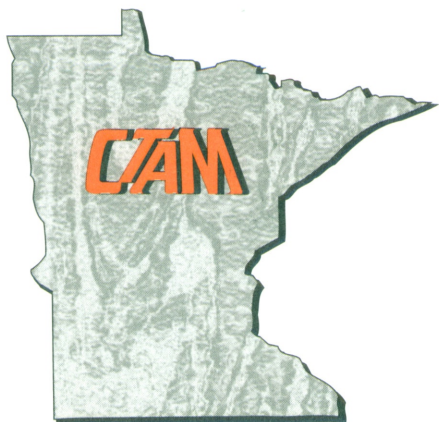


VOLUME 30
2003



*Blending Parody and Political Activism
on the World Wide Web:*

*How Bushboy.com Entertained and
Rallied Citizens in Minnesota's
Turbulent 2002 U.S. Senate Race*

*What's So Funny about Humor and
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A Communitimirthologist's Perspective*

*The Wellstone Memorial:
Remembering an Unspeakable Situation*

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The Root of the Listening Process*

Review:
Presentation Help Online
*by Diana Rehling, Paula Tompkins
and Dave Warne*

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COMMUNICATION & THEATER ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA

COMMUNICATION AND THEATER ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA JOURNAL

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CTAM Journal Mission Statement

The Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal (CTAM-J) is the scholarly journal of the Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota (CTAM). It is an outlet for articles related to issues of discipline-related importance including articles discussing innovative teaching methods. All theoretical and methodological approaches are welcome. The CTAM-J encourages contributions from scholars and practitioners, who comprise all segments of the journal's readership, including K-12 educators, graduate school, community college, and college or university groups. The journal welcomes theoretical and applied articles from both the theater and communication disciplines. Capable scholars in the appropriate field will blindly review all general articles.

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*To publish high quality scholarship in the disciplines of
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The Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal is seeking manuscripts for Volume 31, scheduled for publication in summer 2004. The journal welcomes theoretical and applied articles and teaching suggestions from theater, communication and forensics professionals from secondary and collegiate levels. All general articles will undergo a blind review process by a minimum of two reviewers. Manuscripts may be submitted for one of two sections: General Interest research and essays, and a Teacher's Workbook. Contact the editor concerning book review proposals.

Authors should submit three copies of their manuscript. A separate title page should accompany the copies. Authors should include an abstract of the article, and brief biographical information about themselves. Care should be taken that author identification has been removed from the paper itself. **All manuscripts should be prepared according to current APA or MLA guidelines.**

Authors are reminded to keep the Journal audience in mind: students and teachers at the high school, community college, private college and university levels. All manuscripts must be postmarked by March 31, 2004. Please send manuscripts and any questions to Mark Braun, Editor, Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal, Office of Associate Dean of the College, Gustavus Adolphus College, 800 West College Avenue, Saint Peter, MN 56082; 507-933-7368; <mbraun@gustavus.edu>.

***Blending Parody and Political Activism
on the World Wide Web:
How Bushboy.com Entertained and Rallied Citizens in
Minnesota's Turbulent 2002 U.S. Senate Race***

Jeffrey Falk

Macalester College, 2002

Abstract

Minnesota's 2002 U.S. Senate race will be remembered as the most tragic and chaotic in the state's history. The race also witnessed the emergence of a remarkable local activist Website, BushBoy.com, which parodied Norm Coleman's U.S. Senate campaign. While past communication scholars have argued that political spoof sites merely serve an inconsequential, non-informative, entertainment purpose, BushBoy.com would prove otherwise. BushBoy.com not only attracted and entertained numerous citizens, but also served as an online location of authentic cohesion and mobilization among Paul Wellstone's, and later Walter Mondale's, supporters. BushBoy.com's innovative approach to political rhetoric may provide a glimpse into the future of effective political activism.

The emergence in the last decade of the Internet as an influential dimension of America's political process has prompted scholars to analyze and evaluate the impact of this medium on the U.S. democracy. Early academic analysis concluded the Internet would revolutionize our democratic processes, presumably benefiting previously underrepresented groups. However, the consensus among political communication scholars in recent years appears to favor the view of online political activity as a World Wide Web version of "politics as usual" (D'Alessio, 2000). While the political establishment may indeed make successful use of the Internet as a convenient communication vehicle next to traditional media such as print, radio and TV, the Internet nonetheless provides almost unlimited space for individuals or groups to express their political opinions on personal Websites. One such phenomena of citizen expression are spoof sites, Websites that criticize, attack, and/or lampoon an issue or a candidate.

In 1998, computer-mediated communication (CMC) scholar Barbara Warnick published an article that sharply criticized and rejected the rhetorical significance and democratic merit of political spoof sites on the World Wide Web. Her analysis was based on an extensive study of so-called parodic Web postings related to the 1996 presidential race between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. She argued that these sites merely served an inconsequential, non-informative entertainment purpose. Moreover, Warnick attacked the

sites' authors for engaging in deceptive practices, such as "allegation, innuendo, exposé, parody, and slander" (1998, p. 306). In conclusion, she pointed out that spoof sites may actually only further public cynicism about the political process (1998, p. 306). Scholars in the fields of communication studies and political science joined her in articulating a generally pessimistic assessment of the Web's democratizing impact (see, for example, Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Stromer-Galley, 2000). Four years later, in 2002, a Minnesota spoof site, BushBoy.com, may have proved Warnick and others wrong, thus calling for a reevaluation and reconsideration of political parody and activism online.

Minnesota's 2002 U.S. Senate race will be remembered as one of the most tragic and chaotic in the state's history. The campaign was marked by the death of incumbent Senator Paul Wellstone ten days before election day, his replacement by former U.S. Vice President Walter Mondale, and the come-from-behind victory of the Republican challenger, former St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman. Tragedy and chaos aside, the race also witnessed the emergence of creative and intelligent homegrown spoof sites, most noticeably, BushBoy.com.

This article asserts that BushBoy.com, a non-affiliated activist spoof site parodying Norm Coleman's U.S. Senate campaign, not only skillfully managed to attract and entertain viewers with humorous texts and intelligent visual rhetoric, but also served as a location for authentic cohesion and mobilization among Wellstone, and later Mondale, supporters. Moreover, by openly identifying themselves, the site's creators, Rob Davis and Adam Wirtzfeld, two "newly political citizens," counteracted possible criticism for being secretive and, most importantly, deceptive (Davis, 2002). In conclusion, BushBoy.com's innovative approach to political rhetoric may provide a glimpse into the future face of effective online political activism. To demonstrate these claims, I provide a comprehensive description and analysis of BushBoy.com's on- and- offline efforts, contrasting these activities with Barbara Warnick's (1998) earlier assessment.

This article first provides an overview and recapitulation of the major characters and events of the 2002 U.S. Senate race in Minnesota. Next, it describes and gives context to the spoof site Bushboy.com, highlighting its employment of satire and parody, as well as BushBoy.com's creators' capability to attract media attention and, most importantly, mobilize its supporters. I then review and critique Warnick's article on spoof sites, contrasting her assessment with BushBoy.com's efforts. Finally, I urge the reader - not only communication scholars—to see this innovative Website's rhetoric in a positive light due to its humorous and civilized treatment of the subject, Minnesota's new junior Senator, Norm Coleman, and its entertaining contributions to Minnesota's 2002 U.S. Senate race.

The 2002 Minnesota Senate Race: Tragic, Chaotic, and Historic

The 2002 U.S. Senate campaign was certainly the most unusual in recent Minnesota election history. It encompassed the tragic death of a popular Democratic incumbent in an airplane crash ten days before Election Day, Paul Wellstone, the comeback of a retired political legend as his replacement, Walter "Fritz" Mondale, and the come-from-behind victory of a one-time Democrat turned Republican, Norm Coleman. Practically overnight, Minnesota became the focus of national media attention, with media pundits and political scientists scrambling to make sense of this unprecedented spectacle. The following section will provide an overview and analysis of the major characters, events, and issues marking the campaign. While the overview is far from comprehensive, it provides a basic understanding of this remarkable race. Moreover, one gains greater appreciation for the groundbreaking work done by Rob Davis and his BushBoy.com colleagues when aware of the extraordinary circumstances they faced.

The Candidates: Paul Wellstone and Norm Coleman

Out of the 34 U.S. Senate seats being contested in the fall 2002 election, the Minnesota race between incumbent Democrat Paul Wellstone and Republican challenger Norm Coleman was looked upon as one of the most unpredictable and critical in determining whether the Republicans would regain Senate majority. Up to Election Day on November 5th, the Democrats were clinging to a one-vote edge in the Senate. Closely watched by local and national media, polls showed that both candidates had nearly equal support among Minnesota voters throughout the campaign; Wellstone most often only leading by a slight margin. According to a *Time* analysis, "maverick liberal Wellstone may well be the Democrat's most vulnerable Senator" (Gibbs, 2002). In a similar assessment, the United Press International's (UPI) national political analyst, Peter Roff, pointed out, "Wellstone may be in the race of his life" (Roff, 2002). To the dismay of many Minnesotans, the contest was accompanied by a "full-blown advertising war" on local TV and radio stations (Brunswick & Lopez, 2002). In the end, spending in the Senate race would top \$20 million, the most expensive congressional election in Minnesota history (von Sternberg, 2002).

First elected as an outsider and reformer in 1990, Paul Wellstone, 58, had built a reputation as a spokesman for the political left in his 12 years in office, both revered and detested as "one of the Senate's most liberal members" (Feldmann, 2002). The son of Jewish Russian immigrants, Wellstone was raised in Arlington, Virginia, and was a champion wrestler at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where he earned his bachelor's degree and a doctorate in political science (Smith, 2002). While still in college, he married his high school sweetheart, Sheila Ison, who was consid-

ered his closest friend and advisor throughout his academic and political career (Smith, 2002). After graduate school, Wellstone taught political science at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., from 1969 to 1989. At Carleton, he would hone his skills as a grass-roots political activist and passionate orator for liberal causes. His first political campaign was in 1982, when he unsuccessfully ran for state auditor, defeated by future Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson. In 1990, a still little-known Wellstone would stun Minnesota's political establishment by defeating a popular and deep-rooted incumbent Republican, Rudy Boschwitz. After taking a triumphant victory ride to Washington, D.C. on the trademark green campaign bus, Wellstone made an impression in the Senate from day one. As the *Star Tribune* points out when summarizing his service in the Senate:

From the moment he arrived in the Senate, Wellstone was a crusade for the poor, the disadvantaged, workers, struggling family farmers, the environment and human rights causes. Wellstone was the voice of the true left (Smith, 2002).

Political pundits and journalists agreed that one of his principal stumbling blocks to reelection in 2002 was that in his 1990 campaign he had sworn to voters that he would only serve two terms. That broken pledge may have alienated Minnesota voters who were used to "good government" senators like Gene McCarthy and former vice presidents Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale, all three known for their integrity and dedication to public service (Roff, 2002).

But what made the race even more noteworthy and, indeed, fascinating to political pundits were the apparently "deep and abiding differences" between the two leading candidates (Smith, 2002). Wellstone's challenger, former St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman, 53, a onetime Democrat and chair of the 1992 Bill Clinton for President Campaign in Minnesota, was heavily recruited into the race and supported by the White House and the National Republican Committee. Like Wellstone, Coleman was a prodigy of the East Coast, born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, as one of eight children. After earning a J.D. at the University of Iowa, he worked in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office for 17 years as chief prosecutor and solicitor general. Most Minnesotans came to know him in the 1990s, when he served as the popular and high profile mayor of St. Paul for 8 years (PBS.org, 2002). While mayor, Coleman's pro-life position increasingly alienated him from the state Democratic Farm-Labor Party. He would switch to the Republican Party in 1996. In 1998, Coleman launched an unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign, narrowly losing the election to the Independence Party's Jesse Ventura. Ironically, while still a member of the DFL Party, Coleman fervently endorsed Senator Wellstone for reelection in a televised speech in 1995 (Stassen-Berger, 2002). For Coleman critics, this shifting of political posi-

tions was seen as evidence for his opportunism and supposed lack of core values and integrity. Coleman supporters, however, praised his bipartisan and pragmatic approach to government.

Whether a pragmatic moderate or opportunist, Coleman from the start positioned himself as a polar opposite to Wellstone. Most noticeably, Coleman tried to make Iraq and post-9/11 terrorism worries an issue against an allegedly unpatriotic Wellstone. Wellstone, who also voted against the 1991 Persian Gulf War resolution and voiced strong reservations about Bush's fall 2002 Iraq policy, did not support the resolution giving President Bush the authority to launch an invasion unless he would win allied support (Dewar & Eilperin, 2002). In contrast, Coleman continuously stressed his support for President Bush's plan to attack Baghdad in the near future, disregarding Minnesota's high percentage of swing voters, many of whom had reservations about possible unilateral action by the United States (Dewar & Eilperin, 2002). Coleman would further attack Wellstone as a classic tax-and-spend liberal. In turn, Wellstone's campaign criticized Coleman's questionable campaign contributions from corporate America in the face of scandals involving such businesses as Arthur Andersen and WorldCom. The Wellstone camp would also attack Coleman's wavering position on privatizing Social Security in a series of negative TV ad blitzes intended to scare middle-age workers and senior citizens.

Almost over night, all attack ads and vicious rhetoric came to a sudden halt on a morning in late October, ten days before the election.

Wellstone's Death, Mondale's Comeback, and Coleman's Win

On Friday, October 25, a chartered twin-engine plane carrying Senator Paul Wellstone, his wife Sheila, their daughter Marcia Markuson, as well as three campaign staff members and two pilots, crashed in a wooded area near Eveleth in northern Minnesota, killing all passengers (Brunswick, Doyle, & McEnroe, October 26, 2002).

The news of the crash literally brought the state to a stop as thousands of mourners left flowers and candles at the Wellstones' home and Wellstone's campaign headquarters, both in St. Paul. A quote in the *Star Tribune* by Jeff Blodgett, Wellstone's campaign manager, fittingly sums up the emotional turmoil felt by Wellstone supporters and many Minnesotans on that day: "It's an earth-shattering event. We're all grieving. The unthinkable is what it is" (Brunswick, Doyle, & McEnroe, 2002). Leading political figures from all over the nation expressed their final respect to the "champion for people" (Wellstone Senate staff statement, 2002). President Bush, speaking from his ranch in Texas, said, "Paul Wellstone was a man of deep convictions. He was a plainspoken fellow who did his best for his state and for his country. May the good Lord bless those who grieve" (White House

news release, 2002). Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura ordered that flags on all state buildings be flown at half-staff through the November 5 election. He said that Minnesotans need to be strong and “to be strong all we have to do is remember Paul’s energy” (Office of Governor Ventura news release, 2002). Norm Coleman announced that he would suspend campaign activities until further notice. “This is a terrible day for Minnesota,” Coleman said. “Paul Wellstone and I were political opponents, and that was it. That was it. I had the greatest respect for his passion. He was a fighter. The people of Minnesota are going to miss that. I’m going to miss that” (Stassen-Berger, 2002). When a reporter asked him if he regretted the tone of the sometimes “biting, nasty campaign,” Coleman said, “Paul is a wrestler and we fought this out. It is kind of like if you’ve ever watched prizefighting - at the end of the fight, the fighters...give a hug. In the end this was never about personal stuff” (Stassen-Berger, 2002). Just hours after Wellstone’s plane crash, Coleman’s campaign Website was taken down, replaced by a blank screen and words of condolence from Coleman and his wife, Laurie. Throughout the state, major candidates joined Coleman in suspending campaign activities for the following days. However, the show had to go on, and as shocking and disillusioning as Wellstone’s death was, the DFL had no time to waste in finding a suitable replacement. Many, including Wellstone’s sons, quickly looked to former U.S. vice president, senator, and ambassador, Walter Mondale, who would officially jump into the race five days later, on Wednesday, October 30. The Coleman camp, in turn, would have to reinvent a campaign marked for its sharp aggressiveness. In the days after Wellstone’s death, the consensus among political analysts was that Coleman now found himself in an impossible situation. “He can’t really do much to affect his fate, which is a very difficult position for a candidate,” said Steven Schier, a Carleton College political science professor (Olson, 2002).

As mourners tried to make sense of Wellstone’s sudden death, political analysts evoked a similar event that had taken place in Missouri just two years earlier. In 2000, Democratic Governor Mel Carnahan died in an airplane crash in the midst of a tight US Senate race with Senator John Ashcroft. Paying respect to his deceased opponent, Ashcroft chose to suspend campaign activities for eight days (Olson, 2002). While Carnahan’s name remained on the ballot, Roger Wilson, Carnahan’s gubernatorial successor, said he would appoint the governor’s widow, Jean Carnahan, if her husband prevailed. Mel Carnahan in fact won the election posthumously, and Jean Carnahan became the U.S. Senator for Missouri. Analysts agreed that Governor Carnahan’s posthumous victory could be credited both to sympathy for the widow and Ashcroft’s inability to campaign (Olson, 2002). If the Coleman campaign wanted to turn the race around, they would have to learn from Ashcroft’s mistakes. Moreover, they needed to

develop a communication strategy for their candidate that authentically and decently mourned the deceased Wellstone, as well as respectfully attacked Walter Mondale, a Minnesota icon.

Up until the Tuesday following Wellstone's death, polls indicated that the immensely popular Mondale held a comfortable lead over Coleman (Black, 2002). However, a public Wellstone memorial service on Tuesday evening, October 29, would mark a decisive turning point in the campaign as analysts later agreed. On that evening, the University of Minnesota's Williams Arena was "jammed with the famous, the unknown, the rich, the powerful and the humble," including Republican luminaries such as Senator Trent Lott, in a memorial service intended to celebrate the lives of Paul and Sheila Wellstone, as well as the staffers and pilots killed in the airplane crash (Black, 2002). Towards the end of the service, Rick Kahn, Wellstone's campaign treasurer and a former student of his at Carleton College, would give a passionate speech that many Minnesotans, as well as Wellstone staffers, felt was inappropriately political for a memorial service. Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura walked out in protest before Kahn finished. In the following days, Mondale and other DFL Party candidates suffered from a severe backlash effect created by the overly partisan tone of the memorial service. Polls showed that Minnesotans quickly reacted in dismay to Kahn's speech, with Coleman dramatically catching up to Mondale: the race was open again (Black, 2002).

The final stage of the campaign saw both candidates hustling around the state, with Coleman receiving a final boost from President George W. Bush at a rally in front of 14,000 supporters in St. Paul's Xcel Energy Center on the Saturday before election day. The candidates met for their one-and-only debate on Monday, November 4, in St. Paul's Fitzgerald Theater. National commentators like the Annenberg School of Communication's Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Republican speechwriter Peggy Noonan later commended both candidates for the quality and depth of the debate, Noonan calling it "the best debate in the nation this year" (Salisbury, 2002). While a feisty and knowledgeable Mondale was declared the winner by a panel of Minnesota debate coaches, the image of a youthful, respectful, and calm Coleman may have swayed the majority of Minnesota television viewers (Lopez, 2002). One day later, on election day, the momentum had finally swayed towards Coleman. Coleman won the race with 49.53 percent of the final tally, beating Mondale (47.34 percent) by roughly 50,000 votes (Source: Minnesota Secretary of State Website, 2002). Republican candidates also won the races for governor, state auditor, and secretary of state, providing the Minnesota Republican Party with an impressive electoral sweep. Statewide voter turnout was unusually high on that day at almost 80 percent, lending credence to the notion that Minnesotans felt and acted

upon the historic magnitude of the race (Source: Minnesota Secretary of State Website, Dec. 1, 2002).

In the days after the election, political scientists and pundits pointed to several factors that may have given Coleman the final boost. Jennifer Duffy, as Senate analyst for the *Cook Political Report*, commended Coleman for his performance following Wellstone's death. "Coleman ran a pretty good race form beginning to end, but in many ways, the last ten days were his best" (Lopez, 2002). In conclusion, the now infamous "memorial service-turned-political-rally," frequent visits by President George W. Bush and other GOP luminaries, a change in the national political climate in favor of the Republicans, and a distinct variation in ad messages in the last weeks of the campaign, finally propelled Coleman ahead of Mondale in one of the most peculiar U.S. Senate races remains to be more closely analyzed (Lopez, 2002).

When Minnesota's junior U.S. Senator embarked on his voyage to Washington, D.C., his actions were not only closely watched by national and local media, but also by his online "nemesis," BushBoy.com, which emerged as a potent force of on- and offline political activism in the last months of the race. The following section will introduce the reader to BushBoy.com and highlight the innovative work done by its founders, Rob Davis and Adam Weitzfeld.

