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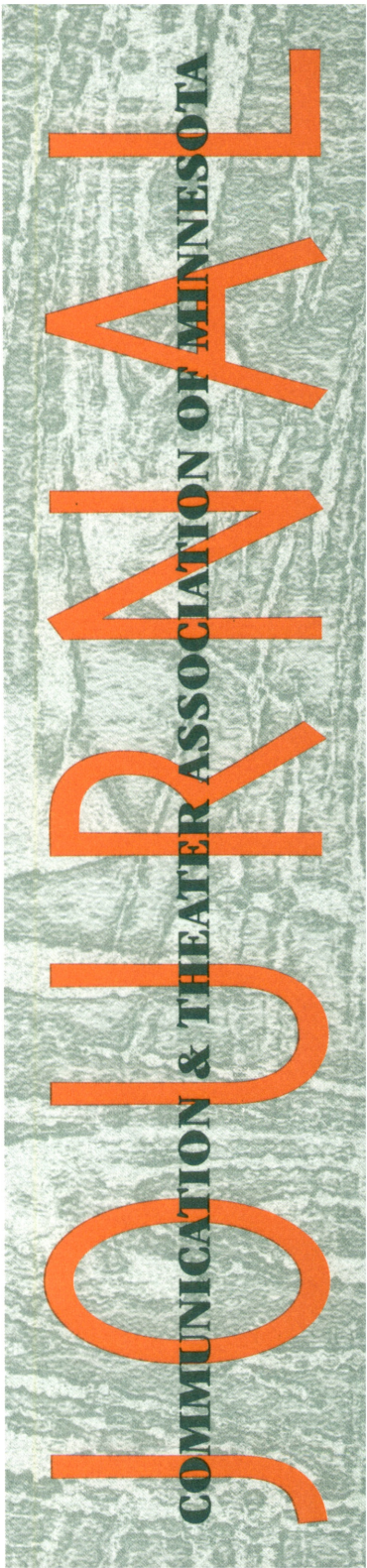
**“Culturally Relevant Teaching in
the New Millennium: The Preface
to a Primer”**

**“My Papa Writes: The Kovno
Ghetto, 1941-1944 or, The Word,
The Lyric, and Spiritual
Resistance”**

**“A Plain-Spoken Response to the
Communibiological Challenge”**

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Group Course: The Good, The
Bad and The Ugly”**

**“Teaching Dance to the Non-
Dancing College Student:
A Strategic Approach”**



COMMUNICATION AND THEATER ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA JOURNAL

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Summer 2001

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The Call for manuscripts goes out in the fall of the year and the deadline for submissions is in March of the following year. Details of how to submit are given in the Call which is sent to all members and all departments, and is announced in SPECTRA and the CTAM Newsletter. Book review ideas should be queried with the editor in advance of the submission date. Book reviews are generally published if accepted and on a space available basis. All articles are read anonymously by two Associate Editors. All author identification markings are removed from the articles, and no editor reads the work of a colleague. Associate Editors may submit articles to the journal, but their work must go through the process of blind review, just as any other submitter. The Journal Editor facilitates the process and makes final decisions based on the Associate Editors' recommendations and comments. If there are any questions about the process, please direct them to the Journal Editor.

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The *Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal* is the scholarly journal of the Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota. It is also an outlet for innovative teaching methods as well as issues of discipline-related importance. All theoretical and methodological approaches are welcome. The CTAMJ 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 and university groups. The journal welcomes theoretical and applied articles and teaching suggestions from both the theater and communication disciplines. All general articles will be blindly reviewed by capable scholars in the appropriate field.

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ments made. But, when making editorial decisions, all attempts are made to balance these demands with the needs and interests of the journal's readers.

The Journal is guided by three key principles:

To provide an outlet for the expression of diverse ideas.

To publish high quality scholarship in the disciplines of Speech Communication and Theater.

To meet the journal-related needs of CTAM and its members.

CTAMJ Call for Manuscripts

The Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal is seeking manuscripts for Volume 28, scheduled for publication in Summer 2001. 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. For the general section, original theoretical, critical, empirical, or applied research is desired. For the Teacher's Workbook, shorter essays focusing on pedagogical methods in communication, theater and forensics will be considered. These may include exercises or other instructional material that could be used at the secondary or collegiate level. For both the general section and Teacher's Workbook, articles that address the role of technology in communication and theater, including the use of technology in classroom instruction and evaluation, are especially welcome. Book reviews are also being sought for this issue. Contact the editor concerning book review proposals.

Authors should submit three copies of their manuscript. A separate title page should accompany the copies. Electronic submission is welcome. A Word document may be sent via attachment to the editor. Care should be taken that author identification has been removed from the paper itself. All manuscripts should be prepared according to current MLA or APA 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 1, 2002. Please send manuscripts and any questions to Mark Braun, Editor, Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal, Office of the Associate Dean, Gustavus Adolphus College, 800 West College Avenue, St. Peter, MN 56082-1498; mbraun@gustavus.edu; phone, 507-933-7368; fax: 507-933-7081.

Culturally Relevant Teaching in the New Millennium: The Preface to a Primer¹

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The multiple race option offered in the 2000 Census provides a new perspective on Minnesota's growing racial diversity, according to a report issued [on May 29, 2001] by Minnesota Planning. Although less than 2 percent of Minnesotans identified with more than one race, a multiracial identity was much more common among non white people and among children.

Among non white Minnesotans, the proportion identifying with an additional race ranged from 12.6 percent of those marking Asian to 66.3 percent of those who checked Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. In contrast, very few of those who checked white (1.5 percent) checked an additional race. Children were more commonly identified as multiracial than adults.²

This opening statistical outlay by Minnesota Planning offers an eye opening perspective of demographics of Minnesota in the new millennium. These statistics, like the state agency, "provides timely information about critical issues to policy-makers [teachers] and the public." We can see the issue and reality of a growing cultural diversity in student populations in classrooms around the country.³ What does this mean in terms of the daily practice of education—teaching and learning—for you and for me? It means that like the shifting demographics of our country, teachers need to experience a shift in how we think about and approach curriculum; how we approach teaching strategies and consequently our orientation to our students and the social construction of knowledge in the classroom. "To claim that knowledge is socially constructed usually means that the world we live in is constructed symbolically by the mind through social interaction with others and is heavily dependent on culture, context, custom, and historical specificity" (McLaren, *Life* 178).

In the face of increasing cultural and racial diversity in our classroom, this essay is designed as a preliminary articulation and synthesis of arguments that can inform culturally relevant teaching in this new millen-

nium. The essay specifically addresses the issue of culture, the process of schooling, the institution of education as a vehicle for social change, and the communication/theatre classroom as an arena for the infusion of a critical cultural awareness. The essay is structured around five extended tenets that undergird and help to define the notion of "culturally relevant teaching."

But before considering these tenets why should we, as teachers of communication, rhetoric and theatre, show interest in the increasing presence of cultural diversity in our classrooms? It is because the very nature of our disciplinary grounding is interested in sharing articulate understandings of varying ideas, principles, strategies, world views (or projection of world views) through language and aesthetic representations of life. We understand and appreciate the fact that "socially situated knowledge is necessary for interpreting the common meaningfulness of communication to its participants" (Donal Carbaugh 5). We understand that culture and language serve as filters, or what Kenneth Burke calls *terministic screens*, through which we see and come to understand the world. And if pedagogy is about asking the questions of what to teach, why to teach it and how to teach it—then surely the answers to these questions should already be influenced by the diverse population of students in our classrooms.

Pedagogical space is socially constructed space for learning. Hence, critical learning about self and other extends beyond the walls of the "traditional" construction of a "classroom" to include the theatrical arena and the multiple and varying places where teachers teach. The politics of pedagogy is present in what we teach and why; it is present in what theorists, models and perspectives we expound; it is present in when and how we talk about differing cultures; it is present in what plays we choose to perform and why? The classroom becomes a space for varying cultural performances just like the theatre becomes a space to explore culture through performance.

It is true in the larger study of communication and theatre as it is in rhetoric, that "a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" (Burke, *Permanence and Change* 49). To what degree do we and should we, offer our students multiple ways of seeing the world in which they live? To what degree do we and should we, offer our students multiple ways of articulating their cultural experience in the classroom? The project of promoting culturally relevant teaching is most certainly within the purview of what we do as communication, rhetoric, and theatre scholar-practitioners. The nature of our intellect, art and skill is always directed towards bridging gaps of understanding and difference through time and space. So throughout this essay while the project is focused on centralizing the notion of culture in pedagogy, we should understand the intricate relationships that exists between culture, communication, rhetoric and theatre; all serve as a politic of value.

Tenets, Topoi, Tropes and Schemes⁴

The first tenet in developing a program of culturally relevant teaching is to re-examine the very notion of culture. Culture is often referred to as "the social production and reproduction of sense, meaning and consciousness. The sphere of meaning, which unifies the spheres of production (economics) and social relations (politics)" (Tim O'Sullivan et. al. 68). The term is most often reduced to specifics of individual cultural practices as relegated to issues of ethnicity. The concept is generalized to refer to the shared ideologies and practices of people within geographical or political landscapes, such as Americans or southern culture versus northern culture; the East Coast versus the west cost culture. The following description of culture offered by O'Sullivan et.al. is worth quoting at length.

The term culture is multi-discursive; it can be mobilized in a number of different discourses . . . What you have to do is identify the discursive context itself. It may be the discourse of nationalism, fashion, anthropology, literary criticism, [education, communication, theater, etc.] In each case, culture's meaning will be determined relationally, or negatively, by its differentiation from others in that discourse, and not positively, by reference to any intrinsic or self-evident properties that are eternally fixed as being quintessentially cultural. Further, the concept of culture cannot be 'verified' by referring its meaning to phenomena or actions or objects out there beyond discourse. What the term refers to (its referent as opposed to its signified) is determined by the term itself in its discursive context, and not the other way around. (68-69)⁵

The significance of this functional definition of culture is the acknowledgement that it is thought, experience, practice and how people talk about these aspects of their daily existence that establishes culture. That while culture is often spoken about in monolithic terms and even in ways that mark racial, ethnic, class difference; culture is always defined and occasioned by those who engage in specified practices that define discursive communities. It signifies "the particular ways in which a social group lives out and makes sense of its 'given' circumstances and conditions of life. In addition to . . . a set of practices ideologies, and values from which different groups draw to make sense of the world" (McLaren Life 180).

For the last ten years there has been a growing emphasis on what is referred to as "multiculturalism," especially in the schools. On the surface, this acknowledgement of cultural diversity seeks to expand the canon of educational thought and to celebrate diverse cultural contributions to human experience. Yet in reality, it is a political venture that is designed to placate cries of exclusion. In celebrating cultural others the program of multiculturalism focuses less on the substantive realities of varying cultural communities and more on exoticizing difference by placing the specu-

lar gaze on the performative accepts of cultural display. According to Pepi Leistyana and Arlie Woodrum in their book Breaking Free: The Transformative Power of Critical Pedagogy

The majority of this work, which endeavors simply to affirm diversity and identities through positive images of subordinated groups, does so in a limited fashion, focusing on color coordination, food festival, cut-and-paste add-ons to the existing canon, and group-based methodologies. These efforts, by abstracting particular groups' similarities form an understanding of their varying complexities (such as difference among them in terms of genders, class, sexual orientation, etc.) often fall into the trap of essentializing . . . objectifying . . . or even romanticizing the lives of those on the margins.

Current trends in multiculturalism seem to reify difference by exploiting diversity. By holding a refracting mirror up to ethnic and minority populations, difference is acknowledged but only in relation to what is perceived as the *dominant referent group*—the invisible norm of the White, middle-class, heterosexual male by which all others are measured. Consequently, this is all too common depoliticized. Liberal 'multiculturalism' fails to examine adequately the ideologies that inform unequal power relations and social stratification along such lines as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation. (2)

Any emphasis on culture in education and specifically the multiple cultures that intersect in educational environments must move beyond the exoticization of difference to get to substantive understanding of what truly marks those differences.

The differences in cultures can not be limited to skin color, costumes, or traditional dances. The differences must be explored to examine the undergirding ideologies of specific cultural communities—what informs their thought processes and practices? The examination must explore cultures not in relationship to what we perceive to be dominant Western culture. We must approach each cultural community (within a spectrum of a specific educational exploration) with an articulate focus on its distinct and dictating features. What are the deep structures of a particular culture and how do we come to understand those?⁶ What are the performative goals or performative methods of a particular culture? What are the tensive components that maintain balance and order within a particular culture? To what internal and/or external factors does a particular culture perform resistance? The discernment of answers to these questions is not like breaking a code in order to infiltrate secrets, as much as to appreciate the complexity of the social construction. Then and only then, can we come to an articulate understanding of otherness—realizing, that we are also constructed as other and begin a move towards a meaningful dialogue. To what degree are these cornerstone issues of concern in the range of cre-

ative and meaningful expressions found in communication and theater programs?

How do we bring our students to a close understanding of otherness and consequently to know themselves as other? This may simply be reflected in the practice of allowing students to bring their own articulated cultural experiences into dialogue with the curriculum. "Curriculum as communicative action would advocate mutuality, require respect, invite a genuine effort to understand what the other is saying, and encourage an openness to test and evaluate opinions interactively" (Berkeley 10). Through meaningful engagement we discover the varying culturally discursive communities and practices that are already at play in the classroom. This means that communication and theater teachers must engage in a reflexive process about the undergirding ideologies of their pedagogy, the structure and content of curriculum, and the multiple and varying ways in which students enter the classroom and engage the process of learning. It is to acknowledge that students enter the classroom with what Satya Mahonty calls their own "dense particularity," the construction of their cultural identity as influenced by the intersections of race, sex, sexuality, gender, class, geography and time (13).

The second tenet in developing a program of culturally relevant teaching is to establish culture as the central idea in schooling, and thus engage a critical pedagogy that always and already sees the classroom as a site of cultural proliferation. To what degree in communication, rhetoric and theatre does culture serve as the stage, script and character and the evaluative criteria of performative exchange? To what degree are these consciously and unconsciously present in what we do and teach? Teaching, educating and the process of schooling are grounded in processes of culture and cultural propagation. I make a distinction between these three descriptive pedagogical endeavors knowing that they are intricately interwoven, but seeking to tease out difference in order to uncover process as it relates to intent.

In *Educating*, D. Bob Gowin defines teaching "in the context of educating, is a social event in which human beings come to share meaning. Sharing meaning between persons is a large part of the process of changing the meaning of human experience" (62). He defines "educating, as an eventful process, [which] changes the meaning of human experience by intervention in the lives of people with meaningful materials to develop thinking, feeling, and acting as habitual dispositions in order to make sense of human experience by using appropriate criteria of excellence" (35-36).

While Gowin does not offer a working definition for schooling, I would assert that schooling has often been the process in which teaching and educating has been socially sanctioned and required. Located and established in specified sites called schools and classrooms, the power laden relational dynamics between teachers, students, administrators and the

dominant society that sanctions certain knowledge in the forms of curriculum and pedagogy. Thus curriculum becomes a form of cultural politics. "To view the curriculum as a form of cultural politics *assumes that the social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions are the primary categories for understanding contemporary schooling*" (McLaren Life 189) [original emphasis].

The standardized and regimented process of schooling is enacted upon students regardless of their specified cultural beliefs, values, backgrounds and ways of seeing the world in which they live. Thus, classrooms have always been sites of cultural inscription. So, if we are to engage culturally relevant teaching, we must make culture the central idea in the practice of teaching, the project of education, and in the program of schooling. We must examine what is embedded in Gowin's notion that "sharing meaning between persons is a large part of the process of changing the meaning of human experience." How much is this grounded in principles of communication and rhetoric? We must also reflect upon what is meant to "develop thinking, feeling, and acting as habitual dispositions in order to make sense of human experience by using appropriate criteria of excellence." How does this work with prevailing constructs of performance in everyday life and theater as a rehearsal for living?

If in fact we use culture as the central thesis that governs educational discourse, we must question the notion of shared meaning. As people who are interested in the dynamic and transactional nature of human communication, we surely must understand that in the project of education we can only offer students ways of understanding. We can only engage them in articulate contact of issues, theories and methods. We can only offer them an understanding of the world in which they live in and strategies towards their personal actualization.

This is the kind of empowerment that we seek one that "not only help students to understand and engage the world around them, but also enable them to exercise the kind of courage needed to change the social order where necessary" (McLaren Life 195-186). But maybe Ann Berkeley says it better from a communication and theatre perspective when she talks about the notion of *communicative action*. She says: "Communicative action suggests a model for a critical form of theatre pedagogy that would promote engaged citizenship, foster participation in development of dramatic and performance cultures, and encourage experimentation with theatre forms, techniques, and conventions in developing aesthetic consciousness"(10).

As communication scholars we understand that the notion of a "shared meaning" is illusory. We can only share a process of knowing and a method of sense making— relegating the notion of "shared meaning" to an appreciation of intent and an interpretation of reality. It is this approach which acknowledges that culture serves as a filter to experience and that

what we value in the process of learning is not blind acceptance. We value and encourage a critical understanding of variables that lead to particular outcomes and conditions—and how knowledge can make meaningful contribution to lived existence.

If we are to engage culturally relevant teaching, we must also re-articulate the notion of “changing the meanings of human experience” to reflect an understanding of diverse human experience and the forces that can impact change. We must also re-vision the intention of education. The intention must not only “develop thinking, feeling, and acting as habitual dispositions in order to make sense of human experience by using appropriate criteria of excellence”—we must engage in the critical project of questioning what cultural standards are being used to establish excellence and habituate dispositions.

“Critical pedagogy . . . while widely misunderstood and misinterpreted, challenges us to recognize, engage, and critique (so as to transform) any existing undemocratic social practices and institutional structures that produce and sustain inequalities and oppressive social identities and relations” (Leistyna and Woodrum 2). But beyond the formalistic notion of critical pedagogy, it is not a specified disciplinary focus as much as it is a collective of emancipatory pedagogical practices. Theorists such as Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire, Ira Shor and others offer complex interpretations of critical pedagogy that ground the disciplinary focus. Yet for me, the more approachable articulation of any critical pedagogy or emancipatory educational discourse is primarily concerned with the kinds of educational theories and practices that encourage both students and teachers to develop an understanding of the interconnecting relationships among ideology, power and culture. Critical pedagogy is really a localized practice informed by liberatory notions of possibility—that the classroom can be a site of practicing voice and empowerment.

“The term voice refers to the cultural grammar and background knowledge that individuals use to interpret and articulate experience” and how the sometimes diverse vocalities of students and teachers meet within the context of the classroom (McLaren, *Life* 226). Feminist pedagogy is also interested in unleashing the voices and listening to the stories. Wendy Hesford states that “one of the fundamental tenets of feminist pedagogy. . . is eliciting and attending to the personal experiences, histories, and narratives of our students and ourselves” (1). This discussion calls for making space for multiple voices. The practical implication of these definitions is that through attentive listening, teachers can hear the articulation of students’ cultural experience in the classroom. But it should be noted that “while cultural background surely plays a part in shaping identity, it does not determine identity” (Greene 256).

Student articulation of voice always intersects the pedagogical venture. So through the specific creation of classroom engagements, teach-

ers can establish opportunities for students to practice voice in the classroom. The nature of "engagement" must move beyond the traditional book report, researched speech or paper that asks students to demonstrate theories that may or may not register with them, but simply reinforces the intention of sanctioned knowledge. *Engagement* suggests that students are intimately connecting and embodying issues in a sensuous interplay between what is constructed as objectified knowledge and their own enfleshed knowledge.

The engagements may take the form of personal or cultural narratives, family histories, argument/position papers, or cultural perspective essays that relate to specific issues. They may be critical engagements in which students are required to either construct cultural theories to explain certain phenomenon or engage the critical process of culturally deconstructing theories that deny or have shaped their lived experience. In theater programs the notion of engagement might include a rehearsal or script analysis technique in which students simulate a dialogue between themselves and a particular character that they perceive to be the *radical other*. In this situation, the dialogue between the "imagined character" in the play and the "real character" of the student, may serve as a forum in which competing and shared values might be explored. The moments of intersection and divergence could be explored in terms of culture, race, class, sex, gender, etc. and their accompanying and varied ideologies.

The challenge in this type of insurgently liberating pedagogy is that teachers discover new ways to evaluate such articulated experience. In doing so teachers must realize that the expression of personal experience does not relieve them of critical responsibility to evaluate, rather it demands a more clarified matrix of evaluative criteria. The challenge is to realize that a key component in the educational venture is to teach students to engage in *critically reflexive thinking*. This means that we ask our students to critically reflect on what they know and how they know what they know. We should ask that they apply knowledge in ways that make sense of the world in which they live—not the presumably "real world" that they will enter after school, but the world that is always and already realized in and impacts their enfleshed beings.

When we evaluate these articulated experiences and perceptions, we evaluate them, not based on the true/false mentality of traditional educational methods that reify truth and deny individual perception. We evaluate by coming to an intimate understanding of the logics that formulated the utterance, the argument of the message and the passion of the articulation. We evaluate how students use the specialized and expected knowledge of academic discourse in relation to what they know and perceive through experience. It is through our concerted effort to listen to the voices of our students that we can further engage them in a dialogue.

The third tenet in developing a program of culturally relevant teaching, is to acknowledge the classroom as a microcosm of society. If we do this then we must acknowledge the diversity of issues of our society and how they impact on the student and thus on the classroom. We must acknowledge that class, poverty, drugs, disease, a disproportionate distribution of wealth and violence intervenes in the classroom, and even if these issues seemingly do not effect the immediacy of our lives, we do not live in isolation of these issues—they shape cultural experience.

