Creative Academics

H. Paul LeBlanc III

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Firstword

The essays and articles in this collection were written primarily when I was in college as a graduate student between the years of 1992 and 1994. They represent the thoughts and academic development of a young man.

The collection begins with letters to the editor of the Daily Egyptian. The third letter in the collection was not published; it was written in response to the publication of the second letter. These letters can be compared and contrasted to the reasoning used in previous letters to the editor, in the sense that a theme of nonviolence is inherent. They are included in order to compare developmental trends illustrated in other editorials and papers found in the earlier volumes of works: Poems, Thoughts and Essays, and Master's Works. Whereas the move from undergraduate studies to graduate studies as evidenced in the two volumes demonstrates a change from more artistic pursuits to more academic pursuits, this collection demonstrates an attempt to be creative in academic pursuits. As a consequence, this volume is, perhaps, the most balanced.

Following the letters are several short essays which were written as creative endeavors, outside of coursework. As such, they reflect various interests. However, as with the letters, they reveal reflection upon events which occurred internally and externally. The essay, "Perspectives on methodology" was presented to a professor as a response to the challenges of the departmental manifestations of a debate currently ensuing within the discipline of speech communication, and in the social sciences as well as academia at-large.

The rest of the collection includes essays and research articles. The works were written as assignments for classes, but are not inclusive of all classwork and assignments required for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. Rather, these works are the projects and assignments which were written as papers, therefore excluding assignments in the form of presentations, outlines, and annotated bibliographies. As such, they provide evidence for further academic development beyond the Master of Arts level. In comparison to Master Works, the essays and articles included here are more revealing of a synthesis of all earlier work. Several essays demonstrate an emphasis on philosophical arguments akin to the undergraduate work in philosophy in Poems, Thoughts and Essays. A few of the articles continue work began at the Master's level. Other articles and essays revisit personal issues relevant to communication that were first written about in Troubles of Teenage Years. New directions are taken with several of the articles presented, however the collection as a whole demonstrates a more balanced synthesis of ideas as might be expected at this level.

As with Master's Works, the academic essays take various methodological approaches. The majority of the essays are qualitative/descriptive, although a few of the articles included follow the hypothetico-deductive model. Methods covered include rhetorical/critical analyses, ethnographic descriptions, ethnomethodological and phenomenological explications, conversation analyses, hypothetico-deductive approaches, case studies, as well as a few articles employing methodological
triangulation. In the case of methodological triangulation, the most common approach is abductive: grounded in the phenomena with appeal to extant research combined with the meaning expressed by the participants from the participants point of view.

The essays written for the comprehensive examinations for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Speech Communication are compiled in a companion volume: Preliminary to Preliminaries. They are intended to indicate the spectrum of research and study during doctorate level graduate studies. However, they also indicate a clear direction for the doctoral dissertation. These essays offer closure to the work created during this period. Hopefully, this collection, as the last, will help you understand who this person was and who he has become.
Attitudes to T-shirt, Gays Promote Division, Violence

Dear Editor,

In the last several weeks, I have seen a number of letters to the editor of the Daily Egyptian which promote attitudes of division, distrust, and hatred. First, there were the letters regarding the young man with the "F--- Tipper Gore" t-shirt. Then on 10/21/92, there was the letter regarding homosexuality. On both sides of the t-shirt incident were cries of injustice. One side argued that such a statement against Tipper Gore was inherently violent. The other side argued that the actions of Tipper Gore (regarding censorship) were inherently violent (to the rights of citizens).

The second issue, the letter regarding the "normalcy" of homosexuality, suggested that the "perversion" of homosexuality is unjust because it is violent against our society's "moral" way of life. The letter itself was inherently violent because it suggested that "we" all would be better off if these "perverts" were not around.

The problem with the attitudes promoted is that they are inherently violent. Violence against a group because they do not hold the same values promotes division, distrust, and hatred. I propose that this promotion is leading our society to ruin. Although I believe such attitudes are a function of the environment we are socialized into, we have an obligation (especially in an educational setting) to be critical of such attitudes. I am not suggesting censorship of those attitudes, for to deny their existence is to deny our responsibility. I am suggesting that we promote dialogue, and progressive communication, to rid ourselves, as a society, of the attitudes which promote violence, division, distrust, and hatred.

Published as “Attitudes to T-shirt, Gays Promote Division, Violence” (Daily Egyptian, Vol. 78, No. 55, p. 5; November 9, 1992).
Dear Editor,

Several months back I ordered subscriptions to two magazines: U.S. News and World Report and Money magazine. I was well aware when I ordered these magazines that they had conservative editorial policies. My purpose for ordering these magazines was to try to understand the conservative point of view. I was not prepared for the barrage of mail from conservative organizations that I was to receive as a result of these subscriptions. I believe these magazines must have sold my address to a select group of organizations because before I had not received such mailings.

On 9/23/93, I received a mailing from the Republican National Committee. The mailing contained a letter from Sen. Bob Dole and a "Republican Agenda Referendum" survey that was to be filled out and returned. I believe such organizations have a right to both exist and to try to elicit my support. However, I am amazed at the lengths such organizations will go to persuade individuals to support their position.

The letter used several rhetorical devices that I believe are quite manipulative. First, the letter used several instances of hyperbole (or exaggeration): "liberal Democrats are literally dancing in the streets. . . . They now control [their emphasis] the White House, the Congress, the federal bureaucracy, the media, academia, and the entertainment industry." Second, the letter admonishes readers to "ignore [their emphasis] the 'advice' of the 'experts'." This move implicitly places the conservative point of view, or the point of view represented by the letter, in the roll of expert. Third, the letter encourages support for the Republican control of the organizations which are the very organizations claimed to be currently controlled by "liberal Democrats."

Each of these rhetorical moves are obvious attempts by the authors to persuade, unless they are only addressing those they believe already agree with their position. Yet the most blatant rhetorical device used in this and other mailings has been what I will term "enemy design." This is accomplished by the use of "devil" terms. For example, the use of the term "liberal" engenders connotations, supplied by the conservative point of view, which imply characteristics such as loose or lack of morality, or even a desire to destroy Christian morality. Specific implications made in the Referendum are that "liberals" want school children to be given pornographic materials, that "liberals" want to destroy family values, and that only Democrats take part in "pork-barrel" spending projects. The "devil" term of "liberal" is thus applied to all democrats, and other liberal organizations such as the whole "media" complex. In the "enemy design", the enemy is described as biased, implying that we, the conservatives, are not biased, or biased in the correct, moral way.
I would honestly like to know where Bob Dole and the Republican National Committee got the idea that: 1) I would agree with their point of view, 2) that I was not educated enough to see through the manipulative tactics used in their mailings, and 3) that I was loyal to the conservative point of view or any point of view in such a way that I would not try to expose the persuasive tactics used to change opinions.

Published as “Republican Propaganda Incorrect” (Daily Egyptian, Vol. 79, No. 25, p. 5; January 20, 1993).
Dear Editor,

I appreciate the work that the Daily Egyptian staff does in reporting news and offering opinion. However, please be more careful when adding titles or otherwise editing letters to the editor. On 9/28/93, my letter to the editor appeared in the DE. While I am grateful that I am allowed to express my opinion, I was dismayed by the title that was added to the letter.

Nowhere in the letter did I explicitly or implicitly state that the Republican propaganda was incorrect (nor did I imply that it was correct). The purpose of the letter was simply to point out the rhetorical devices used, and my amazement at their use on me.

I also would not have chosen the term "propaganda." Propaganda is a loaded or "devil" term which connotes ideas I did not intend.

The arguments posited in opinion letters often contain certain logical structure and precise language for a purpose. Changing the letter by adding terms not intended by the author can change the argument.
Abuse Ignores Sex Boundaries

Dear Editor,

In response to the letter by Dewey G. Cooper you published Wednesday March 2, 1994 (Daily Egyptian, Volume 79, Number 108, page 5), I would like to validate the thoughts and emotions expressed regarding the lack of male voices concerning abuse. Certainly our cultural mores inhibit males from speaking out about abuse they may have suffered. However, I have female friends who were, for lack of a better emotional descriptor, upset with the letter, perhaps because of the way it was presented. I also want to validate the thoughts and feelings of those who felt the letter was accusatory. I read anger in the words that were on the page and for good reason. As a male, I know that it is difficult to talk about and acknowledge vulnerabilities and victimization, especially when it seems that the cultural expectation is to be strong.

This past weekend, I was part of a production of "Breaking the Cycle," directed by Lori Montalbano, a doctoral candidate in the Dept. of Speech Communication. This performance was produced on the Kleinau stage last semester and was taken to Purdue University-Calumet for one performance Friday March 4. In this production, I played the part of a young man who was coming to understand the incestuous abuse he suffered beginning at the age of three. This was not a fictional account. The director of the show used text from actual interviews she conducted.

Myself and other males I know personally have suffered various forms of abuse at the hands of others, male and female, who had some form of power over us. As Dewey suggested, victimization knows no demographic boundaries. To be sure, the statistics available seem to indicate an overwhelming tendency for females to be victimized by males, and not the other way around. However, it is a mistake to assume, given current attitudes, that the statistics available are highly accurate. Both males and females often do not report when they have been abused.

I doubt very seriously that the persons or groups the author blamed for distorting the picture of the occurrence of abuse are guilty of propagandizing a one-sided picture. I do not believe that there is a grand conspiracy for silencing male abuse survival. Only when we learn to accept the possibility of people’s pain regardless of gender or lot in life, can we hope to grow.

Published as “Abuse Ignores Sex Boundaries” (Daily Egyptian, Vol. 79, No. 113, p. 5; March 9, 1994).
The Clinton Inauguration: Issues of Community and Communication

Thursday night, on the McNeill/Lehrer News Hour, video excerpts of the Clinton Open House were aired. The treatment of the visitors by the hosts, in particular by President Bill Clinton, was gracious and warm. Clinton was considerate especially to the children in the line, and he even offered a happy birthday song to a twelve year old girl.

The Inaugural Address had as a major theme that of unity. To me that theme described a desire to build relationships. I believe that theme was a cornerstone of the campaign, and I believe that theme is a sincere wish of Bill Clinton. The desire to build relationships was a major reason why I voted for Clinton.

Perhaps I came to political awareness earlier in life than many of my peers at the time. I did not vote for Bush in 1988 because I did not believe him to be an honest man. I did not find him trustworthy then, and I still do not believe him to be trustworthy. I believe he has a view of relationships (and family) which is unhealthy. I watched the nation become less kinder and gentler and more hostile and abusive. I saw more prejudice and hatred in the last twelve years, and I saw more and more people become alienated and isolated.

I did not believe the lie that the conservative vision of family values would triumph in a grand reinstitution of morality. That position of moral superiority was hollow because it was preached by people who had, in my view, unhealthy attitudes about relationships. For example, Bush's policies seemed to promote the notion that: father was or should be a benevolent dictator, father was always right, what father said went, and children were to be seen and not heard. Bush demonstrated this attitude, time and again by both domestic and foreign policy. In domestic affairs, although he preached for help to the family, he consistently denied social resources to help troubled families. If father was good, he would be a provider and not a lazy lout. If we as a society continue to punish lazy louts, sooner or later they would come to their senses and do right. If these lazy louts did not do right, at least the punishment of our society upon them would be a deterrent to other males that they had better not become lazy louts. Such a position made the President the disciplinary father punishing (or shaming) the lazy children. After all, father is always right.

In foreign affairs, Bush exerted his force as a disciplinary father on any unruly nation that did not follow his dictates. To his last days, he continued applying his parental attitude that if we continue bombing Iraq, sooner or later they will submit. Iraq is, to be sure, an unruly child that does not obey his or her parents. But it wasn't just Iraq, and it wasn't just Bush. His predecessor seemed to have the same attitudes. I believe macro-level attitudes mirror micro-level attitudes. That is, the attitudes one has in one's personal relationships parallel the attitudes one has towards nations. And, I believe ultimately we treat others the way we are treated.

My coming to political awareness perhaps coincided with my awareness of relationships and others whom I could greatly affect and influence through my attitudes. Shaming others destroys self-esteem. Bullies find their self-esteem by
belittling others. And I saw, as I was coming into awareness, a nation torn apart by bullies who were following the behaviors of their political leaders.

When I saw Clinton campaigning, I saw someone who perhaps viewed relationships as I did. I saw someone who believed that we need to build each other up, not tear each other down. I saw someone who believed that healthy relationships are characterized by concern, by listening, by affirming and validating others, and not by putting others down if they do not obey.

It did not seem to far fetched to believe it was possible to have a politician campaigning on the notion that the only way we can grow as a nation is if we work together. It was not far fetched to believe that someone like Bill Clinton, with the family background he had, could believe in relationships as I do. There was ample evidence throughout the campaign. There was ample evidence on the McNeill/Lehrer News Hour, in the way he greeted the visitors to the White House. There was ample evidence in the news story a few days ago about Bill Clinton's childhood buddy from Arkansas who remains a close friend. I was impressed by the story of how when news of the death of Clinton's friend's mother, Clinton went through extraordinary measures to find this friend (in Italy, while Clinton himself was in England) to console this friend.

In the Inaugural Address, Clinton spoke about unity. I do not believe it was the hollow words of a politician. I believe relationship is something in which Clinton believes very strongly. I do not know if Clinton's particular policies will contribute to fundamental change in attitudes around this country regarding the way we treat one another. But we cannot force love through power, gentleness and kindness through violence, or happiness through apathy.

I felt, through this process of national renewal, recreated in my desire to affect positive change. I felt heard in the political process for the very first time, having the experience of losing almost every election I have ever voted in. It was as if someone finally understood that the attitudes we promote in the macro-level arena really affect the way we treat each other at the micro-level relationship. I hope and believe that at least the change in attitude will be positive for the nation.
Disconfirmation and Human Dignity

People have as a basic human right, the right to be treated with dignity. Dignity is a subjective, individual understanding of that which an individual possesses which makes her human. For example, an individual may believe that she has certain talents while lacking others. This belief that the individual holds helps her define who she is.

Disconfirmation occurs when an individual has been denied his dignity. Disconfirmation is an act of refusing to acknowledge the basic dignity of another. For example, the expectation that an individual will do his best is part of our work ethic. That best may vary according to situational constraints such as illness, time of day, or unrelated worries or concerns. However, the individual following a work ethic of doing his best may not meet the expectations of the other. An act, such as a statement by the other, which denies the individual is following a work ethic, and doing his best, is disconfirming. In that sense, externalizing and projecting our beliefs or expectations onto another may be disconfirming to the other if she does not hold the same beliefs.

Denying the other through denying the other’s experience and knowledge based on that experience is violent. This denial can be manifested in various ways, but the effect is the same. Treatment of the other with less than dignity, the ability to know oneself, is violent.
Music and Growing Up

In August of 1992, I moved to Murphysboro, Illinois. A companion had driven me with a large load of furniture in his truck from my apartment in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. When we arrived at my new home, I noticed that I had already gotten mail. An old friend of mine from high school had sent me a welcoming package. In the package was a letter and a cassette tape of Pearl Jam's "Ten". In the letter, she had inscribed a note about a particular song on the tape entitled "Jeremy". She said that the song reminded her a lot about me when I was in high school.

The tape had been released a year earlier, but I had not heard of this group before. My companion and I put the tape in the player as we drove around to see the sights of Southern Illinois. We recognized the musical influences of Pearl Jam from the early seventies, for example the Guess Who.

When I was growing up, music was very important to me. I used music for cathartic purposes. If I was angry, I listened to music that acknowledged that feeling. If I was sad, I listened to music that acknowledged that feeling. Often times I listened to music to help me get my mind off of the things that troubled me. I entered into the world of the music. I felt the rhythms; I followed the melodies. I memorized and wrote song lyrics on the notebook and book covers of my school books. When I walked to school or rode my bicycle, I sang songs to myself. I read and collected books on music. I collected albums from groups, sometimes whole collections of various bands: Yes, Kansas, Led Zeppelin, Rush, and Pink Floyd. I associated my experience with the stories and narratives in the songs. I read into the lyrics of the music, and interpreted the lines as moments of experience I could understand. It seemed that no one could understand me or my relationship to the narratives in the songs. I felt that if others knew me, they would understand the songs, or if they understood the songs, they would know me.

One particular album that had significance for me was "The Wall" by Pink Floyd. It took me a while, but I started to understand the experience of the character Pink as being similar to my own. Although my father did not die in a war, I did experience feelings of abandonment in my relationship with him. As a young child I sought out surrogates to replace him. But much of the time I spent by myself. I was self-contained yet longing for some connection to others. Pink had an overprotective mother, perhaps she was reacting to the fact that Pink was the only other she had after the death of her husband. That was not the case in my family, there were seven kids. But if I felt abandoned by my father, my mother may have been the one to whom I turned. I wanted to, but there was something in our relationship that kept her at a distance.

In one scene from the movie, Pink was playing at the playground and observing how all the other kids had parents, mothers and fathers, helping them on the swings and slides and merry-go-rounds. Pink’s mother had gone shopping and left Pink to play on the crowded playground. Pink sought out an adult male to help him get on the merry-go-round. Pink observed the man helping a child, and after getting off the merry-go-round went to grab his hand. The man pushed Pink away.
Then Pink went to sit on the swings by himself and watched the other children with their parents. In the first and each subsequent viewing of that scene I have had a strong emotional reaction. It is as if I never really recovered from the wounds of the past, and the viewing reminds me of the pain. I cannot not watch it. It is as if I must hold on to it because it is so much a part of who I am.

Pink also had problems at school. He felt ridiculed by the schoolmaster. School was a very difficult place for me. As a sensitive boy, I had difficulty associating with others. Pink wrote poetry. I wrote poetry. It was my way of dealing with my feelings and struggles. Pink played by himself. I played by myself. I was used to doing things by myself. On infrequent occasions that Pink played with other boys, he had to prove himself to them. I felt inferior in the ways deemed important to others. I was not the fastest. I was not the best player. And when it came time to pick teams, I was the last one chosen.

Pink sought relationships to deal with his loneliness, but his interaction in those relationships seemed to sabotage his attempts to find the very unity he was seeking. All that had occurred helped him build his defenses with which he kept others out. I did the very same thing. And, it took me a very long time to understand why I was lonely and could not develop or maintain relationships. I spent much of my time in my room listening to music. Music was the best friend I had.

Several years later, I was attending a meeting with several people that were trying to come to terms with the traumas of their childhood. I noticed a theme that kept emerging through the narratives: Music had been a saving grace. I spoke out about the theme I had noticed and began to tell the story of my experience with "The Wall". After I spoke, a man twenty years my elder said thank you. He then told a story about how he had always had difficulty understanding why his son had taken his own life. He remembered that his son had always listened to "The Wall". The son left in a note that if they, his parents, wanted to understand they should listen to the song "Mother" from that album.

At the MTV music awards last year, Pearl Jam won an award for the song "Jeremy". The band came on stage with the young man who had played the role of Jeremy in the video. Eddie Vetter, the lead singer handed the trophy to the young man and said that in the end it is really the music that counts. And if at had not been for music, he added, "I might have shot myself in front of the class."

With that statement in mind, I thought about my friend's comment in the letter she wrote me. And, I knew what it meant.
The Dissolutionment (Disillusionment) Bell

The first time I heard the new album, I felt a strong sense of disappointment. I don't know what it was that I expected. It had been seven years since their last release. I supposed in seven years, or is it eleven years, the members of Pink Floyd would have resolved their differences. It became apparent to me upon listening to the new album that resolution was not the case. The album was aptly named.

Several aspects of the album lead me to the conclusion that the subject matter of the album, as a whole, and thus the album title was the very public leave-taking that occurred following the album "The Final Cut" by band member and primary composer Roger Waters. The dissolution of the long-term relationship between Waters and the other band members was an ugly affair. Waters was an artist of impeccable clarity and texture in his descriptions of the human experience. His swan song with Pink Floyd, "The Wall," was very disclosive of a man attempting to deal with the demons of his past, and the follow-up, "The Final Cut," was a realization of that process. The title of that album was ironic in more than one way. It was ironic because it was the final album "cut" Waters was to make with Pink Floyd. But it was also ironic because of the lines from the song of the same name: "I held the blade in trembling hands, prepared to make it, but just then the phone rang, I never had the nerve to make the final cut." It is a wonder if this idea of breaking up the band wasn't something that occurred to Waters or other band members since the period surrounding the cutting of the album "The Wall."

David Gilmour and other members of Pink Floyd described the making of "The Wall" as extremely difficult. According to interviews and reports, Waters was very hard to work with during this time. Waters even "fired" band-mate Richard Wright because his musicianship was "not up to par." Wright was not present on the album "The Final Cut," the only album he was not present on since the first release in 1967. To be sure, Wright had been very quiet during the whole affair. When "A Momentary Lapse of Reason" was released, Wright appeared as an extra musician. On the new album, Wright has principle composing credits on three of the songs, and secondary composing credits on two others, the most he has done as a member of Pink Floyd since "Dark Side of the Moon."

Two of the former songs are instrumentals. These two songs have similar musical themes to the music Waters composed on his most recent album "Amused to Death." Gilmour's guitar in the song "Marooned" even sounds similar to some of the phrasing used by guitarists on Waters' album. Although "The Division Bell" was released after "Amused to Death," it is difficult to determine the direction of influence in guitar phrasing and musical theme. The beauty of the songs crafted by Waters and Gilmour together as members of Pink Floyd occurred because the dark images of the characters created by Waters in the lyrics were perfectly matched by the phrasing of Gilmour's guitar. The song "Dogs" on the album "Animals" is, perhaps, one of the darkest songs ever composed, and its performance is flawless. The song "The Final Cut" contains a measure that requires a major chord as a preferred musical response to the preceding musical theme, however Gilmour
places a minor chord to match the lyrical theme. The sounds of Pink Floyd, Waters and Gilmour collaborating, were in syncrony.

Waters seemed to want to match that syncrony in his solo efforts following his leave-taking. He even employed highly respected guitarists such as Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck to play guitar on his solo projects. The Gilmour "sound" was most closely reconstructed on Waters' third solo album "Amused to Death." It is this "sound" which is imitated in the two instrumentals written by Wright for "The Division Bell."

However, the images of dissolution do not end with the instrumentals. The song "Wearing the Inside Out" describes a relationship which matches the pattern which occurred between the members of Pink Floyd during the period of the band break-up. Although the lyrics to the song were written by a collaborator, it is difficult to imagine that the lyrics do not apply in some metaphorical way to the events surrounding "The Wall." The first person, the singer of the song, presumably Wright, expresses a feeling of being "overrun" by an other. Musically the song sounds similar to the Wright's solo work (including his singing) on his album "Wet Dream." The significance of this connection can be interpreted as a statement that Wright is musically capable, even though Waters did not think so following "The Wall."

The lyrical images of the remaining songs composed primarily by Gilmour also contain references which can be interpreted as statements about the dissolution of a long standing relationship. During the court battles between Waters and the other members of Pink Floyd, Waters was accused of making the claim that he was Pink Floyd and the other members had no right to continue under that name. Gilmour expressed, in an interview, the he was deeply hurt by that claim because he was a principle composer in much of the work of Pink Floyd. Although he was not the original guitarist, Gilmour did know the band from the beginning. He claims to have taught guitar licks to Syd Barrett, and he played for Syd during the early shows when Syd was too stoned to play. When Syd was asked to leave the band, because the band could not tolerate his acid dropping, Gilmour was the logical choice to take his place. Gilmour's, and the rest of the band's, overcoming the cult of personality surrounding Syd Barrett was difficult in the early years. When "Dark Side of the Moon" was released, the band had finally arrived. The follow-up album "Wish You Were Here," seemed to be a tribute to Syd Barrett, specifically the songs "Shine on You Crazy Diamond" and "Wish You Were Here." The song "Have a Cigar," sung by Roy Harper, lamented the "arrival" of the band.

This songs on the album "The Division Bell" seem to describe the relational dissolution between the band members and Roger Waters in a way that is similar to the tribute offered to Syd Barrett on "Wish You Were Here." The songs seem to describe a regret for the way the relationship turned out. They also seem to describe a desire by the band members to reunite with an old friend, presumably Waters. There are "high hopes" for such a reunion, even though there exists the realization that such a reunion will not occur until the old friend returns the attempts. This image is also shown in the closing sounds, where a phone call is made to "Charlie," but when voice recognition is made, the person on the other side hangs
up. This images of the other hanging up is also present in "The Wall" where the character "Pink" attempts to call his lover. And the image is replayed in the song "The Final Cut." In that song, the phone call delayed the inevitable end, but the end still occurred.

Maybe Gilmour, Mason and Wright are hoping for resolution to relational issues with Waters. It is apparent throughout the album that this desire for resolution, although tempered with a realization of the unlikelihood of resolution, is held by band members. Even the image of the two faces interacting with each other face-to-face on the front shows that desire. However, a closer look at the whole picture shows a broken heart. And as a person who held up hopes for a resolution, it is disappointing, and perhaps even disillusioning to see that it has not occurred.
The Experience of Pain and Loss

The pain of loss seems to be a common human experience. In my life I have experienced the pain of loss - loss of loved ones, loss of dreams, loss of desires. I have observed others pain of loss. When others with whom I have been close have experienced the pain of loss, I have felt a loss as well. Perhaps this empathic reaction was due to embodied remembrances of my own pain in similar situations. Perhaps this empathic reaction was due to a loss of the fantasy of naïveté: the belief that nothing harmful will happen to those I love. Perhaps the pain I have experienced at the occurrence of other's pain is a genuine concern for the other. Perhaps the pain results from the reminder of human frailty, fragility, or mortality.

In my life as an instructor, I believe I have had the opportunity to touch the lives of many students, as my students have touched my life in many ways. In teaching a course in interpersonal communication, the subject matter lends itself well to the discovery of relationship. In a sense, I have developed relationships with my students. The course has offered the potential to explore relationships and to share common experiences of friendship, love, and the pain of loss among the members of the classroom community.

In the primary project of the course, the relationship analysis paper, students have had the opportunity to think about deeply and analyze the relationships they are experiencing. I, as their instructor, have had the opportunity to look into their lives in relation to others through the papers they write. At times I feel like a voyeur, peering into their private souls, but I believe that the trust that has been developed between myself and students during the semester manifests itself through the level of detail given in the paper. I have had the wonderful opportunity to see the beauty and the pain of people's relationships with each other.

On occasion I observe some troubling occurrences and events. I sometimes feel a strong urge to reach out to help, although I know in many instances the reaching out is inappropriate and perhaps even painful. I restrain myself in such cases, but I often feel a pain of loss in such instances because of my fears for the well being of people I have come to know.

Recently, just such a troubling occurrence was manifested in an interaction I had with a student. The student had been missing a considerable amount of classtime, due primarily to some surgery he had been undergoing. As a consequence, he had missed a class project, and we set up an appointment so that we could determine an alternative assignment to make up for the one he missed. The student missed the appointment and did not attend class that day.

The following class the student came in late for class and appeared to be disinterested in class. However, his disinterest was not out of the ordinary, and I did not pay much attention to it. After class, students were standing around my desk to sign the roster. He was the last to sign the roster, so I took the opportunity to ask him about the appointment he missed. By this time he and I were the only people in the room. He responded by saying that he was not sure if he was going to succeed in his classes or if he was going to even stay in school. I asked him if he wanted to
talk about it, at which point he broke down into tears and intimated that his eleven year old brother had been shot and killed.

At this point I realized that this event was very serious, and I asked him if he had anyone he could talk to about this event. I do not believe he really heard my question. The student was very upset and displayed emotion through tears, yelling, and walking across the front of the room at a very quick pace. He displayed emotion bodily by drawing his arms into his chest and bending over at the waist. At times, he placed his hands on the sides of his face as if to hide his feelings. He also, put his hands over his ears as if to keep himself from hearing what he was saying. I saw his mouth which displayed a very pained expression. Saliva was flowing regularly between his lips and teeth. It seemed as if he could not control the rapid explosion of emotions which were occurring. All the while he continued walking back and forth across the front of the room.

While he was having this bodily reaction, he continued to talk about the incident and his feelings of guilt. Specific statements he made included that he had raised his little brother as if he was his own son. He felt guilty for being at college instead of home. He stated that he believed his brother would not have been shot if he had been there. He stated that he wished it had been him that had died instead of his brother, and that he wished he were dead.

During this time, I felt confusion. My first reaction was to hold him. I walked toward him on a couple of occasions and grabbed his arm as if to let him know that I was there and wanted to help. He did not respond to my touch but kept walking in a rapid pace across the front of the classroom. I was unsure what to do because I wanted to calm him, but whatever I could do could not relieve the pain he was experiencing. I knew that whenever I was in pain, I wanted someone to hold me. Although often it did not matter to me who that person was, I was not sure if my holding him, because I am a man, would make him feel uncomfortable. All of these ideas were rushing through my head, as I was searching for the proper response.

At some point, I thought that I should just sit down and let him do what he needed. I sat and watched him as he released this great outpouring of hurt and anger. I thought that maybe he needed to release these feelings that he had hid so well during class. So, I allowed him the space still unsure if I was doing the best thing for him.

He kept stating that he needed to get out of school. I knew that if he needed anyone to testify on his behalf to the university that he needed to take a semester off, I would be able and willing to do that for him. I was witnessing raw, real, uncensored, and unmodified pain. And I was witnessing it from a student that I had only had passing task-oriented conversation with in the past. It was as if my whole being was now invested in this person who was little more than an acquaintance. Yet, he was more than an acquaintance. He was a human being. And I was a human being. My life up to that point had been one of a person looking for opportunities to be human, and recalling opportunities in the past where I had either succeeded triumphantly or failed miserably at being human.

I got up from the desk on which I was sitting and walked up to him and grabbed his arm and said, "take all the time you need." The assignments were
I sat in the quiet for approximately two minutes. My head was spinning. As an instructor, and as a caring person, I have had a few experiences in the past of being confronted with another’s troubles. But this time was different. I felt as if I should have done something to ease his pain: I did not believe I had succeeded. Yet why did he choose me. Was it the timing? Was it something external to myself? Did something trigger his reaction? Or, was it something in me that he saw that made him feel comfortable enough to express his vulnerability?

I walked out of the room, and another student asked what had happened. I acted upon my belief, and training, that information of that sort is confidential. And I could not divulge the information because she knew through observation the individual involved. I told her that he had had a tragedy in his family but that I thought he would be all right. Secretly, I was concerned about the possibility that he might take his own life. I walked out of the back of the building but then turned around and went back into the building to ask the other student if she had seen which way he went. I went in the direction she stated, but I could not find him. I thought maybe I could catch up with him to tell him that it might be a good idea to talk to some one who was trained to deal with these type of situations. But I could not see him.

As I walked to my next appointment, I felt fearful that the student might commit suicide since he had offered that option. I felt helpless because I could not find him. I could not think of where to look, and I was running late for a promise I had made to a colleague. When I got to my destination, I told my colleague about the incident. He asked me if I needed to take time out, but I declined because there was nothing else I could do about the situation.

