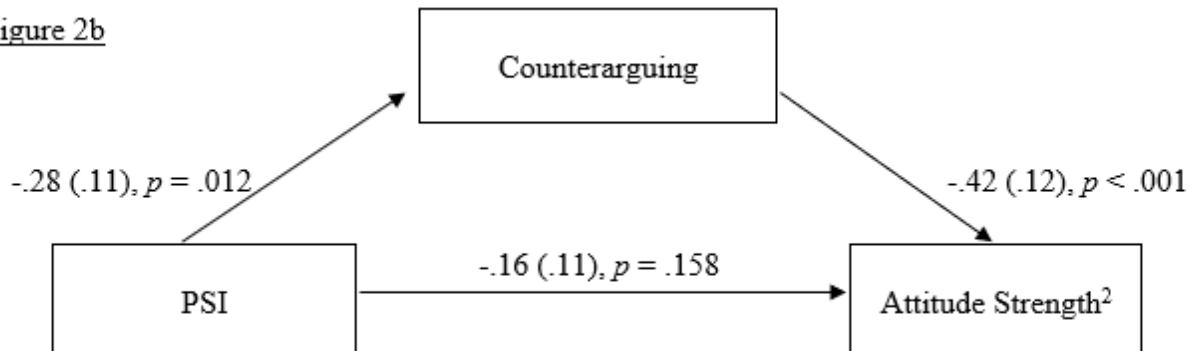
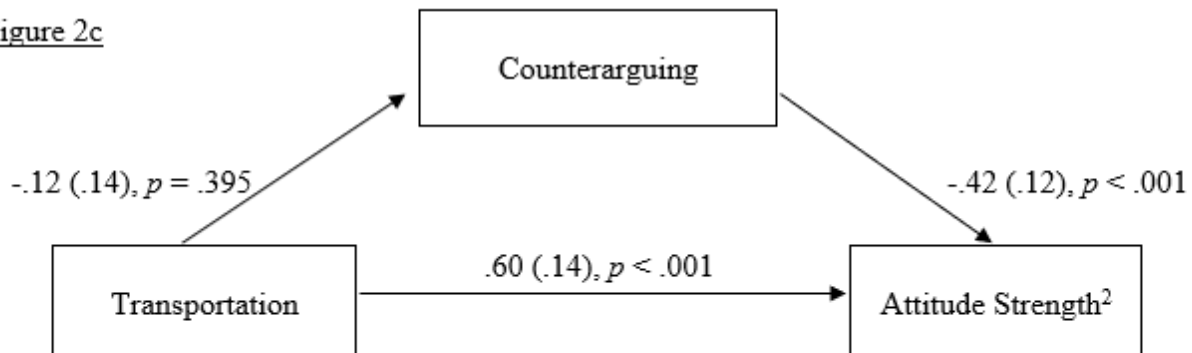


Figure 2c



Notes. ¹ All analyses controlled for the influence of biological sex, political ideology, and the other forms of entertainment not included in the analysis. ² Higher levels of attitude importance mean more persuasion.

Discussion

This study demonstrated that audiences respond to Prose and Dramatic Interpretation performances in ways consistent with the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). The

expectation of H1 that audiences respond to a narrative speech with traditional forms of entertainment was confirmed for identification with the speaker (Cohen, 2001) and transportation (Green & Brock, 2000) into the narrative. Results for PSI (Rubin et al, 1985) were in the predicted direction but not significant. The expectation of H2 that being entertained (PSI, identification, and narrative transportation) by a narrative speech predicts more enjoyment of the speech was also partially confirmed. PSI and narrative transportation predicted more enjoyment, but contrary to research by Tal-Or and Cohen (2010), findings were not significant for the impact of identification on enjoyment. Finally, the findings for H3 mostly confirmed the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008); and when they did not, they were informative. On two measures of persuasion (attitude valence and attitude strength), the influence of PSI and identification on persuasion was mediated by less counterarguing. These findings support the construct validity of the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). They both extend the model to another media form (i.e., oral interpretation) and demonstrate the capacity of PSI to reduce counterarguing. Additionally, these findings provide further support for extant research showing that transportation directly influences persuasion (Green & Brock, 2000); but contrary to the expectation of the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), that influence was not mediated by less counterarguing.

Further, our findings link the substantial body of empirical entertainment education research to the forensic tournament. With the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008) as a predictive framework for articulating an explanatory process for the influence of Prose and Dramatic Interpretation, coaches and students could use existing entertainment literature to guide some of their performance choices. The relationship can move the other direction as well. The sheer number and variety of narrative speeches produced annually by the forensic community offers a wealth of opportunities for examining how story structure, emotional stakes, non-verbal communication, blocking, and introduction strategies might influence the processes of entertainment education (i.e., PSI, identification, and narrative transportation) with applications far beyond the forensic tournament or forensic community. The theoretical nature of such research offers opportunities to publish scholarship in venues rarely available to forensic scholars, for example *Communication Monographs*, *Media Psychology*, and *Human Communication Research*. Furthermore, the impact factors of the aforementioned journals offer forensic scholars opportunities to make strong cases for tenure and to gain wider visibility within the field. In particular, this study's findings are broadly relevant to the larger community of entertainment scholarship.

Although our results for the effect of oral interpretation on PSI were non-significant, this study is the first to test the claim that a semi-parasocial relationship can occur with personalities encountered in a lecture (i.e., public speaking) format (Horton & Strauss, 1957; Giles, 2002). Although not confirmatory of the hypothesized relationship between oral interpretation and PSI, results trended toward confirmation. Thus, a more powerful replication of this research with an onsite public speaker might provide a critical test of the relationship between public speaking and PSI with the speaker. The more encouraging and precedent-setting finding for PSI in the process of narrative persuasion was its initiation of a significant path of influence through less counterarguing and to more persuasion. Although studies of the EORM have investigated the role of PSI in the process of entertainment education, this is the first to examine and demonstrate the

posited path from PSI, through reduced counterarguing, and ultimately to greater levels of persuasion (see Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

This study also expands the study of identification (Cohen, 2001) and narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000) into the media form of oral storytelling. Although narrative transportation has been demonstrated with written materials (Green & Brock, 2000), both are typically examined with commercial media products. The capacity of oral interpretation to elicit the same forms of entertainment typically elicited by expensive and highly produced audiovisual media speaks to its raw power and elegance.

Simultaneously, it is important to note that this study investigated *audio-visually* mediated performances. *Live* performances might have provided a far more powerful test of the entertainment education potential of oral interpretation. Compared to an audio-visually mediated story, the reduced social, emotional, and physical distance between a live storyteller and the audience might have resulted in greater levels of identification with the character and transportation into the narrative.

Although narrative transportation did not offer a path to persuasion through counterarguing, identification operated as predicted by the EORM (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Oral interpretation elicited identification, identification reduced counterarguing, and less counterarguing predicted more persuasion in terms of valence and attitude strength. In other words, this research is consistent with Moyer-Gusé and colleagues' (2011) finding that identification plays an important role in the process of entertainment overcoming resistance to persuasion. Furthermore, our lack of persuasion findings for the influence of narrative transportation through the mechanism of less counterarguing is consistent with Moyer-Gusé and Nabi's (2010) lack of findings for that same relationship. Even more interesting is that, just as it did for Green and Brock (2000), transportation directly influenced persuasion. In fact, this study adds to a growing body of research showing that the the influence of transportation on persuasion is direct, or at least takes a different path than identification or PSI. More broadly, the consistency of our findings with the larger body of research investigating entertainment, narrative persuasion, and the EORM demonstrates the usefulness of studying oral interpretation as a form of narrative persuasion and entertainment education.

This demonstration that oral interpretation elicits powerful forms of entertainment, enjoyment, and persuasion is also relevant to forensic scholarship and practice. We provided evidence for Koeppe and Morman's (1991) argument that oral interpretation is persuasive. Therefore, these results reinforce the importance of competitors and coaches acknowledging their responsibility as ethical persuaders. Oral interpretation is not merely a tool for winning prestige and trophies. It is a tool for profoundly affecting an audiences' subjectivity, and it is precisely that persuasive power that could further justify the existence of the introduction as a means of clarifying the persuasive intent of any particular oral interpretation performance (Koeppe & Morman, 1991).