As a means of exemplifying how the classroom becomes both literally and figuratively a microcosm of society, I turn to the literature that seeks to explain the social construction of “educational risk” and more specifically the notion of the “at-risk” student.⁷ The nomenclature of this ever-evolving field of study seeks to explain and describe students who are at-risk of not succeeding in school. The *Ecological* or *Interactionist Models* of at-risk is most appropriate to my discussion. The Ecological Model attempts to show the interrelation of student with his or her environment. The focus is on how that interaction or negotiation within and between specified contexts, on specified cultural and social terrain, places the student at a border crossing. That marginal positionality is then what causes and or contributes to the student’s at-risk status.

The logics that promote an interactional orientation to educational risk suggest that there is direct correlation between students in specific contexts. Bronfenbrenner formulated one of the first systematically expanded ecological models that can be applied to educational risk. This model consists of four nested systems or levels: the *microrisk* (classroom), the *mesorisk* (in the home), the *exorisk* (in the community) and the *macrorisk*, (the larger society). “Education risk is thus configured as a discordant child-environment interaction that may occur in varying contexts” (Johnson, Ecological 46).

The model is configured with the student in the center with his her individual *lifescrypt*. The lifescrypt includes personality, developmental potential, life experience, intelligence and personality. These characteristics are limited in the model, but are variably based on the individual student. The student is surrounded by a series of expanding concentric circles moving from the *microrisk* representing the classroom, which may include curriculum, materials, peers, physical structure and the teacher. The next level is the *mesorisk*, in which student and the classroom interaction are encased by the domestic sphere, where family issues impact the educational experience. The influences of housing, parents, discipline, norms, routines, and siblings are all considered as variables. Expanding the sphere of educational impacts is the *exorisk*, which includes the community interaction: community education, socio-economic status and public health; community leaders, extracurricular activities and recreational programs. The larg-

est and all encompassing sphere in the model is the *macrorisk*—which includes the impacts of socio-cultural variables: politics, government, social opportunity, and public policy in determining the individual student's at-risk status. This approach to theorizing at-riskness acknowledges and defines the socio-cultural component of risk. It attempts to consequently identify a "corresponding hierarchy of viable intervention strategies" (46).

While this model is rather broad, it serves to reinforce our understanding of the classroom as a microcosm of the larger society. Whether this is constructed by looking at the diversity and multiple factors impinging upon our students, or by exploring the traditional goals of education to produce workers or an educated, informed citizenry—the class is the site in which all of these issues collide. What are the specific strategies that teachers use to intervene or negotiate these complex socio-cultural issues? Teachers can not be expected to solve the world's problems, nor can we be expected to intervene at every level of social influence indicated in the model. But we can and must begin to address the issues in ways that give our students access and begin to develop those tools necessary for students to become social and cultural critics, which can lead to activism and change.

In this sense we also begin to establish the classroom as a border crossing, where teachers are not border guards restricting passage, but serve as guides to new understanding and opportunities—new ways of thinking and being. Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux have been at the forefront of critical/cultural pedagogy, particularly in their assertion that classrooms are border sites of negotiation, contestation and struggle. In Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education and Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies they play with borders of identity, borders of culture, borders of representation, and borders of power and politics. These borders are real, imagined, constructed and sedimented within the lived experiences of those who are affected by them. They are borders marked by difference. In Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture and Social Criticism, Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux expand on the agenda of "border pedagogy."

In short, the notion of border pedagogy presupposes not merely an acknowledgment of the shifting borders that both undermine and reterritorialize different configurations of power and knowledge; it also links the notion of pedagogy to a more substantive struggle for a democratic society. It is a pedagogy that attempts to link an emancipatory notion of modernism with a postmodernism of resistance. (118)

Border pedagogy promotes a reflexive move in which students are encouraged to acknowledge the physical, cultural and intellectual borders that are socially and historically constructed and to critique how they are implicated in and by those processes. It acknowledges that identities are

not predetermined, nor are they exclusively in alignment with race or culture. Rather, "[o]ne's class, race, gender, or ethnicity may influence, but does not irrevocably predetermine, how one takes up a particular ideology, read a particular text, or respond to particular forms of oppression. Border pedagogy recognizes that teachers, students, and others often "read and write culture on multiple levels" (cited in Aronowitz and Giroux, 119).

While the classroom is always a border crossing of cultural beliefs and values the practice of culturally relevant teaching may present a special challenge in educational institutions with a homogenous student and faculty population. Yet, this simply furthers the challenge to expand conceptions of culture, in which culture is not relegated to marked (visible) difference, as in skin color, body types or physical disposition. On predominately "White" campuses students must first come to a deeper understanding of the ideological, perceptual, religious, political, geographical and historical backgrounds that influence the lived experience of students of those who *appear* to be *just like them*. This exploration must then be extrapolated into a discussion of how visibly marked difference in skin color, point of origin, cultural performance and social practices are undergirded with histories of logic, reason and purpose. These students, like all students must come to an understanding that difference should not be equated with a hierarchy of value, privilege or oppression. They must be guided to an understanding of their own cultural roots, performances, allegiances and biases.

It may be impossible within the context of a limited classroom experience to come to an understanding of the "deep structures" of any given culture. But the pedagogical exploration of "the other" coupled with an on-going critical reflexiveness of how we are all implicated in cultural politics, leads towards building respect, compassion and tolerance.⁸ And while I use the example of predominately "White" campuses, these issues also impact historically Black colleges and universities, as well as predominately Hispanic-serving campuses. Culturally relevant teaching in these educational contexts must also explore the responsible practice of voice with a close examination of the promises and pitfalls of resistance, the possibilities that exist in cultural/racial reconciliation and a concentrated focus on racial tolerance. These issues are not equated with *forgiving and forgetting* past harms, or seeking historical reparations, as much as engaging an active preparation for the future.

If in fact, we buy into the idea of the classroom as a microcosm of society and thus serves as border crossing into realms of new understanding of self and other, this idea then leads into *the fourth tenet of culturally relevant teaching*. *In developing a program of culturally relevant teaching it is necessary to avoid ghettoizing a focus on culture by relegating it to specific courses or programs of study.* In doing so, the study of culture and cultural

studies, which are separate but interconnected ventures, become central to the educational experience of students. It is not the pet project of an individual instructor, class or department—or the personal burden of the ethnic or minority teacher who is personally invested in the issues.

Following the edict of David Bailey and Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg describes the shifting borders and boundaries of cultural studies when he says: “no single position can ever be secure in its correctness” (4-5). Grossberg outlines four approaches to locating and defining the project of cultural studies.

[T]he ‘main lesson of cultural studies’ is that ‘in order to understand ourselves, the discourse of the Other—of all the others—is that which we most urgently need to know’. . . Second, for cultural studies, the very nature of the relation between culture and power depends upon the particular context or site into which it is attempting to intervene . . . Third, the very concept of culture itself is contextual or at least polysemic. It is caught between social formations, everyday life, and representational practices . . . Fourth, in cultural studies, the cultural practice (or text) itself and its effects are also contextual [My emphasis].
(67)

The shifting borders of cultural studies are perceptual and intellectual borders. They mark an orientation between self and other that signals my conception of a ghetto.

The reference to a ghetto often refers to a geographic setting that is characterized by low economic conditions and a specified ethnic or gendered population. But the notion of a ghetto also refers to a sociological construct which is centered not in the reality of those who live in those sights, but by those who construct the difference that marks and pathologizes these territories and consequently the people who live in them. The ghetto stands in relation to the notion of the suburb and its perception as an idealized space, the American dream.

Lisa Duggan offers a critique about the positioning of Queer Studies, that I see as applying to the study of culture in academic settings. She says: “Identity politics only replaces closets with ghettos. The closet as a cultural space has been defined and enforced by the existence of the ghetto. In coming out of the closet, identity politics offers us another bounded, fixed space of humiliation and another kind of social isolation” (566). Duggan’s reference is specific to identity politics as it refers to queer identities, or the interactive and socialized ways in which a society legislates identity, deeming some acceptable or normal, and others as tolerated or atypical. The reference to the closet crosses discursive boundaries. The notion of the closet is a reference to hidden or cloistered identities that are

not fully expressed, either through personal choice or social sanction. The issue of being *in* or *out* of the closet, like issues of *culture* or *race* in the classroom, is an issue of visibility, referentiality and inclusion.

When issues of culture are relegated to specific courses like intercultural communication, interpersonal communication or departments like Black Studies, Native American Studies, Chicano Studies and Women Studies, they are successfully ghettoized and relegated to their place in the academic canon. Educational institutions engage in what Cheryl Johnson calls disinfecting dialogues "which keep the very 'funkiness' of racism and sexism temporarily at bay and simultaneously deny" students access to engaging in meaningful intercultural dialogue (129). This is not surprisingly evidenced in the fact that, the highest percentages of students taking classes with a specified cultural (or gender) emphasis, are students who claim membership in those communities, or students who by nature of their academic programs are required to enroll in these classes. Concomitantly, it is not surprising that many colleges and universities also give waivers in cultural diversity classes to their international or ethnic students. The arguable logic suggests that their lived experience sensitizes them to the issues related to intercultural communication. The logic falls short in the intersections between experience and sense making, between knowing and understanding, between experiencing and translating.

In this way students can also successfully avoid those classes and the concomitant issues related to culture and differing cultural experiences that they perceive as not relevant to their own interests. When these classes and programs are allowed to exist, as stand alone programs or specialty courses, educational institutions are in essence *outing* these issues. The practice of outing is highly politicized in that it is always relational. Like culture itself, it is the referent of outing an identity in a social context, as opposed to its signified, the thing done—whether that be by personal choice, malicious intent or as a result of political coercion.

The question of outing should be less about what is being outted, as much as why was it closeted? Why were the issues silenced? Why were the issues not included in the academic cannon that historicizes the nature of human experience? When these issues are *outted* like Duggan says, those who are outted (diverse cultural communities) are thus bounded in another fixed space of public scrutiny that is no less isolating than being in the closet.

I am not making an argument against these classes or programs, as much as I am commenting how they are positioned as "special" and therefore marked once again outside of the boundaries of the normal. I am constructing the notion of "normal" in this case, as it relates to curriculum and academic requirements. Within the liberal arts tradition, most universities establish what they may call *general education classes*. In doing so the

specified academic community establishes a canon of generalized knowledge, as well as social and cultural exposures that they deem necessary in the education of its students. If issues of culture are centralized throughout the curriculum and the educational experience of students, the issue of culture thus becomes normalized as an integral part of the educational process. Culture, both as an ideological notion and a marked reality in the lived experience of others, also becomes a part of what we teach and why we teach, which according to Robert Simons are the key questions of any pedagogical venture.

While issues related to culture, cultural studies and gender studies are often taught by a wide variety of faculty members, it is usually the insurgent issue of members of specified communities who initiate the need to develop those classes. Women professors have been the motivating impulse in classes in Women Studies, gay or queer identified faculty have created the impetus in courses in gay or Queer Studies. And appropriately noted it is Black, African, African-American, Latino and Chicano faculty who develop classes or programs that are geared towards issues related to those specified experiences. Ali Behad refers to this practice as a form of tokenism when he says: "The example of one person teaching all postcolonial literatures in a traditional English department that has two Renaissance scholars and three nineteenth-century critics is symptomatic of the practice of tokenized inclusion" (46).

Speaking from my own perspective as a Black Gay Man, what motivates my address of race and sexual identity issues in the classroom relates to my own personal condition in the world, both academically and personally. It is not my desire to flaunt the implicit and or explicitness of my difference, but to present myself as authentically as I can, to be fully present in the classroom.⁹ It is also my desire to engage students in the multiple discourses that inform issues with the hope that understanding leads to a greater acceptance of difference. But more importantly, I seek for them to find a way to engage difference and thus discover the potential for personal growth and understanding.

These motivating factors are not anchored in the desire to simply tolerate difference, as one tolerates that which can not be changed or understood; as in perpetuating that tired old bromide, "live and let live." This ultimately suggests that you draw lines and boundaries of personal existence without crossing or beginning to understand how alternative and othered ways of being reflect aspects of your own lived experience. Or it suggests that you live in isolation of those who are different from you, with the hope and smug notion that their lives have nothing to do with yours. The intention is to truly empower students with a clear understanding of alternating cultural communities and the ways in which they overlap, to increase their own options for living and their informed understanding of how their lived existence works in relation to the world around them.

The imperative of these issues over-extends the boundaries of the individual experience or desire of the ethnic, minority or the queer identified professor. These instructors engage the teaching of classes and approach these issues for both personal and academic reasons. Yet all teachers are genderized, sexualized and racialized.¹⁰ Their articulated way of being in the world is always and already a screen through which their pedagogy is filtered. It is for those whom the difference has been foregrounded, either by choice, nature, or social otherizing that the personal becomes political. But the personal should not be limited to the vested interest of these already othered professors, but should be expanded into the very interests of any educational mission to prepare students to live in an ethnically diverse and culturally pluralistic society. According to Hannah Arendt, "plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live" (57).

It is for these reasons that classes dealing with culture (race, sexuality, or gender) should not be limitedly taught by teachers who claim membership in these specific communities. We must critique the arguments for the primacy of experience, which would negate the possibility of a "straight" identified teacher from teaching a class in "Queer Theory" or a "White" professor teaching a class in "Black Studies." I clearly understand these arguments for they are rooted in the racial politics of narrative authority and who should be able to tell specified histories. It speaks to the primacy of experience as the hallmark of authentic voice. The arguments are grounded in the notion that narrative authority resides in embodied experience and that the theoretically based knowledge of teachers, who do not belong to specified cultural communities, should not supersede nor substitute the enfleshed knowledge of students who are members of those communities. We must discover how these limitations further entrench racist logics, essentialize cultural experience, and re-establish the borders that divide.

Though I place great value on enfleshed knowledge, critical response and intellectual knowing can not be negated as invalid. "It is crucial that critical educators provide the pedagogical *conditions* for students to give voice to how their past and present experiences place them within existing relations of domination and resistance" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991 131) [my emphasis]. I believe it is the broad scope of this type of intellectual activity, gingerly applied to the significant and fragile ego of human experience, that helps give meaning to embodied knowing. In this way both teachers and students are informed, not only through an academic survey of issues, but the kinds of direct intercultural dialogues that clarify understanding.

In Teaching to Transgress, bell hooks suggests that the binary between the primacy of experience and intellectual knowledge, creates a dis-

tion that establishes a "false dichotomy between theory and practice" when in fact theory is only articulated experience (65). She goes on to say, "When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-discovery, of collective liberation, no gaps exist between theory and practice. Indeed, what experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other" (61). As teachers we must model the necessity of cultural literacy in our classrooms. We must engage students in the tough and often tense discussions that always occasion intercultural dialogue—discussions about who can talk about what and the link between theory, practice and experience. We must show them how these questions are already steeped in issues of voice, experience, power, control and dominance. Maxine Green suggests that if we encourage students to "look through [and at] multiple [cultural] perspectives [they] may be helped to build bridges among themselves. By attending to a range of human stories, they may be provoked to heal and to transform" the world (259).

The fifth tenet in developing a program of culturally relevant teaching is to politicize and interrogate the homogenizing and celebratory notion of community. In American culture there are a series of metaphors that have been used to establish the notion of national identity. Metaphors such as melting pot, tributary, tapestry, salad bowl or soup theory have been used to both identify the rich cultural diversity that marks this country and establish the relational orientation to otherness. The soup metaphor often replaces the variability of the salad metaphor, which characterizes cultural diversity as ingredients in a mixture adding a fluidity of influence. But like the tributaries metaphor, difference is always moving towards some common cultural destination of shared beliefs. These metaphors are alternatives for, but always seem to return to the heated crucible of the melting pot metaphor—in which cultures are blended with the result of a particular product, an American.¹¹ These are working metaphors, metaphors in which we live. They consequently establish the idealized notion of community.

Social scientists, biologist and geneticists have stated that on the genetic level there is no difference in what is called "the races" and that race is a social and political construct that marks physical and regional differences. How can we use this information to reestablish the reality of a global community? The images of a global community may be idealistically pictured as a Benneton ad. But the reality is that when multiple cultures come into contact with each other in this country, there is usually a homogenizing effect that is often mistakenly interpreted and generalized as a democratic ideal.

As people interact with existing institutions and social practices in which the values, beliefs, bodies of knowledge, styles of communication,

and biases of the dominant culture are imposed, they are often stripped of their power to articulate and realize their own goals. For example, the efforts of the United States to enforce a *common culture* (an un-negotiated foundation of values, ethics, meaning, histories, and representations—'our cultural heritage') or a *common sense* (a selective view of social reality in which difference is viewed as deviant or a deficit), is in fact the imposition of a homogenizing social paradigm (known as ideological domination or *hegemony*) that severely limits the possibility for a critical multicultural democracy. (Leistyna and Woodrum 3)

The undergirding problems is the abstract applications of idealized tropes to the complicated nature of competing values, and the tension between race, culture, class and lived experience. These complex notions always and already inform and motivate the classroom as a site of perpetuating not only a national culture, but the specified and immediate experiences that impact the daily lives of students and teachers. Thus, communities become arenas—physicalized, geographicalized and politicized spaces in which people circulate, responding to the enfolded and enacted ideologies of others.

In order to move towards a program of culturally relevant teaching we must move beyond metaphorical notions of community building. Traditional approaches to constructing community often involve the establishment of common truths or celebratory ideas of people helping people. "Community should not be identified with conformity" (Green 259). Instead we should move our students towards an understanding of community as a dynamic social unit in which the diversity of thought and lived experience come together to inform and increase quality of life. In this construction of community our commonalities or similarities can be celebrated and our differences can be respected; a construction in which identity is fluid, but not perpetually changing or moving towards the expected end. We should espouse an understanding of community where meaningful exchange contributes significance not to some aestheticized image of the ideal, but where the competing interests of varying cultural communities serve as the foundation of a democratic society. I echo the definitional query of Eric Freedman in "Producing (Queer) Communities" when he says:

I question what community I belong to. On a fundamental level, do I define myself by race, gender, sexual preference, class, or nationality? Am I part of an academic community? Indeed, are the borders of these communities mutually exclusive or even clearly defined? I want to explore the notion of community, and challenge any presupposition of an inherent unity. 'Community' is a term under which we can speak of collective involvement, or even

unified resistance, while at the same time respect (and expect) difference. (251)

To construct and engage this notion of community in the classroom is to encourage students to open up their understanding of the larger communities in which they live. As Maxine Greene suggests, "To open up our experience (and, yes, our curricula) to existential possibilities of multiple kinds is to extend and deepen what we think of [and what they think of] when we speak of a community" (254).

It is within studying multiple and integrated approaches to culture that students come to an understanding of culture, not exclusively marked as a physical difference, but a psychosocial orientation to the world. Extending previous definitions of culture, culture becomes an articulation of lived experience enacted and engaged in particular communities. In this way students come to understand diverse communities not exclusively by their practices, but the ideologies that undergird their realities. Hence, the gay and lesbian communities are seen, as discursive communities not bound by sex, sexuality or gender performance, but self-expression and a performative resistance to what is considered *normal*. And the handicapped or physically challenged communities are not defined by their restrictions, but the vast potential of their humanity and how that is inhibited because of social obstacles—physical and perceptual.

Within this tenet we come to understand that a program of culturally relevant teaching is to question and critique the notion of the box. Question metaphorical and ideological boxes that confine our thinking about sameness and difference. Question the boxes that organize systems of thought. Question what it means to be an educated person—and the ideological, political, special interests and cultural assumptions that undergird what we know (epistemology). Question how we come to know and how we use knowledge to mark difference, and how we use knowledge as weapons. Question the literal boxes—the ones in which we categorize and reduce identities by forcing people to check off a box thereby successfully compartmentalizing their identities, without questioning their being or how they came to be (ontology).

Question these things especially in light of the political moves that people of biracial heritage are making to claim the multiplicity of racial identity and a performed resistance to relegating choice. Question these things as we come to new understandings of knowledge and learning styles. Question these things as Queer Studies, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies and Women's Studies seek to open our understanding of the politics of culture, sexuality, the construction of gender identity and the production of sexual inequality. Question these things as we come to a better understanding of our individual selves and how we have come to realize that the boxes that we have been placed in, have often confined our identity and

our expressive modalities. These literal and metaphorical boxes are many: Boxes such as race (Black, White, Other). Boxes like sexuality (Straight, Gay, other). Boxes like citizen or free thinker. Boxes like normal or abnormal. Boxes like overachiever/ average student/ or at-risk student. And boxes that designate the mainstream or margins all successfully reorient the nature of culture from discursive communities into pathology or categories of privilege.

Pedagogy, Culture and Communication (A Conclusion)

The opening epigram by Minnesota Planning offers a statistical perspective of demographics of Minnesota in this new millennium. We are at a critical time in our educational history, a time when the confluence of cultures in our classroom necessitates culturally relevant pedagogical strategies. A time when, as Henry Gates suggests that, education can offer "an invitation into the conversation [of pluralism] which can learn to recognize the voices, [of diverse populations], each conditioned by a different perception of the world" (712). As communication, rhetoric, and theatre scholar-practitioners this is what we do. Through creative and articulate contact we marshal our students to new ways of seeing, being and presenting themselves in the world bridging gaps of difference with each other. The issue of culture is always and already a component of what we teach. We know that "performance is an act of engagement, pedagogy is a question of what and how to teach, and the body is the primary site of experience" (Alexander 57). We understand that these components always and already effect what we do and how we do it in our roles as teachers and scholars. The challenge of the new millennium is to confirm our commitment and to further engage our efforts.