Later, I talked to my supervisor, and she offered me some suggestions about how to follow up with the student. I made an effort to contact the student, but his phone had been disconnected and the university had no phone number for his mother in Chicago. I knew that I did not have responsibility for him, but I still believed I needed to help, and I was concerned about his well-being. I resigned myself to wait until the next class period. The waiting was very difficult.

When the next class period arrived, the student was not in class. However, a friend of his was waiting outside the classroom. I asked the friend if he had seen him for the last couple of days. The friend said no. I responded by telling him that the student had had a family tragedy, and I was concerned about his well-being. I asked him if he would look out for him to see if he was all right. I realized this was all I could do about the situation, but I am still a little fearful.

I believe it is part of who I am to be a caring person, but I felt helpless in the situation. I was witnessing the extreme pain of loss of another human being, and all I could do was to try to be there for him. I kept asking myself why I was the one he chose. I know that the subject matter of the course I teach lends itself to this type of relationship building, discovery and exploration. I knew then, and I know now, that my motivation for studying interpersonal and family communication, as well as
counseling, is based on an anticipation of just such occurrences and a desire to be helpful toward others. Maybe I have helped.
A Human (Male) Experience

Over the past several years I have found myself to be more and more sensitized to issues of oppression and forms of oppression. I have become aware of the myriad forms that oppression can take, and the contribution of power, competition, and hierarchical social structures which can enhance the occurrence of oppression. I suppose another, perhaps more personal, reason for my sensitization to issues of oppression has been my own experience of alienation which I have learned to associate with personal characteristics both inside and outside of my control. Also, the philosophical and theological training I have had during the years I was a member of a religious order, I believe, also contributed to increased understanding. To be sure, I believe my awakening into issues of oppression came to fruition during my undergraduate days, although the potential for understanding existed prior to these studies due to the tolerance instilled in me by my parents.

However, within the past several years, and in particular, the last two years during which I have been engaged in doctoral study, I have had several experiences of feeling disconfirmed, invalidated, ostracized, alienated, and marginalized for personal characteristics which are outside of my control. In particular, I feel I have been oppressed simply because I am male. In the next couple of pages I will attempt to describe several recent events which have occurred in my life which have led me to this interpretation.

Before I begin, I believe I must admit to some of the attitudes I had held earlier in life and the cultural context from which these attitudes were based. Also, I would like to describe some of the occurrences within my family of origin which have contributed to a change of attitude. I grew up in a Catholic family. I am the fifth child and the first boy of seven children. My parents are still married to each other. Although I did not critically think about gender issues as I was growing up, I believe I was heavily influenced to hold traditional values and attitudes regarding gender roles. My parents were fairly open to allow me, and I believe my other siblings, to do whatever we wanted in terms of expression and career. However, the context of the environment we grew up in seemed to reinforce traditional roles.

I remember a specific argument I had with my oldest sister which demonstrated the attitudes I had toward women prior to my entering the seminary. My oldest sister was working toward her Master of Pastoral Studies degree at Loyola University in New Orleans. She had a Jesuit priest as a boss in the Pastoral Ministry office where she worked. She had several unhappy confrontations with this priest regarding women’s roles in the church. She could not understand the reasoning why women were not allowed to be ordained in the Catholic Church. The priest maintained that it was because women were not suited for such a responsibility. This argument occurred while she was going through a troubled marriage. Her husband was a medical student at the time, and he was quite abusive towards her (from her perspective, which I eventually accepted).

In my argument with her, I held the party line. I observed, however, an enormous amount of pain, and later I began to understand. I believe in my
theological studies, I began to understand better the Church's reasoning. At some point I awoke to understand my sister's perspective.

There were several other incidents which lead to an eventual change in attitude. While I was in high school I dated different young women. I came to learn about their stories of abuse and survival. To this day it still frightens and amazes me that most women I have known well enough to know such things about have been victims of various forms of abuse. The year after I graduated high school, the woman I was dating was raped by two males whom she previously considered her friends. That was a very difficult time for her and me both. It became very real for me.

My brother was molested by an uncle when he was around thirteen years old. I knew about the incident, but I did not say anything to my parents because I knew he had not told them, and his trust was very important to me. I was afraid to divulge his secret because of the possible ramifications it could have had on our relationship. In the last several years I have learned about the abuse my sisters suffered at the hands of an uncle(s). When the family secret was divulged to me by my mother about my sisters, she expressed the shock she felt when my brother told her that he had been abused as well. I told her that I had known about my brother's case for years but did not tell because of the perceived sanctions against telling. Later, my mother divulged her story of rape from her childhood.

All of these stories have affected my understanding of others and my approach to relationship. I want to believe that I am a compassionate person, and that the development of trust with others is very important. Others with whom I have developed relationships have had incidents which have shaped their lives. The incidents have sometimes impeded their ability to trust. And, I can understand why. However, it has often been difficult for me to develop relationships with people because of an inability to trust despite my reassurances that I am not like that to abuse others. It is as if the consequences of abuse have disabled victims' abilities to develop relationships. The inability to trust creates a cycle of self-fulfillment which disallows the possibility of ever learning to trust again.

This context leads to the events and the interpretation of events that have occurred in the past few years. On several occasions I have felt as if others could not believe that I could possibly understand. On one such occasion, I was sharing with a female colleague my experience, understanding and pain of a recent romantic relationship dissolution. From my understanding, and from what my former lover told me explicitly, my lover could not trust me or anyone because of her experiences of relational abuse and parental neglect. My lover broke off the relationship with me because she had come to the conclusion that she could not meet my need for trust and intimacy. I explained all of this context to my colleague who had inquired about the reasons for the breakup. I trusted her, my colleague, enough to feel comfortable expressing this personal information. After my story and explanation, she expressed her belief that my lover could not trust because "... maybe she was raised as a male."

I understood her interpretation as meaning several different things. First, if my lover was socialized with male attitudes, than her inability to trust could be
explained in terms of general stereotypes regarding males’ inability to trust. Second, I may be partly responsible for her inability to trust by virtue of the fact that I am male, and I represent the group of individuals who oppress and abuse. But most importantly, an implication of the statement was that if she had been raised as a female, she may have been able to overcome trust issues because females are socialized to be relationally oriented, unlike males. I felt disconfirmed and psychologically castrated. It was as if she was telling me that the relationship was devious and doomed to failure because I acted as a female by trusting and she acted as a male for not trusting. Maybe my colleague did not believe I was telling the truth. My lover told me in no uncertain terms that she had difficulty trusting anyone with personal feelings. I believe I demonstrated to my colleague that I did trust by exposing my feelings to her regarding the unhappy ending to a relationship. My colleague was aware that I had four older sisters. Maybe she assumed that I was not a "normal" male. Although, I trusted her as an individual, and as a scholar whose interests include gender issues, I felt very disconfirmed by her comment.

On several occasions in classes that I have taken during my doctoral studies comments have been made regarding "typical" males. I do not believe these statements apply to me. Maybe my experience is different from most males. Maybe I am more self-reflective than most males. Maybe I am more compassionate than most males because of the peculiarities of my upbringing. I certainly understand statements made by colleagues regarding the attitudes that "most" males have toward women. I have heard many of these attitudes expressed. But, where am I to stand when someone wants to know if I am masculine or feminine. I certainly possess many of the traditionally categorized "masculine" traits, as well as many of the traditionally categorized "feminine" traits. I was born with male genitals. I was treated as if I was a boy growing up. I played traditionally endorsed "boys" games. I was socialized as a boy.

I am attracted to women. While I was in the seminary, I met and lived with and shared intimacy with many males who identified themselves as homosexual. I believed I needed to come to an understanding regarding homosexuality. Up to that point I never questioned my own sexuality. I took my heterosexuality for granted. Other than occasional skinny-dipping episodes as a teenager, and the required group showers during football training, I never had a homosexual experience. Several times during my high school years I had to confront issues of homosexuality in others, but many times I felt it unfair to ostracize people for any reason. For various reasons, I felt ostracized myself, and I resented attempts by others to ostracize me or others. However, in the seminary I knew men personally and intimately who identified themselves as homosexual, and I wanted to understand it. I tried consciously not to take my sexuality for granted. I tried to imagine myself being attracted to men. Every attempt I made fell short. My sexuality was a mystery to me. Since that time I had read and heard much research regarding the biological and sociological factors contributing to homosexuality. I have accepted the fact that being homosexual is not a conscious choice. As a result of my reflectiveness I have gained insight into my own identity. I am comfortable with who I am. I am a heterosexual male. However, these experiences have led me to the conclusion that
intimacy is a need that people feel regardless of gender, biological sex, or sexual orientation. To be sure, I felt intimate with my brothers in the seminary without being physically involved.

Yet, my self-identity as a heterosexual male is incongruent with the definitions of maleness and femaleness that I have been exposed to in the last two years. Statements by others regarding my relationships, regarding typical male characteristics, and regarding who I must be given my apparent characteristics have left me feeling disconfirmed and invalidated.

All of this context leads to the occurrences of this past weekend. Last semester I took part in a performance of “Breaking the Cycle” directed by Lori Montalbano. I decided to audition primarily because I wanted to understand more fully the experiences of my siblings. I stated this reason explicitly to the audience during the discussion session following the performance. Lori was asked to take the show to Purdue University-Calumet, where she previously taught, by the women’s studies program there. Lori had done many of her interviews about abuse survival for her dissertation and for the show in Hammond, Indiana where Purdue University-Calumet is located. I agreed to go to Hammond for the performance. I believed it was a worthwhile endeavor. Although I had some reservations about living through the emotional turmoil associated with the performance, overall I believed it was a good thing to do.

The performance went well. I felt as though I was able to get in touch with the feelings associated with being sexually abused by a parent, which the individual I performed endured. I associated the story of the three year old boy, sexually abused by his father, with the experience my brother had at the hands of an uncle. The other stories within the performance were enhanced because of the many stories I had heard from my own family members as well as others I have been close to. It was a real experience for me, and although I had tried desperately to emotionally distance myself from the subject matter during rehearsals, in the performance in the Kleinau and at Purdue, I could not help but to shake from a real emotional reaction from what was transpiring on the stage in the telling of the stories.

Several events that occurred on the way to Purdue, during the discussion session following the performance, and on the way home resulted in my feeling disconfirmed for being male, just as had other experiences previous related. For example, on the way to Purdue, I rode with four other performers, all women, in a station wagon. During the trip, many topics were discussed, of which many were interpreted as having some gender related aspect. One in particular was a discussion about elephants and their social behavior. Several interesting aspects about elephant behavior were revealed. Two of the women in particular talked about the female elephants behavior and how the elephant community's social structure was matriarchal. The discussion was framed as though the matriarchal structure had only positive qualities against which “obviously” patriarchal societies had only negative qualities. Once the statement about elephants having a matriarchal structure was made, one of the women in the discussion made a fist, bent her arm
at the elbow and made a gesture by pulling her arm down to her side while stating "matriarchy yes." At that point, I felt belittled because of being male.

At some point following this discussion, two of the women stated that they did not mean me in their statements about males because I was not like the "typical" male: I was sensitive. In a sense, this statement could have served as an apology for any possible harm done by the emphasis on matriarchy at the expense of patriarchy. However, the apology served double duty because embedded in the apology was the implication that I was "atypical" and therefore not a true male. At this point, I do realize that there are some aspects of patriarchal and/or hierarchical social structure which has resulted in the oppression of women and many other people, including men. I am also aware that the emphasis on competition as a means to success, over the tendency to cooperate has long been emphasized in western civilization, perhaps even for thousands of years. This emphasis on competition may have lead to the conclusions which allowed for the oppression of people by those in positions of power. Yet, I am leery of the prospects of overthrowing the dominant paradigm by replacing it with another paradigm which may also result in people being oppressed. I am not convinced that replacing patriarchy with matriarchy would result in the oppression of people, however, because I have felt oppressed by those who espouse the ideals of matriarchy, I am not willing to dismiss the possibility that a matriarchy may also oppress.

Following the performance, several statements were made by women in the audience which contributed to my feeling invalidated for being male. On only one occasion did I feel allowed through direct questioning the speak out and express my feelings regarding the performance or abuse. The question which I did answer, was asked of all of the performers. I took that opportunity to express the reasons why I chose to do the show (as stated above). During the next hour, their were no comments made by myself or any of the male audience members. For myself, I felt disattended. Audience members were quick to lump children into a category with women as abuse victims. This disattended my performance of the male that was abused as a child. Following comments about abuse statistics, Lori stated that both men and women were abused by men and women. Yet, this possibility was disattended subsequently by comments from the audience members which implied that only women can be and are abused by men. A lack of an occurrence which contributed to my interpretation of this event as disconfirming was the discussion with cast members following the discussion. Lori and the female cast members were approached by audience members for follow-up discussions. One of the cast members told us later that an audience member provided a personal abuse narrative. I was not approached, even though my character was an abuse victim, and my statement was one of a desire to be understanding and compassionate toward the experiences of my siblings.

I understand the anger that individuals may feel when they come to understand that they have been oppressed or abused. I have experienced it first hand. I have experienced it through the lives of my family members. I have experienced it through the lives of many people who have been close to me through the years. I can understand the desire not to associate with individuals that remind
one of horrors one has experienced. But I am not that person. And as a result, I have felt on many occasions to be accused of something I did not do and have actively sought to undo. Even though I am a male, I have tried to be understanding and compassionate, accepting and nonjudgmental of others. Yet these characteristics which others sometimes observe, I feel, are often labeled as not belonging to me. And thus, I have often felt disconfirmed for being male.
Perspectives on Methodology

In reference to some comments from an instructor about the direction I am going with my questioning on class assignments, there is an underlying theme throughout all of them. At the risk of endangering my position, because I feel it's important to be forthright and admit one's biases, I do have an agenda with my line of reasoning. I am trying to build a case, for my research interests, for the need for method triangulation in the study of human interaction. I believe very strongly that it is important for the researcher to get the whole picture of a phenomena using all the available tools. I also believe that although understanding is a most important end in itself, it is not the only purpose for research. Research can also be a means for making our lives better. It has to be applied, and in order to apply it, the whole picture has to be seen and seen in such a way that there is some orientation toward the future, i.e. prediction.

It is no small observation that the reasons that I am interested in questions about knowing, in obtaining a broad background in methods, in coming to Southern Illinois University in order to get more than the standard hypothetico-deductive research model I would have gotten if I had gone to any other school for studies in interpersonal communication. The social scientific research paradigm did not satisfy my thirst for the big picture. HOWEVER, I cannot deny the things that I understand now as a result of being trained within that paradigm. Indeed, so much of what is understood about human interaction, even in lay persons’ talk at the grocery counter, is based on the social scientific paradigm. It (knowledge about human interaction based on the social science paradigm) is embedded in the culture, and it is impossible to tease out the ideas that inform our judgments in daily living that were derived from that source. If that paradigm is so wrong about human interaction, than how do we survive as a culture with all the information we receive from that source. If I had only been trained within that paradigm, if I had not gotten my BA in philosophy but rather in psychology, I might have believed that was all there was. I may have been contented. But somewhere along the path I caught a glimpse of the possibility of seeing the bigger picture, and I wanted more. So I believe that there is more than one way to see life.

Yet, I get defensive when I perceive others, perhaps absent others or perhaps not, as denying the usefulness of any method for gaining insight on any phenomenon. I had an English professor my first semester as a college student who said, "Every statement is a partial map of a part of reality." I don't know if that quote was his originally or someone else’s, but the statement he made freed me. My entire career as a high school student involved questioning the authorities about the officially sanctioned interpretation of life. And with one simple statement I was liberated from the shackles of the singular view.

I get defensive when I perceive colleagues, whom I respect for their own perspectives, disparaging a method for viewing because for one reason or another they are uncomfortable with the results of that type of inquiry. I get defensive when I perceive others condemning the social science paradigm for being useless in
gaining insight into human interaction. It is as if someone is saying: (a) everything you've learned up to now has been in error, (b) only our, as opposed to your, way of viewing reality is valid or accurate, and (c) you've been duped into thinking that, "Every statement is a partial map of a part of reality." I have now returned to the problem I experienced in high school with someone in authority telling me that should accept only the officially sanctioned view. The social scientific paradigm has been invaluable to me, and it remains so even though I believe very strongly it is not the only way. I am not satisfied. I want to see it all.

With all of that said, there are some serious limitations to the social scientific paradigm, as there are with any way of viewing. You only get a partial map. This paradigm carries with it some dangerous tendencies, including the tendency toward explaining reality in causal terms. This tendency is not inherent in the paradigm, but the tendency occurs frequently as a result of uncritical uses of the paradigmatic assumptions. For example, if one believes that it is possible to predict human behavior, than it is not hard to assume that one could make a causal connection. It is possible to predict with some degree of probability, but predicting does not imply that the action is determined an any way. However, as human beings we predict in order to protect ourselves from the possibilities of the future, and we do it fairly accurately fairly frequently.
Random Notes

Although we may organize according to function, the existential doing defines our lives, the ability to organize is inherent in the structure of the mind. Reality may be structured or it may not. But we understand parts of it because those parts adhere to our ability to organize. The rest is chaotic and random and thus mystery and relegated to the realm of religion.
The argument over whether the art of rhetoric and its practice are inherently ethical or unethical is an argument which seems to have plagued early rhetorical theorists and philosophers. Some rhetorical theorists, such as Plato, posited that rhetoric could be used for unethical purposes. This position begs the question: does rhetoric have an inherently unethical nature? This question may be re-framed to ask about the nature of the art of rhetoric itself.

The definitions one holds for the ethical, and the nature of knowledge, may greatly affect one's outlook toward the art of rhetoric and its practice. This paper will describe how ontological (being) and epistemological (knowledge) assumptions affected beliefs about the practice of rhetoric by the early theorists. This description will take several steps. First, I will posit a working definition of ethics. Second, I will discuss a description of the possible ontological and epistemological assumptions and their relationship to the definition of ethics. Third, I will discuss a brief description of the two outlooks toward rhetoric. Finally, I will utilize a delineation of the thought of three classical theorists: Gorgias, Isocrates, and Plato, to depict the connection between the philosophical assumptions and the assertion regarding the ethical nature of rhetoric.

The works of Gorgias, Isocrates, and Plato excerpted in the Bizzell and Herzberg text, The rhetorical tradition: Readings from classical times to the present do not present a working definition of ethics. It is apparently assumed by the early theorists that such a definition is generally agreed upon. However, an assumption about the definition of ethics may be made from its use in the text. Generally, ethics seems to be concerned with the conduct of individuals in society. Bertrand Russell (1966) argues that ethics is concerned with actions which one should choose to conduct or avoid for the purpose of promoting good and demoting evil. The implication for rhetoric is that truth is the good, and falsehood is evil. Given this definition of ethics, the determination of an act as either ethical or unethical is dependent upon the notion of truth.

To define truth, one has to make some assumptions about the nature of reality and the human capacity of knowing that reality. The first assumption is that reality exists. This point was not disputed by the three theorists relevant to this study. However, the human capacity for knowing this reality was disputed among the three theorists. Possible positions regarding the capacity to know reality include: (a) reality is unknowable, (b) knowledge of reality is purely subjective, (c) knowledge of reality is primary subjective, (d) knowledge of reality is primary objective, (e) knowledge of reality is purely objective, (f) knowledge of reality is gained through sense experience, or (g) knowledge of reality is a priori and requires only recollection to access.

The two Sophists of interest, Gorgias and Isocrates, held that at best humans have probable knowledge. This assertion regarding knowledge includes the
assumptions that knowledge cannot be purely objective and must be gained through sense experience. Gorgias held that, "... provisional knowledge is the only knowledge we can attain" (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 38). Isocrates, a student of Gorgias, posited in Antidosis, "I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course..." (p. 51). This statement implies that knowledge is probable because humans generally arrive at the best course of action given the context of the situation. These contexts can change and are not absolute. Isocrates believed that absolutes or universals do not hold because they do not take into consideration the particulars of a given situation. By comparison, the notion that reality was not immutable was a belief held by pre-Socratic philosophers, such as Heraclitus of Ephesus (O'Connor, B., 1987).

Plato, on the other hand, posited in Theaetetus that "... true opinion, combined with definition or rational explanation, is knowledge" (p. 49). According to Moser & vander Nat (1987, p. 25), Plato held that knowledge is only of what is true. This implies that knowledge of reality is purely objective. This knowledge of reality is a priori (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 55). Plato saw knowledge as justified true belief (Moser & vander Nat, 1987). Plato believed that the essence of reality existed in ideal form. He believed that knowledge of these forms existed in the mind and needed only to be accessed through recollection.

Given Plato's ontological and epistemological assumptions, the ethical consisted of knowing the truth, which was absolute. Given the working definition of ethics proposed above, the ethical individual, in Plato's view, must choose actions which promote the recollection of the truth. The Sophists' ethics would necessarily be more relative, since it required the consideration of context for making ethical choices. If, perhaps, the best course of action was that which was most functional in the given situation, the ethical choice was determined by the context and not by some absolute truth.

Thus, the problem of rhetoric as inherently ethical or unethical was duly defined. The purpose of rhetoric was to convince or persuade the target audience. The process of persuasion could be determined as ethical or unethical depending on the end to which the act of persuasion was aimed. If, for example given Plato's view, the end was to persuade the audience away from the truth, then rhetoric was used for evil and therefore unethical. If, on the other hand, the end was to persuade the audience toward the truth, then rhetoric was used for good and therefore ethical. This argument implies two possible definitions of rhetoric. A broad definition of rhetoric would have no regard for any ultimate goal other than to persuade the audience or to make the audience believe the rhetor. A more narrow or specific definition of rhetoric would regard only that which teaches truth. Plato held (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 59) that rhetoric was "... the art of influencing the soul," which requires knowledge of the truth. Plato therefore believed that rhetoric which had no regard for absolute truth was unethical.

Given this view, Gorgias's and Isocrates's rhetoric was unethical. Indeed, Gorgias held that the purpose of rhetoric was to distract the target "from the limitations of provisional knowledge," (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 38) in order for the target to believe the thesis presented. Gorgias believed that language has the
power to persuade, and therefore could be used for both ethical and unethical ends. Gorgias held a broad definition of rhetoric.

Isocrates also held a broad definition of rhetoric. Isocrates posited in Against the Sophists, "... yet those who desire to follow the true precepts of this discipline [rhetoric] may, if they will, be helped more speedily towards honesty in character than towards facility in oratory." This statement implies that rhetoric is neither inherently ethical nor inherently unethical. Isocrates held that the agent (or rhetor) will eventually become an ethical agent if she/he practices ethical principles in deed.

As discussed above, Plato held a more specific definition of rhetoric. Plato defined rhetoric as good (ethical) or bad (unethical). Bad rhetoric sought to persuade without regard for transcendent truth. Good rhetoric sought to persuade by recollecting transcendent a priori knowledge of truth through dialectic discourse. Plato suggested in Gorgias that Gorgias's rhetoric dealt only with belief -- and not the truth. Plato wrote in Gorgias that Socrates defined Gorgias's position on rhetoric as, "... a producer of persuasion for belief, not for instruction in the matter of right and wrong" (p. 66). Plato therefore believed that the rhetoric of Gorgias, and by extension Isocrates, was unethical.

Plato's criticism of Gorgias, perhaps, was unfair. Gorgias, as did Isocrates, believed the ethical act came from the character of the individual. As stated above, Isocrates believed the agent could be ethical. Plato believed the ethical act came from the search for truth. Plato espoused the ethical life in Gorgias, "Let us therefore take as our guide the doctrine now disclosed, which indicates to us that this way of life is best -- to live and die in the practice alike of justice and of all other virtue" (p. 112). It cannot be reasoned from the available text, namely that read from Bizzell and Herzberg, that either Gorgias or Isocrates would disagree with Plato's view of the necessity of a virtuous life. On the contrary, it may be argued that Isocrates, at least, upheld the importance of ethics.

The ontological and epistemological assumptions of the early rhetorical theorists greatly affected their beliefs regarding the inherency of the ethical nature of rhetoric. In brief, Plato held a narrow definition of rhetoric as requiring a search for absolute truth. With the search for truth, rhetoric was ethical. Without the search for truth, rhetoric was false and unethical. The Sophists held a broad definition of rhetoric as having only persuasion as its purpose with the ethical existing outside the domain of rhetoric. Rhetoric was therefore only a tool which could be used either ethically or unethically.

References


The relationship between knowledge and language has been debated on the point of the nature of knowledge and the nature of language. One argument concludes that knowledge is independent of language. This is the position advocated by John Locke (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 698). The other argument concludes that knowledge (self-awareness and understanding) is impossible without discourse, which is functionalized through language. This position was advocated by Martin Heidegger (Lescoe, 1974, p. 210). In this essay, I will demonstrate that knowledge and language are interdependent. This demonstration will be accomplished by examining and analyzing the arguments of several philosophers and rhetorical theorists from J. Locke through I. A. Richards.

Locke posited that all knowledge is gained through sense experience. Locke maintained, "Sensation, a universal human phenomenon, generates simple ideas, which are universally the same" (Locke, 1690; cited in Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 698). We come to know, or understand, reality first through our sense experience, and we communicate this understanding through an imperfect language. "To these ideas we give arbitrary signs: words" (Locke, 1690; cited Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 698). However, Locke did concede that language itself may allow the individual to know of things the individual did not directly experience. Hearing the explanation of phenomena allows one to "know" about the phenomena.

Individuals do not live in a vacuum. That is, individuals live in the context of their surroundings. If we could only know about an object through our direct experience of the object, then would there be no purpose for interaction? Language serves a function of communicating ideas. The communication process requires: (a) sense experience, (b) some mechanism for decoding or understanding the sense experience, and (c) the presupposition that human beings have the capacity for understanding communicated ideas. Given Locke's strict empirical stance, ample evidence shows that communication of ideas, in fact, does occur.

Locke did not dispute the fact that communication of ideas between individuals does occur. Yet, if this process occurs, some mechanism for decoding these communicated ideas must exist. For the purpose of this essay, this mechanism will be defined as judgment. Given the argument above that language communicates ideas, one may conclude that language produces knowledge. This is the position held by Vico (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 711). The notion of judgment pertains to an assignment of meaning to an idea.

To be sure, Heidegger held, "The intelligibility of something has always been articulated even before there is any appropriate interpretation of it . . . . Discourse (judgment) is the articulation of intelligibility" (Heidegger, 1927; cited in Lescoe, 1974, p. 210). Heidegger believes that ideas must be articulated in order for those ideas to be understood; therefore, knowledge necessitates a judgment. Heidegger continues, "Discourse then expresses the intelligibility of the world, and language is the concrete expression in words and sentences of this very intelligibility"
(Heidegger, 1927; cited in Lescoe, 1974, p. 210). This articulation requires some assignment of a symbol as a representation of reality. Perhaps this notion was first introduced by Nietzsche. "Metaphor formation is, according to Nietzsche, the fundamental quality of the human intellect" (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 886). The connection between ideas and objects is gained by the articulation of the sense experience. That is, a judgment is made about what we experience.

Locke held that language did represent reality. Yet, Locke maintained, "... sounds have no natural connection with our ideas ..." (Locke, 1690; cited in Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 700). Therefore, language must be arbitrary; given this, language is necessarily an imperfect representation of reality (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 698). This notion of the imperfection of language led Locke to conclude that knowledge was independent of language. However, this conclusion was more likely affected by his desire to affirm the possibility of absolute knowledge. If knowledge is not independent of language, and language is imperfect, then knowledge must be imperfect.

Nietzsche reiterates that there is no "naturally occurring" connection between words and things (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 890). Nietzsche states, "The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth, never a question of adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages" (Nietzsche, 1873; cited in Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 890). This view is perhaps a naive understanding of social evolution: however, it does describe the potential for the purpose of many languages. That is, many languages express many different ideas which are borne out of the social contexts to which they belong. This context helps define the meanings of a language so that the language can perform its function. Vico suggested that context influences our understanding with the notion that history must be understood in context (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 712). (I will explore this point below.)

Nietzsche continued the argument with his description of metaphor. Nietzsche contended that language does not convey sensations, but rather, language conveys representations of sensations (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 886). These representations of things in language, therefore, act as metaphors, or symbols, of things. Language, therefore, is a metaphor for things (Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 886). I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden maintained the notion that language is symbolic for reality (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 964). The fundamental epistemological question remains: what is the mechanism for the creation of the symbols of language?

The function of language is the communicating of ideas. To perform this function, ideas must first be encoded into a language that is mutually understood by the participants of the communicative interaction. This notion implies the creation of symbols of language which can be mutually understood. This statement is the basis for the language as metaphor argument. Language becomes a tool of judgment. We make judgments about the sense experience by labeling the experience with a symbol. That labeling is contingent upon the social context and expectations (prior language definitions) as well as our own expectations about the meaning of the reality being labeled.
According to Nietzsche, the expectations we have (about reality) influence our perceptions of reality (Jones, p. 238). So, once a concept is formulated linguistically (a judgment is made), this formulation becomes the expectation to which our knowledge must conform (Jones, p. 239). Heidegger suggested that the structure of language affects our understanding (Jones, p. 305).

This notion suggests that the context influences the judgments made about the things that are experienced. Ogden and Richards proposed that language represents ideas (or perceptions) of reality, and that this representation requires interpretation in context (1923; cited in Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 964). Heidegger held that perception (interpretation) requires a consideration of the whole (object) in terms of the context of its existence in the world (Jones, p. 305). Heidegger also holds that the individual cannot understand an object unless that individual is either dealing with the object or has dealt with it; and, if the individual is dealing with the object, then the individual must understand it (Jones, 1975, p. 305).

Communicating ideas requires judgment which is an articulation of the discourse that exists as a result of the sense experience. As suggested above, this judgment is influenced by the context of the language that is used to represent ideas upon which that judgment is based. This idea calls into question the possibility of absolute knowledge about complex ideas, which are arrived at through discourse. Locke apparently did not want to allow that contention. However, that judgment is influenced by context suggests that knowledge is interdependent with language.

Restating the argument, all knowledge is based on sense experience. Sense experience includes the communication process. We hear messages and ascribe meaning to those messages. The mechanism to ascribe that meaning is judgment. Judgment entails the use of symbols (in a language) in order to make ideas intelligible. Ideas are formed as a result of sense experience. Language, therefore, represents reality. That assignment of meaning is arbitrary, although it is controlled by convention for the purpose of maintaining the functionality of language. This function of communicating ideas requires symbolic formulation by means of judgment. However, judgment is influenced by the language that is used, both to form the idea in the mind and to communicate the idea. Forming the judgment in the mind requires consideration of the context. Context is defined by language in the communicative process. Communicating ideas requires judgment. Therefore knowledge of the ideas is interdependent with language.

