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Volume 48, Issue 1, 2011

Introduction to the Special Issue on Method in Communication
Stephen M. Croucher

**The Fantasy of Separatism:
An Examination of the Rhetoric of Sri Lanka's
Tamil Separatist Movement**
Carolyn Prentice
Suranthi Boange

**Pragmatism, Pragma-Dialectics, and Methodology:
Toward a More Ethical Notion of Argument Criticism**
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**Through the Linguistic Looking Glass:
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and Linguistic Spaces**
Anthony Spencer

Sculpting the Rhetorician: A Transformation
Crystal Lane Swift

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Delta Sigma Rho—Tau Kappa Alpha
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Editor's Note:

S&G went to an entire online format with volume 41/2004 of the journal. The journal will be available online at: www.dsr-tka.org/ The layout and design of the journal will *not* change in the online format. The journal will be available online as a pdf document. A pdf document is identical to a traditional hardcopy journal. We hope enjoy and utilize the new format.

Speaker & Gavel

<http://www.dsr-tka.org/>

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1. S&G publishes refereed articles addressing all aspects of communication theory and practice.
2. Manuscripts must conform to the latest edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) style.
3. Manuscripts must provide, on the cover page, complete contact information for the senior/lead author and brief biographical information for each author.
4. *Speaker and Gavel* encourages and promotes undergraduate and graduate research; submissions from undergraduate and graduate students should be identified as such on the cover letter.
5. The abstract page should contain an abstract not to exceed 150 words, and a list of keywords for indexing.
6. All manuscripts must be submitted in Word format (doc).
7. Submissions should be e-mailed as an attachment to the editor.

Introduction to the Special Issue on Method in Communication

Stephen M. Croucher

When I sent out the special issue call for articles focusing on “Method in Communication Studies,” I did not fully know what to expect. As the field of communication studies is vast, the variety of methods used in the field is also vast. The Editorial Board and I received numerous articles with methods ranging from semiotics, ethnography, autoethnography, performance, numerous rhetorical approaches, discourse analysis, a variety of critical approaches, and few statistical submissions. In our evaluations of the submissions, we considered many factors: is it conceptually meaningful, methodologically driven, well-written, are the arguments well grounded, and is it interesting. I also looked to a keen statement put forth by Abelson (1995), who asserted that research, “should make an interesting claim; it should tell a story that an informed audience will care about, and it should do so by intelligent interpretation of appropriate evidence” (p. 2).

With these ideas in mind, four articles were chosen. The first piece is “The Fantasy of Separatism: An Examination of the Rhetoric of Sri Lanka’s Tamil Separatist Movement” by Carolyn Prentice and Suranthi Boange. Here the authors use symbolic convergence theory (Bormann, 1982) to analyze the rhetoric of the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka. The authors identified three themes and a dominant rhetorical vision through their analysis. Their work shows the usefulness of symbolic convergence theory outside of the United States.

The second piece is “Pragmatism, Pragma-Dialectics, and Methodology: Toward a more Ethical Notion of Argument Criticism” by Matthew Gerber.” In this piece, Gerber asserts the pragma-dialectical approach to analyzing argumentative discourse (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984) is limited and run the risk of amorality. Gerber adds arguments are deemed “good” as long as they meet the needs of the speaker, regardless of the goals or purpose, which he deemed amorality. He outlines corrective measures for standard pragma-dialectical approaches.

The third piece is “Through the Linguistic Looking Glass: An Examination of a Newspaper as Negotiator of Hybrid Cultural and Linguistic Spaces” by Anthony T. Spencer. In this analysis, Spencer English-language media outlets should and could be viewed as minority-language media outlets, particularly when such outlets are in a nation where English is not the first or official language. Spencer conducted three months of ethnographic observations at a newspaper in Costa Rica in which he focused on the hybrid identities (Bhabha, 1994) staffers form as they instruct tourists, sojourners, and other transnational migrants in this hybrid space.

The fourth and final piece is “Sculpting the Rhetorician: A Transformation” by Crystal Lane Swift. In this study, Swift entered a culture (a group of artists) to study communicative interactions such as: marking of space, positionality,

speech acts, and the overall formation of community. Through her analysis, Swift asserts she impacted the culture, and the culture impacted her. The piece incorporates rhetorical and performative elements to demonstrate a researcher's transformation.

These four pieces demonstrate four different methodological approaches to the study of communication, and I applaud each for his/her contribution. I also want to thank Daniel Cronn-Mills for his many years of stewardship of *Speaker & Gavel*. As I begin my term as editor of *Speaker & Gavel*, I am pleased to have him not only on the Review Board, but as a colleague and friend I can call for assistance as I begin this endeavor.

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The Fantasy of Separatism: An Examination of the Rhetoric of Sri Lanka's Tamil Separatist Movement

Carolyn Prentice
Suranthi Boange

Abstract

The study used symbolic convergence theory to analyze the rhetoric of the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka to garner support for their cause. Examining two texts, the 1976 Vaddukoddai Resolution and the 2008 Heroes Day speech, we identified three main fantasy themes and a dominant rhetorical vision in both. This timely study clearly demonstrates the usefulness of SCT as a method of rhetorical analysis across cultures and also incorporates some recent criticisms of the theory. Thus, the study provides nuanced insights into how terrorists inspire followers through their rhetoric.

Key words: Symbolic Convergence Theory, Rhetorical Analysis, Tamil Tigers, Terrorist Rhetoric, Cross-Cultural

Introduction

From the mid-1970s until May 19, 2009, Sri Lanka battled a devastating Tamil militancy movement aimed at creating a separate homeland for the island nation's Tamil ethnic minority. Citing the injustices caused to their community by successive governments since independence from British rule in 1948 (DeSilva, 1991; U.S. Department of State, 2010), the Tamils promoted their cause through terrorist acts and rhetoric. The violence unleashed thus took an immense toll on the nation and created much socio-economic hardship for all Sri Lankans, regardless of ethnic identity (Hennanayake, 2004). The Tamil militancy derived its main source of strength from the unwavering loyalty demonstrated by its cadres and the substantial financial support given by sections of the Tamil diaspora based mainly in the West (DeSilva, 1991). The Tamil militancy movement, which was formally conceptualized and endorsed in the early 1970s by an elitist section of the Tamil community, was represented by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or "Tamil Tigers"), one of the world's most deadly and successful terrorist organizations (Mahindapala, 2004; US Department of State, 2010). The terror activities of the LTTE included suicide bombings, recruitment of child soldiers, indiscriminate bombings that targeted innocent civilians, and assassination of Sinhala and rival Tamil political leaders (Mahindapala, 2004).

This study examines the rhetoric of the Tamil Tigers for the persuasive themes used to garner support for the cause in terms of recruitment, retention and financial funding. The LTTE was defeated in May 2009 through an aggressive military campaign pursued by the Sri Lankan government and also as a result of dissension within factions of the LTTE. Consequently, an analysis of the persuasive power of the rhetoric of the group may be opportune. Further, the

analysis of the persuasive rhetoric of the separatist movement which successfully maintained its momentum for more than 30 years may prove useful in comprehending and countering the rhetoric of similar movements worldwide, as well as give clues to its ultimate defeat.

Origins of Sri Lanka's Conflict

Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is an island nation located 31km off the southern tip of India in the Indian Ocean. The population of Sri Lanka, estimated at 21.3 million, is 74 percent Sinhala and 18 percent Tamils (U.S. Department of State, 2010). The Tamil community is composed of 12 percent Sri Lankan Tamils, as well as 5 percent Indian Tamils, who were brought to the island as indentured laborers during the British Colonial period to work on the country's tea plantations (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Moor Muslims represent another 7 percent of the Sri Lankan population, while the remaining 1 percent consists of Burghers, Malays, and the indigenous Veddha community (U.S. Department of State, 2010).

The socio-economic causes for Sri Lanka's recent ethnic conflict have been attributed by colonial history theorists DeSilva (1991) and Mendis (1967) as resulting from British policies that employed a strategy of "Divide and Rule" (DeSilva, 1991). This strategy segments a country's population based on factors such as language, religion, geographical area of residence, etc., and favors a predetermined minority group over the majority in terms of administration and political influence (DeSilva, 1991). Thus, during British rule, the minority Tamil community was positioned favorably in areas of education, political influence in the country, and government employment (DeSilva, 1991). Mendis (1967) noted that animosity between the Sinhala and Tamils was a recent phenomenon, with no evidence of any serious antagonism between the groups occurring before the 20th century. He argued that tensions between the two ethnic groups were caused by competition between the middle classes over the limited number of jobs in governmental service, which was the only stable employment under the British regime. "The British did not pursue policies of encouraging indigenous entrepreneurship for fear that this might compete with their overarching imperial interests" (Mendis, 1967, p. 127). Recently, prominent Sri Lankan scholars such as Uyangoda (1986), Jayawardena (1986), Dharmadasa (1992), Wicremaratne (1995), and De Silva (1971, 1981) have argued that the intensification of social mobilization in colonial Sri Lanka was the root cause for the island's ethnic conflict (as cited in Imtiyaz & Stavits, 2008).

The Vaddukoddai Resolution and the Rise of Tamil Militancy

In 1956, the newly elected government of the late Prime Minister Bandaranaike enacted the "Official Language Act of 1956" which made the Sinhala language the sole official language of the country. As a result, tensions were heightened between the Tamil and Sinhala communities, which led to ethnic riots in 1956 and more serious riots in 1958. Although the government attempted to rectify this injustice to the Tamil minority by two pacts in 1957 and in 1965, these were later abrogated in response to pressure from certain sections of the

Sinhala community. Consequently, ethnic riots broke out every few years for the next quarter century including 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1979, 1981, and especially the July 1983 riots, which were considered the most brutal (De Silva, 1991).

On May 14, 1976, the principal Tamil parties who represented the interests of the Tamil community jointly authored and proclaimed the Vaddukkoddai Resolution (Wilson, 1994). This Resolution called for the creation of a separate state known as “Eelam” in the Tamil-dominated North and East provinces of Sri Lanka, and it encouraged Tamils to resort to arms if necessary for the right of self-determination (Ladduwahetty, 1996). The Vaddukkoddai Resolution identified a number of Tamil grievances that formed the basis for their right to self-determination: (a) the proclaiming of Sinhala as the only official language throughout Sri Lanka, (b) the settlement of Sinhala colonists in the traditionally Tamil-dominated eastern province, (c) the denial of equal opportunity for Tamils in the spheres of employment and education, and (d) the lack of development in traditionally Tamil-dominated areas of the North and East.

The dream of an independent homeland had been envisioned by sections of the Tamil community in the early 1960s and 1970s—even before the Vaddukkoddai Resolution (Swamy, 1994). However, only after the formal declaration of the Vaddukkoddai Resolution did the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) devote a significant portion of resources and time to the cause of Tamil separatism (Swamy, 1994). Tamil militancy first emerged in the early 1970s when a plethora of Tamil militant groups sprang up simultaneously, proclaiming to fight for the cause of Tamil Eelam (Swamy, 1994). The group known today as the LTTE (The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) first emerged in 1972 as the TNT (Tamil New Tigers) (Swamy, 1994). The LTTE, also commonly referred to as the “Tamil Tigers,” was denounced as a terrorist group by the U.S. government and was identified on the website of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation as the “most dangerous and deadly extremist group in the world” (January 2008).

Theoretical Foundations

This study uses Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) to analyze the persuasive power of the rhetoric of the Tamil militancy. Originally posited by Ernest Bormann in 1972, SCT has described symbolic convergence as a general communication theory, which provides a universal explanation of human communication (Bormann, 1980). Bormann theorized that “symbolic convergence creates, maintains, and allows people to achieve empathic communion as well as a meeting of minds” (p. 102). From an ontological perspective, the theory is based upon the humanistic-rhetorical paradigm, as well as scientific approaches to communication (Bormann, 1980). SCT operates in two ways: as a context-bound and context-free theoretical structure, and as a theory embodying both fantasy and logic. On one hand, the theory is context-bound because it examines the communication of groups in a particular time and space (Bormann, 1985; Bormann, Cragan & Shields, 1996). On the other hand, SCT is context-free because it is concerned with tracking the spread of consciousness outside of its original contexts (e.g., in social movements, mass media, consumers), thus al-

lowing SCT researchers to make claims that transcend time and culture (Bormann, 1982a). SCT is a context-free general theory through its use of technical terms such as fantasy types, fantasy themes and rhetorical visions. The theory achieves symbiosis between diverse ontological approaches because it conceives of communication as embodying both fantasy and logic.

In advancing SCT, Bormann (1972) expanded upon the 1970 work of Robert Bales, whose research on natural groups uncovered a relationship between individual fantasizing and group fantasizing. The tendency of groups to collectively share and repeat fantasies is known as “fantasy chaining,” in which one member may vocalize part of a previously expressed fantasy, followed by other members repeating, embellishing, or providing new examples of the fantasy. Bormann (1972) carried the chaining process beyond the small group context and described the process from a rhetorical perspective. Bormann described the fantasy chaining process:

The dramatizations which catch on and chain out in small groups are worked into public speeches and the mass media and in turn spread out across large publics, serve to sustain the members’ sense of community, to impel them strongly to action (which raises the question of motivation) and to provide them with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions and attitudes. (1972, p. 398)

Thus, a fantasy introduced in a small-group setting may be repeated in other settings, eventually becoming part of the shared fantasy of a larger community.

SCT assumes that a rhetor in a given context manipulates symbols to create a shared social reality within a group. The rhetor’s meaning, emotion, and motives are revealed in symbolic manipulations, referred to as the “manifest content” of the message (Cragan & Shields, 1994, p. 200). Further, the theory suggests that as three “master analogues (righteous, social and pragmatic) emerge and compete as explanations for the followers of the message” (Cragan & Shields, 1992, p. 200). The righteous analogue focuses on a sense of obligation toward some “overarching cause or position” (Bormann, Knutson, & Musolf, 1997, p. 257). The social analogue emphasizes social acts, seeking to develop interpersonal relationships on a concrete level and “to enhance humanity more abstractly by positioning a view of the future” (Bormann et al., 1997, p. 257). The pragmatic analogue emphasizes “pragmatism by focusing upon fulfilling practical and utilitarian goals” (Bormann et al., 1997, p. 257). Therefore, groups participating in competing rhetorical visions will view the same event from different perspectives.

The term “fantasy” is derived from the Greek root *phantastikos*, meaning to present or show to the mind, to make visible. A fantasy theme presents the group mind, encompassing a common experience and shaping it into shared knowledge (Bormann, 1980). The technical term “fantasy theme” in SCT consists of a dramatizing message in which characters enact an incident or a series of incidents in a setting somewhere other than the present moment of the people in-

volved in the communication process. Fantasy themes are often narratives about living or historic personages or about an envisioned future.

A fantasy theme consists of five structural elements: the rhetorical vision, dramatic personae (the hero and villain), the sanctioning agent, the plotline and the scene (Shields & Preston, 1985). A rhetorical vision is constructed when a given fantasy theme can be identified in most interpersonal, mediated or public communication settings (Bormann, 1982b). Once a rhetorical vision has emerged, dramatic personae and a typical plotline become easily identifiable in all communication contexts and can be further expanded when the need arises to generate an emotional appeal from the targeted audience. Thus, in many persuasive communication campaigns, the message is simply a repetition of what the audience already knows and shares (Bormann et al., 1996).

The creation of a rhetorical vision is guided by three rhetorical principles of novelty, explanatory power and imitation. The novelty principle states that established visions eventually start to lose effectiveness and fail to attract members of the second and third generations of the targeted audience. Therefore, a rhetorician will find common ground using an innovative set of dramatizations among the inheritors of the older rhetorical vision. The explanatory power principle suggests that a community may respond to bewildering events by sharing fantasies that provide satisfying explanations to the altered situation. The principle of imitation states that a bored or confused community tries to create and share fantasies that give the old familiar drama a new production (Bormann et al., 1996).

Dramatic personae are characters given life within the rhetorical vision. The heroes and the villains in the ongoing drama may be attributed with certain qualities, portrayed as taking certain actions, represented as appearing within a certain scene, or motivated or justified by a sanctioning agent (Shields & Preston, 1985). The sanctioning agent justifies the acceptance of a given rhetorical vision within a fantasy theme. In a particular context, the sanctioning agent might range from a higher power such as God to a salient here-and-now phenomenon such as an atom bomb or a warring conflict. The sanctioning agent may be a legitimate or moralistic framework (e.g., the constitution of a country). The plotline refers to the action taking place within the drama: good vs. evil, oppression vs. freedom, or conspiracy. The scene in SCT is the setting, or the place where the action takes place, where the heroes and villains act out their drama.

A fantasy type is described as a standard fantasy theme that represents a common plotline across a number of rhetorical visions (Bormann et al., 1996; Shields & Preston, 1985). A fantasy type could be a recurring script in the group culture. In most instances, group members will narrate stories that are similar in theme and action. These stories will essentially be the same narrative, with somewhat different characters and incidents. As members of a group expand their culture, they begin to use the device of fantasy types to tap old meanings, to arouse shared emotions and motives and to interpret new experiences in terms of old scripts (Bormann, 1982a).