On the other hand, the presence of an introduction raises interesting theoretical and practical questions concerning its effect on the processes of entertainment overcoming resistance to persuasion (see Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Future research might investigate how the absence/presence of an introduction, influence the effect of the performance on entertainment, enjoyment, and persuasion. In this study, the introduction did not prevent audiences from significantly identifying with the performers. Moreover,

the introduction did not seem to prevent identification from having its posited influence on reduced counterarguing. Interestingly, omitting the introduction might result in a significantly stronger effect for identification, enjoyment, and ultimately persuasion through reduced counterarguing. Such a finding might provide support for performers omitting introductions as a way of enhancing the influence of their performance, even if that decision might mean being less explicit about their persuasive intent.

State of the art communication studies research developing and testing theory for how narratives persuade audiences offers a myriad of ways to inform the performance choices of oral interpreters. Semmler and Loof (2019) recently revealed that soliloquy in a typical situation comedy increased the potential of that comedy to elicit identification with the speaking character and ultimately, the persuasiveness of its narrative message. Similarly, Onwunali's 2018 championship Prose Interpretation incorporated soliloquy (i.e., interior monologue aside) by presenting it with her book closed. In other words, When Onwunali opened the book, her character's dialogue was audible to the other characters in the world of the narrative, but when Onwunali closed the book, her character's dialogue was presented as audible to only the audience. This particular adaptation of soliloquy to oral interpretation deserves to be empirically tested for its influence on identification (Cohen, 2001) and ultimately, persuasion. Indeed, as communication theory and performance tactics continue to evolve, there will be myriad opportunities for the two spheres of the communication discipline to benefit one another in both practice and in publishing studies like this one.

Of course, all studies are limited in many ways. This study is no exception. Initially, the sample size is relatively small, resulting in low power for statistical tests and a relatively low reliability value for the counterarguing measure. Finally, this study lacked a clear control condition with which to compare the narrative speeches. Future research employing such a sample would provide a powerful test of these hypotheses.

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Rehearsing with Imagined Interactions Theory: Exploring Imagined Interactions as Framework for Ensemble and Solo Performance Rehearsals

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How should I practice is a common question that comes up while teaching performance and public speaking classes, when directing and performing in productions, and when coaching and competing for forensics squads. This essay provides a rationale for fusing Honeycutt's imagined interactions theory (2003) with performance rehearsal processes, employing research guiding retroactive and proactive imagined interactions as a template to frame rehearsals that have the purpose of future actor ↔ spectator engagement. I use my experiences applying imagined interactions to an ensemble performance rehearsal and during a solo performance rehearsal to show the usefulness, limitations, and potentials of this methodological hybridization.

Keywords: Imagined Interactions, Rehearsal, Performance, Forensics, Public Speaking

“Coach, *how* should I practice my performance?”

I am asked this question from a novice speech student working on their dramatic interpretation performance. As an educator and director involved with coaching forensics speaking and producing performing arts productions for two decades, I have been asked versions of this question by students and performers many times. As a performance artist and practitioner touring and devising performances, I tackle this question, too. *How should I practice* arises while teaching performance and public speaking classes, as well as directing shows and forensics squads, and when *intrapersonally* preparing for future *interpersonal* communications. These queries surface because purposes and people and contexts contained within performing for/to/with others necessitate rehearsal. Rehearsal strategies are useful, practical, and build confidence; although, as my student's question infers, rehearsal strategies are not always accessible.

“There are many ways to practice. We need to figure out what styles or methods are best for you based on the goals of your performance and—”

1. An early version of this manuscript was presented on a competitive paper panel of the Performance Studies Division at the 2019 meeting of the National Communication Association in Baltimore, MD. Correspondence concerning this manuscript should be addressed to first author Joshua Hamzehee, Communication Studies Department, Santa Rosa Junior College, Garcia Hall #123, Santa Rosa, CA 95407. E-mail: joshuahamzehee@gmail.com.

“But, like, how do I practice personally connecting with something I’ve never experienced? How do I perform this dude’s struggle, you know, without actually doing John Wayne Gacy stuff? Like, should I go be a clown? Should I go watch the movie, *IT*?”

Strategies for *how* to rehearse future actor ⇔ spectator interpersonal interactions provide maps to desired communication outcomes. As a performance studies scholar ⇔ practitioner housed in communication studies alongside interpersonal scholars, I speculate about methodological opportunities to assist actors, directors, students, coaches, speakers, and performers in reducing apprehension and uncertainty, rehearsing presentations and goals, and making performances effective with limited resources beyond one’s self. During my PhD, I took a course about imagined interactions theory, and Dr. James Honeycutt’s seminar showed me researchers define proactive and retroactive hypothetical conversations as imagined interactions (2003). We rehearse the everyday with ourselves in a way similar to how we might a stageplay in private.

“So, *how should I practice*, coach? Should I go find a serial killer?”

“No, you should not. Maybe we can use our imaginations to make that unfamiliar situational interaction more familiar for you.”

“Imaginations?”

“We use imagined interactions every day to help make the unfamiliar familiar, to understand the past, and rehearse the future. So, maybe we can use that concept to help motivate your aesthetic choices and add depth to your decisions?”

We use imagined interactions to plan for, measure, and generalize *interpersonal* social action(s) through *intrapersonal* self-dialogue. Characteristics of our imagined interactions include dialoguing with ourselves in first or third person (Porter, 2010), incorporating perspectives beyond ourselves (Crisp & Turner, 2009), increasing our empathy (Mapp, 2013), working through struggles (Wallenfelsz & Hample, 2010), developing skills in coping and mitigating anxiety (Honeycutt, Choi, & Deberry, 2009), and managing relational uncertainty (Van Kelegom & Wright, 2013). Think of anticipated conversations before an upcoming job interview; think of critical reflections after teaching a class about serious subject matter; think of preparing *before* and processing *after* going on a date! Imagine rehearsing for the stage.

This essay provides a rationale for fusing Honeycutt’s imagined interactions theory with performance rehearsal processes, employing research guiding retroactive and proactive imagined interactions as a template for framing ensemble and solo performance rehearsal processes. Gotcher and Honeycutt (1989) find focusing on “mental imagery” can enable performers “to produce or reproduce successful communication behaviors” (p. 1). In this essay, I first, outline a rationale for deploying imagined interactions as a tool to reframe performance rehearsals. Then, I use my experiences applying imagined interactions to an ensemble performance rehearsal (from a directing and performance coaching perspective with *Baton Rouge SLAM!: An Obituary for Summer 2016*) and

during a solo performance rehearsal (from the perspective of performer and practitioner with *Burnt City: A Dystopian Bilingual One-Persian Show!*) to show the usefulness, limitations, and potentials of this methodological hybridization for forensics performance and beyond.

Connecting the Process of Imagined Interactions to the Practice of Performance Rehearsal

Honeycutt (2003) coined the term imagined interactions as a social cognition process where we imagine and indirectly experience ourselves “in anticipated and/or past communicative encounters with others” (p. 2). Imagined interactions are self-dialogue, mindful dialogue—not self-*monologue*. We communicate *to* someone/thing else, but with ourselves. These interactions are dialogic because of the invocation of another within an *intrapersonal* engagement, allowing reflection on previous and future moments. We experience representations of conversation with “verbal, nonverbal, visual and mixed imagery features” (p. 2). Edwards, Honeycutt, and Zagacki (1988) write an individual consciously takes on roles of others, imagining how they could respond within specific contexts (p. 24). Rehearsal within performance realms often use these dialogic features to explicate and motivate emotions and actions. We take on roles of others, imagining how we/they did/could respond. We test and act upon consequences of messages prior-to and following communication, crafting scripts to reduce apprehension and provide performers potentials to live and embody in-the-moment.

Even if actors perform to themselves, another party—an anticipated audience—remains present. In performance, theatrical, and forensics pedagogy, imagined interaction-related techniques such as Hagen’s “substitution” (1973), Stanislavski’s “system” (1946), Strasburg’s “method” (1987), Adler’s use of imagination (2000), Meisner’s “mindful dialogue” (1987), Goffman’s social situation scripting (1959)—among countless other perspectives—are utilized in rehearsal and as rehearsal to help make scenes and actions more present for both performer and witness, and to process contextual objectives. As Hagen writes in *Respect for Acting* (1973), we “make this transference, this finding of character within ourselves through” employing “imaginative extension of realities, and put them in the place of the fiction” (p. 34). To focus this essay, I privilege Hagen’s substitution technique as an example. Substitution, in a basic sense, is the transference of one’s ideas, memories, and experiences to those of the character, role, or text one is performing. This act is a way performers access their emotional and physical backgrounds to complete scene objectives and connect to motivations. This substitution of real-life interactions with realistic fictional interactions is similar to quantitative categorizations of attributes and functions of self-this self-communication phenomena.