Taking Online Political Activism to the Next Level: BushBoy.com

Until the summer of 2002, Minnesota had never before experienced the phenomenon of well-known homegrown, independent political spoof sites. While prior Minnesota gubernatorial and senatorial campaigns had indeed utilized the Internet as a tool for message dissemination and supporter mobilization, most memorably Jesse Ventura in 1998, the mixture of parody and contemporary politics online remained a novelty to Minnesota (Stromer-Galley, 2000). However, campaign 2002 fostered the growth of not one, but three noteworthy spoof sites: WellstoneMustGo.com, BushBoy.com, and TheFunion.net; a spoof site created by the Green Party's Ken Pentel for Governor Campaign, styled after the popular real-world news spoof site, TheOnion.com. The following section describes and analyzes the work done by Davis and his colleagues over the last months of the Senate campaign, from the preliminary planning stage to the current state of BushBoy.com.

The founding story of BushBoy.com is almost too simple to be true. In early July 2002, Rob Davis and Adam Weitzfeld, both Minnesota natives, decided they were more than concerned that a supposedly overly George W. Bush- and Big Business-dependent Norm Coleman would get elected to the U.S. Senate instead of incumbent Senator Paul Wellstone. Not wanting to be passive spectators, they felt the need to somehow get

involved in the campaign, as well as involve others. Davis, a 1998 graduate of St. Paul's Macalester College and a communications and marketing specialist for a St. Paul software company, acknowledges that his and Weitzfeld's prior involvement in political causes had been minor. However, Norm Coleman's ambitious and promising campaign for Senate incited them and six other acquaintances to take a time-consuming step – they ended up working close to 100 hours a week up to the election – on behalf of Senator Wellstone. For Davis and Weitzfeld, a freelance graphic designer who studied at the famed Joe Kubert School of Comic and Graphic Art in New Jersey, the creation of a cutting-edge anti-Coleman Website was an attractive prospect, as it closely matched their personal and professional interests and strengths. Moreover, both knew and felt the challenge of the anti-Wellstone site WellstoneMustGo.com, which had already been launched months before. What Davis and Weitzfeld may have initially lacked in knowledge of the local and national political scene, they compensated for with a trained insight of what makes the Internet “tick,” a quick-witted marketing and publicity campaign, and state-of-the-art web design and animation skills. Back in his college days, Davis had founded the Macalester Internet Underground, one of the first student-run Web servers in the United States. Before the website was even set up, Davis had purchased several domain names, including Coleman4Senate.com, NotNorm.com, and BushBoy.com. He would later buy the keywords “Norm Coleman,” “George Bush,” “Minnesota,” “Senate,” and “Americans for Job Security” on the popular Internet search engine Google, thus directing potential Web issue surfers to his site. Within a few weeks, the eight-person team opted for the catchiest name, BushBoy.com, and their ambitious vision was sketched out:

To launch a Website into the mainstream of state political interest: BushBoy.com. Through editorial, animation, and art BushBoy.co will say what official political campaigns cannot or will not. BushBoy.com will loudly criticize Norm Coleman and create doubt in those that would elect him (Davis, 2002).

From the start, Davis stressed his independence from the Wellstone camp and the DFL Party, knowing that any connection would jeopardize BushBoy.com's credibility in the media's and public's eyes. A marketing expert, he asserted his independence by cleverly referring to himself as a “newly political citizen,” a phrase that local media such as the *Pioneer Press* would readily take up when referring to Davis (Davis, 2002). In the early and tentative mission statement for BushBoy.com, Davis, who functions as BushBoy.com's chief spokesman and promoter, articulates the overarching theme for Bushboy.com, succinctly laying out their motives:

To avoid the gross Congressional misrepresentation of the State of Minnesota by the old-buddy network of George W. Bush through contagious ironic, sarcastic and/or over-exaggerated comedy (Davis, 2002).

Confident that the election-deciding swing vote population in Minnesota lived in the middle class suburbs surrounding the Twin Cities, Davis decided to structure the content in a way that targeted and persuaded this coveted audience. BushBoy.com intended to shed a light on Norm Coleman that painted him as a right-wing puppet out of touch with Minnesota's traditionally moderate and progressive citizens. Davis was certain the employment of humor as a rhetorical device would be most effective in attracting viewers to their site. Moreover, he believed humorous texts and catchy visuals would be an ethical and humane ground on which to criticize Norm Coleman. Davis also knew that a controlled dosage of fair-minded, civil, and intelligent parody would inoculate them against possible legal repercussions brought forward by an angered Coleman campaign. Along these legal lines, Davis decided it was reasonable not to cheaply mimic the design and content of Norm Coleman's official campaign Website when designing BushBoy.com.

Throughout the early planning stage, Davis was fortunate to draw on the advice and expertise of Zack Exley, the creator of the notorious and still active anti-Bush spoof site, GWBush.com. In the 2000 presidential campaign, Exley had garnered national media attention after a disgruntled Bush campaign sent him a cease and desist letter intended to shut down his irreverent Website (Foot & Schneider, 2002). Bush failed, and Exley attained almost legendary status among progressive activists. Exley was able to calm Davis' fears about possible legal trouble, noting that the Federal Election Commission (FEC), "has no teeth and won't do anything. But you can play that up with the press as if you're being sued" (Exley e-mail to Davis, July 31, 2002). Exley also advised Davis to register his BushBoy.com endeavors as a Political Action Committee (PAC), giving him the legal independence and protection such a body offered. Regarding fundraising activities, Exley told Davis that most funding would probably come out of his own pocket, which it, in retrospect, did. As Exley straightforwardly put it:

Actually taking contributions makes things more complicated, though. Why would it cost dollars for press releases? I only took contributions for my radio ad, and I still haven't actually cashed the checks. I have no idea to handle that stuff for tax purposes. If you figure it out, let me know (Exley e-mail to Davis, July 31, 2002).

However, Davis was not discouraged by Exley's words about funding, BushBoy.com was on track. In final tally, Davis would actually only spend

roughly \$200 for registering as a PAC and buying time-limited keywords on Google. (He didn't bother keeping track of minor costs such as gasoline and basic office supplies.) Although Davis did not meet his initial "plan of attack" timeline, he was still working a full-time job next to BushBoy.com, the site launched in mid October 2002. From that point on, Davis and his colleagues would embark on a schedule of 20-hour workdays for the following three weeks.

On Thursday, October 17, Davis sent out an introductory press release, "Norm Coleman Parody Web Site, www.BushBoy.com, Unveiled," via the *Internet Wire*, announcing the launch of BushBoy.com. The site had gone online the previous day, October 16, at 9:00 a.m. (Davis, 2002). While BushBoy.com's online competitor, the anti-Wellstone site WellstoneMustGo.com, preferred to play a low-key role regarding media and public relations activities, Davis actively pursued the local media's attention. Throughout the site's brief online life, WellstoneMustGo.com's founder actually declined to disclose his identity, thus staying anonymous. BushBoy.com's press release invited interested citizens to a "BushBoy Happy Hour Rally" at Minneapolis' "The Saloon Bar" to celebrate the site's launch (Davis, 2002). Journalist accessing the site after receiving the press release found a Website not to be overlooked - regardless if one agreed with the content.

In the following weeks, BushBoy.com's work was mentioned—if briefly—in both major Minnesota daily newspapers, Minneapolis's *Star Tribune* and St. Paul's *Pioneer Press*, while two alternative news sources, Minneapolis' weekly *City Pages* and *MNPolitics.com* featured favorable, lengthy reviews. In an article subtitled, "Two Nice Minnesota Boys and the Healing Power of Satire," the politically progressive *City Pages* praised BushBoy.com as "one of the year's most inspired—not to mention righteous—political websites" (Schimke, 2002). *MNPolitics.com*, a bipartisan news and opinion website tailored to viewers interested in the Minnesota political scene, posted an article, "Cyberpoliticking," that reviewed the three major spoof sites of the 2002 campaigns: BushBoy.com, WellstoneMustGo.com and TheFunion.net. Obviously impressed, the article concludes that one should "leave it to laypeople to make a candidate site really work" (Erickson, 2002). The author commends BushBoy.com's owners' "guerilla marketing tactics," noting, "while the site itself is pretty clever, what's more impressive is the marketing savvy of its owners" (Erickson, 2002).

BushBoy.com: Memorable Flash Animations, Interactive Features, and Real World Mobilization

From day one, BushBoy.com had the look and feel of a professionally

created and maintained Website. In comparison to the more rigid and static layout of WellstoneMustGo.com, BushBoy.com emanated a colorful liveliness and a decidedly less antagonistic tone - the BushBoy.com team actually points out that Coleman "probably [is] a pretty decent guy" (Davis, 2002). Playing on the theme of Coleman's dependence and indebtedness to President Bush, the site's logo featured a pawn from a chess set on its banner. This pawn would serve as the sites' recurring logo throughout all BushBoy.com activities.

One of the most eye-catching highlights of the site is a Flash animation of a gleaming Coleman selling "my votes in the U.S. Senate" on "eBuy" to "George Bush and all his special interest buddies" (Davis, 2002). At the end of the animation, the viewer sees the total campaign contributions Coleman has received. The dollar amounts flutter across the screen and into Coleman's pocket. Another feature pokes fun at Coleman's supposedly lax attitude towards environmental protection, asking visitors to vote on backdrops for Coleman's speech on the Boundary Waters Canoe area. The backdrops include an image of a nuclear power plant, nuclear and atomic symbols, snowmobiles, and chain saws. Other jests include a Paul Bunyon statue thinking, "that guy sure doesn't sound Minnesotan" in reference to Coleman; a caricature of George W. Bush sitting on Coleman's back as the "Pony Express" for e-mail delivery; a story relating Coleman's "Proclamation of Corporate Independence;" and an outdoor stadium photo with the caption, "Coleman: as Minnesotan as Yankee Stadium" (Davis, 2002). Although the BushBoy.com team excelled at having fun at Coleman's expense, they did not take themselves too seriously. In a self-deprecating manner, they asked visitors whether a "semi-funny, semi-political website really [is] a good way to meet women?" (Davis, 2002). BushBoy.com also reminded its visitors that their site was nothing but a "collection of opinions, exaggerations and humor. Taking the contents of this site seriously is reason enough to have your head examined" (Davis, 2002).

Of course, Davis was not interested in merely entertaining his audience with funny visuals and tongue in cheek texts, but intended to get them actively involved in spreading the word, no matter how little. As a basic feature, BushBoy.com had a so-called "viral marketing function" that let visitors send five friends an e-mail with a link to the site. In addition, viewers were encouraged to subscribe to BushBoy.com's frequent e-mail updates. E-mail subscribers also received *Lapdog*, the site's newsletter. *Lapdog* editions featured press mentions for the site, links to other activist sites, invitations to join the BushBoy.com team at Coleman campaign events, and most entertainingly, angry e-mails from Coleman supporters. Literally having nothing to lose, Davis was disarmingly transparent about BushBoy.com's activities, which were not limited to the online world. On October 18, one day after

the launch, Davis and friends traveled to Rochester, Minnesota, to hold up signs advertising BushBoy.com outside the University Center Regional Sports Center, where President Bush was attending a massive Republican rally. To Davis' disappointment, he was not arrested, which may have garnered invaluable media attention. However, BushBoy.com's Rochester antics did receive brief mention in the *Rochester Post-Bulletin* and Minneapolis' *Star Tribune* the next day. Two days later, on Sunday, October 20, Davis was a guest on KSTP AM radio's "Inside Politics in Minnesota," where he talked about his work at BushBoy.com just an hour after Norm Coleman had been on the show. Davis' toils were beginning to pay off as he registered 1800 individual visitors and 350 e-mail subscribers on Wednesday, October 23, one week after the launch. However, on Friday, October 25, all activity would be halted by Wellstone's death. How would BushBoy.com react? Davis responded by heightening the efforts at BushBoy.com.

In the minutes after CNN first reported that Wellstone's plane had crashed in northern Minnesota, Davis sent out an e-mail notifying all BushBoy.com subscribers. A few hours later, BushBoy.com's usual content was taken down, replaced by a black screen and a few words of condolence from Davis and Weitzfeld. At the same time, WellstoneMustGo.com's anti-Wellstone content would be taken down for good, even after Mondale entered the race, being replaced by words of condolence for the late Senator and the others killed in the crash. That evening, Davis attended an impromptu memorial service at the State Capitol in St. Paul. Unsure at first of the appropriateness, Davis took catchy BushBoy.com cardboard signs with him, a move that would grab the interest of numerous mourners. For Davis, the presence of BushBoy.com signs that evening communicated that the battle was not over for Wellstone supporters, even in death. In the next days, BushBoy.com's traffic actually significantly increased, lending credence to the notion that BushBoy.com may have served a cohesive function among disillusioned Wellstone supporters. By Election Day, Davis counted 65,000 individual visits, while 2,300 people had signed up for BushBoy.com's e-mail updates. As the race began to heat up again following the dubious memorial-service-turned-political-rally, so did BushBoy.com's efforts. As before, the BushBoy.com team became a recognized force at Coleman and Mondale campaign events throughout the state. They made themselves noticeable at the televised Republican rally in St. Paul's Xcel Energy Center on the Saturday before Election Day, and at the one and only debate between Coleman and Mondale at St. Paul's Fitzgerald Theater. On election night, the BushBoy.com team held up their trademark signs into the TV cameras at the DFL's official gathering at the St. Paul Radisson Hotel.

Although Davis was clearly disappointed by Coleman's win, he did not see this as a loss for BushBoy.com. In fact, he has kept this online Coleman watchdog up and running as this article goes into print in July 2003, regularly updating the site with jests and visuals attacking and poking fun at Minnesota's freshman senator.

One thing is certain: Davis' effective use of the Internet has set a standard for spoof sites in future campaigns. Moreover, his work stands as an imperative for political communication scholars to revise their notions about the value of spoof sites. In the following section, I will highlight Barbara Warnick's (1998) analysis of spoof sites, contrasting her findings with BushBoy.com's work.

The Leading Scholarly Analysis of Political Spoof Site

Given the fact that the Internet, the "home" of spoof sites, itself is a comparably new medium, the amount of scholarly analysis on the rhetorical significance and political impact of spoof sites is small and limited. In fact, the premier academic journal article on spoof sites, Barbara Warnick's "Appearance or Reality? Political Parody on the Web in Campaign '96," is roughly 4 years old; obviously antiquated for such a rapidly evolving medium. Moreover, Warnick's article outright rejects the democratizing value of spoof sites for the political process. However, the work done by BushBoy.com indicates that Warnick's earlier judgment needs to be revised. I am confident that, as time progresses, more and more political communication scholars, will be intrigued by this creative form of political action on the World Wide Web. Thus, this section is not primarily intended to critique Barbara Warnick, but rather to show how interpretations of the Internet need to be continuously revised.

Barbara Warnick's groundbreaking article, "Appearance or Reality? Political Parody on the Web in Campaign '96," studied both serious and parodic political Websites relevant to the 1996 presidential race between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. In this article Warnick argued that so-called political parodic Websites present a "postmodern communication environment where the identity of the author, the stability of the text, and the audience itself are all fragmented" (1998, p. 306). Warnick drew on prior research done by a number of scholars of CMC, who have argued in a similar manner (1998, p. 306). Warnick's employment of postmodern thought supports her finding that appearance is, in fact, not reality when assessing the context of spoof Websites.

On parodic sites, the site authors are often not identified, or are identified only obliquely; material is often not copyrighted, and much of it seems to be intended for appropriation and dissemination by browsers, text is

discontinuous, dispersed, and doubles back on itself. While these features may exist in other media, they are particularly well suited to the Web with its cut-and-paste images, textual fragments, circular links, anonymous authors, and indecipherable allusions (Warnick, 1998, p. 310).

Warnick describes the browsing of political Websites as a “recursive activity where one could participate in pseudo polls, sign bogus petitions, and play political computer games” (1998, p. 306). Referring to the increasing public skepticism about the political process, Warnick argued that such interactive gadgets merely provide the illusion of political participation, in effect not decreasing public cynicism about politics or the political process. Warnick argued, “Web browsing is often an isolated, self-fulfilling activity. It is not constructive but deconstructive, not goal-oriented but processual, not substance but style” (1998, p. 317). In conclusion, she lamented that authors of parodic Websites “enacted a performative contradiction between what they said on the one hand and how they operated rhetorically on the other. They promised to ferret out the truth and correct the record, but they relied on allegation, innuendo, and anonymous tips to do so” (1998, p. 320). Clearly, this harsh evaluation loses its force when considering the transparent work done by BushBoy.com in 2002. In comparison to the WellstoneMustGo.com’s founder(s), Davis from the start identified himself and other collaborators prominently under the “About” section on BushBoy.com, thus making no secret of who they were (BushBoy.com, 2002). While BushBoy.com indeed made exaggerated and overly dramatic claims and insinuations about Coleman’s political agenda, it embedded these “attacks” in a humorous, tongue in cheek context that made its satirical nature obvious. As the site readily disclaims, “BushBoy.com is a collection of opinions, exaggerations and humor. Taking the content of this site seriously is reason enough to have your head examined” (BushBoy.com, 2002). Instead of conjuring up wild, tabloid-like narratives, BushBoy.com based its content on tangible data such as Coleman’s policies as mayor of St. Paul, his actual campaign statements, or monetary contributions made to the Coleman campaign. Most importantly, Davis made it a rule not to include and spread sleazy rumors or gossip about Coleman that pertained to the candidate’s private life, showing an understanding for the political and private. BushBoy.com was about political satire, not slander.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I suggest scholars continue the ongoing endeavor to make sense of this novel and evolving form of political action. Without doubt, the innovative online activity surrounding Minnesota’s 2002 Senate race provided a glimpse of what the future face of effective political activism

may look like on the World Wide Web. Moreover, I ask the reader to appreciate BushBoy.com for its, in my opinion, mature and civilized approach toward its subject, Norm Coleman. Instead of viciously and anonymously attacking Coleman, BushBoy.com poked fun at him on the basis of his political decisions and stance on issues. Showing an understanding for civic discourse, Rob Davis openly identified himself, thus opening a forum to criticism and dialogue.

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***What's So Funny About Humor Theorizing
and Humor Research? Sadly, Quite a Lot:
A Communimirthologist's Perspective***

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Abstract

Humor theories, such as superiority, incongruity, and relief, have failed to provide an adequate understanding of many of the factors that contribute to a message being perceived as humorous, such as context, interpersonal relationships, and the nonverbal components of the message. Humor research, while often acknowledging the difficulties of defining "humor," has sought to quantify "sense of humor," "humor ability," and "humor orientation." 'Researchers' focus on joke telling instead of the production of spontaneous humor is seen as problematic. More qualitative research is advocated, with an emphasis on the analysis of the social construction of humor.

In one of my favorite episodes of *Seinfeld*, Jerry's dentist friend, Tim Watley, converts to Judaism and soon after starts telling "Jewish jokes," jokes that mock the Jewish people. Jerry is outraged and complains to a priest, who asks, "And you are offended as a Jew?" Jerry responds, "No. I'm offended as a comedian!" meaning that Watley has discovered a loophole that allows him to make jokes about Jews without really being Jewish, thus avoiding the anti-Semitic label.

As I read through the scores of research articles in the Communication field (and other fields as well) on humor, I feel a similar outrage. Not as an academic scholar, but as someone who has spent a lifetime trying to make people laugh. The theoretical bases, the operational definitions, the methodologies used, and the conclusions arrived at, have led me to the inescapable conclusion that most humor researchers are missing the true essence of what humor is, how and why funny people try to make others laugh, and why people do (or don't) laugh at humor attempts.

I am a communimirthologist. The reader is probably unaware of this term. That is understandable, since I made it up. Unless you're referring to Edith Wharton's house, the term "mirth" only surfaces in the serious analyses that exist in academic journal articles about humor. "Levity" and "jocularity" are also terms that find refuge in such articles. I have never said the word mirth out loud (to my knowledge, no one has) but I sort of like the

word and have decided to incorporate it into the label for the new field of research I will advocate in this paper. Any resemblance of the word "communimirthologist" to some other word is purely coincidental. Honest.

I have been attempting to make people laugh since I was around five years old, often with success. In some social contexts it has been my primary style of communication. I don't believe, though, that I was born funny. Based upon their study, Wrench and McCrosky (2001) concluded, "...our tendency to communicate using humorous stories, jokes, and nonverbal patterns is probably genetically based" (p. 155). Well, my parents were not funny. My sister is not funny. Of the literally hundreds of blood relatives of which I'm aware, only my Uncle Charlie was occasionally successful at eliciting laughter, though I remember him laughing more at his own attempts at humor than the people around him did. The only funny genes I'm aware of are the pair of Sergio Valentes still hanging in my closet from 1977.