Mirror-Image Fantasies

In this study, the Sinhala community and the Tamil separatists demonstrate the concept of mirror-image fantasies (Bormann, 1982a). In mirror image fantasies, “the heroes of one account are the villains of the other, the laudable action in one group becomes a deplorable action in the other and so forth” (Bormann, 1982a, p. 54). Sinhala history has always denied the existence of a separate Tamil state in the North and East of Sri Lanka before British occupation of the island. The Sinhala insist that the eastern province claimed by Tamil separatists actually belonged to the Kandyan Sinhala kingdom which existed before British annexation of the kingdom in 1815 (DeSilva, 1991). Although they are in the majority, the Sinhala community appears to have felt oppressed like a minority due to the privileged position given to the Tamil community over the Sinhala majority in colonial times (DeSilva, 1991). Therefore, as theorized by SCT, the Sinhala see the Tamils as the villains who have been engaged in a violent struggle, citing unjustifiable claims based on history and oppression (Shields & Preston, 1985).

Aims of the Study

This study examines two seminal texts for the presence of symbolic fantasy themes used to justify the Tamil cause. The first text, the Vaddukoddai Resolution of 1976, signaled the official endorsement by the Tamil leadership of Sri Lanka for the creation of a separate Tamil nation within Sri Lanka. This endorsement included a call to arms directed especially at the Tamil youth of Sri Lanka to achieve this purpose. The Resolution was unanimously adopted at the first national convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) held at Pannakam in Vaddukoddai on May 14, 1976. An elected member of the Sri Lankan Parliament, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, presided over the meeting and personally checked and approved the wording of the Resolution. He is therefore considered the father of the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka (Wilson, 1994). The Resolution opened up a new phase in relations between the Sinhala and Tamil communities. For the first time a conscious decision was made by the leadership of the Tamil community to abandon principles of non-violence and to resort instead to militancy. Thus, this text represents the official sanctioning of violent conflict by Tamils. As a collectively written document, the Resolution represents the shared rhetorical vision of the various Tamil groups that had emerged through the preceding years of riots and oppression.

The second text to be analyzed is the LTTE 2008 Heroes Day speech. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were the only remaining remnant of the Tamil separatist movement that was officially endorsed by the elite Tamil leadership. In 1989, the LTTE introduced the concept of commemorating an Annual Heroes Day on November 27. This day was selected because the birthday of the head of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, fell on November 26, and the first LTTE fighter is said to have sacrificed his life for the Tamil cause on this date. The highlight of the Heroes Day (Maveerar Naal) celebration was an annual speech given by Prabhakaran to memorialize the fallen heroes and to reinvigorate the militancy. Thus, this series of speeches continue the rhetorical vi-

sion of the LTTE. The 2008 speech is particularly important because, since Prabhakaran's death and the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009, this text stands as the final official message of the Tamil Tigers' rhetorical vision. Together, these two texts represent the first and the final public messages of the Tamil separatist movement. This analysis will demonstrate whether the same fantasy themes propagated 32 years beforehand at the initiation of the Tamil militancy were still being promoted at a time when the militancy was about to suffer its biggest defeat.

Although the original Vaddukoddai Resolution and Prabhakaran's Heroes Day message were presented in the Tamil language, in this study we examined English translations of the documents. Analyzing translations can be problematic because cultural and linguistic differences may interpret metaphors and examples inaccurately. However, these translations were widely published on the internet on Tamil and Hindu news sites as accurately representing the original Tamil texts and remain available on these sites (Prabhakaran, 2008; Vaddukoddai Resolution, 1976). Therefore, they appear to be widely considered as accurate translations. Although fantasy theme analysis could be applied to a larger sample of texts, we focus only on these two texts because (a) they are representative of a larger body of rhetoric which has not been widely translated into English, and (b) they stand as important markers of the inception and final days of the active militancy.

Applicability of SCT

SCT and its operant method of fantasy theme analysis are considered appropriate to analyzing the two texts because of the method's versatility as a context-bound framework applicable across diverse cultures and differing communicative contexts. SCT as a context-free theory can be used to analyze the passing of historical time, which is applicable in analyzing the spread of consciousness regarding Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka over 32 years. Therefore, the concept of fantasy chaining is particularly useful in this given context.

In addition, the five structural elements of SCT are evident in the ongoing drama of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. The method's emphasis on master analogues as encoded in the rhetorical vision makes it an appropriate method for analyzing current group consciousness of the movement from a rhetorical perspective. The versatility and applicability of SCT to the given context of the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka as embodying part of a fantasy theme provides the critic with the necessary tools to evaluate a historically-informed analysis of the discourse of Tamil separatism.

The Vaddukoddai Resolution

Fantasy Themes

Upon examining the Vaddukoddai Resolution, three main fantasy themes are self-evident, namely (a) historical claims to the existence of a Tamil state of "Eelam," (b) oppression and discrimination of the Tamil people by successive Sinhala governments, and (c) the right to self-determination of the Tamil people.

A fantasy type relating to the acceptance of the Tamil state by the international community is also discernible.

The overarching rhetorical vision of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka in light of the above fantasy themes is the right to self-determination of the Tamil people based on historical claims and claims of oppression and discrimination by successive Sinhala governments. The concept of self-determination is generally defined as the freedom of a people of a given area to determine their own political status or independence. Consequently, the rhetorical vision of self-determination for the Tamil people reflects the ultimate vision of the Tamil militancy as achieving independence from the Sinhala-dominated government of Sri Lanka—a concept that has been idealized as an inalienable right of the Tamil people. The two other fantasy themes support this rhetorical vision by promoting the legitimacy of the separatist cause.

The Vaddukoddai Resolution opens with the fantasy theme relating to the historical claims of the existence of a separate Tamil kingdom in Sri Lanka as existing “from the dawn of history” (para. 1). This reference to the primordial beginnings of the Tamil state reemphasizes the historical basis for the existence of a Tamil state. History is generally a lens through which an individual comes to understand the world. The worldview of a youth is shaped through education, family, societal and religious upbringing, with knowledge of history comprising a vital component of education. The Vaddukoddai Resolution essentially calls upon the “Tamil youth to throw themselves fully into a sacred fight for freedom” (para. 21) with allusions to history in the beginning of the Resolution, as well as by the later declaration that the Sri Lankan Tamils have always been separate and distinct from the Sinhala “by the virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, and their history of independent existence as a separate state over a distinct territory for several centuries” (para. 16). Together these words serve to shape the fantasy theme of the historical existence of the Tamil state from the dawn of time (or rather, several centuries) in an effort to influence the worldview of the Tamil youth who will take part in the “sacred fight” (para. 20).

The fantasy theme of oppression and discrimination of the Tamil people by successive Sinhala-dominated governments supports independence as another dominant theme in the Resolution. Nine passages portray the Sinhala as using their power to the “detriment” of the Tamil people:

- (a) Depriving one half of the Tamil people of their citizenship and franchise rights thereby reducing Tamil representation in Parliament, (b) . . . planned and state-aided colonization and large scale regularization of Sinhala encroachments calculated to make Tamils a minority in their own homeland, (c) Making Sinhala the only official language . . . (d) Giving the foremost place to Buddhism under the Republican constitution . . . (e) Denying the Tamils equality of opportunity in the spheres of employment, education, land alienation and the economic life in general and starving Tamil areas of large scale industries and development schemes, thereby seriously endangering their very existence in Ceylon (para. 6- a, b, c, d, e).

The theme of oppression and discrimination is also the plotline in the ongoing drama between the Sinhala and the Tamils, who are fighting the oppression of the Sinhala in order to achieve their rightful place as a distinct nation and culture as decreed by history. Hence, the central action or plotline of the Vaddukodai Resolution might be described as “Sinhala oppression” or “Sinhala oppression vs. Tamil freedom.”

Master Analogues

The three master analogues (Cragan & Shields, 1992) also emerge within the Vaddukodai Resolution. In the righteous analogue, the Tamil youth and the Tamil Nation are reminded of the enormity of their great language, religions and separate cultural heritage (para. 16) and also the continuing oppression of the Tamil people by Sinhala-dominated governments (para. 6- a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i). Therefore, a sense of obligation is invoked for the Tamil people to preserve their cultural identity and freedom, particularly in the closing of the Resolution:

This convention calls upon the Tamil Nation in general and the Tamil youth in particular to come forward to throw themselves fully into a sacred fight for freedom and to flinch not till the goal of a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam is reached. (para. 20)

The words “sacred fight for freedom” reaffirm the righteousness of the cause, whereby arousing the emotions of Tamil youth.

The social analogue also competes as justification for the Tamil cause. The Resolution clearly defines Tamil Eelam as a state in which equal citizenship will be granted to all Tamil-speaking people, divisions of caste will be abolished, and “exploitation of man by man shall be forbidden” (para. 19, f). These statements emphasize the social goals of the envisioned Eelam, presenting a hopeful view of the future to any disgruntled Tamil who has faced discrimination within the Sinhala-dominated state.

The pragmatic analogue emphasizes that the creation of a separate Tamil homeland is the only practical solution to relieve the Tamil oppression:

This convention resolves that the restoration and reconstitutions of the free, sovereign, secular, socialist state of Tamil Eelam, based on the right of self-determination inherent to every nation, has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil Nation in this country. (para. 18)

The Resolution further calls upon the TULF to “formulate an action plan and launch without undue delay the struggle for winning sovereignty” (para. 20). These statements would appeal to the pragmatist who seeks to move beyond mere rhetoric to a concrete action plan for achieving the goals set forth in the Resolution.

The Vaddukodai Resolution presents a vision of oppression of the Tamils in Sri Lanka which is headed toward “cultural genocide of the Tamils” (para. 6-f) that can no longer be tolerated. Tamils are cast as having patiently sought re-

dress of these injustices through peaceful means, which have been “summarily and total rejected without even the courtesy of a consideration of its merits” (para. 9) by the Sinhala. Thus the Resolution justifies its call to arms as the only remaining avenue for equality and freedom. Now we will turn to the analysis of the final general message of the Tamil Tigers in November 2008

Vellupillai Prabhakaran’s 2008 Annual Heroes Day Message

The LTTE propaganda and rituals associated with Maveerar Naal (Heroes Day) were directed at several layers of the Tamil population, including Tamils living within the LTTE-controlled area and elsewhere within Sri Lanka, as well as the Tamil Diaspora who had migrated to other parts of the world, the Tamils of India, and anyone else who might sympathize with the Tigers (Roberts, 2005). Central to our analysis of the 2008 Heroes Day speech is the assertion that the fantasy themes have escalated beyond those of struggle and oppression to more explicit images of Sinhala waging war and genocide against the still-peace-loving Tamils.

Fantasy Themes and Types

Examination of the 2008 Heroes Day speech reveals that the fantasy themes and types identified in the Vaddukoddai Resolution are clearly echoed and extended. Prabhakaran alludes to the fantasy theme of the historical claims of the Tamil state by stating that “from time immemorial, from generation to generation the Tamil people lived on this land” (para. 7). He further states that “Ancient Tamil civilisation stood long and firm in this land. . . . Our ancient kings built kingdoms and dynasties and ruled from here” (paragraph 12). The fantasy theme and the main rhetorical vision of the right of self-determination also echoes the rhetoric of the Vaddukoddai Resolution: “From the day British colonialism was replaced with Sinhala oppression, we have been struggling for our rights. . . . The political struggle for our self-determination has extended over the last sixty years” (para. 13). Later, Prabhakaran reaffirms that self-determination for the Tamil people is justifiable on the grounds of historical claims to the land, as well as Sinhala oppression: “It was when state oppression breached all norms and our people faced naked terrorism that our movement for freedom was born as a natural outcome of history” (para. 13). Here, as in the Vaddukoddai Resolution, oppression of the Tamil people by the Sinhala state continues as the prevalent fantasy theme in the Tamil rhetoric. However, reflecting the novelty principle, Prabhakaran heightens the pitch of this struggle by specifically referring to the struggle as a “war” 24 times in the speech. In contrast, the Vaddukoddai Resolution uses the word “war” only one time, and then as an historical fact rather than as a characterization of the Sinhala. The recurrence of the 1976 fantasy themes are sharpened into a much more strident tirade against the Sinhalese in order to continue to attract new members.

The fantasy type identified in the Vaddukoddai Resolution on the acceptance of the international community of the Tamil State attains pre-eminence in Prabhakaran’s rhetoric, reflecting the increased stridency of the Tigers. The Vaddukoddai Resolution alluded only briefly to this fantasy: “This convention an-

nounces to the world that the Republican Constitution of 1972 has made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by the new colonial masters, the Sinhala” (para. 16). This identification of the entire world as the audience for this declaration was significant because the words suggest that the Tamil separatist struggle had been concerned about world opinion since its inception. Thus, 32 years later, Prabakaran lashes out at the international community as new villains in the ongoing drama: “They put us on their blacklist and ostracized us as unwanted and untouchable. Our people living in many lands were intimidated into submission by oppressive limitations imposed on them to prevent their political activities supporting our freedom struggle” (para. 18).

Nevertheless, Prabakaran also goes on to reaffirm that the Tamils still seek the approval of the international community:

Our freedom movement, as well as our people, have always maintained cordiality with the international community.... Cordially I invite those countries that have banned us, to understand the deep aspirations and friendly overtures of our people, to remove the ban on us and to recognise our just struggle. (para. 24)

The favorable opinion of the international community is vital to the survival of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka because of the significant funding provided to the movement by sections of the Tamil Diaspora based in the West (DeSilva, 1991). Therefore, an international community well-disposed towards the cause of Tamil Eelam is essential for the group.

Since the fantasy theme of oppression has escalated to war, a new fantasy theme emerges of the valor of the fallen Tamil war heroes: “The sacrifices they [the heroes] made have no parallel in the history of the world. No country but ours has at any time encountered such wonderful dedication as expressed in the actions of our valiant heroes” (paragraph 6). This fantasy theme may be self-evident by the nature of the occasion of the speech. In contrast, since the Vadukoddai Resolution initiated the movement, it could not invoke this theme. However, 32 years later, it seems only natural that the valor of past heroes of the movement needs to be glorified in a fantasy theme to sustain consciousness of the cause and to construct the vision of a patriotic war. The fantasy theme of oppression by the Sinhala state is given greater prominence through the repeated use of the word “genocide.” Whereas the 1976 Resolution used a much more softened term “cultural genocide” only once, the 2008 Heroes Day speech invokes “genocide” or “genocidal war” in six places (para. 9, 17, 18, 19, 21, and 30), which clearly paint the bloody backdrop for the sacrifice and valor of the Tamil heroes. This violent heroism is one-sided, however, in that it does not acknowledge the Sinhala and other victims of the LTTE terrorist acts. The increased use of the word “genocide” in this speech also invokes the international community’s heightened awareness and concern about genocides around the world in the intervening 30 years. Thus, the repeated labeling of the Tamil struggle as “genocide” may invoke a greater sense of guilt among international onlookers.

Playing on this guilt, Prabakaran expresses his appreciation for the support given by sections of the Indian population (para. 24-26). Consequently, India's acceptance of the Tamil struggle figures prominently in the fantasy type. Although Prabakaran notes that Indian involvement in the Tamil struggle was "injurious to the Tamil people," he exonerates them by noting that this was solely due to the "intrigues" and conspiracies of the Sinhala state who sought to create friction between the LTTE and the Indian government of the time (para. 25). The populace and leadership of the Indian state of Tamilnadu and India are typecast as heroes who were misled by the villainous Sinhala state. Prabakaran calls for further support from Tamilnadu:

I would cordially request them to raise their voice firmly in favour of our struggle for a Tamil Eelam state, and take appropriate and positive measures to remove the ban which remains an impediment to an amicable settlement between India and our movement. (para. 27)

Therefore, Prabakaran reaffirms India's support for the Tamil cause as vital to the survival of the separatist movement, calling upon Tamilnadu to promote Indian governmental support for the Sri Lankan insurgency. Consequently, great expectations are placed upon the state of Tamilnadu and India as potential heroes to take up the Tamil cause and save the LTTE from further defeat.

The words "united strength of our people" may once again be labeled a fantasy type in the Heroes Day rhetoric. Prabakaran may well be calling upon the support of members of the Tamil community living around the world to sustain the dreams of a separate Tamil nation, through concentrated efforts on all fronts. Similarly the Vaddukoddai Resolution also calls upon the support of the "Tamil nation and youth to throw themselves fully into the sacred fight for freedom" (para. 20) in its initial call for achieving a separate state. Though the initial Vaddukoddai Resolution may not reflect such obvious rhetoric of calling for concentrated efforts on all fronts, the reference to the "Tamil Nation" (para. 20) may reflect this fantasy type. Consequently, the unity of the Tamil nation has become more important in the Heroes Day speech than in the Vaddukoddai Resolution and has risen to become a dominant fantasy type in the group's rhetorical vision.

Other Elements

In the Heroes Day speech, the three competing master analogues come into play. The righteous analogue in the rhetoric emphasizes that the Sinhala state has unilaterally escalated the struggle to a war: "The Tamil Eelam nation does not want war, it does not favour violence; it is the Sinhala nation that has waged war on our nation" (para. 30). Prabakaran's emphasis on the history of peace negotiations engaged by the group further reaffirms his use of the righteousness analogue (para. 30) while at the same time ignoring or excusing the Tamil terrorist activities.