I end this essay by consolidating my previous discussion into a functional definition of what I mean by *culturally relevant teaching*. Culturally relevant teaching is engaging the social exchange of knowledge in the classroom with an articulated understanding of how culture has influenced curriculum, teaching practices and social indoctrination. Culturally relevant teaching encompasses both a paradigmatic orientation to teaching, such as critical pedagogy, as well as encourages specified pedagogical strategies that acknowledge the classroom as a border crossing and a site to practice voice. It acknowledges that culture is not limited to political constructions of difference, as much as culture is a lens through which communities view themselves and the worlds in which they live.

Through the engagement of culturally relevant teaching, teachers and students can participate in what belle hooks calls *engaged pedagogy* in which "teachers approach students with the will and desire to respond to [their] unique beings" (13). This process also allows the diverse lived experiences of teachers and students to infuse the pedagogical venture and to reveal how the construction of education is always and already about intercultural dialogue.

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Notes

- ¹ The concept of a "primer" refers to an introductory document, usually a book that is designed to either lay down a preliminary understanding of a specified subject or a workbook designed to build and develop specific skills like reading or teaching.
- ² "Media Release: Multiple Race Identities Most Common Among Children, NonWhite Populations" (<http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/demography/multiracenews.html>).
- ³ I taught at what is now Minnesota State University, Moorhead for five years. The student demographic statistics of California State University in Los Angeles (CSULA) where I currently teach tests the realities of these statistics. According to a December 2000 fact sheet prepared by the Offices of Analytical Studies and Public Affairs at CSULA, the student "headcount by race/ethnic group" is as follows: 52.6% Latino, 21.7% Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 16.4 % White Non-Hispanic, 8.9 % African-American, and 0.5% American Indian, 61.9% female, 38.1 % males." Offices of Analytical Studies and Public Affairs, California State University Los Angeles http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/irm_as/reports.htm.

4 I am using these varying notions to show an intersection of ideas: Tenets refer to opinions, doctrines, principles or dogma that structure certain systems. *Topoi* (or topics) as espoused by Aristotle, are strategies that contribute to a full investigation of issues. Tropes are figures of thought and schemes are figures of actual expressions (Covino and Jolliffe 7, 22).

5 Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn suggest that there are six major "classes of definitions" of culture found in the anthropological literature: Descriptive Definitions--those that attempt to list any and all aspects of human life and activity. Historical Definitions—those that tend to emphasize the accumulation of tradition over time often linked to terms such a heritage and heredity. Normative Definitions—those that emphasize the shared rules that govern the activity of a group of people. Psychological Definitions—those that emphasize a variety of psychological features that include notions of adjustment, problem solving, learning, and personal habits. Structural Definitions—those that emphasize the pattern or organization of Culture. Genetic Definitions—those that emphasize the origin or genesis of culture) (Berry et.al 166)

6 I thank Cynthia Carver, Chair of the Speech Communication and Theatre Arts Department at Concordia College, MN for this question, as well as her concern about culturally relevant teaching on culturally homogenous campuses. The question was posed when I presented a version of this paper at the CTAM convention in September 2000. Aspects of my response to her specific concerns are included in my discussion of tenents number one and three.

7 See Johnson, Johnson, and DeMatta for an overview of these logics.

8 While there are multiple strategies in exploring cultural and intercultural issues, I offer this brief but provocative assignment. Using a case study format—choose a social and political event or issue that is saturated with issues of racism, cultural conflict, or actions that could be considered hate crimes or harassment. Present the case and ask students to analyze the scene from differing perspectives—teasing out the implications, and concerns of the situation. In teasing out the issues they should also provide a historical context of the scene and the reasons and motivations behind the act. In this way students come to explore the historical milieu of the occasion and not reduce it to an isolated and possibly fabricated case study. Use "real" case studies to reinforce the reality and currency of issues. Some examples might include racial profiling, gay bashing, sexual harassment, and affirmative action cases.

9 Norman Greer refers to authenticity as being true to the initial self: "To be authentic is to remain true to the definition of self held at the initial creation of mentoring . . . The self is the definition a person creates for himself/herself. The self is defined from perceptions formulated through interactions with others. Authenticity, then, is the concept of self that one

brings with himself/herself into the mentoring relationship. The individual's ability to maintain self and to perceive others as being true to their individualized selves formulates the idea of authenticity presented in mentoring" (72).

¹⁰ Morrison uses the construction of "genderized, sexualized and racialized" to describe the world context in which she writes "unencumbered by dreams of subversion or rallying gestures at fortress walls" (4-5).

¹¹ Lustig and Koester do a nice job of outlining these metaphors (15-17).

My Papa Writes: The Kovno Ghetto, 1941-1944 or,
The Word, The Lyric, and Spiritual Resistance

Diane Cypkin

Pace University

Each newly composed song that expressed the feelings and experiences of the ghetto masses was eagerly welcomed and spread by them, quickly the ghetto's own.¹

S. Katcherginski, Yiddish Folklorist and Musicologist¹ ("Bamerkungen" 16)

In June of 1941, without warning, Hitler's forces attacked the Soviet Union. "Operation Barbarossa" had begun. In the Lithuanian provinces, Jews were almost immediately killed en masse by local collaborators and Hitler's Einsatzgruppen (special killing squads) coming on the heels of the advancing German army. In select major Lithuanian cities like Kaunas, better known to its Jewish residents as Kovno, Jews were quickly herded into ghettos. There, completely shut off from the rest of the world, they would be systematically robbed, enslaved, and murdered, when, where, and how their merciless captors decided. Thus thousands of Jews, imprisoned behind miles of barbed wire—civilians—suddenly came face to face with the military might of a nation bent on ruling the world and totally annihilating them. Indeed, considering all this, it is no less than a miracle that these Jews did not simply and immediately collapse in the presence of the intrepid enemy dispirited, demoralized, and defeated. But they did not.

Ironically, the German expression "Mut farloren, alles farloren" (Destroy the spirit and you destroy the individual) may well hold the key to their strength. For, indeed, over the centuries it was the strength of their spiritual resistance that had kept them devoted Children of Israel, even as they wandered the Diaspora. Then their source of strength had been the hope and promise of the words of the sacred text, read, spoken and sung. Now, faced with the greatest of tyrants, Jews again turned to words sacred and an ever-growing wealth of secular words—all promising a tomorrow to those who would believe in it and finally, fight for it.

This paper then, is an in-depth analysis of one ghetto writer's work, the Kovno lyricist Abraham Cypkin, my father. It will contain three songs written by Cypkin in the Kovno Ghetto translated from Yiddish into English. The impetus for each song's creation will be

chronicled. Thus a historical context will be offered. Finally, and most especially, each song will be analyzed rhetorically. Interestingly, the results here, among other things, will particularly highlight the fundamental role played by what rhetorical theorist and critic Kenneth Burke refers to as "identification." For in each piece, before the writer-creator could deliver his determined message of hope, of ultimate victory, of peace—the upshot of many a song—he had to have first achieved a oneness with his audience. And this was accomplished by way of audience "identification" with the descriptions, depictions, thoughts, and feelings he offered up in each respective song (Burke 20), so obviously written by one of them (Knupp 377) . . . by one that intimately knew the bitterness of their present and the sweetness of their past, enveloped as it had been in a culture rich in folk beliefs, and cultural archetypes.

Actually, Cypkin, born in Vilna, Lithuania, in February 1910, had never really dreamed of becoming a writer. Moving to Kovno while still a child, he would eventually attend the city's Real Gymnasium and dream of becoming a botanist. Sadly, however, when his father Eliezer suddenly died, he was forced to quit his studies and, instead, help his mother Sarah make a living.

Of course Cypkin could and still did, take advantage of all that Kovno had to offer. There was the library where, whenever he could, he would read voraciously. There was the "Narodnedome" (The People's Theatre) where he eagerly went, whenever possible, to see performers from all over the world on tour in Europe. There were Kovno's Cafæs like the Cafæ Monika, where outstanding virtuosi musicians and whole orchestras played the most beautiful music. Wherever he went he would meet old school friends. They would talk. They would laugh. Etta, his young fiancée soon joined the group. Life, in fact, wasn't bad at all . . . Then the Russians came in June 1940, and the Germans a year later.

The Russian takeover of Lithuania, initiated by agreement with Russia's new found "friend" Nazi Germany, was a heavy blow for the country. Aside from the disastrous affect on religious institutions and communal life generally, the economy was quickly in a shambles. Communism meant the nationalization of all industry. It meant war on all forms of capitalism. It meant war on all capitalists. Still, the Jews of Lithuania felt comparatively "lucky" to have been invaded by the Russians and not their "allies," the Germans. For it was rumored the Germans made war on Jews . . . As luck would have it, though, this was but a reprieve—and a short one.

On June 22, 1941, the Germans struck east. On the night of June 24, 1941 the "first German troops enter[ed] Kovno" (Mishell 391). By summer's end, all of Kovno's approximately 30,000 Jews were penned up in the Kovno Ghetto, a rundown, dilapidated suburb of Kovno, formerly

known as Vilijampolė, or as the Jews had called it, Slabodka. Within a year, what with endless lootings and Aktions, Jews had been stripped of possessions of any value, they were slaving for the Germans, and many had already been killed for being supposedly too young, too old, or too sick to work. Then, too, they were killed for no reason. Thus, after October 28, 1941, where approximately ten thousand Kovno Jews were condemned to death in one day, only about 17,500 people were left in the ghetto (Tory 58).

Undoubtedly if Jews had believed in the Nazi evil, if they'd been prepared, if they'd been armed, organized and could have looked to the surrounding non-Jewish community for support, if they could have looked to anyone for support, their story would have been very different. But they did not have any of these things, nor could they look forward to them in the foreseeable future. Instead, shocked and alone, they had to look within for the strength to continue. There, as always, they found the reassuring inspiration of the sacred word, their old companion in strife, joined by an ever-growing number of secular words echoing their message.

From whence came these secular words? Interestingly, from individual ghetto Jews who, in their own "yearning" to live (May 24), created. It was their act of "defiance" against the brutish world around them (Csikszentmihalyi 38). And there were a number of such individuals. For "creativity dwelt among ghetto residents. On every street, every yard song [especially] peeked out . . ." (Miller 8). And the ghetto inhabitants? It was as if the collective body of Kovno Jewry, realizing the "medicine" needed to fortify its spirit, couldn't get enough!

Song was the preferred mode of expression because it was a short form. Moreover, the song was "portable" with lyrics easily remembered when married to an especially popular tune "already part of the culture" (Rybacki & Rybacki 281). And most all ghetto songwriters, or rather, lyricists, put their words to the familiar tunes of the Yiddish music world, to well-known tangos, or easily recognized Soviet melodies (Katcherginski, "Bamerkungen" 24). Additionally, the song's "portability" could make it the constant companion of the Jew "when he went to work, when he was standing in line for a bowl of soup, when he was being led to his death, and when he went to battle" (Katcherginski, "Bamerkungen" 15). Among those whose songs were most popular in the Kovno Ghetto were those of Avrom Akselrod, Moshe Diskant, Percy Haid, Nosn Markovski, Shaul Shenker, Reuven Tzarfat, and Abraham Cypkin.

Cypkin and his wife Etta, now seven months pregnant with their son Louis, had been forced into the ghetto along with all of Kovno Jewry in July/August 1941. Like everyone, they quickly lost all possessions of any value. However, miraculously, he, his wife and son were part of the 17,500 people left in the ghetto after that black October 28th. The labor

branch of the Ėltestenrat, the Jewish governing council of the ghetto, soon made Cypkin a leader of Jewish slave brigades to military installations and to firms and factories working for the Germans. They did this especially because he could speak German and hence communicate with the Nazi overlords. This usually made them a bit more humane to the entire brigade (Kaplan 25). At the same time Cypkin began to write.

Much sung were the songs of Tzipkin [direct transliteration from the Yiddish for Cypkin]. Especially popular was his song Der Airomstsik [sic. Der Aerodromtshik (The Airfield Worker)] . . . , which spoke of the harsh working conditions in the airport at Alksot [sic. Aleksotas]. The song ends with a call not to lose hope for liberation. (Miller 8)

The period after October 28, 1941 to the Fall of 1943 would be called "the so-called quiet period" (Matth'us 23). This meant that while individual Jews might be killed or could starve to death on their pitiful rations, there were no mass murders. The reason for this lull was a purely selfish one: the Germans realized they needed a large malleable labor force—the Jews—to work for them, at least for a while. Others were not as "dependable." One of the places they put them to work was the hated Aerodrome, the airfield at Aleksotas.

Located three miles to the south of Kovno, "the airfield had been badly damaged by German bombs at the outset of the invasion of the Soviet Union, and the Luftwaffe needed to repair and expand it for its own use" (Beinfeld 36). At its height 4,000 Jews slaved there, mostly men from 14 to 60 years of age, but women, too, from 15 to 55 (Kaplan 14). What made the Aerodrome the most "detested" place to work? (Klein 125). There was the "long" early dawn march to the Aerodrome (Gar 326). There was the hard physical labor once you got there, all done under the open sky. And there were the German meisters or overseers at the Aerodrome.

At every opportunity they verbally and physically abused the Jews. 'You gouge yourselves on German bread!' they would say to the famished Jews. 'So work, make yourselves useful!' They would sneer contemptuously. 'We are turning you into productive people!'

Often their insults were accompanied by beatings with clubs. The 'enough food' the Germans gave us was 100 grams (less than five ounces) of bread a day per person. Later they gave us a little yushnik [a soup made of water with some cabbage leaves]. (Oshry 37)

Finally, and most importantly, "there was no opportunity for bartering for food to smuggle" into a hungry ghetto (Beinfeld 36). Indeed, one was more likely to get frostbite at the Aerodrome and hence become an "invalid" (Kaplan 24), or die on the road home (Kaplan 10-11).

Cypkin, the head of a column of Jews at the Aerodrome, a Colonenführer (Column leader) saw all this and wrote his most famous song, sometimes called Der Aerodromtshik ("The Airfield Worker") (Gar

405), sometimes Tsores un layd ("Pain and Sorrow") (Katcherginski, Lider 308), and sometimes, Unzer lebn ("Our Lives") (Garfinkel 441).

The song I will sing you dear friends
Is a song that cries from my heart.
It will tell you all that I feel
Before it is time to part.

On this gray morning, on these dim streets,
My body riddled with pain,

Is covered with rags that limply hang,
Sodden from days of rain.

Small, soft hands are kneading hard clay.
Suffering shapes these innocent lives.
Enough of this hell, we want to go home,
Our sorrows pierce us like knives.

Children are carrying heaps of gravel
Feeling their strength give out.
Still the master, curses, wields his rod
With a diabolical shout.

And food – what food?
When do we eat and what is it?
Cabbage water is all that we get
Without a grain of barley in it.

Bodies are worn, hands are bone,
Our lives are shattered, our trust shaken.
How can we sing when all beauty is gone
And we have been forsaken?

Hold on, be strong, eternal Jew
Keep faith, and hope for tomorrow.
Some day your slavery will come to an end
And with it, your sorrow.

Translated from the Yiddish by Rosaline Schwartz

Why was this song so successful? First off, one can plainly see that Cypkin used some especially effective rhetorical strategies in order to forge

an identity with his audience, unify them, and with that, deliver his inspirational message. Most obviously, there are the many descriptive stanzas in his song that offered real snapshots, or what Burke in his dramatic approach to rhetorical criticism would call "scenes" (Rybacki & Rybacki 78), of the terrible life of the airfield worker. These descriptions rang only too true with those many thousands who had to work at the aerodrome. They lived those "gray" cold mornings. They saw those innocent "soft hands" at hard physical labor. They witnessed "children" "carrying" heavy "gravel" and the masters beating them. They, too, felt the hunger and despair so compellingly expressed in this song.

Then, what especially made this song "work" was the use of the omniscient voice coupled with the letterform of the entire piece. For this song is, in fact, a letter to the world by the writer in the name of all the Aerodromtshikes (airfield workers) who wanted the world to know what was happening to them and act in their behalf. Thus the first stanza's salutation is not directing this song to fellow ghetto Jews who already know what life is like at the Aerodrome, but rather, to "dear friends" beyond the confines of the ghetto. They must know. With that, the voice goes on to tell of its own emotional experiences at the hated airfield, yet at the same time, knows and relates the feelings of the many others who work there. Then, finally, in the last stanza, realizing this letter cannot possibly be sent or received, and having proven its omniscience, the voice of the song easily takes on the persona of The Voice, speaking to the enslaved Jews encouraging and promising "redemption" and freedom if they but hold on! (Rybacki & Rybacki 73).

Cypkin would join these words to an exceptionally popular Russian ballad by Alexander Gurilev, entitled Raskinulos more shiroko ("The Broad, Stormy Sea") (Werb 8). And people would remember it more than fifty years after its creation. Kovno Jews would recall it as Veykhinke hentalekh ("Soft Hands"). But then titles never mattered, substance did.

Where the Aerodrome was the worst place to work, participation in any of the 150 city brigades (Beinfeld 37), toiling for various firms and factories in Kovno, always promised better. First, the work was invariably easier, there were fewer German overseers, and, most importantly, there was always the opportunity to barter goods for food with some friendlier non-Jewish civilians. How much better still if the brigade itself was employed at a food facility!

Thus, there was "Maystes." Even though it was far from the ghetto, it was one of the best if not the best place to work. For "Maystes" was a large poultry processing plant. Jewish women from the Kovno Ghetto worked there, and Cypkin was frequently their Brigadenführer (Brigade leader). Leading and watching them "work" was the impetus for his song simply called Maystes.

The little town lays sound asleep
While fields are carpeted with snow.
But there's news that will not keep –
The Maystes Brigade's on the go.

The bitter frost cuts to the bone,
While etching window-panes with wreaths.
Still the butcher's work goes on,
Slaughtering ducks, chickens, and geese.

"Listen my children, pluck those fowl with pleasure,
Although your hearts are faint.
I have taken your measure,
And know that no one here's a saint."

So into the ghetto ducks and geese flew,
Chickens joining the pack,
Giving us meat and fat – a kilo or two,
And if it's three, who can object to that?

"What a happy thought!" I mutter,
"That all these fowl now wait for us
Tucked into nests soft as butter,
Ducks and chickens neatly trussed."

Snaking in lines ranged in rows,
Proud of their daring and pluck,
The Maystes Brigade cheerfully goes,
Everyone blessing their luck.

The little town lays sound asleep
While fields are blanketed with snow.
But there's news that will not keep –
The Maystes Brigade's on the go.

Translated from the Yiddish by Rosaline Schwartz

Here again, the song was successful because Cypkin's fellow ghetto Jews could identify with the reality presented in it. Again, there was the description of frosty mornings all knew. There were the brigades on the move before dawn. There was the joy Jews knew when part of a "good" brigade. Moreover, there were even specifics as to just how food was smuggled into the ghetto—hidden in underwear. Other common ways

were "in work tools, in containers with double walls, . . . in shoe heels, and even under the yellow badge" (Tory 244). Needless to say, necessity—hunger in the ghetto—and fear of the guard's search at the ghetto gate, had turned this Nazi "crime" into a Jewish "art."

Then, what especially made this song "work" was its narrative form and particularly the structure of its plot. For in presenting a day in the life of the "Maystes Brigade," Cypkin reminded his audience of a Jewish monomyth, a "story line" they all universally believed (Rybacki & Rybacki 114), and the entire record of Jewish existence bore out: as always, they could and would outlive these oppressors, just as they had all others before them. And the "Maystes Brigade," bravely smuggling food into the ghetto, women "proud" and "daring," was but one example of this strength that all had to endure . . . and be "cheerful" dafke (in spite of) their merciless Nazi masters.

Cypkin would attach these lyrics to "a popular number from the Soviet cinema" (Werb 17), written by the Soviet film composer Isaak Dunaevski. In Russian, Dunaevski's original was entitled Pesnia o rodine ("Song of My Country"). Now this heroic march would dramatically underline the hope and determination communicated by Cypkin's Yiddish lyrics in Maystes.

Nonetheless, holding on to hope and determination was no mean feat. Assignment to a "good" brigade didn't happen that often, especially when so many clamored for a place in one. The Aerodrome remained the biggest "employer" (Beinfeld 37). And then there was the life in the ghetto itself. Aside from the constant hunger, there were the overcrowded living conditions which meant a number of families living together "in one small house or apartment, sharing one kitchen [with one stove] and one out-house toilet" (Greenbaum 318). There was the cold, resulting from the lack of fuel, of proper clothing, and the "especially bitter winter of 1941-42" (Gar 86). And there was the darkness, a consequence of strict German rationing of electricity and Jewish cooking. For with the problems attendant to sharing a stove with many, Jewish ingenuity created "a primitive electrical appliance for boiling water made of two nails stuck in wooden boards and attached to the electrical wiring" (Faitelson 131). This illegal tapping into rationed ghetto electricity meant light always "burned very low" in the ghetto and frequently "went out altogether leaving entire quarters in complete darkness" (Gar 348).

Finsternish, ("Darkness"), the chronicle of a man who ended up in the wrong house, in the wrong room, in the wrong bed, with the wrong woman, was Cypkin's reaction to the last.

Let me tell you a story that I swear to you is true.
I'll say it loud and clear – I won't hide a thing from you.