References


My first semester in college, I was exposed to a new way of thinking. My intellectual experience of high school had not been challenging in that the "why" questions I had were not answered. In my experience, the why questions were not asked by my peers, nor by the instructors. As Kant was awakened from his rationalistic slumber by the radical skepticism of Hume, my naive eyes were opened by a simple statement from an English Professor. Professor Bob Westerman stated, "Every statement is a partial map of a part of reality." This simple statement exposed me to a way of thinking that ultimately helped answer many of the why questions I had considered throughout my high school career. In this paper, I will explore some of those questions.

The argument over whether the art of rhetoric and its practice are inherently ethical or unethical is an argument which seems to have plagued rhetorical theorists and philosophers. Some rhetorical theorists, such as Plato, posited that rhetoric could be used for unethical purposes. This position begs the question: does rhetoric have an inherently ethical or unethical nature? This question may be re-framed to ask about the nature of the art of rhetoric itself.

The definitions one holds for the nature of knowledge and truth, and the relationship of ethics to that knowledge and truth may greatly affect one's outlook toward the art of rhetoric and its practice, and have implications for the rhetor. This paper will explore ontological (being) and epistemological (knowledge) assumptions, and their relationship to definitions of truth. Since the rhetor's art may involve the communication of truth, which implies ethical choice, ethics will be defined based on these notions of truth. This project will take several steps. First, I will describe the possible ontological and epistemological assumptions. Second, I will explore the relationship of these assumptions to a definition of ethics. Third, I will define language and explore the relationship between language and knowledge. Fourth, I will discuss a brief description of the two outlooks toward rhetorical ethics, and how the use of language impacts the use of rhetoric. Fifth, I will utilize a delineation of the thought of three classical theorists: Gorgias, Isocrates, and Plato, to depict the connection between the philosophical assumptions and the assertion regarding the ethical nature of rhetoric. Finally, I will define the ethical rhetor in terms of authenticity.

To define knowledge and truth, one has to make some assumptions about the nature of reality and the human capacity of knowing that reality. The first assumption is that reality exists. This point was not disputed by the theorists relevant to this study. However, the human capacity for knowing this reality was disputed among the theorists. Possible positions regarding the capacity to know reality include: (a) reality is unknowable, (b) knowledge of reality is purely subjective, (c) knowledge of reality is primary subjective, (d) knowledge of reality is primary objective, (e) knowledge of reality is purely objective, (f) knowledge of...
reality is gained through sense experience, or (g) knowledge of reality is a priori and requires only recollection to access.

Two classical rhetoricians, Gorgias and Isocrates, held that at best humans have provisional knowledge. This assertion regarding knowledge entails the assumption that knowledge cannot be purely objective and therefore must be gained through sense experience. Gorgias held that, "... provisional knowledge is the only knowledge we can attain" (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 38). Isocrates, a student of Gorgias, posited in Antidosis, "... I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course..." (p. 51). This statement implies that knowledge is provisional because humans generally arrive at the best course of action given the context of the situation. These contexts can change and are not absolute. Isocrates believed that absolutes or universals do not hold because they do not take into consideration the particulars of a given situation. By comparison, the notion that reality was not immutable was a belief held by pre-Socratic philosophers, such as Heraclitus of Ephesus (O'Connor, B., 1987).

Plato, on the other hand, posited in Theaetetus that "... true opinion, combined with definition or rational explanation, is knowledge" (p. 49). According to Moser and vander Nat (1987, p. 25), Plato held that knowledge is only of what is true. This implies that knowledge of reality is purely objective, and this knowledge of reality is a priori (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 55). Plato saw knowledge as justified true belief (Moser & vander Nat, 1987). Plato believed that the essence of reality existed in ideal form. He believed that knowledge of these forms existed in the mind and needed only to be accessed through recollection.

Historically, these epistemological and ontological assumptions (of Plato) were held through the Medieval period until the time of the Renaissance, when they began to be questioned (Jones, 1969, p. 2). By the time of the Enlightenment, David Hume fully discarded those assumptions (Jones, 1969, p. 3). Hume's teacher John Locke posited that all knowledge is gained through sense experience. Locke maintained, "Sensation, a universal human phenomenon, generates simple ideas, which are universally the same" (Locke, 1690; cited in Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 698). We come to know, or understand, reality first through our sense experience.

This was the position that the Sophists held. If knowledge is gained through sense experience, then knowledge must require individual processing of external stimuli. For knowledge to be purely objective, individuals must process external stimuli in exactly the same way. Perhaps, the psychological processes could be the same for all individuals. However, the assumption that these processes are the same is disputed through ample empirical evidence which suggests that individuals react differently to the same stimuli. For example, two individuals may have different experiences regarding relationships with their parents. For one individual, the relationship with a parent may have been a happy, healthy, and productive relationship. For another, the same type of relationship may have been rife with conflict and inappropriate, dysfunctional behavior. A discussion on parent/child relationships in the presence of these two individuals may produce different emotional reactions. The possibility of different reactions to the same discussion presupposes a subjectivity to knowledge. As Hume maintained, the external world is
impossible to know with certainty (Jones, 1969, p. 319). Knowledge, therefore, contains both a subjective and an objective component.

It is more useful to argue that our understanding of reality (knowledge) is possible and truth varies in degrees of probability. Truth can be defined as the agreement of knowledge with reality (O'Connor, 1985). If an individual's understanding of reality did not agree with reality, then the truth value of that understanding would be improbable. If an individual's understanding of reality could be tested against others' understanding of that same reality and common patterns in that understanding were forthcoming, then the truth value of that understanding would be more probable. Reality exists and is knowable through an interpretive process of understanding which is dependent upon individual sense experience. Truth, therefore, is not absolute, but is made probable by the individual's ability to conform one's understanding of the reality to the nature of that reality.

We communicate this understanding of reality through an imperfect language, for various purposes including testing the truth value of that understanding. "To these ideas [understanding of reality] we give arbitrary signs: words" (Locke, 1690; cited Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990, p. 698). However, Locke did concede that language itself may allow the individual to know of things the individual did not directly experience. Hearing the explanation of phenomena allows one to "know" about the phenomena.

The act of communicating implies choice which is determined by individual understanding of reality (knowledge). The ethical might be defined as an act of communicating truth. The ethical is concerned with what is good. (This relationship between the good and ethics will be explored below.) The works of Gorgias, Isocrates, and Plato excerpted in the Bizzell and Herzberg text, The rhetorical tradition: Readings from classical times to the present do not present a working definition of ethics. It is apparently assumed by the early theorists that such a definition is generally agreed upon. However, an assumption about the definition of ethics may be made from its use in the text. Generally, ethics seems to be concerned with the conduct of individuals in society. Bertrand Russell (1966) argues that ethics is concerned with actions which one should choose to conduct or avoid for the purpose of promoting good and demoting evil. The implication for rhetoric is that truth is the good, and falsehood is evil. Given this definition of ethics, the determination of an act as either ethical or unethical is dependent upon the notion of truth. If truth is the agreement of knowledge with reality, one might argue that truth is good for existential reasons. For example, if an individual is deluded, that is, there is no agreement between knowledge and reality in the individual's mind, that delusion will affect the individual's ability to deal with that reality and keep oneself from harm.

Given Plato's ontological and epistemological assumptions, the ethical consisted of knowing the truth, which was absolute. Given the working definition of ethics proposed above, the ethical individual, in Plato's view, must choose actions which promote the recollection of the truth. The Sophists' ethics would necessarily be more relative, since it required the consideration of context for making ethical choices. If, perhaps, the best course of action was that which was most functional in
the given situation, the ethical choice was determined by the context and not by some absolute truth. However, this contextual application of ethics does not deny an act toward the good. The contextual application of ethics merely denies the existence of an absolute good which would be cross-situationally applicable.

Thus, the problem of rhetoric as inherently ethical or unethical was duly defined. The purpose of rhetoric was to convince or persuade the target audience. The process of persuasion could be determined as ethical or unethical depending on the end to which the act of persuasion was aimed. If, for example given Plato's view, the end was to persuade the audience away from the truth, then rhetoric was used for evil and therefore unethical. If, on the other hand, the end was to persuade the audience toward the truth, then rhetoric was used for good and therefore ethical. This argument implies two possible definitions of rhetoric. A broad definition of rhetoric would have no regard for any ultimate goal other than to persuade the audience or to make the audience believe the rhetor. A more narrow or specific definition of rhetoric would regard only that which teaches truth. Plato held (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 59) that rhetoric was "... the art of influencing the soul," which requires knowledge of the truth. Plato therefore believed that rhetoric which had no regard for absolute truth was unethical.

Given this view, Gorgias's and Isocrates's rhetoric was unethical. Indeed, Gorgias held that the purpose of rhetoric was to distract the target "from the limitations of provisional knowledge," (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 38) in order for the target to believe the thesis presented. Gorgias believed that language has the power to persuade, and therefore could be used for both ethical and unethical ends. Gorgias held a broad definition of rhetoric.

Isocrates also held a broad definition of rhetoric. Isocrates posited in Against the Sophists, "... yet those who desire to follow the true precepts of this discipline [rhetoric] may, if they will, be helped more speedily towards honesty in character than towards facility in oratory." This statement implies that rhetoric is neither inherently ethical nor inherently unethical. Isocrates held that the agent (or rhetor) will eventually become an ethical agent if she/he practices ethical principles in deed.

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Plato's criticism of Gorgias, perhaps, was unfair. Gorgias, as did Isocrates, believed the ethical act came from the character of the individual. As stated above, Isocrates believed the agent could be ethical. Plato believed the ethical act came from the search for truth. Plato espoused the ethical life in Gorgias, "Let us therefore take as our guide the doctrine now disclosed, which indicates to us that
this way of life is best -- to live and die in the practice alike of justice and of all other virtue" (p. 112). It cannot be reasoned from the available text, namely that read from Bizzell and Herzberg, that either Gorgias or Isocrates would disagree with Plato's view of the necessity of a virtuous life. On the contrary, it may be argued that Isocrates, at least, upheld the importance of ethics.

The ontological and epistemological assumptions of the rhetorical theorists greatly affected their beliefs regarding the inherency of the ethical nature of rhetoric. In brief, Plato held a definition of rhetoric as requiring a search for absolute truth. With the search for truth, rhetoric was ethical. Without the search for truth, rhetoric was false and unethical. The Sophists held a broader definition of rhetoric as having only persuasion as its purpose with the ethical existing outside the domain of rhetoric. Rhetoric was therefore only a tool which could be used either ethically or unethically.

The rhetorical tool uses language to communicate the individual's understanding of reality. The implications for rhetoric involve a method for determining the ethical nature of the rhetorical event. The truth value of statements made by the rhetor must be measured to determine the ethics of the rhetorical event. If knowledge is provisional or contextually determined, and truth is the agreement of the mind to that contextual reality, then what means may be utilized to determine the ethics of the rhetorical event? The means by which this can be determined is the degree of authenticity of the rhetor.

Authenticity is the quality of making ethical choices based on an intersubjectivity (a balance of subjective and objective knowledge) which requires a "leap of faith" in relationship with others. As was argued above, knowledge has both an objective and a subjective component. The subjective component derives from the interpretive processes of understanding of the individual which are unique to the individual's experience. The objective component derives from the common patterns of understanding which exist between members sharing similar experiences. The rhetor must balance the subjective knowledge with the objective knowledge when communicating understanding. The ability to balance the subjective with the objective requires the belief in the rhetor that his or her understanding of reality has probable truth value in both the subjective and objective plane.

The ethical rhetor, therefore, would be authentic. The ethical rhetor would communicate both subjective and objective understanding of reality which is in agreement with the nature of that reality. The ethical rhetor would not sacrifice the subjective understanding of reality for the objective understanding of reality, nor would the ethical rhetor sacrifice the objective for the subjective. This authenticity could be measured by the audience through observation of the rhetor's subjective investment in the rhetorical event, as well as the degree of commonality of understanding on the objective plane. If every statement is "a partial map of a part of reality," then each statement has the potential of revealing either the subjective or the objective understanding of the rhetor.
References


Adventures at Venture
and the Sentinels of Lifestyle

When I go to the shopping mall, it is usually for a purpose. Perhaps the purpose is to buy an item that I need, or perhaps it is to buy something I convince myself I need when the real reason is some psychological compulsion. However, I usually have an item in mind when I go. I do not always purchase an item. Sometimes the item does not exist in any of the stores. Sometimes the item costs more than I am willing to spend, and I do not purchase it. Yet, I always have a purchase in mind when I go to the mall. To purchase, or to consume, is my purpose.

This weekend was not an exception. There were dual purposes in this sojourn to the shopping mall. One purpose was to observe the activities of the mall in reaction to the chapter in Goodall's book about shopping malls. The other purpose was to look for, and perhaps purchase, a calculator for statistics class and a tape recorder for conversation analysis class. I first ventured into the Venture store. The store was abuzz with people. Many of them were pushing shopping carts. I imagine the Venture store is not like the other stores in the mall. First, it is the only store that has shopping carts. Second, the floorplan is more like a Wal-Mart or K-Mart that usually exists in its own shopping center. Large, all-purpose discount stores such as Wal-Mart are usually not found in malls. I did not find the exact calculator for which I was looking. Even large, all-purpose stores cannot carry every item. My search for a calculator would lead me out of Venture. On my way out of Venture, I noticed a sign which stated that this store would close February 13th. All other business conducted with Venture should be done at the other locations. I imagine the Venture store does not fit the mall image.

As I walked out of the Venture, I entered a new world. This new world was comprised of specialized mini-shops. Shops were set up to sell just clothing, or just gifts, or just music, or just food. This was in stark contrast to the Venture, which sold, or at least offered, all of these items. I was not uncomfortable with this new world, for my purpose was to find a specific item. I walked along the corridor of the mall observing the people. Some were walking alongside friends or others with whom they had relationships. Many were holding hands as if they were on dates. Very few people were traveling the corridors alone. I must have seemed an oddity. Not only was I alone, but I was carrying a notebook and pen as well.

I made my way to the Radio-Shack to find a calculator and tape recorder. I did not expect to find the calculator I was looking for since I desired a Texas Instruments. Radio-Shack very rarely sells anything that does not carry a Tandy brand name. I did look at the tape recorders and found a very nice stereo recorder. However, the price was very high, much more than I was willing to spend at that time. It was very busy in the Radio-Shack, and I suppose I decided to leave the store without buying the tape recorder because a salesperson had not approached me. I may have decided to leave the store at that time because I envisioned it would have been harder to make the decision not to buy the tape recorder if the salesperson had spent time with me. That business relationship between the
salesperson and the client is not a personal one, but it is a relationship nonetheless. Once words are exchanged, the members of the relationship discover in themselves some minimal degree of obligation to the other. Would the salesperson be disappointed with my decision not to purchase the item? Would the salesperson have one less pork chop to feed his family if I did not purchase the tape recorder? Although I realized that eighty dollars for the tape recorder would not have had a serious effect on the global economy, or on the salesperson's family life, I decided not to concern myself with the possibility it would. I left the Radio-Shack without making a purchase.

I had resigned myself to the fact that I would not be making a purchase at the mall. I was comfortable with that knowledge even though I did not achieve my purpose. Although I only go to the mall when there is an item that I desire to purchase, I do not always get what I am looking for. However, on this night there was a second purpose. I decided to observe the activities of the mall. I walked down the corridors again, in search of the meaning of the space. In so doing, I observed the mannequins in the mini-shop windows. I had always noticed mannequins before, and I had attributed little meaning to their purpose. They seemed simply to show the items which were for sale in the shops for which they modeled. However, this evening was different. I paid more attention to them. I began to discover a hidden purpose, a hidden agenda. It was as if the mannequins were not just models, but sentinels in a campaign to mandate new styles of living. The mannequins were unliving beings designed to show living beings how to live. The mannequins' life style was foreign. For example, in shop windows, male mannequins only stood with other male mannequins. Female mannequins only stood with other female mannequins. There were no mixed sex mannequin couples. There were no mixed sex mannequin groups.

When I stood further back, I discovered a pattern. Male mannequins stood as sentinels in front of mini-stores that sold only male gender-typed clothing. Female mannequins stood in the windows of female gender-typed clothing mini-stores. On rare occasion, some stores would have both male and female mannequins but never in the same window display. This tendency seemed to communicate that men and women are very different, so different that they must have their own clothing, their own stores, or at least their own departments within stores. This seemed strange considering both male and female mannequins had the same general form. Both gender-typed mannequins had two arms, two legs and a head. There were some slight shape variations between male mannequins and female mannequins. But, both wore pants and shirts. In general, both female and male mannequins wore the same colors.

There was something hidden and dark in the forms of the sentinels, as if there was a deeper purpose. The mannequins stood for something the shoppers should become. The mannequins were not modeling clothing. They were modeling lifestyles. They stood in strange, erect positions. Their arms were folded are twisted in inhuman ways. Their chins were jutted out. Their heads were turned away from the direction of their bodies as if they were looking toward some place that could not be seen by humans. They told human passersby there was another way to live.
As a male, I looked at the male mannequins to try to discover some truth about what it meant to be a man. The male mannequins stood in strong, forceful, hard ways. The mannequins looked cold and calculated. If they were modeling lifestyles, they did so with a firm conviction. But, it seemed as though the mannequins did not do this of their own accord. Some unseen entity made these mannequins they way they were. It was not the salespeople in the stores that made these mannequins. It was not the store manager, though the manager may have placed the mannequins in the shop windows. The salespeople and store managers were dupes to the hidden agenda of lifestyle change.

The people walking down the corridors of the mall were also dupes. The people in the mall seemed unaware of how their lives were affected by the mannequins in the shop windows. The people walked hand in hand, or in triads, or with families. They may have had purposes for going to the mall such as to buy a particular item or items. They may have just needed a night out, and the mall appeared to be a safe and interesting place to spend the evening. They did not look that interested. People's faces did not smile. Faces were expressionless, as if in a relaxed state. Except for the occasional parent reprimanding an active child, people walked through the malls without any apparent destination in mind. Whatever the purpose of the visit, the people in the mall appeared to be dupes to the hidden agendas of the mannequins.

The mall seemed not so safe a place anymore. Although my purpose had always been to go to the mall whenever I needed an item, that purpose gained new importance as if it was the only reason to go to the mall. I would not be going to the mall to pass the time away. I would not be going to the mall as if called by some unseen force. My idea was to go only to consume the item I immediately needed to make my life easier and then leave. I will be more aware now of the hidden agendas of the mannequins.
On the Way to Tippey’s Restaurant:
Murphysboro, Illinois

Tippey’s is a restaurant on the main street in the small Southern Illinois town of Murphysboro. In order to fully describe the experience of Tippey’s, the environment or context in which it exists must be examined. In the description of Tippey’s Restaurant, part one will examine the entrance into the small town of Murphysboro, through the downtown area, and to the front (and back) door of the restaurant.

When driving into Murphysboro, one notices self-advertisements, and descriptions of the town on highway signs. When entering from the east on Illinois Highway 13, one sees the description of town size: Population 9900. Next to the Murphysboro City Limit/Population sign is another sign which advertises Murphysboro champion status in the 1990 World Barbecue championships. A nearby billboard announces, “Welcome to Murphysboro, Home of the Apple Festival.”

One can enter the metaphorical front door of Murphysboro from the east, north or south since state highways from these three directions converge on the east side of town. The east-west route through town becomes Walnut Street. This street is the main street through downtown. The welcoming into the city continues: On every alternating light post along Walnut Street, there are “Welcome to Murphysboro” signs. They are maroon and white and made of cloth.

Driving west on Walnut, the first evidence of downtown is the Jackson County Courthouse. (Murphysboro is the county seat of Jackson County.) The courthouse is a large, two-story building constructed of large, white (perhaps limestone) bricks. In the front of the building, stairs lead up to the first floor. A second floor is visible from the outside, although it is hard to determine how many floors there are in total. The front of the building is framed by large pillars. In front of the courthouse are two signs. One sign is an honor roll for Desert Storm troops of Jackson County. It’s a list of names of all the people who have served in the Persian Gulf War from the area. The second sign advertises the service of the “American Legion of Illinois.”

Directly across the street from the courthouse is a building which appears to have been a store at one point in time, but has since closed down. It is empty inside except a few brushes, and a box or two, and a cup, and an extension cord. Next to the empty building is an empty lot. The empty lot appears to have been the location for a building sometime in the past. However, the lot is grassed over now. It seems odd that an empty lot would be this close to the downtown area, since it is not even being used as a municipal parking area.

There are three traffic lights - one at Eleventh Street, one at Thirteenth Street, and one at Fourteenth Street - which seem to demarcate the downtown area. The traffic lights seem to slow down traffic, giving travelers a reason to stop. There are a number of shops along Walnut Street. Some shops are open for business and some are closed. There is even a “For Rent” sign in one shop window. These shops
sell all types of things. For example, there is a shop that sells vacuum cleaners, a general store, a Rexall drug store, and several shoe shops. There is even a pet store in downtown Murphysboro, which still has Christmas trees and decorations up even though it is February. A shopper can even buy a pair of plastic Pink Flamingos for the front yard at the low price of $8.99. The shops have Valentine's Day decorations such as little, red hearts up in the windows.

Between Thirteenth and Fourteenth street, on the left side is the Murphysboro Chamber of Commerce. There is a little sign in front of the Chamber of Commerce which advertises Murphysboro as the "Home of the Apple Festival." The sign even has an apple on it. The townspeople here appear to be quite proud of their apple heritage. In several of the shop windows there are different signs with apples on them advertising some aspect of Murphysboro. Next to the Chamber of Commerce is the old Liberty Theater where the moviegoer can see movies for a dollar.

On the corner of Fourteenth and Walnut, there is an old federal building. It has the same basic style as the courthouse with large pillars framing the front of the building and the words: United States of America carved into the stone mantle facade. It is made with white brick and has stairs leading up to the first floor. It does not appear to be used as a federal building, but rather as an art and gift gallery called Olga's.

The number of banks along Walnut Street also serve as a demarcation of the downtown area. There is a Charter Bank, a City National Bank, and a First Bank and Trust approximately four blocks apart. Across Walnut from the First Bank and Trust is the Murphysboro Township building. The building has a sign on the door which advertises "General Assistance, Roads and Bridges, Assessments and Community Service."

On the southwest corner of Sixteenth and Walnut, there are a number of buildings. The first building is what used to be a florist shop but is now closed. Next door is Tippey's Restaurant, and a store called Video Images where they sell baseball cards, and rent videos and games. The Tippey's Restaurant store front is very close to the road. There is about eight feet of sidewalk between the store front and the curb. There are three parallel parking spaces marked off in front of the restaurant. There is a lighted Pepsi sign in front of Tippey's. Below the Pepsi logo the sign reads "Tipp'y's Restaurant, parking in rear." Tippey's on the sign is spelled T-I-P-P-Y ' S. On the building facade, however, are large, white letters approximately two to three feet in height which spell out Tippey's Restaurant with an E.

Across the street from Tippey's is Grob Auto Center. Apparently, cars are sold at Grob Auto Center. There are five cars on the inside of the building behind plate glass windows. All of the cars are classics. There are two Thunderbirds. One Thunderbird appears to be a '61 or '62 model. The other Thunderbird is perhaps a '64 model. There is an early/mid-seventies Lincoln Mark IV, a forties or fifties era Chevrolet, and another car in the back whose make is hard to determine.

Next door to the Grob Auto Center is Blankenship Auto Parts. There's an empty space between these two buildings where perhaps another building existed.
The former existence of a building between Grob and Blankenship is apparent from the large I-beam between the two buildings, the jagged brick corners on the inside of both the Grob and Blankenship buildings and the fact that the two buildings are connected in the rear.

In the empty space between the two buildings are several old, beat-up or used cars and a van. The van, a Chevy, looks like a mid-seventies model and has a sign in the window. The van is being sold "as is" with no warranty. The sign says it is a 1976 Chevrolet G10 van.

On the other side of Grob Center, directly across Sixteenth Street is a Uniroyal Tire store: the Wright Tire, Muffler, and Auto Center. Wright Tire is also known as Murphysboro Auto Parts. On the other side of Video Images is I.K.T. Service, Inc. They sell auto parts as well. So, in this one block there are three auto parts stores, a car shop, a closed florist store, a restaurant, and a video/game rental store.

On the south side of Walnut Street, Sixteenth Street is paved with red bricks. Just past the buildings on the right there is an alley. The alley leads to parking for Tippey's Restaurant patrons. Directly behind the restaurant, on the north side of the alley, is a parking lot with five slots for cars. There's a sign on the back of the restaurant that says, "Tippey's Rear Entrance," and there's a door. There's a no parking sign on the left side of the building just above an ice machine, and on the left side of the parking lot, letters which spell out NO PARKING are painted on the pavement. Next to the ice machine there is a small space large enough for one car. Above the space is a green-lettered sign that says "Reserved for Manager Only." Apparently that location is the parking space for the manager of the restaurant.

At the corner of the building, which from the front appears to be the Florist shop is a very small dumpster. Directly across from this parking area, on the other side of the alley is the main Tippey's parking lot. From Sixteenth Street there is a sign visible that says "Parking while dining at Tippey's - Rear entrance." There are two other signs, that read "Tippey's Parking, while dining inside, violators will be towed, use rear entrance." I notice on these signs Tippey's is spelled with an E. On the back of the building, where it says "Tippey's Rear Entrance," Tippey's is also spelled with an E.

Right next to the parking area directly behind the restaurant is a miniature golf course similar to a "Putt-Putt" golf course. The miniature golf course perhaps belongs to the Video Images game rentals place. It appears as if the course has not been used in a while. There is a large chain-linked fence, six feet in height, that surrounds the golf course. On the other side of the chain-linked fence is a small parking area for patrons of Video Images. There are wooden signs with hand-carved lettering that read, "Private parking! Video Images parking only! Violators will be towed at their own expense!"

Next to Blankenship and Company Inc., headquarters of AC/Delco products, is a closed-down Zephyr Self Serve gas station. There are large plywood boards pasted up around the doors, large concrete blocks surrounding the outside of the lot, and yellow police tape attached between the concrete blocks. Apparently, the owners, or perhaps the police or city, do not want people on that parking lot.
The next block, Seventeenth Street, was once the location of a railway line. On the southwest corner of Seventeenth and Walnut is an old train depot which is now Molly-O's Restaurant/Lounge. Across from the old depot is the parking lot for the local Dairy Queen. This particular area figures very large in the annual Apple Festival. The edge of the parking lot is where they have the judging station for the Apple Festival parade which goes straight down Walnut Street through downtown Murphysboro.

There are businesses west of Seventeenth Street, but these businesses are more spaced and appear to be less central to the downtown area. As one continues west, the "Welcome to Murphysboro" signs on the light posts continue. But the signs can be read from either direction.
The Public Relations Student Society of America, Raymond D. Wiley Chapter:
Issues of Organizational Interaction

Organizations have as a primary function interaction between members and interaction between the organization and the outside world. The public relations specialist is the individual within the organization who is given the role of facilitating communication within and out of an organization. This role is becoming more and more important as our society moves into an information age. Many organizations require full-time staff to serve the function of public relations; other organizations contract out to public relations firms.

Public relations firms serve as marketers for organizations toward their clients and customers. There are marketing aspects to the role of public relations specialist, such as, organizational spokesperson, speech writer, customer relations representative, fund-raiser or director of development, and communication specialist. Each of these aspects helps the successful public relations specialist create an image of the organization he or she represents.

Public relations as a field of study contains aspects of speech communication as well as business administration. The public relations student must learn to manage contracts with firms as well as manage the images of the firms he or she may one day represent. In order to facilitate the learning process for the public relations student, organizations which simulate or take part in actual public relations type work have been created. One such organization is the Public Relations Student Society of America.

The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) was founded by the parent organization: the Public Relations Society of America. PRSSA is an undergraduate organization with one-hundred and seventy-seven chapters nationwide, and approximately five-thousand, seven-hundred members. PRSSA is a student-run organization for students majoring in public relations or allied fields, or for students interested in public relations. The main focus of the organization is pre-professional training in public relations.

PRSSA holds national and regional (district) conferences where members can attend germinars and workshops. These workshops serve the purpose of enhancing members knowledge of public relations. Conferences also serve as a place where student-members can meet with professionals (members of the parent organization) to learn about public relations and ask for career advice. However, much of the learning about public relations occurs at the local level.

PRSSA was founded on April 4, 1968 as the student organization of PRSA. Nine chapters were chartered at schools including: University of Florida, University of Houston, University of Maryland, Ohio State University, San Jose State College, University of Southern California, University of Texas at Austin, Utica College, and West Virginia University. Five more chapters were established in the first year. The requirements for charter included the offering of a minimum of two courses in Public Relations at the school seeking charter. From its founding until 1973, PRSSA was
governed by the Assembly and Board of Directors of PRSA. In 1973, Joan-Patricia O'Connor, a graduate student at the University of Southern California presented a resolution to the PRSA Board of Directors calling for PRSSA to be managed by students. Formal approval was given to the resolution and O'Connor was chosen as the first National Chair of PRSSA.

Requirements for charter have since changed. In 1987, a commission sponsored by PRSA and including other organizations such as the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the International Association of Business Communicators, the Speech Communication Association and the International Communication Association, determined that charter members should offer a minimum of five courses in Public Relations, and undergraduate study should be firmly grounded in Liberal Arts.

PRSSA is headquartered in New York City and is composed of twelve districts nationwide. The Executive Director is Colleen McDonough. Each of the twelve districts is headed by a District Director. The District Director is elected by members annually at the National Assembly. The current Central District Director is SIUC senior Jana Dawn Perkins. Southern Illinois University is a member of the Central District, which is comprised of the five states: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, and includes fifteen active chapters (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Public Relations Student Society of America National Committee. The National Committee represents the formal structure of the organization at the national level.
The SIUC chapter is the Raymond D. Wiley Chapter. The R. D. Wiley Chapter was chartered in January, 1970, less than two years after the national organization was founded. The chapter was founded by Raymond D. Wiley, former associate professor of speech communication. Since its founding, the R. D. Wiley Chapter has won numerous awards on both the district and national level as an outstanding chapter, including the 1990 Outstanding Chapter in the Nation. Dr. Michael Parkinson, of the Department of Speech Communication is the current Faculty Advisor.

In 1980, the Raymond D. Wiley Chapter established the Pyramid Public Relations firm. Pyramid, an agency of the Wiley Chapter, is a student-run firm with accounts from local organizations and businesses. As a Public Relations firm, Pyramid engages in media writing, brochure designing, special events planning, as well as research projects. Accounts currently held by Pyramid include: the Neighborhood Food Co-op, Pickneyville-DuQuoin Airport, IMC (International Management Consultants) St. Louis, and IMC Chicago. Members of Pyramid supervise accounts, conduct interviews, and write news releases, brochures and newsletters.