I believe that humor is one of the most subjective phenomena in the field of communication. "Nothing is funny to everyone and anything seems potentially funny to someone" (LaFave, Haddad, and Maesen, 1996, p. 85). Previous humor studies have surveyed groups and conducted experiments using groups and then subjected the resulting data to a variety of statistical procedures. I don't believe that quantifying one's sense of humor or one's humor ability has provided much insight into the communicative act of humor. In this paper I will draw upon my almost half-century of mirth-making and mirth-analysis experience to provide a new perspective. Therefore, proudly asserting the use of a research methodology with an N of 1, I would like to share with you my assessment of humor theorizing and humor research, as well as offer my insights into the phenomenon of humor. Take my theory...please!

The Sacred Canons of Humor Theory: Funny Philosophers?

Speculation as to why people laugh has been going on for over two thousand years. The most commonly cited theories of humor are superiority theory, incongruity theory, and relief theory. What is most interesting is that the musings of famous philosophers are attached to each of these theories, even though most people would not readily associate philosophers with the field of mirth. And though these theories have had their critics (see LaFave, Haddad, and Maesen, 1996), they remain popular theoretical foundations in many humor studies.

Superiority Theory

Superiority theory asserts that we laugh because of the pleasure that accompanies comparing ourselves favorably to someone else. We put others down, and by doing so we build ourselves up. A section from Thomas Hobbes' (1651/1963) *Leviathan* is often quoted in humor literature to support this theory:

Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called laughter and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them, or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves (p. 155).

What causeth *me* to maketh grimaces are studies that label Hobbes as a "humor theorist." Hobbes devoted one paragraph in *Leviathan* to his thoughts on laughter, listing it among the various "passions." Hobbes provides us with no support for his beliefs. It is theory by assertion, similar to the superiority theories espoused by Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero a few thousand years earlier. Plato, circa 355 B.C. wrote that we laugh at those who violate the precept "know thyself" and Aristotle and Cicero believed that the ludicrous was to be found in the defects and deformities of others (as cited in Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p. 7). (I, myself, have never found Aristotle to be that funny, though I do enjoy saying the word "topoi" and have considered using it as a name for my first born.)

A vast amount of humor does involve mocking and ridiculing someone or something. Insult humor was the stock and trade of entertainers like Jackie Leonard, Don Rickles, and Sam Kinison. But "superiority" is much too simplistic a label and explanation for why people enjoy such humor. Ridicule is an attack, it is a communicative act of aggression, but the goal of producing laughter in the target audience makes ridicule qualitatively different from hostile communication whose goal is not laughter.

There is a fine line between saying something mean and unkind and being perceived as funny. People who are not gifted in terms of creating humor often have such barbs received negatively. Talented humorists, especially people whom we like, are often given permission to ridicule others and still receive the reward of laughter. On a recent HBO special, Robin Williams mimicked homosexuals, people of Middle Eastern background, and a variety of other ethnic groups, to the delight of his audience. One can assume that the vast majority of the live audience was adoring fans and they assume good intentions on Williams' part. They know his primary goal is to make them laugh. Few, if any, in the audience would label him as homophobic or racist, so they know these are "just jokes." Other people whose intentions we are not sure of, or people we dislike, could attempt similar humor to Williams and not be found funny, even if those joke constructions and delivery evidenced comedic talent.

There can be a sense of powerlessness that accompanies living in a world where situations and people are not what we'd like them to be. Many aspects of daily life can frustrate and anger people, from bad drivers to rude wait staff to politicians whose policies we don't like to coworkers who make sucking sounds with their teeth. People who abuse their power, act with

arrogance, behave like phonies, or act deceitfully are often a source of irritation and annoyance. We can experience anger, rage, frustration, or jealousy over such aspects of day-to-day life, but feeling and even expressing those emotions are not often satisfying, and certainly not enjoyable.

But when we or someone else can transform that hostility into humor, symbolically defeating that person or institution with the use of ridicule, the result often *is* satisfying. It can be transcendent. The boss is still mean and petty, but we joke about her/him and we not only cope through the use of humor, but we feel less helpless, more powerful, and we have fun at their expense through laughter. "Superiority" seems a very inadequate label to place upon this reason for laughter. "Feeling not so powerless" and "transcending frustration and anger through laughter" captures the experience for me.

This perspective on hostile humor is not much different than that expressed by someone I would consider a legitimate humor theorist, Sigmund Freud, who devoted an entire book, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, to the examination of humor. Freud (1905/1963) distinguished between two types of jokes: non-tendentious and tendentious. Non-tendentious are the harmless jokes, often word plays, verbal silliness, and having no particular aim but to amuse. Tendentious jokes, though, have as their main purpose, the veiled expression of hostility. Freud believed that human aggression is often repressed. It is socially unacceptable to express anger. Hostile jokes allow for the safe release of this natural human impulse and are more socially acceptable.

The "sudden" element from Hobbes' quote is seen by some as a critical element in the experience of humor. In concluding their assessment of humor theorizing, LaFave, Haddad, and Maesen (1996) write, "Necessary ingredients of an adequate theory of humour would seem to involve a (1) sudden (2) happiness increment (such as a feeling of superiority or heightened self-esteem) as a consequence of a (3) perceived incongruity" (p. 89). It has been my experience that laughter is usually a very sudden response. It can be a burst of energy, an explosion of sorts when it occurs within a large group of people. Given a choice between labeling this a cognitive experience of felt superiority or an emotional reaction caused by the release of aggression,

Freud's explanation for the purposes served by hostile humor makes much more sense.

Self-deprecating humor is not usually connected to the superiority theory of humor, but I believe it has more relevance to the theory than humor that attacks others. On the surface, it seems to portray the self-deprecator as more human, as being capable of not taking themselves too seriously, and of putting themselves in a one-down position, letting others feel

superior to him or her. We have been given permission to laugh *with* someone, and avoid the guilt that could accompany such behavior. But by poking fun at themselves, jokers rise above their imperfections and join the audience in feeling superior to this aspect of their behavior or personality. The tragic character is one who is blind to his/her flaws or will not admit frailties. Those who are arrogant or in denial are often the targets of ridicule. By pre-empting any mocking criticism, the joker succeeds in getting the audience to laugh with, instead of at, him/her. The skilled humorist will connect with universal imperfections, so that jokes about the human condition indirectly allow the audience to laugh at themselves, too. We can all feel superior to the less than perfect sides of ourselves, taking pleasure in the self-awareness and the courage to admit our flaws.

Incongruity Theory

Another oft-applied humor theory is incongruity theory, which claims that laughter is a result of a surprise, something unexpected, inconsistent or incongruous. We again must thank another acclaimed philosopher, Immanuel Kant, for such insights. (Yes—mirth, levity, and jocularity all come to mind when we recall the first time we read *Critique of the Pure Dread*.)

Kant wrote, "Laughter is an affection arising from a sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" (as cited in Eastman, 1972, p. 153).

As was true with superiority theory, I feel this perspective, too, is much too simplistic and incomplete an explanation for why something is perceived as funny. There is an element, though, that does get at the heart of humor. Humor and laughter are commonplace in our everyday interactions, but being serious is still the norm. People's general expectations are that when they ask another a question or engage in an exchange of information, the other person will not respond in a facetious manner or with silliness or with the use of hyperbole or sarcasm. Initiating a humorous verbal or nonverbal message, or responding with one, is not only a violation of expectations, but it is a way of reframing the communicative event. If the joker is talented, this violation is often perceived as humorous. It provides a very different perspective on the reality that was being addressed. But if the joker lacks ability or if the receiver(s)' definition of the situation will not allow for a humorous perspective, the attempt at humor will likely be met with disdain and perhaps even anger. The surprise or incongruity does not result in laughter.

As I will address later in this article, humor research is often focused on the telling of jokes and funny stories. But those are exceptions rather than the rule of everyday humor. Most messages that elicit laughter are spontaneous. The humor emerges from the context, from the persona of the joker, and from the values and attitudes of the audience. People who are

adept at making others laugh, and who do it often, are able to see the humor in everyday experiences, and are able to share that vision with others. Comedians such as Jerry Seinfeld, David Brenner, and George Carlin have been labeled “observational comedians.” They find the absurdities, the hypocrisies, and the illogic in commonplace situations we find annoying or frustrating or enraging. These humorists have the ability to frame these situations in a way that makes us laugh. Let’s call it the “mirth perspective.” And while the aforementioned comics are very talented at this, there are nonprofessionals, the funny people we encounter in our daily lives, who can also provide us with this perspective. It is *this* perspective that is incongruous, one that we are often not expecting. I am much more successful in making people laugh when I am not trying to do it too often. The more they expect what I say to be funny, the harder it is to be funny. But the key is being able to see the absurdities in life and then to be able to articulate that perspective in juxtaposition to the commonly expressed serious view of life. How one communicates that perspective determines whether or not the incongruity will be perceived as humorous. Incongruity alone is not a sufficient condition for producing laughter.

Relief Theory

The third theory I will address is the theory of humor called “relief theory.” Humor is said to function as affording relief from strain or constraint, or to release tension. Descartes took time out from weightier subjects like existence to speculate on why people laugh. He wrote, “Laughter results from the joy that comes when he have been indignant at some evil and realize we cannot be harmed by it” (as cited in Berlyne, 1972, p. 802). In small group communication theory, the “joker” role is often synonymous with the role of tension reliever (see Bormann, 1990). But this perspective addresses the consequences of some humor attempts. It does not explain why some humor results in tension relief and some does not.

What is missing from all three of these theories, and from Freud’s theory as well, is an understanding of the communicative process of humor. What kinds of verbal and nonverbal strategies are used in encoding a message that one wants to be perceived as humorous? What role does the receiver of the intended humorous message play? I will address these questions in more depth at the end of this article.

Measuring One’s Humor Ability: HO, HO, HO.

On the last day of class in a course I taught last year, a student presented me with three typewritten pages of humorous comments I had made over the course of the semester. I was flattered that she had been dutifully recording my attempts at mirth, but it was not a document I wished to share with people who had not been members of the class. Not because there was

anything offensive on those pages, but because read out of context, none of those comments would have been judged as funny. It was a classic example of “you had to be there.” They were not rehearsed, memorized constructions of humor in the sense of “Two adjuncts walk into a bar...” These were spontaneous constructions that were perceived as humorous because of the situation, because of the students’ perceptions of and feelings about me, because of the relationship the students and I had developed prior to the comment, and because of all the nonverbal components of those comments (facial expression, vocal qualities, timing, etc.). The humor in my classroom was typical of the humor we all experience in a variety of contexts in our everyday lives. While people sometimes do tell preplanned jokes and humorous stories, it is my sense that spontaneous humor is more prevalent.

Yet, as noted earlier, humor research often places its primary emphasis on the telling of jokes. Perhaps this is an issue of semantics, but I think most people distinguish between telling a joke or humorous story, and a humorous off-the-cuff comment or a spontaneous story told humorously. This is no longer a world of Henny Youngmans and Alan Kings and Shecky Greens, but humor research often still seems to reflect that era.

The quintessential example of this appears in Feingold’s (1983) work in which he outlines the revision to his “Humor Perceptiveness Test,” an instrument he believed could measure humor ability. The test consists of thirty-two “incomplete jokes, puns, gags, and riddles” (p.163). The subjects were asked to fill in the missing words on these “one-liners.” Here are a few examples:

Waiter, there’s a _____ in my _____.

One word answer: Take my wife _____.

A beggar told me he hadn’t had a bite in days, so I _____ him (p.163).

This study was done in 1983, but these one-liners were old when Bob Hope was a toddler. Feingold’s subjects were introductory psychology undergraduates, likely to have been born in the early 1960s and who were more likely to recall humorous lines from sketches from *Saturday Night Live* than jokes of the vaudeville era. And some of the one-liners are not even jokes, but just pithy sayings (e.g. “Boys don’t make passes at girls who wear glasses.”).

A year later Martin and Lefcourt’s (1984) article presented the “Situational Humor Responses Questionnaire: Quantitative Measures of Sense of Humor.” This questionnaire provides subjects with twenty-one situations and asks them how they would respond. Situation #10 stated, “If you were having a romantic evening alone with someone you really liked (girlfriend, boyfriend, spouse, etc.)....” The subject’s choices were:

- (a) I probably would have tended to be quite serious in my conversation
- (b) I’d have smiled occasionally but probably wouldn’t have laughed aloud much

- (c) I'd have smiled frequently and laughed aloud from time to time
- (d) I'd have laughed aloud quite frequently
- (e) I'd have laughed heartily much of the time (p. 149)

I'm thinking that subjects who choose "e" don't get many second dates.

The other twenty situations were equally interesting in terms of choice of context for measuring sense of humor, such as, "You had accidentally hurt yourself and had to spend a few days in bed. During that time how would you have responded?" and "If you were eating in a restaurant and the waiter accidentally spilled some soup on one of your friends..." (p.149). The response options were similar to the "a" through "e" choices listed above. Another communitirthologist might be tempted to comment that a write-in choice for a response to that last scenario might be, "Waiter, there's some soup on my fly," but I would not stoop to that level.

I really do not wish to cross that fine line between teasing and cruel mockery but I was truly amazed when I first encountered the Situational Humor Response Questionnaire and further amazed (and quite dismayed) when I saw it used as an instrument in communication studies [see Graham, Papa, and Brooks (1992), and Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, and Booth-Butterfield (1995)]. "Providing the humorous perspective" that I wrote of earlier does not apply to "laughing heartily" in situations that provide little or no basis for understanding why anyone would find the situation amusing. I laughed heartily at the possible response choices for these situations. I'm sorry, but I did. The questionnaire does not pass the test of face validity and I cannot understand how it could be used to serve as concurrent validity for any other instrument.

Steven Booth-Butterfield and Melanie Booth-Butterfield (1991) have developed the "Humor Orientation Scale," a humor measurement tool that they have used in several of their humor studies. This scale was also used in the Wrench and McCroskey (2001) study mentioned earlier which argued for a genetic basis for humor ability. The instrument is composed of seventeen items on a 5-point Likert scale. (e.g. "I regularly tell jokes and funny stories when I am in a group.") Twelve of these items focus on the telling of jokes and funny stories. If I were to apply my understanding of the terms jokes and funny stories I would score very low on their scale. I would be a low HO, as would most of the people I know who I think are very funny. Only two of the items have potential for identifying humor ability, and even those are problematic: "My friends would say that I am a funny person," and "Being funny is a natural communication style for me." I have friends with whom I joke all the time and who find me amusing, and friends with whom I rarely joke. My humor, both the type and the frequency, vary depending upon the person I am with, whether or not it is a group situation or one-to-one, and the context.

A major weakness in humor research is directly related to the difficulty in defining humor. Wrench and McCroskey (2001) addressed this very point, but did not resolve it. They wrote, "No matter the definition we use for the word 'humor,' the associations linked to humor are very strong" (p. 143). They are referring to the traits of cheerfulness and exhilaration, but that does not negate the need to adequately conceptualize humor. Is humor a communicative attempt to make someone laugh, or is it only humor when someone perceives the attempt as funny? The Humor Orientation Scale provides less information on how funny the subject is than it does on how frequently the subject attempts to make others laugh. The quantity of humor attempts, regardless of the perceived quality or success of the humor, would result in a higher HO score. Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, and Booth-Butterfield. (1995, 1996) label these folks "The Funny People" in the titles of each of those studies. At best, their instrument might make the claim that some subjects were funnier than others, or tried to be funny more often, but no threshold has been established (or, I believe, could be established) for labeling someone a funny person.

The problematic issue of defining humor also has impacted research on teachers' use of humor in the classroom (Bryant, Comisky, and Zillman, 1979; Downs, Javidi, and Nussbaum, 1988; Gorham and Christophel, 1990; Kher, Molstad, and Donahue, 1999). We know that humor can serve many functions and achieve a variety of goals, so "humor as a tool" has been the focus of much research in pedagogy. Whatever humor is, it seems that the assumption is that one can choose to use it or not. How often should a teacher use it? Downs, Javidi, and Nussbaum (1988) found that the "average frequency of use of humor by nine award winning teachers" (p. 133) was an average of 7.44 attempts per 50-minute class period. (Now I understand why my eighth joke always falls flat.) What kinds of humor are most effective or most appropriate in the educational setting? Can/should a teacher use sarcasm? Can she/he poke fun at a student or at the entire class? Many would say no, but the students' perceptions of the teacher's intentions play a significant role in those determinations. A few years ago, at the time of the release of the movie, *The Sixth Sense*, I was attempting to engage my class in a discussion, only to be met by thirty-five sets of blank stares. I paused for a moment, looked around the room, and whispered, "I see dead people." Big laugh. It probably would only receive a titter today. The humor is not in the words. My comment was not received as ridicule or an attack, though I was being critical of their behavior. I had developed a positive relationship with this class and they liked and trusted me. I felt comfortable with them and was able to be myself, myself being someone whose dominant communication style is one of humor. Humor is not something I "use." It is a part of who I am, integrated into a variety of traits and abilities and patterns of behavior.

The ability to make others laugh exists in most people. I saw footage a few months ago of Saddam Hussein holding court at a table filled with his advisors and everyone was laughing. (It is possible the advisors may have felt pressured to laugh. Possible. I think I read somewhere that Saddam once made milk come out of Tariq Aziz's nose with some clever quip, but I could be mistaken.) For some, humor attempts are frequent, while for others attempts at humor surface only occasionally. But humor expressions are embedded in one's personality, not separate. "Use of humor" in teaching is conceptualized like "use of visual aids." It makes as much sense to say "teachers' use of warmth and caring." Teachers who can make their students laugh, whether on an occasional basis or more frequently, do so because of a positive relationship that has been created. These teachers have allowed a natural aspect of their humanity to surface and students respond positively. We rarely laugh at humor attempts made by people we dislike and/or do not trust. Some believe that the use of humor results in liking, but I believe the reverse is true. The liking and affection for the source of the humorous attempt creates the context from which the humor attempt will be more successful. It is a consequence of the relationship between themselves and their students.

Suggestions for a New Direction in Humor Research

Almost thirty years ago, Babad (1974) argued, "tests should not be used in the assessment of humor" (p. 630). His research contrasted the use of the sociometric method with humor tests, and found that the two contradicted one another. He had more faith in the sociometric method. If you want to find out if someone is funny, ask the people who know them. One's sense of humor, humor ability, and humor itself are all subjective phenomena.

Allow me to offer up the following definition of humor: A message, verbal and/or nonverbal, intentional or unintentional, that is perceived by someone, sender and/or receiver(s) as amusing. Conceptualizing humor in this way underscores the futility of trying to quantify someone's humor ability or sense of humor or humor appreciation. None of these concepts can be measured objectively.

I also propose looking at humor attempts as a compliance-gaining activity. When attempting humor my primary goal is to elicit a laugh. That is my reward, the confirmation that my attempt was successful. I use a variety of techniques when trying to make others laugh, adapting my verbal and nonverbal behavior to my audience, to the topic, and to the situation.

Interviewing those people identified as skilled at the use of humor would be a first step in identifying these compliance-gaining strategies that would help build a communication oriented theory of humor.

I see another parallel of mirth-making to the act of persuasion. Larson (1998) defines persuasion as "the co-creation of a state of identifi-

cation between a source and a receiver that results from the use of symbols" (p. 11). Laughter is agreement. The amused audience has identified with the comic's perspective. The comic has made use of his/her audience's values, beliefs, opinions, and the emotional responses that accompany them. They serve as the unstated major premise of the humor. For example, if you share my negative opinion of the rap singer Eminem, and are outraged at the content of his lyrics, I can create a message ridiculing him that you will probably will find amusing. (My students, most of whom like Eminem and Adam Sandler and Pauly Shore, do not see the humor in my mirth-making attempts at the expense of those characters.)

Larson asserts that all persuasion is self-persuasion. He writes, "The idea of co-creation means that what is inside the receiver is just as important as the source's intent or on the content of messages" (1998, p. 11). The receivers of the humor attempt must also participate, cognitively and/or emotionally, in order to "get" the joke. Thus my claim that in order to fully understand the communicative process of humor, it is necessary to interview the people who identified the "funny person," and ask why they laugh at such humor attempts.

I realize that the approach I am advocating is a difficult one. Whereas people who earn their livings as "comedians" may have a conscious awareness of how they do what they do, the nonprofessional mirth-makers will most likely have great difficulty analyzing this behavior. And the "laughers" might find it even harder to explain why they laugh. But a case study approach may prove to be the best way to get a handle on the vast complexities of the process of humor.

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***The Wellstone Memorial:
Remembering an Unspeakable Situation***

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On Friday, October 25, 2002, U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone died in a tragic plane crash near Eveleth, Minnesota, along with his wife Sheila, daughter Marcia, three staff members and two pilots. A memorial service for the victims was held Tuesday, October 29 at 6:30 pm in Williams Arena on the University of Minnesota campus. Election Day was Tuesday, November 5, leaving the Wellstone team and the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) party less than seven days to mount a U.S. Senate race with a new candidate. On Wednesday, October 30, the DFL party had a special committee meeting to nominate former Vice President Walter Mondale to run for the U.S. Senate in Wellstone's place.