Honeycutt (2003) measures eight distinct attributes of imagined interactions: proactivity, retroactivity, frequency, variety, discrepancy, self-dominance, valence, and specificity. As a starting point to develop a performance rehearsal framework, these eight attributes allow for eight ways of conceptualizing this style of self-talk. In the application section of this essay, I focus on proactive and retroactive imagined interactions in ensemble and solo rehearsals as a way of processing past experiences, planning future actions, and motivating performance choices. Honeycutt (2003) notes each attribute

features six functions: Relational maintenance, conflict-linkage, self-understanding, catharsis, compensation, and rehearsal. For example, I might use a retroactive imagined conversation with a parent as relational maintenance, as a way to prepare for future interactions with them. In rehearsal, might use an imagined interaction with a moment in a character's past to motivate a choice I make on stage. These six functions fall in line with scene objectives, too. For example, a question arising from relational maintenance: *What does an actor think of another character and what do they think that person thinks of them?* Conflict-linkage: *What is the conflict and who does the performer believe is at fault?* Self-understanding: *What is a performer's role in the action and how honest are they with themselves?* Catharsis: *What does an actor want? Need? How do they try to accomplish objectives?* Compensation: *How do imagined conversations compare to in-person?* Rehearsal: *How confident do directors and performers feel? How can a performer use their imagination as a tool?* How we rehearse and the methods we use are critical to what we gain and how we grow from that rehearsal, in much the same manner as how we process life's obstacles and conversations influence our future interactions.

The interactions we imagine influence our everyday life rituals, our future scripts, our embodied desires, and shape our realities. Similarly, Hagen (1973) writes *substitution* is used "to 'make believe' in its literal sense—to make *me* believe [...] to send me into the moment-to-moment spontaneous action of my newly selected self" (p. 32). This idea of "always rehearsing becoming" links interpersonal and performance scholarship. Imagined interactions have been studied in areas like communication apprehension (Honeycutt, Choi, & Deberry, 2009), interpersonal relationships (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1990), nightmares and daydreaming (Eldredge, Honeycutt, White, & Standige, 2015), personality traits (Honeycutt, Pence, & Gearhart, 2013), pedagogy and instruction (Goodboy, Bolkan, & Goldman, 2015), narcissism (Honeycutt, Pence, & Gearhart, 2013), listening objectives (Vickery, Keaton, & Bodie, 2015), and prayer (Honeycutt, 2009). Performance-specific applications of imagined interactions theory, though, are rarely explored. Meaning, the chiasmic benefits of fusing imagined interactions as preparation for actor ↔ spectator events are unmined.

Regarding imagined interactions research in performance realms, studies have occurred in both forensics speaking competitions and public speaking classrooms. Through studying effects of imagined interactions and rehearsal on speaking performance, Choi, Honeycutt and Bodie (2015) argue preparation sessions where as many forms of imagery as possible are present are "most effective in reducing disfluencies" and mitigating anxiety (p. 34). Through active engagement and awareness of imagined interactions, performers employ their senses to make sense, to make sure communication tactics are legible to future audiences. The more sensoria a performer is exposed to, the more developed the understanding of their performance can become and the more intentional on-stage actions can be for both performer and spectator. In forensics, Gotcher and Honeycutt (1989) write competitors experience imagined interactions to "compensate for lack of experience" (p. 13), but they differ as a result of task, such as participating in debate or in individual events like oral interpretation (p. 12). Speech competitors tended to have more retroactive imagined interactions, while debaters were proactively oriented. Debate's immediate argumentative nature also produced more imagined situations in debaters than those in individual events. Across both, imagined interactions were used by competitors "to rehearse behaviors" and implement "in

subsequent rounds” (p. 14). Regarding public speaking performance, Choi, Honeycutt, and Bodie (2015) point out imagined interactions can mitigate anxiety, and rehearsal consisting of imagined interactions training and multimodal imagery resulted in higher speech fluency and “self-reported speech evaluations” (p. 25). Research demonstrates if a performer’s imagined interactions are vivid in rehearsal, then upcoming performances benefit from this exposure, and this benefit has been quantified through greater performer confidence and self-reported anxiety reduction.

Developing an Imagined Interactions Framework in Ensemble and Solo Rehearsals

As discussed, imagining previous or future interactions to strengthen performance is not novel to theatrical, speaking, and performance worlds. I have been asked *how should I practice* as a forensics speaking coach, performance practitioner, and public speaking instructor, and I have found operationalized strategies for how to rehearse are not always intuitive or accessible to those asking. Choi, Honeycutt, and Bodie (2015) argue using imagined interactions theory as a rehearsal frame addresses nervousness “from an anticipated communicative encounter, to manage and plan for the specific content of a message, and to ensure” efficient performance outcomes (p. 26). Here, I explore how I employed the vocabulary of imagined interactions during an ensemble performance rehearsal. Then, I show how that experience inspired me to develop a rehearsal framework that I applied to an hour-long solo performance workshop.

First, use imagined interactions to guide and direct an ensemble rehearsal. A challenge for stage directors and forensics coaches is helping folks perform in roles unlike themselves. Judgment from pre-conceived notions, expectations, and personal scripts cloud attempts at grasping unfamiliar contexts. Honeycutt (2009) states imagined interactions allow us to distinguish our reality from what we wish it would be (p. 194), removing judgment, giving actors awareness to separate monologue from dialogue. This separation, Buber (1947) writes, allows us to more fully turn “towards the other” (p. 22). One way for performers to honestly portray perspective and achieve goals different than their own is to separate their views from those of the text or character they will perform.

During fall 2017 I directed an ensemble performance, *Baton Rouge SLAM!: An Obituary for Summer 2016* (Hamzehee, 2021). This show was a critical ethnography of a slam poetry community coping with tragic events on personal, political, and infrastructural levels, so ethical community representation was a paramount concern for myself and the cast. The five actors were tasked with performing words of community members who were slam poets. We interrogated how to position ourselves within these roles while simultaneously remaining at a critically ethical distance. During one rehearsal in the second week of our six-week process, I discussed the concept of imagined interactions, and I asked my cast to have a five-minute imagined conversation with the community member whose words they were tasked to embody. Sitting toward different walls in our black box theatre, each cast member had unique hypothetical conversations exploring what we knew, what we still had to learn, what we could relate to, and what we have not experienced. A few cast members had this conversation entirely in their brain, a couple had their eyes closed, one person talked out loud then trailed off a minute into the activity. Then, we spent ten minutes discussing our experiences. Not everyone in the cast had met their assigned poet in person yet, causing one cast member to note how the voice

and perspective they gave the other in their interaction was clouded, so they mainly asked questions during their wall-time. Without going into too many details due to the privacy of the rehearsal and the sensitivity of the show's subject matter, our follow-up to this collective/solo role-playing noted a collectively heightened inspiration for our texts and the people whose lives we were representing on stage. Our rehearsal immediately following this exercise was notably more energized than our previous rehearsals, and we carried that momentum to future rehearsals. Two weeks later, the cast met their slam poetry doppelgangers at the local poetry slam. Our imagined interactions exercise was a literal rehearsal for both our aesthetic performance goal and an everyday experience! Although brief, taking one rehearsal to reflect in this manner was productive because it allowed us to engage with our lack of localized experience, and also prepare for future interpersonal engagements. While we did not do this activity again as a cast, I suspect the cast's hypothetical conversations would have become more specific after engaging directly with the poets.

Admittedly, this brief application was unstructured in its implementation, so the evidence to justify its efficacy is anecdotal. Gotcher and Honeycutt (1989) remind, if we rehearse events "without cognitively evaluating the effects of the performance," then "the cognitive imagery will not fulfill its potential" (p. 16). For a more nuanced analysis, future applications of this exercise can incorporate questionnaires, scales, and measures that correlate from performance subject matter to imagined interaction research. I can also include brief Likert-scale surveys before and after the rehearsal to quantitatively examine rehearsal efficacy and how empathy and other variables may influence the process. Additionally, a structured framework would have been beneficial for this process. Based on my initial exploration, I created the Imagined Interactions (II) table (see Table 1) to help practitioners guide an hour-long ensemble or solo rehearsal.