In examining this organization, I interviewed a new member to determine his reasons for joining PRSSA. Todd B. responded, "I joined because I want something for my résumé and to meet other people...gain experience, and maybe learn a little about public relations. I'm a PR major." Todd joined PRSSA in February following an "open house" meeting for new members. Within the first month, he has attended two major meetings for the entire chapter and one Pyramid meeting. Todd's general impression is that the organization is very worthwhile. Students run the organization and learn how to do public relations. Todd believes that active members of PRSSA have a mindset (or ambition), or goals about public relations and that officers in the organization have quite a bit of outside work that they must do in order to run the organization. His impression of the officers that he has met is positive. To him, the officers were nice and very helpful. He stated that the officers he met were helpful because they explained more about the organization than he could gather from the brochures that were handed out at the "open house" meeting.

PRSSA members write articles for a local (Chapter) newsletter ImPRRections. I have observed members working late in the evening in both the main Speech Communication office and the PRSSA office on the newsletter. I have also observed members holding meetings in the Speech Communication Conference room, and in the second floor lobby. PRSSA has a bulletin board on the wall of the second floor lobby, as well as several banners denoting awards for the Chapter's accomplishments.

The organization seems on first inspection to have very specific goals for its members. However, the local chapter also has inactive members. This paper will explore inactive members impressions of the organization and their reasons for being inactive, as opposed to active. Other issues may include the Chapter's process of electing officers. Approximately three-quarters of the present officers are graduating seniors. How the Wiley Chapter of PRSSA prepares younger members for leadership roles will be observed.
The formal structure of the local chapter is similar to the formal structure of the larger organization. The chapter has five elected positions which constitute the governing board. The elected positions include: (a) president, (b) vice-president, (c) vice-president of operations, (d) secretary, and (e) treasurer. The chapter also has a faculty advisor, Dr. Michael Parkinson of the Department of Speech Communication. He serves in an advisory capacity only and does not take part in the decision making of the local chapter. Each of the four elected members under the president have one vote in matters requiring a vote such as the allocation of funds for projects or conferences. The president votes only in cases of a tie vote. From information gathered in an interview with the president of this chapter, J. Smith, most chapters follow this structure. Exceptions to this would occur in chapters in which there is not a vice-president of operations. The vice-president of operations position exists when there is a student-run public relations firm. In the case of the local chapter, the vice president of operations oversees Pyramid, as the Executive Director (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. PRSSA, The Raymond D. Wiley Chapter formal structure.

Seven committees exist below the position of vice-president. These committees include: (a) public relations director, (b) professional planning, (c) publications, (d) social activities, (e) promotions, (f) fund raising, and (g) portfolio. The chairs of these committees are seated through an appointment process in which potential appointees interview. Each committee holds individual meetings, and the committee chairs respond to the governing board. However, J. Smith stated that this particular chapter uses a more unilateral decision making process. That suggests that even though a formal structure exist for the local chapter, the local chapter uses a more horizontal pattern of communication as opposed to the classical top-down or bottom-up vertical pattern of communication. J. Smith suggested that local chapters have idiosyncratic rules for the governance of the chapter, and that these rules are influenced by the persons in charge of the local chapter, i.e. the president and faculty advisor.
There is also a formal structure for the student-run firm Pyramid which is overseen by the Vice-president of Operations. The Pyramid Public Relations firm has a financial and an operations manager which oversees the processes of the firm. The marketing manager is in charge of promoting Pyramid to potential clients. For each client that Pyramid services, there is an account supervisor and three account executives. At present, Pyramid services four clients. There are four account supervisors and a total of twelve account executives (see Figure 3).

A. Vice President of Operations  
   1. Financial Manager  
   2. Operations Manager  
      a. Account Supervisor  
      b. Marketing Manager  
      c. Account Supervisor  
         i. Acct. Exec.  
         ii. Acct. Exec.  
         iii. Acct. Exec.  
    - Clients

Figure 3. Pyramid Public Relations formal structure.

These characteristics of the structure of the Raymond D. Wiley chapter manifest themselves through chapter artifacts and interactions between myself and members. Examples of artifacts include the awards won by the chapter adorn the walls of the main lobby on the second floor of the Communications Building. There is also a bulletin board for the organization in that lobby.

The PRSSA office is located in room 2021C of the Communications Building. On the outside wall of the office is a schedule of office hours for PRSSA members working in the office. On the door are two black nameplates with white lettering. One nameplate announces PRSSA, while the other announces Pyramid Public Relations. Below these two signs is a memo board for attaching information, notes, and other periphenalia. The door and outside walls appeared cluttered with information and envelopes for dropping off papers or notes.

Inside the PRSSA office are more posters, and notes, and memo boards on the wall. On one wall are a number of plaques. These plaques announce awards won by the chapter. One item that strikes me is an eight by ten portrait of Raymond D. Wiley. Against the wall, on which the plaques are hung, there are two desks with a two drawer file cabinet between them. Above the file cabinet is a set of mailboxes for PRSSA committees and officials. In a corner above one of the desks is a shelf which contains materials such as pamphlets about the organization and chapter.

On the opposite wall are two three-drawer file cabinets, one two-drawer file cabinet and a desk. Above the file cabinets is a shelf. The shelf and file cabinets appear to contain materials for the organizations or firms with which Pyramid has accounts. Above the desk is a memo board, which contains notices, phone lists, and other information. On this desk is the phone. On the wall opposite the door is a clock.
This office environment gives the impression that much work is done here. There are five chairs in the office, three of which are situated directly behind the desks. However, it does not appear overly organized. I believe that someone who works in the office can probably locate any materials that are needed. Yet, it office does have a somewhat casual feel about it. For example, the posters on the wall are hand made in bright colors. All of the items on the walls are placed somewhat haphazardly, except for the plaques. This seems to suggest that pride is taken in the organization but not to an extreme of formalization. This environment seems to follow the formal/informal structure of the organization as discussed above.

Next to the three file cabinets is a box which contains T-shirts. The existence of the box of shirts as well as the placement of notes on the wall suggest a more casual atmosphere than suggested by the formal structure. I experienced a sense of casualness in the tone and manner of conversations I had with the president and other members. At the open house, at the beginning of the semester, for example, I talked at length with an active member of the organization about casual topics. I am curious about how an organization such as PRSSA is successful in balancing the needs for formalization of structure and casual atmosphere.

In interviewing members, I received a positive description of the organization in terms of interaction between members. I have observed members working together in the office without conflict. This is not to say that conflict does not occur, rather I have not observed conflict. J. Smith described the decision making protocol as more collegial as opposed to hierarchical. In some cases, such as small (under one-hundred dollars) allocation of funds, the decision is made by the executive board. However, other decisions are made in discussion with other members during the large chapter meetings.

When talking with former members of PRSSA, another perspective emerges. Two former members disclosed that the committee chairs often complained that the members of the committee, including the two former members, would not show up for the committee meetings. What occurred in many instances was that the committee chairs would not take into account the scheduling needs of members. Instead committee chairs would simply state a time for the meeting that was convenient for themselves. Committee members would not attend the meetings either because they had time conflicts or personal conflicts with the scheduling decision-making style of the chairs, or because they experienced burn-out from membership in PRSSA.

The former members interviewed disclosed that they were only members for one year. This was due primarily to burn-out from the organization. The burn-out was described as being caused by the large amount of work and time required for the organization without enough compensation. This description came from both former members who served as committee chairs and those who were at-large members.

Former members described their decision to join PRSSA as primarily for the purpose of padding their résumés. The purpose of the organization was described as an extracurricular activity which might help public relations graduates get a job because of the profile of PRSSA. One former member stated that the only real
benefits came if you worked with Pyramid. However, the work load for members of Pyramid did not justify the compensation because it required many hours of work which took time away from classes, social life, and part-time work for which students got paid.

Another former member who served as a committee chair described the work load as high; most of the work was done by the chair because committee members would not show up at the meetings. The chair would have to make phone calls to all the committee members to tell them when the meetings were occurring, but even then members would not attend. It is interesting to note that, as discussed above, one former member felt decisions regarding when meetings were to occur were autocratically made. The former committee chair interviewed felt this type of decision was the only option available given the circumstances of low interest or motivation by at-large members.

The current vice-president of operations, Kelley O., concurred with the above description. The VPO is also the executive head of the Pyramid firm. She has been a member of PRSSA for one and one half years and has participated in many of the positions in the organization. She had become head of Pyramid at the end of November 1992. She stated that it was somewhat difficult to get members to contribute to the work load. For example, she described a technique that she uses to foster input: she asks committee members to write down a thought for the day. Next she has them relate the thought to an idea for Pyramid.

Most often, she will have ideas for Pyramid and will implement the ideas. She does ask for input from committee members, and she asks for opinions about her ideas. However, she believes that the majority of ideas come from her.

She described many members as interested solely in a line on their résumé. She agreed with the description given by the former committee chair that few members come to the meetings or participate in PRSSA work. She stated that even though there are seven committees in PRSSA, only a few of them have regular meetings. Several of the committees have only one or two members, and those committee members do the work on their own time.

She described the tone or desire of committee chairs as being open. However, when decisions have to be made, and members do not contribute input, the chair has to make the decision. According to her, it might appear that the chair is acting in an autocratic manner, but that decision-making strategy is needed due to the lack of input from other members.

Kim, the secretary-elect for the 1993-94 school year stated that although inactive members may get a line on their résumés, she believes active members get more than just experience. She stated that in her capacity as committee chair she has had several opportunities to pad her résumé. She concurred with Kelley's description of the problem of work load and at-large membership. However, Kim believed that the extra items for the résumé as well as the experience made the work worthwhile.

It would seem that the majority of work is done by committee members. If that is the case, then J. Smith's desire to be more collegial in the decision-making
process for the chapter as a whole makes sense. Practical necessity may induce decision-making from the chairs of the committees.

On Wednesday, April 21, 1993, the Raymond D. Wiley Chapter of PRSSA held its last formal meeting of the year. The meeting involved announcing the names of the new officers, covering any last minute business such as the amount of funds which should be allocated to recruitment and the announcement of end of the year social events, and a speech from Virginia Marmaduke, retired reporter from the Chicago Sun Times.

The meeting was held in Lawson 101, a lecture hall. The hall angles inward and downward toward the front where a podium, backboard, and projector screen propose the focal point of the room. The audience area partially surrounds the front of the room in a semi-circle. Audience members sit behind tables. The room is situated much like a parliamentary chamber. And the proceedings of the evening demonstrated that characteristic.

At the top of the hour, current president J. Smith announced the names of the new officers. Several awards were given for best new members and gifts were presented to Dr. Parkinson. Then J. Smith introduced member Gail who gave a short introduction of the guest speaker Virginia Marmaduke.

Virginia Marmaduke is eighty five years old and is from Pinckneyville, Illinois. She was the first woman to work as a reporter for the Chicago Sun Times and was the only woman to work in such a capacity for many years. Consequently, she had many stories to tell about her experiences as a reporter. Her talk was geared toward the importance of public relations and she gave several examples from her experience about public relations issues. She spoke for approximately twenty minutes then fielded questions from the floor about her experiences.

After the guest speaker, the meeting was turned over to the president-elect Julie Kennedy. The topic of discussion in the general meeting involved the activities of the last few weeks including the Fun-fest fund raiser. Money that was raised at the Fun-fest was requested for use in recruitment. The importance of recruitment was underscored due to the large number of members who were expected to graduate this May. A figure of two-hundred and twenty five dollars was offered as an appropriate amount for spending on advertising PRSSA. However, a disagreement about the calculation of that figure and the need for using that amount for advertising ensued. The former treasurer asked how the figure was generated. The president-elect answered that the figure was based on general price guidelines of the Daily Egyptian newspaper.

The discussion about allocation of funds for the purpose of recruitment continued regarding the need for advertisement in the Daily Egyptian. One member suggested the group seek new ways to advertise and recruit. This member suggested that public relations strategies be used to advertise and recruit new members. One of the new officers requested that a motion be passed to accept the amount of two-hundred and twenty five dollars. There was no opposition to the motion.

The next process to occur was reports from the various committee chairs. These reports were primarily pleas for new members to apply for the positions of
committee chairs who were leaving due to graduation or moves to other positions in the organization. The meeting ended with announcements about the end of the year social, the awards banquet, and a party to be held at a member’s house immediately following the meeting.

An interesting aspect of the meeting was that many members, whom I had never seen, were in attendance. I had not seen many of these people visit the PRSSA office during the semester. The party after the meeting consisted of approximately a dozen people, half of whom were members of the organization I had seen at the meeting but not around the PRSSA office. Many of the people regularly around the PRSSA office were not at the party. Absent from the party were both the president and the president-elect and many of the officers.

The party-goers all seemed to be friends. There were two distinct groups at the party when I arrived. One group was in the den watching the Blackhawks/Blues hockey match. I did not recognize any of these people though I assumed they were all members of PRSSA. They did not seem to recognize me either, although they did seem to accept me into the house. In the kitchen were the smokers. I recognized several of these people. The new vice-president was present among the smokers. This was the individual who invited me to the party.

What I noticed about both the meeting and the party was that there was a pronounced lack of jargon. There did not seem to be any special language used in any of the interactions to which I have been privy. I imagine one reason for this was that one function of a public relations firm is to communicate well between clients. Lack of jargon may be one way to for the organization to actuate its function as a public relations organization.

The party seemed like a regular party of college student friends. I conversed with a member in the PRSSA office the next morning and asked her if she believed that there were any cliques in the organization. She responded that there is definitely a core of members who do the work, and they consider each other as their friends. She mentioned that many of the core members, particularly officers and committee chairs, consider other core members as their main group of friends and that many core members do not have friends outside of PRSSA.

This is an interesting statement given the participation at the party. An interesting question about this situation is how core members re-vitalize interest in the organization as core members leave. At the meeting, one of the main focuses was a desire and need to recruit new members. This seems to be an invitation for new friendships.

Conclusion

The Raymond D. Wiley chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America seems to accomplish its goals of training its members for careers in public relations. However, these goals are only met for active members. Active members desire to gain new members and to promote participation by inactive members. Yet, the types of patterns which emerge, such as the development of cliques, may inhibit active participation by members who do not serve as committee chairs or board members. This organization is unique in that many members may not develop friendships outside of the organization. Task-oriented hierarchical organizations
may prohibit or discourage friendship development in order to keep the tasks as the primary goal. This chapter of PRSSA may have difficulty keeping the tasks at hand as a goal for members who join primarily for the purpose of a social group.

The Wiley chapter will also have to struggle with a new office. The office space they currently occupy will not be available for the coming school year due to renovations. Chances are good that the new location will not be centrally located near the Department of Speech Communication. This may pose additional logistic problems for an organization which is attempting to increase its membership.

Membership will probably continue to be difficult for this organization. The choices made to accomplish its goals seem to sabotage attempts to foster more participation. However, structure more formal than what currently exists for this organization may have more detrimental effects on membership.
Introducing the Problem
What is disconfirmation? How can we capture a sense of it? These were our primary questions. We wanted to understand how individuals describe their experience of confirmation and disconfirmation. Each individual experiences confirmation and disconfirmation in a unique way. To explicate the experience of confirmation and disconfirmation, our group organized and structured: (a) a method comprising an interview protocol (see Appendix), (b) a general and unfolding understanding among our membership regarding how to proceed, and (c) a commitment to work together toward understanding.

Overall Thematic Structure
(We believe that because contrived schematic structures are not wholly adequate, we attempt to capture, as best we can, the myriad nuances of confirmation and disconfirmation.)

We thematized a structure consisting of four cells (see Figure 1).

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**Figure 1.** The thematic structure of confirmation/disconfirmation by context.
Confirmation or disconfirmation can take place within a group of two or more, or it can be experienced as something the individual does to him or herself. Disconfirming experiences relate to exclusion issues. Within group disconfirmation reflects feeling pushed out of the group, self-disconfirmation reflects cutting-off a part of oneself, letting go, stripping away, seeing oneself in a shaming light, feeling guilty or embarrassed in only one’s own gaze. Inclusion in a group can be experienced as positive, however if the confirmation is judged to be false, inaccurate, or insincere by the individual, it may lead to self-confirming or self-disconfirming. The experience of confirmation or disconfirmation is multi-leveled, relying on the self-image of the individual. However, the experience holds the potential for personal and interpersonal growth.

Disconfirmation finds its orientation in three realms: either it is sensed by the individual about him or herself, about the other, or about the relationship she/he has with the other. That other may be an individual or a group that takes on the character of an other. The egocentric realm, often results in anger, loneliness, or a sense of loss of self-worth. Anger, for example, is typically directed at the disconfirming other in response to a sense of individual hurt, without reflection on the damaged relationship. Egocentric confirmation, likewise, is self-oriented and shown by expression of pride, relief, and happiness about one’s self and how one appears to others. System-oriented disconfirmation is seen as a mourning for the damaged relationship. It is expressed in relational terms like betrayal, aloneness, and isolation. System-oriented confirmation is experienced as connectedness, solidarity, and inclusion.

Underlying these experiences of confirmation and disconfirmation is a common element of relational expectation. In the case of disconfirmation, the expectations the individual has toward the self or the other were not realized. This leads to a need to interpret the unmet expectation. For the egocentric individual, the act interpreted as disconfirming is one necessitating framing as untoward or exclusionary. The act interpreted as confirming is one necessitating framing as deserved or inclusionary. For the other-oriented individual, the disconfirming message also means exclusion, but to the detriment of the other. Confirmation, on the other hand, is generous and giving or growthful. The degree of importance placed on the relationship affects the interpretation of the message as minimally or maximally damaging to the self, other or relationship.

Although being disconfirmed elicits a multiplicity of emotional responses from anger to hurt, an intriguing emergent theme is empowerment. Disconfirmation may also result in positive growth. Empowerment does not occur immediately, rather it emerges upon reflection of the specific instance in which the person felt disconfirmed. Empowerment is a complex response and depends upon the expectations the person has of the other and her/himself doing the disconfirming.

As discussed above, a person has various orientations, either to self, other or relationship. If the person is egocentric, feeling disconfirmed will not be empowering unless a distinction is made between the actions or choices the person has made and the person's being, which is also dependent upon the relationship expectations that accompany the experience. Empowerment can occur when
confirmation is experienced from other(s) but is interpreted as disconfirmation from self. For example, if a person has been told she/he is bright, the feelings of being confirmed may be only temporary because the individual may disconfirm her/himself based on one's self-image. Being disconfirmed may also be empowering if the person believes he/she has given one-hundred percent of oneself or believes it is his/her actions that are being disconfirmed and not his/her being.

The experiences of empowerment mentioned above depend upon the level of intimacy in the relationship. If the relationship is intimate, disconfirmation is typically experienced as less empowering and about the person's being. A less intimate relationship affects the interpretation of disconfirmation as being directed toward one's actions and therefore experienced as more empowering.

**Interpretation**

The experiencing of confirmation or disconfirmation entails a complex interaction (feedback) system, itself entailing key experiential modes: cognitive, spatial embodiment, affective and relational modes. Each experiential mode gives rise to different schema which are salient for the context. Issues of self such as esteem, image, respect, and confidence also contribute to the experience of confirmation or disconfirmation. This ultimately affects the interpretation of the confirming/disconfirming act according to degree, level of effect, and experience of empowerment. The experience of disconfirmation is a temporary state that can be described as a multiplicity of emotional responses which emerge from the individual's orientations and expectations, which include at the deepest level group inclusion, for the level of relational intimacy experienced.
Appendix

Confirmation/Disconfirmation

Interview protocol for the explication of the experience of being disconfirmed:

1. Describe your experience of being the member of a group.
   (Can you visualize specific instances of group membership?)

2. a. What does a crisis, in that group, look like?
   Describe an experience of personal crisis which involved the group.
   b. How does that crisis feel?
   Describe an experience in which you felt in crisis.

3. a. What does non-support or disconfirmation look like?
   Describe an experience of when support was desired but not forthcoming.
   b. How does being disconfirmed feel?
   Describe the feeling of being:
     unsupported,
     neglected,
     ignored,
     interrupted,
     ridiculed,
     invalidated

4. a. What does support or confirmation look like?
   Describe an experience when support was desired and forthcoming.
   b. How does it feel to be confirmed?
   Describe the feeling of being:
     supported,
     validated

An example of disconfirmation:

   An individual works very hard on a project for another person: a teacher, a boss, a parent. The other does not acknowledge the time and hard work invested by that individual.
An Empirical-Phenomenological Explication of Familial Cohesiveness: A Prospectus

We are born into this world. For most of us that means to be born into a family. The individual experience of family may be uniquely our own. However, we seem able to talk about family with each other, and share our experiences about family, and develop our own families based on our upbringing. These experiences are shared on a daily basis through our own discourse and the discourse of others we observe.

Unity with the other is often experienced within the context of relationship and family. Levy (1976) described married love we-ness as a shift from an individual orientation in relationship to one of unification. Many stories exist in popular culture, and perhaps rules are constructed around the notion that individuals should be loyal to their family. If family is the foundation for relationship, then the basis for understanding relational unity may be developed first in the family.

The experience of familial unity or cohesiveness may manifest itself in the stories individuals tell about their family. Cohesiveness has been described by Olson, Sprenkle and Russell (1979) as the degree of separateness or connectedness in a relational system, such as a family. In this study, the researcher is interested in explicating the meaning of familial cohesiveness. I propose to examine familial cohesiveness through an empirical-phenomenological method.

The empirical-phenomenological method

The phenomenological method has as its focus the lived experience of the individual (van Manen, 1990). It attempts to describe the lived-world at the pre-reflective state before the experience has been categorized. This method is interested in the description of phenomena as it is presented to the individual consciousness. The purpose of the method is to understand the meaning of the experience for the individual as opposed to the characteristics of the experience that may be manipulated. Phenomenologists reflect "... upon the process by which individuals know that experience" (Collins, 1974, p. 140).

The phenomenological method begins with an "orienting to the phenomena" (van Manen, 1990). This orientation implies an interest in the subject matter of study. In orienting to the phenomena the research takes into account the context in which the phenomena of interest takes place. Also, the researcher must take into account that the understanding of context is in and of itself part of the interpretation of the experience of the phenomena.

The next step in the process of inquiry is the formulation of the phenomenological question. The question must ask what the nature of the experience is; what does the experience feel like. This requires an openness towards the possibilities. As a method, the phenomenological inquiry should be free of judgments about the essences prior to the description of the lived-world experience. However, the researcher should be aware of the assumptions and pre-understandings about the phenomena.
The phenomenological inquiry should begin with personal experience. According to van Manen, this allows the researcher "... to detect the overall thematic quality of ..." the described experience (p. 57). The researcher should also remain cognizant of the language used to describe the experience, as the particular language effects the interpretation of the description.

Once this process of self-reflection occurs the researcher is able to obtain experiential descriptions from others. This process is accomplished through interviewing. According to Weber (1986), the interview process is an invitation to engage in a joint reflection about a phenomena. Kvale (1983) argued that the purpose of the interview "... is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 174). Kvale (1983) suggests that the interview has twelve aspects: (a) it is centered on the lived-world experience of the interviewee, (b) it seeks to understand the meaning of that lived-world experience, (c) it is qualitative in approach, (d) it is descriptive, (e) it is specific, (f) it is presuppositionless, (g) it is focused on certain themes (which were derived by the self-reflection of the researcher), (h) it is open to ambiguity, (i) it allows for changes, (j) it is dependent upon the sensitivity of the interviewer, (k) it involves interpersonal interaction, and (l) it can be a positive and cathartic experience.

In order for the interview to remain focused, a protocol should be specified. According to van Manen (1990), this protocol should guide the interview by focusing on the experience itself, without causal explanations. The interview should focus on the feelings during a particular incident which stands out. However, the protocol should allow for flexibility in the interview process to allow the themes to emerge.

Once the data has been gathered through the interview process, themes should be derived through phenomenological reflection and reduction. According to Tesch (1987), a theme is a major descriptor of the data: a theme is a pattern which becomes apparent in the data. These themes are derived by reading and rereading the data, underlining the phrases that are particularly revealing. The condensing of data into a set of themes is known as reduction. The process of reduction allows the researcher to get at the fundamental notions existent in the descriptions.

In the empirical-phenomenological method, these themes are interpreted to explicate the meaning of the concept explored. This process involves a clustering of themes into meaning-expressions, which gives rise to the overall structure or essence of the experience. This final description of the phenomena depicts the universal aspects of the lived-world experience.

To explore some of the assumptions underlying the phenomenological method, the nature of how individuals come to understand or know reality must be grounded. Von Eckartsberg (1971) argues that the individual comes to know his or her reality through the process of socialization. He argues that individual variations exist which are dependent on the individuals differing circumstances. However, the individual comes to view his or her world in a way that is common to others. Individuals in a society share common language about their experiences as well as perspectives about what they experience.
Yet, the process by which they can make sense of the experience must ultimately begin with the sense experience. Hume argued that all knowledge is gained through sense experience. In this statement is implied that meaning is ascribed to the experience after it occurs. Human beings are shaped by the world (von Eckartsberg, 1971). This argument does not imply that the individual has to experience a phenomena to know it. The individual can experience a phenomena through others due to common language usage. The individual can understand another's experience when that experience is communicated.

The communication of lived-world experience to another shapes the world of the other. Individuals in the society are informed by the language to which they are accustomed, that is the language shapes the understanding an individual has about the experiences he or she faces. The individual makes a judgement about the experience and ascribes meaning to the experience.

Judgment entails the use of symbols in a language to represent experiences and make those experiences intelligible to others. The ideas one forms about an experience is a cognitive representation of the experience. These ideas are connected to the symbols used to communicate the ideas through common usage which is determined by the society and learned through socialization into the society. The connection between the experience and the symbol used to represent it is arbitrary. However, the connection is controlled by social convention for the purpose of maintaining the functionality of language and the connection between people.

Due to the relationship between the thing (or experience) signified and the signification (the language about the signified) through the common language usage of a society, individuals can understand or make judgments about the experience of others shared through discourse. This argument suggests that individuals may experience and understand the experience through the discourse of others. For example, an individual does not have to experience the pain of separation to see the effects on others. That individual may come to understand the pain through others by observing others reactions to the separation as well as listening to the other's discourse about that pain. This example illustrates a point made by Earle, "The truth is that I didn't explicitly see what he saw until he spoke; and after he spoke then what he said seemed to me evident enough because it characterizes my experience, and I can "verify" it directly" (Edie, p. 24). Edie points out Earle's contention that the individual can understand the experience of the other through the other's discourse.

If the individual is informed about the experience of separation through the discourse of others or through prior experiences of separation, then the individual will have developed an understanding about the experience of separation which effects the interpretation of later discourse about separation. This has consequences for the empirical method. For example, the researcher has to attempt to bracket out his or her knowledge about the experience, while uncovering the experiences of the other. The attempt to bracket out one's own understanding while focusing on the themes in the data is a researcher's paradox. Tesch (1987) described the researcher's paradox as the need "... to be both informed and naïve,
experienced and fresh, engaged and distanced, focused and open, pushy and patient” (p. 240).

The process of explicating meaning from the lived-world experiences of another cannot occur through an objective observation of the other. The process requires the use of language which both shapes and is shaped by the understanding of its practitioner. For this reason, the phenomenological method requires careful organization of thought by the researcher. The researcher must remain aware of his or her own beliefs about the phenomena to be explored. This awareness comes from self-reflection about one’s own lived-world experience.

Ontological autobiography of familial cohesiveness

My own experience of familial cohesiveness informs my quest for the explication of the meaning of cohesiveness through others discourse. As pointed out in Hill's (1990) dissertation, individuals come to better understand their own experience through the discourse of other's common experiences. In my family, for example, I have experienced feeling separated while at the same time connected to the other members of my family.

The feeling of separateness has been experienced as feeling excluded from the lives of important people. A concrete example of this occurred for me last Christmas. I experienced feeling separate from my family members by the occurrences of interaction between family members. Whenever my family gets together for holidays or special occasions, we take part in storytelling rituals. Typically, these storytelling events revolve around things done by nephews and nieces. Since three of my sisters have children, and children are wonderful topics for discussion, my sisters have a common experience of parenthood to share. My parents also share in the common experience of parenthood. Since the talk is about nephews and nieces who are usually present, the nephews and nieces also share in common experience. For my brothers and I, none of us have children, the talk is about experiences we can only understand through discourse. Perhaps, the talk is part of our socialization into the potential future experience of parenthood. But as of Christmas 1992, my brothers and I have not experienced parenthood directly.

In my experience of separateness, I experience feeling outside of the discourse of common experience because I have not experienced parenthood directly. This feeling of separateness is manifested in the actual structure of the room environment. Because I have a rather large family, which is even larger when extended to in-laws, the room does not often provide the means for all family members to sit in a common area. Oftentimes, a family member or more may be require to listen from a distance. I experience myself taking this position frequently because I am not as actively involved in the conversation due to my lack of common direct experience with the others in the conversation. I experience myself in such situations as an outside observer. I do not feel pushed out or excluded from the family by the family, but rather feel as if I am not a part of the discussion.

At the same time as I am feeling separated from my family, I also feel connected. In the case of family members sharing stories about other family members, the stories are about people that I know and love. In hearing the stories, I believe I know the person about whom the story is told, much better than I have
before. I also believe I know the person telling the story better because I understand his or her feelings and perceptions. There is a type of cohesiveness which occurs as a result of the storytelling. However, this cohesiveness or connectedness is tempered by the experience of separateness. My understanding of the phenomena of familial cohesiveness exists as a consequence of my living it.

This understanding of familial cohesiveness from my own experience both shapes my understanding of the world and shapes the world which I attempt to explore through the phenomenological inquiry. The experience of familial cohesiveness seems paradoxical in that it can be experienced as both separateness and connectedness simultaneously, although for perhaps different reasons.

I propose that the experience of familial cohesiveness lends itself well to the empirical-phenomenological method of inquiry. Given my own experience of familial cohesiveness and the guidelines for the process of interviewing, I propose the following interview protocol (see Appendix). This interview protocol will be helpful in the explication of the meaning of familial cohesiveness.

References


Appendix

Familial Cohesiveness
Interview Protocol

This study is being conducted by H. Paul LeBlanc III of Southern Illinois University, Department of Speech Communication to determine the meaning of familial cohesiveness. Please describe or define your experience of family and your experience of separateness or connectedness you feel towards your family. Please give examples of family interactions which demonstrate the description you have provided.

1. Please describe your experience of family?
   a) What was (is) the emotional climate of your family?
   b) Give examples describing this emotional climate.

2. How would you describe your family in terms of cohesion?
   a) How independent are family members from each other?
   b) How do you experience privacy in your family?
   c) How do you experience separateness from your family?
   d) How do you experience cohesion?
Disconfirming Conversational Acts

Introduction

Conversational acts such as minimal responses, overlaps, and certain types of repairs can be interpreted by conversational partners as disconfirming. A disconfirming act is one which is interpreted as ignoring, interrupting, invalidating, or otherwise disrespecting the other. Cissna and Keating (1979) suggest that a moderate association exists between communicated empathy, respect, and genuineness and the perception of confirmation by the other. They argue that there is no relationship between agreement or disagreement and feelings of being either confirmed or disconfirmed. However, the particular acts which communicate empathy, respect, and genuineness are not specified. It may be the case that particular speech acts have the potential of communicating lack of concern for the other.