I took an internship in Senator Paul Wellstone's press office in the summer of 2001. I then decided to work on Senator Wellstone's re-election campaign as a press intern in the summer of 2002. I left the campaign in August, but returned in October after the plane crash. I helped prepare for the memorial by organizing media logistics and credentialing media personnel.

The memorial's proceedings created an intense and critical reaction. Attention was high at the outset of the event because of the sheer number of people attending the memorial and the levels of emotion and energy that accompanied the event. Many people became critical of the event after campaign treasurer and longtime Wellstone friend Rick Kahn offered a controversial eulogy of Paul Wellstone. People viewed the speech as part of a staged political rally. Kahn's speech was seen as the reason the media and public reaction to memorial turned negative, and he was ultimately blamed for some Democratic candidate losses. Sue O'Brien, a citizen of St. Paul, wrote a letter to the editor in the *Minneapolis StarTribune* stating, "Paul Wellstone's memorial service was nothing more than a political rally. I pray to God that the people who plan my memorial service are not that selfish. I would want my memory honored better than that" (2002, October 31, p. 22A). Another writer, David Anderson of Plymouth, Minnesota stated, "...if Norm Coleman ends up winning this election, I believe the blame can be laid squarely upon the shoulders of Rick Kahn [who made] a mockery of the memorial service and [was not] waiting to campaign out of respect for Sen. Paul Wellstone" (2002, October 31, p. 22A).

Though personally cathartic, the primary purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, it is to outline the rhetorical constraints surrounding memo-

rials. Second, the purpose of this paper is to shed light on media framing of events that mingle elements of deliberative and eulogistic genres. In addition, by analyzing a number of interviews with Wellstone campaign officials and others who played direct roles in the events, I hope to set the record straight and provide campaign practitioners with an inside perspective on this unprecedented event. What you are about to read are the stories of six senior campaign officials who had a role in planning the memorial. I wanted to present their stories because they have an important insight that no one has yet captured. This information is also important for scholars of political communication because of the intense media coverage that occurred, labeling this memorial for a political figure a "political rally."

Background

The scale and public nature of the Wellstone memorial had not been previously attempted, and made the event intriguing. Before understanding the perceptions and expectations surrounding the memorial, it is helpful to examine what might have led to those perceptions, what types of political memorials or funerals have been conducted in the United States, and how they differed or bore similarity to the Wellstone memorial.

The Wellstone memorial was novel because it was held in such a public setting. Research concerning the funerals and memorials for major U.S. public officials reveals that they typically have been conducted in a private setting—within the confines of a religious establishment—following or preceding a public procession. In order to establish a pattern, I will discuss several such ceremonies in chronological order, starting with the funeral of President John F. Kennedy.

President Kennedy's funeral in November of 1963 was held at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington D.C. The president's body lay in state in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, and then was transported to St. Matthew's Cathedral where leaders of ninety-two nations attended his funeral. A million people lined the route to the cathedral as a horse-drawn caisson bore the body. Millions of Americans also watched the ceremonies on television including the president's burial at Arlington Cemetery (Friedel, 2003).

This format was repeated for Martin Luther King Junior's funeral in April of 1968, in Atlanta at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where he served as co-pastor. Jacqueline Kennedy and Vice President Hubert Humphrey as well as many civil rights leaders attended the private funeral. The ceremony and procession was aired on national television and more than 60,000 people stood outside listening over loudspeakers. The procession involved taking King's body to the cemetery at Morehouse College with King's casket borne by a mule-driven farm cart, symbolizing his support for the rights of poor people ("King's Assassination," 1968).

Senator Robert F. Kennedy's funeral, in June of 1968, was also a private affair. Members of the family were joined by politicians, artists, and actors at a private ceremony at which brother Edward Kennedy eulogized the late Senator. Robert F. Kennedy's body was then driven through the city streets to Penn Station and placed on a funeral train bound for Washington during which people stood by railroad tracks for miles holding up signs and pictures in memory of Robert F. Kennedy as the funeral train passed. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery near his brother, John F. Kennedy. Once again we saw, as with Martin Luther King's funeral proceedings, a private funeral setting followed by a public processional ("Funeral Train," 2003).

Finally, a more recent, and perhaps the most relevant to the Wellstone memorial event, was the funeral for the late U.S. Senator Mel Carnahan from Missouri, which took place in October of 2002. Carnahan also died in a plane crash, and, like Wellstone, he was locked in a tight senate race. The funeral ceremony began with thousands of Missourians lined up outside the governor's mansion to view the casket (Kraske, Adler, Montgomery & Canon, 2000). The next day, mourners dressed in black watched as the caisson carrying Carnahan's coffin slowly made its way through Jefferson City streets toward the state capitol building. In this case, the procession occurred prior to the funeral. Mrs. Carnahan, with her children and grandchildren, as well as President and Mrs. Clinton and Vice President and Mrs. Gore, as well as other dignitaries, followed the caisson. A riderless black horse with its boots backward in the stirrups also followed as a "symbol of a fallen warrior" ("Clinton, thousands...", 2003). When the caisson arrived at the state capitol grounds, close to 10,000 mourners stood listening to the service. There were a number of important differences between the Carnahan funeral and the Wellstone memorial, however. For instance, those who attended the Carnahan funeral probably heard little of what was said because of an inadequate sound system. Also, because it was a private funeral service, the Carnahan event was more controlled and much less partisan.

The preceding examples indicate that the elements of a private funeral following or preceding a public processional has been the norm for prominent political funerals in the United States.

It is against this historical backdrop that one can analyze the memorial for the late Senator Paul Wellstone. As in the previous cases, Wellstone family and close friends eulogized the deceased at private funeral service the day before the memorial was held. The main difference between the Wellstone memorial and that of previous funeral activities for public officials lies in the actual memorial that occurred on October 29th, 2002. The memorial was unique because average citizens outnumbered public officials at the gathering. The memorial was also unique because it

was mostly average citizens, those closest to the deceased, who eulogized the victims of the tragic plane crash. The memorial—a public event that was designed to augment the private ceremony—was held at Williams Arena, a basketball stadium on the campus of the University of Minnesota. Guests included “former President Bill Clinton; former Vice President Al Gore; the Rev. Jesse Jackson; the actor Michael J Fox; and at least half of the Senate” (Wilgoren, 2002, October 30, p. A23). Prominent public officials were not the only ones to attend the memorial. Twenty-thousand people packed Williams Arena, accompanied by 6,000 people in the ‘overflow area’, that quickly became filled, leaving 1,000 people standing outside watching the event on large video screens (“Thousands pay tribute...”, 2002).

The roster of speakers at the memorial symbolized Wellstone’s populist ideology, since it included average citizens and friends of the Wellstones. In comparison, the funeral of the late Senator Mel Carnahan included a eulogy by President Clinton and other public officials (Wilgoren, 2002, October 30, p. A23). The Wellstone memorial displayed a feeling of community that was represented by the speakers that were chosen. Most of the speakers at the Wellstone memorial were not popular public officials speaking to a strict invitation-only guest list; they were average citizens speaking to a crowd that represented all walks of life. Senator Tom Harkin, the only popular public official to speak at the event, eulogized Wellstone, but did so along with Wellstone’s two sons and his best friend and campaign treasurer Rick Kahn.

The above comparison shows that political funerals and memorials have evolved since the time of John F. Kennedy. They have become more open to the public, as exemplified by the fact that organizers of the Carnahan funeral allowed the public to stand at the periphery of the site of the ceremony. One aspect that makes the Wellstone memorial exceptional was that it leaped from this slow transition inching toward public embrace to an event intentionally arranged so that the general public would vastly outnumber dignitaries or private guests. It is partly because of this jump that the memorial can be seen as precedent setting. The second reason the Wellstone memorial will be viewed as a rhetorical watershed is because of the enormously negative reaction it created. The Wellstone memorial was conducted in a distinct manner, different from previous events memorializing a deceased public official. The reasons why the memorial was conducted in such a way, and particularly why there was controversy over it, are questions many have sought to answer, and are the subject of this article. It is important, however, before I begin my analysis, to report the methods and the procedures I utilized to conduct this study.

Methods and Procedures

The study is a phenomenological study of the Wellstone memorial. Phenomenology consists of qualitative human science research and in-depth interviewing. Phenomenology is a study of a person's lived experiences and beliefs (Rossman & Rallis, 1997, p. 133). Qualitative human research refers to a broad approach of the study of social phenomenon. Rossman and Rallis state, "...the approach is naturalistic, interpretive, and draws on multiple methods of inquiry. That is, qualitative research is conducted in natural settings rather than controlled ones" (p. 7). The human sciences study people or beings that have consciousness and act with a purpose. Thus hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science that studies people and their actions (Van Manen, 1990, pp. 3-4). Qualitative research is what phenomenological studies use in conducting their procedures. As stated by Rossman and Rallis:

Qualitative researchers seek answers to their questions in the real world. They do their research in natural settings rather than in laboratories...Their purpose is to learn about some aspect of the social world and to generate new understandings that can be used by the social world (1997, p.5).

The notion of in-depth interviewing is what phenomenological researchers rely upon in order to generate data. The process involves asking participants to recollect their own life history, to bring that history into the current day, and then to reflect on the meaning of these experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 1997, p. 133). This technique in interviewing is crucial in a phenomenological study because it calls for thorough analysis of the participant's experience. It is through this detailed analysis that the researcher is able to deduct prominent themes.

A number of procedures were used to locate co-researchers and to understand their personal biographies. Before starting my interviews, the topic of study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research (IRB) at my institution. After receiving IRB confirmation, I contacted co-researchers from the Wellstone campaign and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. A total of eight interviews were conducted; six with Wellstone campaign officials and two with co-researchers working in the media. Campaign officials were selected for interview based on their close connection with the Wellstone campaign and their senior roles in planning the memorial itself. The campaign officials interviewed were: Kelly Bjorklund, temporary press staff; Allison Dobson, Press Secretary; Jim Farrell, Spokesman and Communications Director; Tom Kelly, a communications consultant and temporary press staff; Kathleen Miller, Deputy Communications Director; and Josh Syrjamaki, Deputy Campaign Manager. Media officials, in turn, were interviewed

based upon specific suggestions from the campaign team. The media officials interviewed were: Bill Salisbury, Political Reporter for the St. Paul Pioneer Press and Pat Sweeney, a reporter for the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Thirty-minute interviews were conducted over a four-week period. Interviewees were asked to sign a consent form. Each interview was tape-recorded and notes were also kept to highlight key themes. After the interview transcripts were prepared. It was from these transcripts that key themes and terms emerged. The six senior campaign officials were provided copies of the study prior to submission to ascertain whether they were uncomfortable with any statements they had made. All co-researchers were also given a copy of the final version of the paper.

Argument

Since the Wellstone memorial was unique in respect to its venue, and with respect to the decision to open the event to the public and the media, I would argue that people did not know what to expect. The fact that the memorial's initial and final perceptions were perceived so differently was one that no one could have foreseen. Because of the intense and negative reaction to the memorial, the fact that it was widely credited with undermining the candidacy of Wellstone's successor candidate (possibly a host of other state-wide DFL candidates as well), and because the campaign was unable to induce the media to frame the event in positive terms, it is important to fully understand the implications of this precedent. People's expectations of the Wellstone memorial most probably were derived from the media who received their information from campaign press staff. Press conferences conveyed that the event would honor and memorialize those who passed away in the tragic plane crash. While the expectations for the Wellstone memorial were neutral and positive, expectations for future memorials were probably created through this memorial, and it set a precedent for how organizers should handle logistics for such events in the future. In other words, the Wellstone memorial likely created expectations people will have for future memorials, and moreover, placed constraints on future memorials in terms of speakers and venue.

Findings

It is important to begin with the launch of the memorial, including the choice of location. Next, expectations as well as initial perceptions of the event will be addressed. A section dedicated to Rick Kahn's eulogy comes next, followed by an analysis of the public apology given by campaign manager Jeff Blodgett the day after the memorial. Although not all section topics contributed negatively to the view of the memorial, solutions on how to handle the negative situations differently will be addressed within each section. Following each section's

analysis and suggestions, the consequences of not following the proposals will be addressed.

Venue

The Wellstone campaign's choice of venue, the University of Minnesota's Williams Arena, surprised some people because of its large capacity. People are also surprised because they do not associate a sporting facility with a memorial service. The campaign had reasons in choosing such a venue, it also foresaw the risks associated with holding the memorial in a large arena. A senior campaign official explained these risks:

I was initially concerned about filling an arena with Wellstone partisans who were very much grieving and very emotional for two hours on national television with highly charged emotional speeches given. And I would have gone with a much more simple memorial service.

The campaign official goes on to state that the idea was suggested but was turned down. Jim Farrell describes a smaller service:

In the end there was a much less risky approach to honoring Paul Wellstone and I didn't give it a great deal of thought... You could have done something more solemn like I said a lying-in-state at the capitol. And maybe one or two speakers only...President Clinton and maybe one of [Wellstone's] sons.

The question then is why the memorial did not occur in a smaller and more private setting. Josh Syrjamaki explained the campaign's reasoning behind the choice of Williams Arena:

There were three options...the reason to hold it in an arena is because all those people wanted to come. All of Paul's strong supporters and admirers and even some of those who weren't his supporters wanted to come and say good-bye. And we felt that it was important in this kind of a Wellstonian way to make sure that average people had access to this...The Xcel Energy Center, which [Wellstone's senate opponent, Saint Paul mayor] Norm Coleman built with critical state subsidy...did not seem appropriate. The Target Center in downtown Minneapolis seemed too corporate, and Williams Arena seemed like the best choice of all. It was Minnesota...it was on a college campus.

The campaign wanted to hold a memorial in a true "Wellstonian way" and knew Williams Arena was their best choice. Yet there does not seem to be a simple solution in controlling an event placed in the chaotic atmosphere of a basketball arena. Although a much simpler memorial could have been achieved, memorial planners felt it was important to allow the general pub-

lic to attend. It was also noted that the University of Minnesota basketball arena was symbolic of Wellstone's commitment to the state of Minnesota, and to education in particular. The memorial event thus had to be advertised in order to invite citizens. Therefore, press conferences were conducted regularly to brief the media so that Minnesotans could be made aware of the memorial. The main question members of the media seemed to have on their minds at these press conferences was about the tone and character of the planned memorial service.

Expectations

Allison Dobson spoke at a press conference Monday, October 28th—the day before the memorial—identifying logistics the media needed to know. Dobson told the media:

It would be an event Paul Wellstone could be proud of. We told them that there would be music, that it would be lively, but that it would be respectful. We wanted people to know that the event would be a celebration of six peoples' lives, and the beginning of carrying their spirits forward.

The media's initial coverage of the event converged around these themes of energy and celebration. However, when the memorial seemed to take political turn, members of the media found themselves in a different atmosphere. Reporters reacted negatively and began to cover the event in that negative light. Perhaps because of their inexperience and because of the chaotic situation, planning staff did not foresee such a negative reaction to the event. Although the memorial was incredibly well organized and well planned, the planning staff was new to this type of organizing. Dobson expands:

On the morning of October 25th, we were all thinking about planning our Election Night victory rally. By the afternoon of October 25th, we were told to put together a memorial for our candidate, our colleagues, and our friends. No one was versed in planning a memorial, and amidst terrible, terrible grief, we had to start from scratch and plan a media event on par with the Democratic National Convention. It was pretty daunting.

The fact that few had experience with this type of organizing, combined with the challenge of having to organize a 20,000 person memorial in two days, resulted in a chaotic 48 hours of organizing while trying to simultaneously update the media on logistics. The obvious solution here would be to not have press conferences until after the planning was complete. However, the national media crush surrounding the Senator's death and the memorial made it impossible for the Wellstone communications team to conduct their work without constant news coverage. The main issue was that even

though the memorial was carried out expertly, event planners did not foresee the problems the event would ultimately create. This could be because of the high emotion and chaotic nature of the situation or because the staffers were new to planning an event of this nature and magnitude.

Initial Perceptions

Initial perceptions of the event were positive. Kelly Bjorklund stated:

I thought the memorial was nice because at the beginning they tied everyone's lives together and showed how they were all public servants and how they were all working for a common goal and they were all friends and they died together as they lived together.

Others who had come to the memorial to celebrate the victims of the plane crash shared Bjorklund's initial perception. Bjorklund commented on the reason many people came to the event as she spoke with people entering the arena:

[The people] were so glad to come and to just be with people who they didn't know...and sit next to them and share and just know they weren't just sitting home and watching television and feeling sad and full of grief,...that they got to see a public expression.

Feelings of companionship and inclusion were some of the reasons people chose to attend the memorial. Pat Sweeney described the positive feeling he received:

I found this outpouring of energy and good will. And as I interviewed people I was struck by—at least at first I was interviewing people I knew who were movers and shakers of some sort—the bipartisan nature of this good will and sense of togetherness.

Sweeney described the positive energy he received from citizens, but also reported the feeling he got from public officials such as former republican governor Al Quie. Sweeney stated, "[Quie] entered Williams Arena and I asked him why he was there, and he said words to the effect of: 'You've got to admire a man who stands up for what he believes.'" Sweeney described his conversation with Quie as one of bipartisanship in tone but also one of coming together, which was what this memorial allowed. Dobson indicated the positive elements of the memorial she hopes will be mimicked in the future, "The event as a whole was just beautiful. The music, the images of their lives, the people, the communities and cultures represented...It was truly an honest and heartwarming celebration of Paul and who Paul was. I am so proud of that." Since the initial perceptions of the memorial proved to be positive, they would be an aspect imitated in future memorials.

However, the intensity of support for, and emotion toward, Paul Wellstone created an inherent politicization. The high emotion apparent at

the outset of the memorial led to the negative perception found at the close of the event. Bill Salisbury stated, "A lot of memorial services I've been to, you don't have this emotionally charged not that kind of emotionally charged atmosphere where there were such partisan feelings expressed where it was so completely politicized." In short, the apparent politicization of the Wellstone memorial is what changed the tone from a positive initial perception to a negative final perception.

Rick Kahn

This change in tone coincided with, and was attributed to, the eulogy given by campaign treasurer and longtime Wellstone friend Rick Kahn. The partisan tone of Kahn's speech was what the media took issue with and portrayed in a negative light. Farrell stated, "I felt immediately that there were going to be negative repercussions for the service and for the campaign particularly." Farrell indicated that he foresaw the consequences of Kahn's speech as it was occurring. However, campaign officials allude to the fact that the media did not have a solid understanding of the speech. Dobson stated, "The media tried to make this into some big scandal. There was no scandal at all. This is how someone reacted when he found out his best friend was dead." Dobson commented that the media did not accurately cover Rick Kahn. Dobson also reflected on the choice the campaign had to make in dealing with the media's coverage of Rick Kahn's eulogy. She stated, "Rick is our friend and a part of our campaign family. Our only alternative was to abandon him, make him a scapegoat and kick him while he was down." Dobson inferred that this was not a choice the campaign officials could take because of their strong relationship with Rick Kahn.

This brings about the question of vetting the eulogizers' speeches at the memorial. Farrell explained the difficulty encountered in failing to vet the speeches:

Oh yeah...no one will ever do one of these things again...the consequences are terrible and the risks are huge. It's hard to manage a lot of very emotional speakers and what they'll say in front of a national audience.

Syrjamaki described the difficulty in vetting the personal eulogies: Now certainly we talked to them, but we talked to them when we were going to the funerals and the services of the others who passed away, and those services were held before the memorial. So we were going to funerals and attending funerals while we were trying, working with their families to plan this one. There [were] so many things happening at once. It was extraordinarily difficult to get people to focus much on the memorial. And plus, I don't know if I could

have said to all those people who spoke, 'Write your statements and send them to me 24 hours in advance or you can't speak and then I have the right to edit your speech and then you must stick to it. There will be a teleprompter and you have to read what's on it'. I don't think that would have been possible given the circumstances.

Regardless of the difficult situation, the campaign press staff was given the task of dealing with the ramifications of not vetting the speeches since they were the ones confronted by the media backlash. Farrell stated, "It would have been difficult to vet those speeches because they were personal speeches. If I had to do it all over again I would have insisted on it." In retrospect, this is the one clear lesson to be learned from the Wellstone memorial. Dobson gives a middle ground for the issue of vetting the eulogies:

I regret that the Memorial generated so much negative press attention. And it is easy to say, 'Yes, this was avoidable.' And that given the chance to do it all over I would ask to see the speeches before they were delivered. You have to look at the reality of the situation we were in. We asked close friends and family to speak about their respective loved ones who had just died. I still do not think it was appropriate to say to a group of eulogizers, 'The eulogies must be on message. Submit your speech ahead of time so I can edit it.' Bottom line, every political reporter and pundit was looking at this event through a microscope. We should have better impressed to everyone participating that there would be extreme media scrutiny and made sure everyone understood exactly what that meant.