To appeal to the wider international audiences, the LTTE invoked other discourses of liberation (e.g., Buddhism, civil rights, and Marxism) to legitimate their claims of the righteousness of their struggle (Hennanayake, 2004). Sinhala

are traditionally Buddhist, a fact which Prabakaran exploits in his speech in two places. In the opening, he cites a traditional Buddhist outlook of “All human suffering springs from unbridled desire. Unless one extricates oneself from the clutch of greed, one will not free himself from the fetters of sorrow” (paragraph 7). “Suffering” is a key Buddhist concept (Keown, 1996), which Prabakaran exploits by mentioning “suffering” eight times in the speech, compared to no mention at all in the 1976 Resolution. Thus Prabakaran cleverly paints the Buddhist Sinhala as evil hypocrites: “In a country that worships the Buddha who preached love and kindness, racist hatred and war-mongering vie with one another . . . from politicians to spiritual leaders . . . their voice is raised only in support of the war” (para. 28). In contrast, Prabakaran paints the Tamil Tigers as a “freedom movement” seeking “our just rights” and “seeking[ing] a peaceful resolution”—while excusing their terrorist activities as being “forced upon us by history” (para. 12). Thus, the 2008 Heroes Day speech forefronts the righteous analogue by poising the Tamil Tigers as more peace-loving than the Buddhist Sinhala who have been waging this war.

The other master analogues are present but not as prominent. The social analogue appears in the statements emphasizing the “potential” of the Tamil nation. Prabakaran claims that the Sinhala nation has implemented a policy of “suppression” for the past 60 years (para. 32). Therefore, the Tamils as a nation with their distinct language, cultural heritage and history should be entitled to develop their characteristic individuality without any hindrances by the Sinhala state (para. 33). The emergence of the pragmatic analogue is seen through statements that the Tamils have faced bigger crises and “superior” powers, but have been able to withstand these efforts. Therefore, the current challenges the group is facing will be overcome through the “united strength of our people” (para. 11). The Vaddukoddai Resolution gave equal weight to all three master analogues, while the Heroes Day speech principally promotes the righteousness analogue, while ignoring its own terrorist activities.

SCT Extended

Olufowote (2006), noting the weakness of SCT to explain why humans dramatize and share fantasy, has suggested that Weick’s sensemaking theory (1995) might be used to expand SCT’s treatment of this issue. According to Weick, sensemaking *constructs* rather than *interprets* the past in an attempt to explain the present. Olufowote suggests that a rhetorical vision is thus a dramatization of sensemaking, presented to construct the past in order to support the present predicament. The addition of this sensemaking lens promotes the concept that a shared rhetorical vision may be consciously constructed to manipulate the present audience’s view of the past in order to garner support for future actions. In the present study, the continued fantasy themes of these two proclamations clearly demonstrate how Tamil leaders purposefully cast the Tamils as righteous heroes oppressed by the villainous Sinhala who have continued their oppression over decades. During 32 years, the recriminations against the Sinhala became more shrill, with claims of a one-sided war aimed at genocide. By invoking the emotionally and politically laden word “genocide,” Prabakaran pro-

notes the Tamil cause as so righteous that the “armed violent path” (para. 12) was warranted, while never acknowledging that this path included undisputed incidents of suicide bombings and reported kidnapping/recruiting of child soldiers, —in short, “terrorism”—an equally loaded word.

The fact that Prabakaran promoted his one-sided, Tamil-as-victim- speech, even in the face of looming defeat, demonstrates that the prosocial bias enjoyed by SCT may be unwarranted (Olufowote, 2006). The prosocial bias suggests that rhetorical convergence is positive or desirable for a group, but such is not always the case. By inflaming the sense of injustice and oppression through a simplistic construction of the past, the Tamil leaders continually provoked their followers to terrorism, without advocating for a more nuanced approach. Through repeating this vision in 32 years of rhetoric, the LTTE silenced any expressions for a more peaceful approach. A rhetorical vision, dramatized in public and advocating violence, may effectively squelch any temperate voices, and thus may not be desirable. Sharing a rhetorical vision may unite a group in ways that may eventuate in harm to the group and failure to achieve the group goals.

A related criticism of SCT is its apparent egalitarian assumption that a shared rhetorical vision is beneficial to all in the group, when in fact the speaker alone may benefit significantly from the vision (Olufowote, 2006). This inequality may be particularly true of terrorist groups whose leaders are insulated from direct harm, protected by the buffer of young people willing to blow themselves up for the cause. In the case of the Tamil Tigers, countless unnamed Tigers died in the 32-year long struggle. But eventually Prabakaran did have to enter the fray directly, and his assassination in May 2008 facilitated the Tiger surrender and peace negotiations.

Olufowote (2006) also criticized SCT as too narrowly characterizing membership in a rhetorical community as primary to an individual’s identity without recognizing that group members are also members of other groups. Thus, the promotion of a specific rhetorical vision may serve to repel members who must balance their personal values with membership in other groups. The Tamil Tigers’ public outreach to the international community, and particularly the Tamil diaspora, ignores the widespread and undeniable public view of the Tigers as terrorists. Few governments, public figures, or wealthy donors want to be associated with supporting terrorism. Prabakaran notably addressed how the international community was being misled to believe that Tamils were terrorists. He continued to assert the peace-loving nature of the Tamils, highlighting the oppression, treachery, and hypocrisy of the Sinhalese, while simply ignoring the terrorist acts of the Tigers. The continued rhetorical vision of brave, noble Tamils defending their homeland against Sinhala usurpers may actually serve to drive away the potential donors and supporters it was designed to attract.

Conclusion

This analysis of the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka employed symbolic convergence theory to identify the persuasive rhetoric used by the movement, focusing on two seminal texts, the Vaddukoddai Resolution of 1976

and the 2008 Heroes Day speech given by Velupillai Prabhakaran. The Vaddukoddai Resolution emphasized three main fantasy themes: (a) historical claims to the existence of a Tamil state of “Eelam,” (b) oppression and discrimination of the Tamil people by successive Sinhala governments, and (c) the right to self-determination for the Tamil people; this fantasy theme was also the rhetorical vision of the movement. A fantasy type relating to the acceptance of the Tamil state by the international community was also identified but was not yet fully utilized.

Velupillai Prabhakaran’s rhetoric of 2008 reemphasized these three main fantasy themes employed in 1976. In addition, a new fantasy theme also emerged regarding the valor of the Tamil heroes who sacrificed themselves. The rhetorical vision of 2008 remained the same, albeit linked with two dominant fantasy types: the “united strength of the Tamil people” and the acceptance by the international community of the Tamil struggle for self-determination—a 1976 theme that was significantly expanded upon in 2008. The fantasy chaining began in 1976 and continued throughout the movement, but escalated in its polarizing characterization of the “peace-loving” Tamils and the “genocidal” and villainous Sinhala. Consequently, the process of fantasy chaining was observed in the rhetoric of 2008 and culminating from the 1976 rhetoric which was influenced by events that occurred over a period of 32 years.

The emergence of the three master analogues—righteous, pragmatic and social—were observed in both texts. However, the Vaddukoddai Resolution was more balanced in addressing all three analogues than Prabhakaran’s 2008 speech, which gave heavier emphasis to the righteous analogue, with seemingly less emphasis on the social and pragmatic analogues. The emphasis on the righteous analogue seems to be in direct response to the international labeling of the Tamil Tigers as terrorists, which was countered principally by directing attention to the hypocrisy and oppression of the Sinhala.

The strengths of this study are three-fold: First, we have demonstrated the applicability of SCT across cultural boundaries. As a theory developed by Ernest Bormann, a scholar from the West influenced by Western ideologies, the theory’s demonstrated applicability into an “Eastern” setting is noteworthy and thereby enhances the validity of the theory. Bormann (1980) claimed his theory reflected a universal form of human communication, and this study validates his claim. The second strength of this study is that tapping the universal applicability of SCT enables communication scholars and others to systematically analyze and compare terrorist rhetoric across cultures. The final strength is that we have also incorporated some of the criticisms of SCT to demonstrate how the theory can be used to create a more nuanced understanding of the power of shared rhetorical visions.

The LTTE has surrendered in Sri Lanka—a military surrender, not a redress of grievances. There continue to be rumblings of unrest among the Tamils (see daily postings on Tamilnet.com). The identification of the three initial and later four dominant fantasy themes and the two fantasy types in the rhetoric of the LTTE may prove useful in comprehending the ongoing persuasive rhetorical power of the group. The identified themes may serve a dual purpose. These

themes may offer insight into how to counter or soften the ongoing separatist rhetoric, while at the same time illuminate grievances of the Tamil community that must be addressed. This would especially hold true for the fantasy themes on oppression, the right to self-determination, and the valor of the Tamil heroes who have sacrificed their lives for the Tamil cause.

The principle of mirror image fantasies may be particularly useful in understanding terrorist rhetoric. Opposing groups that form mirror image rhetorical fantasies polarize their conflicts and leave little room for cross-cultural understanding. Rather than promoting a mirror image fantasy, understanding the messages in an opposing group's rhetorical vision may lead to a different approach. Under the present circumstances (and since the surrender), do the Tamils continue to feel oppressed in this multi-ethnic democratic society? Is self-determination still an option for the Tamil people if oppression ceases and their legitimate aspirations are met? Is violent suicide terrorism really the answer to a community's problem? How is Sri Lanka repairing its image as an attacker and oppressor and creating a new image congruent with its Buddhist roots? These would be issues which could be expanded upon in producing counter rhetoric to continue the peace in Sri Lanka.

Further, the two fantasy types remain important to the peace and healing process in Sri Lanka. The LTTE called upon the international community to support the right to Tamil self-determination and reached out to the united strength of the Tamils worldwide. Are Sri Lankan Tamils continuing to lobby abroad in order to gain recognition from the international community on the legitimacy of their aspirations? Is the movement trying to galvanize the extended Tamil community, i.e., the Diaspora and Tamils in South India, for enhanced cooperation in order to achieve their fantasy of a separate Tamil state? It will be worthwhile to analyze these issues further. Consequently the study may provide impetus for further comprehensive research into the persuasive rhetoric employed by similar movements worldwide.

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Pragmatism, Pragma-Dialectics, and Methodology: Toward a More Ethical Notion of Argument Criticism

Matthew Gerber

In this essay, I argue that the pragma-dialectical approach to the analysis of argumentative discourse is limited, or could better serve critics, if it provided a more defined method for the evaluation of arguments based upon goals, purposes, and consequences. Specifically, I argue current conceptions and applications of pragma-dialectical methodology potentially run the risk of amorality in that arguments are deemed ‘good’ as long as they meet the goals of the speaker, regardless of what those goals or purposes might be. In the following segments of this essay, I will more clearly and specifically identify and investigate the aforementioned ethical deficiencies of the pragma-dialectical method, and outline a corrective based on the theories of American pragmatists such as John Dewey, William James, and Richard Rorty, that I believe functions to elevate the *pragma* in this particular approach.

Key Words: Pragma-Dialectics, Pragmatism, Argumentation

Introduction

In the past two decades, significant scholarly attention has centered on the pragma-dialectical approach to argument criticism. Borrowing from previous scholarship in the fields of linguistics, pragmatics, and logic, pragma-dialectics originated in the Netherlands in the early 1980s. Scholars who developed the pragma-dialectical methodology subscribed to a purpose-oriented, problem-solution framework to analyze and criticize argument, rhetoric, and dialectic (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 1992, 2004). Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2000) defined argumentation as a mode of discourse for dispute resolution: “In pragma-dialectics argumentation is viewed as a phenomenon of verbal communication; it is studied as a mode of discourse characterized by the use of language for resolving a dispute” (p. 293). Van Rees (2000) defined pragma-dialectics as both “embedded in existing controversy” and concerned with the “resolution of a difference of opinion” (p. 119). Similarly, Johnson (2000) argued that “informal logic is pragmatic, meaning that it is concerned with the *uses* of argument” (p. 256). While informal logicians may deny the existence of any concrete, formalized rules to evaluate arguments, they advocate for a methodology that judges the impact of arguments by how successful they are at resolving disputes. Thus, the pragma-dialectical approach, at least in theory, provides critics with a methodology to evaluate how well particular arguments fulfill their rhetorical purposes (the *pragma*) and whether or not they comply with the guidelines for fair dialectical processes (the *dialectics*).

Similarly, other scholars who espouse a pragmatic (albeit not a *pragma-dialectic*) approach to argumentation also adhere to a model in which the effectiveness of an argument is measured by its ability to bring about the end of a conflict. In his landmark essay on the fields of argument, Rowland (1982) said

that identifying and analyzing the goal of an argumentative exchange offers critics the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of that argument. By identifying the shared purpose of a group of arguers (who also share specialization in the same field), critics have a foundation to more accurately judge the effectiveness of a given set of arguments. Rowland (1985) posited that a pragmatic theory of argument in which criticism is centered on determining whether an argument is useful in fulfilling its rhetorical goals could function as a corrective to postmodern criticisms of rationality. He claimed that all argument is essentially rational, and its effectiveness can be gauged by its consequences, or whether or not it functions as a useful problem-solving tool (p. 354). Thus, Rowland maintained that “the business of argument is problem-solving” (p. 356).

In this essay, I argue that the pragma-dialectical approach to the analysis of argumentative discourse is limited, or could better serve critics if it provided a more defined method for the evaluation of arguments based upon goals, purposes, and consequences. Specifically, I claim that pragma-dialectical methodology potentially runs the risk of amorality because arguments are deemed ‘good’ as long as they meet the goals of the speaker, regardless of what those goals or purposes might be. In the following segments of this essay, I more clearly and specifically identify and investigate the aforementioned ethical deficiencies of the pragma-dialectical method. In addition, I outline a corrective based on the theories of American pragmatists such as John Dewey, William James, and Richard Rorty that I believe functions to elevate the *pragma* in this particular approach. To be clear, I am not advocating the wholesale abandonment of the pragma-dialectical approach; rather, I argue that a more philosophically robust theoretical foundation (and application) may offer critics a more useful, and indeed more ethical, method for interrogating argument. Finally, I argue that this type of investigation is particularly fitting for an issue dedicated to communication methodology and theory. As Craig (2007) noted, “...many communication scholars have approached pragmatism as an epistemological-methodological stance without noticing that it also contributes a distinct way of theorizing communication” (p. 133).

Problems with Pragma-Dialectics

Within the current framework, the *dialectical* portion of the pragma-dialectical equation functions usefully, borrowing from ‘critical rationalism’, and seeks to apply normative guidelines for what constitutes a reasonable dialogue aimed at problem-solving. The theoretical emphasis on *dialectic* is well-placed and closely resembles Habermasian notions of an ideal speech situation in which critical stasis is reached by all parties in the argumentative process as they moved toward public reconciliation of a dispute (Gilder, 1987, pp. 16-17). While I would argue that these types of ‘ideal’ dialectical exchanges are rare and elusive, the guidelines applied by the pragma-dialectic approach nevertheless help to provide useful benchmarks for criticism. However, the way in which the *pragma* is applied in the current conception of the methodology is problematic, and potentially, it is ethically suspect. I argue that this dilemma primarily stems from a misapplication, or a lack of incorporation of pragmatism. To elucidate a

theoretical corrective to this methodological problem, it is first necessary to specifically identify my points of contention with the Amsterdam school.

First, as Garver (2000) argued, not all discourse is about dispute resolution. Indeed, “discourse often has purposes that have nothing to do with resolving disputes” and “people often speak merely to be heard, to express themselves, and create identity within a community” (p. 307). The way in which the pragma-dialectical method is currently applied offers no means to account for these types of arguments, despite its intended goal of providing a way to analyze and explicate such ‘everyday’ exchanges between people. The adversarial and purpose-driven focus of the methodology obscures consideration of these important communicative utterances because it conflates ‘discourse’ and ‘argument’. One might argue that the purpose in Garver’s example is to create identity within a community. However, identity-creation is distinct from conflict resolution, or problem-solution, and it is also not amenable to ‘field’ analysis. As Rowland (1982) suggests, how would one evaluate these types of arguments based upon field dependence or field invariance? How would a critic even classify these types of arguments that clearly defy easy categorization? One might argue that “identity creation” is a field or argument, but defining the parameters of that very broad field would be an enormous and theoretically impractical task.

The basis for my second set of objections to the pragma-dialectical approach can be traced to the work of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969). They questioned the usefulness of a pragmatic conception of argumentation on two counts. First, they argued that “pragmatic arguments can only be developed in terms of agreement on the value of consequences” (p. 268). How do people who already possess a different opinion on the substance of an issue come to agreement upon the potential values associated with the consequences of action or inaction? The answer is that they would not come to such an agreement, were the exchange not taking place in an ideal dialectical situation. It is not particularly pragmatic, even in its most ‘practical’ sense, to assume that humans involved in a dispute with a predetermined difference of opinion would be able to ever be able to approach such a rational place of argumentative ‘stasis’ (Hinck and Rist, 1983). The use of this methodology would become even more limited if the argumentative dilemma were highly ideological, such as in contemporary debates over abortion policy. Second, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) argued that multiple consequences may stem from a single event, or that unpredictable, nascent, and perhaps invisible consequences may arise from an argument. Critics operating within the current application of pragma-dialectical methodologies would be hard-pressed to account for an argument that was deemed ‘effective’ because it fulfilled the desired purpose, but also created unintended or dangerous consequences.