Although it makes me shudder, I know you will agree,
If anyone's to blame – it's not me.

Chorus:

You cannot blame me – those rooms were very small,
You cannot blame me – when darkness covered all,
You cannot blame me – for no one could suppose,
That in such darkness I would even see my nose.

All this happened yesterday – what was I to do,
Looking for a place to sleep, all alone and blue,
I crept into a narrow bed . . .
She screamed, she cried, she tossed about like grain in a mill.
I stroked her, calmed her, sang to her until she lay quite still.

Chorus:

You cannot blame . . .

It was early in the morning when the sun began to rise
That I turned to look at her and opened up my eyes.
Oh woe is me, how can this be, and yet it must be said,
There was an old woman lying in my bed.
Shattered, broken-hearted, there is no joy for me.
So softly I console myself for that which cannot be.

Chorus:

You cannot blame me . . .

Translated from the Yiddish by Rosaline Schwartz

Unlike the two aforementioned pieces, the success of Finsternish was due to “the joint participation of rhetor and audience in finding the humor in contradictions and absurdities . . . creat[ed by] . . . a shared fantasy” (Rybacki & Rybacki 347). It may seem strange to think that humor was popular in the ghetto, but it was exceptionally so (Gar 401). “Humor was both a psychological weapon and a defense mechanism. It was a social bond among trusted friends. It was a diversion, a shield, a morale booster . . .” (Lipman 10) Moreover, it may seem even stranger still to think that oppressed ghetto Jews would willingly and joyfully accept the schlimazl (ne’er-do-well) of a protagonist in Cypkin’s Finsternish, and share his fantasy of the beautiful woman who must be sharing his bed—all due

to the darkness. But they did. For they recognized this luckless character right out of Yiddish folk literature, and they identified with him. Like them, he was a victim of situations not of his making. Life plotted against him. Like them, he always hoped things would get better, but when the proverbial soup spilled, it was always into his lap (Wisse 13-14). And yet, like them, he survived. Thus, ghetto Jews delighted in the setup and punch line of this song, exaggerating and yet recognizing their own lives in it (Rybacki & Rybacki 311). They could share, for a moment, a lovely fantasy taking them far, far away from their present miserable lives. They could laugh, themselves the butt of the joke, and in laughing, distance themselves and find some "relief" from a Nazi ghetto world created specifically to destroy them (Rybacki & Rybacki 323).

Unfortunately, to date, while this researcher knows the melody to which Cypkin joined these lyrics, the title of the tune awaits confirmation. According to Sam Weiss, a Kovner Jew who was frequently in Cypkin's work detail and with whom the lyricist often shared his creations, the melody comes from a Yiddish folksong popular before the war entitled, Ikh bin mir a chalutz ("I'm a Pioneer to the Jewish Homeland"). And, indeed, there are some rhythmic and melodic similarities. Then again, there are differences. Perhaps one day, a more definitive answer will be able to be given, and with it another piece of a fascinating puzzle will come to light.

In sum, this paper, with its particularly special attention paid the rhetorical analysis of a variety of songs written by one writer, clearly reveals how the ghetto song was truly about much more than just putting any words to a well-known melody (Gonzalez & Makay 2-3; Thomas 262). Through the fundamental use of "identification" (Burke 20), among other techniques—all to deliver a message of hope, surely and well—the ghetto song became a major source of spiritual strength and resistance.

Nor was Cypkin alone in the use of the abovementioned. Even a slight perusal of Katcherginski's anthology entitled Lider fun di getos un lagern (Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps), which includes a number of Cypkin's works alongside the works of many other songwriters, plainly shows that Cypkin's methods were commonly used. Hence the success of many of these songs. Hence, too, the exceptionally fond remembrance of them by those lucky enough to have survived those hellish years.

Sadly, little if any rhetorical analysis has been done of Yiddish songs written during the Holocaust generally. At most—if songs survived the war—they have appeared in anthologies, like Katcherginski's, with some slight reference as to where and when they were written noted. Perhaps this study, underlining the inestimable value of this instrument will spur interest.

Song. Sometimes there is nothing else separating the defenseless individual from abject "terror" (qtd. in Carter 366).

Postscript

Cypkin, his wife, and son would survive the war, coming to America in the late 40s. The writer of this piece, the lyricist's daughter, was born just prior to their departure for America in "Neu-Freiman," a DP camp in Munich, Germany, located in the American zone of operations.

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Notes

- ¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this paper are by the author of this work.

A Plain-Spoken Response to the Communibiological Challenge

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With the mapping of the human genome now complete, we have fully stepped into a new era in which a genetic focus on human behavior rules the day. For the foreseeable future, the attention of science and a variety of social institutions will be directed to understanding the ways in which people are genetically programmed to become who they are.

Such a focus on genetics has already had a gradual but very definite influence on our interpretation of a wide range of behaviors. For instance, alcoholism and obesity have ceased to be a weakness of the will, but rather, a genetic predisposition. Children who don't perform well in school are the victims of genetically-driven conditions such as dyslexia or ADHD. And criminal behavior is no longer always a matter of personal responsibility, the famous "Twinkie defense" being one of the most sensational examples.

Perhaps, then, it should come as little surprise that the field of speech-communication has also come under the spell of genetic determinism. With the publication of a special issue on "Nature/Nurture Balance," Communication Education (Vol. 49, No. 1, January 2000), some well-known scholars within the communication field have now jumped aboard the "nature" bandwagon as well.

An outline of the communibiological perspective

In their lead article in Communication Education, James McCroskey and Michael Beatty (2000) contend that the goal of much early 20th century research "was to establish that people learned different things . . . as a function of the external environment" (p.1). However, they argue that the communibiological perspective "proposes that inborn, neurobiological structures are responsible for communication behavior and assorted processes" (p. 2). Some of the strongest evidence they offer for such a position is provided by McCroskey (1997, p. 10) in a Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture presented at the NCA national convention. Using recent studies of identical twins, McCroskey suggests that

On a wide variety of variables there has been little difference observed between the correlations for identical twins who were raised apart and those who were raised together. This indicates that

shared environment is of little importance for these traits. Some of these variables include altruism, empathy, nurturance, aggressiveness, assertiveness, constraint, and (most importantly) general happiness.

Besides research on identical twins, much of the communibiological paradigm is grounded in research on the human brain. McCroskey and Beatty focus specifically on the cerebral cortex, a "fairly thin" portion of the brain which is the home of the "conscious mind" (p. 3). They believe that the teaching of communication principles and content can be achieved by tapping into this part of the brain. However, McCroskey and Beatty also argue "It is significant that the cerebral cortex is the newest addition to our brain complex and that it is small in mass compared to [its] emotional systems. . . . Hence, the emotional brain systems usually prevail in a struggle against the cerebral cortex" (p. 4). They illustrate what this means by contending that "Learning skills involved in how to give speeches rarely reduces the stage fright experienced by highly apprehensive communicators" (p. 4). In other words, as discussed below in more detail, McCroskey and Beatty believe that people can intellectually "learn" certain ideas through the cerebral cortex, but that much deeper deterministic forces in the brain—often emotional in nature—prevent people from being able to enact these ideas behaviorally.

McCroskey and Beatty (2000) go so far as to say that "while nurture has some effects (via cultural influences, formal education, experience, etc.) nature has set forth in one's genetic code most of what one will become and do" (p. 2). Later, they claim that "the influence of cultural, situational, or environmental stimuli are comparatively trivial, estimated at about 20% of the determinant of behavior" (p. 2). Additionally, McCroskey and Beatty argue that "...while a few people can change a great deal, most people can't change much. Furthermore, much of the change which we can observe is due to unfolding genetic programming, not individual volition...." (p. 3). Finally, given their pessimism regarding "nurture," McCroskey and Beatty believe that "If we commit our curriculum to changing behaviors in communication classrooms, we should be prepared to pray for good luck. Our chances will not be good" (p. 5).

For all of these reasons, "skill" becomes a dirty word in the lexicon of McCroskey and Beatty. The authors are somewhat relieved that "It is not essential to revert to skills-oriented classes as the center of our curricula. Many of our strongest and largest programs have few skills classes, or none at all" (p. 6). Indeed, their vision of a "quality communication curriculum" has little place for changing behavior, for in their paradigm, behavior is exceedingly difficult to change. Rather, they propose that we

largely focus on teaching "those things which constitute higher education in the first place. We can teach people to better understand others. We can teach them that it is best to stay out of romantic relationships with certain types of people. . . . We can teach people to identify their temperament as it relates to social interaction and to find good occupational and social 'fits'" (pp. 4-5). However, they point out that "As persuasion researchers and practitioners have long known, changing behavior normally is very difficult, at best, and often not possible at all" (p. 5).

A response to the communibiological challenge

By this point, the importance of this issue ought to be unmistakably clear. The implications of the communibiological paradigm for communication educators are significant; therefore, we should be prepared to offer a sensible response to the communibiological challenge—especially if we believe that there should always be a place for "skills" courses within the discipline.

My main focus is to consider the implications of a "communibiological" perspective for pedagogy. Although the communibiological paradigm is intended to go well beyond pedagogy—i.e., to provide a broad explanation of human behavior in general—it is also highly relevant to the communication classroom. Indeed, the subtitle for McCroskey and Beatty's article is "Implications for Communication in Instruction." And when I consider this broad paradigm within the specific context of the classroom, I can only conclude that a communibiological perspective is ultimately out of touch with some important realities, that it is hopelessly self-defeating, and that its implications for education as a whole are even a little dangerous.

First, we must be skeptical of any attempt to "quantify" human behavior across a wide variety of contexts and apply that quantification to any specific pedagogical situation. As mentioned previously, McCroskey and Beatty go so far as to claim that 80% of human behavior can be explained by genetics and "about 20%" is due to "cultural, situational, or environmental stimuli." In my view, reducing human behavior to a nice, neat "80/20" ratio is inherently problematic, if only because life in general and communication in particular are far too multi-faceted and complex to be expressed in such a manner. Given the vast array of behaviors connected with communication (e.g., delivery skills, conflict management skills, listening skills, self-disclosure skills, feedback skills, critical thinking skills, refutation skills, assertiveness skills, organizational skills, etc.), how can it reasonably be proposed that across all these skills in any possible context that 80% of one's orientation is genetically determined? Precise numbers are seductive in their seeming veracity; they possess an inherent mystique

that is invariably misleading. What we have here is a good example of the fallacy in reasoning called a fallacy of division—i.e., what is true of the whole must be true of the individual parts. Even if humans have a general orientation to respond to their genes and brain structure more than their environment, this general claim cannot be automatically applied to any particular context. To suggest otherwise is to adopt a very simplistic view of human behavior; to “prove” otherwise would involve methodological tools for specific types of communication instruction that we simply do not possess.

Second, let us assume for a moment that “nature rules” to the precise extent claimed by McCroskey and Beatty. Even if that is the case, there is still a place and a need for skill development curricula. To begin with, we need skill courses to develop that “20% of behavior” which is not genetically determined. Further, even the 80% which is genetically determined must still be developed because skills do not develop by themselves, in a vacuum.

Consider the children who enter kindergarten. Regardless of their genetic potential, they generally lack the ability to read complex material, to write grammatically correct sentences, to think critically, to formulate a cogent argument, and so on. Even if they are “genetically gifted,” they will never be able to fully develop these skills without teaching, coaching, and attention. McCroskey and Beatty may well be genetically gifted, but without the instruction, the mentoring, and the guidance of scores of teachers, professors, colleagues, and mentors, they would not likely have the skills to write as eloquently as they do today. Indeed, any one of us, reviewing the many paths that together form our lives, must be forced to conclude that we did not become who we are in the equivalent of a petri dish. For example, my own daughter, presently eleven years old, is clearly genetically gifted in gymnastics. But she did not learn how to successfully execute a series of back handsprings without the aid of fourteen hours of coaching every week for the last five school years. Until she started taking gymnastics lessons, she only had “potential.” One does not simply wake up one morning and become a gymnast; one must learn to do so.

McCroskey and Beatty (2000) readily concede that people do change, but they contend that “. . . much of the change which we can observe is due to unfolding genetic programming, not individual volition” (p. 3). However, the use of the “unfolding” metaphor is potentially misleading, as it suggests that people—just like loosely folded envelopes or new flower buds, perhaps—simply “become” something different. No intervention is necessary; “unfolding” is as inevitable as apples falling from a tree. But countless generations of human experience demonstrate that maximizing one’s skills and knowledge cannot occur in a vacuum. If it could, there would be little need for any sort of schooling or instruction.

In this respect, the implications of the "nature" position for skill development are far broader than McCroskey and Beatty seem to admit. I believe that a legitimate form of reductio ad absurdum applies to their analysis. To wit, if skills are truly genetic, and people are indeed immune to change, then what is the point of any type of skill development? Classes in ballroom dancing? You're too clumsy! Piano? You've got no sense of rhythm! Tennis? You lack the hand-eye coordination! Taken to its logical conclusion, an extreme "nature" position calls into question the value of almost all education oriented toward skills. And on its face, I regard that position as indefensible.

Now McCroskey and Beatty might contend that I am setting up a "straw man" to knock down, somehow oversimplifying their position in a way that is reductionistic and misleading. However, their words do tend to speak for themselves. They seem quite pleased to note the lack of "skills" courses in many college communication departments. They explicitly state that teaching skills is simply "praying for good luck" because "our chances will not be good." With respect to skill development, it is not a gross oversimplification to conclude that McCroskey and Beatty are the ones who have "thrown in the towel" and essentially said, what's the point?

Well, I believe that there is a point, and that point is rooted in the experiences of thousands of educators teaching millions of students over the whole of human history. Although teaching skills is challenging and difficult, it is done every day in our schools. It's done when a bright but untrained student becomes a champion debater. It's done when a not-so-bright but eager student writes her first polished essay. And it's done when an inexperienced student has that first opportunity to make an oral presentation to his peers and therein to explore and develop his potential as a communicator. None of this necessarily comes easily, but it does happen, and those of us in the classroom know it when we see it.

McCroskey and Beatty might well dismiss these romantic and hypothetical examples with another one of their dirty words: "anecdotal." They believe that one reason people may resist a communibiological perspective is due to "... anecdotal evidence that. . . people can change. And indeed, people can change. However, research indicates that, while a few people can change a great deal, most people can't change much" (p. 3). My contention is that anecdotal evidence is very real and meaningful, every bit as much as any factor analytic study, paper-and-pencil questionnaire, or electronic brain scan. One may try to dismiss actual human experience by using the mildly pejorative term "anecdotal," but at least anecdotes are grounded in the realities of human experience. Simply put, anecdotes are a form of empirical data.

Moreover, we must consider the pedagogical bone that McCroskey/Beatty do throw out to us as educators. Does communibiology

mean that "we can't teach anything at all"? Their answer is a definite "no," provided that we don't teach skills, but rather things such as "self-awareness" and "understanding," because they emanate from the cerebral cortex (p. 3). I would first contend that such a position assumes a neatly-ordered world in which ideas can be taught, because they tap into the cerebral cortex, whereas skills cannot, because they are somehow related to a deeper, less "teachable" region of the brain.

It is also noteworthy that these "deeper," seemingly more primitive, less teachable aspects of human behavior are all "emotional" in nature—at least, those are the only examples offered by McCroskey and Beatty. Basically, they claim that even when our more teachable cerebral cortex is properly trained, our emotional reactions will get in the way of behavioral change. They claim that's why golfer Greg Norman has failed to win the Masters; it's "not because he has inadequate psychomotor skills or golf knowledge: He has not been able to overcome interference from the emotional systems" (p. 4).

Now, this position assumes that "skill development" is inherently "emotional" and thus "unteachable." However, I can teach a student an abstract idea—how to organize a speech, for instance—and do so through the cerebral cortex. Further, changing this knowledge of organization into actual behavior—i.e., delivering a speech with explicit organization—can be done with no connection whatsoever to the murky, deterministic regions of the brain that seem to make communibiologists so fatalistic. Quite simply, the skill of organizing can be considered a thoroughly teachable skill even from a communibiological perspective because the skill resides largely within the "appropriate" part of the brain. I believe the same analysis can apply to a variety of other communication skills; the notion that skills lack a "cognitive" component is simply untrue. McCroskey and Beatty have concocted an all-too-simple false dichotomy: to wit, intellectual understanding is by nature immune to emotional interference, and skill development, by nature, has an inherently "emotional" dimension. It's simply not so—at least, not necessarily and not always.

Further, the use of Greg Norman as support for a "nature" interpretation of human behavior assumes something which is not in evidence. Specifically, McCroskey and Beatty seem to assume that Norman's genetic golf skills are truly "championship" in nature, and that some sort of hard-wired emotional gremlin has prevented him from fulfilling his golf potential. However, since a phenomenon such as "genetic golf skill" is ultimately unknowable, or at least imprecise, we have no business assuming that Norman is not performing up to his genetic potential. Perhaps genetics alone would have dictated that Norman would turn out to be a talented "club pro" at best. In other words, for all we know, Norman has already far surpassed his genetic golf potential, and so he—and we—should be amazed at the degree of competitive success he has enjoyed to date.

The same analysis can also be applied to McCroskey and Beatty's other sports example: NBA star Shaquille O'Neill. They write, "For basketball fans, Shaq O'Neill's inability to make important free throws in games, even though he is successful in doing so in practice, has become legendary. In sports, it's called 'choking,'" (p. 4) which they suggest is similar to the communication trait of "stage fright," another (in their view) genetically-driven condition.

What's wrong with this basketball example? First, even if Shaq is a better free thrower in practice (which they don't actually document), there is a significant difference between "practice" conditions and "game" conditions; most athletes will tell you that they are simply not equivalent. Second, the notion that O'Neill is especially prone to missing "important" free throws is similarly undocumented and is a rather sweeping generalization to boot. Third, we know nothing about Shaq's motivation to become a better free thrower, or even if his shooting mechanics or his musculature prevent him from doing better. (For what it's worth, the March 12, 2001 Sports Illustrated suggests that one problem may be that "When Shaq was 11, he fell from a tree and broke both wrists. The right one won't bend as far back as it should, which means he can't get good spin on his shots.") But most important, the data suggest that at the time McCroskey and Beatty's article was published—the1999-2000 NBA season—Shaq was doing something the communibiologists would regard as highly improbable: over certain portions of that year, O'Neill showed a noticeable improvement in his free throw percentage. For example, during the month of November 1999, Shaq made 76 of 182 free throws in Laker games, a rather dismal 41.7 percent. On the other hand, during March 2000, he was 96 for 158, a more respectable 60.8 percent (NBA website). If indeed the communibiologists are right, Shaq should have become resigned to his woeful free throw skills. But, lo and behold, he has at times somehow managed to improve. Overall, the reality is that O'Neill's free throw success is widely variable: against the Denver Nuggets on 11/18/99, he was 2 for 14 (14.3 percent), while against the Chicago Bulls on 2/15/00, he made 11 of 12 (91.7 percent). This variability leads to an important point, articulated by Celeste Michelle Condit (2000, p. 31) in the same issue of Communication Education:

Substantial research in physical anthropology has demonstrated the existence of considerable human "plasticity" or "adaptability". . . Human biological systems have evolved in such a fashion that they must be functionally flexible and open to new inputs, at least in some major ways. Therefore, the specific, biologically "determined" characteristic of human behavior is as likely to be adaptability as it is inflexibility. The Beatty/McCroskey research team none-the-less repeatedly employs the assumption that if something is biologically based it must be rigidly fixed (and vice versa).

I think Condit's point is that it is simplistic to put all of one's eggs into the "genetic basket." In the case of Shaquille O'Neill, many factors contribute to his success or lack of it at the free throw line; such factors are not, as Condit suggests, "rigidly fixed." As I have suggested above, his performance varies over time due to a wide variety of "inputs" (e.g., crowd noise, game situation, physical or mental fatigue, etc.).

Of course, no sensible person would ever contend that genetic factors are irrelevant to human behavior. However, the McCroskey/Beatty paradigm is noteworthy for its lack of balance. I believe that a more reasonable analysis was offered some time ago by Stephen Toulmin (1969, p. 101):

... a comprehensive account of human behavior must be rich and complex enough to accommodate half a dozen contrasting and complementary modes of explanation. Certain aspects of our behavior reflect our basic genetic equipment; other aspects manifest the effects of simple reinforcement and conditioning; others again are essentially speech-regulated, intentional, or voluntary. Some modes of rule-conforming speech-regulated (or voluntary) behavior are learned alike in all cultures; other types are learned in ways that vary from culture to culture; and the variety of such learned constellations ranges across a spectrum from simple object classification to sophisticated technical and intellectual skills.

Therefore, although not all of our communicative behavior is likely due to "nurture," it seems important to realize how much of it can indeed be considered normative, rule-governed, and intentional.

At an even deeper and perhaps more philosophical level, I would argue that we simply cannot allow a deterministic view of human behavior to prevail because it violates the very essence of what it means to be human. When we cease to believe that humans can alter and thus improve their own condition, we ultimately debase the very nature of humanity. As William Barrett (1962) has observed about extreme forms of deterministic thinking, "If science could comprehend all phenomena so that eventually in a thoroughly rational society human beings became as predictable as cogs in a machine, then man [sic], driven by this need to know and assert his freedom, would rise up and smash the machine" (p. 139).