This study will propose a framework for discovering and exploring particular types of conversational acts which may be interpreted as disconfirming. In order for these acts to be considered disconfirming, evidence regarding the interpretation will need to be shown. For example, if the recipient of a minimal response responds, "Are you listening to me," then the recipient may be communicating that he or she feels ignored and therefore disconfirmed. The function of such a recipient response may be to confront the violation of an expectation. However, the feeling of being disconfirmed cannot be demonstrated unless it is explicitly stated, or is derived from an interview with individuals about disconfirmation. This study is therefore part of a larger program of study which is interested in determining the form of disconfirming messages. This study will propose examples from existing transcripts as well as hypothetical conversations which may demonstrate possible disconfirming conversational acts.

Characteristics of disconfirming conversational acts

In order to approach possible forms of disconfirming conversational acts, some general criteria for such acts must be enumerated. According to Grice (1975), maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner specify general principles of discourse. Conversational interactants may come to expect that their partner will not violate these general principles. In terms of effect on relationships, violations of these conversational expectations may contribute to difficulties in understanding, affect, and development of trust. For example, a violation of the quantity maxim may communicate to the recipient a lack of concern for the recipient's needs or a lack of trust in the recipient. A violation of the quality, relation and manner maxims may also produce this effect. However, this effect is contingent upon the recipient's interpretation of the violation.

Disconfirmation occurs when there is a violation of a relational expectation. For example, an individual may expect his or her relational partner to show concern and trust. If that expectation is violated, then the individual may suffer from feelings of being disconfirmed. An example of a violation of the quantity maxim which may affect feelings of being disconfirmed is the minimal response. The minimal response
occurs when the conversational expectation is that the partner will respond in such a way that does not violate the quantity maxim. In the following excerpt, designated D6POST.1:4, M asks a series of questions which do not receive answers.

(1)

171 M: How bout you ↑ how are your finals (shaping up
172 with that-) d'you have five of em like me
173 ⇒ (2.2)
174 M: You don't wanna
175 ⇒ (1.8) ((loud airplane noise))
176 M: You don't wanna talk about it
177 ⇒ F: ↑ heh heh heh
178 (9.2) ((noises))
179 M: Actually I cannot wait- to go and see you and
180 Lee
181 ⇒ (3.5)
182 M: How's it gun be interesting.
183 (4.0) ((crumpling))
184 ⇒ F: pt ↑ heh heh heh
185 heh (. ) heh · hhh
186 M: How is it going to be interesting
187 F: Put- the tape recorder down

In this interaction, F does not answer a series of questions asked by M. In lines 171-172, M asks three distinct questions. The first questions asks for acknowledgment; the second asks for information, and the third question requests agreement. Yet, F does not answer any of the three questions. M allows for a response by leaving a gap at a transition relevance place (TRP). When a response is not forthcoming M self-selects the next turn at talk with another attempt at eliciting a response. Lines 173, 175, 177, 181, and 184 each specify opportunities for F to respond in such a way that answers M's requests. However, in each case F violates the quantity maxim.

According to LeBlanc (1990), minimal responses have several distinguishing, but not mutually exclusive, characteristics:

1. Minimal responses (MR) follow the first pair-part of an adjacency pair which incorporates conditional relevance.
2. MR may involve repetition of the first pair-part of an adjacency pair.
3. MR may involve repetition of a statement or assertion by the originator.
4. MR may involve a topic shift by the other in the second pair-part of an adjacency pair.
5. Dispreferred responses or lack of preferred responses may occur in MR.
6. MR are often no responses at all.
7. MR may involve significant pauses known as gaps at TRP’s.
8. MR may involve a lack of turn-taking selection by the other following gaps.
9. Following a minimal response, the originator normally continues (self-selects) after a gap.
10. MR are often characterized by extended turns by the initiator which include many TRP’s and gaps.
11. Conversation is normally between two people, but conversations characterized by MR may seem one-sided.
12. Conversations characterized by MR may give one interactant a subjective sense of non-listening on the part of the other.

Minimal responses therefore may be interpreted by one interactant as a showing of a lack of concern by the other. This demonstration of a lack of concern may be experienced as a feeling of disconfirmation.

Another type of conversational act which might demonstrate a lack of concern for the other is the overlap which is treated as an interruption. Drummond (1989), argued that not all overlaps can be interpreted as interruptions. He continues that interruption does not exist as a "codable, countable phenomena." In the following excerpt, designated as F1CUP.1, the parties do not treat the overlap as an interruption:

(2)

9    M:    an you jus- jus heat that u:p (0.6) an pour it
10    over your meat (.) an-
11 ⇒ D:        [↑Kitchen Bouquet=          
12    M:    =Yeah you know that stuff that makes things
13    brown=  
14    D:    =mm hm
15    M:    ·hhh Jus heat that up an pour it over your meat
16    and turn your meat on as low as it will go

Line 11 is treated as a relevant insertion sequence. Yet, in line 14, M restates and continues the point started in line 9. It is possible for this insertion to be treated as an interruption. For example, in this hypothetical conversation, M treats D’s overlap as an interruption:
The subtext of the response in line 12 might be, "you have interrupted me." Drummond's (1989) contention that the specification of an interruption in a transcription is an evaluative act is a point well taken. However, interruptions do occur as a subset of overlaps in which the current conversational partner treats the overlap as a "deep incursion" into his or her utterance.

Lerner (1989) argues that the delayed completion is evidence that an overlap is interruptive. In example (2), line 14 is a delayed completion of the instruction started on line 9. Lerner (1989) states, "The continuation (i.e., the Delayed Completion) is thereby asserted to be part of the same turn space occupied by that prior utterance, thus characterizing the intervening utterance as interruptive of the now finished single turn-constructional unit" (p. 171).

If certain types of overlaps can be described as interruptive from characteristics such as delayed completion, and if individuals talk about interruption and develop relational rules such as, "Don't interrupt: it is impolite," then interruption must exist as a phenomenon in conversations. Indeed, the existence of such relational rules suggest that expectations about conversational partners' behaviors regarding interruptions are important and may result in interpretations of impoliteness or as communicating lack of concern for the other and thus experienced as disconfirming. Brown and Levinson (1987), argue that politeness is a universal rule or maxim regulating conversational interaction. As argued above, the violation of relational expectations, including conversational maxims may induce disconfirmation.

A final type of conversational act which also may induce disconfirmation is other-initiated repair sequences. In other-initiated repair sequences, the conversational partner responds to the current speaker's repairable (Nofsinger, 1991). In the following excerpt, F initiates a repair of M's repairable:

(4)

1 M: I'll take almost all of it out to the Regina auction
2 ⇒ F: Regeena
3 M: Regeena

In this excerpt, M mispronounces Regina. F initiates a repair of the mispronunciation by supplying the correct pronunciation. Yet, it is not difficult to
imagine a sequence which one individual appears defensive following an other-initiated repair. The following hypothetical excerpt illustrates this:

(5)

1. M: I'll take almost all of it out to the Regina auction
2. F: Regeena
3. M: Why are you always correcting me?

In this excerpt, M evaluates F's repair initiator as inappropriate. Line 3 appears to specify a relational rule that has been violated by F. The expectation that M had regarding the interaction is that conversational partners should not correct each other. This particular example may demonstrate a violation of politeness rules.

In example (5), M may also interpret the other-initiated repair as a deep incursion into the topic, and is thus interruptive in nature. The subtext of this example may be, "You don't seem concerned for my feelings because you are not interested in what I say but only how I say it."

Discussion

The above argument does not suggest that minimal responses, interruptions, and other-initiated repairs are exclusively disconfirming conversational acts. However, the occurrence of these acts may be interpreted by interactional partners as disconfirming. Common elements of these three acts include some form of violation of an expected occurrence.

In the case of the minimal response the expectation is that the interactional partner will offer a certain amount of information in response to the first pair-part of an adjacency pair or to an assertion. This is a violation of Grice's (1975) quantity maxim. However, it may have even deeper implications for the relationship, such as a demonstration of an attitude of indifference toward the other.

For interruptions, the expectation violated is that the interactional partner will share conversational space with the current speaker. This may also be viewed as a violation of the quantity maxim. In the case of a tangential interruption, an interruption that takes the topic in a new direction, it may also violate the relevance or relation maxim. This type of conversational act may have a disconfirming effect in that the current speaker feels that his or her choice of topic is unimportant to the other.

In other-initiated repair sequences the expectation violated is that the interactional partner will be polite. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is a universal face-saving rule. Face-threatening or embarrassment may occur when an individual is corrected by another. This face-threatening may also violate a relational rule regarding loyalty. This act may have a disconfirming effect by communicating the attitude that the other's feelings are unimportant.

In all three types of conversational acts the possibility for interpretation as a relational message is apparent in the function of the act. Minimal responses, interruptions, and other-initiated repair may all communicate a lack of concern for the other.
Disconfirmation is not directly apparent in the structure of the conversational act. Rather, disconfirmation is an evaluation imputed upon a given conversational act. Yet, disconfirmation is the experience of feeling ignored, interrupted, or invalidated. In our common discourse about conversation, such as the relational rules specified by, "Don't interrupt, it's impolite," we demonstrate how these conversational acts can have disconfirming effects.

Conversation analysis is a method which describes the function of particular conversational phenomena. As a descriptive method, it should serve as a basis for the discovery of the characteristics of relational messages.

References


Rule Violations by Family Type:  
Implications in the Distinction Between  
Functional and Dysfunctional Family Systems

People interact in learned patterns which are a function of socialization, the process by which persons learn what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a given cultural or social context. In this study, the social context is the family system. According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1991), a system is a group of interacting, interdependent individuals that together make up a whole arrangement or organization. Systems (families) organize into a fairly stable set of relationships. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1991) continue,

A family is a natural social system, with properties all its own, one that has evolved a set of rules, is replete with assigned and ascribed roles for its members, has an organized power structure, has developed intricate overt and covert forms of communication, and has elaborated ways of negotiating and problem solving that permit various tasks to be performed effectively (p. 3).

A family, therefore, has characteristics which describe the nature of the relationships between its members. The definition of family as a system implies a transactional process of socialization. This process of socialization in the family system defines the family to its members.

To describe the transactional process of socialization within the context of family systems, four major concepts will be explored. First, the discussion of the socialization process will be theoretically grounded. Second, the nature of rules of interaction within a system will be described; then specific rules which may apply to families will be discussed. Third, family systems will be examined by their characteristics. These characteristics will be examined by defining relational typologies. Finally, these relational typologies will be examined by the relative degree of function or dysfunction which exists in systems. It is important to note that family systems interact with larger social systems, and the larger social context influences the development of families through the process of socialization. In summary, this study will discover the process by which family members define themselves as members of their family system, and define family systems by their interactional characteristics.

The Process of Socialization

The socialization process involves the learning of meaning or behaviors by entering a system. Social learning theory suggests that individuals imitate actions as a result of conditioning and reinforcement, and that conditioning and problem solving are the processes by which individuals learn (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). Conditioning occurs as a response to stimuli repeated until the stimuli are no longer needed to induce the desired behavior. Problem solving, on the other hand, occurs as a result of dissonance and the desire to reduce it. This desire serves as a motivating factor in the cognitive search for a means to reduce cognitive dissonance (Mowrer, 1960). Social learning theory implies a connection between behaviors and
meaning. Individuals learn to associate meaning to observed behavior as a result of punishment or rewards for that behavior. Indeed, behaviors may result from attitudes (meanings) that the individual holds.

The social learning theoretical perspective would suggest that children learn acceptable behavior as a result of reinforcement which occurs through interaction. Behaviors that serve as positive reinforcers, such as a smile, are strengthened, behaviors that serve as negative reinforcers, such as a spanking, are suppressed, and those that are not reinforced are extinguished (McCoy & Zigler, 1965). However, individuals attach meaning to the behavior, whether reinforced, suppressed or extinguished. On the other hand, cognitive developmental theory suggests that the socialization process involves assimilation of events given existing mental structures and accommodation of new ideas for problem solving (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). Individuals are typically motivated to maintain equilibrium between assimilation processes and accommodation processes but may opt for one process over the other as a result of cognitive dissonance (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). For example, an individual may opt for the assimilation process to overcome cognitive dissonance when the attitudes surrounding the event are well established and are central to the individual's self-concept.

Social learning theory and cognitive developmental theory both assume that the socialization process involves interaction between an agent and a target. Observations of behavior are organized into cognitive schema, which serve as knowledge bases for achieving goals (Berger & Kellerman, in press). These knowledge bases provide structures or rules for mentally organizing information, and therefore developing meaning, as hypothesized by Kant (1781) in the Critique of Pure Reason (cited in Jones, 1975) and later considered as cognitive schema by Bartlett (1932; cited in Smith, 1982). Individuals, therefore, attach meaning to observations as a function of already-existing mental structures. The individual develops methods to achieve goals based on those meanings. Goals such as being accepted into a group, or not being alienated from a group, serve as motivators for acting acceptably. The group defines itself by those actions or behaviors that are expected of its members. The expected behaviors are specified by rules. These rules are compared to existing mental structures.

In summary, the socialization of an individual into a system involves the observation by that individual of patterns of behavior idiosyncratic to the system. The individual attaches meaning to those observations, and this process can be influenced by the interaction between the individual and other members of the system through reinforcement and conditioning. The development of meaning units, within the individual, occurs in the form of cognitive structures known as schema. And cognitive schema which pertain to expected behaviors within the system the individual has been socialized into are formalized as rules.

Rules and Rule Development

Shimanoff (1980) defines a rule as a prescription which can be followed and suggests behaviors that are obligated, preferred, or prohibited in particular contexts. Rules are determined by the society, the family, or a member of the family given authority to make such rules, e.g., the head of household, and can be implicit or
explicit. Implicit rules are guides which are not formally stated but rather define behavior as appropriate or inappropriate based on actions that are either performed or not performed by the group, e.g., the society or the family. An example of an implicit rule within a family might concern being loyal toward family members: do not talk about family problems to non-family members.

Implicit rules may have been stated explicitly at an earlier time in another social context (system) but are assumed to apply by members of a new social context. For example, a child learns rules of interaction in his or her family of origin. These rules are then applied to other contexts such as friendships, boss/subordinate relationships, or student/teacher relationships. The notions of accommodation and assimilation from cognitive developmental theory play a role in the assumption of rules implicitly from one social context to another. Explicit rules are formally stated regulations or customs that define appropriate or inappropriate behaviors for the group. An example of an explicit rule in the family might be that children are expected to be at home by eleven o'clock in the evening.

The role of rules as communicative interaction cannot be understated. Shimanoff states:

In order for communication to exist, or continue, two or more interacting individuals must share rules for using symbols. Not only must they have rules for individual symbols, but they must also agree on such matters as to how to take turns at speaking, how to be polite or how to insult, to greet, and so forth. If every symbol user manipulated symbols at random, the result would be chaos rather than communication (p. 31-32).

Rule development begins with and parallels earlier childhood development. A child learns rules about language by interacting with adults. Games provide an example of one type of interaction that infants take part in with adults. Bruner and Sherwood (1976), observed infants’ rule development for the game of peekaboo. In peekaboo, the infant appears to learn not only the rules of the game, but also the range of variation possible within the set of rules. The emphasis upon patterned variation within constraints of the rule set seems crucial to the mastery of competence and generativeness.

The formation of an explicit rule (for interaction) may be a result of a behavior contrary to the implicit expectations of the group or system. Behavior contrary to the goals of the group is labeled deviant by the group. This deviance may or may not have been intentional or intentionally deviant. However, when deviant behavior occurs, it creates a crisis situation in which the group may decide to state the rule, therefore, making the rule explicit. Implicit rules exist when members of the group know what is expected of them as a consequence of observed behavior of other members of the group (Ford, 1983). Therefore, implicit nonverbal rules are defined as communicative rules for nonverbal interaction that are learned through a socialization process. Attitudes (and knowledge of rules) are learned through conditioning which may be performed through verbal (and nonverbal) communicative behaviors (Staats & Staats, 1958).
Groups are defined by rules which indicate who belongs or does not belong to the group (Pearson, 1989). Rule violation occurs when a member of a group defined by the rule acts contrary to the suggested behavior. This may require specific knowledge of the rule. If the individual group member is unaware of the rule, then the rule violation is an unintentional deviation from expected behavior. However, if a group member is aware of the rule, then a true violation occurs whether or not the individual agrees with the rule. A violation of a rule may precipitate negative sanctions by the authority setting the rule, or by the group that is defined by the rule. The force of the rule defining the group is not determined by its implicit or explicit nature, but rather by the meaning of the rule for the group and the sanctions incurred by its violation. These negative sanctions can include punishment, ostracism, or alienation from the group. Consistent violation of the rule may result in reformulation of the rule, or a withdrawal of the rule (Shimanoff, 1980; Littlejohn, 1989).

Rules, therefore, are learned and are used in and affect everyday interactions. For example, the style of expression and the skill of communication are influenced by the emotional expressiveness of the family environment (Halberstadt, 1986). A child interacts with others according to the rules that he or she has learned. Following or violating rules affects interactions with others.

Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that interaction is based on universal rules of politeness in language, and that violation can incur sanctions. These rules of politeness are based on individuals' desires to save or maintain "face." The researchers distinguish rule types by function: (a) rules of positive politeness, such as cooperation which saves face, and (b) rules of negative politeness, such as being direct and honest which threatens face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Children will follow rules in order to maintain "face", and to secure further interaction with others.

As a consequence of the development and use of rules, persons have expectancies regarding compliance to rules in any given context. Individuals in a system are expected to follow rules, and noncompliance may be viewed as a violation. Which environment determines the set of rules to be followed may be situational. Rules for appropriate behavior within a specific group, as suggested earlier, may be assimilated from previous knowledge of rules and then applied to the new social context. On the other hand, the context may be sufficiently different to warrant the development of idiosyncratic rules. However, these idiosyncratic rules must be based on a social understanding which is affected by other contexts.

Family systems have rules regarding nonverbal behavior. The types of rules and the strictness of maintaining those rules may depend on the type of family system. Shimanoff (1980) delineates rule following and rule deviating into four types of behaviors each. Rule fulfilling and rule ignorant behaviors involve acting without knowing the rule. Rule conforming and rule error behaviors involve unconscious following or nonfollowing of a known rule. Rule following behavior is conscious compliance with the rule. Rule violating behavior is conscious violation of the rule. Positive reflective behavior is conscious following of a rule that has been positively
evaluated by the individual. Negative reflective behavior is conscious violating of a rule that has been negatively evaluated by the individual.

Although violations can incur negative sanctions, that is not always the outcome. According to Burgoon (1983), violations appear to be an effective strategy (for influence) so long as they are accompanied or followed by other positively valued actions that can compensate for any negative connotations they carry. For example, a particular behavior may be defined as inappropriate and have rules restriction. However, the rule may have been developed without consideration of possibilities of positive outcome following the violation. In a family, a rule may exist regarding time curfews for teenage children. In a strict system, any violation of the time curfew rule may incur negative sanctions. Yet, instances can occur where violations of this rule are not only necessary but may result in a more positive outcome than blind following of the rule.

Rules define relationships. Rules set boundaries so that members of a system can tell who is in the system and who does not belong to the system. Kantor and Lehr (1976) define the term equifinality as the notion that families are capable of achieving similar goals or ends through a variety of different ways and with different starting points. This implies that different families can have different idiosyncratic rules.

Pearson (1989) holds that rules are important for three reasons. First, the development of rules reinforces relational development. Second, rule development encourages relational satisfaction. Third, rules allow individuals to define any given relationship. Rules also allow the individual to define oneself. Communication of life history allows an individual to define oneself within a system, to define one's purpose, and one's boundaries (Myerhoff, 1980).

Rules and the Family

In the family, children are socialized by their parents, older siblings, or other relatives with whom they come in contact. Outside of the family, persons are socialized by peers, significant others, or the media. A child's environment includes the ideology of society (e.g., formal and informal rules about how life should be conducted) (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). Children learn socially appropriate behavior by imitating others when others' behavior is not prohibited and results in positive reinforcement (Kagan, 1985). According to Bell (1975), "No one is born social, but must acquire social characteristics from others and incorporate them into his [or her] own personality" (p. 471-472).

Children learn what is acceptable behavior through the observation of the behavior of others, their own behavior, and their interaction with those others (Roedell, Slaby, & Robinson, 1977). Ford (1983) found, "... rules can be inferred from any repetitive family behavior" (p. 135). Most family rules are implicitly derived from inferences by family members about repetitive patterns of interaction in the family (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1991).

Minuchin (1974) argued that rules are dependent upon the family system: "Transactional patterns regulate family member's behavior. They are maintained by two systems of constraint. The first is generic, involving universal rules governing family organization . . . . The second system of constraint is idiosyncratic, involving
the mutual expectations of particular family members," which are derived from observations of interaction within the family (p. 51-52). Indeed, family interaction follows certain persistent patterns--rules which define the rights and duties of members (Jackson, 1965).

Members of a family can deviate from the family rules, that is from the definition of family rules. Family rules are based on the goals and values of the family. Since values determine goals and result in the allocation of time, money, and energy, parent-adolescent differences in values might be expected to lead to conflict in the family (Nye, 1958). Conflict of goals between members of a family may motivate some members to violate the rules.

In the family context, a child who deviates may be punished by a parent. The sanctions employed by a parent in this situation will depend on the ideology of that parent or the marital couple towards child-rearing. Kephart (1966) delineates between two ideologies in regards to child-rearing: the permissive school, and the restrictive school. The permissive school holds that the needs of children to be loved, attended to, and to be afforded the right to self-expression is of more importance to the development of the child. The restrictive school believes that teaching discipline and respect for authority is paramount in the child's development of character. Therefore, some definition of appropriate behavior in terms of rules may be necessary for child development, as long as there also exists flexibility in the application of those rules.

Violations may occur when conflict in the family arises. These violations can communicate difficulties in family systems. A family with much conflict may have problems adjusting to each other, which may have ramifications for family development in subsequent generations. Rule violations may occur more as a result of conflict in the system rather than by the type of system. However, the type of system, determined by overall family patterns of behavior, may contribute to higher levels of conflict in the system.

Family conflict can lead to changes in family rules of interaction. Witteman (1988) conducted a study which examined family interaction. The focus of his study is on the conceptualization and initial interaction between people in a relationship after a problem situation is perceived. Individuals react to the perception of a problem, typically in a reciprocal fashion. Due to the first tendency of perceiving a problem in the situation and reacting to that perception, perceptions are reinforced and, therefore, remain relatively stable. The perceptions either reinforce the rules or call for a re-examination of the rule.

The type of interactional rules of interest in this study include regulation of conversation, the communication of affect, and the rules regarding the use of space, time, energy, and resources. These behaviors can be observed in interactions between people in any interpersonal context. According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1991), "Nonverbal exchange patterns between family members . . . represent subtle, coded transactions that may transmit family 'rules' . . . ." (p. 4). The observation of these nonverbal exchange patterns may help the observer infer family rules. For example, conversational interaction rules include following the proper cues for switching speakers or turn-taking. Duncan (1972) found that strong
regularities exist in behaviors regarding the rules of turn-taking. These regularities or rules can be observed through conversational (verbal and nonverbal) interaction. Family systems can be delineated according to the form of interaction which occurs. This delineation of family systems has been examined and described with typologies.

**Family Typologies**

Reiss (1971) theorizes that each family constructs its own idiosyncratic perspective, a consensual experience of social reality, through the course of family interaction. The family develops its own pattern of interaction. In relationships, individuals interact according to expectations about the rules that apply to the situation/relationship which are assumed to be shared by others (McLaughlin, 1984). These expectations, shared by others in the system, describe the grounds by which relational typologies can be examined.

Kantor and Lehr (1976) have described three different types of families: open, closed, and random. An open family has a moveable use of space, a variable use of time, and a flexible use of energy. A closed family has a fixed use of space, a regular use of time, and a steady use of energy. A random family has a dispersed use of space, and irregular use of time, and a fluctuating use of energy.

These different family types have different target ideals. Kantor and Lehr (1976) state that open families seek adaptation through consensus. This consensus is achieved by sharing power through cooperation. Open families hold as an ideal the authenticity of affect and the contextual relevance of meaning. A closed family holds a hierarchical power structure of authority as an ideal. This structure helps to maintain durability of affect and certainty of meaning. They seek stability through tradition. Random families do not desire any form of set structure. They make room for whatever feelings any member can possibly have or want to share, if that family member wants to share his or her feelings. Random families hold freedom of choice as an ideal. To accomplish this, the family may choose a laissez faire approach to decision making. This family types holds as an ideal tolerance for ambiguous meaning.

Given these three family types, it seems reasonable to assume that each family type will have different attitudes regarding compliance to rules. It may be that very specific roles are held in a closed family, and the rules for interaction are dependent upon those roles. For example, a closed family, desiring the stability of authority, may place the father in the role of authority figure. This is a traditional family role. Having father as the head of the household may entail certain rules for interaction between the father and other members of the family.

Although these assumptions may make intuitive sense, there is reason to doubt they hold true. In a study conducted by Jackson (1965), traditional sex roles appear in interactions with strangers, but such roles tend to disappear in the context of the family. A later study found that family members share common rules about how they should handle their affect (Middelberg & Gross, 1979). These family types described by Kantor and Lehr allow for different types of rules about interaction, and metarules about decision making.
Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell (1979) have produced a family typology known as the Circumplex Model, which is based on the family’s degree of adaptability and degree of cohesion. Adaptability refers to the level of structure or flexibility regarding rules of interaction, decision making, and role relationships. Olson, et al., (1979) argue that balance on this dimension is most desirable.

Cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the degree of separateness or connectedness between members of a family. The extremes of disengagement and enmeshment are considered undesirable. Disengagement occurs when family members act independent of one another without communicating concern for others' well being. Enmeshment occurs when boundaries between family members are blurred, and members are over involved in each other's lives in such a way making autonomy impossible. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1991) state, "A boundary is an invisible line of demarcation that separates a system, subsystem, or individual from outside surroundings" (p. 45). Boundaries in family systems fall along a continuum between enmeshed and disengaged. When family relationships consistently reflect either extreme, the family is considered to be dysfunctional.

Olson (1986) argues that moderate levels of adaptability and cohesion are descriptors of healthy family functioning. The extremes on either of these two continua are descriptors of family dysfunction. Given Kantor and Lehr's typology in view of Olson's typology, open, closed and random families can be described by the level of adaptability. For example, open families would be flexible enough to deal effectively with crises and situations as they occur. Open families, however, would maintain some degree of definition by the existence of rules. Open families, therefore, would have moderate levels of adaptability.

Closed families, less adaptable than open families, are rigid and resistant to change. Random families, on the other hand, are more chaotic. Random families are characterized by a lack of defining rules or by a lack of knowledge about rules defining the family. In chaotic situations, the child often reports lack of support, though he or she expresses a desire for such support (Jesse, 1988). Chaos implies unpredictability. Given that unpredictability suggests a lack of definition, the family system may be ineffective in dealing with crises which effect the family system as a whole. This inability to adapt or cope with family crises implies dysfunction. Jesse (1988) suggests that perceptions of interpersonal functioning derived from a chaotic period (in the family system) are extremely resistant to change. These perceptions may perpetuate through subsequent relationships leading to cross-generational family dysfunction.

Family System Function and Dysfunction

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1991) define dysfunction as an impaired ability to accommodate to or cope with stress. Given this definition, a dysfunctional family would not develop in healthy manner. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1991) state, "Family dysfunction may signal that the family is at a developmental impasse" (p. 17). That is, the dysfunctional family would not foster individuals with an ability to cope with stress. If individuals are socialized by the family, a lack of effective coping skills in the family ultimately will effect the coping skills of the individual. Satir (1972) found that dysfunctional families follow rules which retard family development.
Given the family’s effect on the individual family member, the individual may perpetuate this dysfunction to other systems. In fact, the perpetuation of dysfunctional family systems across generations is profound (Jesse, 1988, p. 58).

Whether or not this is the case may or may not affect the development of rules in any given family. Yet, a basic issue still exists in the development of the family. Which family structure works best for the development of the individual in the family? Given the arguments, the study of rules and rule violation by family type is highly relevant. A highly structured, authoritarian family system may contribute to reticence in children. Burgoon and Koper (1984) found that as the level of reticence increases, subjects nod less, show less facial pleasantness and animation, display more anxiety and tension, lean away more, and communicate greater disinterest. Reticents' relational messages were rated as expressing less intimacy or similarity, more detachment, more submisiveness, more emotional negativity, and therefore less credible. This ultimately will affect their ability to effectively interact and develop relationships.

The lack of credibility may become a double-bind for children in this type of family system. If a child is caught in this type of bind, he or she may believe his or her only recourse is to violate a rule. This may even contribute to violence in the home. Familial violence may be related to the perceived noncompliance of members to rules, or perceived rules. Jesse (1988) suggests family systems theory holds that the family's dysfunction will be expressed in a concealed manner (p. 57). Which explanation accurately reflects the realities of family interaction still may need to be tested.

Other types of rules can be measured by family type. For instance, kinkeepers use a variety of activities to keep families in touch including visiting, telephoning, letter writing, and mutual aid (Adams, 1986). These activities of kinkeepers may be measured in terms of enmeshment. In terms of roles, Brody and Steelman (1985) found that as the number of sons in the family increases (holding constant the number of daughters), the sex-typing of traditionally-female tasks decreases. In sibling groups with no sons, increases in the numbers of daughters reduce the sex-typing of male tasks. Family structure, as well as actual characteristics, appear to affect the rules within the family system.

Callan and Noller (1986) found that there were few differences in the ratings of family members between the parents. However, adolescents rated family members as more anxious, less involved, and less dominant. Both parents and children viewed interacts as equally friendly. The perceptions of the five dimensions marginally depended upon the sex of the adolescent and the perceived level of marital quality.

Yet, a more pervasive incidence of dysfunction may demonstrate itself through psychological disorder of individual family members. The vulnerability-stress model (Nuechterlien & Dawson, 1984) proposes that the genetic predisposition to mental disorder is recognized as forming the basis for the disorder; the vulnerability is modified by all life events, particularly those of family life, which in turn modify the likelihood of the later expression of the disorder. Later research (Goldstein, 1985) concluded that the incidence of psychological disorder within the
family covaried with high degrees of communication deviance. Communication deviance was first defined by Wynne (1970) as a disordered style of communication within a system. These findings suggest that rule violations can be found in families and differentiated by family type.

Discussion
Families develop of rules, or patterns of behavior, which define member's expectations regarding interactions between individuals. The development, endorsement, or violation of these rules can be observed. Research into rule violations by family type is highly relevant for determining effective means for distinguishing between family system function or dysfunction. What this means for researchers is that communicative interaction within the family is a good descriptor for the health of a given family. Socialization patterns within families may be altered which would allow families to break the generational cycle of dysfunction and to develop new paradigms or metaphors. These new metaphors may allow individuals to cope with stress in their communicative interactions.