Table 1: Imagined Interactions (II) Table

	<u>Retroactive IIs</u>	<u>Proactive IIs</u>
Relational maintenance		
Conflict-linkage		
Self-understanding		
Catharsis		
Compensation		
Rehearsal		

Since cast members had both proactive and retroactive imagined interactions without being prompted, I placed those attributes as columns. As rows, I pulled from the six functions found to be associated with each attribute. The different functions provide conversational objectives while also remaining creatively flexible and dependent on the performer and their text(s). Two columns and six rows provide both performers and coaches twelve possibilities for imagined interactions, and many more opportunities for application. For example, in a group setting, forensics coaches can dedicate part of a team meeting to have all their interpretation and platform speakers face a wall and apply this exercise to their texts and topics (we are familiar with talking to walls, after all). In individual coaching sessions, exploring these functions provides a menu of motivations to navigate. Performers are then left with connecting their experiences to the motivations they associate with their text, as well as the decision of how to aesthetically communicate internal justifications with vocal and embodied actions that feel truest to their performance objectives.

Second, use imagined interactions to frame a solo rehearsal. Rehearsing solo can be difficult because it often happens in isolation, so preparation frameworks become important in helping a solo “performer’s journey become less about surviving and more about thriving” (Hamzehee, Baldwin, Collins, et al., 2021, p. 1). During winter 2017, I presented a ten-minute autoethnographic performance, *Yogurt Drink*, part of *Burnt City: A Dystopian Bilingual One-Persian Show* (Hamzehee, 2021). I used narrative, poetry, humor, video, and Farsi to excavate how domestic abuse at home is congruous to violence inflicted by governments on citizens. After memorizing my selection, I used a one-hour rehearsal to deploy the II table I created after *Baton Rouge SLAM!* I wanted to explore a section of the show tackling my relationship with an estranged family member, and isolate how memories from our estrangement might diverge. To do this, I aimed to spend five minutes on each of twelve hypothetical internal conversations.

Before engaging in this hour-long exercise, I performed *Yogurt Drink*. Fighting through recent memorization, I timed myself at seven minutes and eleven seconds. Then, I spent sixty minutes imagining interactions with my estranged family member. Having a hypothetical conversation with someone who I have a real-life history with is a different sensation than my Baton Rouge slam cast had with local poets they had yet to meet in person. While having history with the family member allowed me to paint a detailed picture of them in my proactive and retroactive conversations, it also forced me to critique how I script and frame my memories and hypothetical dialogue. Below, I provide the II table filled with brief thematic descriptors denoting the topics of the interactions I manifested.

The level of focus and concentration on personal topics was more overwhelming and emotionally draining than I anticipated. My durational goal also required much focus and mental presence. I found myself needing a minute between each interaction to center myself toward who I was hypothetically conversing with as well as my pre-planned topic starter. A performer must possess high self-reflexivity to effectively substitute actual or fictional interactions without causing damage to their psyches, or triggering traumatizing experiences, and all precautions should be taken before engaging in this type of work. While navigating imagined interactions with a key figure from my life was challenging, it was vulnerability I was comfortable with because enough time had passed for me, and risks were minimal to my well-being. I encourage any performer engaging with imagined

interactions about triggering subject matter to only do so if safe, and please reach out if help is needed. Like my experience with the ensemble, this solo undertaking exploded Barnlund's notion of dialogue (1970), as I had to negotiate how I viewed myself, how I viewed the estranged family member, how I believed they viewed me, how they might view themselves, how they do view me, and how they believe I view them (p. 90). This exercise allowed me to flesh out feelings, memories, blind spots, and aesthetic and everyday script constructions.

Table 2: Completed Imagined Interactions (II) Table

	<u>Retroactive IIs</u>	<u>Proactive IIs</u>
Relational maintenance	How we concluded.	Our future meeting.
Conflict-linkage	About domestic abuse.	About responsibility.
Self-understanding	Back to childhood.	Growing older.
Catharsis	Moments of joy.	Future relief.
Compensation	What is lost.	What is gained.
Rehearsal	How we remember.	New habits?

After twelve mini-scenes and a ten-minute break, I again performed *Yogurt Drink*, this time mentally and physically holding on to those interactions I had substituted for the time estranged. I timed this performance at thirteen minutes and twelve seconds. The six-minute time increase itself is not significant—though, the way I visualized and explored the scenario through this methodology directly influenced the depth and connection I felt to the text, which in turn lengthened my performance and made me feel more confident in the direction my negotiated choices had taken my performance. I found that the II table was useful in categorizing and conceptualizing my imagined interactions, although a series of rehearsals with this technique would have allowed me to better develop the usefulness of this method, to play with possible prompts, and adjust the time allotted. Additionally, I invoked this framework during the first weeks of both ensemble and solo performance processes. I am curious as to how my performance motivations might shift if this exercise happens closer to audience engagement? Regarding forensics and coaching, with off-stage focus and talking to audiences being a norm in both interpretation and platform events, the focus on one individual in these imagined interactions is a performance that is transferable to performing for spectators. In my thirteen-minute performance, I was better able to visualize the estranged family member on stage because of engaging this process. The ability to re-imagine on stage and have that visualization be

legible to an audience is a pivotal skill to develop because it supplements an audience's suspension of disbelief, and allows for a message to be communicated through performance more intentionally and, hopefully, impactfully.

Of course, there are limitations to this research hybridization. First, self-reporting is fallible, so further experimentation must be conducted to determine rehearsal and self-efficacies of this type of applied research. Second, as I was reminded during my solo rehearsal, we must be careful to avoid catastrophizing experiences. When using our imaginations practitioners must determine if connections to an unfamiliar situation are successful, effective, ethical, or even healthy? But how, when these experiences are so contextually dependent? This requires directors listening to performers, and performers being honest with our needs and limits with those we trust to guide us. Hagen (1973) warns against going too deep into trauma without a professional present:

There are teachers who actually force actors into dealing with something buried (their response to a death of a parent, or the trauma of a bad accident). What results is hysteria or worse, and is, in my opinion, anti-art. We are not pursuing psychotherapy. (p. 42)

This essay fuses the vocabulary and findings of imagined interactions research as a framework for performance rehearsals. In the future, I will work to better incorporate reflexivity toward imagined interactions attributes of frequency, variety, discrepancy, self-dominance, valence, and specificity. This can be accomplished through adapting rehearsal framework structure, employing a follow-up questionnaire or interview, and through journaling. Reducing uncertainty in unfamiliar, difficult, and conflict-laden situations is critical to invoking motivated connection to actions. I found that focusing on imagined interactions during rehearsal processes can provide directors, performers, practitioners, educators, coaches, and students one more tool to re-conceptualize what rehearsals look and feel like. Future chiasmic paths can examine what else quantitative frameworks offer performance scholars. What can performance scholarship offer interpersonal researchers? And what are other ways we can

“... maybe use that concept to help motivate your aesthetic choices?”

“How?”

“Let's use our imaginations.”

Cool, I guess I don't need the clown make-up then. So, where do we begin?

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Resisting and Persisting through Organizational Exit: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Disclosing Sexual Harassment in Collegiate Debate

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Collegiate debate has documented extensive problems with sexual harassment. This manuscript uses the first author's layered account of sexual harassment experienced as a collegiate debater, her transition to a different university, and the management of private information with her family. Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory and a plethora of studies provide a theoretical lens of the first author's autoethnographic experience. We advance CPM theory by examining how young adult children manage their privacy through constructing more rigid privacy boundaries than their adolescent counterparts and provide the first look at how disclosure can both enable and constrain victims/survivors of sexual harassment, as well as interrogate the way in which survivors can own their experiences and perpetrators be held accountable within the debate community.

Content Warning: This manuscript includes mention of suicide and sexual harassment.

Keywords: Communication Privacy Management, mental health, health communication, sexual harassment, debate

While other children were dreaming about being astronauts, cowboys, or presidents, from childhood, my dream had always been to be a teacher. Because my mom was an elementary school music teacher and my dad a worship leader at our church, my parents placed a high priority on music in our family. As a result, in fifth grade, I joined the band and cultivated a love for music. From then on, I decided that I would become a band director. I was very comfortable being the “band nerd,” and never had a desire to cross the boundary into any other activity in high school, and during the rest of my life. However, my freshman year of high school, my dad forced me to join debate and forensics. I hated it.

I am not sure if I could isolate a specific instance during my high school career where my hatred of debate turned into a love for it, but by the end of my junior year, I knew that I had to teach debate and forensics. Because I wanted to eventually coach debate, I knew that continuing as a debater was important in college in order to gain more experience and knowledge in the activity. The cost of the university, as well as the

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attention I, as a freshman, would get from the coaching staff played significant roles in my decision of where I would attend college. I came to the conclusion that Midwestern College (MC)² was right in both cost and coaching. Midwestern College (MC) offered me a scholarship to debate, so I planned to begin my college career there.