I believe that we need to adopt a similarly "rebellious" posture with respect to the communibiological perspective. I do not share the sense of pessimism and futility embodied within communibiology, and I would

submit that as soon as we regard communication skills as being "unteachable," we run the risk of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In fact, I am even inclined to think that a "skills" orientation needs to receive even greater emphasis than it has heretofore been given, either because of or in spite of the communibiological paradigm. The reality is that schools in general continue to provide limited opportunities to develop oral communication competencies. Ask collegiate public speaking students how many writing assignments they have had in school over the years, and they will tell you they can't even begin to count them. Then ask them how many oral assignments they have had, and they will usually tell you that they can count them on one or two hands. (And then we wonder, how come these students don't have better oral communication skills?) Even when they take a public speaking course, we can only provide students with four or five significant oral assignments, which only scratches the surface in terms of what they need. Instead, we need to offer more intensive, more aggressive, and more varied oral activities across the curriculum—exactly the opposite of what McCroskey and Beatty endorse. My own training in oral advocacy—high school and college debate in particular—tells me that I didn't really know what I was doing for at least the first fifty or sixty debates. It was only through repeated exposure to the activity that I developed a significantly enhanced level of competency. In short, most of our students have not had a fair opportunity to develop the skills that McCroskey and Beatty are so quick to dismiss. We don't expect our students to become accomplished writers overnight; we need to adopt a similar posture with respect to oral skills.

Few would suggest that teaching communication skills is easy. But it can be done. Over the last two decades, I have seen skill development occur with many of my own students, and I am certain that almost all other educators have witnessed the same sort of development in their students. Surely if we can train dolphins and whales to jump over ropes and dogs to fetch sticks, so we can train students to research, organize, and deliver a persuasive speech. And if we ever think we can't, we will be doing a genuine disservice to our students, to ourselves, to our discipline, and to centuries of pedagogy which have placed rhetoric as one of the cornerstones of a liberally-educated person.

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Virtual Groups in the Small Group Course:
The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

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One of the major thrusts in today's educational arena is incorporation of technology. Consequently, workshops are offered to bring faculty members up to speed in various computer applications, software packages, WebCT, PowerPoint, and more. Besides keeping up with changing times, the point is clear: our students will enter a world as more fully functioning and capable individuals if they have had educational opportunities embracing technology. Dyrli and Kinnaman (1995, p. 86) note that "integrating computer-based telecommunication activities into your curriculum . . . prepares [students] for the emerging future where such information and communications skills will be of paramount importance." With this said, however, teachers must realize that the move to incorporating more technology into the classroom is not without cost—and those are the costs beyond the obvious costs of hardware and software, smart classrooms, and adequate training. The purpose of this article is to explain the value of incorporating technology into the small group classroom; provide a case study of one instructor's attempts to use a very user-friendly freeware called Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant (ICA)¹; reveal the pros, cons, and frustrations one is likely to encounter on both sides—from the point of view of the educator and the learner; and, offer recommendations for implementation. These points are offered not to discourage one from using virtual groups; rather, it is important and necessary to embark upon the technology trip with eyes open and a "heads up" attitude, willing to encounter the unexpected.

The Value of Using Virtual Groups

Former textbook definitions of small group communication usually included the requirement of meeting face-to-face. In today's world, with a variety of technologies at our disposal, this is no longer the only or the expected mode of group work. As new forms of technology and groupware emerge, people are expected to interact in new and different ways (Ellis, Gibbs, & Rein, 1991). Although people in organizations spend an incredible amount of time in meetings (Panko, 1992), there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the work accomplished (Monge, McSween, & Wyer, 1989; Kayser, 1990). Electronic meetings, or e-meetings as they have been called, now allow for interaction between people who are geographi-

cally and temporally separated, and they have been shown to improve productivity. Organizations such as IBM, the US Army, Boeing, and others "have all reported cost savings, improved decision quality, and improved buy-in to produced outcomes when using electronic meeting systems" (Tullar, Kaiser, & Balthazard, 1998, p. 54).

The e-meetings take many forms depending upon the sophistication of the technology. Some of the more advanced systems allow for both distributed work and face-to-face electronic meetings. In distributed work, the participants are temporally and geographically separated, but the face-to-face electronic meetings take place in specially arranged laboratories where people can all "talk" at once, hence not losing track of comments they wish to make. All ideas then become part of a real-time, permanent record (Tullar, Kaiser, & Balthazard, 1998). While some meetings can make use of little more than bulletin boards, chat rooms, and e-mail, others occur in more elaborate settings like the PlexCenter Planning and Decision Support Laboratory at the University of Arizona.

The facility provides a large U-shaped conference table with eight personal workstations; a workstation in each of four break-out rooms; a video disk; and a large-screen projection system that can display screens of individual workstations or a compilation of screens. The conference table workstations are recessed to enhance the participants' line of sight and to encourage interaction. They communicate over a local network and run software tools for electronic brainstorming, stakeholder identification and analysis, and issue analysis (Ellis, Gibbs, & Rein, 1991, p. 42).

Schools rarely have the luxury of such a sophisticated system, but at best have some networking groups of computers located physically in the same building, spread throughout the facility, or beyond. Such networking allows for the advantages of resource sharing, resource management, research and development, remote access, global access, and interaction/collaboration (Dyrli & Kinnaman, 1995). Programs like WebCT, now used by many colleges and universities, allow for networking of students who can work out of the privacy of their homes using a remote login. Regardless of the system used, the capability for interaction/collaboration using such tools as file sharing, conferencing, messaging/e-mail, and scheduling allow users more freedom from the restrictions of time and space which obstruct collaborative learning. Munter (1998) stresses that when choosing technologies in meetings, it is important to consider group expectations, timing and location issues, group size, and resource availability. In like manner, the small group communication instructor needs to consider student abilities and acceptance of technology, course preparation and administration time, number of students and sections, and computer access for training and operation.

Granted, those of us who teach knowledge and skills of human communication prefer the face-to-face human contact, but we do need to

recognize that we can bring our expertise to making those virtual meetings more similar to effective face-to-face group communication. We need to recognize that face-to-face meetings have both advantages and disadvantages. The face-to-face mode works when nonverbals are important, when issues are sensitive, when relationships need to be built, when people don't know each other, and when it is easy to bring participants together. Disadvantages of face-to-face interaction include lack of simultaneous participation in multiple locations, delay of follow-up due to needing to write up decisions after the meeting, and possible domination by more active and higher-status persons (Munter, 1998). If it is appropriate to use technology for meetings, instructors need to bring knowledge of communication strategies to counter the problems and pitfalls of e-meetings.

Tullar, Kaiser, & Balthazard (1998) recognize that group work in classrooms occurs at three different levels: the individual participant level, the coordination level, and the group dynamics level. At the individual level, students work independently with little coordination of efforts. Unfortunately, too many "group" projects are little more than group speeches only pulled together the evening before the assigned presentation. Enhanced personal productivity contributes to group productivity if there is collaboration and coordination of efforts. It is at the coordination level where time and energy can be saved through the use of technology. Tullar, Kaiser, & Balthazard (1998, p. 55) note that "coordination level support can greatly increase the productivity of the organization for problems that can be solved through a series of individual but interdependent processes." Finally, at the group dynamics level, members create a synergy by working effectively in concert with one another. E-meeting tools (i.e., electronic brainstorming, shared editors, discussion webs, and chat rooms) support the group dynamics level, provided that the group makes use of a facilitator. This latter qualification is an important consideration in the success of e-meetings.

Extensive interviews of 37 practicing facilitators of group support systems technologies revealed that effective facilitation by individuals who had insight on what contributed to an effective meeting improved the productivity and success of e-meetings (Niederman, Beise, & Beranek, 1996). This is similar to how effective facilitation improves face-to-face meetings. Face-to-face meeting facilitation is difficult because of a wide array of variables including personalities of group members, emerging norms, task difficulty, environmental influences, and more. When technology is added to this mix, as in the case of the e-meeting, group dynamics variables are made even more complex with the addition of different channels, procedures, creation of anxiety, and geographic/time barriers. The ability to bring the various levels of interaction together—the individual, coordination, and group dynamics—can be a challenge for the instructor and the student of group communication.

A Case Study Using Niconet ICA in Small Group Communication

At our university, the small group communication course is a sophomore-level requirement for majors and an option for minors. Since the College of Business requires a communication course for their students as part of accreditation with many selecting small group communication, registration for the course was set to accommodate an even number of students from communication as well as from various outside departments. In addition to the College of Business, a few students from other disciplines such as education, applied psychology, social work, aviation, and others are attracted to the course. While the diversity of backgrounds is sometimes a challenge in terms of instruction, it is beneficial for forming more heterogeneous groups. It is worth noting that the diversity of majors also brings forth substantial differences in the knowledge and comfort level in using technology.

This author typically teaches two or three sections of this three-credit semester course each year. Students are placed into five-person "home groups" the first day, and they participate in a variety of experiential activities while learning small group theory. Grading consists of three exams (30%), a portfolio of essays on focused topics, which ask for reflection and critical analysis of experiential activities (25%), a videotaped in-class decision-making discussion (10%), a major term-length problem-solving discussion which culminates with their last official 45-minute meeting in front of the class (20%), and subjective assessment based on attendance, participation, improvement, and other related factors (10%). The remaining 5% of the grade² has been reserved for participation in various Niconet ICA activities. It is this latter assignment that will be discussed more fully here.

When the decision was made to incorporate Niconet ICA, it was done for two reasons. First of all, it seemed important for students to learn how to participate in electronic or virtual groups. While not making this the main thrust of the course, an introduction to e-groups and some experience using them would be provided. Second, by setting up individual classrooms for each home group, students would have their own virtual space for sending messages, posting documents and links, and conferencing with one another. Due to the fact that many students also work a substantial number of hours (making meeting scheduling difficult), this provided alternative means for groups to work on the major discussion project.

The first year of incorporation of virtual groups, students were immediately placed into separate virtual classrooms identified by chosen group names. Training was given to students through the use of handouts on Niconet ICA (a difficulty since our department does not have ready access to smart classrooms or a departmental computer lab which would

enable an actual hands-on demonstration). They were initially given minimal direction other than encouragement to log on and communicate with one another. The major online task they were to accomplish was generation, prioritization, and selection of their major problem-solving discussion topics. Prior to the activity, students were introduced to both Nominal Group Technique and Delphi, so they knew that this task could be accomplished if everyone participated in a timely manner. Following this assignment, which worked well for some and was a disaster for others (particularly those who surreptitiously met outside of the classroom to do their brainstorming and then posted online), students were told that classrooms would remain intact for the rest of the semester and they could choose whether or not to use the resource. Occasional checks as the Nicenet ICA administrator discovered activity only on the part of one or two groups out of twelve. An assessment was done of this activity with students asked to respond online. The results of that assessment will be discussed in the section on benefits and frustrations.

Instructor reflection is important for any pedagogical innovation, and the flaws of initial incorporation of Nicenet ICA were soon discovered. Several errors and assumptions were made that were remedied in the second year of using virtual groups. This next section will take each of the problems in turn and discuss subsequent changes.

First of all, since it had become apparent that not all students were at the same level in terms of both knowledge and comfort level in the use of computers, more time was spent with training. Some advice for working with the students: don't assume they can all read and follow directions. The number of students who could not figure out how to join the virtual classroom (despite very clear online instructions and instructor follow-up) was higher than it should have been. Students forgot the key for joining Nicenet ICA, couldn't remember their user names or passwords, and were confused once they were logged on to the system. Instructors should be willing to meet with individual groups of students to actually walk them through the process. Of course, working with students in a computer lab would be ideal, an opportunity not at the disposal of all. Again, having handouts with instructor annotations helps for those who tend to forget what they have been taught.

Second, dividing the class into groups right away was not the best choice. Other groupware may exist that allows for different ways of monitoring and communicating with individual groups, but the configuration that had been established meant that teacher messages had to be independently entered into each of the twelve groups—certainly not the most efficient use of time and energy. The remedy was establishment of a classroom called "Total SPC 213" which enrolled all students in two sections. All assignments, messages, documents, links, and conferencing on text top-

ics were done in this virtual classroom. At a glance, it was easy to see which students had and had not joined the ICA and friendly reminders could be given to them in class. Students were given a number of small assignments to get them comfortable with the features of Nicenet ICA such as asking them to find a useful Internet site on group communication and to post the link with a brief annotation and their name, or having them reply to a conferencing topic posted by the instructor related to their reading, or asking them to compose an answer to the question, "How is Nicenet ICA a group 'system' as discussed in class lectures?" The latter set of brief responses were to be sent to the instructor thus crafting a total class "document" using that feature of Nicenet ICA. So that a coherent document free from repetition could be written, students needed to open and read the current document prior to responding to the instructor.

Third, ongoing assignments to groups provided a useful way to have them interact in their home group virtual classrooms. Assignments were posted on the total class virtual group asking them to do such things as formulate their discussion question, generate appropriate questions of fact/value/policy, post links useful to their topics (again, with brief annotations and their name), conference on the discussion question and needed information, and discuss interviews to be set up. Progress reports could also be constructed by the group as a whole and posted as a document to be edited by one group member. Since students had done this before in the total group, it was assumed this would succeed. The results of this endeavor will be explored in the next section of the paper.

Finally, to track use of virtual group activities, a dated spreadsheet was created which allowed for the recording of student involvement. Each activity was coded with a number of the assignment for ease of recording.

Benefits and Frustrations

Evaluation of any teaching tool is essential to its success. Incorporation of e-groups brought various benefits and frustrations that will be addressed from the point of view of both the instructor and the student. Several of the pros and cons parallel observations of Munter (1998) and her list of advantages and disadvantages of electronic meetings.

Instructor point-of-view. The benefits to using virtual groups or e-meetings include the following: (1) Their use allows for meeting an objective to teach students about alternative forms of group process using technology. (2) It allows incorporation of additional short activities and out-of-class discussion. For example, a personality inventory was posted as a link and students were asked to take the inventory and then share online with their groups their role type. Questions of ethics raised in the small group communication text were posted for reflection and conferencing.

(3) E-groups allow an additional assessment of students who may be less active in class. Those who are active in class are not always the only ones active online. This gives the shy student more of an opportunity to participate. (4) Because students can hold virtual meetings, there is less instructor guilt about assigning out-of-class group work. There are frustrations, however, which include: (1) Lack of buy-in and participation by all students which results in the need for instructor nagging. (2) It does take additional time to set up and administer, especially when working with multiple sections. Witmer (2000) also notes the difficulties of time intensity in setup and excessive focus on learning technology skills. (3) Trying to encourage "self-starting" is sometimes frustrating with students always expecting someone else (or the instructor) to get discussion going. (4) Dealing with the unexpected can be disheartening. The first year this system was implemented in the small group communication course, the Niconet ICA went down for several days. Actually, this provided a good opportunity to teach students the concept of interruption breakpoints (Poole, 1983). The second year a student anonymously posted an obscene link. This became a teachable moment, however, when the Ethical Credo for Online Education (Charron & Fuss-Reineck, 2000) was posted as a document with an associated conferencing topic. This became an excellent way to deal with ethics and group norms.

Student point-of-view. As an assessment of student learning, the first classes to use e-groups were asked to post a message on Niconet ICA listing three pros, three cons, and suggestions for improving e-meetings. Students recognized the following benefits: (1) Every single student mentioned convenience—the ability to do group work in between job obligations, other homework, and from their place of residence. This was especially useful for commuters and even for a student who communicated with her group from her Hawaiian vacation! (2) The students believed that it was easier to speak out without direct negative feedback or interruption. (3) It was seen as a boon to data collection and archiving, and the students appreciated the quick transfer of information. (4) E-meetings were seen as an effective brainstorming tool. Others have reported that electronic brainstorming increased group satisfaction with process, increased participation and ideas, and enhanced group synergy (Aiken et al., 1997; Dennis et al., 1988; Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1989). (5) Students saw e-groups as a nice supplement to face-to-face meetings. (6) Students recognized the assignment as good training for group activity in the future. There were frustrations that were reported, however. (1) The most significant problem was that the e-groups required commitment from all, and not all of the students participated. The norm of some individuals not logging on with the rest of the group was often cited as a major problem and roadblock to group productivity. (2) Students found the medium impersonal

with little time allowed for informal chatting. They found it more task-focused than socioemotional. (3) Due to both campus dial-up network problems and unfamiliarity with the system, students felt that sometimes e-groups were time consuming. Of course, for the numbers who commented on this, an equal number found the system to be a time saver. (4) Lack of immediate response was another problem, especially with the inconsistent logins. (5) Some felt that a drawback was lack of computer access. Some students said they did not have a personal computer at their disposal (although there are adequate computers in campus labs). (6) Several students commented on being uncomfortable with computer technology. This is in line with the findings of Niederman, Beise, & Beranek (1996) that over half of the concerns expressed by group support system facilitators focused on technology and group members' negative responses to technology.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The subtitle of this article referred to "the good, the bad, and the ugly," which may lead the reader to believe that there is an inherent bias against using virtual classrooms or e-groups in the small group communication course. Is it worth changing the course to incorporate electronic meetings? The answer to that question is an equivocal yes, no, and maybe. Yes, it is worth trying some innovations to give your students an introduction to those technologies that will make teamwork and meetings more effective in today's competitive environment. No, you should not embark upon these changes unless you are willing to invest time, energy, and some frustration in fine-tuning the system to meet your course objectives and personal needs. Maybe you should start out slowly, incorporating those features with which you feel most comfortable and adding to them after you feel more proficient. There are several suggestions offered for making this work for you.

First of all, consider introducing the electronic meeting a little later in the semester after relationships have been formed. Munter (1998) suggests that face-to-face meetings are better for individuals who do not know one another, and that electronic meetings "cannot replace face-to-face contact, especially when group efforts are just beginning and when you are trying to build group values, trust, and emotional ties (p. 88).

Second, provide adequate training with the technology. Groupware systems ask people to develop a different sort of awareness of interaction that can be difficult to embrace and use until a system is internalized (Ellis, Gibb, & Rein, 1991). With a range of student expertise and facility in using computer technology, and with the possibility of computer anxiety, it is important to provide trainings for different groupings of students.

Third, consider the use of a designated student e-group facilitator. Facilitation in computer-supported meetings is thought to be a key factor for success (Eden & Radford, 1990; Kraemer & King, 1988). Niederman et al. (1996) suggest numerous characteristics of effective facilitators that might guide the instructor in selecting facilitators. They note effective information exchange, theoretical and practical experience with how groups work, concentration on the group and task, perception of meaning from verbal and nonverbal communication, flexibility, listening skills, group process skills, ego-less facilitation, understanding group objectives, and leadership. By observing students in the first three weeks of the semester and evaluating their progress, instructors should be able to identify potential facilitators who could be rewarded with extra points or a substitution of facilitation duties for another assignment in class.

Fourth, determine effective motivators for classroom participation. One male student in a recent class came forth with this statement, "If participation in e-groups is only worth 5% of the grade, why should I bother?" The response he was given was that he should participate because he was part of a group and that his actions could affect the grade of others, but that may be insufficient motivation for some. It may be worth making the activity a more substantial portion of the grade, although it is important not to make the weighting so hefty that it intimidates students. E-group grades could be tied to participation points. Tullar, Kaiser, & Balthazard (1998) indicate that in a normal classroom, the student can refrain from class discussion and not feel the need to participate. However, in the virtual classroom, students are aware that contributions are being both monitored and recorded.

Fifth, assess the activity at several points during the course. That way, student feedback can be used to make necessary changes. Student feedback can also enlighten the instructor of quirks in the system or help in the discovery of more efficient and effective ways of using electronic groups. Assessment need not take up class time since it can be done efficiently online.

Sixth, whatever system is used, it is good to utilize balance. Incorporate sufficient face-to-face meetings to balance out the more impersonal electronic meetings. Brillhart, Galanes, & Adams (2001) offer the following advice when incorporating any sort of group decision support system (i.e., electronic meetings):

No matter how much these systems grow, we remind you that they are designed to *support*, not *replace*, traditional group decision-making and discussion processes. . . . As long as [group decision support systems (GDSS)]are used consistently

with their intentions, they can be very effective, but GSDD does not eliminate the need for group members who understand group processes, nor is their use an excuse to slack off on using good communication skills (p. 358).

Finally, be willing to experiment. The beauty of the virtual classroom is the potential to alter plans and notify all students electronically. Tullar, Kaiser, & Balthazard (1998) suggest ideas that may pique the interest of the small group communication instructor such as assigning students to teams with geographically dispersed members, adding professionals to student groups, and pairing the small group communication course with an information systems class. These are just a few of the endless possibilities for adding technology to the small group classroom.

The small group communication course can be a fun yet at times exasperating course to teach. No class is ever the same due to dynamics of the various students and groups. There may be the tendency to avoid adding technology, thus adding to that sense of exasperation; hopefully, this article has convinced the reader to investigate both the challenges and the paybacks for such a venture. It may be good, bad, and sometimes ugly, but well worth the effort to incorporate electronic meetings into small group communication.

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Notes

¹Nicenet Internet Classroom Assistant is a free web-based academic environment useful for classrooms, distance learning, and other collaboration. Founded in 1995 by an organization of Internet professionals whose goal was to bring communication tools free to the education community, it has improved in service capability and grown in usage. Server space is donated by the Teaching Center at Northwestern University, and Macalester College agreed to be their fiscal agent. Information about Nicenet ICA and log in information can be obtained by visiting their web site at <http://www.nicenet.org>.

²Later in the article the pros and cons of this weighting will be discussed.

Teaching Dance to the Non-Dancing College Student: A Strategic Approach

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As a professor in the Communication department of a large state university, I often find myself in the unusual position of teaching dance to the non-dancing college student. This is by choice, not obligation. While my close friends and colleagues in the Dance department must devote a great deal of time teaching the craft of dance, I have the luxury of teaching the art of dance. The mission – that of building dance audiences – is an important one. But the privilege has not been easy to obtain.