A third line of exposition, also levied first by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), but distinct from the aforementioned criticisms, is that the evaluation of argument(s) from a pragmatic, or purely consequentialist standpoint, might preclude a moral or ethical evaluation that might be more appropriate from a methodological standpoint. Indeed, Frank (2004) argued that pragma-dialectics originated “with a misreading of the New Rhetoric paradigm to launch

a system of argument with quite different goals than those set forth by Perelman” (p. 267-8). Put simply, the pragma-dialectical approach considers itself to be a universal method that offers a way to analyze all arguments; this is not the case because it rests upon the problematic “presupposition of speech validity claims: that what the speaker says is true, sincere, and normatively appropriate” (Curato, 2008, p. 9). The pragma-dialectic method, as currently conceived, is limited at best because it provides critics with no way to reject or even interrogate arguments made in the service of less-than-noble goals or purposes.

A fourth objection concerns the overwhelmingly rationalist assumptions behind the pragma-dialectical method. In *Manifest Rationality*, Johnson (2000) proclaimed that “argumentation is characterized by manifest rationality” and that argument is “patently and openly rational” (p. 163). I argue that it is both dangerous and fallacious to reduce all human argumentation into the realm of the rational. All discourse and argumentation is not rational, or even necessarily purpose-driven. As Williams (1993) claimed, “the human has become literally disembodied in the discourses of modernism, abstracted into the logics of logic” (p. 86). Indeed, such an overbearing focus on rationalism dooms the pragma-dialectic methodology to the realm of the useless for the analysis of some categories of rhetoric. For example, rhetorical arguments often appear in the form of aesthetics such as music, art, or other visual imagery. The arguments made in these venues are not dialectical in nature; they are not part of an explicit argumentative exchange; they do not fit into the definition of an “ideal speech situation”; and they are not amenable to analysis based on fallacies. While the pragma-dialectic method does not necessarily purport to explain all types of arguments, I do believe that its applicability to the analysis of rhetorical arguments has been overstated.

Finally, a fifth objection to the pragma-dialectical approach is that its notion of fallacies is too limited to be a useful tool for critics. If fallacies are simply defined as violations of the rules, or aberrations in the unattainable world of the ideal speech situation, is there room for any notion of the rhetorical enthymeme? For example, in a pragma-dialectic framework, an enthymematic argument (with a missing premise), would be viewed as a fallacy rather than as an argument in which the audience was intended to supply the missing warrants. Concurrently, within the current applications of the pragma-dialectical framework, any justification or rhetorical strategy is deemed legitimate so long as it fulfills its purpose without violating the rules. As noted by Tindale (1999), “the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation effectively restricts fallacies to the violation of rules for conducting a critical discussion” (p. 49). Herein lies the core of my argument; the pragma-dialectical approach is too heavily weighted toward the *dialectical*. A deeper investigation of the *pragma* side of the formula is warranted. In fact, *failure* to re-investigate (and reinvigorate) this method may call into question its overall usefulness, particularly with regards to the pragma-dialectical approach to fallacies. The question remains, how can argument critics evaluate an argument based solely on its purpose or outcome? If the initial purpose or goal is morally and/or ethically bankrupt, can critics still determine that the arguments put forth to justify those goals were ‘good’? I argue that a careful incorporation

of the ideas of the American pragmatists can help to correct these methodological deficiencies while leaving the *dialectical* side of pragma-dialectics intact.

Elevating the PRAGMA in the Pragma-Dialectical Method

When William James argued that pragmatism was “a method only,” he was also implying that pragmatism was concerned with the means and methods by which consequences, or argumentative outcomes, were brought about (1991, p. 23). One can easily extrapolate from James’ position and argue that if the purpose of a rhetorical or dialectical exchange is morally wrong, then at least some of the arguments put forth will also be morally wrong (even if formally or informally ‘valid’ or effective). Rowland (1985) thus misjudged James as being unconcerned with the means by which certain rhetorical goals are achieved. James was not purely a consequentialist, nor was he wholly concerned with political or philosophical expediency, as some have suggested. James was not only concerned with outcomes, but also by the methods by which outcomes are produced.

On the other hand, contemporary pragmatic and pragma-dialectical approaches veer dangerously close to an amoral ethical relativism. Rowland, while arguing in the tradition and spirit of Dewey that “pragmatic theory involves the use of intelligence to liberate and liberalize action” (1985, p. 360), centered his notion of argument evaluation on the concept of purpose, which seems to privilege an answering of the ‘why’ question to the exclusion of the more important questions of ‘how’, and ‘to what ultimate end’. Dewey and James both argued that pragmatism possesses emancipatory potential. However, contemporary explanations of pragmatic and pragma-dialectic approaches allow for the advocacy of undemocratic goals, so long as that is the stated or implied purpose of the speaker. In this framework, moral and ethical decision-making practices have taken a back seat to the age-old goal of political expediency. Additionally, the pragma-dialectic approach seeks to put an end to conflict, to resolve differences of opinion, to adjourn deliberation, and to create univocality. Herein lies precisely what Frank (2004) argued was fundamentally *un*-pragmatic about the pragma-dialectic movement--it sought to circumscribe rhetorical exchange, rather than to expand it: “pragma-dialectics, which is truly a crude form of conflict resolution, seeks to end difference of opinion through argument” (p. 279). Pragma-dialectics, according to Frank (2004), privileged clarity and precision over interpretation in the investigation of the impact of argument: “Pragma-dialectics is intolerant to interpretation, and certainly to varied interpretation, and seeks clarity in the face of a reality and experience that is irreducibly ambiguous, tragic, or in which there are multiple or incompatible truths” (p. 279).

Rowland’s dismissal of Rorty’s “interpretive pragmatism” was also premature. While Rorty denied any foundational conception of truth, he also attempted to de-link notions of “good” from truth. Rorty was not an ethical relativist; instead, he simply argued that some truths were better than others. For Rorty, it was simply good to believe in some ideas over other competing ideas. Rorty’s pragmatism contained a moral element that was lost in Rowland’s re-telling. Indeed, “the pragmatist disengagement of rules for action from an *a priori*, ra-

tionalist-based truth claim renders *ethical* rather than *epistemological* questions central” (Horne, 2001, p. 150). Rorty espoused that some truths were more useful than others, but not necessarily that those truths spoke to “the nature of things” (1991, p. 24). When Rowland argued that there was a “performative contradiction” at the heart of postmodernism, he mistakenly assumed that Rorty and others used rational argument to support their own metaphysics. To the contrary, Rorty argued that:

The pragmatist does not have a theory of truth, much less a relativistic one. As a partisan of solidarity, his account of the value of cooperative human inquiry has only an ethical base, not an epistemological or metaphysical one. Not having *any* epistemology, *a fortiori*, he does not have a relativistic one. (1991, p. 24)

The charge of ethical relativism is one usually reserved for use against pragmatists by modernist or realist critics. In this case, it is the pragmatists (both Rowland and the Amsterdam School) who are guilty of ethical relativism. Both Rorty and Dewey embraced a form of ethnocentrism that viewed truth as contingent, but recognized that some truths are more useful, more enduring, than others. When Rowland appropriated Dewey on this subject, arguing that pragmatism is emancipatory, he sealed the contradiction in his own argument. How can arguments that support a purpose that runs counter to the promotion of freedom and liberation ever be pragmatic? Those arguments may be effective or practical or expedient in achieving that purpose, but certainly not *pragmatic* in the sense that I mean here.

As critics, we should be skeptical regarding arguments put forth in the service of nefarious, undemocratic, or dangerous purposes. Moreover, from a methodological perspective, approaches that short-circuit public deliberation by prematurely resolving differences of opinion run the risk of deconstructing the communicative bridge that links metaphysics and human action (Dewey, 1916, p. 3-4). The scholarship of Kenneth Burke is also instructive here. While pragmatism is certainly oriented toward the measuring of consequences for Burke, he was also concerned with the inclusion of a consideration of the motivation of the speaker. For Burke, “the pragmatist featuring of agency seems well-equipped to retain a personal ingredient in its circumference of motives” (1945, p. 283). Burke’s theoretical privileging of the exploration of the links between purpose and action was necessary to uncover the motivations and the ideologies that inform the ways in which human agents go about formulating and enacting decisions. Incorporation of Burke’s ideas into the application of pragmatic approaches to argument may begin to account for the types of dangerous public rhetoric I am concerned with in this essay.

The goal of this essay is truly pragmatic in nature. It is aimed at providing critics with a way to analyze and investigate argumentation in terms of both its rhetorical and dialectical function. It is also pragmatic, in the American philosophical sense, in that it seeks to yield a means by which scholars can more accurately identify and criticize the types of undemocratic rhetoric that seems to

pervade the contemporary socio-political-linguistic milieu. I have argued here that the dialectical side of pragma-dialectics is useful and meaningful as it has been applied in contemporary argument criticisms. Pragma-dialectic theory is aimed at producing a set of normative guidelines that govern critical discussions between people who are trying to reach a consensus. What has remained unexplained thus far is the function of the connection between the pragmatic and the dialectical. In this framework, the *pragma* provides critics with a better way to investigate the rhetorical implications of argumentation. In the pragma-dialectical framework as currently conceived and applied, it is easy to point to fallacies in which a participant violates one of the normative rules of dialectic, but it is less clear how critics should evaluate the rhetorical or persuasive elements of an argument. Certainly, evaluation based upon purpose, goals, or perceived consequences is both incomplete and potentially dangerous. Perhaps Wenzel (1993) characterized it best when he indicated that “argumentation produces habits of life and living, not formations of words...the art in rhetoric consists in accomplishing persuasion in the best interest of a polity, not in discovering the means of persuasion, as Aristotle claimed” (p. 3). While the pragmatic tradition in communication studies is certainly concerned with discovering the means (*inventio*) by which rhetorical goals are accomplished, it must be more willing to castigate and reject arguments which cannot have positive ramifications for civil society. For example, critics who analyze the rhetoric of those engaged in racist “hate speech” must have an ideological, moral component as part of their methodology in order to identify and investigate the arguments advanced in support of the goals of those rhetors. In the current pragma-dialectical framework, such rhetoric might be criticized on *dialectical* grounds, but the methodological spotlight on purpose and goal-fulfillment leaves critics with slight means to analyze the quality and/or validity of the arguments themselves.

Conclusions

In this essay, I have outlined a corrective to the pragma-dialectical method of evaluating argumentation. I have suggested, at least implicitly, some ways in which some of the tenets of American pragmatist philosophy might be incorporated *post hoc* into the discussion surrounding the most useful ways to engage in argument criticism. To be clear, I have at least suggested some theoretical starting points that might move critics toward potential solutions to the criticisms laid out at the beginning of the essay. Since not all arguments are aimed at dispute resolution, the suggested re-envisioning outlined here can provide scholars with a way to explore arguments based on other goals, such as self-expression or identity creation. Pragmatists believe that some purposes are better or more useful than others, but to exclude arguments would be to engage in incomplete analysis. Similarly, a re-imagining of the pragma-dialectical in the ways I have suggested would also, at least partially, resolve Perelman’s objection to pragmatic argument based upon its presupposed exclusion of moral or ethical determinants. Indeed, a more philosophically informed pragmatic method is the very moral framework that Perelman desired. The corrective I have outlined here also helps to avoid the epistemological pitfalls of an overly rationalist conception of

argumentation. A more pragmatic notion of purpose would not immediately reject arguments or stated goals that were viewed as irrational, but instead would seek to determine if those goals were useful and positive in terms of their implications for civil society. An enriched notion of pragma-dialectics would also offer scholars a more applicable way to analyze non-traditional arguments such as those made in music, film, and visual images.

Finally, a more informed notion of the *pragma* would help to clear up the theoretical confusion surrounding the identification and analysis of fallacies. The pragma-dialectical approach is clear regarding fallacies of argument that occur in the dialectical realm, but it provides critics with limited guidance to evaluate rhetorical fallacies except for reverting back to the fulfillment of purpose. Under the current methodological framework, rhetorical strategies that were coercive in nature would be deemed illegitimate only if: a) they actually failed to result in coercion, or b) they were evaluated in the dialectical frame. While I am not putting forth an entirely new definition of rhetorical fallacy, I am advocating for the rejection of methods that are not ultimately pragmatic or democratic in the philosophical sense. The “repair and refurbishment” (first noted by Frank, 2004) that I have suggested, potentially offers critics an enriched moral and ethical calculus for determining the value (and validity) of rhetorical argumentation. As rhetorical critics we should certainly be concerned with the structures and forms of rhetoric, but not to the exclusion of nuanced investigation of the ethical dimensions of rhetoric. Method should be emancipatory, and there is little value in attempting to *remove* value from our criticism. On the contrary, value-based ethical concerns regarding the uses of argument and the identification and rejection of undemocratic arguments (whether formally valid or effective), should pervade pragmatic and pragma-dialectic methodologies.

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Through the Linguistic Looking Glass: An Examination of a Newspaper as Negotiator of Hybrid Cultural and Linguistic Spaces

Anthony Spencer

Abstract

I contend English-language media outlets could and should be viewed as minority-language media outlets as they are cultural negotiators for tourists, sojourners and other transnational migrants. To better understand the cultural and linguistic forces these English-language media outlets exert upon the host cultures and nations in which they exist, I performed three months of ethnographic observations at a newspaper in Costa Rica and conducted in-depth interviews with staffers. I particularly focus on the hybrid identities of the staffers as they in turn instruct their readers how to navigate this hybrid community. I identify and explain the themes, which emerged in this process of cultural negotiation. This study makes it possible to view media outlets as negotiators of hybrid linguistic and cultural spaces.

Introduction

This essay addresses the role played by an English-language newspaper as American expatriates navigate the framework of another culture, specifically a Spanish-speaking society. I examine the functions of the English-language newspaper *The Tico Times* in assisting English-speaking residents to integrate into Costa Rican society. The newspaper has been the most important “local” news source for this community of U.S. expatriates for fifty years, and thus it has been the primary method for English speakers to navigate their lives in their adopted country. This is evidenced in real estate transactions, hiring locals for expatriate businesses, and even making love connections with the native population. The advertisements, classifieds and articles published in *The Tico Times* illustrate these themes of intercultural negotiations; however, in this essay I mainly explore the ways in which journalists at the newspaper negotiate identity for themselves as well as their readers in a hybrid society.

In this research I specifically focus on how the newspaper’s staff members perceive their role as an intermediary in the process of cultural negotiation. The staffers literally explain to North American English-speakers how to navigate Costa Rican (*Tico*) culture. This important role assumed by bilingual staff members also illustrates, in varying degrees, the concept of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) in their own lives. The reporters and editorial staff inhabit this hybrid American-Costa Rican world just as their readers do.

First, I briefly explain the immigration of English-speaking Americans to Costa Rica. Next, I place into context the significance of the newspaper *The Tico Times* and how it enacts the role of cultural broker, and I explain the theoretical lens of hybridity employed in this study. Then I explain the method of

data collection and describe the participants. Finally, I detail the findings as they relate to hybridity and explore the implications for these findings.

Americans in Costa Rica

While many exotic locales have lured foreign tourists for decades, Costa Rica is unique because a large number of these tourists become enamored with the country and its people and do not want to leave. They often buy property either as an investment or as a home to raise their children and grandchildren. Essentially, these sojourners hope that by changing their latitude of existence they will inherently change their attitudes about life. These tourists cum settlers find a way of life that seems very pleasing to them (Van Rheenen, 2004). Many of these visitors settle in niche communities in Costa Rica's heavily populated Central Valley while many others live along the Pacific coast (Calderón-Steck & Bonilla-Carrión, 2008). In fact, foreigners own eighty percent of all coastal property in Costa Rica (Miranda & Penland, 2004).

While the number of North Americans (and to a lesser extent Europeans) continues to increase, Costa Rica remains a small country in terms of population at just over four million. One report estimates there are approximately 70,000 U.S. citizens and Canadians residing in the country (Kimitch, 2006), while another (Wallerstein, 2006) places the number at nearly 80,000. The actual number is unclear because many of these English-speaking residents enter as tourists and then renew their 90-day tourist visa by spending 72 hours outside of the country. Other U.S. citizens obtain legal residency in Costa Rica through business investments, retirement, or marriage. Each type of residency permit carries with it certain privileges in the country as well as specific obligations regarding how much one must spend to keep the residency status current, or how much money and/or income is required to obtain the status (Van Rheenen, 2004). Thus, many people simply opt to live in the country as perpetual tourists.

The levels of Spanish-language ability and cultural integration for these immigrants vary as much as their legal status. Some members of this community speak Spanish fluently and have successfully integrated into the local culture. But many others speak little Spanish and live in high-end English-speaking enclaves. Those who have not integrated have greater need of assistance to help them broker local customs and deal with linguistic tasks, and they may turn to a trusted friend, neighbor or local business associate. However, often Americans in Costa Rica rely on the longstanding, local English-language newspaper *The Tico Times* to serve as an intermediary in brokering these interactions. This intercultural exchange takes place in cultural and linguistic space that is not uniquely North American nor is it solely Costa Rican. These interactions have linguistic and cultural elements of both groups as they create a hybrid space of existence in which *Gringos* (North Americans) and to a lesser extent *Ticos* (Costa Ricans) negotiate lifestyle based upon levels of language fluency and cultural integration.