Rick Kahn's eulogy can perhaps best be viewed as deliberative in nature, and as a call to action. While eulogies are allowed to be persuasive, Rick Kahn's eulogy failed to call upon Paul Wellstone's character for the basis for his call to action and therefore failed as an effective eulogy. The elements of being deliberative, calling the audience to action, and failing to support the eulogizer's claims with an accurate reflection of the deceased's character should have been removed from the eulogies because such rhetorical elements are seen as insincere and, in this case, politicized. While vetting speeches is a difficult task at such an emotional time, Dobson's middle-ground for vetting the eulogies seems to be the best suggestion prior to allowing personal eulogies to commence on national television. If some form of prior restraint does not occur, a senior campaign official will likely have to engage in damage control after the fact.

Apology

On Wednesday, October 30, the day after the memorial, campaign manager, Jeff Blodgett held a press conference to discuss the previous evening's events. The intent of this press conference was to apologize for any offense taken at the memorial. But it was more of an effort to induce 'damage control' on what the media had done with the Rick Kahn eulogy. Tom Kelly discussed the press conference:

What I admired most about Jeff in that situation the day after the memorial was that he apologized to the people who were offended by it and he made it clear that it wasn't intended to offend anybody. He refused to use Rick Kahn as a scapegoat...so he had defended him by not throwing him to the dogs, which is what the press seemed to be waiting for him to do.

Blodgett conducted his press conference in the most tactful way possible; however, the damage seemed to have already been done. Salisbury reiterated that: "If the intent of it was to calm things down, it was too late . . . I think that may have helped somewhat, but the damage had already been done." Bjorklund alluded to a different reason:

[To] the media, this was sexy, and it was the most closely watched campaign in America and it was a tragedy. You know, everything put together, I think we got our four days of sorrow and niceness from the media and then it was just back with the wolves.

The media had already reported on the Rick Kahn speech numerous times by the time Blodgett held his press conference. The Rick Kahn speech was strategically ill considered. When something in a campaign goes as deeply wrong as did the Rick Kahn speech, the senior-most campaign official, in this case Blodgett, must address the media to explain the campaign's perception of the event. The official must be incredibly articulate, but also genuine in expressing the campaign's stance on the issue. The Wellstone campaign could have handled aspects of the Wellstone memorial differently, however, and if future memorials make the same mistakes, repercussions will still likely occur.

Media Reaction

Because of the Wellstone campaign's mistakes, the media, local television in particular, projected anger toward the campaign. Television commentators were particularly upset with the Wellstone campaign because many local stations had carried the event live. Kathleen Miller describes the local station reaction:

The media felt violated. They had placed trust in us by saying this will be run live. The first problem they had was that

the ceremony I think was an hour over what it was supposed to be...they had the choice of either pulling the plug on a memorial ceremony or honoring their state's senator.

While the time frame of the event caused distress with television stations, it is almost certain that a major reason these stations took issue with the memorial was because of its change in tone and politicization factor, putting into question issues of equal time for the Republican opponent, Norm Coleman. WCCO-TV issued a statement the day after the event stating, "WCCO-TV was caught off guard by the change in tone during last night's memorial service" ("WCCO Statement...", 2002). Kelly indicated conversations he had with media reporters directly after the memorial:

My worst fears were confirmed when I went out to the press risers just as it ended and I was screamed at by several reporters...finally I said, 'Look, you guys, the media always talks about how they want spontaneous unscripted events. Well you just got one'...they don't want to cover the national and the state conventions because they're scripted. Well here's an example of what happens when people react emotionally to a personal tragedy in public...I was kind of upset at them for not giving Rick a break and for reading some sinister plot into it.

Kelly indicated that the television media contradicted itself by wanting to report spontaneity, and yet taking issue with the spur-of-the-moment events of the memorial. One reason for the media's rejection of the event was that many believed the memorial to be more a partisan ambush than an impromptu event. The media took issue with the fact that they believed the Wellstone campaign used the memorial as a rally to show support for Wellstone's replacement candidate, former Vice President, Walter Mondale. Syrjamaki stated the irony of this claim:

If you're trying to be very political with the sole purpose of winning the election with the memorial then we would have done a focus group poll-tested message designed to swing the undecided middle aged men and women and the families who lived in the moderate and wealthy suburbs, and to really tug at their heart strings to support the democratic candidate in the election. But what we did is, we were selfish in our greatest time of need. We felt that it was important to have a memorial that allowed the people who most loved and cared for those who had died to really weep. And in doing that people got a little political, got a little positive and got a little excited, and then they were

attacked and accused of being political. So had they been very very political, people wouldn't have noticed, and there's an irony there.

Syrjamaki indicated that the truly political way to have handled the memorial was different from what the media perceived as politicization. The fact that the television media felt used and violated contributed to the negativity in their reporting.

Effect on Other Campaigns

The perceptions of the Wellstone memorial not only caused trouble for the DFL Senate campaign, it has been suggested that the event contributed to the defeat of DFL candidates statewide. Sweeney speculated about the memorial's impact on Minnesota's Gubernatorial race: "Roger Moe's campaign's poll numbers declined precipitously after the memorial. It was likely to benefit the Democrats after Wellstone's death. The memorial erased all of that benefit and may have actively hurt them." The politicization of the Wellstone memorial as perceived by the media had consequences for the Minnesota DFL, as well as the republican opponents. Salisbury stated:

If you talk to people in the Coleman campaign, it really energized their supporters and there was an incredibly negative reaction among Republican voters, they really got fired up. Senator Coleman told me that after that event he traveled around and there were huge crowds around and there was much more emotional passion and support than at previous times. And I think that it probably influenced a lot of the Independent voters...People who were undecided, that small group of voters that was undecided that both campaigns were appealing to moved to Coleman pretty quickly and pretty decisively and they managed to.

Independent voters were the demographic actively sought by both major party candidates in the senate race. If Salisbury's claim that the memorial swayed independent voters to vote for Norm Coleman is true, then one can infer that the memorial caused Mondale's loss in the senate election. Looking back, the Wellstone memorial can be seen as producing grave consequences for the U.S. senate race as well as other races in Minnesota. The question then is if the memorial had any influence on races outside the state. Farrell indicated that there is no such link:

I really question how much impact a memorial service in Minneapolis Minnesota has on a race in Florida or somewhere else. So did it cost democrats their seats around the country? I don't believe that, but I think initially there was

an impact. There was a short-term impact . . . But in the end the races were close where it had been. So you saw a drop and then the races went back to where they were. That's why I do not believe that the memorial service caused the loss of the Senate. I think that's very typical of a lot of national pundits to look for some sort of picturesque explanation for why something happened.

Dobson also alluded to the untruthfulness of the national media:

I think the national media are largely responsible for spinning this out of control. We deserved criticism, and we should have received some. But in the days after the service, no explanation, no amount of apology—no matter how sincere—could stop the story. Conservative pundits kept talking, Fox News—even CNN—kept running it and running it, and that was all that was needed. Minnesota journalists tried to focus on the race itself as much as possible, but with all that noise from people in Washington—half way across the country—it was difficult to ignore. And of course, national media reaches Minnesota, too.

Thus, the manner in which the memorial occurred had local consequences and the national media amplified them. The Wellstone memorial created precedent for what to do or not do in planning future memorials for public officials. The seriousness of the consequences could have caused campaign officials to seriously question what they would have done differently if they had the chance to conduct the memorial again.

Final Analysis

The Wellstone memorial set a precedent based on the way the campaign staff and media judged elements of the memorial. Since the Wellstone campaign staff was so emotionally drained by the deaths of their boss and colleagues, one might question why a new campaign team was not appointed to take over the remainder of the campaign. Why, specifically, was a crisis plan not implemented? Miller stated, "...perhaps everything could have gone perfectly...if we hired some professional event planning staff that would be cold callous and calculated to make the kinds of decisions that needed to be made." Indeed, a new campaign team could have prevented the mishaps that occurred in the event. One thing that they will never be able to do, however, is imitate exactly the situation the Wellstone campaign found themselves in the day their candidate and colleagues died. Syrjamaki stated:

People will strive not to make some of the same mistakes that we made. But I would defy anybody who was in the

circumstances we were—with the death of 6 friends—to do as well as we did.

In the end, it is clear that the positive expectations and positive initial reactions to the Wellstone memorial were dramatically altered by the eulogy delivered by Rick Kahn. The media's negative reaction to the event, due to the political nature of the Kahn eulogy, may influence future campaign decisions. Future organizers of funerals for public officials will take from the Wellstone memorial both positive and negative aspects in concocting their own such memorials.

Conclusion

The Wellstone memorial set a precedent for future memorials because no recent political memorial had been done on this large of a scale or, in the end, had been viewed so negatively as the Wellstone memorial. The partisan tone and, in turn, the ultimate consequences to the campaign were quite unanticipated. Campaign officials discussed the different approaches they would consider, had they a second chance at the event. It would be interesting to further analyze these different approaches, as well as further examine the television media's viewpoints specifically in terms of station and reporter reaction to this event. Television media officials would be interview subjects in further research. The limitations to this project were that more television media officials were not able to participate. Future studies could also include more about the general public's reaction to the event. Moreover, it would be important to understand if there is a connection between how people reacted to the memorial and how it was presented and analyzed by the media.

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***Developing as an Empowering Educator:
Democratic Power-Sharing in a
Basic Communication Course Classroom***

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Abstract

This essay explores one educator's journey implementing democratic power-sharing, a form of critical pedagogy, into a basic communication course classroom. The essay begins with a discussion of the administrative and curricular roadblocks faced when practicing democratic power-sharing in a required course. While discussing these roadblocks, the author offers practical examples of how to overcome these roadblocks in the basic communication course classroom. Next, an examination of student resistance is offered as well as pedagogical strategies for meeting student resistance in the classroom. Finally, suggestions are given for ways in which educators can acknowledge and overcome barriers to using democratic power-sharing in a university required course.

In the past several years, I have observed my students becoming increasingly disengaged in from the classroom. I have spent countless hours reflecting on how my teaching practices "fueled the fire" of apathy that was growing in my students. Several years ago, I was introduced to critical pedagogy. It was through critical pedagogy that I began to understand that my students' apathy toward their education might not be induced by my teaching or their disregard for the value of a 'good' education alone. My students' educational disinterest was larger than my students and me; it was a problem rooted in our educational system.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is has inspired the work of critical educators in the U.S. Freire spent the majority of his career as an educator working to liberate oppressed adults through literacy. Freire (1998) argues, "to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge" (p. 30). For Freire, a teacher is not the only source of knowledge in the classroom; instead, students and teachers work together to question existing power structures, knowledge, and conditions in our schools and larger society. Freirean pedagogy involves engaging the oppressed in an interrogation of their own experiences in order to help them understand "their own power as knowers and creators of the world; this knowledge will contribute to the transformation of their world" (Weiler, 1991, p. 463). In the educational system, the students are

considered the oppressed. Critical pedagogy, in turn, allows students to become active agents and empowered students in the classroom. A critical pedagogy in the classroom requires the teacher to “give-up” traditional teaching methods (i.e., lecture format) for new methods that engage and empower students.

According to Sleeter and McLaren (1995), “critical pedagogy is situated as a critical/tactical practice designed to contest and transform...‘terrorism and everyday life’ and the beaurocratic society or controlled consumption” (p. 16). In this essay, I describe my experiences implementing democratic power-sharing in a basic communication course. First, I discuss the administrative and curricular obstacles that a course required within the core curriculum imposes on democratic power-sharing. Next, I examine how student resistance can hinder an instructor’s attempt at implementing democratic power-sharing in the classroom. Finally, I discuss how an educator can acknowledge and overcome barriers to using democratic power-sharing in a university required course.

In the spirit of Freire’s liberatory education and Dewey’s (1997) learning through experience, Shor has developed a pedagogical method that is known as democratic power-sharing. Shor’s (1996) notion of democratic power-sharing involves creating new speech communities in which teachers and students work together to promote educational equity (p. 29). Shor outlines four characteristics that are necessary components of a speech community in a classroom:

- Language Choice: Students have the opportunity to read, write, and speak their own language variety as well as the standard.
- Generative Content: The curriculum is chosen by students and teachers to address issues they consider important.
- New Knowledge: Students and teachers produce knowledge for themselves and others.
- Action: Students and teachers initiate and/or support actions, which challenge inequitable power relations in and out of the classroom. (1996, pg. 30)

The above characteristics of a speech community promote the involvement of students in the educational process. In order for the speech community to be successful, students must be engaged in the decision-making process. Students who actively participate in the decision making process acquire the skills necessary to become independent and freethinking citizens in our society.

Dewey (1997) clearly articulated why student involvement is essential to democracy in the classroom. He argued:

There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of the participation of the learner in the forma-

tion of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process, just as there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active co-operation of the pupil in the construction of the purposes involved in his [her] studying. (p. 67).

Democratic power-sharing is a dialogic process that is initiated and directed by a critical teacher but is democratically open to student intervention. Teachers remain the authority or academic expert, but they “deploy their power and knowledge as democratic authorities who question the status quo and negotiate the curriculum rather than as authoritarian educators who unilaterally make the rules and lecture on preset subject matter” (Shor, 1996, p. 56). Empowering students becomes a collaborative effort between teacher and students actively engaged in transforming the education experience.

Democratic Power-Sharing in a Basic Communication Course Classroom

To empower students to participate effectively in their civic community, we must change the ways in which they acquire, view, and evaluate knowledge. We must engage students in a process of attaining knowledge in which they are required to critically analyze conflicting paradigms and explanations and the value assumptions of different knowledge systems, forms, and categories. (Banks, 1991, p. 126)

During one of my summer teaching assignments, I decided it was time—time to put theory into practice and incorporate a critical pedagogy into my basic communication course classroom. For several years, I had been studying the strengths and weaknesses of critical pedagogy; I had engaged the writings of several critical pedagogues, written theoretically-based papers on critical pedagogy, and participated in many pedagogical conversations about using critical perspectives in the classroom. I chose the democratic power-sharing method that Ira Shor (1996) models in his book, *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy*, because he clearly outlines how an educator might work toward an empowering classroom.

SPCM 101: Introduction to Oral Communication: Speech, Self, and Society (SPCM 101) is a required course at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (SIUC). SPCM 101 is a hybrid course—the course surveys interpersonal communication theory, intercultural communication theory, and public speaking. All students must take this course as part of their core curriculum requirements. As a part of the core curriculum, several aspects of the course are mandated externally. For instance, the instructors of the course use a common syllabus that articulates the course goals, grading scale, required assignments, and textbook/materials that will be used in the

class (see Appendix A). All instructors of the SPCM 101 course are expected to fulfill these requirements before the end of the semester in order to guarantee that all students have received similar instruction. Although the instructors of the basic communication course are teaching a standardized course, they are granted some privileges in the classroom. For example, the instructor of the course creates his/her own course calendar that indicates which chapters will be read, when assignments are due, and how the course materials will be presented in the class.

The creative license that I was allowed in the basic communication course was the "loophole" that I needed to create a course that incorporated democratic power-sharing. While I had to fulfill the basic requirements of the course, I was not restricted from creating a new speech community in my classroom. I adjusted the assignments to incorporate student voices and language, and I encouraged my students to address the types of materials they wanted to bring into the course. In what follows, I present several strategies that I incorporated in this basic communication course to help students become the central creators of knowledge.

Overcoming Curricular and Administrative Roadblocks

The first approach I employed in my classroom to empower my students and included "backloading" my comments and "frontloading" my students comments. Shor (1996) explains that democratic power-sharing requires the need to "restrain the teacher's didactic voice [backload] so as to generate student expression [frontload] as the foundational discourse" (pg. 40-41). I frontloaded student involvement by discarding my typical first day routine (i.e., introducing the goals of the course, syllabus, and calendar). After a brief introduction, I distributed a "Student Information Sheet" (see Appendix B). The information sheet listed five questions which helped me get to know my students through their past experiences, the problems/issues they perceived about our campus and the surrounding community, their past educational experiences, and how they related communication theory to their lives.

The second item on the information sheet asked students to consider how they could relate SPCM 101 to their everyday experiences. As students began to list their ideas, I helped them see how their ideas related to the achievement of success in their personal, professional, and community lives. Question #3 on the information sheet asked students to discuss their "ideal classroom" experience. I related their ideas to the ways in which this particular class would reflect their needs and desires. The students defined what a "good" classroom experience is/was and what a "bad" classroom experience is/was. We discussed the role of the teacher in creating a positive classroom experience and we discussed the role of the student in creating a positive classroom experience.

In order to allow my students to have choices about the course content, I immediately grounded the defining of the course in their notions of communication (see Appendix C). We created a definition of communication and what it meant in light of their experiences based off of their responses to the first question on the information sheet. Question #1 on the student information sheet asked each student to discuss four communicative interactions they had—these did not have to be groundbreaking or earth-shattering experiences. Rather, this question was designed to generate ideas about communication. The following is an example of one student's past communicative interaction:

I have a slight problem trying to argue my point across to people. For the simple fact that my style of language is hard for some to decipher. As a result of this, I have to repeat myself three or four times just to get a message across to people.

In groups, the students discussed this and other examples in light of reading Chapter Two in the customized text taken from Julia T. Wood's (1998) *Communication Mosaics* and *Communication in Our Lives*. The above example was articulated by an African American male. He offered the other students in our class a glimpse into the impact that privileging Standard English had on his life. He brought to the table issues of race and culture and the influence of these issues on our everyday communicative practices.

My student's example was also important because I grounded my course in the importance of understanding how racism affects our communicative practices and how our communicative practices shape our perceptions, identity, and opportunity. The first week of class I began with a discussion of communicating in a culturally diverse world. Specifically, I addressed The Standpoint Theory and assigned students to read Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1990). In this article, McIntosh discusses the daily effects of white privilege, privilege as elusive and fugitive, and an examination of earned strength and unearned power. While reading this article, I asked students to consider the following questions, 1) what is your initial reaction to this essay?, 2) what is McIntosh's standpoint? How does this article relate to the readings for this course? and 3) Consider McIntosh's list of 26 privileges she has based on her whiteness. Do you agree with all of her listed privileges? Which do you find problematic? My students wrote a three page reaction paper and we discussed their essays in class. Several comments and questions were raised. For example, one of my students suggested we must begin solving racism with the educational system. He argued that we "need to stop the segregation in schools to begin to change the system of power and privilege that exists" (June 22, 2000). A conversation ensued about the role of education in breaking down systemic racism. My students offered the following ideas:

1) change the way that people teach in the classroom, 2) add more diversity to the curriculum, and 3) smaller class sizes (June 22, 2000). We also discussed the ways to make their suggestions a reality and referenced this article many times during the course of the semester.

The answers on the student information sheet allowed me to understand what my students believed to be pressing issues on campus and in the surrounding community. Their ideas were generative themes for future assignments, discussions, and activities. I drew on their idea when discussing perception, verbal and nonverbal communication, listening, and intercultural communication. I developed an assignment around my students' responses to the fourth and fifth question on the information sheet (see Appendix B). Each student investigated a problem, developed a solution to the problem in light of communication theory, and presented their ideas to the class. This assignment allowed the Japanese students to discuss how they faced racism on campus and in the community. One of the African American students discussed the need for more African American professors at SIUC. Each student presented his/her speech and conducted a question answer period about the topic. Shor (1996) maintains that because the university or the instructor has unilaterally chosen the topic of the course, it is important to give the "student the chance to define what the course [is] going to be about" (p. 48).

Berry (1998) articulates a major impediment to utilizing critical pedagogical strategies in the classroom. She contends that "the textbook has become the dominant source of knowledge for students and in no way are they given the opportunity, encouraged to, or evaluated on their abilities to challenge, resist, or oppose that authority" (p. 49). The Department of Speech Communication at SIUC mandates the textbook used in SPCM 101. Grounding the course in student experiences allowed me to use their experiences as a supplemental text for the course. My students were asked to contribute ideas for supplementing the course textbook such as readings (poems, articles, short stories, and newspaper articles), videos, and activities that we could utilize during the course of the semester (see Appendix D). I compiled the information and integrated their ideas into the course calendar. While the textbook was a credible source for communication theory, my students understood that it was not the only truth about communication theory. Through a collaborative effort, my students and I created new knowledge that questioned the status quo.