How does one obtain the right to develop and teach an appreciation-based course such as “Dance and Communication” or, more broadly, “Communication and the Performing Arts?” And once obtained, how does the instructor maintain healthy enrollments in such a class, please administrators, and enrich his or her own research in the process? In this article, drawn from 12 years’ teaching experience, I would like to discuss a series of strategies that should help teachers of dance both within and outside their Dance departments to broaden their perspectives, vary their curricula, and regenerate their bases of support. The overall goal: to instill a profound, sophisticated and abiding appreciation of dance among students. The following steps offer one approach to meeting this goal.

Connect Dance Scholarship to Humanities and Social Science Scholarship

Students are constantly surprised that a rich intellectual history in dance scholarship already exists; your syllabus and reading schedule should convince them that it does. But even more importantly, instructors should connect these movements within dance scholarship to larger movements of literary and social criticism. This is certainly true if your course is aimed at upper-level undergraduates and graduate students, as mine is. However, even courses designed for lower-level undergraduates can benefit from a lecture on semiotics or cultural studies. An introductory textbook on communication theory, such as Em Griffin’s excellent *A First Look at Communication Theory* (McGraw-Hill) is a good starting point.

For an upper-level course, it has been my experience that too few scholars outside the humanities are aware of the profound impact literary theory has had on the teaching of literature over the past 20 years. That same impact needs to be felt in dance scholarship, but we as instruc-

tors need to be conversant in contemporary literary theories, then apply them to the dances we watch. And of course, we should hold our students to the same challenge. Approach a colleague in the English department, as I did, and investigate the possibility of auditing a graduate seminar in contemporary literary theory. You will be amazed at the resonance between, for example, Derrida's deconstruction of meaning and the dances of Mark Morris; between Bakhtin's notion of dialogue and the mad scene in "Giselle;" between Butler's performance of sexuality and Matthew Bourne's all-male remake of "Swan Lake." Such connections not only make for more stimulating assignments, but they enhance your own intellectual credibility as well.

Get to the Data as Soon as Possible

Students can only read about dance for a short while; soon they need to watch it or they will become bored. The preponderance of dance videos provides the solution. Given the shorter attention span of students these days, show scenes from ballets instead of entire productions. A favorite exercise of mine, recounted in the Summer, 1999 issue of CTAMJ, is to show two different versions of the same ballet, such as the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet." The Lavrovsky version (Bolshoi) is entirely different from the MacMillan version (Royal Ballet). Show one five-minute excerpt, then the other, and encourage students to discuss and write about the differences.

It may be that some students in the class are themselves experienced dancers; if so, have them demonstrate key positions they see on video and explain what they signify, as well as the effort required to hold them. If space allows, have the remainder of the class (non-dancing students) assume a position to see how difficult it is. Then the data becomes lived as opposed to simply observed.

Make Students "Get Micro," Then Build to the Macro

Having watched a dance video, students find it easy to say "that was very romantic" or the dependable "that was stupid." But it is much more difficult to point to the specific behaviors that build to those larger impressions. Again, video can help. Show repeatedly a very short snippet of movement to sharpen students' observational powers. Encourage students to get to the microanalytic level in their viewings and presentations. This is analogous to "getting textual" in a literature class. For example, the comment "Romeo made extended eye contact with Juliet as he lowered his cape and walked toward the balcony" is an excellent example of a micro observation: a detailed, specific description of behavior that stays within a particular moment of the dance.

Once they've described the specific movements in detail, encourage students to build these descriptions into an over-arching impression of the work, much as a dance critic would do upon seeing a work for the first time. For example, the comment "The MacMillan version of "Romeo and Juliet" exhibits a greater degree of intimacy than the Lavrovsky version, so that the audience feels it is spying on the couple" is an excellent example of a macro observation: more general, it deals with the overall impression the ballet makes on its audience, and it can be traced back to specific moments within the ballet.

An effective exercise to illustrate the difference between micro and macro is to divide the class into two halves. The first half is instructed to focus only on the micro-details of the scene, including movement, music, costume, sets and lighting. These students should describe, in terms as objective as possible, only what they are seeing. The second half is instructed to describe, only in general terms, what they feel about the piece as they watch it. The focus for these students should be on emotions, not linked to any particular moment in the scene. These macro-impressions can also be termed the "artistic vision" of the entire production. Then compare notes between the two halves of the class. Chances are there will be a remarkable articulation between the "micro-detail" half of the class and the "macro-impression" half of the class.

Encourage Students to Follow Their (Changing) Passions

A student may come to the class knowing she wants to do her final report on Balanchine – then she falls in love with Fosse. Flexibility is the best policy here. What students are most enthused about, they will investigate more thoroughly and report with less anxiety. Classmates will feel this enthusiasm, and pass it on. Just as the artistic directors of most major dance companies maintain that their dancers can no longer afford to specialize in one type of dance – be it classical, modern, jazz, or even postmodern – so, too, must audiences embrace all styles of movement. In the classroom, one means for ensuring this is to allow a more open stance as to what constitutes "dance." This suggests developing a syllabus that will expose students to everything from the most conservative production of "La Sylphide" to Twyla Tharp's latest work, then encouraging students to design their final presentation on whatever dancer, choreographer, or movement style attracts them the most.

Postmodern dance, in particular, allows students with political or cultural studies interests to link dance to the broader cultural issues of our day. For example, Bill T. Jones controversial "Still/Here" has quickly established itself as a landmark in contemporary dance, not only for its message of hope for AIDS survivors, but because New Yorker dance critic

Arlene Croce reviewed the piece without having seen it – and proudly said so. Emphasize to students that dance does not exist in a vacuum, but rather reflects the sociological and cultural issues of the day, as well as the artist's personal vision. Their own reports should include movement description, of course, but should expand to include biographical research and cultural analysis. Any competent presentation on "Still/Here" would have to encompass its political ramifications as well as the divisive critical reception that followed, thus forcing the student to address issues beyond the dance stage itself.

Make it Male-Friendly

Anyone who has taught a college-level course on the performing arts, especially dance, has noticed a conspicuous lack of men in the classroom. The men who do take the course often do so because it fulfills a university requirement, or because their girlfriends have put them up to it. While the deeper cultural issues that effect this state of affairs are well beyond the purview of this article, several things can be done to make the few men who are in the class feel welcome.

In the first place, no matter the university, fears of seeming effeminate or gay when studying or participating in the performing arts are never far from the surface for most young men. I prefer to bring such hesitations to the fore and discuss them openly, but in an indirect, non-threatening way. The question of why there appears to be a disproportionate number of gay people involved in the performing arts is a perfectly valid question for the classroom as well as the dorm room, in part because it can never be answered conclusively. Like the rest of the world, students find the link between sexuality and artistry endlessly fascinating, but only if they are not forced to admit it. As long as the instructor takes the lead in raising this issue, they do not have to.

Secondly, males in performing arts classes need to be especially, albeit subtly, encouraged and acknowledged for their active participation, in much the same way females need to be recognized and encouraged for their participation in science and math classes. While I am certainly not suggesting that such preferential treatment should extend to the grading table, I do feel that the "masculine perspective" –however that term may be construed in a given class – should be actively honored in class discussion, as well as group and individual projects. When males make comments, encourage them to expand on what they have just said. And when moderating a discussion, make a special effort to elicit, then synthesize, males' remarks into the interchange. We may someday reach the point when such sensitivity becomes superfluous, but it has been my experience that in today's classroom, it still is.

Finally, most men in dance appreciation classes simply do not realize that dance means more than women in tutus and, by default, men in tights. While they can, with time and a great deal of effort, be made to see that classical ballet requires a great deal of strength, speed, agility and athleticism, a more effective means of achieving the same end is to expose them to companies specializing in contemporary dance. Dance companies such as Pilobolus, Twyla Tharp, Paul Taylor and David Parsons all feature works and dancers that are, from the outset, recognizably athletic. The company Momix presents an evening-length work centering on the theme of baseball. Men in the class tend to be overjoyed, even relieved, that the world of dance can encompass the overtly athletic as well as the overtly aristocratic, and they quickly become invested in convincing their classmates of such works' artistic merits.

Pitch Your New Perspective

We can have lunch with the same colleagues for years without knowing what they are teaching or writing about! Fellow faculty outside Dance, Theatre and Music departments often view instructors in these disciplines as inhabiting a world apart; they may feel intimidated by the special knowledge you possess. Paradoxically, they may also perceive you as having less credibility than their colleagues in "real" academic disciplines such as philosophy, English, history or physics, particularly if you present student-run productions whose sole purpose, they perceive, is their own enjoyment. I have often heard performing arts faculty complain that other faculty see them only in a service capacity! But that misperception can change, particularly if you work actively to change the awareness of those around you. Take every opportunity to tell them exactly the kind of thinking, data presentation, and discussions occur in your classroom. Accentuate the positive – always a difficult thing to do around a table of world-weary academics. Present your ideas at brown bag colloquia around campus; volunteer to give lectures to which the larger community may be invited. For example, I have found that the relationship between a Theatre and Dance department and an English department can either be very good or very bad, depending on the extent to which each can honor the other's differing approach to the same text. "Bridges, not walls" should be the motto here. Invite a faculty member to observe your classes, be a guest lecturer in them, or even audit them. They will be more surprised than anyone at how accessible dance can be, as well as how connected it needs be to other disciplines around the campus.

Develop Your Signature Course

Make a list of all the things you wish your students knew about dance – outside the studio – and design a course around it. Include, per-

haps, the types of movement, choreographers, essays, or movies that drew you to dance originally. Fill it with creative assignments and original lectures. In short, make this a course that only you can teach. Then work to get it on course schedule, perhaps as a Special Topics seminar initially. Develop a following among both students and faculty alike. In three years, if enrollments and evaluations warrant it, approach your department chair about making the course a regular offering. Even if the course can only be taught every other year due to faculty shortages, it is likely that most students can take the course who want to – and that you will be identified with it.

Funding is often available for new course development, especially from the Center for Teaching Excellence, if your campus has one. Junior faculty can take advantage of grant-in-aid funding reserved for them. Your campus's alumni association may offer small stipends for course development. Administrative entities such as the dean's office often fund the development and offering of innovative courses during the summer, guaranteeing faculty pay regardless of student enrollment. A course that links dance to other disciplines may well be eligible for any of these funding sources, which could lead to larger, extramural grants in the future.

Link Your Teaching to Your Research

Nothing pleases administrators more these days than to hear faculty talk of the synergy between teaching and research – particularly at institutions that have trouble choosing between the two. Let your chair and particularly your dean know how your research has been “jumpstarted” by your new course. Then be sure to present conference papers and/or write articles that capitalize on this connection. Do not hesitate to use your students as subjects. For example, my own classes require that students become respondents in my surveys and repeated-viewing experiments, ensuring a steady, varied, and statistically significant sample size. The “Romeo and Juliet” assignment, in which the students watch two very different productions of the balcony scene, has produced several publications, ranging from a quantitative analysis using statistical methods to a qualitative, interpretive piece. It would have been much more difficult to conduct this research without teaching a class in which the issues and methods were continually under discussion.

Make it Interdisciplinary

“Interdisciplinary programs” is another catch-phrase for administrators in these times of increasing costs and vacant faculty lines. As Jane Bonbright, Executive Director of the National Dance Education Organiza-

tion, pointed out in a recent address, dance educators are fortunate to have logical connections to mainstream academic disciplines such as Anthropology, Literature and Sociology. Yet these connections are not cultivated frequently enough. How can we remedy this deficiency?

If an undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Programs already exists on your campus, look for ways to make your dance courses fulfill some of its requirements. A general Humanities or Social Sciences interdisciplinary major is a natural for dance courses, as is an interdisciplinary curriculum in Arts Management. If no such self-design major exists, then fill out the proper paperwork to ensure that at least one of your courses fulfills a general education requirement. Most Colleges of Arts and Sciences have a "cultural context" requirement emphasizing the visual and performing arts, and most students are desperate to find a course within this category, particularly at the upper-division level, that will challenge them without threatening them. To raise student awareness about your courses, cross list them with the appropriate departments such as English, American Studies, or Anthropology, and consider team-teaching with faculty members there. This strategy differs slightly from #7 (Develop Your Signature Course) in that your signature course may not necessarily be interdisciplinary. But if it is, then combine the two and seek extra funding. Grants for course development today often specify a preference for interdisciplinary courses.

Keep Reading, Keep Watching, Keep Writing

To be effective, the teaching of dance to non-dancing students involves a three-way reflexive process of watching a variety of movement styles, reading about the history of ideas that informed them, then responding to that interaction through original writing – or choreography – of one's own. As teachers, we need to exhibit such behavior before our students can emulate it. Emphasize to students that the best dancers and choreographers not only listen to all types of music, they also read books as a way to motivate and connect their ideas. And they occasionally write about, or at least discuss, their ideas publicly. Be sure to design assignments that will require students to read, watch, and write in order to do well.

Conclusion

In his recent study, "Dancing with Dollars in the Millenium," the noted dance researcher John Munger assesses the health of dance in the United States. He notes a number of disturbing trends.

If these trends are true, then our role as dance educators becomes even more critical. Now more than ever, we need to develop vi-

brant, sophisticated and committed dance-goers at the college level, who will go out into the world willing to acknowledge the importance of dance, to speak up on its behalf, and to support it with their subscription and tax dollars whenever possible. And by developing courses similar to the ones I have outlined above, we can achieve other goals in the process: a new way to understand and express oneself kinesthetically, a greater ability to observe detail and communicate one's observations, and a heightened critical and aesthetic sensibility. More importantly, if we can demonstrate to students the value of all the arts in our culture, then we will have fulfilled our highest educational mission. I hope these strategic suggestions will prove as helpful to you as they have to me in achieving that end.

Suggested Readings

For communication theories at the introductory level, including discussions of semiotics and cultural studies:

Griffin, E. (2000). A first look at communication theory. New York: McGraw-Hill.

For communication theories at the advanced level, including discussions of Derrida and Foucault:

Littlejohn, S. (1999). Theories of human communication. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

For literary critical theories at the advanced level:

Richter, D. (1998). The critical tradition. Boston: Bedford.

For intelligent, well-written readings of dance:

Banes, S. (1994). Writing Dancing. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.

Cohen, S.J. (1992). Dance as a theatre art. Pennington, NJ: Dance Horizons.

Foster, S.L. (1986). Reading dancing. Berkeley: University of California Press.

For performance theory:

Schechner, R. (1994). Performance theory. New York: Routledge.

Text and performance quarterly. Published by the National Communication Association.

Important dance journals:

Dance Magazine. New York: Stern Publishing. Includes the supplement "Dancing with Dollars in the Millennium: A Ten-Year Summary of Trends." by John Munger (2000).

Dance Research Journal. Published by the Congress on Research in Dance.

Journal of Dance Education. Published by the National Dance Education Association.

Proceedings of the Society of Dance History Scholars.

Helpful Videos:

Romeo and Juliet. Lavrovsky version. 1975. Bolshoi Ballet. Kultur Video Series.

Romeo and Juliet. MacMillan version. 1966. Royal Ballet. Kultur Video Series.

Swan Lake. Traditional version. 1976. Paramount Home Video.

Swan Lake. All-male version. 1996. Warner Music Vision.

CREATE:
A Theologically Reflective Model of
Small Group Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

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We all participate in numerous decision-making and problem-solving groups. For many of us in Minnesota, those groups can be found in some type of faith-based community, e.g. church choir, pastoral councils, youth ministry activities, bible studies, denomination-based fraternal groups, and the like. Additionally, there are many occasions when we need to make personal or family decisions that involve questions of spirituality or ethics (e.g. dealing with illness, divorce, financial decisions, career choices). Unfortunately, we are often ill equipped to engage in such practices of discernment, even if we come from a faith-based background.

A 1996 poll of Minnesota adults conducted by the Minneapolis Star Tribune and WCCO-TV found that 91% of Minnesotans characterized themselves as religious "believers." Half of all Minnesotans described their religious belief as "intense." Other findings of the poll include the fact that 65% of respondents belong to a formal church, and almost half of all Minnesotans attend weekly services ("Minnesota Poll"). Regardless of the environment one works and, for this reading audience, perhaps teaches in, it is not inappropriate to assume that a majority of individuals come from a Judeo-Christian background.¹ Such a background provides the individual with a gamut of lifestyle credos – "Honor your parents," "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," "Turn the other cheek," – though rarely does this background include some systematic protocol for implementing these beliefs when dealing with complex decisions or problems.

Most readers of this essay are no doubt familiar with the literature on small group dynamics, which sheds insights into the processes of decision-making and problem-solving. Those models, however, say little about the ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the questions being addressed. Conversely, there is ample literature available on spiritual direction and discernment, but it is generally quite vague and lacking any specifics as to the steps one should follow for well grounded decision-making and problem-solving.

This essay seeks to summarize and combine those two arenas, and proposes a theologically reflective model for small group decision-making and problem-solving. First, a review of the key definitions associated with decision-making and problem-solving will be offered, including a review of the popular Dewey discussional model. A potential shortcoming of the Dewey model will be addressed, arguing for an overt

inclusion of theological reflection. This essay concludes with a presentation of the CREATE model and case study, which integrates aspects from both bodies of literature.

Small Group Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

Looking through the most recently published texts in small group communication², one sees that each of them has at least one, and sometimes two, chapters devoted specifically to *decision-making* and *problem-solving*. Much of the literature paints them as synonymous concepts, while others separate them. Initially, this author was inclined to agree with those who separate the terms, such as Klopff (1994) who defines **decision-making** as "the process of selecting among several alternatives," while **problem-solving** refers to a "conscious process of organizing a person's or a group's resources and abilities to overcome obstacles"(p. 32). Let's examine the differences in more detail.

The Act of Decision-Making

Making choices between computer name brands, long-distance providers, course electives, and job interview candidates would all be examples of decision-making. When groups engage in decision-making, the biggest challenge facing them is to reach some form of *agreement*.

Most decision-making literature, when speaking on agreement, speaks on behalf of **consensus**. Be wary. Some define consensus as existing only when everyone is in complete and unanimous agreement. This is really difficult to do in a group of human beings. A better perspective on consensus would be to view it as the decision that, all things considered, is the one that everyone agrees is the best possible decision achievable.

And if consensus is not possible? **Compromise** would be next, where different parties both win a little and lose a little. If no compromise is possible, then a group may need to move to **majority vote**. Voting works with large groups, such as in elections, but often causes more heartache in small groups than it is worth because it creates an obvious minority. The last way for groups to make decisions is through **chance**, such as flipping a coin or drawing straws. This works only in the rarest of circumstances, such as needing a completely unbiased and impartial selection method, and should be avoided.

The Act of Problem-Solving

Problem-solving is a more complex process than decision-making. In problem-solving, we are generally faced with a bad situation

with no clear-cut set of options, e.g. low morale, lack of attendance at meetings, lack of clarity about where to apply resources. The process of problem solving is to develop strategies to overcome the obstacles and move the group toward its intended goal. This will most likely entail making several decisions along the way.

In order to solve a problem, groups need to determine early on what type of discussion question they will be asking. In some cases, groups will ask a **solution question**, in which the intended behaviors are woven right into the wording of the question itself. If a group is having difficulties with a problem member, they may meet and ask themselves, "What can we do to remove Person A from the group?" The wording of the question already has the solution in it. Be careful with these questions. Unless you are absolutely positive that there is only one course of action, a solution question will blind you to other alternative questions, such as "What can we do to improve Person A's performance in the group?"

That latter question above is an example of a **problem question**, which indicates the negative situation but leaves the options open-ended. The wording reflects the issues at hand but merely implies the direction that the solution should go, without stating the outcome explicitly. In most problem-solving situations, groups should use problem-questions in order to access the broadest array of solutions possible.

Additional Characteristics

Despite the differences between decision-making and problem-solving, it seems most reasonable to default to a form of Aristotle's Golden Mean – the midpoint between excess and deficiency. While it is important to know the distinction between decision-making and problem-solving, the way in which we approach the processes is similar, and justifies some level of equation. To overemphasize the distinction is unnecessary, and to ignore the distinction is naïve.

For both decision-making and problem-solving, it is important to look first at *who* is engaged in the process. Groups are better at **conjunctive tasks**, where knowledge and efforts need to be coordinated in order to reach an outcome. In contrast, **disjunctive tasks** need little or no coordination, and are best handled by individuals. Essentially, the more complex the issue – be it a decision to be made or a problem to be solved – the more we should look to groups to do the work. One thing to keep in mind when determining the *who* is a phenomenon known as the **group polarization tendency**, or the **risky shift**. Studies have shown that groups tend to make either more risky or more cautious decisions than do individuals. In other words, an individual will operate "down the middle," while groups – due to influential members, exaggerated values, peer pressure, or time con-

straints – will often skew one direction or the other. The tendency appears more “topic-bound than group-bound” (Cragan and Wright, 1995, p. 209), in that groups will often make more cautious decisions about people-issues than they will regarding equipment or non-personnel issues. Rothwell (1998) adds that this may be culture-bound as well; for example, Americans tend to be bigger risk takers than other cultures.

A related and useful distinction would be to look at the group’s process as being either descriptive or prescriptive in nature. A **descriptive** approach focuses on *how* the group makes its decisions or solves its problems, while a **prescriptive** group uses “specific agendas and techniques to improve group performance” (Beebe and Masterson, 2000, p. 205). Studies indicate that some structure always appears to be better than none at all.