The Tico Times

The Tico Times was founded by American journalist Elizabeth Dyer in 1956 to help North American students acquire journalistic skills while living in Costa Rica, and it began at a local English-language high school. According to the current publisher and Dyer's daughter, the choice of location was between Costa Rica and Guatemala, and Costa Rica was selected because it had a more stable government. The Dyer family had moved to Costa Rica because Mr Dyer had become the director of public relations in Central America for the United Fruit Company. In 1960, Mr. Dyer was transferred to UFC's operation in Chile, and the newspaper was put on hiatus. Tired of working for a multinational company, the family returned to Costa Rica and re-established the newspaper in 1972 (D. Dyer, personal communication, October 30, 2006). The paper evolved over the years as its readership expanded and diversified. It is important to emphasize that, although the newspaper now is perceived by most Costa Ricans to aid American expatriates in navigating intercultural interactions and capital acquisitions, the media outlet actually began as an educational forum. Today, as an English-language newspaper, *The Tico Times* predominately, but not exclusively, serves the American community residing in Costa Rica. Cultural negotiations between Americans and Costa Rican elites take place primarily in English given the generally low level of Spanish proficiency amongst expatriate communities.

Traditionally, newspapers similar to *The Tico Times* serve marginalized ethnic-minority communities. However, in contrast *The Tico Times* serves a minority population that has access to resources and power. For the mostly white, English-speaking, economically-privileged immigrants who need assistance navigating their newfound hybrid space (Spencer, 2011), *The Tico Times* performs the role of cultural broker, and it is the largest English-language newspaper in Central America (Howard, 2005-6).

Cultural Negotiation

To more clearly explore this concept of cultural negotiation I borrow upon three seemingly disparate yet parallel forms of scholarship inquiry: anthropology, traditional intercultural communication scholarship and mass media research.

Anthropological Perspective

Crapanzo (1986) refers to the Greek God Hermes when discussing the importance of what he terms "cultural translators," people in a similar position to that of Hermes, who passed along messages from the gods to the mortals and interpreted those messages by placing them into a context that mortals could understand. In much the same way as Hermes gathered information and framed it for mortals, many anthropologists surmise that immigrants also need their own cultural translators. Fadiman (1997) also describes this process as being essential in navigating a new system of cultural and linguistic norms. She notes the importance of having what she terms a "cultural broker" to help negotiate interactions with a community. Whether researchers name this position cultural translator or cultural broker the purpose remains the same.

Intercultural Communication Perspective

Several intercultural communication theorists also have explored the issue of immigrants utilizing a cultural broker to integrate into a new culture. However, the terminology used to describe this process varies by researcher. Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998) explore the need for foreigners to employ an intermediary to assist their negotiations in Chinese linguistic and cultural norms. Martin and Nakayama (2004) borrow the term cultural broker from social psychologist Peter Adler when referring to a person who assists another person's cross-cultural interactions. I use the term cultural broker in this research project to keep the integrity of a give-and-take relationship which brokerage implies.

It is neither possible nor feasible for every person to have his or her own personal cultural broker. For many English-speaking foreigners in Costa Rica *The Tico Times* performs the role of cultural broker. Reporters make observations of important events and interview key economic, political, and cultural players in Costa Rica.

Mass Media Perspective

In the case of *The Tico Times* and its relationship to the Costa Rican English-speaking immigrant community, print media have become the appropriate catalyst of cultural and linguistic consciousness, and thus I have chosen to examine how one outlet assists readers in the negotiation of their hybrid identity. The relationship between mass media outlets and cultural reproduction is as murky and interesting as the process of understanding and explaining hybrid cultural identities. Ethnic-minority media enable immigrants to retain their own native language and culture as much as they facilitate integration into the new host culture (Jeffres, 2000). Through an autobiographical approach to understanding the complex emotions media can evoke, Keshishian (2000) reminds us that the relationship between cultural integration and media usage can be difficult to understand and interpret.

Despite the growth of ethnographic research concerning media audiences (Murphy & Kraidy, 2003), studies of media production are not as common. It is especially difficult to find ethnographies which relate journalistic practices to issues of language and culture. One exception is Silcock (2002) who studied journalism practices in a television newsroom in Germany. He compared the alignment and importance of stories as well as the behind-the-scenes debates surrounding the stories between the English and German newsrooms at the Deutsche-Welle television network. Silcock particularly focused on the language spoken and its relationship with mythmaking in story production and dissemination.

Hybridity

The women and men who work in a particular media outlet very often inhabit the same cultural and linguistic spaces as the people who consume their product. That is why I have chosen to examine the way English-speaking journalists examine and re-examine their hybrid linguistic and cultural spaces as

they make sense of important and practical issues for their readers. I believe hybridity to be the most appropriate theoretical construct through which to illustrate the ways an American-style newspaper in Costa Rica facilitates intercultural negotiations for its readers. Hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) as a cultural theory allows scholars to recognize and interrogate the unique spaces which form when linguistic and cultural groups come together. In this analysis I attempt to detect and explore the processes of language usage and ability, as well as cultural negotiation as enacted by a newspaper staff for its readers.

Hybridity as a cultural theory of communication embraces the emotions and contestations within a framework of cultural studies and linguistics. According to Bhabha (1994), the margins of culture that touch and conflict and often overlap are where scholars are likely to find the richest examples of hybrid lives, languages, and commonalities. Other scholars (Dean & Leibsohn, 2003; Kraidy, 1999, 2005; Werbner, 1997) have also examined the importance of the messy and complicated fissures which emerge from the hybrid mixings of art, language, and culture in the social fabric of our lives.

I utilize the cultural theory of hybridity to better explicate and interrogate these fissures which emerge in all types of interactions in a bicultural lifestyle. While investigating the acculturation process of Korean immigrants in the United States, Moon and Park (2007) found that ethnic minority media can produce “culturally hybrid messages” (p. 338). These media messages might share commonalities with those produced in the homeland, in this case Korea, but would also be unique to the situation of the Koreans living abroad. *The Tico Times* also reproduces a hybrid type of news for Americans living in Costa Rica. The format and language of the news might be familiar to these high-end English-speaking immigrants, but the topics covered by the newspaper come from the intercultural and linguistic scenarios the readers encounter.

I urge journalists as well as scholars to explore the hybrid spaces these news producers inhabit as they assist their audiences who negotiate a hybrid cultural space. The reporters and editors who act as gatekeepers for the masses also live within the same hybrid world. These media professionals are often better trained to navigate a bicultural world, which is why they are able to assist their readers. By virtue of this research project, I have asked the editorial and reporting staff of *The Tico Times* to literally view themselves and their hybrid lives through a cultural and linguistic looking glass to explain they way(s) in which they act as brokers for the tens of thousands of English speakers in Costa Rica. This brings about the following research question:

How do the staff members of a newspaper enact the role of a linguistic and/or cultural broker for English speakers in Costa Rica?

Method

The merits of qualitative methodologies are particularly well suited for exploring social phenomenon in great detail and depth. Various scholars have elaborated upon the value and advocated for scholars to employ these methods in a variety of contexts (Briggs, 1986; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Spradley & McCurdy, 1988). The most effective method to answer the aforementioned re-

search question is through in-depth interviews of the staff members and observation as they collect and disseminate information to their readers. I also incorporate supplemental textual data from the newspaper. Harcup (2005) provided important nuances to the traditional binary oppositions of mainstream and alternative media as he asked the media practitioners about their roles in various types of outlets. *The Tico Times* itself falls along the type of media continuum Harcup explored between traditional and alternative outlets.

To better understand how the newspaper enacts the role of cultural broker for its readers I conducted ethnographic observations from September to November 2006 at the *The Tico Times* in San José, Costa Rica. In December of 2005 I visited the newspaper and requested permission from the management to observe and conduct interviews with the staff members. The publisher was keen to the idea as were the staff members. I began the observations in September 2006 and throughout the next three months I became more interactive with the staff--attending editorial meetings, accompanying reporters to stories, and examining all aspects of the various daily activities at the newspaper. As I gained the trust of those I was observing I began to ask questions. I conducted twenty in-depth interviews with staff members from the editorial staff (almost exclusively native English speakers and the business staff (exclusively native Spanish speaking Costa Ricans). The English speakers chose to conduct their interviews in English while all but two of the Spanish speakers chose Spanish.

I asked the participants to provide basic demographic information such as age, gender, length of stay in Costa Rica (applicable to the non-Costa Ricans), number of years employed by the newspaper, residency status in the country, and English/Spanish language abilities. The primary in-depth questions relating to the project included asking about the primary role of *The Tico Times*, the relationship between *Gringos* and *Ticos* in Costa Rica, and the integration of English speakers into Costa Rican culture. All of the participants had worked for the newspaper for at least one year at the time of our interview. All the employees who participated in this project displayed a genuine interest in the research as it pertained to their profession. It is also important to mention here that every employee in all departments of the newspaper is at least functionally bilingual.

In this paper I focus primarily on the data from those interviews and observations. The goal of my study is to understand how *The Tico Times* operates as a cultural broker between American expatriates and their new Costa Rican homeland. I specifically explore how the bicultural and bilingual staff members perceive their role in this process of cultural negotiation for their readers.

Data Analysis

I investigated these interview transcripts and ethnographic observational data by conducting a systematic analysis of the major themes which emerged from my corpus of data. I have supplemented the notes from ethnographic observations and interviews with supplementary data from *The Tico Times*.

I utilize discourse analysis to inform the analysis of finding in this study. European linguistic and cultural scholars led by Fairclough (1992) build on thematic construction that links thematic analysis to critical analysis of language

and discourse, particularly as discourse relates to hegemonic structures. I carefully and systematically examined the themes and topics which emerged. It is through constructions such as symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) that we have a better understanding of how to combine these themes and construct a framework to better connect these key themes to theory. Blommaert (2005) invites scholars to explore the relationship between language and the power systems which connect them to their social environments. The communicative events which envelop the usage of linguistic and cultural contestation are often found in the messiness of the above mentioned hybrid spaces (Bhabha, 1994). Thus, as I examined the themes I attempted to relate them to the structures in which they emerged.

Findings

The newspaper employees are bilingual, articulate, and educated individuals. The *Ticos* and *Gringos* who worked for the newspaper recognized that they inhabited a hybrid space of their own. It is their profession to navigate a bilingual and bicultural space for the English-language readers and the Spanish-speaking general populace. However, employees often told me that, because they are so enmeshed in this hybrid world, this research project evoked moments of personal awareness causing them to reflect on their job more deeply, as well as the important role of cultural brokering they performed.

As I examined the data I noticed two themes emerged consistently throughout the interview and ethnographic findings. First, the reflexive nature of a hybrid identity emerged in this process with the bilingual newspaper staffers and as they often used their own experiences in Costa Rica to act as broker for their readers in the host culture. The second major theme which came out of the data set was the way in which the newspaper literally instructed people to better negotiate and understand the government bureaucracy in which they lived.

Brokerage

English-speaking residents constantly negotiate their own cultural terrain in Costa Rica. As illustrated above, newspaper staffers use their own experiences to help put the *Tico* in *The Tico Times* and essentially make it more “Costa Rican.” In order to better understand the staffers’ roles regarding the facilitation of cultural negotiations, it is imperative to ascertain their perceptions of those roles. The publisher, Dery Dyer, presented her viewpoint on the function the newspaper has in Costa Rica’s mediascape. I pointedly asked her what she perceived to be the role of the newspaper:

Dery: To present Costa Rican news and developments and things so that anyone can understand them. To present them in such a way that if you live in Podunk, Iowa and have never been to Costa Rica, you will get a clear picture of Costa Rica by reading *The Tico Times*.

Not only does the newspaper present a vision of Costa Rica to the international reader, it creates a strong visual presence in the country as well. Reporters cover

every major news event and press conference alongside their counterparts who work for the Spanish-language media outlets.

Hybrid Identity

Each member of the staff inhabited a distinct yet related space along this hybrid fluid continuum of *Gringo* to Tico identity. With two exceptions, all the editorial staffers were native English speakers from the United States or Canada. Their own lived experiences varied greatly as they had been in Costa Rica from one to twenty-seven years.

Auriana, who was the editor of *The Tico Times* when I conducted this research, had lived in Costa Rica since she was eight years old, only leaving to return to the United States to attend college. Auriana was in a unique cultural position. She was a native English speaker whose entire primary and secondary education was in regular Spanish-language schools in Costa Rica. Perhaps, she understood better than most other Americans in Costa Rica what it means to inhabit an in-between space both culturally and linguistically. Auriana facetiously referred to this as “horrible” or falling between the cracks of identity:

Auriana: I live in that horrible area where I’m not quite *Gringa* because I have too much of a Costa Rican background, and I’m not quite *Tica* because I’m obviously *Gringa*. Any *Tica* will tell you that I’m *Gringa*. So, I have very few friends in the same situation. We consider ourselves this hybrid, this rare hybrid that not many people can relate to.

This phenomenon Auriana described is what Pieterse (1994) refers to as the “messiness” of hybridity. These qualities which do not fit neatly into set boundary conditions and axioms very often provide the most important aspects of cultural exchange and negotiation. As more Americans continue to move to Costa Rica the variations of hybridity increase and become more nuanced. Auriana acknowledges the difficulties she faced in integrating into Costa Rican culture are even more overwhelming for adults who move to the country and attempt to functionally integrate. However, having lived in the country for so long, the other staff members often used Auriana as a sounding board for questions about authenticity of language and placing stories into context for readers.

A less extreme example of a hybrid identity in the newsroom emerged from conversations with a reporter named Leland. He came to Costa Rica as an adult and had only lived in the country for two years at the time of our interview. Leland and the other reporters brought varying levels of hybrid experiences to their newsgathering.

Leland: I work in intercultural communication. It is something that I thought about since I was young and something that I wanted to be in. Part of what I do is try and understand what’s going on in Costa Rica and translate it not only in terms of language but ideas to Americans or *Gringos* or English speakers who are here in Costa Rica. So my job is just that, to translate, and like I said not just in terms of language, what is going on in this

country, find things, differences and explain them and better the understanding of English of this Spanish speaking, different culture.

Leland's usage of the term "intercultural communication" denotes a high level of reflexivity on his part as he explains and interprets his duties as a reporter for a minority language media news outlet. He essentially explains how he and the other staffers enact the role of cultural broker for the readers. In the transcript below he continues to explore this concept and explain how he is in a unique position to enact that role.

Researcher: Do you think it's important that you come from this community of *Gringos* so you go through the same experiences that these *Gringos* do? Does that make you a better reporter?

Leland: Yeah, I think so.

Researcher: So, you understand what the readers are thinking maybe?

Leland: Definitely. I mean I have been in Costa Rica two years. Before that I was in Mexico six months, in Guatemala then in Costa Rica twice before that. I mean I've gone through a lot of cultural changes, culture shock, adjusting to a new culture. So being fluent I am able to access things that people who are not culturally fluent or Spanish fluent can't access and yeah I can understand. I can be like I remember when I was on the other side of this fence looking at this culture and not being able to understand and to get past that façade and into the meaning behind things and now because I am here and have access to that meaning I can share it with these people. And so yeah I think it makes me a better reporter.

In this transcript Leland expresses the frustration felt when an expatriate is "on the other side of the fence." He acknowledges the difficulties involved "to get past that façade and find meaning." He empathizes with the difficulties newcomers encounter upon arriving in a new culture and negotiating a new language. Leland and other reporters clearly articulated their positions as cultural brokers for English-speaking expatriates in Costa Rica. In the data presented above, Leland demonstrates acute awareness of his ability to broker the system on his own because he understands the language and culture.

While Leland and the other reporters have not lived in Costa Rica as long as the editor Auriana has, she readily admits that the varying perspectives of the staff members create a product which appeals to the needs of the expatriate population in the country. Just as the editorial staff has varied backgrounds and individual experiences in the country, so do the newspaper's readers. Thus, we see how the above-mentioned fluid hybrid identities emerge along a continuum from *Gringo* to *Tico* (varying levels of integration into Costa Rican society).

Government System

One of the primary frustrations I noticed with foreign residents, especially non-native Spanish speakers in Costa Rica, is how difficult it is to deal with a new system of bureaucratic hurdles. Navigating a new government's system can be just as challenging as learning to navigate a new language. Auriana was raised in the Costa Rican system, but with a *Gringa* perspective on life. She believes one of the primary functions of the paper for the English-speaking readers is to assist in making governmental red tape easier to cut.