The grading criteria imposed by the nature of the course quickly became the most difficult obstacle to overcome. A key component to empowering students in the classroom is allowing the students to have a voice in policy making decisions. I incorporated their voices into policy making through the use of 'choice.' My students chose which type of exams

they wanted to take (objective vs. essay formats, points, etc.) and I created the opportunity for my students to develop the criteria for their last major speech assignment. Shor (1996) argues "when people are not consulted about policy and process in their experience, they are denied citizen status as members of the democracy" (p. 31). For the persuasive speech, my students were placed into small groups and asked to create a grading form. When each group was finished, they reconvened as a large group and negotiated what the final form would look like. I acted as a facilitator for their discussion. When they needed my assistance, my students called upon my expertise as an experienced instructor and scholar in the discipline of communication. If I believed they were going to harm themselves through a decision they made on the grading criteria, I played the devil's advocate and showed them the effects of the decisions that they were making. This was a process of negotiation—we all had to work together to ensure that the end product – the evaluation form—was fair and agreeable to all students in the class.

A conscious attempt to frontload my students' voices and backload my presence enabled me to begin the democratic power-sharing process. I worked to fulfill the four characteristics for creating a "new speech community" to empower students in the classroom. I utilized pedagogical strategies suggested by Shor (1996) in order to incorporate student language. My students were asked to help create and generate the course content and we created new knowledge through a dialogic process. We worked together to take action and overcome the constraints imposed by the administrative and curricular requirements of a core curriculum course.

Engaging the Resistant Student

A significant roadblock that I faced while incorporating democratic power-sharing was student resistance. After the initial course meetings, it became obvious that I would have to find ways to overcome my students' attitudes about how a course should be governed, and what the role of the student and teacher should "look" like in a classroom.

During this class, I attempted to restructure the way that my students engaged in their education through liberatory practices; however, for years, these students have been socialized into what is commonly called the "traditional classroom." In the traditional classroom, a teacher unilaterally fills student with information and does not encourage students to reflect on the subject matter. Freire (1999) explains that in the traditional classroom, "education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 53). The banking model of education encourages students to sit, memorize, and repeat facts. According to Wink (1997), "schooling refers to the hidden educational process by which schools impose the dominant ways of knowing on all. We have been

schooled to think in traditional ways" (p. 55). A critical pedagogy involves reconstituting the way that knowledge is created in the classroom. Critical pedagogical strategies are foreign to many students and, as a result, can cause confusion and frustration in those students who work to understand how they and their classmates' social positions, knowledge, and experiences could benefit their understanding of the classroom material.

A critical classroom involves the teacher talking with the students instead of talking at the students. Teachers and students engage in a dialogical process that "joins [them] together in asking fundamental questions about knowledge, justice, and equity in their own classroom, school, and family community" (Wink, 1997, p. 60). As McLaren (1998) explains

although it may be true that we can never escape ideology; the teacher must both reveal how subjectivity gets constructed and legitimated through dominant pedagogical discourses and eventually challenge the imaginary relations that students live relative to the symbolic and material conditions of their existence. (p. 234)

A teacher that shares authority, allowing students to take greater responsibility for their education, can help students find a more intense relationship with their education. For instance, the students might be more invested in their education if they can find a connection between course content and their lived experiences.

Occasionally, my students resisted my attempts at sharing authority. During the first few weeks of the semester, I spent more time than I would have suspected explaining *why* I did not lecture very often, and *why* I was interested and concerned with their experiences. At several points in the semester, some of my students wanted me to "lecture." If I was not behind the podium or writing on the blackboard, my students were unsure of what they were "supposed" to be learning. I believe that I was asked these questions because the course was similar to a graduate seminar—a pedagogical style that was quite different from their past experiences. In other words, many class periods were spent analyzing the course material in a group discussion format. I was not shocked by the resistance from my students, as I knew that my teaching strategies were in opposition to what many of my students had experienced in the past. I also believed the student resistance was engagement and their engagement in democratic power-sharing was a form of resistance. When students resisted my attempts at sharing authority, I believe that they were engaged in a critique of their education. They were not sitting idly by as I imposed democratic power-sharing in the classroom; rather, my students wanted answers; they wanted to know why I was not

lecturing, why I wanted to know their opinions, why I did not want them to sit passively taking notes. When my students engaged the power-sharing strategies, they were resisting the markings of a traditional classroom.

I addressed my students concerns about my teaching ability by engaging them in a discussion about what a teacher is and what a teacher should be. I grounded these discussions in their past educational experiences. I referred back to our discussion about the "ideal" classroom experience. I pushed my students to consider whether or not a teacher's credibility was linked to traditional forms of pedagogy. I asked my students to consider whether or not the lecture format was the best way to learn in all instance. As I reflected back upon these experiences, I have considered whether or not I approached their questions in the appropriate way. It is a possibility that the learning style of my students was best met through lecture. I do not believe that any of my students were harmed by my deliberate questioning of their assumptions about what an education is and should be. However, I could have negotiated with them about when lecture would be beneficial and when a group discussion format would be more effective for their needs.

Some students used silence to show their resistance to my attempts at democratic power-sharing. There is little wonder that I was confronted with silence because students have been socialized into an educational system that ignores their ability to generate knowledge. Shor and Freire (1987) explain that students have had passive roles scripted for them for years in the traditional classroom (p. 122). Shor and Freire (1987) explain that a 'culture of silence' is fairly common in mainstream American classrooms. According to Shor and Freire the 'culture of silence' manifests itself in several ways. For instance, some students passively withdraw or sit smoldering with anger while others silently sit and take notes and follow the teacher's voice. Freire and Shor argue, "these silences are varieties of alienation produced by transfer-of-knowledge pedagogy in U.S. schools and colleges" (p. 122). By the time students enter college, they have had several years of experiencing alienation from the educational system, including teachers.

Student silence manifested itself along racial/ethnic and gender lines in my classroom. I had a small group of students in this particular course. Of the eight students, two were female, and six were male. Of the six males, half were either non-white international students or U.S. racial minority students. The two female students were non-white international students. During several class discussions, I had to make a conscious effort to address my students that had been consistently marginalized in traditional classrooms (minority students and female students) in order to allow everyone's ideas and perspectives to be heard. Silencing dominant student voices and privileging minority voices was my attempt to empower all the students in my course. According to Ellsworth (1989), "the discourse on student voice

sees the students as 'empowered' when the teacher 'helps' the students to express their subjugated knowledge. The targets of this strategy are students from disadvantaged and subordinated social class, racial, ethnic, and gender groups—or alienated middle class students" (p. 100). I agree with Ellsworth when she argues that a critical pedagogue works to help empower minority students; however, I disagree with Ellsworth's argument that this type of pedagogy targets "disadvantaged" students. I contend that critical pedagogues believe and hope that students will find their experiences every bit as valid as the white male students in the class.

In this particular class, the international students and U.S. racial minority students were reserved when sharing their experiences and opinions during class discussions. To address their needs and encourage them to actively participate, I had to be considerate of their cultural norms, especially with those likely to have been socialized in an educational system that did not encourage student participation. I incorporated a three-minute essay assignment to encourage my students to find their voice in the class without making them feel uncomfortable. This is an approach that I had used in the past to encourage participation; however, I modified this activity by placing students in dyads to discuss their essay response. Students discussed their viewpoints and constructed a summary of their ideas. When we reconvened as a class, one person reported the findings of the dyad. Because I did not want to make students feel uncomfortable, one member of the dyad presented a summary statement that represented a collaboration of both students' ideas. Throughout the course of the semester, I worked to ensure that all of my students found their voice (offering their ideas, opinions, and beliefs) to help them find power in the classroom and combat the hidden curriculum that exists in the college classroom.

I have known for some time that our classrooms contain "hidden curriculums" that represent the perspectives of the dominant culture (i.e., white, male, middle-class) that are often so ingrained in the curriculum that these perspectives remain unquestioned. Wink (1997) explains that the

hidden curriculum can be seen in schools when little boys are called on more than girls; when only Eurocentric histories are taught; when teenage girls are socialized to believe they are not good in math; when heroes, and not heroines, are taught; when counselors track nonwhites to classes that prepare them to serve. (p. 43)

Wink (1997) argues that the hidden curriculum "is covert and insidious, and only a critical lens will bring it into view" (p. 43). As an educator interested in the engagement and empowerment of all of my students, I could not ignore my students who challenged my authority in the classroom because democratic power-sharing in the classroom invites the negotiation

of power in the classroom. I found it necessary to challenge the hidden curriculum by incorporating strategies that encouraged and empowered the traditionally oppressed voices in the classroom.

Acknowledging and Overcoming Barriers

Critical pedagogy is a process of learning and relearning. It entails sometimes painful examinations of old practices and established beliefs and of educational institutions and behaviors. Critical pedagogy causes one to make inquiries about equality and justice. Sometimes these inequalities are subtle and covert. The process requires courage and patience. Courage promotes change and democracy provides all learners equal access to power. (Wink, 1997, p. 60)

My journey into democratic power-sharing in the classroom was often exhilarating and at times disheartening. As an instructor concerned with empowering my students, I had to learn to be patient and willing to "give-up" class time for the immediate needs of my students. I also had to relinquish my traditional conception of power and authority in the classroom. As Shor insists, "I cannot act as if I have no authority, am not an authority, and cannot use authority fairly and democratically." Instead, Shor (1992) argues that he "must acknowledge and establish [his] various kinds of authority while distributing some power by inviting students to negotiate the curriculum" (p. 20). A transformative educator must be willing to acknowledge and reflect upon the power and status he/she brings to the classroom in order to overcome the barriers to critical pedagogy and democratic power-sharing. To become an effective critical pedagogue, I also had to critically reflect on the practices that I used in the classroom.

When engaging a class in democratic power-sharing, as Shor asserts, an instructor's authority, and the power granted to the instructor by the institution, does not disappear. Rather, the instructor must learn to shift his/her authority to the background while simultaneously foregrounding the credibility and expertise of his/her students. This was not an effortless task, as I had to remember that I chose to incorporate critical pedagogy and democratic power-sharing in the classroom. As Shor (1996) contends "such conceptual frameworks belong to my discourse, not theirs" (p. 46). How I chose to introduce these notions to my class and implement a democratic power-sharing pedagogy in the classroom was an authoritative decision consistent with the traditional description of what a teacher is and does. Consequently, when I made such unilateral decisions, I had to discover ways to counteract or balance my actions in the classroom.

The notion of "teacher as authority" in the classroom does not simply disappear through an acknowledgment of its implication, or by incorpo-

rating dialogic approaches in the classroom. Instead, I had to distribute the power to my students, even when the power was not equal. Shor and Freire (1987) argue that the

dialogical relationship does not have the power to create such an impossible equality. The educator continues to be different from the students, but, and now for me this is the central question, the difference between them, if the teacher is democratic, if his or her political dream is a *liberating* one, is that he or she cannot permit the necessary difference between the teacher and the students become antagonistic. (p. 92-93)

This fundamental difference between the teacher and the student is not a detriment to the functioning of a democratic class as long as the teacher includes his/her students in overcoming oppressive conditions and dominant forces in our society. It is the authority of the teacher that allows him/her to create spaces for students to work toward sharing in the discourse of democracy.

As a critical educator, it was imperative that I engaged in the process of critically reflecting on my practice. Freire (1998) argues that critical pedagogues know "that without a correct way of thinking there can be no critical practice. In other words, the practice of critical teaching, implicit in a correct way of thinking, involves a dynamic and dialectical movement between 'doing' and 'reflecting on doing'" (p. 43). A conscious effort to think critically about the practice I implemented in the class would improve my teaching in the future. I engaged in a critical reflection on the strategies and methods I used in my basic communication course. I also engaged in a critical reflection about my teaching with other colleagues teaching the basic communication course. I engaged in a critical reflection of my teaching through a careful examination of how the classroom functioned on a daily basis.

The process of critical reflection did not stop after the semester ended. Before my students left the class, I asked them to reflect on the process we used in the classroom. I asked a series of open-ended questions that allowed me to understand their engagement with my teaching methodologies in the basic communication course. I was able to improve my teaching methods from their suggestions, and I also understood the strategies that were useful for the students in the course. I am also engaged in critically reflecting on my teaching practice as I write this essay. Several scholars engage in critical reflection through their academic writing, including hooks (1994), Shor (1980; 1992; 1996), Freire (1998; 1999), Ellsworth (1989), and Wink (1997). These scholars worked to refine and improve their pedagogy through scholarship. Just as critical pedagogues ask students

to engage in a dialogic process, these scholars were producing research from their classrooms that allowed other educators to dialogue about critical pedagogical strategies.

Acknowledging the power that a teacher possesses in the classroom is the first step toward breaking down the traditional classroom where students are passively taking notes while a teacher transfers knowledge. The authority that a teacher possesses in the classroom does not simply vanish through an acknowledgment of his/her power; instead, an educator must work to deconstruct what that power means in the classroom with his/her students. A teacher can also work with his/her student to negotiate and redefine how the teacher's authority should/could be manifested in the classroom setting. An instructor engaged in critical pedagogy must also critically reflect upon the methods he/she utilizes in the classroom. If a critical educator does not engage in critical reflections, he/she has a greater chance of reinscribing the already pervasive power structures that he/she is working to eliminate.

Conclusions: Working to Become a Transformative Educator

We must provide far more opportunities for students of all ages to plead each other's cases, to stand between opposing parties in appreciative efforts to bring people together in common understanding. (Noddings, 1989, p. 173)

As an instructor of the basic communication course, I have had several opportunities to watch my students' apathy grow toward the curriculum of a required course. Trying to generate student interest as well as give students a sense of empowerment in a course dominated by administrative requirements has been and can be more than frustrating. I have heard students complain about having to take a required communication course and question the validity of the material to their lives and their future professions. I worked to diminish student apathy and disinterest through democratic power-sharing in the classroom.

My journey into democratic power-sharing in the classroom was challenging as I attempted to overcome several barriers. I tried to erase my former role of "teacher as authority" and my students' former roles as "passive learners." When I decided to implement Shor's democratic power-sharing method I am not sure that I truly knew what I was getting myself into. I knew that the curricular and administrative obstacles inherent in the SPCM 101 course would be difficult to overcome; however, I did not fully contemplate how or in what ways my students might resist this form of transformative pedagogy. The process of critical reflection and acknowledging my implicit authority in the classroom helped me improve my teaching throughout the semester.

A question that I continue to ask myself is: "Was this experience truly empowering for my students?" In other words, was I successful in implementing a democratic power-sharing in this particular basic communication course? Ellsworth (1989) has considered this question with her work in critical pedagogy in the classroom. She contends that her "classroom was not, in fact, a safe space for students to speak out or talk back about their experiences of oppression...for fear of being misunderstood and/or disclosing too much and becoming too vulnerable" (p. 107). This may very well have been the case in my basic communication course. My students did remain quiet at times. It was not until their final presentations on campus and community issues that some of my international and U.S. racial minority students shared their experiences of racism. These students had previously discussed being misunderstood because of their race or ethnic background; however, they did not label the experiences as racist. The words of these three students disrupted the power relations that often exist in a class that is dominated by males and nonwhite participants. Unfortunately, these words were not shared in time to ensure all members of the classroom "had equal legitimacy, safety, and power in dialogue" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 108). While my students made significant attempts throughout the semester to bring their experiences and knowledge into the classroom, I believe that many voices went unheard due to the fear of being alienated by the very words that could work to liberate their educational experiences.

In the eyes of liberatory educator Paulo Freire, I may have succeeded in this attempt at democratic power-sharing. Freire believes critical pedagogy is not about success or failure; instead, it is more important for educators to engage in the process of liberation with their students. I believe that Freire would support my attempt at democratic power-sharing and encourage me to continue engaging in liberatory practices in the communication classroom. Shor and Freire (1987) argue that success may not come the first year. During the second and third year of using transformative pedagogy in the classroom, it will not be a uniform experience. Instead they state "change is inevitable in human experience, but liberatory transformation is a potential sometimes available. When possible, it is not necessarily realized by the means used in another setting" (p. 26). In other words, a transformative or liberatory classroom will never look or feel like the same experience.

My original goals for this course (beyond those objectives put forth in the course syllabus) included:

- Encouraging students to take responsibility for the teaching-learning process
- Encouraging students to think and speak about community issues

- Helping students develop critical thinking skills, increase class participation
- Helping students identify connections between the theory presented in the course and their lived experiences

If I critiqued my use of the democratic power-sharing method on these goals alone, I believe that I succeeded in my mission to transform the educational experience of my students. However, I would also have to ask my students to discuss whether or not they believed these goals were achieved in the classroom, and because these goals were established by me and not collaboratively with my students, they may not have found these goals applied to their experience.

Although I have mixed feelings about whether I succeeded at creating a democratic power-sharing pedagogy in this basic communication course classroom, I will not give up the task of creating a transformative classroom for students. I will continue to create a new space for learning in the basic communication course classroom because I do not believe that the experience my students had was detrimental to their past and future educational experience. Furthermore, I cannot expect change to happen if I stop practicing critical approaches in the classroom because these pedagogical approaches can be difficult or frustrating to implement. Freire (1999) contends, "one cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding" (p. 76). If I were to stop implementing critical strategies in the classroom, I would stop respecting the views of my students in the classroom. I would no longer be working toward transformation; instead, I would be working within the traditional dominant ideology (textbooks as the only form of knowledge, the authoritarian teacher, etc.) that is found in many university classrooms. This traditional ideology works to reinforce the mainstream beliefs about what education is and should be without taking into account the experiences and knowledge that the students bring to our classrooms.

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APPENDIX A

Course Syllabus

Department of Speech Communication, SIUC

SPCM 101: Introduction to Oral Communication: Speech, Self, and Society

Required Text: Customized Text (1998). Taken from *Communication Mosaics and Communication in Our Lives*. Julia Wood.

Suggested Text: *The Little Brown Compact Handbook*, 3rd edition, Jane E. Aaron.

Suggested Materials: Three-ring Binder

General Course Objectives:

In a complex and culturally diverse world, the ability to communicate effectively has become increasingly important. This course has two interrelated goals. First, it will introduce you to the basic concepts, vocabulary, theories, and processes relevant to understanding oral communication in a variety of interpersonal, public, and cultural contexts. Second, it will enhance your communication skills by providing systematic opportunities to practice clear, critical, and ethical oral communication. Since it is our intent to integrate theory and practice throughout the course, your classroom experience will combine lectures, discussions, small group activities, written assignment, public speeches, and out of class observations. Together we will foster and maintain an interactive, open, and supportive classroom environment that promotes insight into self and others, critical thinking, intellectual growth, and communicative competence.

Course Goals:

- To understand and interpret communication processes.
- To develop intentional, organizational, and expressive skills.
- To develop understanding and acceptance of communication ethics.
- To develop critical skill appropriate for responsible receivership of messages.
- To gain understanding of relationships between self, message, and others in communication interaction.
- To embody/enact communication behaviors that reflect each of the goals listed above.

Course Requirements:

1. *Two Exams*. (Objective and short answer essay format) designed to

- demonstrate basic understanding and application of selected concepts and terminology introduced in the test and lecture/discussions.
- 2. *Short written probes.* No more than 5 short papers (1-3) pages designed for application an analysis of course concepts as they relate to specific communication situations.
 - 3. *Three public speeches.* These speeches are designed to increase your skill in creating, organizing, delivering, and interpreting informative and persuasive messages.
 - 4. *Engagements.* A series of small group activities and out of class observations--designed to facilitate the integration of communication theory and practice in interaction with other class members.
 - 5. *Communication Analysis Paper.* (5-S pages) This paper is designed to extend and apply course principles to interpersonal and/or intercultural communication situations that the student has experienced.
 - 6. *Attendance and participation.* This is an important part of your responsibility as a member of this class. Several written and oral engagements will be assigned and completed in class.

Grading Policies

Assignment:	Points:	
2 Exams	120	20.0 %
3 Speeches	180	30.0 %
1 Analysis paper	90	15.0 %
Written probes	75	12.5 %
Engagements	75	12.5 %
Attendance	60	10.0 %
	<hr/> 600	<hr/> 100.0 %

All assignments will receive a raw numerical score; finals grades will be based on a 90-80-70-60 percent scale. You will be given a form for monitoring your point total throughout the course. At any time you can determine your approximate letter grade by calculating the percentage of points you have earned out of the points possible for each graded assignment.

Course policies:

As members of a learning community instructors and students agree to a tacit social contract. That contract ensures that all participants will attend every class meeting, engage one another in an informed and spirited manner, and complete all assigned responsibilities on time. In other words, when you signed up for this course, *attendance and participation* became two of your assigned responsibilities. Like any other assignment, you will be awarded points for meeting the full-class-period attendance. If you are

there, you receive the points automatically, if you are absent, *for whatever reason*, you do not receive points. Remember that the reason for your absence does not change the fact of your absences. Attendance points comprise 10 percent of the total course grade.

Copies of all homework assignments and handouts will be made available to you (or someone you designate) to pick up after any class you miss. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to get and complete these assignments by the due date in order to receive full credit for the assignment. In general, no make-up speeches, exams or written assignments will be allowed. In the event of a personal emergency, make-up work may be accepted for half credit. In class engagements may not be made up.