The Dewey Model

In both research and pedagogy, this author acknowledges a bias for the procedure advocated originally by the pragmatic educational philosopher John Dewey. Dewey developed his model in the early 1900’s as a tool for individuals to respond to their “felt difficulties.” Many group adaptations exist. Dewey called it the Reflective Thinking Process, as do some authors today (e.g. Renz & Greg, 2000). Other variations or adaptations exist, such as the Standard Agenda (e.g. Keyton, 1999; Rothwell, 1998), P-MOPS [Procedural Model of Problems Solving] (e.g. Brillhart, Galanes & Adams, 2001), or the Ross Four-Step Agenda (cited in Cragan & Wright). All of these share elements in common.

For the sake of argument and structure, the general steps of Dewey’s Process as presented in Beebe and Masterson’s text (2000, p. 230-242) will be offered here. The first step is to “*Identify and Define the Problem.*” This is where the group seeks to label what the specific problem is and what obstacles stand in their way. Perhaps most important here is the concept of **criteria**, which Brillhart, Galanes, and Adams define as “statements that set standards against which available options must be judged” (2001, p. 259). Now that groups agree on what the problem is and what standards they have set, they can move to the second step and “*Analyze the Problem.*” Here they consider the full scope of the issue, e.g. history, causes, symptoms, ramifications if left unchecked, and the like. The third step, “*Generate Several Possible Solutions,*” is found in all variations of the Dewey model. What is important here is the recognition that there may be more than one viable solution to a given problem. Too often groups default to the outcome of **satisficing**, or going with the first decision or solution that meets the requirements. This strategy only works when one is limited to a single solution, e.g. you need to buy a single birthday card for a friend, so you purchase the first one that is appropriate rather than read them all. Groups

need to realize that, while their first solution may indeed be viable, their second, fifth, and tenth solutions may be viable as well. Step four of the process is to "*Select the Best Solution or Combination of Solutions.*" The main reason that this works is because the definitions and criteria were established back in step one, and each solution is weighed in light of those criteria. The final thing a group needs to do is "*Test and Implement the Solution.*"

Why Isn't Dewey Enough?

While the Dewey model is a solid strategy, it lacks any overt moral or ethical component (let alone a theological one). One could argue that group members, if they come from a faith based background, will automatically infuse their discussion with some type of default ethicality. Strom, in his well crafted analysis of communication studies and the Christian faith, offers the following story that addresses this point:

One of the drama instructors on our campus joked with his students that 'skit' is a four-letter word. What he meant was that the kind of skit you might see in an elementary school program or on a church platform, pales in comparison to what *drama* is intended to be. This example captures the problem for many communicators, including believing ones. We may become so accustomed to B-grade drama, film, television, speech-giving, or everyday conversation, that we lower our expectations and aim for the wall rather than the sky. (1996, p. 270-71, emphasis original)

Essentially, despite the best of intentions, group members may not automatically bring the lessons of their faith background and experience into the dialogue. This could be unconscious oversight, or a conscious reluctance on their part to be "preachy" during the process. Such an omission is unfortunate, as it may allow groups to avoid developing what Dennis Gouran labeled "ethical sensitivity." Gouran argues, "Groups are not always aware of the ethical implications of their decisions. Were a member to call this possibility to the attention of his or her own colleagues, in some instances they might arrive at a different decision" (cited in Johannesen, 1996, p. 168).

It could also be argued that Dewey is sufficient because one of the key steps is to develop criteria or standards prior to evaluation. Couldn't theological or ethical frameworks be offered as criteria? While the answer is of course "yes," the truth is that the Dewey model is not presented or taught in such a fashion. Within the popular and current group texts reviewed for this essay, "criteria" (when included) is defined via the following types of examples:

- Limitations on authority/area of freedom
- Resources
- Deadlines

- Organizational goals
- Prior decisions
- Existing policies
- Costs
- Constituent acceptance
- Implementability
- Equity
- Qualifications
- Demographic characteristics

Ironically, even Katz and Lawyer's (1985) Communication Skills for the Ministry, a communication-based text which presents an adapted Dewey model, leaves out the notion of criteria altogether and makes no mention of moral or ethical standards. While some of the criteria noted above could be argued to have theological or moral overtones, there is no guarantee that the ethical high ground will be included. The closest standard found in the review was the mention by Brillhart, Galanes, and Adams (2001) that the "values" of the participants be taken into consideration – but the example they gave was of a cross-cultural worldview based on ethnicity and not religion or spirituality.

Does this mean that small group scholars and authors do not care about the ethics or morality of a group? No, but most of their focus is on the ethics of the *process* for the discussants, and not the ethics of the *outcome* of the group's discussion. For example, Cragan and Wright (1995) provide a set of ten group ethical standards for small group discussion, but all are a commitment to the group members themselves such as "do your best," "fair play," "good listening," "tolerance," but not to the ethicality of the topic at hand. Wilson (1999) does note that groups "have a responsibility to operate with the best interests of their society in mind" (p. 27), but this is found early in the text, and is not linked to the discussion of decision-making and problem-solving.

Another irony stems from the fact that Dewey originally intended his model to be a mechanism allowing individuals to search for the Good. Contemporary adaptations generally ignore this original motivation. Of course, even if Dewey's original intent were considered in the model's execution, the perspective may not suit the needs of some faith-based communities. As Christians (1998) explains, Dewey's pragmatic philosophy attempted to overturn the ethical rationalism and moral absolutes that dominated most Western moral philosophy and theology in the early 1900's, and replace it with contextual narrative. "For Dewey, interpretation rather than pure reason or divine revelation is the only appropriate method" (p. 272). While Christians pays some tribute to the shift, he concludes that "in the end a narrative foundation for ethics is no foundation at all. Our busy

moralism does not amount to much intellectually" (p. 270).³ Thus, even if groups implemented the model in a fashion originally intended by Dewey, the contextual relativism may be too situational for those hoping to apply more universal standards.

Now that we see the potential shortcomings of the Dewey model, we should ask whether or not theological orientations are appropriate for communicative applications. Turning to Johannesen (1996), in his seminal text on communication ethics, we read, "Various world religions emphasize moral and spiritual values, guidelines, and rules that can be employed as standards for evaluating the ethics of communication. One source for ethical criteria would be the sacred literature of a particular religion, such as the Bible, Koran, or Talmud. Furthermore, interpretations stemming from a religion may present standards for ethical communication" (p. 99). Of course, few lay people are well trained in articulating theological standards. This is where theological reflection comes into play.

Theological Reflection

What exactly is theological reflection, and how does it differ from decision-making and problem-solving? Krisak (1995) defines theological reflection as peering into one's "house of experience" through a "window of theology" in a fashion that allows us to "articulate what is being observed in a 'God-with-us' relationship" (p. 309). Kinast, in Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection (1996), puts it simply:

A person can reflect on experience from many points view: psychological/emotional, sociological, economic, political, legal, medical, cultural. Theological reflection helps a person look at experience in light of the person's religious beliefs and understanding of those beliefs. (ix)

Unfortunately, despite the overtly theological tone, most reflective models lack a guiding structure such as that found in the Dewey process. No explicit message is provided. Though not speaking directly to the notion of small group decision-making and problem-solving, Whitehead and Whitehead's (1995) criteria for theological reflection details *exactly* what decision-making and problem-solving groups need today.

Christians today need a *portable* method: a reflective process that they can carry with them to the daily duties and challenges of their life of faith. We also need a *performable* method: a style of discernment that is simple and straightforward enough to lead our reflections toward practical action. And we need a *communal* method: a shared strategy by which Christian gatherings can face the challenges in their surrounding culture and come to agreement of how to witness to their faith here and now. (p. 3, emphasis original)

Fowler, in Faith Development and Pastoral Care (1987), uses the phrase "practical theology" to refer to our analysis of present situations

and challenges in light of Scripture and tradition. However, Fowler leaves the door open for this to be done either “consciously and in a disciplined manner” or “unconsciously and haphazardly.” Unlike small-group problem-solving models, in which “all roads lead back to Dewey,” the steps in theological reflection are many and varied. As Stone and Duke (1996) observe, “Attempts at deliberative theological reflection too frequently are piecemeal and fragmented” (p. 23). Stone and Duke propose a model, which they call a Rudimentary Procedure for engaging in theological reflection, which exemplifies both the strengths and shortcomings of such approaches:

- Make explicit the theological understandings of the Christian message implicit in the discussion.
- Examine those understandings and note their strengths and limits.
- Propose what seems the most adequate resolution to the issue in light of the Christian message of God.
- Explain in theological terms why what we propose is preferable to other options.

To use small group terminology, this model is very *descriptive* of the process, but it is not at all *prescriptive* of the procedure a group must follow to actually make it happen. How exactly does one go about “making theological understandings explicit” and “proposing adequate resolutions”? While all the touchstones are present for interpreting experience, there is no overt mechanism for discerning or implementing solutions.

Whitehead and Whitehead (1995) offer perhaps the easiest to follow procedure. The first step is *Attending*, in which one pays attention to personal experience, Christian tradition, and cultural resources, all while maintaining a judgment-free perspective. This is followed by *Assertion*, where this information is brought into lively dialogue for clarification, expansion, and insight. The final step is *Pastoral Response*, which is discernment on action, planning, and evaluation.

Similar procedures are found in Krisak’s (1995) five-stage model, which he likens to the process of “scientific discovery”: Identifying the Experience, Articulating the Experience, Dialogue (with text and community), Discovery of New Meaning, and Impact Decisiveness (how does this impact person?), or in Killen’s (1995) four-step process: Nonjudgmental Narration of Experience, Identifying the Heart of the Matter, Structuring a Correlation (with Christian tradition), and Identifying New Learnings and Calls to Action.

These models are representative of what we find in most theological reflection procedures. First, that the goal of the models is to *understand*

experience and not necessarily to make a decision or solve a problem. Second, if the end product *is* some type of decision or solution, no procedure is stipulated on how such a decision or solution comes to pass. There is huge leap from discussion to implementation, and no suggestions are provided on moving from one stage to the next.

Haughey (1989) created the five-stage model summarized below, which comes the closest to providing a systematic sequence for resolving issues within a theological frame. It is geared specifically to the workplace environment, and is suggested as a tool for departments or committees to use when dealing with some of the frustrations or injustices of the work world.

- 1. The Naming Step: paying attention to the work situation. List likes/dislikes. Get a sense of the whole. No judgments.
- 2. The Decoding Step: interpret meanings in context as they exist at work, especially regarding interests, ideology, and power.
- 3. The Faith Lens: discover and magnify the presence of God at work. Look at work through the teachings of your faith.
- 4. The Encoding Step: develop new definitions and meanings. Use discernment to translate them to the common good.
- 5. The Resolution Step: praxis – do work from the perspective of the new meanings.

Perhaps most useful in this model is the placement of the “Faith Lens” as a distinct stage of reflection. This perspective was influential of the next stage of this project.

The CREATE Model

In order to bridge the gap between small group models with no reflective component, and theological models with little to no structure, this author developed an original theologically reflective model of small group decision-making and problem-solving. The model is titled CRE-ATE. Each letter in the process stands for one of the stages, namely:

- C = Criteria
- R = Reflection
- E = Evaluation
- A = Alternatives
- T = Tally
- E = Execute

As with the original Dewey model, the goal is take each of the stages in order, and to avoid the temptation of jumping back and forth haphazardly. Each stage of the process helps inform the next stage, and provides the group members a lens to look through that will help guide the discussion in an appropriately structured and prescriptive fashion. Each stage will be addressed in turn, including a list of guiding questions that will help group members through each step of the process.

Criteria

The first thing a group must do is agree on what they are talking about, what kinds of goals they have, and what limitations or constraints they face. In this model, the essence of criteria is akin to those standards found in the earlier summarized review of small group texts, e.g. deadlines, existing policies, costs. Galanes, Adams, and Brilhart define **criteria** as "statements that set standards and limits for comparing and evaluating ideas" (2000, p. 95). To this we can add the additional distinction between **absolute criteria**, or those standards that *must* be met within a solution, and **relative criteria**, which are considered desirable but not crucial to the success of the solution. Too often, groups do not enter a discussion with a clear sense of their goals, resources, workforce, timeline, or finances, let alone a distinction between those standards that are critical and those which are merely preferable. We too easily default to the old saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." The idea behind Dewey's original model was to think carefully about the situation one encountered, and save oneself from putting an idea into practice only realizing too late that you didn't have the money, the time, or the people power to pull it off. Questions to be asked at this stage include:

- What words need to be defined and agreed upon?
- What, exactly, is the group called on to do?
- What are some of the goals of the anticipated outcome?
- What are the constraints, e.g. deadlines, resources, staffing?
- Which standards/criteria absolutely must be met?
- Which standards/criteria are desirable but need not be met?

Reflection

Once the group has a foundational understanding of the definitions and criteria, they need to put on their "faith spectacles" and

use that explicit perspective to color the rest of their dialogue. In traditional theological reflection, one would often begin immediately with the Scripture and tradition. This reflection was saved until the second step, to preclude groups from getting into the important moral considerations without first having some idea and agreement about the definitions and standards of their problem. By starting with the Criteria stage, we lay the foundation for a well-informed stage of theological reflection. Guiding questions for this section are:

- Are there relevant examples from Scripture which speak to the issue?
- What stories and morals from your faith should be kept in mind?
- What does your faith tradition and history say about the situation?
- How does the current practice of your faith inform this decision?
- What beliefs of the faith community are relevant?
- What is your own personal moral position on the question?

Notice that the guiding questions do not ask group members to quote the Bible by line and verse. While Biblical knowledge is essential for theological reflection, we want to avoid **proof-texting**, or using select passages out of context to justify an argument. Stone and Duke (1996) observe that using the Scripture in theological reflection "calls for deciding how the parts relate to the whole and vice versa" (p. 47). They advocate knowing the Bible, looking at the "big picture," and looking for prominent general themes like promise, sin, and salvation.

Evaluation

Now it is time to fully discuss the problem at hand, understanding it in all its intricacies. The discussion here should take into consideration group member's feelings and responses to the scenario. The biggest challenge here is to focus on the nature of the problem without prematurely jumping to solutions. This is where satisficing becomes a danger. Questions to guide this segment are:

- What is the nature of the problem facing the group?
- What obstacles need to be overcome in order to reach the goal?

- What are the most critical components that need to be addressed?
- How does everyone feel about the problem?
- What conditions have contributed to the problem?
- Does the group need to gather any additional information?

Alternatives

Once the group members feel they have discussed the matter fully, then and only then do they move to generating solutions. One way to get at this is through the process of **brainstorming**. Originally developed as a marketing focus group technique, the purpose behind the activity is to generate as many creative ideas as possible without intervening discussion. The belief is that the generation of a range of ideas (even wild ones) without criticism will cause a piggy-backing effect, and that quality will emerge from the quantity. Eitington (cited in Beebe and Masterson, 2000) even suggests **reverse brainstorming**, where a group generates ideas or solutions that would make the problem worse. Rather than providing guiding questions at this point, an adapted version of brainstorming rules are offered for this stage of the procedure.

- What possible solutions exist to solve the problem? (note: the goal at this stage is to produce as many alternatives as possible without evaluation. Strive for both rational and creative solutions. Designate somebody to record all the options on a whiteboard or flip chart.)

Tally

In many respects, it is this fifth stage that really makes the model work, because it fosters a cross-comparison between what has already been accomplished in the previous stages. What the group needs to do is take the solutions generated in the **Alternatives** stage above, and analyze them in light of the **Criteria** established in the first stage and the theological **Reflection** from stage two. This approach allows recognition of multiple solutions that groups may have otherwise missed, and stops a group from prematurely selecting and attempting to implement a solution that does not meet their criteria. Groups should ask themselves the following during the Tally phase:

- Which solution(s) meet the absolute criteria set above?
- Which solutions also fulfill relative, preferred standards?
- Which solutions are consistent with your theological reflection?
- What are the probable benefits of the proposed solutions?
- What are the possible negative consequences of each?
- Will the solution(s) be acceptable to those affected by the decision?

Execute

Finally, the group needs to put its chosen solution or solutions into effect. As noted earlier, this requires the development of an action plan, which can be guided by the following questions:

- What needs to be done to implement the chosen solution(s)?
- How will responsibilities be designated?
- What technical or physical resources need to be acquired?
- Who must cooperate with whom for successful implementation?
- What timeline will the implementation process follow?
- What, if any, follow up evaluation is needed to assess the outcome?

Of course, each group will impose its own style and personality on this process. The CREATE model is offered as a guideline for groups who wish to sit down and have a formal, structured, and prescriptive conversation on a particular problem. Such a conversation allows the group to be focused and thoughtful, while at the same time encouraging creativity and flexibility (such as that found in brainstorming). Most important, it adds the element of theological reflection so that the selected solutions can have a moral, as well as a rational, foundation. (Contact the author at tgendres@stthomas.edu for a copy of the CREATE template and a CREATE worksheet.)

The CREATE Case Study

In order to test and validate the CREATE model, the author conducted a pilot study with two large suburban churches in the upper Midwest. Each church included the pilot study as part of an in-service retreat with regular staff and ministers. One strategy would have been to introduce them to the model, and allow them to apply it to an actual issue they were facing in their own church. Such a strategy, however, was fraught with complicating questions. What if they couldn't come up with a problem? What if they had a problem, but didn't want to share it with an outsider? What if the groups came up with such divergent problems that it was impossible to compare them, thereby making it impossible to assess the reliability of the model? Obviously, a common "problem" was warranted.

Developing an original case study seemed the most widely used and appropriate strategy. A case story was created about a suburban parish dealing with an HIV-infected youth minister. Goals in writing the case included the need to make it sufficiently problematic so there would be points on which reasonable people might disagree, and to keep the language ambiguous enough (e.g. using "Pastor" instead of "Priest" or "Rabbi") so that multiple faith beliefs could enter into the dialogue. (See the Appendix for the complete case.)

Comments from participants were extremely positive, and included observations such as the following:³

"The most useful aspect of the model is having clear cut guidelines regarding stages. This helped to maintain focus and avoid personal opinions and getting off the subject. It truly moved to final outcome. The integration of values and scripture is wonderful!"

"What an excellent means to do problem solving! I appreciate the theological approach!"

"This is a good process that looks to resolve very real problems that focus on both the seriousness of the issue as well as the spiritual and humanitarian piece as well!"

"It focused the process – helped us to think specifically and yet think 'out of the box.' Created (forgive the pun) great thinking, discovering."

Discussion

What are the strengths of this project? First and foremost the model is, as Whitehead and Whitehead suggest, *portable, performable, and communal*. Initially, it seemed that the use of the acronym CREATE was a luxurious byproduct of the model's development. In reality, it is an integral component of the model. During the pilot study and other applications, numerous comments were made by students, faculty, and volunteers on how apropos the label is, seeing that the goal of the model is to help *create* ideal situations. (Would it be as effective if the acronym were not related to the outcome, e.g. V.E.R.B.A.L. or O.R.A.N.G.E.?)

Another strength of the project is its applicability to a variety of situations and groups, not just those based in faith communities or dealing with theological questions. Though the primary methodology presented here is Judeo-Christian theology, all religious or spiritual models can be integrated into the Reflection phase. As West and Turner (2000) note in their introductory communication theory text, "Both Eastern and Western civilizations have stressed ethics in their moral traditions." In fact, one can step entirely outside the realm of theology. This view is nicely articulated in a continued observation from West and Turner:

The Judeo-Christian religions are centered...on questions of ethics. Christianity, for instance, is founded on the principle of good example – that is, live according to God's laws and set an example for others. However, some believe that such moral standards are not uniquely religious. For those not affiliated with organized religion, the secular values of fairness and justice and working toward better relationships are important as well. (2000, p. 14)

To that end, this author developed a secular variant (labeled the Standard Version) of the CREATE model for use with non-theological groups. In the Reflection stage, the guiding questions look more at generalized philosophical and ethical perspectives, rather than Scriptural or faith-based views. Groups and individuals can use the model to address a variety of work, career, and family issues, and the articulation of personal moral stances remains as a reflective standard.⁵

The biggest drawback to the model is that it suffers the same fate any prescriptive, rational procedure does – some people just don't like to follow a sequence. Groups do need to keep in mind that the CREATE

model is an *exercise* to guide them through a specific decision-making/problem-solving discussion. It is not intended as a guide for general group conversations or meetings. A more legitimate concern is that the model could backfire upon itself and, rather than open up the gate to potentially multiple solutions, it could actually close it down. The pilot studies support the contention that the criteria and faith lenses one puts on early in the process influence the eventual generation and acceptance of solutions. What if those lenses are too narrow? Hopefully, a group would be savvy enough to realize that the early stages are to provide *guidance*, and that new ideas *could* be introduced in later stages.

Where should this project go from here? One possibility is the development of a set of theological presuppositions that groups could use as a springboard for their reflection. Not all groups may be sufficiently versed in pastoral or liturgical arenas to fully articulate the theological components of an issue. Essential themes could be made available to group participants, such as:

- Human dignity over economism
- The dignity of work
- Preferential option for the poor
- The right to personal property
- The principle of subsidiarity
- The care of creation

Some of those theological presuppositions can actually be found in communication resources. Johannesen's (1996) Ethics in Human Communication is one place to start. Johannesen presents a variety of Christian standards for interpersonal and group communication, mass media, advertising, evangelism, and fundraising, as well as several Asiatic and Mid-Eastern religious perspectives. For example, the text offers Joseph Fletcher's Christian situation ethics as one standard for communicative interaction: "there is *one* absolute ethical criterion to guide situational evaluations – namely, *love* for fellow humans in the genuine affection for them and concern for their welfare" (p. 89-90, emphasis original).