Our lives are storied adventures (Fisher, 1984), as such, it is considered normal and healthy to share the positive and negative events that occur through our varied experiences (Frattaroli, 2006). For the most part, we are comfortable with letting different people into our lives, and thus our engagement with others can be characterized by reciprocal disclosure.

The means through which we disclose our stories varies based on setting or relationship. For example, we choose to share vulnerable details with those people in our lives we deem safe, while maintaining a rigid boundary with those we feel are less so (Morr Serewicz & Petronio, 2007). Even this piece is a space in which disclosure takes place, in particular, through the story of the first author. Autoethnography creates a space to be present to each other in a performative space of writing and reading (Holman Jones et al., 2013). More than just the recalling of a story, autoethnography challenges the authors and readers to take issues of justice personally and move from simply understanding the world to action (Berry & Patti, 2015; Cissna, 2000; Frey, 2000).

In an autoethnographic work, the researchers become the site of fieldwork as they recall and reconstruct events into narratives and bring awareness to their experiences and the experiences of other actors in their stories (Crawford, 1996). “Autoethnography is an interpretive research method through which scholars seek to evocatively narrate the selves’ experiences in diverse cultural settings” (Berry & Warren, 2009, p. 602). Specifically:

...autoethnography creates a space for a turn, a change, a reconsideration of how we think, how we do research and relationships, and how we live. These stories constitute a narrative of coming to an experience and a moment in time when excluding or obscuring the personal in research felt uncomfortable, even untenable (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 21).

In this piece, we have chosen the autoethnographic tactic of layered accounts, which use “data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature” along with the author’s experience illustrating research’s procedural nature (Charmaz, 1983, p. 110). According to Tracy (2004), layered accounts “...experiment with the format of our writing and experiment with ‘messy’ texts” (p. 511). In other words, engaging with experiences is an iterative and dynamic task that asks the subject to embrace their narratives while simultaneously deconstructing and reconstructing their own narrative. This method simultaneously uses traditional data collection and analysis alongside tools of reflexivity or multiple voices (Charmaz, 1983; Ellis, 1991). Therefore, the writing style of layered accounts allows for discussion of affect and provides techniques for engaging with it (Tracy, 2004).

2. We make frequent use of pseudonyms throughout the manuscript in order to protect the privacy of the people involved, including the first author.

In the following section, we present relevant literature, including literature on mental illness, sexual harassment (specifically within the collegiate debate circuit), communication privacy management (CPM) theory, and literature on the autoethnographic method (see Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). This literature works in combination with the autoethnographic telling of the first author's experiences through an analysis of the disclosure (or lack thereof) to her family.

Dynamics

Upon arriving at MC, I quickly learned the team dynamic was significantly different than the culture of the team I was on during my high school debate career. This team was characterized by their crude humor and negative demeanor. However, more than just those qualities, there was a deep level of racism, homophobia, and sexism that manifested in sexual harassment demonstrated by the assistant director of debate, the coach with whom we most interacted.³ It should be noted that these sexual harassment behaviors are often hard to discuss because of the insidious nature of these acts. Sexual harassment took place in jokes, comments, and the way the team presented itself. These dynamics were engrained within the system of the team, which fostered a constant culture of disrespect and harassment. I was acutely aware of the dynamics causing problems at MC, and the culture of the team made me uneasy although I suppressed those feelings due to the necessity of the scholarship to fund my education. I did not anticipate what was to unfold, but my intuition told me that something was not right.

When it comes to considerations of a person's personal and professional life, existing sexual harassment research does not account for the complex relationships within the debate community (Sulfaro, 2002). The dynamics between students/competitors and their professors/coaches in collegiate debate and forensics are unique, as those within the collegiate debate community are more likely to interact with each other in settings outside of debate tournaments in close friendships, apartment living, or in romantic relationships (Sulfaro, 2002). Debaters engage with others in their programs in both formal (i.e., during a debate round) and informal (i.e., at dinner, in hotel rooms) settings (Sulfaro, 2002). As a result of this more frequent and varied interaction, Stepp and Gardner (2001) argue that students on coed teams who compete off campus may be more prone to sexual harassment because of the travel requirements of undergraduates, graduate assistants, hired coaches and judges, and program directors who are a part of these activities.

There is little documentation of the debate community's attention to issues of sexual harassment within the activity until the nineties, and little statistical evidence has been collected over the past 20 years. However, Stepp and Gardner (2001) documented

3. Note: we reference sexual harassment and avoid the term sexual assault. Although many times these two problematic behaviors are intertwined, we are making a distinction that behaviors that are reported in this manuscript do not involve sexual assault. Sometimes this distinction is hard to make (for example, if sexual harassment is occurring and touching is involved is that automatically sexual assault?). We argue that the behaviors discussed in this manuscript do involve sexual harassment but did not escalate to the point where author 1 contextualizes the behavior as sexual assault.

high levels of sexual harassment when they investigated the issue. CEDA responded to the data with a sexual harassment policy implemented in spring of 1994 (Stepp & Gardner, 2001), yet Stepp and Gardner's (2001) study seems to indicate "the implementation of the CEDA sexual harassment policy has had little overall effect on reducing sexual harassment in the CEDA intercollegiate debate community" (p. 30). Instead, little social support, lowered self-esteem, and sexual harassment may be continuing to drive women away from collegiate debate (Jones & Treadaway, 2000). During Szwapa's (1994) study of the NDT, over 80% of women NDT debaters reported experiencing gender harassment and seductive behavior, while over 30% of the female debaters reported being in a position where a coach or debater sexually imposed (making forceful attempts to touch, kiss, or grab) themselves upon the women. Over 46% of women reported being in situations where a coach or debater attempted to touch or fondle them (Stepp & Gardner, 2001). Furthermore, recent efforts have called attention to the nature of sexual violence within the forensics community, identifying these behaviors as more than just isolated offenses, woven into the very structures and processes of the activity (Tarin & Dykstra-DeVette, 2020).

Because of the sensitive and damaging nature of the experience, the effects of sexual harassment vary and include emotional, physical, and psychological consequences. Some of the negative physical effects can include unwanted pregnancies, alcohol and drug abuse, self-cutting, and suicide (Harris, 2011). Decreased self-esteem and uncertainty surrounding personal identity are two aspects of the psychological effects of sexual violence (Orbuch et al., 1994). Relationship struggles are also common in survivor of sexual violence including sexual struggles, such as sensitivity to sexual experiences or sexual dysfunction (Connop & Petrak, 2004). While communication can be redeeming for survivors and ease the trauma, communication can also be difficult as finding someone to confide in after a sexual harassment incident can be challenging (Pluretti & Chesebro, 2015). Additionally, sexual harassment, in academia in particular, can have adverse effects on a person's faith in academe, as harassment is "often embedded in organizational rituals that coincided with or exploited their vulnerability" (Taylor & Conrad, 1992, p. 413). Taylor and Conrad (1992) go on to state:

Sexually, the university is both desexualized and patriarchal. It is conditioned by popular images of its pastoral innocence, and of its highly cognitive and theoretical workers-seemingly "disembodied" intellectuals. Organizationally, authority in the university is diffused between loosely-coupled bureaucratic units and levels. Jurisdiction and accountability for sexual harassment are frequently confused and displaced. Its regulation through policies and procedures is slow, cumbersome and resistant to change. Within research-driven reward systems, students are commodified (e.g., as enrollment data) and devalued as transient, needy and 'difficult.' (p. 405)

In other words, the structure of academia, through its bureaucratic levels and commodification of students, creates a system that devalues students and sets the stage for those who possess power to prey on those who do not. Devaluation manifests itself in instances of Student Services, which becomes the support system for sexual harassment victims, as the services are often feminized and marginalized within the structural system (Taylor & Conrad, 1992).

As a result, men often serve as “gatekeepers” for women who wish to access academia, and men possess most of the power when it comes to progressing within the university or college. Faculty rely on a highly ambiguous role as they are tasked to “instruct and develop” students. Through advising and instructing responsibilities, professors are given a lot of freedom into the inquiry of students’ personal lives (Taylor & Conrad, 1992). Rutter (1989) cites men in power often having access to a woman’s future regarding her “physical, psychological, spiritual, economic and intellectual well-being” (p. 23), and are often highly trusted by women, especially in communication and theatre departments. According to Willis (1994):

Whether in the classroom, laboratory, news room, studio or performance hall, faculty, students and others work together closely, with emotional intensities that encourage vulnerability, with psychological thrusts that invite fragility, and with a purposeful process which often blurs the edge between dependence and independence. Those who work in these areas also usually bring with them a high degree of tolerance, an overriding drive for success and acceptance, and an intensity of work which demands intimacy—and all of these are special invitations to potential sexual trouble. (p. 60)

Therefore, the codependent nature of shared spaces and places impacts the nature of communication within a system. The added complexities of a debate practice and travel schedule blur the professional-personal line to an even greater extent, resulting in increased intimacy and potential unchecked power.