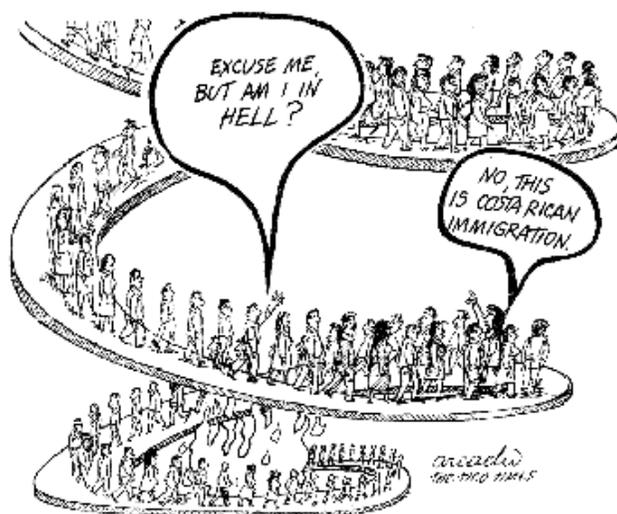
Auriana: Yeah. I mean I think for your average U.S. citizen coming to Costa Rica it would be extremely frustrating and maddening and more than that just nonsensical. Whereas, I think that's the advantage I have is coming from years in Costa Rica I still think it shouldn't be that way but I can understand why it is. So I have that understanding of the *mañana* culture or whatever people call it. I understand therefore it is easier for me to deal with than someone who is expecting things to be different and wants them to be different and can't handle it.

Even though Auriana understands this system better than most foreigners who live in Costa Rica she acknowledged that it is difficult for her to completely remove the base layer of "*Gringo* time" as she navigates a culture which is on "*Tico* time." These key linguistic terms and phrases evidence the ways in which a critical discourse of language (Blommaert, 2005) enhance the thematic analysis employed in this study. Understanding these key linguistic nuances provide what Auriana termed her advantages of speaking like a *Tica*, but having all the physical characteristics of a *Gringa*.

Auriana: When I demand my rights and I go to the municipal government where I live and I just demand that whatever and they are like oh that crazy *gringa* and I'm like that's fine they can think that because of that crazy *Gringa* it's ok with them that I am sitting there ranting and raving about how I have to pay for garbage pickup when they are not picking up the garbage in front of my house.

Auriana's personal frustrations are very interesting but far from unique with *The Tico Times* staff. A reporter Katherine wrote an article dealing with immigration officials as she attempted to renew her own *cédula*, identity card, which provides proof of her status to legally work, subscribe to utility services, and entitle her to stay in the country for more than three months at a time. Katherine recounts her time of standing in line with U.S. citizens, Europeans, and many Nicaraguans and Colombians. The topics of conversation included: the best telephone calling cards, cultural and linguistic differences between home and host countries, as well as the difficulties of trying to obtain and/or renew the *cédula*. The editorial cartoon (figure 1) accompanied by Katherine's article describing the experiences she and her fellow "immigrants" observed in line while waiting for their documents to be processed.

Figure 1



During one particular newsroom conversation I listened to Katherine and Auriana discuss the immigration situation, which required a one-month wait to obtain an appointment to stand in the aforementioned line. Other reporters perked up from their desks and chimed in with their own adjectives as well. The three words the staffers used to describe this process were “mind-boggling,” “ludicrous,” and “hell.” These terms influenced the tone of the story as Katherine had provided a first-hand account for readers. The terms even influenced the staffers to include the figure above to graphically illustrate these concepts in the newspaper. This further demonstrates how the staffers’ hybrid lives provide a direct cultural negotiation for the readers who also inhabit this hybrid space to varying degrees.

The Tico Times’s sales manager Yvonne is a well-educated bilingual woman in her early 30s. As a native Costa Rican Yvonne has a different but just as valuable perspective in understanding how the newspapers instructs *Gringos* to live within the framework of a Spanish-speaking society and governmental processes. She acknowledges readers place importance on the issues they read in the newspaper:

Yvonne: *The Tico Times* gives the opportunity to foreigners who don’t speak Spanish to read news in English, and not just that but it covers many different points of view, like papers in the States maybe. It is very like down to earth. I think that is why most of the people living here like *The Tico Times*. It is in English but it is very different.

Researcher: Would you say it is almost a cultural guide to Costa Rica for people who don't speak Spanish?

Yvonne: Yes I would say they would get involved with the country by reading *The Tico Times* because we cover different news other people don't cover.

Yvonne succinctly comments that the newspaper covers stories in a particular manner unique to the newspaper's readership in a way that a Spanish-language publication would obviously not report for its readership. This is what makes a minority and/or ethnic publication such as *The Tico Times* unique in its function and provide nuances to expand the cultural theory of hybridity.

Discussion

In this essay I used ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews with newspaper staff members to better understand how they perceive the own, varying hybrid entities as they enacted the role of cultural broker in the intercultural negotiation for English-speakers who visit and/or live in Costa Rica. While the study focused on the newsroom as a holistic being, teasing out the individual identities of the staff members provides for a rather unorthodox, yet enlightening examination of the ways in which a minority language media outlet performs its role.

The richest examples of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) were often uncovered in these relaxed moments of banter among the staff members. The moments of reflexivity I observed were some of the richest and most personally fulfilling. Several of the newspaper's employees told me they began to examine issues of hybridity and think in those terms after our interviews. I observed these moments of reflexivity with the native English speakers as well as the Spanish speakers who worked at the paper.

The staffers and readers of *The Tico Times* inhabit the same hybrid cultural sphere, but it is important to recognize and understand that the bilingual and well-educated staff members are able to fully function in mainstream Costa Rican society. As they reflect upon their own hybrid spaces they feel they are better able to serve their readers who also inhabit this fluid yet very real state of hybridity. It is by understanding this concept of being neither fully *Gringo* nor fully *Tico* that it becomes easier to understand how readers can better navigate the new system of government paperwork and bureaucracy in which they live.

The in-between cultural space(s) created by these participants formulate a very unique space in the Costa Rican cultural milieu. These Americans, and to a lesser extent Canadians and Europeans, have chosen to take themselves out of their home culture and navigate a new system of beliefs, cultural norms, and language. Kraidy (1999) calls for "native ethnography" to understand "the articulation of local practices with global discourses" (p. 457). This brings up the question of who is qualified to be a "native" of a hybrid space. Traditionally native ethnographic research disrupts the paradigm of ethnographer/observer by

producing a situation in which the ethnographer is a member of the group being observed.

Implications

I assert that these newspaper staff members also perform this role as they reflect upon their own hybrid spaces and how their personal experiences can assist their readers in navigating new cultural and linguistic spaces. Thus, I view the implications as two-fold. First on a practical level, the newspaper staffers constantly must reflect on their own identities, and in this way they are able to relate to the needs of their readers. Second, on a theoretical level, scholars can further nuance the study of hybrid linguistic and cultural spaces as they explore the lived experiences of the media producers who enact the role of cultural broker for their audiences.

It is a constant negotiation on the part of the English-speaking residents in Costa Rica to navigate this cultural terrain. However, as the newspaper staffers reflect on their own hybrid experiences they help their readers understand how to negotiate their own identities and their daily lives. As more high-end immigrants move outside their own linguistic and cultural spheres, the importance of English-language publications such as *The Tico Times* will continue to increase. Thus, these theoretical implications allow scholars to investigate the phenomenon of how hybrid interactions as experienced by newspaper staffers are passed along to readers who do not have their own personal cultural negotiator, and so therefore they must rely on *The Tico Times* to enact the role of their cultural broker.

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Sculpting the Rhetorician: A Transformation

Crystal Lane Swift

Abstract & Acknowledgements

The following study is the result of a naïve scholar infiltrating and analyzing a culture that she was unaware of before this experience. The participants in the study demonstrated numerous consistent patterns in their communicative interactions with each other, including: invitational community, marking space, the metaphor of “life as a journey,” non-materialistic collectors, concrete positionality, producers and consumers of visual culture, and “the joke is on all of us.”

I would like to thank Dr. Tracy Stephenson Shaffer, Professor of Performance Studies at Louisiana State University, for her contribution to this project as well as the sculptors: Adam Tourek, Ezra Kellerman, Lance Malley, Jonathan Pelliteri, Holly Streekstra, and Michael Williams for welcoming me into their culture and allowing me to analyze them. This project remains a collaborative, on-going process, and the full range of its impact is yet to be fully explored.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Experimental Text, Outsider, Sculpture, Transformation, Visual Culture

Introduction

Sculpting the Rhetorician: A Transformation¹

I began this project thinking that I would simply observe a culture that I was interested in, record information about the members of the culture, and write a paper. I gained access into a group of Master of Fine Arts sculptors at Louisiana State University, and I had the privilege of interacting with six magnificent people. My only regret is that my representation of my subjects is bound to fall short. I am a better person for this interaction, and this positive change in my life is what I am referring to when I (aptly) call this project a **transformation¹**.

The purpose of this paper began as an inquiry into the “Other,” grew into a selfish desire to be accepted, and ended as a **transformative** experience. The desire and need to share this text with my communication colleagues stems from my appreciation of this subculture, as well as to advance a call for more self-reflexive and honest scholarship in our field, as has been expressed and demonstrated by many performance scholars before me. As an effort to extend my own experience to the readers of this paper, I have constructed an experimental text. Denzin (1997) explained “the experimental text privileges emotion and emotionality, arguing that a main goal is to evoke emotional responses for the reader, thereby producing verisimilitude and a shared experience” (p. 209). An experimental text seemed the only way to present this project because of the emotional reaction it evoked in me. Throughout this project, I felt as if I were attempting to view subjects through a thick glass wall, clad in a white lab-coat. As I did this, I continually heard the sculptors asking me why I didn’t simply enter via the door. The tentative conclusion I have come to at this point is that I, as a trained rhetor-

rician, leaning toward social scientist, possess an underlying assumption that culture is a tangible, observable *thing*, though I know that isn't true. Additionally, I am simply *uncomfortable* being engaged by and engaging the Other² on his or her terms. I know that any culture or society is filled with complexity that I could not possibly fully understand. Hence, this paper is only my interpretation of these sculptors, and only a slice of my interpretation at that. This paper begins with a review of literature followed by methodology and interpretation, and concludes with impacts. Throughout the paper there are sections of bracketed text in italics, which illustrate the author's personal journey throughout the research process.

Review of Literature

[To what end this will reach, neither of us yet knows. Perhaps there will be conversation followed by artistry. Perhaps words will not suffice at all. All I am certain of is that I am suffering from a personally unprecedented longing. The ambiguity within our talk so far leads me to believe that we are simultaneously experiencing similar levels of curiosity and caution. I will try not to be the first to explicitly address this, though. I am not ready to be disappointed again quite yet. This is the stuff that poetry is made of. Dreams occupy my already overloaded mind. Curiosity may get the best of me yet. When reality hits, this wonder may unfortunately expire.]

Performative [Auto]Ethnography

This paper [attempts to] deff[y]ies convention. Rather than labeling this project as strictly an ethnography, an autoethnography, or as a “performance piece,” I have chosen to label it a “transformation.” This is primarily because—on many levels—this paper dares to reach into all of the aforementioned methodologies. It is an archive of a splice of history of this culture. “Thus there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order” (Benjamin, 1968, p. 60). While I deem it a “transformation,” to those outside of the experience itself, it may be described as autoethnography, or critical ethnography. As Gingrich-Phillbrook (2005) described: “The term ‘autoethnography’ designates a wide array of textual practice, leaving many to suggest the undesirability, let alone the impossibility, of arriving at a single definition” (p. 298). As Madison (2005) described, critical ethnography: “. . . gives evidence not only that ‘I am here in the world among you’, but more importantly that ‘I am in the world under particular conditions that are constructed and thereby open to greater possibility’” (p.173).

This study focuses on the relationship betwixt and between researcher and subjects, rather than forcing a separation. While communication scholars largely utilize the written or spoken word to communicate, visual artists, especially those specializing in sculpture use physical form in order to visually communicate. The MFA sculpture students at Louisiana State University (LSU) comprised the culture with which I observed and interacted in order to conduct this study.

Visual Literacy

As a rhetorician, I am deeply interested in the persuasiveness of various forms of communication. Because the sculptors communicate about and through visual means, I became more visually literate throughout this experience. Visual communication involves many things to consider. For instance, Schamber (1991) set forth three criteria for visually literacy: the ability to read, write, and evaluate visual messages. Sculptors observe the world around them, particularly symbols, as visually literate people. Sayre (1993) stated that “[s]ymbols are especially important for grasping the changing and multicultural nature of the global community” (p. 13). Sculptors utilize physical, material symbols (or things) in order to communicate their identity and their perspectives in the global community. There is clearly a visual element to communication. Even communication scholars, long focused on the spoken and written word, now study visual communication to an extent, but the value of visual artifacts is not always stressed.

Matusitz (2005) pointed out that there is currently a dearth of communication programs that emphasize visual communication, and because of this, most Western students of communication have difficulty understanding and expressing concepts of visual communication. A study of visual artists—the visually literate—may help to alleviate the aforementioned problem. “Visual communication is important in the college classroom because it exists in the lives of the students, and to some extent, always will” (Matusitz, 2005, p. 102). This type of communication is vital in the general sense, but far more important in our discipline because we specifically seek to learn and inform our students about communication. “We also remould the past to our expectations by embellishing its relics” (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 278). The visual representation in art serves as relics of our time. Bowman (1998) pointed out that protection of the past usually entails preservation of relics as tangible markers of events in our archive. Along this vein, Jackson (1998) aptly pointed out that the combination of archival and ephemeral texts are what enable her to achieve the goal of telling a historiography instead of a *history*. In our technological age, scholars and students alike are bombarded with visual messages, and continued encounters with primarily visual disciplines can inform communication studies.

[All over again, without warning, trail lined with cornhusks and Pacific sand, this merging of materials sparks the possibility of depth. Whether intended or not, a promise has been made. Perhaps this promise will one day be explicit, symbolized by a washer, piece of twine, or silver ring. Social norms go by the wayside, as we permutate our lives. Before we meet, it has begun. Nothing is beyond us. I greatly anticipate this weaving together of art, connected by choice words, (rhetoric) yet to be experienced. I've slept beside him already, though be it in dreams solely thus far. He may just be my missing piece.]

Method and Procedure

Participants consisted of six Master of Fine Art sculpture students at Louisiana State University. They ranged in age from 23 to 34. Five were male, one was female, and all appeared to be of European descent. I lived with one of the

sculptors for the entirety of the project. I had not met him, in person, prior to moving in with him, and began observation one week after we began sharing a residence. Every day during the project, I wrote in my field journal about the interaction I had with Adam [the sculptor with whom I lived]. When applicable, I also wrote of my interaction with the other five sculptors. After three weeks of observation, I compiled my notes and identified various emergent themes from my journal. These themes became the starting point for my interview protocol.

The reason I allowed the emergent themes to guide my interviews is that I wanted to be able to situate myself socially within the culture and understand the way in which narratives and dramas played out naturally. Langellier (1989) argued that narratives provided by participants should become the foundation of research. When personal narratives are viewed from a performance perspective, they then can be placed in a social situation and more accurately analyzed. Hence, the sculptors' personal narratives are central to this project.

Once I identified themes from observation that also had both theoretical and interview data support, then I compiled those themes into a preliminary draft and asked the sculptors to rank the nine preliminary themes from most to least true. This is how I narrowed my research themes. I was fortunate to be able to interact with a culture that was willing to collaborate on this paper. The sculptors' real names appear in this paper with their permission. Goodall (2000) encouraged ethnographers to write as a "conversational partner" with the reader of the text (p. 67). This project is an effort to engage the reader and the members of the culture with which I interacted.

[While getting to know him, I watch him dance, and then I watch him dance again. Quickly I learn to trust him, not because I need a method, but because I have no personal precedent on which to model my actions. I finally simply extend my hand. Go forth, you artist who fashions magic about me night and day, until my dreams of floating above the clouds are effortlessly granted. Soon, I dance with him. He holds me so that I am stronger with him and without him.]

Ethics

When trying to decide when to reveal myself as a researcher to the sculptors, I took my time. My primary interest in the culture originated with my interaction with my sculptor roommate. We spent day and night together, so I was quickly invited to spend time with his friends. I gained entry easily into the culture, and got to know the sculptors as people before considering when to tell them that I was studying them as research subjects. Adam looked over my shoulder as I was typing up some field notes one evening and asked me what I was doing.

Adam: Writing a paper about the sculpture kids?

CLS: Yes, you all are the focus of my ethnography project.

Adam: I kind of felt like I was being observed. I guess I just thought you were observant.

CLS: I hope it's okay.

Adam: Oh, yeah. It's cool. What you writin'?

CLS: I can't tell you everything I think, yet.

Adam: I see, you can't tell the lab rats about the wheel, huh?

CLS: As far as you are concerned, assume that there is no wheel.

I was nervous about how the other sculptors would react, particularly Michael and Ezra. Michael is a private person in general, and I thought that this project might hurt Ezra's feelings. Adam suggested that I simply approach them one-on-one and be as kind and honest as possible. This suggestion sounded like good advice, so I did. In the spirit of complete honesty with the sculptors, I composed an informed consent form. I explained to each sculptor one-on-one what the project was and then asked each to read the form. They all agreed individually and signed the releases. The only request they made was to read the final paper, which I had hoped they would do anyhow. As Madison (2005) pointed out, it is essential that the Other is addressed on his or her own terms. This is why the release forms were necessary and all of our meetings occurred in the sculpture building or in the homes of the sculptors.