Proposal for Research
Given the above argument, that members of a family are socialized into the family systems by means of rules, and that these rules will determine the overall patterns of behavior within the family, it is relevant to study rule development, endorsement, and behavior by family type. This study might involve these research questions:

RQ1 What interactional rules do families endorse?

RQ2 How do families define themselves on scales of adaptability and cohesion?

RQ3 Can families be differentiated by family type according to these scales?

RQ4 What are the interactional rules endorsed by families according to family type?

By answering these questions, researchers will be able to determine whether significant differences in the endorsement of rules occur between families differentiated by family type. In order to determine the rules endorsed by families, I propose an open-ended questionnaire which asks family members to identify rules which exist within the family (see Appendix A). This questionnaire will ask family members to identify themselves as mother, father, daughter or son. The questionnaire will ask respondents to list the rule, state who set the rule, state whether the rule is followed or violated and to what degree, and to state the importance of the rule. Respondents will be asked to consider rules which dictate the use of space, time, energy, and money, or any other category which might affect family interaction. The results from this questionnaire will be compared to the results of a description of family type defined by members of the family.
To determine family type, a family member (from the same family examined above) will be asked to describe or define their family by degree of adaptability or cohesion (see Appendix B). A brief definition of adaptability and cohesion will be given, and family members will be asked to provide an example of a family interaction which demonstrates the definition provided. Results of these two tests will be coded and compared to determine whether families can be differentiated by type and if these differences adhere to the typologies found by Kantor and Lehr (1976), and Olson, et al. (1979).

If these two types are found to coincide with those reported in previous studies, the two tests will be compared to determine which rules are endorsed by which family type. If the definitions do not coincide with previous studies, new family typologies will be determined by rule endorsement. Degrees of adaptability and cohesion may be determined by rule endorsement and violation reported by family members.

Once family type and rule endorsement has been determined, families will be compared to determine degree of dysfunction by levels of adaptability and cohesion. As argued earlier, extremes on either of these scales may be indicators of family dysfunction. This contention will be tested by comparing the frequency of rule violation with rule endorsement and family type to determine the rigidity or relaxed nature of the family (adaptability), or the degree of interdependence (cohesion). The determination of adaptability will be compared to the descriptions given by family members to determine the meaning given to the apparent degree of adaptability. The same method will be employed to determine the meaning given to the apparent degree of cohesion.

Direction for Future Study

This research proposal attempts to define families by type according to rule endorsement and violation, and by degrees of adaptability and cohesion. The purpose of this study is to determine how families determine meaning for interactions and how those meanings might affect the communicative health of the family system. This study marks the beginning of a program of research which ultimately hopes to gain insight into the development of dysfunction in the family system. Potential research questions regarding the development of family definition might include: (a) How do members of dysfunctional families develop models for appropriate and inappropriate behavior, (b) Are these models internally or externally developed, that is, do they continue behavior learned from within the parents' families of origin or are the (new) models developed from outside sources, such as the mass media, and (c) How do family members deal with inconsistencies between internal (to the family) behaviors and behaviors of the outside world? These models can be determined by examining rule endorsement within the family, and the meaning attached to those rules. These models can also be determined by examining the definitions that family members describe for their present family situation. However, these determinations will need to be compared to examinations of actual family interaction to ascertain the reliability of research models differentiating between family types and the relative degree of dysfunction by these family types.
Examinations of interactions will have to determine the degree of similarity between what family members describe as the rules which are endorsed and those which actually exist. To discover these similarities the researcher must ask: (a) What are the family rules endorsed as apparent through observed interactions, (b) What are the rules violated, and what is the frequency of those violations, (c) Are there significant differences in the frequency of interactional rule violations by family type or level of dysfunction, (d) If significant differences occur among the family types, what is the nature of these differences, and (e) Are dysfunctional families defined by a lack of consistency in the application of rules?

These research questions can be studied by observing family interactions. Baesler and Burgoon (1985) posit that overall, the study of nonverbal behavior has yielded reliabilities above .80. This type of study, involving family interactions with children, has been conducted before with success. Callan and Noller (1986) videotaped interactions between parents and their adolescent children. Then the family members viewed the videotape and rated each other on levels of anxiety, involvement, dominance, and friendliness of themselves and other members of the family. The method used in their study has direct relevance to the method proposed in this study.

The question regarding the reliability of children’s responses has been addressed in other studies. For example, Amato and Ochiltree (1987) studied children’s responses to interviews about their families and compared the children’s responses to the responses of their parent(s) and the perceptions of the researchers. The researchers found that although the quality of data for adolescents is higher than for primary age children, the data for primary age children was high in absolute terms. They posited that the findings have positive implications for researchers wanting to use the responses of children.

Therefore, I propose the following methodology for obtaining relevant data for future study. First, identify families by type. Then derive a set of rules for each of the family types. This can be accomplished using the methodology outlined above. The results of this examination will be used to create a coding scheme or template for observing rule violations within interactions. This template will allow the researchers to check off which rules were violated and when these rules were violated in each interaction situation as well as the frequency of violations that occur in the situation.

A new sample of families will be chosen to take part in natural family interaction situations which will be videotaped. The sample of families will be interviewed to determine what type of family system they are. From this sample, an equal number of families will be randomly selected by family type. These families then will be videotaped. The videotapes will then be coded using the above coding scheme by two separate groups. The first group will be a control group. This group will be selected at random and trained to look for specific nonverbal cues, as described above. The second group will entail the family members themselves who took part in the videotaped segments. Each family member will be asked to view the videotape and code any rule violations they observe.
The results will then be analyzed according to the following criteria: (a) family type reported, (b) frequency of the rule violations, and (c) type of rule violations. The scores of the control group will then be compared with the results from the family members to check for consistency of coding.

This method and analysis should reveal differences, if they exist, between frequency and type of rule violations by family type. Once these differences are determined, questions regarding family dysfunction can be addressed. The relevance of this study, or the study of family dysfunction in general, to research on communication cannot be underscored. If people learn to interact in relationships through socialization in the family, then a destructive development defined by family dysfunction can have dire consequences for members of dysfunctional families in their pursuit of relational interaction in other settings.

Due to incidence of dysfunction in families it may be important to ask why family members choose to continue relationally destructive behaviors? The answer may be that families have developed patterns of behavior which have become habituated and possibly handed down from generation to generation from the parents' family of origin to the children who in turn used the same behavior in the families they start. These tendencies can create an unending cycle of relationally destructive behaviors unless the cycle is broken through the learning and application of healthy behaviors in the family.

References


Appendix A

Family Communication Research
Rules Questionnaire

This study is being conducted by H. Paul LeBlanc III of Southern Illinois University, Department of Speech Communication to determine the types of rules which exist in families. Please identify as many rules which exist within your family. These rules may regulate the use of space, time, energy, money, or any other category which might affect family interaction. Please feel free to list any rules that you think are important for the family to get along. After you list the rule state who set the rule, state whether the rule is most frequently followed or violated and to what degree, and state the importance of the rule. For example:

a) Family members should be open and honest.
b) Family members should keep secrets
c) Family members should not discuss family issues with people outside the family

Please identify yourself by circling the correct term:

MOTHER       FATHER       DAUGHTER       SON

What is your current age? _______

1. List the rule: ______________________________________________

   a. Who made this rule: ________________________
   (You could answer: Mother, Father, Both Parents, Daughter, Son, Children, Family, etc.)

   b. Is this rule most frequently followed or violated: ________________
   (You could answer: Always Followed, Mostly Followed, Neutral, Mostly Violated, Always Violated, etc.)

   c. How important is this rule: ________________________
   (You could answer: Very Important, Important, Neutral, Unimportant, Very Unimportant, etc.)

   d. Any additional information about this rule? ________________________

Please attach additional sheets for other rules using the same format as above.
Appendix B

Family Communication Research
Interview Questionnaire

This study is being conducted by H. Paul LeBlanc III of Southern Illinois University, Department of Speech Communication to determine the way family members describe their families. Please describe or define your family, the degree of flexibility of your family regarding rules and how interdependent you believe members in your family are with each other. Please give examples of family interactions which demonstrate the definition you have provided.

Please identify yourself by circling the correct term:

MOTHER    FATHER    DAUGHTER    SON

What is your current age? ______

1. Please describe your experience of family?
   a) What was (is) the emotional climate of your family?
   b) Give examples describing this emotional climate.

2. Who talks to whom in your family?
   a) Is there a parent or sibling that does not communicate with others?
   b) How do you see the communication network affecting the family?

3. Do you or anyone in your family ever feel ignored by others in the family?
   a) Who gets ignored?
   b) How is ignoring done in the family?

4. How flexible is your family toward the endorsement or violation of family rules?
   a) Does your family adapt well to new situations?
   b) Can you give an example of a crisis external to the family but affecting family members?
      i) How did your family deal with this crisis?
      ii) Was your family flexible in dealing with this crisis?
   c) Can you give an example of a crisis internal to the family?
      i) How did your family deal with this crisis?
      ii) Was your family flexible in dealing with this crisis?

5. How would you describe your family in terms of cohesion?
   a) How independent are family members from each other?
   b) How do you experience privacy in your family?
Democratic Truth:  
The Agreement on Language by its Practitioners

When a child first enters the world, the child begins to focus on the things around him or her. The child has needs which have to be met such as food, safety, and to have his or her clothing changed. The child communicates these needs to the caregiver by crying. At some point in persons’ development the discovery is made that it is more expedient to name things in order to communicate more specifically the needs which must be met.

Human needs beyond food, safety, and survival, include the need for intimacy and union with other humans. This need can be demonstrated as universal by examining the tendency for humans to band together. An examination of cross-cultural and religious beliefs demonstrate a common desire for unity with an other. For example, in Christian thought heaven represents unity with an anthropomorphized god. In Buddhism, the highest attainment is unity with the all. These beliefs idealize the human desire to be whole. Yet, the ideal is based upon the experience of unity with the human other.

Human needs and desires demand communication in some form in order to be realized. To realize those needs, agreement with the other, who can meet the need, must be made. For example, the child attains unity with the caregiver by learning names such as "Mama" or "Dada." These names are also learned and used for the purpose of directing attention. The child screams "Mama" when he or she desires the caregiver to pay attention. As adults, we often speak out a person's name to get his or her attention. In order for this attention getting function to occur, agreement on the name of the target should occur between the target and the person seeking attention.

If a purpose of communication is to meet the needs of its practitioners and communication occurs through agreement between practitioners, then some "mechanism" by which agreement occurs must exist. Persons have the ability to store images and ideas in memory. This ability to store information allows the individual person to have constancy in names for particular ideas. For example, if the individual supplies the name "tree" to refer to a particular class of plants, the name can serve as a symbol for recalling knowledge about the characteristics of treeness.

The individual knowing about certain objects, such as trees, occurs as a function of the sense experience of trees. The individual examines the tree and notices bark, branches, and leaves. The individual may examine several different types of trees. However, he or she will notice that the different types of trees have similar characteristics. These characteristics of trees are stored as patterns in memory to which a symbol "tree" is supplied.

The symbol for treeness must be agreed upon by the individual and the target (other) in the communicative event in order for the other to understand to what the individual is referring. Effective communication occurs when both members of the communicative event understand what the symbols, such as words, refer to in
the given context. The use of the word tree in conversation may refer to the characteristics of treeness as recalled by the speaker. In order for the target (listener) to understand the speaker, the use of the word tree has to elicit the image or characteristics of treeness in the mind of the listener. In order for the individual to have his or her needs met, the communicative event has to be effective.

The application of symbol to image and referent is made through the process of learning and socialization. Just as the child learns to supply the symbol "mama" to the primary female caregiver, the child also learns to supply new symbols to objects referred to by others. This process occurs in early stages of development by fixing the attention of the child on the object and speaking the name of the object until the child learns to associate the name with the object. This association between the object and the name is stored in memory so that any further use of the symbol will be understood as referring to the particular type of object.

For members of a culture, socialization occurs through communicative events where images and ideas are agreed upon through description. Symbols are used to describe "truths" which are analogous to individual experience. In this way, the individual has his or her needs met.
Conical Models of Interactional Processes: Communication and Memory

Memory and communication are inextricably linked in that communication requires the use of symbols, and symbols to be known must be stored in memory. This connection between memory and communication implies that the present act of speaking involves a tie to the past. Bergson (1988) described memory as an individual, internal structure in which the present is represented as a ever-moving point on a plane of the individual's "actual representation of the universe" (p. 152). The internal structure of memory represents the past as a motionless foundation upon which present action is based.

Ruesch and Bateson (1987) describe communication using a model which is similar in structure to Bergson's model of memory. In the communication model, the point of the cone represents the individual's internal processes which are referred to as the intrapersonal network. The base of the model represents the cultural network which informs the internal processes. The similarity in structure points to the internal processes of both communication and memory which are inextricably linked.

The point on both models represents a time element. Bergson held that the point of memory is a present act of "sensori-motor mechanisms." These mechanisms involve the perception of the body. In comparison to the communication model (Ruesch & Bateson, 1987), the intrapersonal network involves the perception of the body through present awareness. This present awareness entails both proprioception and exteroception. Proprioception is perception of internal stimuli such as feelings or sensations which give "information about the state of the organism" (p. 278). Exteroception is perception of external stimuli such as light and sound which give information about the relationship between the organism and the environment. Both forms of perception are present oriented occurrences: that is, perception occurs in the now.

The base of both models also represents a time element. However, the comparison between the models is not as direct. The memory model represents the base as an immovable past. In one sense, the past cannot be changed. Individuals are bound by time and cannot change what has already occurred. Memory is a time bound phenomenon in that what has been perceived in the past has been stored with some degree of meaning attached. Yet, the meaning of what was perceived in the past and stored in memory can be changed. This change occurs as a function of new information being perceived in the present. For example, an individual may hold a particular meaning or evaluation for an occurrence in the past. If new information is perceived, this new information may redefine the occurrence remembered.

The communication model represents the base as a cultural network. The cultural data, such as rules, roles, and expectations, may be stored by an individual in memory. The individual may be aware of certain expectations for interaction which are determined by the culture at large. Because cultural data can be stored in memory, it can be described as a past-oriented phenomenon. However, cultural
expectations are constantly in flux. Rules and roles within the cultural network are negotiated through an interaction of many to many.

The interaction of individuals within a larger context such as the cultural network, a group network, or interpersonally provides the individual with new information which allows the individual to redefine the past occurrences stored in memory. Bergson's model allows for a redefinition of past occurrences. Bergson (1988) states that the individual moves between the extremes of the past memory and the present action. To describe the move away from the present, Bergson offers the example of dreams. However, even the perception of past occurrences is a present action. A dream involves proprioception which was described earlier as time-bound to the present.

Communication involves internal processes of perception, which is a present act, as well as recalling of memory, a present act tied to the time-bound past phenomena of memory. The information-based theory of communication posited by Ruesch and Bateson states that communication involves reception, transmission, and the central functions of coordination, interpretation, and the storage of memory. Reception of information in a communication event between people entails the central functions in that perception requires a coordination between proprioception and exteroception in order for stimuli to be interpreted and thus stored in memory. Transmission of information in a communication event between people requires recalling of stored memory.

In order for communication to occur, some degree of agreement in the use of symbols must exist between interactional partners (LeBlanc, 1993). This agreement requires that individuals store symbols in memory and then be able to recall the symbols during the communicative event. Spoken communication is a present-bound act which requires a present-bound act of retrieving past-bound memory of symbols. However, speech often is not spontaneous, but contrived or scripted. The present-bound act of speaking may involve a mindless repetition of habituated sound patterns. In this case, retrieval may not be a conscious act. Regardless of whether the retrieval is conscious or not, the act of retrieval is a present-bound act connected to past-bound memory.

Thus the connection between communication and memory is inextricably linked. Bergson's model of memory and Ruesch and Bateson's model of communication contain complementary and compatible ideas about the internal processes of individuals within larger interactional contexts.

References

The Human Science of Communication:
Roman Jakobson

In the post-positivist quest for knowledge, researchers have determined that to view the whole of experience, if that is possible, the researcher must take multiple perspectives. Any one perspective alone is limited by the assumptions made by that perspective, and as a result of those limitations research cannot hope to achieve a fuller knowledge of the phenomena it seeks to know. Polkinghorne (1983) posits that a syncretic method is needed to achieve such fuller knowledge. This fuller knowledge becomes part of the discourse within the community of researchers and allows for further integration of new ideas which advance understanding about phenomena.

However, Polkinghorne complained that one of the major difficulties which limited the scope and ability to fully understand in positivistic research was the assumption that certainty could be obtained. This certainty of knowledge, in the positivistic sense, was gained through and only through strict adherence to assumptions about knowledge and reality. These assumptions include the notion that the researcher can be objective in his or her observations of phenomena, and that any subjective errors could be edited out through discourse within the community of scientists. The ability to edit out subjective errors would allow the community of scientists to achieve certainty. This assumption denied the effect of cultural context on the ability to perceive any given phenomena. The imposition of context may limit perception and deny renegotiation of assumptions which limit perception. The result of this limitation on perception is an incomplete, "fallible" knowledge, although positivists might claim "true" knowledge is infallible.

To gain a fuller knowledge of human phenomena, Polkinghorne suggests that syncretic research would allow for different perspectives. This syncretism would allow patterns to emerge from the various perspectives which would ultimately result in a fuller knowledge of the phenomena being observed. Furthermore, syncretic research would allow for a progressive and dynamic building of knowledge by "the uniting or combining of differences." Polkinghorne argues that the very nature of human science requires a syncretic approach "in order to gain a fuller understanding."

In order to describe the methodology of human science research using a syncretic approach, Polkinghorne offers a set of criteria. First, syncretic research will allow a unity of ideas to emerge from the inquiry rather than forcing such a unity. Second, syncretic research will attempt to look at the whole range of types of inquiry into the subject matter in order to allow the unity of ideas to emerge. Third, the types of inquiry used must be examined within the context of their own paradigms. An understanding of the assumptions upon which the explanations are made in any give method of inquiry must be maintained in order to insure integrity of interpretation. Fourth, the information gained through the process of the examination of other methods of inquiry becomes part of the whole and informs the whole. And fifth, the syncretic process remains continually open to new information.
which is integrated into the whole. This implies that research into any topic area is never "finished" but rather is always in progress.

When comparing the research process of Jakobson (1972) in his article on verbal communication, some interesting parallels to the syncretic model emerge. Compared to Polkinghorne's first criterion for syncretic research, Jakobson (p. 41) suggests that parallels exist in the divergent studies of mathematics and linguistics. Jakobson offers the example of invariance and relativity as underlying principles which exist in both "sciences." This interconnectedness is similarly exposed by the concept of evolution when researchers discover change as an underlying principle in divergent disciplines. For example, evolutionary ideas are present in Darwin's theory of the origin of the species, geological Plate Tectonic theory, astronomical Big Bang theory, and even in various psychological and relational developmental theories such as by Piaget, Kohlberg, Kubler-Ross, Knapp, and others. Change as a fundamental aspect of reality was described in Western thought originally by the pre-Socratic philosophers.

Jakobson began his article with a historical view of the study of human language and linguistic research. This review was performed in order to describe the development of thought on verbal communication. In this historical review, the patterns of markedness and unmarkedness, as well as variance and invariance emerged. A fundamental underlying principle of these patterns is that they are bipolar opposites. However, in both patterns these opposites require each other. For example, Jakobson held that "marked terms were superimposed on the corresponding unmarked terms," and that language requires a continual interplay of "invariants and variations." This emergence of patterns occurs as a function of the observation of the whole of research, and in the case of the article on verbal communication, the review of the history of the discipline.

The paradigms of thought which underlie the various approaches to understanding verbal communication throughout the period of inquiry should be fully considered. Jakobson considers the assumptions of the Neogrammarian trend as implied acceptance of the notions of uniformity (p. 39). Jakobson argued that this acceptance was a reaction to the assumptions of empiricism. Jakobson may have offered more argument for the reaction to "crude empiricism" in terms of the difficulties inherent in that approach. This argument would have more fully realized Polkinghorne's third criterion for syncretic research. Rather, it is implied in the article that the reader would or should know the limitations or assumptions inherent in such crude empiricism.

The fourth and fifth of Polkinghorne's criteria may be implied in the Jakobson article. Jakobson does attempt to bring the theories into a coherent whole by discussing the underlying patterns as they present themselves in issues such as markedness and unmarkedness in the grammatical process (p. 44). This discussion leaves open the possibility of new discovery within the realm of verbal language. Jakobson implies this possibility by arguing for the creative power of language (p. 44).

The syncretic process requires an open look at all approaches to human inquiry provided they are reasonable and robust. If the statement beginning the
article can be taken as Jakobson’s proposition, then explication of the emergent patterns of verbal language through an eidetic argument may be considered as human science.

References


Family Secrets

Throughout my life, I have felt often as though something that I was not aware of was happening to others with whom I had relationships. I believed, for some reason or another, these others felt it unimportant or unhelpful to divulge certain information about their lives. Whether or not unspoken events had occurred sometimes seems irrelevant; it was the feeling that the event occurred without my being privy to it that was important.

This feeling of being "out of the know" has had serious implications for the development of intimacy and trust for relationships I have been involved with both inside and out of the family. However, I believe that my first experience with secrecy occurred within the family. That experience of secrecy within the family kept me from knowing more about my siblings and parents, and consequently, affected the level of intimacy that I experienced in the family.

The first example of a family secret which affected my relationship with a family member involves my mother's childhood. I never felt as though I knew Mom well, and in many ways I still do not know her well. As I was growing up, my mom did not tell many stories about her childhood. Somehow I understood that it was not a very happy childhood for her, but I did not have any details to back up that intuition. All I knew of her childhood was that she had a brother and a sister and a mother that lived in a nursing home. My mom also had relatives who lived in the country but were less like my belief of family than my paternal relatives. I knew my mom had a father, but I never met him and I did not even know if he was still alive until I was fifteen because mom did not talk about him.

My maternal grandmother, whom we called Grandma Lovett, lived in a nursing home for as long as I could remember. My family and I would go visit her two or three times a year because she lived several hours away. I thought we only went to visit her a few times a year because she lived so far away. Now I do not know why Grandma lived so far away because she did not have any relatives who lived nearby. The trip to see Grandma was also treated by the family as if it was understood that we had to go see her. My older siblings must have gone to visit before I was born, so my recollection was that visiting Grandma was something that we always did.

The only knowledge I had regarding Grandma Lovett's condition was that she had Diabetes, and she had some type of breakdown before I was born which required that she move to a nursing home. The circumstances surrounding my maternal grandmother's life, and consequently that of my mother, was not known to me, nor was it ever mentioned. It was as if it was an unspoken and unwritten rule not to talk about the subject.

It was not until the death of Grandma Lovett that I became aware of the story behind my Grandma's life. After the funeral and the burial, my family went to the house of my mother's sister. There, around the kitchen table, the story of my mother's life unfolded. It seems that my mother had two other siblings of whom I was never aware. She had a sister who was about four years younger and a younger
brother who died in infancy. It was the death of the infant which precipitated Grandma Lovett's breakdown. Grandma was suffering from a severe case of postpartum depression immediately following the birth of her fifth child. As a result, Grandma Lovett's sister came to take care of the children. The infant was ill, so the sister fixed some baking soda for the baby. The infant died. Following the death of the infant, Grandma Lovett had a nervous breakdown which resulted in her being institutionalized.

My mom was about six or eight years old when this event occurred. Her younger sister was given up for adoption, and then she, her father, and older brother and sister moved out west. My mom has not seen or heard from the younger sister since.

My mom's life with her father was harsh. However, it was revealed at the gathering after the funeral that Grandpa Lovett was in love with Grandma Lovett but had a difficult time dealing with the new responsibility of raising a family alone.

At the gathering, I learned a great deal about my mom. I do not know if she knew all of the details which were described by her older siblings, but I sensed that the occurrence of the storytelling allowed my mother to understand and let go of the hurt and resentment which followed her throughout life. It was as if Grandpa was not to blame anymore. It was an unfortunate occurrence which no one could foresee.

However, for twenty-five years of my own life I did not know the circumstances of my mom's childhood. I did not understand the reasons why Grandma was in the nursing home. It became clear to me why it was difficult for my mom to talk about her childhood. Even though I do not blame my mom for not telling me about her childhood, I could not help but feel as though my relationship with her and with my grandmother and with my family and relatives would have been much different and perhaps better if I had known.

Since the time of this storytelling event, more details of my mom's childhood have been exposed. I understand my mom better now than I ever could have while I was growing up as a result of this new knowledge. And, I can understand how other family secrets could have occurred. If my mom had difficulty talking about painful experiences, than it would have been difficult for her to teach her children how to express painful feelings.

This became apparent about two years ago when the truth regarding the abuse of several of my siblings at the hands of paternal uncles came to light. Of the women that I know well, an overwhelming majority of them have been abused physically and sexually. Most women I have dated have shared stories of abuse with me, including one women who was raped while we were dating by two males whom she had trusted. When news of my sisters’ abuse by my paternal uncles was forthcoming from my mom, it was not hard for me to believe such a thing could have occurred.

My mom shared this information with me over lunch one day because she felt it was important for all the family members to know in order for us to be supportive of each other in times of difficulty. One of my sisters was seeking counseling to deal with unresolved feelings about the abuse which had occurred over ten years earlier. During the process, it became apparent that the abuse may not have been
restricted to this one sister, but may have occurred for all of my sisters even though a few of them were not willing or ready to talk about it. It also became apparent that this particular sister had reported the abuse to Mom and Dad when it occurred, but Mom and Dad did not believe her.

It strikes me as tragic that there might be a connection between my mother’s experience growing up and her inability to talk about it and the failure to believe my sister’s reporting of the abuse. It was as if my parents did not want to believe that such a thing could happen to their children. The failure to believe my sister’s account may have contributed to my sister’s difficulty resolving the hurt feelings. And the whole occurrence reemphasized the occurrence of family secrecy.

At lunch, my mom also told me that when she was telling this story of abuse to one of my brothers, my brother shared with her that he had been molested by another of my father’s brothers when he was about thirteen. (He is now twenty-five.) Just before she told me this story about my brother, she warned me that I might be shocked. My mother was shocked when I told her that I knew about my brother’s abuse for about twelve years.

When my mom asked me why I had not told anyone (particularly her and Dad) about it, I responded by saying that it was for two reasons. First, my brother did not tell me about the abuse. I was told about it by a mutual friend of ours whom I was dating at the time. This friend and my brother were close, and I believe at the time that she was the only person that he had told.

This friend was the women that was raped by two of her male friends while we were dating. She also was sexually abused by her father when she was a pre-teen. I believe her experience of abuse gave her an understanding, and that is why she told me about my brother’s experience.

But, I knew that trust and loyalty were very important to my brother. I believed that divulging that information to either him or to my parents, which would probably become known by him, would seriously affect his ability to trust me, our friend, or anyone else. I was unwilling to take that chance. I still do not know if I made the best choice, but my relationship with this brother is the closest sibling relationship that I have.

I believe that family secrecy occurs because of: (a) an inability to cope with traumatic experiences, (b) a desire to avoid pain or talk that might elicit pain, (c) a desire to maintain the status quo in familial relationships, or (d) a fear of destroying trust. However, in the long run family secrecy has a negative effect on intimacy and trust. Secrecy affects intimacy by disallowing the telling of stories which contribute to understanding. Secrecy affects trust by communicating the fear of loss.
The image of the black sheep of the family is an old one, perhaps biblical. The stories about how the black sheep must be separated from the white sheep before they go to market are powerful. In families, the black sheep is the person who is separated from the fold. In this individual experience, separation is a form of alienation from the family.

Alienation can take many forms and might more properly be thought of as falling on a continuum from trivial exclusion to banishment. Trivial exclusion might take the form of being excluded from family events, not being invited to a party, not being told a story that other members of the family have heard. Banishment might take the form of a child being disowned by the parents. Popular movies depict this form of alienation as a child, as a young adult, being thrown out of the family home for some reason which might include: (a) being incorrigible, (b) dating or marrying outside of the family religion, or (c) being homosexual.

Alienation can be other-imposed or self-imposed. Alienation that is self-imposed is sometimes the result of a child who does not wish to belong to the family. An example of this phenomena would be the child who does not wish to remain in the static lifestyle of the parents. Perhaps the family owned a farm in Iowa, but the child had dreams of becoming a famous actor, which of course the parents would not approve. Stories such as this are often depicted in popular movies as well.

A more common occasion of self-alienation may be the child who chooses to distance him or herself from the family of origin due to a desire to escape abuse or chemical dependency. As the child is packing bags to leave, if that child is leaving in the daylight, he or she might here the parent say, "if you leave this house, don't bother coming back."

Whether the alienation is self or other-imposed, both can result in the alienated individual becoming a black sheep to the family. In my own experience, I have often felt as though I were alienated from my family. However, I cannot point to specific ways in which that alienation was other-imposed. It seems I was a lost child. My entire life seems to be defined by the experience, or at least the sense of feeling, of being outside of the group. During my primary and secondary school years I struggled hard to fit in to a group. This struggle carried over into my experience in the seminary where I wanted people to agree with my point of view.

While I was in the seminary, I sought spiritual direction from a Catholic nun who worked as a chaplain at a local Catholic hospital. During a visit with this nun, she asked me what I was like as a baby. Because I could not remember, she suggested that the next time I go home I should ask my mother what I was like. In a conversation with my mother later that summer, I discovered that I was a very quiet baby. I did not cry as much as my sisters had when they were infants. Because I had four older sisters who were still small children at the time, mom let me alone most of the time. I do not believe she was being negligent; she just had plenty to do. Somehow though, I believe that may have affected my development.
The result of this development was that I had learned to rely on myself and to be independent.

By the time I was three years old, my parents were convinced that I either had a hearing problem or I was autistic. I was not responding to them in a fashion they believed to be normal, but rather, I seemed to be ignoring them. They took me to the hospital to have me checked, but the doctor discovered that there was nothing wrong with me.

I also learned in that conversation that I was a difficult birth. I was expected to be a stillbirth, and when I was born I was not expected to survive. All of this information was news to me. It confirmed a suspicion suggested by the nun that my early childhood development affected who I was as a young adult seeking spiritual direction.

I thought about this new information and reflected about my life experiences through primary and secondary school. It seems that my tendencies toward alienation are not isolated instances but all parts of a much larger pattern. This pattern was not exactly self-inflicted; it was part of my identity shaped during my early childhood.

I do not now nor did I then want to be separate from my family. I do not believe my family or any individual members of it want me to be separate from it. However, there are events which have occurred, even recently, which precipitate a feeling of alienation.

The most recent incident involved storytelling last Christmas in my parents home. My sisters all have families, and many of the stories revolve around the grandchildren (my nephews and nieces), and the interesting and funny aspects of that type of life. I find these stories interesting as well. However, to some degree I can only share in them as an observer. This past Christmas I noticed that I usually embody the role of the outside observer physically. My family of origin sat around the table engaged in the story, while I stood or sat several feet away. I was listening to the stories, but I was not actively involved in the storytelling event.