APPENDIX B

Student Information Sheet

SPCM 101: Introduction to Oral Communication: Speech, Self, and Society Treinen

Name:

- 1) Please describe four significant communicative interactions that you have had in the past.
- 2) How do you feel this course might help you when interacting with others?
- 3) Please describe your ideal classroom experience.
- 4) If you could change one thing for the better about this university, what would it be and why?
- 5) If you could change one thing for the better about the surrounding community, what would it be and why?

APPENDIX C

What is communication?

Please form dyads and answer the following questions about examples 1–5. After your dyad has finished answering the questions, we will discuss your ideas as a class, and try to form a definition about communication based on your experiences.

- A. What does this example say about communication/or what can you interpret about communication from this example?
 - B. What type of communication is represented in each instance? What process is represented in each instance? (See chapter 2—pp. 16–29—in your textbook)
-

- 1. I just recently got into a new sport (freestyle footbag), and I went to meet someone who was fairly advanced in it. Scott, it turns out, was a focused individual when it comes to the sport, but I'd swear he said 10 words to me total during the two hours that we practiced. Looking back on his attitude and approach to meeting me, I realize this was his way of showing respect (I have since gotten to know him quite well).
- 2. I have a slight problem trying to argue my point across to people. For the simple fact that my style of language is hard for some to decipher. As a result of this, I have to repeat myself three or four times just to get the message across to people.
- 3. I went out of town for a week at the beginning of the summer, and I didn't tell my Mom I was going to be gone. She called me many times during that week and left messages. Her last message said this: "____, why aren't you returning my calls? Are you dead? Please let me know." When I got back home I called her and left the message on her answering machine: "Hi, Mom. It's me. And, yes, I'm dead. Bye."

4. Believing that I could “get through” to my Dad a piece of information that my Mom explained he would never grasp, I set out to have a discussion with him. I don’t remember what it was specifically, but I do remember my frustration and sense of defeat or failure after multiple and various attempts at communication with him proved to be fruitless.
5. Last semester, I presented my Senior Seminar in Forestry to sixty students and the department’s faculty. I took a stand that was contradictory to the teachings of the “old school” professors. Some tried to crucify me, but failed.

APPENDIX D

Outside Sources & Materials

This assignment is to be completed at home. Please bring it with you to the next class period.

Directions: Please find your “Tentative Course Calendar” and note the chapters that we will be reading throughout the semester. Next, browse through these chapters in your textbook. As you browse through these chapters, please begin generating a list of possible materials we could use in this class to supplement the text. In the space provided, you will find categories that may help you begin brainstorming some ideas. Good Luck!

Readings (articles, poems, short stories, etc.):

Videos (music, movies, documentaries, etc.):

Guest Speakers:

Activities:

Discriminative Listening: The Root of the Listening Process

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Abstract

Discriminative listening is the root of the entire listening process. When listeners use effective discriminative listening, they understand, and assign meaning to aural and visual stimuli. This article reviews literature to define, explain, and explore discriminative listening. This article also presents the skills inherent in aural discriminative listening and links those skills to effective listening and effective learning as one matures.

Discriminative Listening: The Root of the Listening Process

Introduction

In 1996, after several years of research and discussion, the International Listening Association (ILA) framed the current, most widely accepted definition of listening in the field. "Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (Emmert, 1996, p. 2). This paper will define and explore the basic level of the listening process to explain what scholars define as discriminative listening. This literature review encapsulates the major aspects of discriminative listening. Listeners who discriminate effectively understand and assign meaning to aural and visual stimuli. Aural stimuli are those sounds received through the ears. Visual stimuli are those received with the eyes. Because of the magnitude of visual stimuli and nonverbal communication, only the skills needed for aural discriminative listening are discussed in this paper.

Definition of Aural Discriminative Listening

Since the establishment of the more formal study and development of the "field of listening" by Dr. Ralph Nichols, listening has emerged as a vital element of the communication process. Many communication experts recognize the need to study both the sending and receiving components of oral communication. Just as speaking skills exist at several levels and for several purposes. "We listen on a number of levels, for a variety of purposes" (Berko, Wolvin, & Wolvin, 1998, p. 65). The root level is discriminative listening. "At the first level, a listener listens for discrimination—to distinguish auditory and visual stimuli. Discriminative listening is at the base of all listening that we do" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 152). Furthermore, "at the discrimination level, we listen to distinguish auditory and visual stimuli." (Berko, Wolvin, & Wolvin, 1993, p. 33).

"The term auditory discrimination usually refers to the ability to notice separate, minute sounds in spoken words" (Lundsteen, 1979, p. 145). Auditory discrimination is important to both listeners and to speakers. "To be effective both as speakers and listeners, we must develop our ability to isolate and recognize specific sounds. This skill, called auditory discrimination, is an ongoing process. An understanding of how we transform sound waves into meaningful cues might be helpful...to improve...discriminative listening" (Brownell, 1986, p. 30). Berk, Wolvin, and Wolvin (2001) discussed discriminative listening.

In discriminative listening, we attempt to distinguish among auditory...stimuli. Distinctions are at the base of the listening we do. Through discrimination we can come to understand differences in...sounds (dialects, pronunciation)... By understanding such differences, we gain sensitivity to the sounds...of our world. You can then determine, for example, whether a person is being sarcastic, cautious, negative, or uncooperative because you realize that the same set of words can be taken in a variety of ways (p. 98).

Listening Models

Models of effective listening incorporating discriminative skills are being developed and continue to evolve as more is documented about the listening process. Since the publication of early listening research done by Paul Rankin in 1928, scholars have worked to define listening, to enumerate its skills, and develop taxonomies for its study. In 1957, Dr. Ralph G. Nichols, dubbed the "Father of the Field of Listening," predicted that effective listening skills could be learned and enhanced. Following the lead of Rankin and Nichols, Lundsteen analyzed "listening skills...offered an instructional taxonomy of general listening skills and of critical listening skills in particular" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 152). The initial Lundsteen taxonomy defined the A-B-C's of listening. The letters represent three levels of listening ranging from the least complex to the most intellectually complicated. Level A represents the lowest skill, acuity, or perception of sound. Level B represents basic discrimination among sounds, the separate, minute sounds in spoken words. Finally, level C represents comprehension of what the sounds mean. These three levels "form a hierarchy because persons who fail to discriminate sound differences with finesse probably also fail to symbolize much verbal meaning from those sounds. If they cannot recognize meaning, they cannot think or talk about it" (Lundsteen, 1979, p. 54). Two more theories were introduced in the 1980's. Both of these theories are built on the premise that the listener must follow a sequence

awareness, interpretation, and responding. Barker, Steil and Watson (1983) proposed the SIER model. This model presented listening as a four-stage process that connected *sensing, interpreting, evaluating, and responding*. Brownell (1986) devised the HURIER model that emphasized hearing, *understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding*.

Marsnik and Wolff (1992) proposed a listening model known as the Receptive-Transactional Process, which viewed speaking and listening as having distinct roles in the circular, transactional process of oral-aural communication. They included six sequential activities that result in listening. This model, like the others, begins with discriminative listening, which is defined as hearing and attending. Their process suggested that listening consisted of three stages, hearing and attending, interpreting and recreating, and retaining and responding.

Another very popular paradigm of the listening process is the Wolvin and Coakley model which provided the basis for the discriminative skills outlined in this paper. This model takes the shape of a tree [a figure depicting this model is included in the appendix of this article]. Metaphorically, the root level is discriminative listening. The trunk of the tree consists of comprehensive listening, which supports the critical listening branch. Appreciative and therapeutic listening makes up two more branches of the listening tree taxonomy growing from the comprehensive trunk and the discriminative listening roots (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996).

All of these models of the listening process put discriminative listening at the base. The name may be different, but the underlying principle is the same. As Coakley and Wolvin stated "listening with understanding requires that we first function as discriminative listeners, for it is necessary to distinguish the auditory and visual cues in a message before we can further process that message" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 152).

Skills Needed for Discriminative Listening

"Distinguishing the message stimuli is at the base of all listening we do, and experience and practice are our best strategies for improving discrimination" (Berko et al., 1993, p. 33). It is with this underlying premise that Wolvin and Coakley (1996) proposed five skills needed to improve our discriminative listening.

Skill One—Refining skills in Weaver and Rutherford hierarchy

The first important skill involved in discriminative listening is "refining the skills included in the Weaver and Rutherford hierarchy" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 162). The Weaver and Rutherford hierarchy listed "auditory skills that are developed during early childhood" (Brownell, 2002, p. 81). Additionally, the Weaver and Rutherford hierarchy grouped skills according to "the estimated time periods at which...the various skills are

generally developed...relevant to...auditory discrimination" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 160).

According to Weaver and Rutherford, in the *prenatal* stage, the fetus moves in response to sound. In infancy, babies begin to respond differently to unique sounds, imitate speech sounds, are quieted by sounds, search for sounds, and respond to loud noises. As infants, "listening is the primary skill that hearing infants use in learning their first language" (Sadow, 2000, p. 18). As children advance into preschool, they can focus on distinct sounds. They are able to screen out background noise, match identical sounds, repeat a short sequence of sounds, name sounds, and can associate sound with people and objects. From kindergarten to grade three, the discriminative listener recognizes that sounds differ in intensity, pitch, pattern, and duration; recognizes differences in initial, medial, and final sounds in words. At this age, the listener recognizes distinct words within a sentence, recognizes rhyming words, and identifies the accented syllable with a word (Brownell, 2002, p. 81). It follows that adults must master these skills so they can mature as effective listeners. Coakley and Wolvin constructed their five purposes of listening reminiscent of the Weaver and Rutherford hierarchy. They contended that "just as there are specific listening skills important to each of these listening purposes, we believe that the skills that listeners develop and use operate in a hierarchical sequence—depending on what each listener's intended objective(s) for listening might be at any particular time" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 152). Mature, effective listeners have generally progressed through this hierarchy and have obtained and refined their discriminative listening skills.

Skill Two—Learning the Sound Structure of the Language

The second specific skill effective listeners must master in order to be good aural discriminative listeners is to learn the sound structure of their language system. As children grow, they begin to recognize the various vowel and consonant sounds that make up the beginning, middle, and final positions of words. As they continue to mature, sentences and paragraphs are formed (Rutherford & Weaver, 1974). This process, for hearing individuals, is a natural process.

Linguists explain there are five levels or rules in all language systems. "Five different but interrelated sets of rules combine to create a verbal code, or language. These parts or components of language are called phonology, morphology, semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 173). Brownell discussed the process of learning the sound structure of a language for discriminative listeners. "Sophisticated discriminatory skills involve such activities as recognizing the sound structure of a language" (Brownell, 2002, p. 81).

The first level of a language system is comprised of the building blocks of sounds called **phonemes**:

The basic sound units of a language are called phonemes, and the rules for combining phonemes constitute the phonology of a language. Examples of phonemes in English include the sounds you make when speaking, such as (k), (t), or (a). These rules tell speakers which sounds to use...For instance, the word cat has three phonemes: a hard (k) sound, the short (a) vowel, and the (t) sound (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 173).

It is interesting to note, "Languages have different numbers of phonemes. English, for example, depends on about 45 phonemes. The number of phonemes in other languages ranges from as few as fifteen to as many as 85" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 174). A specific example of a phoneme is the *ir* (as in *bird*) sound. However, this *ir* phoneme is only found in one percent of all languages (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2002). When a speaker does not employ certain phonemes, it is crucial that listeners train themselves to hear the alternative sounds the speaker is substituting in order to understand the speaker's message. Effective listeners and competent communicators generally need patience and a desire to understand the speaker to make this skill a part of their listening repertoire.

Listeners learn the sound structure of their language by imitation during infancy. Among the first sound humans hear is their mother's voice. Children learn by imitation to make many of the same sounds as their parents (Rutherford & Weaver, 1974). For example, when parents personify the sounds animals make, they are teaching their children to imitate phonemes. Children use the discriminative listening process when learning these sounds. Many mainstream children learn that an "American" cat says meow-meow. They learn that woof-woof is the sound the American dog makes. An American rooster crows using the sounds cock-a-doodle-doo. The American bird says tweet-tweet. The American pig says oink. However, the phonemes used to imitate animal sounds are, in many cases, culturally based. For example, the "Latvian" cats say mow-mow (as in how); Latvian dogs say wow-wow (as in how); the Latvian rooster says key-ker-ee-koo; the Latvian bird says chuck-chuck; the Latvian pig snorts. However, as a Muslim student remarked in class, "for religious reasons, children in Muslim countries do not even learn a sound for pigs." The imitation of sounds is an important part of discriminative listening, as one learns to speak and hear the sound structure of one's language.

"When you listen to someone who speaks a language other than your own, you will often hear different (some might even say 'strange') sounds" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 173).

Mastery of another language requires practice in reproducing its sounds accurately. Sometimes it is difficult to hear the distinctions in the sounds made by those proficient in the language. Accents of second-language speakers...can provoke negative reactions in native speakers" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 174).

As more international instructors are hired at universities and colleges, student listeners clearly need to refine their ability to learn the sound structures they are listening to. "If the bilingual speaker's primary language is foreign...it is difficult and requires concentration to listen to this type of bilingual speaker" (Marsnik & Wolff, 1992, p. 236). Coakley (1997b, p. 7) said, "as a listener, your initial decisions are made on a phonetic basis; thus, you must understand the structure of sound and distinguish among aural sounds to be an effective listener." Unfortunately, not all people can form all phonemes. "Even when the differences can be heard, the mouths and tongues of those learning...are sometimes unable to produce these sounds. ...imperfect rendering of the phonology of a language—in other words, not speaking the sounds as native speakers do—can make it difficult to be understood accurately" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 174). For example, the word for cat in Latvian is *kačis*. Very few non-native Latvians can make the *ç* sound. There is an urban legend about a Russian Communist who, even though he spoke fluent Latvian, was recognized and captured by non-communist sympathizers during World War II because he could not make the *ç* sound correctly. Other languages make use of clicks and whistles, sounds which most non-native speakers of the language cannot make. The language of a community on the Kalahari Desert contains many words utilizing different clicks and whistles which determine meanings but are impossible for the average non-native speaker to make (Borisoff & Purdy, 1997). Therefore, often times "your success in identifying words within a foreign language...is dependent upon your knowledge of the vocabulary of that language" (Brownell, 2002, p. 81). As Coakley and Wolvin explained regarding the need for effective aural discriminative listening when learning a foreign language, "as we develop flexibility and experience in organizing the sounds we hear, we can become even better at the process of listening because we will achieve more reliable meanings" (Coakley, 1997a, p. 176).

Closely connected with phonology is the second level of language, **morphology**. "In combination, phonemes become words—that is morphemes, the smallest meaning-unit of sound. When articulated, the sounds ka, ah, and tee create the word/morpheme cat" (Neuliep, 2000, p. 205). It is difficult to distinguish where phonology and morphology separate. By definition, "phonemes combine to form morphemes, which are the smallest units of meaning in a language. The 45 English phonemes...generate more

than 50 million morphemes" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 174). The effective listener knows which letters begin and end words, which letters naturally belong together, the sounds of words in general, and how they fit together in the language. "The letters *sr* do not begin words in English. This knowledge helps English speakers to determine the beginning of one word and the end of the other word in sequence. Thus, few would misunderstand *this rip* as *this srip*. A second example, *Idrankitfirst*, can be read, *I drank it first* or *I'd rank it first*. If either phrase is said quickly without effectively discriminating, the meaning of the message could be distorted. Listeners would not know where one word stops and another begins. Brownell said, "That's because incoming nerve impulses are compared to a memory file of whatever you have heard in the past. During information processing, the new stimulus is matched to previously learned sounds...so that it "makes sense" (2002, p. 82). As an example, anyone unfamiliar with any foreign language will find an audiotape of a conversation useless.

Another example of the aural discriminative listening process can be found in a current television commercial for Geico Auto Insurance. This advertisement illustrates how the process of discriminating phonemes and morphemes leads to decoding a message properly. The telephone caller tells the phone operator that he is making a collect call. The caller says his name is Bob, last name, *Wehadababyitsaboy*. Because the receiver of the phone call understood the phonemes and morphemes of American English, he knew when one word ended and the next began. He decoded the message correctly. The caller was Bob. Bob and his partner had a baby, a boy.

The more listeners know more about another's language, the better able they are to isolate specific sounds and then identify those sounds and assign meaning to them. Youngsters seem better able to learn new languages and to reproduce unfamiliar sounds than do adults because they are less intimidated when asked to imitate the sounds they hear (Brownell, 2002).

The third level of language is **semantics**, the study of the meaning of words. As noted earlier, morphemes are used to form words; semantics is the study of the combinations of morphemes. "The most convenient and thorough source of information about the semantics of a language is the dictionary, which defines what a word means in a particular language" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 174). Semantics is often a cause of misunderstandings. One reason for misunderstandings may be the infinite number of meanings words can have. One communication researcher found, "the 500 words we use most often in our daily conversations with others have over 14,000 different dictionary definitions" (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 1999, p. 184). In Latvian, the semantic meaning of the word *zale* depends entirely on the way the word is spoken. The aural discriminative listener must distinguish the dictionary definition of the word as *grass* or *medicine* depending on the stress

placed on the vowel *a* (Streipa, 1986). Discriminative listening skills help make the semantic meanings of words clear.

Syntactics is the fourth component of a language system. "Along with a system of sounds, all languages have a set of rules for combining sounds to create meaning. The set of rules, or grammar, is called syntax.... Through syntax, sound and meaning are connected. (Neuliep, 2000, p. 207). Syntax is "the relationship of words to one another...Each language stipulates the correct way to arrange words....The order of the words helps establish the meaning of the utterance." (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 177). Because the placement of words in sentences can change the meaning of a message, it is important for the discriminative listener to understand the syntax of a language. When Spanish listeners hear the phrase, *Te quiero*, they know it means *I love you*. However, placing the words in the opposite order, *Quiero te*, results in *I want tea*. Clearly, the two phrases send a different message to the discriminative listener.

The sentence "John has, to the store to buy some eggs, gone, is an incorrect example of English syntax but an accurate representation of German syntax" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 177). In the Latvian language, word order, syntax, is not as rule bound as is American English and some other Latin based languages. When Latvians hear the phrase *Kur ir Janis?* they know it has the same meaning as *Kur Janis ir?* (Where is Janis? Where Janis is?) Latvian listeners know it is the use of question words which usually begin with K (Kur, Kas, Kad, Ko, Kam) that are the keys to constructing questions in Latvian, not the syntax order of the words (Streipa, 1986). The discriminative listener must be aware of the flexibility of Latvian syntax in encoding or sending messages and in decoding or listening to messages. Another example in American English is the use of the phrase "Venetian blind," referring to shades that were once used on many windows, juxtaposed with the phrase "blind Venetian." The placement of the words in the phrases definitely changes the meaning of the message. The discriminative listener must make such a distinction in order to understand the message.

The final component of all verbal systems is **pragmatics**, how a language is actually used. "A pragmatic analysis of language...considers how users of a...language are able to understand the meanings ...in particular contexts. By learning the pragmatics of language use, you understand how to participate in a conversation and you know how to sequence the sentences you speak as part of a conversation" (Koester & Lustig, 1999, p. 177). Because communication is a transaction, listeners participate in conversations as both senders and receivers of messages. Listeners must be able to hear and understand the sequence of sentences in order to remain a part of a conversation.

Effective discriminative listeners use their discriminative skills early in life and continually refine them as they mature. "Developing auditory discrimination skills is an ongoing process. When we are quite young, we begin to develop...auditory skills. As we grow older, we often need to refine these...skills. Also, we need to acquire and cultivate additional discriminative skills to master discriminative listening" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 162).

Skill Three—Detecting vocal cues

The effective discriminative listener has the ability to detect vocal cues. This dimension of aural discrimination is the study of vocalics, or paralinguage. "Another key discriminatory skill involves detecting vocal or paralinguistic cues...essential for the accurate interpretation of messages. These cues are...communicated through...your voice, including pitch, volume, and rate...as they influence what you hear" (Brownell, 2002, p. 82). Discriminative listeners must become aware of four major characteristics of the voice: "pitch (the highness or lowness of tone), rate (speed), volume (loudness), and quality (the individual sound of the voice)" (Marsnik & Wolff, 1992, p. 209), as well as vocal stress, inflection, tension, tone, and rhythm. These characteristics, either by themselves or in combination with the others, complete, add to, or contradict the meaning sent by words (Beebe et al., 2002). "There is vocal meaning embedded in the words themselves (we hear the words, but what is the voice saying?). We have all listened to messages where the meaning...changes completely because of the tone of the voice" (Kaufmann, 2000, p. 39).