*[He saves the little cards that he wrote the names of his artwork on. He shows them to me as if they are shiny trophies or a prize game buck. I smile, faintly, blushing from the embarrassment of a lack of understanding the first thing about that which he is so proud. This man rejects the very notion of a label. How can I study him **my way**? I may report: Due to the visual nature of his past and present behavior, it is clear that this man is, in fact, an artist. **I'm glad you're interested in what I do enough to write a paper about it.** He experiments with video, lights, wood, clay, and metal. This beautiful man sees no limits to his art, while I continually impose and perpetuate limitations in my own work.]*

Interpretation

While viewing the fall graduate showcase, I first came upon Adam's work, and then I turned to my left and had an experience. The object was taller than me, made of cut slate, wood, and tiny red clay bricks.³ It was more than six feet tall. The cut slate was black and cylindrical. There were three evenly spaced windows at the top, coated in a gold hue. The bricks were neatly arranged in a half-circle that occupied the length of the slate, with an empty space slit into the back of them. A spiral staircase departed from the bottom of the bricks and led the eye toward the sturdy, finished, wooden support.

I nearly toppled over trying to take it all in. It took me a moment to re-balance. Though unaware at the moment, in retrospect, the sculpture drew me in to a parallel world: a world that simultaneously had been, is, and will be. There was a window before me, and I took a brief journey. I was sixteen or seventeen, I was an adult, and I was an infant. I was in a meadow of little purple flowers, cloaked in a layer of stratocumulus clouds, begging the raindrops to coat my skin. I began soaring through the field, with outstretched wings, just above the

grass. Suddenly, a red brick wall with thick layers of contrasting bright white grout obscured my view and a silver spiral staircase appeared, welcoming me to venture down to the abyss below. I was filled concurrently with warmth and fear. I took a step down, promptly tripped, and began falling, in slow motion to a place that was defining itself as I got closer to it. Before I could clearly make out the image below, I was interrupted.

Jon: So, what do you think?

CLS: I love it. It reminds me of my dreams.

Jon: This piece nearly drove me insane.

CLS: I can see why.

I had the pleasure of many encounters with this culture, including the aforementioned.

*[Adam invites me to a show in the art gallery, made up of clay tiles both hung on the wall and sitting on tables, in a variety of colors and styles. He has a great reverence and respect for the art we see in the gallery. He is more silent and contemplative than I have ever seen him, and when he does speak, it is only in a strained, hushed whisper. As we leave, I catch him write in the guest book, **I felt peaceful while viewing your work.**]*

I found that within the culture of these MFA sculptors, several consistent themes arose. These themes are invitational community, marking space, the metaphor of “life as a journey,” non-materialistic collectors, concrete positionality, producers and consumers of visual culture, and “the joke is on all of us.” The first of these themes that I noticed is that of an invitational community.

Invitational Community

This group of sculptors has a solid sense of community, and the community reaches out to its members as well as outsiders. The sculptors constantly engage in sharing, encouragement, and togetherness as a culture. As Foss and Griffin (1995) explained, “[i]nvitational rhetoric is an invitation to the audience as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination” (p. 5). In this group of sculptors, I am the audience, and they are the performers. However, from the first day Adam introduced them to me, I saw that they treated those outside of their group as if they were already a part of their group. In fact, when I asked Adam how the other sculptors felt about me, he said that if I wasn’t with him, they would ask about me with no prompting from him.

Additionally, there is no apparent hierarchy in this culture. Hall, De Jong, and Stehouder (2004) explained that “collectivism pertains to societies in which people are integrated into strong, cohesive groups [. . .] protecting them in exchange for unquestioned loyalty” (p. 490). This small group may appear to be so inviting because it is communal in nature. The sculptors are not competitive with one another, always looking out for one another. As Lance put it: “We’re a close family around here. I really feel you get a real family sense.

We're always there for each other. I want to see everybody happy, while they are creating. If you aren't having fun in life, what's the point of livin'?"

Adam also described this group as a "happy family," and said that he immediately felt welcome when he entered the community for the first time. In terms of community, Michael said that the group, "spends a lot of time together and are immersed in each others' work. [The grads] get along professionally and as friends and seem open to talk about everything." Jon agreed, explaining that he thinks that the grads are very professional but simultaneously are able to enjoy a close friendship. I observed the following exchange occur at the sculpture studio one night. Ezra was working on a piece of sculpture, and Adam was talking to him. A problem arose while Ezra was working and was quickly fixed:

Adam: The mold is leaking, dude. (Put clay on leak to stop it.)

Ezra: Thanks, bro.

Adam: No problem, dude.

Another night, Lance hosted a party. Reminiscent of the way the sculptors communicate in the studio, the party served as a catalyst for seamless transition betwixt "shop talk" and social interaction. Adam asked Ezra about the piece he had been working on the day before, and Lance asked about John's love life. Lance's house is filled with his roommate's artwork, displayed equally with his own. This is like our house where my paintings, without apology, are hung next to Adam's.

Through this display, the sculptors demonstrate their acceptance and support of others and others' artwork. Michael welcomed me and mentioned that the members of the department spend a lot of time together. Holly was equally inviting, and had deemed me "lady" by the end of the night. Holly stated that at times she feels motherly because she is the only female, but also "very much" an insider and a part of the community. The sculptors seem to genuinely want to know about other people. While I asked questions about their art and thoughts, they asked just as many questions of me and acted genuinely interested when I told them that I study rhetoric and public address. Their invitation is further demonstrated by their eagerness to include me, by [nick] name in their future social events along with Adam. Through this experience, I learned that the sculptors talk frequently and in-depth about their social lives as well as their professional lives. When we left, I felt quite welcome and excited that I was invited back.

"Invitational rhetoric is characterized, then, by the openness with which rhetors are able to approach their audiences" (Foss and Griffin, 1995, p. 6). The openness and acceptance with which I have been afforded by this culture encouraged me to openly approach them as well. Ezra noted that, "I've only known them for a few weeks, but I get along with them and they are nice to work around. They seem to like me that way back." Just as Foss and Griffin (1995) put it, while change is not the explicit goal of invitational rhetoric, it certainly can be a result. While the sculptors clearly make up an invitational community, open to each other and outsiders, they also maintain a level of separa-

tion by marking space. It is expected that those they encounter who want to join their group are always invited to do so.

[We live by candlelight. I become even further aware of how much my housemate of a mere few weeks seems to perceive the world around him as his canvas. Art is his religion. The artist, the man of objects, says some pretty words. I'm going to do something I have never done before. I made you something. It's made of wood, so it's durable, but easy to break on purpose. After a year, it could be replaced by a metal one, or simply destroyed. I feel desired, wanted as I never have been wanted before, but I don't deserve him. We didn't earn this; we didn't earn this; we didn't earn this. This is no more real than any fantasy on page or film.]

Marking Space

Possibly due to the physical nature of their work, the sculptors physically mark the space they occupy as their own. As Osborne (2001) highlighted, "People live in places and identify with them, or are alienated by them . . . It is the actions of humans at specific locations that turn objective space into subjective places constructed by human behavior" (p. 44). The behaviors within the space that these sculptors occupy help to define them as individuals as well as define them as a community. While they get along well, there is a definite expression of individuality between them as well as a collective separation (but not exclusion) from outsiders. This separation is signified by their physical manifestations of art and the way in which they organize the space they work and live in. "Monuments, streets, neighborhoods, buildings, churches, and parks are all material things and are associated with specific kinds of activities. They are linked to society through repetitive prosaic practices, ritualized performance, and institutionalized commemoration. That is, there is an ongoing reciprocal relationship between people and the places they inhabit" (Osborne, p. 44).

The way each sculptor organizes his or her studio and displays work is unique, and it makes the most sense to the individual who works and makes art in that space. Individually, each sculptor mentioned how things define his or her own space. Ezra stated his studio is his own because, "It is a nice contained space, and I have a lot of my tools and my things that inspire me here." Michael said his studio is not his own because there are other people's things in it, and it would be his own if just his stuff was in the space. Holly explained her studio is her own because it is "full of my things," and she spends more time in the space than at home. Adam said his studio is his own because "It is a space that only I get to put stuff in, like my tools, tables, shelves, and pictures that are mine."

Marking space was also exemplified at the fall graduate showcase. Adam's pieces were displayed next to each other in the front room. He was the only artist who displayed an artist's statement with his work. The artist's statement was a poem hanging on the wall next to his work. Lance and Jon chose spaces within the gallery independent of Adam's. Instead of outside definitions, these people prefer their identity to come from within before this identity is (literally) outwardly expressed. "The continuity of peoples' connections with their lived-in worlds reinforces their identification with time and place and each other" (Os-

borne, 2001, p. 45). The sculptors' surroundings and physical pieces of art allow them a vocalized resistance to outside definition. These graduate students prefer no boxes. Their work is unpredictable and crosses genres of subject and medium. Lance explained that his relationship with the art he makes is: ". . . Definitely a physical relationship where you actually touch and view materials, and every material kind of relates to you in some sense. You can see a material and it can spark ideas of moments in your life."

In terms of marking a space as separate from another space, Jon explained that his apartment has no art in it, and very little things in general so that he can have a place to escape from the studio. The presence or absence objects seem to be the primary means of marking space for this community. "Self-knowledge and personal identity cannot be reconstructed without place-worlds. . . . Places are defined by tangible material realities that can be seen, touched, mapped, and located" (Osborne, 2001, p. 46). By being invited into and involved in this community's space, I feel that not only have I learned more about their individual and collective identities, but I have also learned about my own identity. Marking space is only one part of these sculptors' lives that they view as a journey.

*[All I really wanted was to be able to describe you accurately and theorize about the way in which you perceive and encounter your world. It occurred to me quite quickly, however, that I have insufficient tools to do so. I become unraveled. As I continue to insist upon this lab coat and my position outside this thick, unforgiving glass, I hear your invitation. The windowpane serves as a retainer to bar me from entrance, and you keep asking, **Why don't you just use the door?** I have no answer I can articulate. I just reinforce those gold-hue-painted, slate bars, and quickly run for the staircase.]*

The Metaphor of "Life as a Journey"

This group is quite process-oriented, and they view art as dynamic. Michael explained: "The act of making this one of a kind thing with all of its pitfalls and nuances and all these problem-solving activities you go through is enjoyable, especially working through to end. It is enjoyable to see at the end because of what you have invested." Michael values the process he goes through in order to produce a sculpture. Wood (2003) explained that symbolic interaction is a way in which persons can find and express their identity. The physical symbols that the sculptors produce hold more meaningful than aesthetic beauty. Ezra mentioned, "When I am working on a piece it is more than just an object." He said that he feels intimately involved with his art as he is making it. He puts his emotions and experiences into his art.

Additionally, these sculptors seem to see everything as art, just as I see everything as communication. They express themselves through art, no matter where they are or who they are with. It appears that no matter what the subject matter, every conversation is easily tied into past or present projects. For example:

CLS: You going to dig that fire pit in the back yard today?

Adam: I think so. You know, I could always make the fire pit in the back yard double as a kiln.

CLS: A what?

Adam: You know, so that we could fire pots in it. It wouldn't be hard to do.

CLS: We? I don't know how to fire pots.

Adam: It would be work, but you could learn. In fact, I am considering using the subject of work as a starting point for my pieces this year.

Adam weaves his art into his everyday tasks to the point that he wants to focus on everyday tasks (work) as an explicit subject. He said, "Art is an occupation and more than that because as an artist working with your own ideas you're doing your own work. There is a connection more than any other job. Art is a way to communicate an idea and use materials in new and different ways." In this way, Adam defines art primarily as a process.

Holly said that art is a "self-investigation and a mystery." While she is in the process of making her art she claimed she is most intimate with her art, and she self-identified as "process-oriented." She feels most understood in the process of making art, trying to figure out what to do next, especially when discussing it with her colleagues. Lance further clarified the concept of art as a process:

When artists are with each other, we're always giving each other ideas and learning from each other. We might have a good time doing it, but we are also learning. When I feel most understood is when I'm sitting down with my colleagues having a one-on-one conversation. I think my art comes from my inner self in a sense unless you have time to sit down and explain that to somebody, I don't think you can truly be understood. I am always looking for feedback from my colleagues. Within the realm of sculpture, you are conveying messages with materials, so you need someone who works with materials to give you feedback.

Jon echoed Lance's sentiment by explaining: "During the process [of making art] is a time where I am trying to get to know what I am trying to make. My work starts as small parts that need to come together in a composition. I don't know where I am going; I am in the process of figuring it out." The sculptors' lives consist primarily of making art, and they seem to value the process of making the art more highly than the end product. However, end products find their way into the lives of the sculptors in the form of collections.

[The closer I am to you, the further I am from that cushy pillow I had designed so that I may rest in the midst of my long-felt suffering. I am learning. I am learning about you I am learning about me. I just feel better if I can categorize these themes, orated through rhetorical constructs. I see an end, a product, a result. You are process, journey, love I am not nearly as good as I thought I was. I must play. I must let go. I must work on my grammar.]

Non-Materialistic Collectors

There is an obvious love of materials in this community. “Things” constantly surround these sculptors, and they particularly value the materials they work with. Love and Kohn (2001) explained that “whether found, captured, produced, or imagined, the Other still somehow seems necessary, with souvenirs becoming material, portable, touchable pieces of that Other” (p. 53). Souvenirs serve as the beginnings of collections for many people. For these sculptors, however, the materials that they work with are somewhat like souvenirs. The “material, touchable pieces” that these sculptors value seem to be primarily the materials they work with to build their artwork. Lance said that he values material objects because of “the idea of permanence.” He explained that art has only in recent history become something “permanent,” and sculptures are particularly permanent in comparison to other forms of art.

They all seem to have lots of objects in their studios. For instance, Ezra keeps a statuette of Mother Mary in his studio because it was his grandmother’s. He also mentioned there are many other things in his studio that inspire him. Michael said he “values material objects for utility and sentimental value.” Jon said, “I value materials because they all have individual ways of presenting themselves. I do not manipulate the materials. That is why my work uses so many different materials compiled together.” The objects that these sculptors collect are materials they use to make their own objects, or objects they use for inspiration.

While they value both the utility and symbolism of objects, they also self-identify as non-materialistic. For instance, Adam explained “there are some objects I really like. I want to touch them, and I save scraps of everything. I find use for everything or pass it off.” Holly further recognized the paradox of this theme when she said “I have this conflict between being non-materialistic and a maker of *things*.” While these sculptors do value the materials that they work with and their artwork (particularly during the process), they self-identify as being non-materialistic. In fact, all of these artists agreed there comes a time when it is important to part with their artwork. Michael stated: “I would much rather see my finished product go away than keep it, because artwork is like the exhaust out of a car. I have no attachment to pieces in the end and no super attachment to materials. I could start with nothing and be okay.”

Jon further explained that he is “not attached to my work when it is finished because I have moved on.” Adam concurred, “After a while, I move on to the next thing and feel attached to it instead of the last thing. I have parted with nearly everything I have made.” Along with their rejection of materialism, these sculptors value their collections. They demonstrate a further grounding in the physical, material world in the theme of concrete positionality.

[When I first began sharing a residence with this artist, I used to sit across the table, gazing through the candlelight into his blue eyes with excitement at the windows to a possible future I saw with him. This exhilaration is shifting, for rather than windows, I see mirrors now. Perhaps this shift is spurred in part by the smoke and flames, but I am realizing that things are shifting from I and me

to us and we. He tastes like exotic fruits that I have never tasted before, yet feel like I am somehow remembering. Aromatic is the air just lapping at his edges—sucking me into him before he may realize it himself; he smells like sweat; his muscles raw and practically exposed just below the surface of his inviting skin.]

Concrete Positionality

While my own inspiration for poetry, art, and research projects stems primarily from theory or other abstract concepts, I quickly noticed that something these artists all have in common, at least at this point in their careers, is that their inspiration is coming from the concrete, or their own physical surroundings. These artists' surroundings tend to change from time to time, but they continually represent the world around them through their work. "The artistic world has tended to view the world as dynamic and to discuss its occurrence under the general category of drama" (Theal, 1975, p. 274). This group of sculptors seems to recognize the drama they are surrounded by, and produce work that exemplifies, enlightens, or explains these concrete, dramatic elements. Michael said that his work is influenced by "nature, outdoors, primitiveness, and simpler way of life." Holly stated that her art is based on "my life, my experiences." Ezra agreed that his influence comes from "anything that affects me on a personal level." Lance said that "farm instruments" influence some of his work because he "grew up on a farm in Mississippi, and that was just everyday life. There are aspects in my life that influence the objects I produce."

Monahan (2004) wrote that art—in particular sculpture—comes from that which is physically around us, especially nature. Jon produces art that represents the physical world around him. He clarified that his art is influenced by "Everything I see when I am not in the studio, it represents the type of life I live outside of the studio. I have worked construction since high school, so I bring time working with my hands into my work." Adam said that all of his work is "down to earth in a far-out way." None of these sculptors appear to begin with an abstract idea or concept and bring it closer to the concrete. Instead, they seem to work from the ground up. This further supports their love of the materials that they incorporate into their work. They value a concrete, physical relationship with the materials they work with as well as the physical objects that they produce. This physical relationship is complimented by the visual aspect of their culture.