In summary, we in the communication discipline know a lot about small group decision-making and problem-solving, but what we know often lacks an ethical, moral, or spiritual dimension. Conversely, those trained in theological reflection are well versed in interpreting experience, but lack guidelines to follow for practical implementation of their insights. The CREATE model provides one strategy for bridging the gap between small group dynamics and theological reflection. Hopefully, it also provides an exemplar for greater interdisciplinary conversation between cognate areas such as communication, philosophy, and theology. Whether it be at work,

at church, or in our homes, there is now a point of reference for the dialogue between our structural and our spiritual selves.

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Notes

¹Though not intended to be exclusionary, the language used most reflects a Judeo-Christian perspective. This represents the predominant spiritual heritage of both the author and a significant majority of this journal's readership. Theology is used here as a methodological lens, much as authors regularly use Feminist, Marxist, Dramatistic, or other theoretical templates as the filter through which phenomena are interpreted. It must be stated emphatically that the CREATE model is appropriate for any form of faith belief or spirituality, as well as for any non-theologically based ethical perspective. Neither offense nor advocacy is intended.

²Small group texts reviewed for this essay are cited in the References

³Readers are invited to seek out the Christians (1998) essay, which concludes with an argument for an "ontological paradigm rooted in animate nature. The rationale for human action is reverence for life on earth, respect for the organic realm in which human civilization is situated" (p. 273). A key ethical principle would be a "protonorm of human dignity." This protonorm could easily be used as a standard for reflection in the CREATE model.

⁴Both focus and space preclude inclusion of the pilot study data in this essay. For further information on the pilot studies, including results and feedback, please contact the author.

⁵The option existed to submit this essay using the secular, Standard Version. Since the model was originally designed to foster theological reflection, the author felt it necessary to submit an essay which remained true to the original intent.

CREATE: A Case Study

Ron Rice is the pastor of a medium-sized suburban congregation in the upper Midwest. The governing board of the church consists of an associate pastor, a liturgical director, a music director, a public relations/communications representative, three elected members of the parish community, and a youth ministry director named Chris Wahl.

Before turning his life over to Christ, Chris had been a drug user. He had always been very honest with the church and its members about his previous problem. Many felt that his past experience, and the fact that he had been drug free for almost five years, was part of what made him such a credible and effective youth minister. He was deeply committed to seeing that adolescents did not make the same mistake. Chris was also an effective and charismatic leader for the six volunteers who comprised the youth ministry staff.

Two months ago, Chris met privately with Pastor Ron and informed him that he had been diagnosed as HIV-positive. Apparently, he had been infected by a contaminated needle, and it had taken over five years for the virus to surface. He showed no signs of full-blown AIDS. Chris expressed a desire to continue with his ministry, but told Pastor Ron he understood if the church board wished to remove him. He also expressed a willingness to share his story with the congregation, to help them put a face on this growing social problem.

After two weeks of prayer and preparation, Chris addressed the church during Sunday services. Following his story, Pastor Ron informed the community that the church board fully supported Chris and that he was to remain the director of youth ministry. Pastor Ron pointed out that there was no need for concern about exposure, and that awareness of the problem was the strongest precaution needed.

Generally, the support for Chris was overwhelming. At least at first. Then Pastor Ron began receiving negative feedback. Much of it was anonymous; some of it disturbingly intolerant. He received several voice messages and hand-written notes which described AIDS as "God's wrath" against homosexuals and drug-users.

More disturbing, attendance at youth sessions began to dip dramatically. Many times, parents would call and provide excuses why their children couldn't make it to the Wednesday night sessions.

Additionally, a coalition of families had begun a process geared toward removing Chris from his position. One of the leaders of the group was an elected member of the parish board. The families included founding members of the church and were among the more generous donors. They informed Pastor Ron that, while they fully sympathized with Chris and his predicament, they felt that his continued contact with the parish

teens put them at an unnecessary risk and caused stress and hardship on parish families. At last week's board meeting, the group issued its ultimatum: Chris was to be removed as the director of youth ministry or all financial support (which was significant) would be discontinued.

Pastor Ron must take the issue to the next board meeting. He has no intention of giving in to external pressure, but he must honestly consider the devastating impact that a significant loss of funds would have on the entire mission of his church. Additionally, he continues to wrestle with the ongoing anonymous messages and the declining youth attendance. In fairness, both Chris and the elected board member representing the founding families have agreed to stay away from the meeting.

What action(s) would you recommend the board take?

Now Hear This! Two Listening Activities

Nanette Johnson-Curiskis

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Goal Statement for 1st activity: Students will understand the importance of hearing in the listening process

Introduction/Background

Effective listening is a basic communication tool. However, at the root of the process is the ability to hear. Unfortunately, according to the National Institute of Health, more than 28 million Americans suffer hearing loss (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996, p. 26). Therefore, I require all students in my Effective Listening course to schedule a hearing screening and to discuss its results with an audiologist.

The speech pathology department of Minnesota State University, Mankato, is a very willing partner in this endeavor. Speech pathology students are required to administer a certain number of audiograms. Of course, to reach the desired number of screenings, the students often resort to administering repeated audiograms to each other. The clinicians, therefore, are extremely happy to screen subjects from other departments. Often hearing aid stores (Miracle Ear, Sears, etc.) are willing to administer audiograms to students free of charge as well.

After a lecture and demonstration of the hearing process accompanied by reading from the text, I make the following assignment.

Explanation of the Activity

You are to schedule a hearing screening with the speech pathology department or with any hearing aid store (Miracle Ear, Sears, etc.) that is willing to give you a screening. (If you have any cultural objections to receiving a hearing screening, please let me know so we can arrange for an alternative activity.) Following the hearing screening, prepare to hand in a short reaction paper as well as participate in class discussion about your experience. Specifically, address the following:

1. Where and when did your hearing screening take place?
2. Discuss the results of your screening with the technician. What did s/he say? (3-4 sentences)
3. What did you learn about your hearing level? (3-4 sentences)

4. What significance can you place on this activity overall? Why? (4-6 sentences)
5. Ask the technician for a copy of your hearing profile and attach it to your paper.

Follow up/Appraisal

The students' initial reaction is typically how unique and beneficial it is to have a screening done under professional conditions. Most students remember that sometime in elementary school (in the state of Minnesota) they received a hearing screening. It was usually administered in a noisy location while other students made faces at the student being tested! They report that the grade school screening was neither very accurate nor taken very seriously.

Inevitably, the class discussion reveals that some students have some previously undiagnosed hearing loss. They are surprised but grateful that the deficiency was discovered. This collaboration with the Speech Pathology department opens a door for students who might need further assistance or rehabilitation services in a non-threatening fashion. Several students have vowed to change their listening behavior as a result. Some have even pledged to schedule screenings for spouses, partners, friends, and family members!

According to the definition adopted by the International Listening Association in 1996, (<http://www.listen.org>) "...listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages." Hearing is the physiological process that is the foundation for listening behavior. Without adequate hearing, the rest of the listening process becomes difficult at best.

I am always pleased with the results of this rather short but powerful assignment. If even one student modifies his/her listening habits in order to avoid future or further hearing loss, then this is a successful project!

Goal Statement for 2nd activity: Students will empathize with persons who are hearing impaired

Introduction/Background

This second assignment is also extremely beneficial. On the first day of class, I inform students that they must obtain a set of earplugs. To be certain all students have a set of earplugs, I even assign a date when they must bring the earplugs to class.

Often, students who work at jobs that require ear protection will even bring extra sets for classmates. Packages of 4-6 pair of earplugs can be purchased very inexpensively at most drug and discount stores. When 4-

6 students share the cost of the package, it can be less than \$1.00 for each student so the cost of the assignment is not a barrier. When I am certain that all students have a set of earplugs, I make the following assignment.

Explanation of the Activity

Sometime this next week, away from your comfort zone (i.e. your dorm room of apartment or home) you are to spend at least 1/2 hour communicating with your earplugs in your ears! I realize you might feel foolish but chances are nobody will see the earplugs in your ears if you don't draw attention to them. Perhaps others will think you have an ear infection and will feel sorry for you!

After you have spent 1/2 hour with "impaired hearing," write answers (approximately one typed page) to the following questions:

1. How do you think life is different for the deaf/hearing impaired? Why?
2. What aspect of communication did you miss the most? Why?
3. How can you apply this exercise to your life?
4. Reviewing our definition of listening, (...responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages) discuss the link between nonverbal communication and the listening process. Be prepared to share your experiment orally in class.

Follow up/Appraisal

To be perfectly honest, the first time I tried this experiment, I was unsure whether students would actually do the activity or would simply write it up as if they had. I am happy to report that my students have been very honest. Other faculty members in my department have observed students doing this assignment!

Based on student reaction papers and class discussion, this assignment is very valuable. Many students reported they would be more empathic, more aware, or more patient when dealing with people who have a hearing impairment.

The "statistics suggest that one out of every nine Americans is hearing-impaired" ((Wolvin & Coakley, 1996, p. 75). My students realize that many others, including friends, classmates, colleagues and relatives, will benefit from the empathy they gained from this experiment.

Clearly listening and hearing are not synonymous; however, hearing is the beginning of the selection process—we can maximize our listening experience if we are aware of the hearing component it contains. Stu-

dents recognize this as a significant experience. Based on the definition of listening (...responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages), students report they are much more aware of the importance of nonverbal communication to the listening process.

These two exercises generate a good deal of discussion. The level of awareness these assignments produce make them valuable additions to my Effective Listening course. These activities would also be valuable in any course with an effective listening module.

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Talking about a decade: A focused but flexible approach to
topic selection for speaking assignments

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Goal Statement: To guide students toward discussion and speech topics that are worthwhile, novel and interesting.

Most faculty members watch students in introductory communication courses struggle to select topics for their assigned speeches and group projects. In some instances, the topics students are drawn to seem trivial. At other times, their topics have little interest or relevance to their audience. Often the topics are ones the instructor has heard spoken about dozens of times before. In order to guide students toward significant and interesting topics while also allowing them a great deal of flexibility in their topic choices, I have begun focusing the speaking events in my hybrid introductory course upon a decade of the past century. Most recently, the group discussions and speeches focused upon the 1960s.

While the speaking events in my class include a group discussion and two short informative speeches, instructors with somewhat different speaking assignments could quite easily modify and adopt a similar focus in their classroom. In some circumstances the communication course might even be paired with an existing history class. In my class, the small group discussions, which precede the speeches and which are typically done in a fishbowl arrangement, serve both as a low anxiety introductory speaking activity and as an introduction to the decade upon which we are focusing. Groups select their discussion topics from a list I create and distribute to give the students a sense of possible areas to explore for their speeches as well as to provide a window into the times. The past semester, discussion topics included selective service policies, Haight Ashbury, the Black Panthers, the Freedom Riders, the Bay of Pigs and the space race.

After the group discussions and prior to the speeches, we do several activities to help students find specific topics. Following the guidelines in our text, Competent Communication (1997) by O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann and Wiemann, we employ several strategies. We begin by exploring the library as a source for topic ideas. I checkout books about movies, music, social movements, political events, technological developments and the arts during the decade and during class circulate them among the students. We also view documentaries from our library's holdings about or news footage from the decade. These activities are followed by solo brainstorming which helps students link their knowledge and expertise with

the decade (p. 397). As a result, when we focused upon the 1960s, an art major presented a speech about a pop artist of the time; a basketball player researched the Boston Celtics dynasty during the decade and a car hobbyist spoke about the rise of muscle cars. The strategy of "consultation with others" (O'Hair, Freidrich, Weimann and Weimann, 1997) is particularly rich when concentrating upon a decade, since many of the students' parents, aunts and uncles lived through the time period. Discussing possible topics with their family members and, when appropriate, interviewing them as sources of information, proves very helpful in helping students find and develop topic ideas.

Focusing upon a decade can not only leads students to novel and interesting speaking topics, but can have the added benefit of giving students insight into and understanding of a historical period. Students comment that focusing upon the 1960s makes selecting a speech topic relatively easy, while, from my perspective, the quality and diversity of speech topics has never been better. Students have tackled topics varying from Betty Friedan's role in the women's movement to the Cuban Missile Crisis to the Grateful Dead to the beginning of professional baseball in Minnesota to the Tet Offensive. The attention of the class as an audience for the discussions and speeches, as well as the quantity and quality of questions asked of the speakers, has appreciably increased since I began focusing upon a decade. Students also regularly express their enjoyment of learning about parts of history they had only heard about in passing. Some seek out materials such as Tom Wolfe's book The Electric Koolaid Acid Test (1968) and videos of the musical Hair (1982) because of increased interest in and appreciation of the times.

As an instructor, I find the discussions and speeches interesting and edifying and the students enthusiasm and curiosity invigorating. And, when I grow weary of hearing about Woodstock, the '68 Democratic Convention and the Warren Commission, I will simply refocus the speaking assignments to another decade. Perhaps in a year or two we will explore the 1970s or the dirty 30s or even the roaring 20s.

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Studies in the Spectator Role by Michael Benton

Book Review by Christine Sustek Williams

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Michael Benton. *Studies in the Spectator Role: Literature, Painting and Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge, 2000. 220 + xv.

The first assignment in my Performance Studies class is to perform a poem. The structure of this project has shifted from poems from a specific writer, to parts of a poem broken up between group members, and to individual choices by the students themselves. However, the one thing that has remained consistent no matter what the structure of the project, is that the students feel overwhelmed and unprepared to tackle this project. The usual faces that I confront following my announcement of the assignment are ones of stark fear. I have met with great resistance in trying to get my classes to realize that they are creating their own interpretation for performance. Students reply to me that they do not understand what the poem is saying and that they do not have a point of relation with the text. In response to these fears I have resorted to having the students use images to help focus their interpretation. They bring in an image of their speaker and an image of their setting; this method has helped my students feel more comfortable with their poems and their interpretation. The text I am introducing here adds another visual step to this ladder. Michael Benton's *Studies in the Spectator Role* introduces practical ways to introduce literature, painting, and performance into the classroom as pieces of a larger puzzle of oral interpretation.

In Michael Benton's article "Education and the Sister Arts" in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, he outlines the benefits of studying the sister arts of painting and poetry. Benton states, "in addition to the motivation afforded by the inherent interest of these two related art forms, the main educational benefits lie in the enhanced historical and cultural awareness offered by studying the sister arts" (34). This idea continues into his recent book, *Studies in the Spectator Role*.

Benton begins his book with an overview of the various theories pertaining to reading and viewing. In these chapters Benton outlines the important aspects of how a reader is a spectator in the world of the text, how a viewer of a painting becomes a self-conscious spectator and finally, how ekphrasis (the literary representation of a work of visual art) creates a dual spectatorship in reading and viewing. Benton acknowledges in his introduction that the first part of his book can be easily separated from the

second if one wishes to focus solely on the pedagogical import of ekphrasis, thereby making this text quite user-friendly for readers who are reading it for a specific purpose.

His overview of the theoretical background surrounding reader and viewer response is extensive and detailed. As an overview it is well designed to give the reader a concise, clear and constructive description of the information. In his concluding discussion of this section, Benton discusses ekphrasis and its importance, "it is through the operation of this narrative impulse to generate in words a virtual space in which the story of the spectator-poet's reading can be told that ekphrasis makes its dyadic aesthetic appeal" (47). Benton states that through the joint study of painting and poetry, students can achieve greater insights into the creation of effects generated by both art forms in addition to the interpretative power these two arts can generate together.

Benton discusses how literature and painting both place the spectator within their worlds. He focuses upon helping students to find the various ways in which the spectator functions. By offering the example of "mapping," Benton illustrates for his readers a practical way in which to introduce this type of exercise into the oral interpretation classroom. The exercise of mapping consists of giving a reproduced—acknowledged as such—copy of a painting and asking students to write on their photocopy around the picture what they notice about the painting. In the second step of the exercise they are asked to create speech bubbles, like those in a cartoon, to express the characters' thoughts from the painting. Benton states,

Teachers who have invited pupils to map their responses around a copy of a painting...are well aware of the variety of ways in which spectators operate: the idiosyncratic, wandering viewpoint of each pupil is easily demonstrated and can act both as a practical way-in to the study of pictures and as a means of giving pupils confidence in the validity of their own interpretations. (37)

This activity foreshadows Benton's main discussion of connecting paintings with poetry to help build confidence in the student's own interpretation.

The second section of *Studies in the Spectator Role* is the most interesting and useful from a pedagogical standpoint. Benton does an excellent job using each chapter to give detailed examples of how a certain theme, idea or artist can be studied by students with the tool of ekphrasis. The chapters in this section discuss ekphrasis that illuminates the historical personas of Henry Unton and *Henry V*, the theatrical fictions of Hogarth, Gay and Fielding, the image of childhood, landscapes, Turner, Shakespeare, images of war and finally, myth. Each of the chapters in the second section of Benton's book is interesting; however, I will focus upon two to give a more in-depth view of what is covered.

Benton's writing on the painter J. M. W. Turner offers an interesting discussion of the use of ekphrasis. Benton focuses upon Turner's three important works, *The Shipwreck*, *Snow Storm*, and *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying-Typhoon Coming On*. With each painting Benton goes into a detailed description of the story and background of the artistic work and then enters into a discussion of the poetic works that exist that have been inspired by the paintings. Benton raises the important themes and issues that arise from the works by the various artists and ties each poem back to the role that the painting and the painter play in the poem. Benton concludes that by studying the paintings and poems surrounding Turner's work, the spectator finds different insights which inform him/her about the world in which the originals were created and how the contemporary world influences the view of the reader or spectator, "in studying these paintings and texts, our roles as spectators assume different guises and afford different insights...looking at Turner is to study a contemporary now and then" (146). Within this chapter, Benton includes an outline of important works by various authors that can help instructors highlight in the classroom the issues that he has been discussing in the chapter.

The second exemplary chapter in Benton's book is titled "Images of War: Spencer, Nash and the war poets." This chapter is interesting because instead of focusing upon one artist, this chapter focuses upon one theme. Much of this section centers on the biographical and historical details that influenced the work of the various artists discussed. What is unique in this chapter is that Benton has linked poets and painters who write about common themes and ideas and who have come from similar experiences rather than poets who have written poems in direct response to the paintings described. For example, Benton discusses the work of Stanley Spencer, a painter who responded to the horrors of World War I and Wilfred Owen a poet experiencing the same war. Their work is discussed in relation to each other; Benton investigates how these two men, unknown to each other, artistically replied to the same war but in unique ways. By studying the works of these two artists together, students are able to juxtapose how two people react to an event and how that event can be captured in different forms of art. Thus, Benton offers in this chapter a discussion of how a teacher can make connections between a visual image and a text which can serve a similar purpose as that of ekphrasis. Again, Benton offers suggestions in his concluding section of the chapter for suggested references.

In his conclusion, Benton recognizes the possible negative criticism of using the sister arts to create an interdisciplinary education. One argument that is often used is that each art form has its own history, form and theory and thus to teach one with another is to take it out of context and to not fully understand its meaning. However, what art works alone?

Furthermore, literature and art both require the reader and the viewer to enter into a new world in order to read the text or the image. Benton clearly states that art is subject to the time and place it was created, but this is one of the highlights of his argument to include the sister arts as a pedagogical tool: students can learn about connections and references to other times and places.

Benton states that this form of study can help demystify terms such as "romanticism" and "neo-classical" that often intimidate students. Also, Benton states that by studying a visual representation and then studying a poem that somehow highlights that visual representation, students find greater points of entry and understanding for the literary works. As I stated earlier, I have found that my own students are greatly intimidated by what is deemed "poetry," stating that they cannot understand what the author means. By giving them a visual link to offer insight into the world of the piece student's feel that they have an easier way into the realm of the poem. Many of our students respond more easily to visual stimuli, thus, Benton argues for the use of this medium to create an easier and more instructive time for the student. Benton states "the prime educational advantage: study of the two arts together offers students access both synchronically to the artistic connection within a given period and diachronically to the artistic canon of valued and influential works from earlier centuries that were revered at that time" (201).

Benton recognizes that there are some caveats that must be placed upon this technique. First, this technique has the potential to inaccurately construct art and literary history into distinct boundaries, such as "Classical Art," that are well known to not be as clear cut as they seem. Second, Benton stresses that there is not simply a direct mirroring between one art and another just because it is on the same subject. Benton states that teachers must make it clear to their students that contemporary writers basing their poems on older paintings bring different insights and values into their works than might be stated in the original piece.

Studies in the Spectator Role is an informative work that offers an interesting pedagogical tool to teachers. This book is quite useful for instructors of courses which deal with the performance of literature. Teachers that have dealt with students' resistance to poetry and the performance and study of these texts may find this method a useful tool in helping students to find a point of entry into a literary form they feel inadequate to study. Benton's narrative is clear and instructive. He offers extensive references to aid in the preparation of a course of study in this method. Benton successfully mixes scholarly discussion that delves into deep and complex issues as well as practical pedagogical instruction for teachers. This book is successful on many levels and would be informative to teachers who deal with the study and performance of literature.

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For a listing of American ekphrastic poetry see Beverly Whitaker Long and Timothy Scott Cage "Contemporary American Ekphrastic Poetry: A Selected Bibliography" *Text and Performance Quarterly*. 9 (1989). 286-297.



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