Escalation

By the end of the first semester, all the other women on the team had quit debate altogether, or refused to travel with the assistant debate coach, which meant they ended up doing a different form of debate and rarely traveled. I continued to travel with this coach and compete in policy debate despite being uncomfortable on trips with him because I needed the financial support being on the team provided. His sexual harassment started online through Facebook comments or messages, and years later, I can still recall the jabs at my intellect, my uselessness as a woman, homophobic comments, and his thoughts about my body. As the season went on, he quickly moved to harassing me verbally and physically. His comments regarding my intelligence and work ethic in relation to my gender moved from online to in-person as he was emboldened, and I was harassed and embarrassed in front of my teammates. Although my debate partner was incredibly supportive, the complex power dynamics of the team and community made it difficult to do more than offer interpersonal support in private settings rather than directly confront our coach. I was invited to late-night planning meetings in my coach’s hotel room (without my partner) to which I refused to go, and instead of facing the potential physical and sexual abuse in those meetings, chose to face the verbal reprimands and verbal and physical microaggressions for disobeying his orders. When staying overnight in less desirable hotels, my coach told me he needed to stay in my room with me to protect me. Each night of our tournaments, I experienced fear and panic attacks, knowing he had a copy of my room key, and my privacy and safety were an illusion. My debate

partner and I left our adjoining doors to our rooms open during the night as a stop gap measure in case the worst was to happen.

To save face in the community, declining his physical touch was not an option.⁴ I was met with hugs that were both an opportunity to feel up my breasts and a demonstration of his control over me while playing the supportive, caring coach. He regularly spoke about his sexual fantasies and desires with young women, describing women who physically looked like me and shared my body type and characteristics. Back and shoulder massages, which never seemed to be contained to those two parts of my body, and kisses in my hair, neck, and on my forehead were other experiences of unwanted physical touch and sexual attention. In the instances in which I did tell him no or tried to slip from his grasp, his physical strength and the threat of further aggressions and retaliation through loss of my funding were a reminder of the power dynamic that existed between the two of us.

One night during a week-long tournament over winter break, I decided I did not want to attend MC for my second year of college and wanted to leave as soon as possible. Cost, and my inability to afford college without being on scholarships, dramatically limited my options of places to transfer. That night, I decided on Emporia State University⁵ because it comparatively was not expensive, and I was confident in my ability to receive both academic and talent-based scholarships. Although I had never toured the campus, did not know much about their degree programs, and had no real plan, Emporia State University offered a speech and theatre education major, and was cheap enough to be a viable option. I made plans to transfer to Emporia State University to begin my sophomore year of college under the guise of wanting to begin my specific degree program earlier. Shame, embarrassment, and fear of further retribution led me to keep the full story and real reason I wanted to transfer a secret. I assumed if I told my parents the real reason I wanted to transfer, they would not believe me, judge me, and there would be more questions than support. Regardless of whether they would support me because of what happened, I decided to not test their support, and instead came up with a different logical reason for transferring early. The messages from my debate coach were deep in my mind and highly influenced the decision to not tell my parents. As a result, I projected the lies of my debate coach, and my own shame and personal fears upon them. I really believed his words, I was “just a woman” and this was what life was to be. I feared if anyone else knew, they would also blame me for letting this happen and not doing something about it. I believed others would perceive my attempts to disclose to

4. This is a point where the readers may indicate that behaviors are escalating from sexual harassment to sexual assault. It is important to note this distinction, and also, to validate the (re)storying of author 1. It is her perception on the distinction between sexual harassment and sexual assault that matters, and thus, we are continuing to embrace the title of sexual harassment, even though unwanted physical touch is occurring.

5. It is important to note that Emporia State University (ESU) was not involved in the accusations contained in this manuscript, but is where the faculty mentor (author 2) and student (author 1) met. ESU provided an escape from the system that was hurting author 1, and the author did not participate in debate during her time at ESU.

other coaches not enough and I should have done more.⁶ Coming to the end of my rope, I felt the only option left was to leave, knowing at least I would not be in that situation any longer.

Numerous studies have been done to interrogate the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in academia and regarding undergraduate women over the past several decades (see Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Bravo & Cassedy, 1992; Hickson et al., 1991). More specifically, approximately 20-25% of female students in the United States have experienced sexual harassment (Henning et al., 2017), and evidence shows a continued increase in that statistic over time (Fnais et al., 2014). Additionally, with recent, highly publicized campus sexual assaults occurring across the United States, and the responses (or lack thereof) by the academic institutions at which these occurred, there has been an increased call for academic administrators and policymakers to enact institutional change. Even with the expansion of the Clery Act in 2013 and recent changes and refinements to Title IX, a systematic review of all U.S. state statutes relating to sexual assault found them to be poorly suited for responding to campus sexual assaults and holding perpetrators accountable (DeMatteo et al., 2015). Furthermore, few women who have experienced sexual harassment are willing to come forward as victims (Hickson et al., 1991). Statistical evidence is also flawed in that few men fully recognize the role or potential role they take as harasser, and as a result do not recognize or speak about their exploitation of women. Like many communicative processes, sexual harassment is a *process* rather than a simple event (Pryor & Day, 1998). As such, it is more difficult to operationalize, conceptualize and give voice to victims of sexual harassment. For this study we are primarily focused on sexual harassment that occurs within higher education institutions, and more specifically the collegiate debate circuit. Subsequently, our review of literature focuses on existent literature in these areas. Cooper (1985) identifies a six-step process for sexual harassment in higher education: (1) aesthetic appreciation; (2) active mental groping; (3) social touching; (4) foreplay harassment; (5) sexual abuse; and (6) ultimate threat.

The *aesthetic appreciation* stage includes the sender, or harasser, choosing a receiver, and complimenting that person. At this stage in the process, the compliments are not typically perceived as harassment, and are generally liked by the receiver. In the first author's experience, these compliments were simple comments about her outfit or the way she looked, and she did not take them to be harassing or hurtful in nature at all. In the *active mental groping* stage, the sender begins fantasizing harassment by playing through positive conversations in their mind or mentally undressing the victim. It is difficult to identify the *active mental groping* second stage taking place, because while the sender begins fantasizing harassment by playing through positive conversations in their mind or mentally undressing the victim, only the sender knows this is happening (Hickson et al., 1991). The nature of collegiate debate makes it easy for the sender to plan

6. Upon further reflection of my positionally and experiences at MC, I do not think that any mechanism within the organization would have moved the lever enough to provide safety for others, or vindication for myself. I believed organizational exit to be my only viable option. My perception after exiting the organization is that tightly coupled organizations, wrought with power, engage in self-interested mechanisms that reinforce (rather than challenge) the organization.

times to meet outside of normal contexts and plan interactions. In my experience at MC, these interactions took place at meals, preparation, and research sessions in someone's hotel room, or on van or plane rides to tournaments.

In the third stage, *social touching*, “the passion for power over the receiver becomes somewhat of an obsession” (Hickson et al., 1991, p. 113). The sender looks for and is often successful at finding times for both parties to meet outside of their normal contexts, and meticulously plans the interactions between the two. Invitations of late-night planning meetings in his hotel room and “happening” to have seats together on plane rides, as well as the physical behaviors such as hug that were normalized as being a part of a supportive coach are instances for which social touching was able to occur. By the fourth stage *foreplay harassment*, some touching has already occurred, and the harasser has made attempts to become more involved with the victim and has made these interactions more private. The interaction moves from foreplay harassment to *sexual abuse* when the harasser touches the victim, uninvited, in an intimate part of the body. Back and shoulder massages that reached other parts of my body, unwanted hugs feeling up my breasts, and kisses in my hair, neck, and forehead are instances in which unwanted physical interaction happened. Because of the protection during the night from my debate partner and my refusal to join my coach in his hotel rooms and instead face the physical and verbal microaggressions and reprimands, the situation fortunately did not escalate beyond these physical interactions. The sixth stage, *ultimate threat*, occurs when the victim has no choice but to give in or escape knowing there could be consequences because of power differentials, as quid pro quo becomes the ultimate threat (Hickson et al., 1991). Because the assistant coach had most of the power in the program when it came to traveling or advancing in the program, he became the “gatekeeper” and controlled most of the power when it came to progressing within the college or the program (Wills, 1994). Although the other women on the team quit debate altogether or started doing alternate debate formats so they wouldn't have to travel with the assistant coach, I continued to travel with this coach and did policy debate since I still believed I wanted to debate after leaving MC and wanted the experience tournaments gave me. I continued debating the full year, and even contemplated returning to finish out my associate degree because of the financial break being on a debate scholarship was giving me. Contextualizing my experience within Cooper's (1985) framework for sexual harassment in higher education offers the chance to evaluate the process and escalation of actions, which both benefits me in understanding my experiences and offers individuals in higher education leadership the opportunity to examine the complex dynamics between victim and abuser and assess the risks in these relationships and interactions.