Listening actively to paralinguage can add greatly to the meaning of the message being received. Vocalics can help determine if someone is telling the truth. Research indicates voice pitch is a better indicator of lying than facial expression. (Goldman, 1982). Kaufmann said, "perhaps this is the reason the statue of justice has the eyes covered" (Kaufmann, 2000, p. 40). "English has specific intonation patterns for...statements; for commands; yes-no and information questions; and for non-final rising as used in lists. Nonnative speakers must be sure that their intonation falls and rises enough or...a statement may be misinterpreted as a question" (Golombek & Johnson, 1996, p. 14). Effective discriminative listeners can detect how a message is vocalized and they can interpret what meaning is intended.

An excellent example of the importance paralinguage plays in the understanding of a message is found in a comedy routine created by Stan Freberg. In 1951, Freberg recorded his satire of soap operas, *John and Marsha*. In the recording, Freberg used no dialog except for the increasingly melodramatic repetition of the principal characters' names, John and Marsha (Freberg & Kolanjian, 1998). The meaning of the message is only apparent when listening discriminatively to the paralinguage embedded in the dialogue.

Another example of the influence of paralanguage on the meaning of a message is to dissect a sentence into single words and place stress on a different word each time the sentence is repeated. For example, *He didn't eat my brownie*. In order, *HE didn't eat my brownie*, but someone else did. *He DIDN'T eat my brownie*, clearly he did not eat my brownie. *He didn't EAT my brownie*; he did not eat the brownie, instead, for instance, he threw it away. *He didn't eat MY brownie*, but he did eat my brother's brownie. Finally, *He didn't eat my BROWNIE*. He may not have eaten my brownie, but he ate my piece of pie. Each time the sentence is repeated, the tone of voice, the paralanguage of the speaker, influences how a listener might interpret a message.

Finally, Purdy and Borisoff (1997) documented that in Nigeria, the Yala people use different pitches in their words to indicate the meaning of the word. They explained that as a missionary was giving a sermon, he spoke of a spider when he meant to be speaking of Jesus Christ. The vocal cues for the words translating into Jesus Christ and spider were the same with the exception of a slight pitch change. Listeners can use their discriminative listening skills to distinguish among the diversity of such vocal cues.

Skill Four—Developing sensitivity to accents and dialects/

Sensitivity to accents and dialects is the fourth important aural discriminative listening skill. Auditory discrimination can enhance listeners' sensitivity to and understanding of the dialects and accents of others. In fact, it is possible to make assumptions about the origin of people based on their vocal patterns. The good discriminative listener can use those cues appropriately and efficiently.

Travelers can make assumptions about a speaker's hometown or place of origin by listening discriminatively. Listening to a speaker's pronunciation of the words *orange*, *raspberry* or *Boston* can lead to conclusions about the background of the speaker. Unfortunately, making assumptions by listening to accents can negatively influence a listener's perceptions of a speaker. Gill and Badzinski (1992) found that American listeners react more favorably to accents similar to their own and react more negatively to accents of non-American speakers. By developing awareness of various dialects and accents and increasing knowledge of their differing characteristics, listeners can reduce the frequency with which they stereotype and negatively react to differences in speakers' pronunciation, word choice, and grammar (as cited in Coakley, 1997b, p. 8).

Unfortunately, without listening training, listeners tend to stereotype speech dialects. Dubin (1970) found that Washington D.C. personnel interviewers, after listening to audiotapes of speakers using a range of dialects, revealed:

stereotyped reactions by more frequently selecting speakers with standard dialect for upper-level managerial positions and speakers with the nonstandard dialects for lower-level positions. Moreover, Terrell and Terrell (cited by Raloff, 1982) found that 100 secretly audio taped southwestern personnel managers—after interviewing six black college women with equivalent fake letters of recommendation and job experience—gave shorter interviews, made fewer job offers, and offered positions paying significantly less money to the three women who spoke Black English than they did to the three women who spoke Standard American English (Coakley, 1997b, p. 8).

Trained discriminative listeners might be able to avoid negative stereotyping based on accents or dialects. They will recognize the necessity of listening beyond the accent to listening to the individual speaker.

Skill Five—Developing sensitivity to environmental sounds

Being sensitive to environmental sounds is the final important aural discriminative listening skill. Learning to discriminate sounds of the environment is an early listening skill (Rutherford & Weaver, 1974). An exercise in listening to sounds occurring naturally in the environment is one way to hone environmental listening skills. “We must...distinguish different sounds and...identify what we have heard. When we are able to perceive sound accurately, we know more than just the fact that we have heard something—we know what sound we have heard” (Brownell, 1986, p. 31-32).

Discriminative listening produces environmental or spatial discrimination, and the ability to discriminate where a sound is coming from (Rutherford & Weaver, 1974). Discriminative listening to the environment explains why humans, even if blindfolded, can determine if it is raining or sleeting. The amazing mockingbird is able to imitate the sounds it hears. Like the mockingbird, impersonators are able learn to mimic the sounds they hear in their environments including the sound of another person’s voice. Owners of automobiles often use their discriminative listening skill to hear changes in the way their automobiles are functioning. Ross (1981) notes “you will learn by listening whether to take your car home to fix it yourself, or to a service station for minor repairs, or to a more expensive garage for major surgery” (p. 16).

Regrettably, Dobres and Gaffney (1973) found that many listeners are not skilled in listening discriminatively to environmental sounds. They recorded fifty common sounds ranging from the crying of a baby to the skidding of a car. They asked students of different grade levels to identify the sounds. Dobres and Gaffney reported poor results. They concluded that the

poor results were probably due to students' "lack of conscious focusing on sounds " (as cited in Coakley, 1997b). Dobres and Gaffney did not believe the students could not identify the sounds because they had no experience with the sounds. Rather, researchers recommended focusing more attention and energy on helping listeners detect the sounds as a way to improve the listeners' recognition of sounds (Coakley, 1997b).

Perceiving patterns or structures of music develops with effective discriminative listening. Music research revealed effective discriminative listeners "hear much more than note following note; they tend to focus on the organized pattern of the sounds—the melody" (Fiske & Taylor, 1984, p. 4). Those who have played the game *Name That Tune* have had the experience of suddenly recognizing not individual notes, but the patterns that exists among the notes. Brownell (2002) explained, "we create a mental set to explain the data" (p. 93), which in this case, are notes which define a particular song. She continued, "pronounce each of the following words in sequence: *Mactavish*, *Macdonald*, *Macbeth*, *Machinery*. What happened? If you pronounced machinery as mac-hinery before realizing that it didn't fit the pattern established by the first three words, then your mental set got the best of you" (p. 83).

Effective Discriminative Listening, Effective Listening, and Learning

Successful discriminative listening leads to effective listening and learning. While researching language acquisition of children (that is, learning oral and reading vocabularies), Perkins (1971) noted the role of auditory discrimination in oral language development.

Long before the first true word is spoken, the infant has been working on a system for deciphering the mysterious stream of jabber he/she hears when people talk. The fact that he/she can recognize the meaning of what is spoken before he/she himself (herself) can speak reveals the ability to recognize at least gross differences in sounds on which meaning hinges before he/she can produce these differences (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 160).

Researchers believe listening influences learning as early as elementary school. While doing research on the development of reading skills, Ebel (1969) found "the strength of many developmental reading programs appears to lie in their success in improving auditory discrimination of language sounds (p. 1083)" (as cited in Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 160). As early as 1979, Lundsteen (1979) found evidence that listening training may bring improvement in reading skills, and boldly stated:

reading may depend so completely upon listening as to appear to be a special extension of it. Since reading is nor-

mally superimposed on a foundation of listening, the ability to listen seems to set limit on the ability to read. A child in need of remedial reading is also a child in need of remedial listening (p. 3).

He went on to state "there are many specific links between reading and listening, such as: (1) the act of receiving, (2) analogous features, (3) vocabulary, and (4) common skills of thinking and understanding" (Lundsteen, 1979, p. 3). In fact, Neuman (1981) supported one major conclusion:

The child who is unable to hear and distinguish sounds will most likely have difficulty in learning to read. Thus, auditory discrimination plays a crucial role in the development of listening, speaking, and reading and spelling effectiveness. However, it is important to note, there appears to be little, if any relationship between auditory discrimination and the scores on most intelligence tests (Wilkin, 1969) (Lundsteen, 1979, p. 145).

It is self evident to say success in college is important. Research has discovered listening is a critical factor in academic success. Legge (1971) concluded that, "students who listen effectively are more successful in...schoolwork and...achievement levels. Conaway (1982) discovered...'among college students who fail, deficient listening skills were a stronger factor than reading skills or academic aptitude' (p. 57)" (as cited in Coakley & Wolvin, 2000, p. 143). Over the last thirty years, researchers have consistently reported "applied learning skills such as listening... are essential for school success" (Brignam, Lane, Lane, & Switzer, 1999, p. 323). In fact, "Students who have had a listening course report that instruction in the listening process, comprehensive listening, discriminative listening, critical listening, and therapeutic listening is especially of value in their subsequent work, personal, and academic lives (Coakley & Wolvin, 1992)" (as cited in Coakley & Wolvin, 2000, p. 145).

Luckily, students do benefit from listening courses. Charles H. Swanson, professor of Speech Communication and Theatre, at Fairmont State College, and former President of the ILA, stated, "students who get better grades are not smarter, they just listen better" (as cited in Marsnik & Wolff, 1992, p. 5). Floyd (1998) added, "It is important to note that researchers have discovered successful students are better listeners than those who are poor listeners. Listening is a skill students need and one they know they need" (Floyd, 1998, p. v). Floyd (1998) continued, "In fact, students who listen better can achieve beyond their mental capacity as measured by intelligence tests. On the other hand, students lacking in listening skills may be slower in developing mental abilities than those who are higher in listening ability" (p. 3).

"Listening is an important skill we use daily. Your academic success, employment achievement and personal happiness often depend on your ability to listen efficiently" (Berko et al., 1998, p. 51). Listening is an important means for learning at the college level. Listening is the most used academic skill. "Students listen to the equivalent of a book a day; talk the equivalent of a book a week; read the equivalent of a book a month; and write the equivalent of a book a year" (Buckley, 1992, p. 622). In fact, listening is more critical to academic success than reading or academic aptitude. "As an educated person, you have an obligation to strive to be an effective listener. And to be a responsible listener, you must know what the process is about, what it takes to be an effective listener, how to evaluate your own listening, and how to work toward improving your weaknesses while retaining your strength" (Berko et al., 1998, p. 52).

Others have speculated about the importance of listening including recent federal initiatives meant to strengthen educational outcomes for secondary school and post-secondary school students.

The U.S. Department of Labor (1991) established a commission to identify what critical skills were essential for high school graduates to function effectively in the workplace. The basic skills of mathematics, reading, writing, speaking, and listening were determined to be at the core of preparation for graduates to enter the workplace (p. xviii). Likewise the U.S. Department of Education identified in its national goals, Goals 2000, a significant communication objective for all college graduates: "The proportion of college graduates who demonstrate advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially" (National Education Goals Panel, 1992, p. 5). The panel's 'communicate effectively' outcomes include listening along with speaking, writing, and reading (as cited in Coakley & Wolvin, 2000, p. 143-144).

In the academic setting, researchers (Ford & Wolvin, 1992, 1993; Pearce, Johnson & Barker, 1995; Kramer & Hinton, 1996) have determined that college students trained in listening skills in basic speech communication courses perceive themselves to be more competent listeners in academic settings, career settings, and social settings. (as cited in Wolvin and Coakley, 1992, p. 42). Students who have taken an entire course in listening report study in listening is beneficial to them "in their lives as students, as professionals, as family members, and as partners in social relationships" (Coakley & Wolvin, 1992, p. 42).

Direct instruction in listening should focus on developing competent listeners, listeners who effectively and appro-

priately function as communication receivers. Development of this competency requires attention not only to listening skills (the major focus in listening education to date) but also to listening knowledge and to listening attitudes (Coakley & Wolvin, 1994). Describing the foundations of listening education, Ridge (1984) elaborates on the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of listening competency (Coakley & Wolvin, 2000, p. 144).

As adults it is essential to possess highly developed aural discriminative skills. In this manner, adults can help others develop their discriminative ability. Teachers, speech therapists, and parents especially need to increase their discriminative listening ability; they are responsible for guiding children's language acquisition. Only through careful listening can they monitor a child's language development. Only with good discriminative listening skills can a person hear the improper pronunciation of *wabbit* and *yights* meaning *rabbit* and *lights* and provide the necessary guidance to the speaker. (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996).

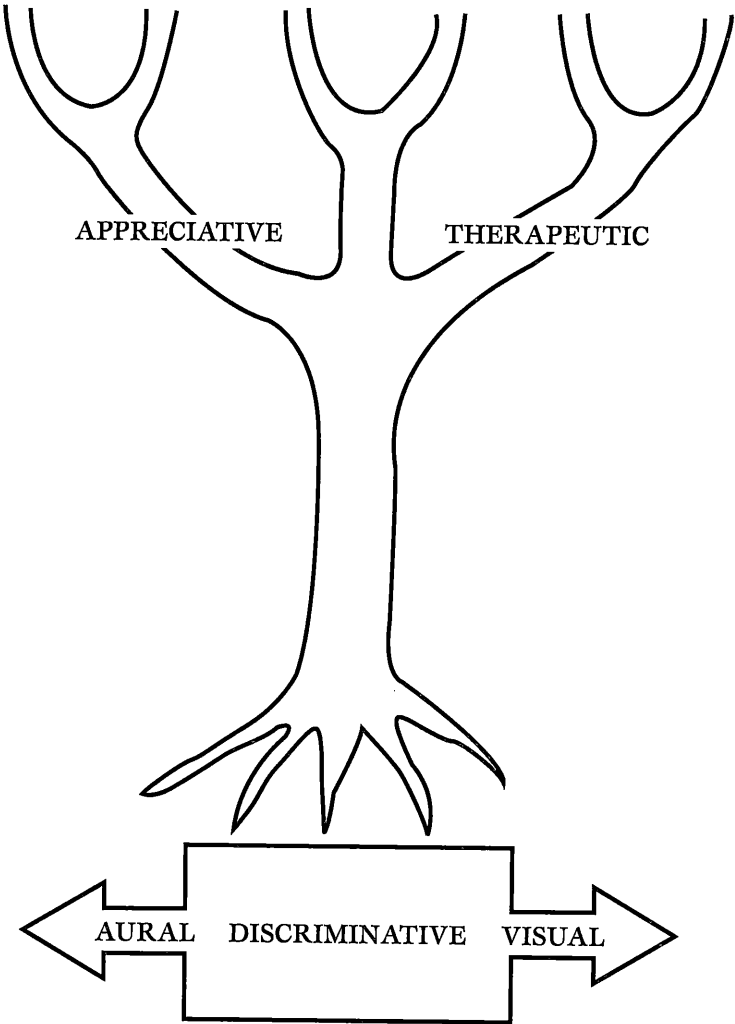
It is clear, then, that as adults, we need to develop our discriminative ability so that we can empower ourselves as more efficient listeners. According to Fessenden, the first level of listening involves the isolation of the individual aspects of a message. This level does not include evaluation or analysis; it involves only the recognition of the presence of specific, independent items. Our proficiency in recognizing specific items depends on our auditory discrimination skills, and without highly developed auditory discrimination skills, we cannot achieve our goal of becoming complete listeners. (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996, p. 162)

Once listeners have mastered aural discriminative listening, they can become effective listeners. Effective listeners are able to comprehend messages, to listen critically to messages, to listen therapeutically to others, and to listen appreciatively to various forms, including music, theatre, and oral reading. These five levels, or types of listening, allow people to function socially, personally, and professionally. Further, efficiency in these levels of listening allows students to be more effective academically. The importance of the process of effective listening is critical in all areas and ages of life.

In conclusion, "listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (Emmert, 1996, p. 2). Listening is important because it is a personal, professional and academic survival skill. Listening is often cited as one of the top skills necessary for effective performance in business (Coakley & Wolvin, 1996). "We acquire knowledge, develop language, increase our com-

munication ability (the good listener is also a good communicator), and increase our understanding of ourselves and others through listening” (Cooper & Simonds, 1999, p. 61). As outlined in this paper, the process of effective listening begins with effective discriminative listening and is linked to effective listening and effective learning as one matures.

APPENDIX



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REVIEW***Presentation Help Online***

by Diana Rehling, Paula Tompkins and Dave Warne

Mark Grant

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A new website, funded by a MnSCU Learning by Doing Grant, was recently launched by members of the St. Cloud State University Speech Communication Faculty. Presentation Help Online (PHO) was designed to support faculty in their use of oral presentation assignments in the classroom. The information provided by PHO is solid, practical and would be of benefit to many faculty using public presentation assignments in their classes. With that said, the pragmatic approach taken by the website makes the true target audiences for the site new speech communication faculty, and non-speech communication faculty looking for guidance in implementing aspects of public presentations in their courses. There is little to no theory; rather the focus is almost entirely on practice. Speaking as a speech communication faculty member who is regularly approached by technical program faculty and asked for such guidance, this website is a welcomed resource.

The creators of the site (Diana Rehling, Paula Tompkins and Dave Warne) strike a nice balance between providing enough practical information as to be helpful, not so much as to be overwhelming to those faculty not steeped in the tradition of oratory. I get the impression that speech communication graduate assistants were tapped as a resource in the development of this site, because it looks to answer the question, "what do you wish we had told you before we gave you that public speaking class to teach."

PHO is divided into several subject links and takes a chronological approach to implementing presentation assignments in a course. The site walks you through the process, starting with issues to consider when deciding whether or not to make oral presentation assignments in your course, to sample evaluations that you can download and modify. The site provides help in writing an effective speech assignment by assisting faculty in identifying the goals and parameters of their individual projects.

I think the best section is titled "The Devil is in the Details," which contains suggestions for dealing with issues that faculty may not realize exist until they are knee-deep in them. Among these are strategies for dealing with the inevitable time issues associated with presentations in class, how to deal with high levels of speech anxiety, and how to respond to the presentations that are just plain bad. I like this section because it is so clearly born from the experience of speech faculty. Faculty who have scheduled

six ten-minute speeches in an hour, only to complete three, know how tricky the planning of presentations can be.

The site also contains a page titled "From the Student's Perspective." This section is the result of a survey conducted by the website authors. In this section, students provided a variety of suggestions for faculty as to what information they want and need when presentations are going to be part of their grade. This contribution from students is a good addition to the website. The student feedback is insightful, and the suggestions provided are reasonable. Faculty who lack confidence in their own knowledge base can use this portion of the site and be comfortable they are providing students the tools necessary to be successful with the assignment.

In the often-tricky area of evaluation, PHO identifies important content areas as well as some components of effective delivery that can be difficult to zero-in on if you do not regularly listen to student presentations. The site does a good job explaining the benefits of both oral and written evaluation as well as offering suggestions as how to implement them. In addition, the site suggests methods of evaluation for the speaker and the audience (an often overlooked area of assessment). PHO also provides practical advice for how to plan for planning effective evaluation—advice ranging from the importance of establishing a clear criteria, to how to best signal to a student that they have used all their time and are currently using someone else's.

The sample evaluations provided on the site are specific enough so that they focus on standard practices of good public address but can also be easily modified to fit a specific subject area or assignment.

PHO also contains several links to public address related websites that provide direction to faculty who may want more information and more resources. Video examples of presentations are listed as a site offering, but are not up as of now. When up, if well chosen, the videos will provide clear examples of student performance and may help shape faculty expectations. Realistic expectations on the part of the faculty play a large part in assessing the success or failure of presentations in class.

From a usability standpoint, the website works quite well. The homepage loads quickly and the subsequent links also load well. The purpose of the website is immediately obvious and it is fairly easy overall to locate desired information. The use of subheads and bullet lists helped keep order to the navigation. The list of links that runs down the left side of the page assists in navigation by identifying where you are in the site. However, there are several links and pages to the site which can make finding information sometimes difficult. For example, if you want to look up what the site says about visual aids, there is not a fast, easy way to find it. You have to searching for it before you find it ("Evaluating Assignments" subheading

“Criteria” subheading “Visual Aids and handout”). I also think there are some embedded links that should be accessed more easily right from home page. For example, the links to public speaking websites are scattered throughout the website on different pages. These links are well placed where they currently are and in keeping with the theme of each respective page, however all the external links used in the site should also be displayed together on their own “resources” page, which should be a main link off the home page.

The website is still in the developmental stage, and as such there are some deadends and missing pieces (student video). But the authors acknowledge the site is a work in progress and visitors are encouraged to evaluate the website and to pose suggestions or questions to the website authors.

As faculty grapple with implementing new assignments and activities in their courses, one of the biggest challenges they face is that of the unknown. The unknown of how to go about it, how much time will it take, how will the students react, etc. This unknown is compounded when the activity or assignment is linked to the number-one fear of American adults –public speaking. Although it is not possible to anticipate every problem and question and address it before it gets asked, PHO has identified many of the issues that experienced speech communication faculty know so well, and effectively passes the information along.



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