I came to the revelation that I physically embody alienation from the family in the weeks following Christmas. As learning the knowledge of my early childhood elicited self-reflection over events in my life, this new revelation over my physical embodiment of alienation empowered me to self-reflect about these events with self-inflicted alienation in mind. The first event that came to mind was Grandma Lovett's funeral. As I was hearing the story of my mother's life unfold before me, I was leaning against the wall several feet away. I was not actively involved in the storytelling event. Although the subject matter did not involve me as a character in any way, nonetheless, it greatly impacted my life.

I do not believe myself to be regarded by my family in any way as the black sheep. I do not believe I have done anything consciously, such as breaking important family rules, to warrant such a label. I have not chosen to set myself apart from my family. Yet, I do feel a certain degree of alienation from my family.

There are degrees to the experience of being a black sheep. My experience perhaps is a mild form of alienation. However, the experience was and is very real.
In my experience of growing up, my relationships with my siblings were sources of pleasure and pain. For the most part, these relationships are pleasurable now. However, when I was much younger they were more painful. The movement from rivalry to affection occurs as a function of maturity. This contention of direction of the growth of sibling relationships is offered by Noller and Fitzpatrick (1993).

The authors of the text offer many explanations for the characteristics of sibling relationships. Some of these explanations were apparent in my own experience. Yet, I contend that relationships which occur within a larger relational system such as a family can be much more complex and idiosyncratic. This complexity suggests that while the research findings reviewed by Noller and Fitzpatrick point to interesting trends in sibling relationships, the possibilities of explanation are not exhaustive.

The authors suggest that one reason for sibling rivalry may be due to a lack of resources. This could be true in economically disadvantaged homes or homes which have many members. In my family of origin, we did not want for necessities, although we did not have many of the extra items other families may have enjoyed. I believe this to be the case primarily because of family size. As a dentist, my father produced finances fairly well, although eventually he had to declare bankruptcy. There were times when family members would fight over who would get the extra pork chop. However, concerns over economic resources did not seem to be a serious issue with us.

Resources of affection may have been a different matter. From my perspective, my parents treated all seven children about the same. The authors suggest that younger children may be treated differently because the parents have struggled through the experimental stage of parenting with the first born children. The expectations for younger children may have been more realistic for the parents than for first born children. As a later born child, my perception of similar treatment by my parents toward all my siblings may be limited due to the fact that I was not able to experience earlier treatment of my older siblings.

As the first born boy, however, I may have enjoyed some privileges not afforded my older sisters. One story that I was told about my early childhood was that a boy was eagerly awaited by my father and that I was the first infant my father held with any regularity. I remember hearing dad refer to me as his "number one son" when introducing me to others. Although chronologically this was true, I can now imagine that label could have had an affect on my siblings.

However, because I was more independent than my other brothers and sisters, I believe my parents may have treated me with less restraint than my siblings. I believe my parents may have taken individual differences into consideration when attempting to determine how to treat each of us. They may have gotten better at that process with each new child. Yet, if we were all treated individually, we may not have felt as though there was any favoritism. In that sense, I have perceived my parents as not treating us any differently from each other.
As we were growing up, we had many arguments which were probably the result of stress induced by an inability to cope rather than lack of resources. At the time my father was drinking, and the model we had for interaction between each other was a relationship between my parents which was ineffectual at times. For example, determining realistic expectations of each other as well as effective ways of communicating those expectations with each other was very difficult. At some point, I believe I was either taught or I assumed that other people were supposed to know what I wanted without my telling them. If my desires were not met, or if another did not know when I was upset, then that person was to blame for not reading my mind. This example illustrates that sibling relationships are not always determined by a rivalry between resources, but rather may be a function of the model taught by the primary caregivers.

Now, sibling relationships in my family are closer than at any point during the years when we were growing up under the same roof. This observation is supported by the research cited by Noller and Fitzpatrick. One reason given by the authors for continued interaction between adult siblings is the common history shared between siblings. This common history forms a basis for relationship, and conversation may center around reminiscence. One purpose for storytelling or perspective-sharing between adult siblings may be to serve the function of resolving issues from one's childhood.

I experience this in my dyadic conversations with my brothers or sisters. Oftentimes the stories told in the course of a conversation serves the purpose of trying to understand occurrences of childhood. These occurrences may be negative as well as positive. Although this type of cathartic communication is a personal journey for myself, this interaction is partaken in by choice rather by a sense of obligation. In my family, most of my brothers and sisters live close to my parents. I believe this to be a matter of choice.

My father stopped drinking when I was about thirteen years old. This change in behavior produced a change in expectations regarding relationships in the family. What occurred was a decision by my family to work together in resolving relational issues brought about by my parents interactions which were affected by my father's drinking. (I think my father's drinking may have, in part, resulted from his inability to functionally interact with others. This was a result of his training in his family of origin. My mother also had difficulties interacting with others for many of the same reasons. The result was that my parents were ineffective in their interaction with each other.)

I believe what keeps the family together now, including sibling relationships, is our common history of trying to work through the relational issues. However, our family did do things together early in our history which allowed us to build bonds. For example, our family went places together such as Guatemala. My parents were involved in Marriage Encounter for a number of years, and the family went on "family weekends" together. And, immediately following my father's detoxification, our family attended family nights to help us cope with our relational difficulties.

These examples from my personal experience illustrate how family relationships, and in particular sibling relationships, may be much more complex
and idiosyncratic than the authors contend. Rivalries do exist and the particular characteristics of individuals do impact relationships. But, the particular issues of interaction and interactional models may have more bearing on the qualities of sibling relationships.

References

"Nesting Dolls":  
An Essay on Joanne Koch's Play

The experience of viewing another life unfold upon the stage at such a deep level of disclosure was both intriguing and troubling. As a performance, and as a written work, it was intriguing to glimpse the level of life experience exposed. At the same time the degree of pain and the issues involved in the piece were troubling.

For me, the thought about many different issues came to the fore. How I could be so effected by a performance, as if I could in some small way identify with this person, even though I had never experienced the extremities? What questions had I pondered about the motives or the contributing factors that influenced the choices about the behaviors of the individuals portrayed. Or, what relational issues between parent and child, between siblings, or between client and social worker were apparent, or perhaps not so apparent, in the portrayal of these lives.

From an academic perspective, I wondered about the issues of methodology. How does a writer discover the pain of another in such descriptive detail? What ethical issues are involved in portraying the inner life of an actual individual as opposed to a fictional character? What destructive possibilities exist for the exposure of such a life on stage? And, does the pedagogical potential of such an exposure justify the degree of exposure in a public forum?

The relationship between the main character, Leila, and her parents during the most dependent years of her childhood, was a very destructive one which eventually led to the extreme forms of psychological coping which she employed. In determining whether abuse occurred, I thought perhaps the outcome of the environment might be a basis for making a judgment. If that was the case, then surely what occurred in the household was abuse. It was not made known until later into the show that Leila's brother Billy had also been abused as a child. The story had been told entirely from Leila's perspective.

The skeptical viewer might wonder to what degree the reporting of abuse had been a fabrication. A few of the psychiatrists as well as the grant committee were skeptical of the claim of abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) as well as MPD as a result of abuse (from Leila's point of view). At some point during the process of therapy the social worker had come to the conclusion the person of Leila had been abused as a young child. This knowledge became a tool in later therapy sessions, as Pam, the social worker, would use the term abuse for purposes of eliciting a needed reaction from Leila.

I have learned about documented cases through the news in which psychiatrists have led the client to a conclusion about his or her treatment by others which has no basis in fact. Instances of satanic ritual abuse, for example, have been discredited due to the investigated unethical practices of the psychiatrists in question. Also, if Leila was indeed suffering from some form of psychosis, then her ability to perceive reality might be questionable.

Also, even though "Nesting Dolls" was a performance of an actual individual's life experience, it was still a performance. The author specified at the
critique session following the show that the actual individual upon with the character was based had an opportunity to read the script and comment on it before it was performed. Within the script, the character Leila intimated that often times she could not remember what her other personalities had done. Yet, the performance was based on some form of description about the behavior of a personality that was not in full control. These discrepancies may lead the skeptical viewer to discount the accuracy of the performance to the real life actions which occurred in the life of the individual. (The first doctor on stage to have an interaction with Leila stated that he believed Leila believed what she was saying. This statement implies the possibility that the occurrence recounted may not have occurred.)

However, for myself as a viewer of this performance, I found it hard to not believe the story of abuse. First, it seems reasonable to me that an individual so badly traumatized by abuse the way this individual portrayed it could develop extreme forms of defense mechanism to cope. Second, the pain disclosed was so extreme that it seemed real. It is hard for me to believe that an individual could imagine a pain that real without having experienced it. Third, the performance of Leila as well as Pam was highly personalized that I could identify them as real individuals.

Another issue that made the scenario described believable to me was the nature of the relationship between Leila and Pam. It seemed throughout the self-disclosure of Leila that she had not gotten her needs for love and affection from her parents or others. These needs manifested themselves later in the life of Leila in her relationship with Pam. Leila became very dependent on Pam as a parenting figure, someone who would take care of her and keep her from harm. This relationship became apparent from the very beginning when Pam reacted to Leila’s regression into childhood by offering her a teddy bear, a hug, and a promise to never hurt her.

Leila, whom it would seem would be very reluctant to trust anyone in the role of parent, responded to Pam’s overture for a hug. In this case, the need for love overcame the fear of pain. The need must have been overwhelming. Throughout the five year client-social worker relationship between Leila and Pam, there were several instances when a personality of Leila did not trust whom she perceived Pam to be. Yet, Leila overcame these difficulties in other instances when she relied very heavily on the support from Pam.

This conflict within Leila may have been a result of her experience with her parents in a number of ways. Her father was sexually abusive, while at the same time telling Leila how nice she was. Her mother acted in a caring manner towards Leila by offering her hugs but would not protect her from the abuse of her father. Leila was put into a double-bind of trusting and not trusting. These messages were exacerbated by the relationships she formed later in life, particularly with her husband Ivan, her boyfriend Tony, and her brother Billy.

Interestingly enough, these messages did not seem to seriously affect Leila’s ability to parent her own child. She seemed very caring and protective towards the child. In situations where a self-destructive, apathetic personality would come to the fore, the caring nurturer in Leila would protect the child. Leila, in the end, seemed to
break the cycle of abuse. But I wonder what type of effects her difficulties with MPD early in her child's life could have had on the child.

All of these questions, and more, were brought to the fore from the process of viewing this performance. For those reasons, I believe performance as a means of knowing has strong implications. Given the skeptic's perspective and the degree of relational description and self-disclosive information portrayed on stage about Leila's experience with relationships, I wonder about the writer's or researcher's process. How does one go about delving into the inner-workings of the life of another at such a deep level? The potential for understanding is incredible. But the costs may be too great for some to be willing to bear.
A Model of a Healthy Family:  
Case Family 001

In many of the descriptions of effective family functioning described in family research, healthy family models are described in terms of what healthy families are not. That is, descriptions of unhealthy families are used to develop models of family functioning, and healthy families are compared to unhealthy families. If health in a family can be defined in terms of effective functioning and interactional qualities which contribute to the growth, well-being and satisfaction of family members, then healthy family models can be described in a positive manner.

The positive description of healthy families can be accomplished in case by case examination of particular families. This examination should include assessment of existing patterns of interaction between and among family members. These patterns can be defined in terms of the functions, the goals desired, the goals achieved, and the overall effect of such patterns. In the case study described in this report, audiotaped family interaction, interview, and self-report questionnaire methodologies were employed to discover interactional patterns. These patterns will be compared to existing conceptions of effective family functioning to determine: (a) the relative degree of interactional health in the family, (b) the capabilities and comprehensiveness of existing models of healthy family functioning, and (c) if new models are warranted.

The particular family examined for this report includes three individuals: mother, father, and daughter. The family also owns a dog. The father is an insurance salesman, the mother is a school teacher, and the daughter is an undergraduate student at Southern Illinois University. The parents live in Buffalo Grove, Illinois which is a suburb of Chicago. The family is Jewish, and they live in a community where this religious culture is present. Both maternal and paternal grandparents are Jewish, and the extended family live in close proximity and attend the same synagogue.

To assess interactional patterns in the family, the family was requested to: (a) audiotape a typical family interaction, and (b) to fill out a questionnaire regarding that interaction, immediately following the interaction. An interview was conducted with the daughter of the family approximately a week and a half after the occurrence of the audiotaped family conversation. The audiotaped conversation was an unplanned interaction which was described by family members as simply talk for talk’s sake. The interaction involved a reporting of the daughter's day at work during the family's preparation of food for dinner. The interaction apparently occurred in the kitchen and continued to the table during the meal. It was reported that the conversation was relaxed, informal, smooth, open, with little conflict, misunderstanding, and communication breakdown. It was also reported that the conversation was highly personal, in-depth, interesting, satisfying, and involved attentive listening. The main topic of talk, the recent death of a friend, was reported as unpleasant although the overall effect of the conversation was positive. It is
interesting to note that there was a high level of agreement in all the dimensions of
the interaction in the individual self-reports.

In the interaction, true triadic communication seemed to occur. Each family
member contributed both to the talk itself and to the topic choice patterns. Overall,
the daughter chose the greatest number of topics with the widest variety of subject
matter. Due to the large number of topic changes, the father became confused twice
about the subject matter, or persons involved. This appears to be due to lack of
foregrounding by the mother and/or daughter during topic changes.

The father initially chose the topic of the death of the daughter's
ex-boyfriend's mother. The topic was troublesome for the daughter, and she
became upset. This is evidenced by her pausing her talk. Prior to the topic change,
the daughter had the floor for the greatest amount of time. This is likely due to the
storytelling about the work day of the daughter.

The mother also chose topics during the conversation, but her topic choices
seem to revolve around the daughter's feelings about issues, particularly the death
of the friend. The mother returned to the topic of this particular event on several
occasions following topic changes within the conversational event. Overall, it
appears that the mother may have been the impetus, in the conversation, for coping
with difficult issues. This was confirmed in the interview when the daughter reported
that often the mother would bring up difficult topics, such as money. Interestingly,
the family joked about the subject matter of this particular interaction as being
atypical, for the sake of the researcher who would be analyzing the tape.

About topics, the daughter reported that there were two subjects which were
troublesome for the family: religion and money. The mother came from a very
religious background which kept Kosher, went to temple regularly, and when her
and her family went to temple, they walked. The father, on the other hand, came
from a family that was not as religious. The father's family would only walk to temple
on High Holidays. Although the family seems to have resolved differences in ritual
observance, the maternal grandmother still retains fairly strict observance, and this
difference is difficult for the father. The daughter stated that her and her father
share similar views on religion, and they typically only attend temple on the High
Holidays of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. However, extended family gatherings
around religious celebrations can be difficult, particularly for her father.

Money is also troublesome, in that at times when the financial situation is
strained, the parents, particularly the father, has difficulty discussing finances with
the daughter. The daughter believed that the parents did not want to worry her
about such matters. She reported that typically, she will bring the topic up with her
mother, and the mother will bring the topic up with the father. All three family
members will then discuss financial matters. In the case of money, the daughter
usually approaches the mother first, whereas for issues of religion she usually
approaches the father first. In conflictual cases, however, the daughter reported that
issues are resolved despite the stress that might be induced.

The phenomena of dyadic coalitions evolving within the family does not seem
to occur, overall. At times, the daughter and father have had more conversations,
which was due primarily to convenience. Since the father worked at home often, but
the mother worked in a classroom, the daughter had more opportunities to talk with
the father on the phone. This caused some strain on the mother, due to feeling left
out. However, this issue apparently was resolved.

Despite the troublesome issues, conflicts seem to be resolved. The daughter
reported that a family rule existed which promoted or required openness and
honesty with each other. This rule was demonstrated in the family interaction. For
example, the parents felt it was important to bring up the death of the friend, even
though they perceived it would be hurtful to the daughter. The daughter used
avoidance as a strategy at times by changing the subject, but the mother came back
to the topic several times, presumably to deal with the issue. This rule, apparently,
is enforced most often by the mother. For example, the mother was uncomfortable
with the daughter and father having conversations of which she was not a part. She
enforced the rule by telling the father and the daughter “to stop doing that;” as
reported in the interview. Also, the mother is the one who has to breach the topic of
money. Perhaps, a different rule is at work; conflicts should be resolved.

The function of the recorded interaction seemed to meet the rule
requirements. As reported by family members in the survey, this particular
interaction seemed to be talk for talk’s sake. In addition, the daughter reported in
the interview that the family talks about almost everything. The function of talk may,
therefore, may simply exist to maintain the family rules of openness and honesty.

In terms of the goals desired, the daughter reported that the family is close
and supportive of each other. The function of the interaction seems to meet this
goal. An example of support occurred in the family when the mother went for an
outpatient procedure, the daughter reported that she called the mother so she
would have "someone to talk to." The daughter reported that oftentimes the decision
to talk or not talk at a particular time is based on the feelings of the other. The goal
of familial support seems to be achieved by such choices. Although this particular
interaction was reported as unpleasant due to the subject matter of the death of a
friend, the overall effect seemed to be positive.

According to Noller and Fitzpatrick (p. 111), healthy conflict resolution should
exhibit qualities of cooperation and supportiveness. At times in the interaction, the
daughter seemed to use avoidance in order to change the topic to a "cheery" one.
However, the mother continually went back to the topic until it was resolved to her
satisfaction. However, within this attempt to resolve the daughter's feelings about
the death, the mother appeared supportive. The mother gave the daughter the
phone number to call about the visitation. The father also appeared supportive by
asking the daughter if she would like some company to the funeral. The daughter
stated that she would like the company, and the support function was served.

The family also exhibited healthy levels of intimacy and affection. According
to Noller and Fitzpatrick (p. 76), healthy interaction is both honest and relaxed. The
relaxed nature of the interaction was reported by all three family members, and
honesty was exhibited through the statement of the family rule. Other examples of
affection within the interaction was the good natured teasing which occurred. In
several instances, teasing was initiated by each of the family members. The
good-naturedness was exhibited by the tendency for family members to play along
with the tease, and by the continuation of the conversation without conflict about the teasing.

Healthy levels of cohesion and adaptability seem to be exhibited by the family. The family demonstrated empathic involvement (Noller & Fitzpatrick, p. 29), without enmeshment. This empathic involvement communicated supportiveness which was a family goal. The family also demonstrated a healthy level of adaptability (Noller & Fitzpatrick, p. 22). They were able to adapt religious ritualization to the needs of individual family members. The family demonstrated healthy boundaries, limiting too much flexibility, in the teasing episode in which the father teased the daughter about being too cruel. The father stated that the parents tried to teach the daughter values. Those values demonstrate familial boundaries.

Overall, this family demonstrates a high level of healthy interactional patterns. Using the currently existing models of familial functioning, one may observe actually occurring instances of healthy interactional behavior. As a result, the existing models may have something to offer in analysis of family communication. However, it remains important to measure these models against healthy families.

References

Pragmatics of Communication Axioms:
Critique of the Use of Anecdotal Evidence

Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson in their book Pragmatics of human communication, use several forms of evidence to posit theories on the functions, or behavioral effects, of communication in relationships. For example, they use case studies, fiction (novels such as Arrival and departure by Koestler, see page 102), and film (such as "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf"). In the third paragraph of the book (p. 13), the authors state that this book represents the first attempt at model building. In making the first attempt, they offer forms of evidence as facts to support the models. If the reader is cognizant of the idea that this book represents only a first attempt at model building, then the forms of evidence used may be sufficient to get the discussion on the pragmatics of communication started. However, if the model as presented is to be accepted as sufficient to explain how or why communication works, then more scrutiny must be used critically analyzing the evidence used to support claims.

The text, Pragmatics of human communication, has stood as an important work within the discipline of speech communication for decades since its first publication. This book is cited often in research articles and textbooks in the field. Textbooks for the introductory interpersonal communication class cite the axioms. However, there has been much debate within the field of speech communication as to whether some of the axioms hold. For example, the axiom "one cannot not communicate" has been hotly debated. The debate may have concluded that the axiom holds when it is redefined as contextual and requiring some degree of mutual awareness. That mutual awareness does not necessarily entail intentionality on the part of the message sender; however, the message receiver may attribute intentionality to the message.

I hope to demonstrate that the forms of evidence used to create the model presented in the book are not sufficient to base uncritical faith in the axioms of the model. The axioms themselves were derived through deduction more often than induction. When induction was used, the evidence was based on commonsense and informal observation more often than hard empirical evidence.

The tendencies toward "theorizing" described above are not out of the ordinary, but rather are more often the ordinary occurrence. For example, in class, the instructor set the ground rule that discussants in class should refrain from "psychologizing" without grounding the discussion with empirical evidence. This rule is based on several philosophical assumptions. First, one cannot know the internal motivations of a person performing a certain action simply by observing the action. There are several issues which impact the action taken by an individual: (a) whether the action was intentional or capricious, (b) if intentional, was it related to or a reaction to the immediately prior action of another, and if so how? (c) if reactionary, what was the particular purpose for the given action, (d) what is the immediate context in which the action has taken place, (e) is the given action new, habituated within the relationship, or habituated by the person regardless of the particular
relationship, and (f) are there other factors such as environmental, psychological, or physical factors impacting the given action unavailable to the casual observer.

Second, regardless of whether one could or could not know the internal motivations of the person performing the given action, one may not be able to tell precisely how the recipient of the action interpreted the action or what the internal motivation of the recipient was toward any given reaction. Simply put, it is impossible for the observer to see all or be omniscient in regards to individual internal states. Minimal understanding of a given individual's purposes for an action may not be known without at least some explanation by that individual. And, even the explanation by the individual may be somewhat inaccurate because the process of rationalization occurs after the fact, and the individual may not have been mindful or strategic in performing the act in the first place.

Yet, psychologizing occurs frequently and is quite pervasive. There are common terms in our language which demonstrate tendencies in our culture to psychologize. For example, the term ego pertains to Freudian psychoanalytic theory. The ego is theorized as an internal motivator for individuals. The process of examining the film "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" and analyzing the internal motivations of the characters was an exercise in speculation because the frame in which the film occurs is unreal. In the film are actors acing out a script which was created by a writer, possibly, but unknown to the viewer, loosely based on the observations of the screen writer of others or self in similar situations. However, even if the characters are based on observed others, the screen writer is psychologizing about the internal motivations of the characters. The observation itself, which may have been based on an actual occurrence, could have been taken out of context. At any rate, the film itself is several steps removed from actual occurrence.

In my own experience, I have had considerable informal training in self- and other-analysis. As a teenager growing up, I tended to be introverted and spent large amounts of private time trying to figure out who I was and what was going on in my relationships with others. Much of this self soul-searching manifested itself in pages of poetry that I wrote. Throughout school, I was very inquisitive about why questions, and these tendencies ultimately culminated in my decision to join the seminary and study philosophy. While in the seminary, I was involved in self-analysis training. And before, during and after my experience in the seminary I was and have been involved in counseling and self-help groups. Given my experience, I am both fairly well prepared to psychologize and do psychologize quite often.

In my current situation, I am enrolled in a marriage and family counseling class. This class is populated by a majority of individuals who have been counseling and working as counselors with only a bachelor's degree in psychology or other field. These individuals have much practical knowledge about the needs of individuals whom seek their help. However, I have observed in class the tendencies of classmates to psychologize about issues based solely upon that practical knowledge. The struggle I experience is between the practical knowledge I have from my experience and the theoretical rigor with which I have been and am being
trained. This theoretical training informs me to be critical in my analysis of observed behaviors. This critical analysis may enable me to see other possible explanations and interpretations of observed behavior which may not be obvious to me if I rely only upon my practical knowledge.

This dialectic suggests a necessity to be: (a) theoretically informed, (b) critical of casual observation and theories based on casual observation, and (c) open to new possible explanations of observed behavior. To accomplish this goal, theory needs to be grounded in empirical evidence. The question becomes, what counts as empirical evidence. The book uses several forms of evidence, some of which may or may not count as empirical evidence. As discussed above, fictional or fictionalized accounts may not count as evidence because they are by their nature creative acts several times removed from actual occurrences. This argument against fiction as empirical evidence may be supported with consideration of David Hume's epistemological assumptions (see W. T. Jones, 1969). Hume held that all knowledge was gained through sense experience. He explained the existence in fiction of mythical, nonexistent beings as combinations of more primary ideas combined in new ways. For example, one can think of a unicorn, not because one exists, but because one has observed both horns and horses and can imagine a horse with one horn. Because one can imagine things which do not exist, it is possible to formulate feasible but untrue representations of actual behaviors. Fiction represents this possibility. Theory is meant to explain actual or probable occurrences. Fiction does not and cannot represent actual occurrences, and its ability to represent probable occurrences is questionable. However, fiction should not be dismissed because it can illuminate previously grounded theory by demonstrating possibility through the creative process.

Using case studies as evidence may or may not be sufficient as empirical evidence. The case study is a descriptive, interpretive explanation of actual occurrences. Case studies may be admissible as empirical evidence because they represent actual occurrences. However, the researcher must be careful to bracket out the perspective of the case study author. This bracketing out is important for examining the Watzlawick et al. (1967) text. The authors are psychiatrists examining deviant behavior. These facts may contribute significantly to the interpretation of the observed behavior. In several instances in the book it is unclear if a given case study is actual or fictional. The use of fictional examples in the text may contribute to the reader's skepticism regarding the actual occurrence of a given case study.

If one considers the text as simply a starting point for the discussion of the pragmatics of communication, than the uses of evidence therein may be sufficient. If, however, the axioms within are accepted uncritically, there may be some logical difficulties with theories based upon them. Hopefully, readers and scholars will learn and remain cognizant of the need to remain critical, to ground theory in empirical evidence and to refrain from psychologizing.
References


Where does the responsibility lie?

Tannen (1990) argues that communication between males and females is problematic. Cross-gender communication is difficult primarily because males and females are socialized differently. As a result of these differences, misunderstandings occur.

As part of the human experience, a desire for understanding regarding feelings and thoughts by others occurs. However, often that desire is not met. Many times, individuals may experience a feeling of being misunderstood. I have felt misunderstood, and I surmise that others have felt similarly at times from their descriptions and disclosure to me about such experiences.

This experience of misunderstanding, from my perspective, is an uncomfortable state. By the nature of the uncomfortableness, and its possible effects such as increased stress, I may try to avoid situations which increase the likelihood of misunderstanding. The assumption that individuals, in general, try to avoid uncomfortableness or pain is questionable. For example, persons involved in relationships which exhibit destructive, cyclical behaviors may be unaware of the options which can break them out of the cycle. Although these individuals may think they are trying to avoid pain, the actions they choose perpetuate the cycle and the pain. At times, I have done this and have come to the conclusion that my fate was inevitable.

Misunderstandings are inevitable. People grow up in different areas, have different experiences, and are socialized in different ways. Even individuals with many similarities in background will have some differences because they are different people. Differences in experience lead individuals to differences in understanding and meaning. The ability to communicate to others the ideas derived from that understanding requires some agreement in meaning, but nuances and subtleties in meaning may never be agreed upon by individuals.

Because absolute agreement in meaning is difficult if not impossible, misunderstanding is inevitable. Individual experience also affects expectations in relationships. Expectations regarding roles, rules, and appropriateness of behaviors result from socialization, and these expectations are internalized and understood according to individual experience.

Tannen argues that differences which lead to misunderstandings between individuals of differing genders results from socialization. She argues that males and females are socialized to have different expectations and understanding regarding the roles and rules of males and females in relation to each other. Throughout her book, she gives numerous examples of ways in which males and females communicate differently. Since the way individuals communicate is believed to be a function of learning, then socialization is assumed by Tannen to be the primary factor contributing to communication behaviors exhibited by individuals.

Differences in communication behaviors and roles expectations by gender may be experienced by individuals. Tannen uses anecdotal evidence to describe these differences. Although the use of anecdotal evidence is not sufficient to explain
or predict significant differences, anecdotal evidence at least points to common perceptions among individuals regarding these differences. One may, in fact, experience some misunderstandings which are attributed to differences. One may experience oneself attributing these misunderstanding to gender differences. Regardless of whether gender differences actually explain the experience of misunderstanding is irrelevant; individuals may make meaning of the experience of misunderstanding by attributing it to difference. Tannen has tapped into that tendency to attribute causes to the experience by pointing to examples.

One example Tannen uses describes males as being motivated by a need for independence more than females, and females as being motivated by a need for intimacy more than males, although all humans need both independence and intimacy (p. 26). As a gross generalization, this proposition may be supported by the stereotyped expectations, and may be the case. The stereotype expectations may contribute to the tendencies observed: that is, the stereotypes contribute to a self-fulfilling prophesy. The more individuals believe the stereotype to be the case, the more likely are those individuals to follow the stereotype.

I have experience members of the class objecting to the gross generalizations offered in the Tannen text. I object to some of the generalizations because my experience is not in accord with Tannen’s observations. For example, I have experienced being in relationships where I wanted to self-disclose about feelings, to become intimate with the other, and the other did not. In some romantic relationships with women, this was a common occurrence. If intimacy and independence are opposed, as it seems to be suggested by Tannen, than the other in these relationships I have experienced wanted independence more than intimacy. This is in direct contradiction to the generalization offered by Tannen. (Often I feel invalidated in my experience when I point this discrepancy or exception out and am told that I am not a "normal" male.)

To explain this observed difference between males and females as due primarily to gender socialization is somewhat reductionistic. I believe, in the case of my experience, that the non-disclosive individuals were so due to an inability to trust which had very little to do with gender socialization. I believe my desire to intimately communicate with significant others has very little to do with gender socialization.

Yet, regardless of the source of experienced differences, individuals will experience differences. On several occasions, Tannen stated that neither the "male" nor "female" way of communicating were right or wrong. If these differences exist, then perhaps knowing about the differences is enough to overcome misunderstandings. In our class discussions, I perceived an implicit suggestion for a need for change, to become less different. If males and females become less different in their ways of communicating, then misunderstandings would become less frequent. Also, if we changed our ways of communicating with each other to more egalitarian styles, issues of power, dominance and oppression would be resolved or at least become less important.

If a movement toward change in communication behaviors between males and females is implied, then several questions become salient. First, can we eliminate these differences. If the differences are due to socialization, then
individuals could be re-socialized. Yet, to bring about lasting change would require this re-socialization to involve a very large number of people, perhaps even a majority of individuals in our society. If this assumption is correct, then the ability to make global attitude change becomes an important issue to resolve.

Second, do we want to change and be less different? This is a political question which implies ideological motivation. The ideal of egalitarianism may not be held by all in our society even by those who are oppressed. To force ideology on society may be another form of oppression. To force someone to do something healthy is still a coercive act. Determining which acts of coercion are justifiable and which are not justifiable is a function of ideology.