Transfer

Upon transferring and beginning my second year of college at Emporia State, I was miserable. I believed transferring would solve all my problems, and it would be an incredibly positive and transformative experience. As a result, I never confronted those emotions or experiences, nor did I consider how they might have affected me personally and how they might have affected the way I engaged with other people. My experience at MC had left me feeling powerless, shameful, and afraid. In addition to those deep emotions, I did not make the connections or build the relationships at Emporia State

University I thought I would build. My roommates and I had a lot of conflict. I was not debating anymore and instead was on a music talent scholarship, and I had lost my sense of purpose and identity. Even after I changed my major from speech and theatre education to communication studies, I felt like I did not belong in the communication department and had no direction.

A combination of deep-seated emotions, as well as the lack of connection and direction, led to severe clinical depression. I felt isolated, and as a result, chose not to reach out to anyone while maintaining a high GPA and excelling in the music department as a means of concealing my feelings and experiences to others. Based upon my experience of advocating for myself and voicing how I was feeling at MC, I was afraid and ashamed of telling people how I was feeling. I felt I would not be believed regardless of what I shared with people. Although I faked as if I was completely fine, I sank deeper into depression, to a state of hopelessness. I could not seem to find a way out, and came to one conclusion: September 10, 2016 was the day I was going to kill myself.

For me, relief did not come in more traditional ways of talking with a therapist, being hospitalized for a period of time, or confiding in close friends. Once I had devised a plan, I took to writing a note to leave in my bedroom. As I was writing my note saying my goodbyes and my best attempt at an explanation, I found myself writing a prayer. My writing turned to crying which turned to sobbing. In that moment, coming back to my faith which I had long forgotten and left behind, I finally found a place, person, on whom the weight of my experiences and pain could rest. Not knowing what to do next, other than simply survive, I kept the suicide note and the plan I had devised to myself, opting to not share that information with anyone else. In addition to keeping my secret of what had happened at MC, I felt I now had to carry the secret of my mental health for fear of judgment and stigmatization. I also believed sharing the state of my mental health with my family would require further exploration, a process I was unwilling to go through, and disclosing those experiences with my current friends would invite additional questions into my past.

It took almost a year for me to get to a place where I was willing to confront those feelings. I had not planned on sharing those experiences with anyone else until resident assistant training when I broke down to one of our complex coordinators, Joseph, after having to go through a mock suicide training. My conversation with Joseph helped to validate my experiences and feelings and established the residential life department as a safe space to share. Throughout the fall semester of 2017, I disclosed my experience to my complex coordinators, some friends at Emporia State University, and several of my coworkers in residential life. I found sharing negative experiences with my new friends and bosses at Emporia State University to be easier than sharing it with those I had known for a longer period of time. My childhood friends and my family still had no idea what I had experienced in the past two years. Through these initial disclosures with my new campus community, I came to realize that it was easier to share my experiences of my mental health struggles and the sexual harassment experiences with people I had not known as long; I felt if the relationship did not endure because of those disclosures, I was not losing as much because the relationships were new and not well established. However, with my long-time friends and family members, if the disclosure created a burden or fundamentally changed my relationship with that person, I could not easily exit the relationship because of the deeper ties formed throughout the longer period of time.

Communication privacy management theory (CPM) helps to explain some of these disclosure dynamics. This theory is uniquely helpful because it is the only disclosure theory that situates privacy as an issue of (co-)ownership and highlights the vulnerability of the disclosure. This is especially important considering that we are examining sexual harassment, and the privacy needs of not only the victim, but of all parties involved in the dialectic of privacy and disclosure. For this particular manuscript, that distinction is important to understand, because the first author is disclosing her story of sexual harassment, including others in her story (for example, the second author, family, and friends) and now the reader of this piece as well. Through the lens of CPM, the choice (and burden) of disclosure is shifted to the victim, rather than to the predator (Petronio, 2002). As such, the victim faces a plethora of challenges when choosing when and whom to disclose, situating this dilemma as an ongoing process (Bute & Vik, 2010). Privacy boundaries are continually (re)negotiated with others, and the person disclosing information creates a metaphorical boundary around their private information and the other people are then co-owners of the private information (see Petronio, 2002).

CPM, a dialectical theory, argues that people feel a push and a pull for them to reveal and conceal information from others, such that privacy and disclosure coexist (Morr Serewicz & Petronio, 2007). To further understand how this rules-based theory functions, Morr Serewicz & Petronio (2007) offer five primary axioms of CPM:

- (a) private information is the content of disclosures, (b) there is a metaphorical boundary or border between public and private, (c) people desire control over private information because they own this information and sharing it makes them vulnerable, (d) people use a rule-based system to manage private information in interaction, (e) privacy-disclosure is a dialectical tension in relationships. (p. 258)

The third axiom is particularly relevant to this manuscript as it places emphasis on the vulnerability experienced by the discloser. Vulnerability is a salient theme when disclosing stigmatized or taboo topics (Petronio, 2002), and we argue that sexual harassment is a topic that is rarely discussed openly and thus taboo.

There are two reasons people seek to control their private information. First, they believe they have a right to own the information, and second, disclosure makes a person feel vulnerable (see Petronio, 2002; Petronio & Child, 2020). A connection between control and vulnerability is apparent as the need for ownership and anticipation of vulnerability both require control. Control and vulnerability thus determine the permeability of a person's boundaries depending on the nature of the information and the circumstances surrounding disclosure (Morr Serewicz & Petronio, 2007). Disclosing private information makes a person feel more vulnerable because it invites another individual to be a co-owner of the private information. The shift in boundaries creates a less clear picture of who now is the keeper of the secret, and if the boundary is then rigid or permeable. The more vulnerable a person feels, the more they may try to mitigate the resulting "boundary turbulence" (see Petronio, 2002). As such, when a person seeks to control private information, they formulate more "rigid" boundaries surrounding their private information (see Petronio, 2002).

Privacy and disclosure become particularly important – and complicated – in the context of adult familial relationships. Families formulate and maintain boundaries based

on the norms and privacy rules of the family. Parents are not privy to the private information of adult children in the same way they are of adolescent children, and to an even greater extent, young children (see Petronio, 2002 for extended discussion). Although much of this research has been attributed to parental privacy invasions (Petronio, 1994; Petronio, 2013), it is important to note that adult children do not have the same privacy invasions and privacy needs as adolescent counterparts. As we transition to adulthood, our privacy boundaries become more rigid and static, with less permeability for others in our lives, particularly other adults (see Petronio, 2002). Adult children maintain these privacy boundaries and do not as readily share information with other people in their lives, including their families. Subsequently, adult children must *invite* parents into a collective boundary by sharing private information with the parents (Kennedy-Lightsey & Frisby, 2016). There is a plethora of ways in which parents can co-own information with adult children (e.g., snooping, receiving information from a third party etc.), but because the adult child has more rigid privacy boundaries it is possible for the child to maintain private information from parents more readily, particularly given that they frequently do not share a living space.

Upon my decision to transfer to a new university, I knew I would need to offer my parents an explanation as to why I was transferring instead of finishing my associate degree at MC. Because I was uncomfortable with sharing my abusive experience of being on the debate team, I told my parents I wanted to transfer to a four-year college a year early so I could begin my degree program a year early. At this point in time, the family privacy boundaries were less rigid, and even though I sought out my parents' wisdom on the decision to transfer, ultimately, the decision was my decision to make. Even with less rigid privacy boundaries, our family still valued a high level of communication, which required me to offer some kind of explanation for the transfer, so I defaulted to a topic-based rigidity. I invited my parents into a collective boundary when I chose to share my information on the decision to transfer while still protecting the real reason for changing schools. However, I still maintained ownership over the information I deemed would make me more vulnerable.