Producers and Consumers of Visual Culture

Within this community, it seems natural that individuals would be visually oriented. Jon stated that his artwork is "a way for me to say something and then leave it behind for others to *see* my message." He continued that "Art for me is a way that I can express what I am thinking. I don't feel comfortable writing or addressing people, so my art is my voice to address the public." Because these artists are simultaneously graduate assistants at a major university, there is a prevalent conflict in this area. Michael said "I don't communicate well using words. I communicate through my artwork." He also noted that in academia

there is a push for explaining and justifying art through words, which he finds frustrating.

While they must prove themselves as artists in order to earn their MFA degrees, they must simultaneously prove to the university (primarily through words) that they are scholars. Adam explained this expectation:

I like to tell stories by just leaving [visual] clues about what happened. I enjoy writing, but when I write it is about things that are tangential to my artwork, not necessarily justifying the work itself. [It is] brainstorming [and] throwing around words, playing, the same way I work with materials, more for myself than a justification. When I make something, I hope it would get my idea across [and] I wouldn't need to further explain.

Adam would like his art to suffice as his form of communication in the realm of sculpture. "The tension between aesthetic negation and discourse [. . .] precludes the identification of art with political praxis. Art cannot represent real forces of change, but can only invoke their possibility in another medium—in aesthetic 'form'" (Cox, 1988, p. 23). Essentially, these artists are charged with justifying their *visual* art through *words*. For the sculptors, however, the visual justifies itself and communicates more effectively than words. For instance, Ezra said his art helps him to communicate because art is therapy, and his art represents his own personal narratives. He stated that his art allows him to be more candid than he would be with only words. Lance commented that art is the "expression of an idea." He continued:

The viewer can teach the creator a lot of times. You don't know [if you have communicated your message] until you find out somehow. In an ideal situation, it would be better to be right one hundred percent with what you are trying to say, but it's all right to miss every once in a while.

The sculptors clearly understand the visual world better than I can imagine. For instance, one evening, Holly was talking to Jon while grading student papers in the woodshop.

Holly: This is not a twirl; it's a swirl.

Jon: Same thing.

Holly: Are you an artist?

Jon: Yeah.

Holly: Then you know the difference.

Jon: Close enough.

Then, Holly looked to me for support. I told her I did not think that I had the level of expertise necessary to offer an opinion. She told me to just agree with her. Holly stated that her hope is for people who view her art to experience an "inquisitive, visual pleasure." She said, "I am a visual person. I like looking at

visual things.” This love of the visual may be part of the reason that the sculptors feel driven to create.

Something that each of these sculptors noted was that they are driven or compelled (to some degree) to create art. For instance, while telling a story about his belt buckle, Lance said that he bought it from a prisoner who was selling it at the prison rodeo because:

I was amazed at the craftsmanship that went into this belt buckle. It makes you relate in a sense to their want to build and their want to create. They may not have a lot of resources, but there is a deep-down drive of an artistic ability, so I could not pass up the little bit of support I could show by buying this belt buckle.

While Lance found connection with a human being based on this drive to create, Holly also addressed this connection. “Other artists drive me most. When I see art, I want to make art.” Adam explained his drive to make art this way “I don’t know what else I would do. I see things around me, and I have something to say about them or with them. I cannot remember the last time I didn’t feel the need to make art.” The drive to make art for Adam seems innate, while for Ezra it seems more socially constructed or habitual. He said he has a drive to work with certain materials because he has developed a love for and comfort with those materials. There is a certain repetition developed in the relationship of working with materials and creating art. Michael furthered this discussion of drive to create by commenting that art is “a by-product of one’s compulsion to produce, what happens when someone wants to create or the act of creating. [It is also a] form of communication I feel compelled to speak through that is larger than language.” For a culture focused on the visual, these sculptors do tell an awful lot of jokes.

[Glass, glass, glass . . . I think I see you beyond this glass, glass, glass . . . frustration at this obstruction that I crafted for myself. I never wanted to join with anyone, nor did I think it possible to converge with the likes of you. Blame, blame, blame . . . sunbeams illuminate this empty space in my chest . . . beams that radiate from you . . . No matter how loudly I scream, no matter how much blood is released from the back of my throat into my lungs, the only impression that I will leave is this cloud of breath, shadowing the back of this transparent glass. I could jump up and down until the floor gives up and grants me access to whatever may lie below. Nothing will come of that, if I am not readable to my intended. All of this intra/extra-spection . . . Everything worked out just like He planned.]

The Joke is on All of Us

Within this community of sculptors, there is a constant joke running. It is not always the same joke, but it is always either a self-deprecating or Other-deprecating joke, myself included as an Other at times. Michael likes to poke fun at me because Adam comes home for dinner every night. If Adam is out later than usual, Michael might pose, “So you let him out, did you?” Sharkey,

Park, and Kim (2004) concluded that “goals [of self-embarrassment] included: to get, maintain, or check others’ attention; to comply with another’s request, demand, or dare; to win a competition; to manage one’s face in the presence of others; or to manage another person’s face” (p. 392). Humor in this community is intended to embarrass, but embarrass everyone (including the self) equally. Hence, the joke truly is on *all* of us. Jon stated that, “We make fun of each other a lot. For instance, I have learned that Lance has no sense of time, and I give him hell for that a lot, but we all know we are joking.” This may take some getting used to. Hauser (1999) argued that personal and professional narratives shared within a culture leave a mark on the individual’s body, because certain narratives are tied to certain places and people.

Adam said, “At first, I didn’t understand the jokes, but I quickly started to understand [after a short amount of time].” Everything is situated. Narratives as representation of culture become problematic when it is assumed that the narrative is mutually exclusive from surrounding elements or context (Langellier, 1989). Understanding the jokes is closely tied to the way in which they are told as well as the place in which they are told. Michael noted further that shop talk and personal talk meet in settings outside of the studio.

Holly put the humorous nature of this culture like this, “It’s like a TV show; each person has their own nick name. There are all these on-going jokes. Jon with his glasses, ‘how’s the blind man?’ Now, Lance with his dog—everything’s dog, dog, dog.” She finds this phenomenon in her culture compelling enough to document it. “The loss of dignity, face, poise, control, and so on may be a small price to pay if one’s ultimate goal is solidarity, attention, winning, protecting another’s face, protecting one’s self against more devastating embarrassments, and so on” (Sharkey, Park, and Kim, 2004, 394). Humor is a part of the way this community maintains cohesion.

[He stays up all night working on his sculptures, trying to get things done for the show. He says that others have been told to take a break from sculpting for a while because their work looks too much like art for art’s sake. We go to the opening. I dress in my fabulous black dress, looking the part of artist’s muse. Am I art for art’s sake? If I pose as art, will I, in fact, be art? Paint me. Paint me with your gaze . . . strike that gaze upon a canvas, a panel of drywall, a pile of dirt . . . please, just notice me as I notice you.]

Sculptors’ Impacts and Implications on this Rhetorician Disciplinary

My study demonstrates that sculptors as a culture could inform communication as a discipline. Messaris (1994) called for more study and attention to visual communication and pointed out the need for more visual literacy. There is more to becoming visually literate than simply viewing images. “Reading visual messages requires an understanding of visual grammar and syntax. In the system of analysis derived from art and design, the visual elements include dot, line, shape, tone, texture, and so forth” (Schamber, 1991, p. 18). Sculptors have the occasion to use these concepts explicitly daily. This particular group informs the way that we can understand visual communication as an object within the self,

created by the self, to become an object outside of the self. The concrete results of this group's art is a starting and ending point for communicative transactions.

Rhetorically, this concept is useful for producing and consuming messages. Matusitz (2005) furthered that visual literacy is necessary to become a more critical consumer of rhetoric. Rhetoric is central to communication as a discipline. Schamber (1991) supported that visual literacy is essential for understanding the world. Visual objects are produced by the sculptors as concepts and as imitation of ordinary life. "The notion of imitation carries with it a suggestion of reflection or condensation of the social reality, or perhaps more accurately, the construction of a model of some social reality with, at least, the potentiality of a possible future" (Theal, 1975, p. 274). Sculptures produced by this group work upon and against this group's socially and artfully constructed reality.

*[The wax room is a dungeon. Everything is dirty and hot; the air-conditioning doesn't work. Everything is unfinished, or if once finished, unfinished. The next track sounds like the beginning of Postal Service's "This Place is a Prison," but isn't. It is TV on the radio—unconventional music for unconventional people. Nothing is too much work; nothing takes too long. The video camera does not distract. I do not distract. This man, this man that I love, doing what he loves: art. **If I ever was art, I am not art now.** He turns to me for a brief moment, a moment of reassurance, I am certain, to remind me that he cares.]*

Professional

Ravetz (2002) explained the relationship between her "ethnographer self" and "fine art self" this way: "If shared reality and immersion in other lives is the bedrock of anthropological [in particular, ethnographic] assumption, then at the heart of fine art is an assumption about the unreality of the external world—an elevation of and belief in the power of imagination and untruth" (Ravetz, 2002, 23-24). This project has helped to develop my fine arts self and ethnographic self simultaneously. Or, as Madison (2005) explained:

Whether one (her audience) likes or not the performance, one cannot completely undo or un-know the image and imprint of that voice—inside history—upon their own consciousness once they have been exposed to it through performance. Performing subversive and subaltern voices proclaim existence, within particular locales and discourses, that are being witnessed—entered into one's own experience—and this witnessing cannot be denied. (p.172)

I am simultaneously a more informed viewer and critic of art and I am also more culture-savvy. I have also been able to integrate the artistic self with the researcher self in ways I was unable to before this project. I have been and continue to be significantly immersed in a culture of which I was previously unaware. I think of this integration akin to sampling. "Sampling is a method of artistic appropriation and entails an active physical encounter with history and a poetic of recreation" (Simpson, 1999, p. 323). In sampling, musicians collect exist-

ing pieces of music to create new music from this combination. I have taken patches of words, images, and physical artwork and attempted to fashion a quilt to represent these people who are now so dear to me.

This transformed from a project on paper to a project in the mind, then settled into the body. Similarly to the way Holman Jones (2005) put it:

Setting a scene, telling a story, carefully constructing the connections between life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation . . . and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives. (p. 765)

I have crafted a text that attempts to express a portion of my lived experience of art in this culture, and the world this experience has brought to me. I am beginning to place importance on things that I once thought of as obsolete, such as breakfast every morning, visual pleasure, and truly connecting with a group. I am beginning to live.

*[I live a cliché subjectivity.⁴ The pain cumulates in the scene encompassing two clothed bodies/backs turned. One pen drawing; one pen writing. A knot deeply embedded under one's shoulder. The realization of memories not lost but simply not made. The void caused by years un-lived, the abyss following a broken heart. What does she know of love? How long will this go unnoticed? He says **I am impressed. Do you think that if I came down here by myself, I would have a house that looks like that? I am impressed by a woman who has her [stuff] together, teaches 50 kids each day about [stuff] they don't know about, and still has time to gaze into my eyes at night. I am impressed.**]*

Personal

*[I am documenting my transformation; art is not simply a product. It is a process. We dance in the living room to the pump-up sounds of a variety of musical artists. Glass candlesticks fall from the shelf on the wall, shatter, and prick our feet. We keep dancing. **I think people might be pretty mad if they knew how much fun we have.** We shoot Scotch and Vodka. We keep dancing. We eat leftover homemade ice cream. We keep dancing. At midnight, we fall asleep in a heap of exhaustion.]*

While this culture has profoundly impacted me (as it continues to), I believe that I have also impacted this culture. I asked Adam what he thought my effect on this culture is and he answered:

Everyone is excited about this project. All these interviews and things make us feel like we're pretty sweet because someone's studying us, and that is cool. You are one of the gang, though. When they invite me they expect that you will be there, too, and they ask where you are when you are not there. You are like the rest of us, a personality in the group and a friend.

I now self-identify as being a part of this culture. My experience supports the notion of Gergen and Gergen, (2002) who argued "scholarship is not chained by

the imperative of cerebral order, but is given full latitude of revelation in action” (p. 19). This revelation is still in action for me. I also asked Adam what effect he thought the nature of our relationship would have on my project. His first response was “Isn’t that a question you should answer?” Then he continued that I might have a “bias,” because while I spend a lot of time with the entire group of sculptors, I spend a considerably more sustained amount of time with him, and can speak about him “with more expertise.”

[Glow from tea light licks pinch pots long-ago fired and glazed. Your gaze meets mine, revealing flickering flecks in your eyes. While looking into your eyes, either this morning or last night I realized ... for the first time, I truly cannot go back to how I lived before I met you. We are no longer two separate beings, you and I. You coat me in your words like the chocolate milk we purchased this morning. Outsiders recognize that we are linked, and for the first time today, you explicitly marked it as such. I am overcome, yet simultaneously at ease. Thank you. I hope you can still tell by feel. You are so sensible. I think you are starting to rub off on me. You are the first person to call me a man.]

Somewhere along the line, I have begun to sense an intertwining of myself and the Other. After all, “writing creates the worlds we inhabit” (Denzin, 2003, p. xii). In this way, I know that this project may never end. I have always valued a defined, structured, linear result, but this notion is constantly questioned by my new friends (whether they realize it or not). I now understand why Adam wrote that the biggest disappointment to him as an artist is “a tale with only one ending.” Process is paramount, and I am in the midst of the “experience-of-becoming” (Conquergood, 1991, p. 6). This *journey* is as close as to an *end result* as I will get. This tale has no end yet, and I now hope it never does. I wonder if what I have found holds true in other communities of artists. I am curious whether I can now consider myself an artist of sorts. Ultimately, I wonder how long this journey of newfound love will last.

*[Thick, green tea, blank sketch pads, old pens, two supple bodies and clean sheets, a heavy heart, and a worn-out, silence-filled phone call combine to create a weighty hand, as your pen abuses the virgin leaves chained to the binding of your sketch pad. My feet cross near your current victim (page). You take a moment’s rest, just long enough to brush your lips against the crook of my left calf, before attending once again to your drawing. Your foot appears so natural on the pillow, though possibly a disturbing contrast. Your toes fill notches in one another with their iris-bulb contours. Each vein is elevated and each bone is apparent. There are teeny patches of dark brown hairs and your toenails are ragged. You’ve hoisted your torso’s weight on to your left side, supporting your head with your left hand. Perhaps you think I do not notice—but I feel your eyes caressing and studying my body, as you stroke a new page with shadows and silhouettes from your pen. Delight combines with sorrow to feed pen, which fills paper, causing you to ask, **Whatcha writin’ about?** Reaching out for your familiar touch, so comfortable, rich, safe, and I still get these butterflies. Met by the outer barrier of an unexpected cocoon, I become flustered. When my eyes meet yours in the morning ... everything is perfection again. I am a woman who is embarrassed by her uncensored behaviors and unmaskable flaws. I am a*

woman who will love you with all that she is and all that she hopes to be. For a minute I was afraid that I may be losing myself in you. I took yet another glance and realized that I am actually finding myself in you. My memories are mostly non-existent, not because they have been erased, but because I never made any to spare. Most of the time, I have felt like a crude interpretation of Roger's explanation of a body without organs. I know that I can bleed, so the physical organs must be there, but each time I take another inward turn, all I see, all I feel is emptiness. The self that you have pulled from this cave (Plato's, perhaps) is so full, however. You fill this self, this woman that I am getting to know, as you are getting to know her. For dinner, we make the most splendid fried jumbo shrimp and okra, finished off by a bottle of blackberry wine, as thick as syrup. I remember the flush of my skin, the butterflies within, right before that final round of debate with Dylan. I have decided that my oh-so-open self may be offensive to some. Hence, I am taking yet another inward turn. **I like telling stories. A sculpture is a character. The beginning of the story has already occurred and the ending is not revealed. I have a fascination with objects; I enjoy finding places for scavenging what others throw away. I collect my treasure and selectively use it through reproduction and modification. I am bedazzled by the delicious colors of fashion and industry. A good story lends itself to varied interpretation; ambiguity is exciting. My greatest fear as an artist is a tale with only one ending.**^{5]}

Endnotes

1. I call this study a "transformation" rather than an ethnography, autoethnography, or some other pre-defined scholarly label, because, as this journal called for in this issue, it is truly an experimental text. Within the field of communication, the definition of autoethnography and ethnography are not stable (e. g. Gingrich-Philbrook, Goodall, Osborn, Pink, Stephenson-Schaffer, Turner, Van Maanen).
2. I use the term "Other" in this text in the truly Levinasian sense. "The primacy of ontology among the branches of knowledge would appear to rest on the clearest evidence, for all knowledge of relations connecting or opposing being to one an Other implies an understanding of the fact that these beings and relations exist" (Levinas, 1998, p. 1).
3. The rest of this explanation was added at the suggestion of Adam. When he read this portion, his reaction was "The experience you had when viewing this piece is very poetic. The description of Jon's piece immediately preceding your experience however is rather dry. I mean, I couldn't imagine what Jon's piece looked like based on your description." This comment made an impact me. How can I claim to be representing a culture in the least if my analysis is more self than Other-centered?
4. Direct quotation from Gingrich-Philbrook (p. 297, 2005). In his article, he argues that ethnographers are dually and equally charged with fulfilling appeals to the aesthetic and the epideictic. My paper is an attempt to answer both, in the separate spaces of which Gingrich-Philbrook perhaps would approve.
5. Artist statement from Adam D. Tourek, November, 2005.

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