Aftermath

Through counseling, I have tried to address the reasons I am uncomfortable with disclosing this information with my family. Perhaps the most obvious reason I have not shared with my parents is because I am worried of their reaction. The first person I disclosed my experiences to validated them, as did the people in residential life I told about these experiences and feelings. However, I still fear my parents will not know how to respond to me sharing this information with them. I am worried they will deny my experiences and not believe me when I tell them about the sexual harassment or depression. I am afraid their reaction could confirm some of the lies I have told myself about my worth and ability to heal from these experiences.

As a result, studying privacy and disclosure in the context of sexual harassment and mental health—both topics incredibly personal to me—has created significant cognitive dissonance. On one hand, I know why I am hesitant to share my experiences with my family. However, I know there are important physical and psychological benefits to me disclosing the status of my mental health to my family (Frattaroli, 2006).

Hammonds (2015) found that rumination, stress, and well-being had an impact on an individual's choice of privacy or disclosure. However, the benefits of disclosure are not universal, and are determined by the response of the people to whom the individual discloses (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010; Frey et al., 2016; Lepore et al., 2000; Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). According to Frattaroli (2006), "early explanations of the benefits of experimental disclosure draw from a Freudian explanation of the benefits of catharsis, suggesting that the inhibition of thoughts and feelings can reduce stress and improve a host of physical and psychological health outcomes" (p. 824). Some of these physical health outcomes include improvements in immune functioning, reduction in health center visits, reduced absenteeism rates from work, improved grade point average, and decreased self-reported upper respiratory problems (Frattaroli, 2006). In addition to physical health benefits, disclosure offers the potential for people to free their mind, make sense of the events, regular their emotions, and improve social connections, leading to a healthier person (Frattaroli, 2006). I have not received the catharsis I would have if I had felt comfortable disclosing to my parents; but I was also saved the labor of having to manage what I anticipated were negative reactions/emotions to the disclosure.

Additionally, disclosure concerning a person's mental health impacts a person's perception of themselves regarding self-stigma. As Corrigan et al. (2010) explain, "public stigma is the prejudice and discrimination that occurs when the population as a whole accepts and endorses a certain stereotype, while self-stigma occurs when individuals choose to internalize the stigma, resulting in decreased self-esteem and self-efficacy" (p. 260; see also Corrigan et al., 2006; Link, 1987; Link et al., 1987; Markowitz, 1998; Ritsher et al., 2003; Rosenfield, 1997; Rüscher et al., 2009a&b). People who have disclosed more about their mental illness are less likely to experience the impacts of self-stigma as the shame is removed through the sharing of their mental illnesses. Avoiding disclosure implies that the stigma associated with mental illness is valid and the diagnosis is something to be ashamed of and kept hidden (Corrigan et al., 2010). I know holding on to this secret has increased my anxiety levels, and I am aware of the information I am withholding from my family every time I interact with them. I also know sharing this experience fully with my parents will release me from the burden of concealment, help me make sense of the past few years, and improve my relationship overall with my parents (Frattaroli, 2006).

Reflections and Contributions

Based on the preceding narratives and analysis, we forward two primary contributions of this work. The first is that written disclosure, while often difficult and emotionally triggering, can not only be reflective and cathartic (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker et al., 1990; Foa & Kozak, 1986), but can lead to further disclosure in other relationships. In the writing of this piece, the first author invited the second author into a collective boundary when deciding to collaborate on a piece together. This was an especially vulnerable position as the first author was currently enrolled in undergraduate courses that the second author was teaching. I (the first author) strategically chose to disclose my experiences and the status of my mental health to protect my privacy and shield myself from stigma. However, the need for support outweighed my need for privacy and I chose to disclose my mental health struggles to my community within the

residential life department and the second author. The social support I was met with from these parties made my boundaries less rigid and made me feel less vulnerable sharing the more intimate details of my experience (Petronio, 2002). This initial support, and the opportunity to write out a narrative, led to additional disclosure that ultimately was vital to the healing and sense making process of my experiences (Corrigan et al., 2013).

Second, the process of writing out and analyzing these narratives also illustrates how the weight of relationship maintenance, particularly in the area of self-disclosure, shifts from the parents to adult children when the adult child leaves the home. In my experience, while I was still closely connected to my parents and family, the responsibility to maintain the relationship passed on to me, and as a result the weight of choosing what to disclose and not to disclose fell on me. This shift brought more autonomy to me, but also less shared information as the privacy boundaries shift. Because of this change in autonomy, the adult child is now responsible for the sharing of information and subsequent relationship maintenance. It is our expectation that privacy boundaries shift giving more autonomy and privacy to the adult child, but these shifting boundaries also could create less shared information between parents and adult children (Petronio, 2002). Perhaps, adult children are then responsible for the sharing of information and subsequent relationship maintenance. As such, future research should explore how a greater share of the responsibility for relationship maintenance falls to the child, and subsequently how that shift, in addition to the change in shared spaces, impacts how privacy boundaries shift.

Although my selective disclosure to my parents allowed them to know particular aspects of my experience, the boundary was still highly guarded and privacy surrounding the true reasons for my transfer was ultimately maintained (Morr Serewicz & Petronio, 2007). We are aware of this dichotomy, the desire for disclosure while protecting privacy boundaries, even in this work. We have wrestled with the ethical dilemma of examining our work, of disclosing something harmful, asking (or not asking) for help (Ellis, 2007), and the protection of the first author along with the other players in her experience. In placing a pseudonym for the institution and using only initials for the first author, we are robustly aware of the fact that by shielding the identity of the first author, we are protecting a sexual predator. These implications hung heavily on both authors as we contemplated the decision to protect the identity of the coach that abused his power and sexually harassed the first author. As we contemplated, we thought deeply about the fact that the perpetrator has no voice in this issue, and thus, we (reluctantly) decided to protect his identity. In addition, we did not want fingers pointed at the other coaches on staff at that institution, or to inadvertently tarnish their reputation when the other coaches did not participate, reify, or enable the predator to continue his sexual advances. Instead, the other coaches were complicit in a system that places young women in vulnerable positions with a man in power over them. It is unlikely the other adults within this system had reason to suspect, report, or intervene in the behavior of the predator. As we continually contemplated the implications of these decisions, we encountered texts (e.g. Ellis, 2007) that helped us continue to wrestle with these ideologies. Ellis (2007) states, "I ask how we can protect their identities and our relationships with them, deal with privacy and consent, and decide when to take our work back to those who are implicated in our stories" (p. 6). Because private information is co-owned (Petronio, 2002), both regarding disclosure exchanges and between those for whom a particular experience was

shared, survivors of abuse co-own those experiences with their abusers. In the end, we decided to protect the identities of all the people in this manuscript, including the first author, so she may appropriately be able to highlight the negative aspects of her debate experience while also preserving the anonymity of the program for which she debated. Though we understand these stories cannot be erased or untold, we stand behind our decisions to protect the identities of people in this story, even the perpetrator. Further considerations must be made as to how these narratives of abuse will be given space to be shared so survivors can own their own experiences and perpetrators be held accountable within the debate community.

Conclusion

Throughout the writing and revision process of this manuscript, we recognized the necessity of questioning the culture of collegiate debate that leaves abusers in positions of power while stripping agency, power, and control from victims. Therefore, we posit a lens of social justice is especially important in examining tightly coupled organizations like collegiate debate. This problematic structure creates a system rife with harmful practices. We urge readers of this journal to enact social justice, empower victims, and hold members of our organizations who engage in bullying, sexual harassment, and abusive behaviors accountable. We do not believe it is the responsibility of victims to challenge the status quo; instead, we posit that the organizational changes needed in debate must be made by agents with power at the head of organizations, such as CEDA and NFA. Until members within the organization wrestle with the systemic problems that are hurting collegiate debaters while enabling predators, this system will never change. We challenge readers of this article, and of this journal more generally, to engage in communicative behaviors that provide agency, voice, and power to victims of sexual harassment (see Livingston & Vik, 2021), while removing positions of power (both formal positions and informal positions) to people who victimize those with less power. Additionally, we invite mentors within the organization to be robustly reflexive in that their relationship with someone else in the organization does not negate the fact that that person may engage in predatory behaviors. After all, we understand that people who engage in problematic behaviors such as bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, P. & Tracy, S.J., 2012) and abuse are skilled at grooming both victims and supporters.

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