Third, if we make a decision as a society to implement changes according to an ideology, then whose responsibility is it to change? If we believe gender differences exist, and we believe that we must change to become more egalitarian (an ideological position), then at least some individuals will have to change. To change toward an ideal, some model is necessary. This is a basic premise of socialization. Individuals are socialized and learn roles and rules according to some model. Do those who represent to model enforce change? Do individuals have to measure up to some criteria based on the model?

Tannen argues that communication between genders is problematic. I believe that communication between two people is problematic, and the problems of understanding and misunderstanding are inevitable. Regardless of the factors which may contribute to misunderstanding and miscommunication, communication will always be problematic to some degree because of the complexities of life.

References

Friendships: Topics, Activities and Contact

Friendships can last a lifetime or be very short lived. Life-long close friendships may be characterized by traits such as being able to communicate with each other easily, being able to rely on each other for support and help, and being able to have fun and do activities with each other (Rawlins, p. 271). These traits seem to define friendships, although the ability to meet the needs of others may be determined by momentary constraints such as distance, lack of time, and other immediate concerns of life.

The author suggests that friendships developed early in the life of an individual seem to rely heavily on contact. The term Rawlins uses to describe this characteristic of early friendships is momentary physicalistic playmates (p.26). Children choose friends according to who is available for play. Friendships may shift as certain individuals become more or less available. Given the mobility of our society, the potential for loss of contact with established friends and gain of contact with new available individuals is great.

The characteristics of friendships shift throughout the individual's life cycle. Playing becomes less important, as communication becomes more important. Friendships in the adolescent years may rely more heavily on support, particularly during the stresses of the process of developing autonomy from parents. This support may take the form of having someone to talk through issues of growth, sharing of feelings and thoughts, and the struggles of developing and maintaining relationships. Perhaps the form of play changes as people get older.

The forms of support needed by individuals in their life journey as they grow older also change. Autonomy from parents may be less of an individual issue for an adult than an adolescent. Consequently, the needs of adults in terms of support in friendships may also change. However, these changes occur, and the relative importance of various aspects of friendships shift, three basic elements of friendships seem to persist: (a) being able to talk with the other, (b) being able to rely on the other for help, and (c) having fun with the other.

In the conclusion of his book, Rawlins suggests that other ideals seem to define friendships for individuals, such as "heartfelt feelings of platonic affection and concern" (p. 271). Throughout my life, I have believed, perhaps naively, that true friendships can maintain a level of affection despite loss of contact. This belief has, at times, been troubling to me, as I believed that my difficulties in maintaining a high level of intimacy with persons that have moved away were due to some disability in relational skills on my part. Yet, I find that the friendships that I do have are highly dependent upon contact, activities, and topics of talk.

Throughout my life, I have developed friendships with people with which I have regular contact. People that I worked or went to school with were prime candidates for friends. Apparently, proximity had much to do with attraction because attractiveness was highly dependent upon the perception of the ability of the other to meet the need for intimacy and association, both of which required contact. As I changed school, changed careers, and changed direction in life, contact was very
difficult to maintain. Although it was possible to write letters or call those individuals that were now distant, contact was not the same without physical presence.

Contact was also difficult to maintain because of the change in direction of my life, and possibly the other's life as well. Intimacy, for me, requires commonality of experience and outlook. In order to be able to share intimate details with another, I must trust that the other can understand, and understanding seems to require some level of common experience. In the description of relational filters which determine an individual's categories of friends from acquaintance to close friends, one of the most important criteria for categorizing a particular individual as a close friend for me was degree of understanding. For me, it seemed impossible for someone who was not and had not been in contact with me to understand the exigencies of my present life situation. If I had changed direction in life, from a previous direction which was similar to that of the other, then our lives had diverged. It seemed less likely that the other would be able to understand my new life choices. Thus, topic of talk was, to some degree, a function of contact.

Activities are also a function of contact: activities help maintain contact. Similarities in activities seem to define friendships, and I have particular likes and dislikes regarding activities. It is easier to maintain relationships with others who enjoy the same types of activities as I do. On the other hand, it is difficult to maintain friendships with those who like many types of activities which I do not like. This occurs because I am unable to maintain contact with others who take part in activities in which I do not or will not take part. The decision to not take part in certain activities may be a matter of lifestyle choice, attitudes or values, or inability. Regardless of reason, others with many different likes in activities may reflect those lifestyle choices or attitudes that I cannot or will not take part in, which affects level of contact and degree of understanding of life experiences.

These criteria for friendships seem to limit the opportunity for friendship. In terms of relational filters, those not meeting the criteria are relegated to a category somewhat less intimate than close friendship. Yet this description of friendship seems somewhat indifferent to the needs of others. If friendships are built upon commonalities of topics, activities and contact, then the possibilities for friendship are limited. And my experience of the limitations of friendship is therefore justified.
Early Marriage:
Two Case Studies

Persons couple for a variety of reasons, such as to meet the need for intimacy, social convention or expectation, or to start a family. The desire to start a family may result from a belief system about the value of family or from a human "instinct" to procreate. Regardless of the reasons, people do couple and experience relationships as a couple. Couples may then add children, which increases the level of complexity of the relationship.

The family takes on characteristics of a system in which the boundaries, rules and roles of the family are defined through interaction by the members of the family. However the complexity of the system, within the system are dyadic subsystems such as the marital couple. The characteristics of dyadic subsystems are influenced by the characteristics of the larger system to which they are members.

The focus of this study is to examine some of the characteristics which define marital relationships within the context of family. Specifically, this study examines the perceptions and beliefs about communication between members of a marital dyad, the effects of those perceptions on the relationship, and the communicative interaction between partners in the construction and expression of those perceptions and beliefs during the interview process.

For the study, two couples were chosen who met two criteria: (a) they must be married, and (b) the two couples must be similar to each other in their present situation. Both couples were young married couples with an infant and extended family members present in the household. Thomas and Kimberly, Couple 1, are in their mid-twenties, have been married for three years and have a seven month old daughter. They are presently living with Kimberly's parents. Couple 2, Jim and Tracie, are in their late-twenties, have been married for five years and have a three month old son. Tracie's mother and sister are presently living with Jim and Tracie.

For both couples, the decision for extended family members to either live with the couple (Couple 2) or for the couple to live with the extended family (Couple 1) was based on economic and care needs. All four interviewees are presently in college, and the stress of money and the time required for school has placed a heavy burden on each of the couples. Both couples reported that the care for the child at this time of their life was difficult, and the choice to live with extended family members was made based on the help that could be provided by extra care givers.

This study employed an interview protocol developed in a seminar on relational communication. Each couple was interviewed with both partners present. Following the interview, both partners of each couple were asked to complete a questionnaire and choose one of three marital type descriptions which best represented his or her marital relationship (see Appendix). The questionnaire was developed by Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma, and Schweitzer (1992) to measure three factors: (a) level of intimacy, (b) parenting style, (c) and level of conflict. According to Noller, et al., (1992) the instrument was based on previous research into family functioning. The questionnaire was chosen for two reasons: (a) the factors of

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interest were relevant to the questions asked in the interview protocol, and (b) the results of data collection using this particular questionnaire are readily available from published sources. The second reason is relevant because a sample of two couples is not sufficient for statistical purposes. However, the data from the questionnaire in this study can be compared to the data of the previous study to determine common elements of family functioning provided that the characteristics of the families in the present study are sufficiently similar to the families studied by Noller and associates. Although in the present study, the two families do not have adolescent children, the basic family structure is the same, and is matched between couples.

The second task for each respondent was to choose which description of the relationship from the three short paragraphs best represented the relationship. These descriptions were based on the work of Fitzpatrick (1976) who described three types of marriages: (a) type 1, traditional, (b) type 2, independent, and (c) type 3, separate. The results of both the questionnaire and the descriptions of marital types were compared to the couple's description of their relationship in the interview. The purpose of the comparison was to determine if common elements or themes existed in the reports of the relationship between and among the couples, and to determine if these elements were common to other couples studied elsewhere (Noller, et al., 1992; Fitzpatrick, 1976; Noller and Fitzpatrick, 1993).

The perceptions of the marital partners will be compared to determine within system similarities and differences which may contribute to the interactions reported and observed. Overall, it is hoped that accurate descriptions of the couples may illuminate characteristics in such a way as to make them identifiable with present theories regarding relationships and relational communication.

Couple 1

Thomas and Kimberly met after being cast in a play production at school. They started dating following their experience together in the play. Ironically, they were cast as husband and wife in that play. They determined at the beginning of their dating that they shared many common interests and similarities of attitudes. They also have some similarities in family background. Both come from small, midwestern families. They dated for three months before they became engaged. They married one year later.

Couple 1’s common activities demonstrate a moderate to high level of interdependence. Examples of activities performed which show a high level of interdependence include reading aloud to each other. They share common interests in the theatre, and have been cast together in many shows. Also, in household duties, they share responsibilities in somewhat equal fashion. Although presently Kimberly’s mother handles many of the household chores, prior to the move in with parents, Thomas took care of the laundry and dishes because that was a chore that Kimberly did not like. Both Thomas and Kimberly took care of the baby, and both shared in the cooking.

Thomas and Kimberly also discuss financial matters and decisions with each other. They described their spending habits as being similar, and they described their work together on financial matters as a way to balance and check those
tendencies. Thomas and Kimberly experience moderate competitiveness when playing games. However, it is more important for them to play than to win.

Thomas and Kimberly reported dissimilarities in the way they handle stress and express anger. Kimberly reported that she becomes hysterical and that Thomas does not want to deal with her when she is upset. They acknowledged and described a habitual spiral which involves Thomas not wanting to get near Kimberly when she is upset, and Kimberly not calming down until Thomas shows affection which requires him to get near her when she is upset. They reported that although it usually takes time to resolve such situations, neither of Kimberly’s parents mediate arguments.

Kimberly and Thomas both selected the description for the independent marriage (Type 2) as more representative of the marriage. The results of the ICPS Family Functioning Scale show a high level of agreement on issues of intimacy, conflict, and parenting style. t-Tests failed to find any significant differences on each of the factors. For the intimacy factor, both Thomas and Kimberly consistently reported high levels of support, the extent of closeness and sharing, and openness in communication ($\bar{x} = 5.818$, $\bar{x} = 5.545$, respectively). For the conflict factor, both Thomas and Kimberly reported low levels of interference and misunderstanding, and difficulty in solving problems ($\bar{x} = 2.222$, $\bar{x} = 1.777$, respectively). For the parenting style factor, both Thomas and Kimberly reported high levels of group decision making and independence ($\bar{x} = 5.750$, $\bar{x} = 5.500$, respectively). Overall, Couple 1 has characteristics of both traditional and independent marital types and seem to be functioning well as a couple.

Couple 2

Jim and Tracie first met at a bookstore at college. They believed early in their dating that they would become married. Although they did not become engaged until two years after they met, they reported that each other knew within the first month of dating that they would be married. They were engaged for five months.

Jim and Tracie have similar backgrounds. They share the same religion, and their families of origin were modest and traditional. Both Jim and Tracie experienced a parent divorcing. For Tracie, her parents first separated when she was seven and lived together again when she was eleven. Although they did not divorce until she was sixteen, she reported that her father was rarely present. She reported that she was raised in a single parent home. Jim's parents divorced when he was eight, but his mother soon remarried. Jim grew up as a single child. Tracie grew up in a large household, with seven children. Jim and Tracie's experiences growing up seem to impact greatly their relationship with each other. The similarities in background help support the relationship. The dissimilarities in background help each other complement one another.

This combination of support and complementariness demonstrate a moderate to high level of interdependence. Jim reported more dependence on Tracie for care and support needs than Tracie. However, he also reported an ability to be content with his own activities. Tracie, on the other hand, reported an ability to be self-sufficient and independent in terms of her care and support needs. However,
she reported a need to be in regular contact with Jim. Although these tendencies complement each other, they also result in conflict.

As did Couple 1, Jim and Tracie reported dissimilarities in the way they handle stress and express anger. Tracie reported that she "brewed" for a period of time and would then explode and be angry for a longer period than Jim. Jim reported that he would "blow off steam" and then be fine. They used a metaphor of a coffee pot and tea kettle to describe their difference in expressing anger. Also as Couple 1, Couple two reported that they do not triangulate parents to mediate conflicts. They reported a high level of commitment to each other and the relationship.

In term of household duties, Couple two reported that it usually fell on Tracie to do much of the household work. The reasons given for this tendency were twofold: (a) Jim has much responsibility to his school work at the present, and (b) the characteristics of both Tracie and Jim's upbringing contribute to these tendencies. Jim expressed a desire to do more, but he admitted to a lack of preparedness in reaching that goal. However, Jim did report that at times the relationship worked well for both of them in terms of give and take, and that he hopes after school is done he could have more time to invest in that aspect of the relationship.

The results of the ICPS Family Functioning Scale show a high level of agreement on issues of intimacy, conflict, and parenting style. t-Tests failed to find any significant differences on each of the factors. For the intimacy factor, both Jim and Tracie consistently reported high levels of support, the extent of closeness and sharing, and openness in communication ($\bar{x} = 5.727$, $\bar{x} = 5.818$, respectively). For the conflict factor, both Jim and Tracie reported low to moderate levels of interference and misunderstanding, and difficulty in solving problems ($\bar{x} = 2.667$, $\bar{x} = 3.000$, respectively). For the parenting style factor, both Jim and Tracie reported high levels of group decision making and independence ($\bar{x} = 6.000$, $\bar{x} = 5.714$, respectively). Jim selected the description for the independent marriage (Type 2) as more representative of the marriage, whereas Tracie selected the description for the traditional marriage (Type 1). As did Couple 1, overall Couple 2 has characteristics of both traditional and independent marital types and seem to be functioning well as a couple.

Between group t-Tests were performed to measure differences between Couple 1 and 2, and between husbands and wives. No significant differences were found with the exception of a significant difference in the conflict factor between couples ($t = -2.773$, $p > 0.024$). Couple 2, as reported above, had overall higher levels of conflict than Couple 1.

The measures with the interviewing procedures seem to work well in concert. It is important to match research tools from various perspectives to achieve high levels of accuracy and validity in the description and interpretation of relational communication data. While both approaches attempted to access the same concepts, the interview process allowed more detailed description by the participants which helps the research in the interpretation. The quantitative measures allow the researcher to compare the data of a couple with tested
theoretical constructs. This model of research, method triangulation, may serve as a more inclusive approach and bring to light a better understanding of the processes and effects of human interaction.

References


Appendix

Marital Typologies

Following are descriptions of three different ideologies and beliefs about marriage. Indicate which one best applies to you, all things considered.

Type 1: You believe that your marriage is very important and that you should sacrifice some personal independence for the marriage. You believe in stability and stress the importance of being able to predict your partner and your life together. You spend a lot of time with your spouse, avoid conflict in general and may argue only over very important issues. You actually disclose more positive than negative feelings—matters that are hardly risky to reveal. You and your spouse present yourselves as a couple to others and downplay distinct individual traits, habits or skills.

You believe you are highly interdependent in your marriage with your spouse. You may engage in conflicts with your partner when the issues are serious ones.

Type 2: You believe that a marriage exists for the gratification that the relationship gives to partners and that marriage should be based on the satisfaction that each partner gets from the relationship. You believe that in this quickly changing world it is vital that each individual has a strong sense of self that is not lost just because that person is married. You do not keep regular daily schedules with your partner and you have outside friends and interests. You disclose both positive and negative feelings to your partner. You are not afraid to openly express your views, are likely to engage in conflict, bargaining, and negotiation. You may agree to disagree.
You hold what some may consider non-conventional values about marriage. You are moderately interdependent with your partner and willingly engage in conflicts whether or not the issues or serious ones.

Type 3: In your marriage, togetherness is a matter of habit and convenience. You believe your marriage is stable yet includes little sharing of time together. The majors points of contact occur at mealtimes or other regularly scheduled daily events. You go to great lengths to avoid conflict. You have a sense of duties and obligations connected with being a husband or wife. Even though you tend to avoid conflict, you may sometimes confront your partner and take a verbal “pot shot” at the other. You feel you can not express your innermost thoughts to your partner. You are careful in conversations with your partner, tend not to interrupt each other, and generally don’t talk very much to your partner. You see marriage as the product of factors that are outside of your control, factors that are part of normal stages of life.

You are not very interdependent with your partner in that you do not share a lot of things. You actively avoid conflict with your partner regardless of the issues under discussion.

Family Functioning

Rate the extent to which each of the following statements is true of the family in which you are now living. Circle the appropriate number using 6 point scale provided.

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<td>1</td>
<td>Totally Disagree</td>
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1. People in our family help and support each other.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Each member of our family has a say in important family decisions.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

3. It is hard to get a rule changed in our family.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

4. We are honest with each other.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. We often misunderstand each other.
   1 2 3 4 5 6
6. Parents usually agree on things involving the family.

7. We are flexible about who does what in our family.

8. Even though we mean well, we interfere too much in each other’s lives.

9. There is a lot of anger between family members.

10. Family members feel very close to each other.

11. Children have a say in the rules.

12. We interrupt and talk over each other.

13. We show affection and tenderness to one another.

14. One parent sides with children against the other parent.

15. We work together to sort out problems.

16. Each person is encouraged to make up their own mind about things.

17. Once we have decided something, we have difficulty making changes.

18. Family members show their true feelings to each other.

19. Making decisions and plans is a problem for our family.

20. Each family member is accepted for what they are.
21. Children are consulted with and participate in decision making.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

22. It is easier to talk about problems with people outside the family than with other family members.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

23. We listen to and respect each others point of view.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

24. We try to change each other in big ways.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

25. Members of our family are able to stand on their own feet.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

26. We can usually sort out problems by talking about them.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

27. Family members share interests and hobbies with each other.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

28. Family members have a say in family matters.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

29. Even when we disagree, we still show our love for each other.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

30. Parents and children talk about things before decisions are made.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

This scale is based on the ICPS Family Functioning Scale developed by Patricia Noller, Department of Psychology, University of Queensland Australia. Used with permission.
"I Just Want to be Loved":  
A Conflict Assessment of  
Arnold Beckoff and His Mother

Conflicts between parents and their children often involve the desires of the parents for their children, the identity of each individual child, and the nature of the relationship between the parents and each of their children after the children have grown into adulthood. Each of these issues is apparent in the fictional relationship between Arnold Beckoff and his mother in the film "Torch Song Trilogy." Arnold and his mother have several conflictual arguments throughout the film. The content of the arguments change, but the relational issues involved remain relatively the same. These issues will be explored using aspects of the Hocker-Wilmot Conflict Assessment Guide, such as the nature and context of the conflict, goals and issues of power, and tactics and strategies of conflict. An actual conflictual episode will be analyzed using background and contextual information from the entire film. Excerpts from the film which encompass these issues and involve mother and son are transcribed in the appendix.

The context for the relationship between Arnold and his mother includes Arnold's self-identification as a homosexual. The opening scene of the movie is a flashback of Arnold's childhood in which Arnold is found by his mother. Arnold is in his mother's closet, playing dress-up with her clothes and make-up. Arnold is about four years old. However, the movie takes place during Arnold's adulthood. He is a burlesque, transvestite singer in a lounge in Manhattan, hence the title of the movie.

Arnold believes that he has always been homosexual (see line 102). Both of his parents avoid dealing with or acknowledging Arnold's sexuality (see line 94). A series of events, or episodes, occur in Arnold's adulthood which directly or indirectly affect his relationship with his mother. The episodes between mother and son include (a) her visit to his apartment on his birthday, (b) supper with the family, (c) the funeral of the father, and (d) the mother's visit after the death of Alan, Arnold's lover. Throughout these episodes interesting power dynamics, particular patterns of argument behavior, and strategies and tactics occur.

From the examples of interaction between mother and son, mother often disallows or invalidates the son's feelings, or insults the son about his lifestyle. In line 3 of the Scene One (see appendix), mother's comment that "they keep their clothes on," is an indirect statement of disapproval regarding Arnold's career. This disapproval becomes obvious in an unsolicited retort offered by mother (see line 12, Scene Two). Arnold describes how he feels about his parents disapproval in the very next scene which takes place with his brother on the porch immediately following the supper scene (see line 13).

Power to determine what is appropriate is again demonstrated at the funeral scene (Four). Mother suggests what appropriate lifestyle includes, by stating for what the funeral plots are to be used, and that Arnold might find a wife. When
Arnold disputes the mother’s claim, Mother retorts with an insult which she speaks toward the brother (see line 18).

This pattern of Mother attempting to constrain the limits of appropriate lifestyle, and thus deny Arnold's identity, occurs in each of the scenes. Arnold's identity is a major issue for both Arnold and his mother. For Arnold, his mother's acknowledgment and acceptance as well as respect is important. For Mother, Arnold's lifestyle is a matter of choice which she believes is wrong (see below). In each of the scenes, except for the continuation of the argument in Scene Four (see line 67), mother opens the possibility of conflict on the issue of Arnold's identity by offering some form of denying comment about Arnold's identity. In this sense, the denying comments become the triggering events which precipitate specific conflict episodes.

In the sixth scene (see line 48), Arnold and his mother argue about Arnold's relationship with Alan. This scene in the cemetery represents the first time (in the movie) that Arnold has raised his voice toward his mother. In earlier scenes, Arnold may have disputed his mother's claims. However, this scene demonstrates competitive symmetry: Arnold took a stand against his mother (see line 66). However, ultimately his mother had the last word in this scene. She walked away from him before he finished his thought.

The argument continues in scene seven, when they both return to Arnold's apartment (see line 67). In this scene, it is Arnold who continues the argument. Mother, attempts to avoid the issue of Arnold's relationship with Alan, but she cooperates in the conflict by continuing the argument (see line 72). In line 72, Mother offers an account for why she does not want to "fight." This account is particularly interesting because it expresses a desire on her part not to be involved in fights. However, as is evidenced in earlier scenes, Mother provokes conflict with her insulting comments toward her son. These provocations appear as nagging or badgering her son to choose a different lifestyle. Yet, the mother denies that she provokes. For example, in line 82, Mother claims that she does not say anything about the way Arnold lives his life. Furthermore, she claims in line 95 that Arnold brings the topic of his sexuality up. In line 105, she implies that she does not want his sexuality to be their every conversation. Her perception of their interaction is incongruent with her observable behavior.

In this sense, Arnold is in a paradox. Mother wants to forget about Arnold's sexuality, yet she constantly brings the topic up by insulting him about his lifestyle. As posited above, in all but Scene Seven, Mother brings up the topic regarding Arnold's lifestyle. For Mother, Arnold’s homosexuality is a lifestyle choice and a sickness (see line 101). For Arnold, homosexuality is part of his identity. This issue is made explicit in line 102. Arnold's paradox is that his identity is not compatible with his mother's desires.

Arnold is trapped in this paradox because he loves his mother. Whenever, he and his mother interact, she brings up the topic of his lifestyle. When he responds to her provocation by asserting his identity, she avoids acceptance of his assertions. This strategy is an attempt for power on her part to determine Arnold's identity.
Mother also competes for power to determine what is appropriate behavior. In line 94, Mother implies that it is wrong for Arnold to assert his homosexuality to his parents. This particular line is very troubling because when Mother brings the thought to conclusion, it implies that her life would have been better if Arnold had not been born. Its implication was effective because Arnold inferred that meaning and left the room. After Mother realized what she had said, which is evidenced by her facial expression, she followed him into the other room. Her statement to Arnold (see line 95) takes the form of an apology, although it is indirect.

Power is an issue in the relationship because Arnold wants love and respect (see line 110), a resource which Mother could give if she chooses. In this sense, Mother is in a more powerful position. Yet, Arnold takes power at this point by demanding love and respect from those in his life and giving his mother an ultimatum of either giving him what he needs or getting out of his life.

The demand for respect is an interesting move by Arnold. Although it is not the first time he has asserted his identity, it represents the first time that he threatened the removal of a resource from his mother. That resource he threatened to remove was his love and respect in the form of presence in her life.

Scene eight, the following morning, is a continuation of the argument. Mother brings the respect issue back into the argument (see line 120). It is unclear at this point whether Mother is throwing the respect issue back at Arnold in response to Arnold's ultimatum, or if Mother honestly feels disrespected. In line 126 Mother claims that Arnold is responsible for her distance. She states that things between Arnold and herself may have been different if Arnold had trusted her enough to tell her the truth about Alan, and David, and unspecified other things (see line 124), and had not turned his back on her (see line 122).

This particular scene demonstrates the principle of reciprocal causation from systems theory. For both Arnold and Mother, love, respect and trust are issues. Both want each other to respect and validate. However, both feel unable to respect the other because of a lack of respect from the other. For some reason Arnold felt unable to trust his mother with the truth about Alan and David. This may have been due to the denying comments Arnold received about his identity from his mother. Mother felt that Arnold did not respect her wishes by choosing a lifestyle that she felt was wrong. Because of the paradox, Arnold was unable to trust his mother with the truth. As a result of his inability to trust, she was unable to be "respectful" toward him. Yet, it is impossible to punctuate the reciprocal causality.

Reciprocal causality can often result in the same tactics being used continuously. The examples of denying comments offered by the mother demonstrate similar tactics being used over and over. If the two individuals are similar or complementary in styles, and those styles are adhered to unerringly, conflicts may never be resolved. The issues surrounding Arnold's identity continued to be a source of conflict for he and his mother in their relationship.

Changes, which could bring about break in the cyclical conflict patterns, started to occur when (a) Arnold stood up to his mother in the cemetery, (b) Arnold did not back down from talking about the issues when he and his mother returned to the apartment, and (c) when Arnold offered the ultimatum. In the end, Mother
brought about a change, which began the process of healing, when she changed
the tenor of the conflict and asked Arnold if he loved Ed (see line 126). Arnold's first
response was noncommittal which could have perpetuated the cycle by
demonstrating a lack of trust, but then he answered in the affirmative (see line 127).
This reply by Arnold reciprocated his mother's move in a positive way. It was this
move toward acceptance by the mother and trust by Arnold which allowed the
possibility for growth in the relationship to occur.
"Torch Song Trilogy," although a fictional work, was very useful for exploring
the dynamics of conflict between a parent and a child. The desires of parents do not
always match the desires of their children, and it is the actual or imagined
incongruencies in desires between individuals in relationship with each other that
present the possibility of conflict. If one considers the context of the conflict, goals
of the parties, the possible strategies for resolution, and issues of power, then one
may be able to bring about growthful resolution.

Appendix

Examples of talk between Arnold and his mother from "Torch Song Trilogy."

I. At Arnold's apartment
((Scene One: Doorbell rings, Arnold calls to Ed - expecting Ed to be
at the door))

1 Arnold: Hi Ma
2 Mother: Happy birthday
3 M: I can only stay a minute. The girls are in the car.
   Charlotte got tickets to some off off-Broadway theatre. It's
   experimental; they keep their clothes on.
   
   ((Lines deleted here.))
4 M: You don't get much light here.
5 A: Oh, I get what you call indirect semi-shade. It's good
   for the plants.
6 M: So is manure.
   
   ((Lines deleted here.))
7 M: What are you making? Potato soup.
8 A: Ma don't, you're going to burn yourself.
9 M: Ah but not like the potato soup I made for your
   father.

====
II. At Arnold's parents for supper.
   ((Scene Two: Present are Mother, Father, Arnold, and Brother.))

10 Father: . . . take it, a loan, just until you're on your feet.

11 A: I'm on my feet daddy.

12 M: Yeah, in six inch heels. Some big shot.

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   ((Scene Three: Conversation with brother on porch after supper.))

13 A: It kills me to think that they look at me and wonder what they did wrong.

====

III. Father's funeral.
   ((Scene Four: At the burial site.))

14 M: . . . This plot is for you, your wife, and your children.

15 A: Oh, Ma

16 M: You might meet a nice girl some day, you never know.

17 A: Believe me Ma, I know.

18 M: God doesn't know. My son knows.

====

IV. Mother comes to visit, after Alan's death and after David moves in.
   ((Scene Five: Mother and Arnold are riding in a car to Father's grave site.))

19 M: How come he ((Ed)) is staying with you?

20 A: He and his wife are separated.

21 M: Separated? How come?

22 A: I don't know.

23 M: Arnold, the man is living with you.

24 A: He's staying on the couch.

25 M: So are you.

26 A: Because you're in my room.

27 M: You're involved.

28 A: Ma. (Gah       )
You must admit, it sounds a little queer. A man's leaves his wife and moves in with an old friend. Hmm. I don't think the people who gave you David would approve. You're taking on a tremendous responsibility with this boy. You have to set a good example.

Wait, giving a friend a place to stay is a bad example.

I knew I should have kept my mouth to myself. Anyway, it's only for a few more weeks.

What's for a few more weeks.

You said he was with you on a one year basis, so it's already more than ten months.

So what do you think happens then?

He leaves.

Oh no Ma, you misunderstood. Yes, David is with me on a one year trial basis. But after that, if we agree and the Bureau of Child Welfare allows, I'm going to legally adopt him. And believe me Ma, if I have anything to say about it David is not leaving.

Stop the car.

Frankly Arnold, you've done a lot of crazy things.

My adopting David is not a crazy thing. It is a wonderful thing. I happen to be very proud of it.

If you were so proud, how come you were too ashamed to tell your mother. Everything else you tell me, you shove your sex life down my throat like aspirin every hour on the hour. But all this time not a word. Why?

You know, you're not the easiest person to talk to.

Why, what did I say. Do I tell you how to run your life? Listen to me my son, I've realized a long time ago that no matter what I thought or how I felt, you and your brother were going to do exactly as you felt anyway. So, I wouldn't say a word. You want to know why you wouldn't tell me? Because you knew it was wrong.

That is not true.

No? Why?

I don't know.

So what else is new?
(Scene Six: At grave site. Mother is praying over Father's grave. Arnold is praying over Alan's grave.)

48 M: That's it. Arnold, honestly, I've had it up to here with you. Your father left these plots for you. This is what you want to do with them fine, that's your business. But I will stand here and watch you spit on your father's grave.

49 A: What?

50 M: What do you think you're doing?

51 A: What

52 M: What are you doing?

53 A: I'm doing the same thing you're doing.

54 M: No. I'm reciting (              )((some Jewish prayer)) for my husband. You're blaspheming your religion.

55 A: Ma, do you know who this is? This is my lover.

56 M: Wait. Wait. Wait. You want to compare my marriage to you and Alan? Your father and I were married for thirty-five years. We had two children together. You dare compare yourself to that?

57 A: I'm talking about the loss.

58 M: What loss did you have? You fooled around with some boy. Huh. Where do you come to compare that with a marriage of thirty-five years? Come on Arnold, this isn't one of your pals you're talking to.

59 A: Mama, I lost someone I loved very much.

60 M: So you felt bad. Maybe you even cried a little. What would you know about what I felt. Thirty-five years I lived with this man. He got sick, I took him to the hospital. You know what they gave me back? I gave them a man, they gave me a place to visit on holy days. How could you possibly know how I felt? It took me two months before I could sleep in our bed alone and a year, it took me a year before I could say I instead of we. You're going to tell me you were mourning? How dare you.

61 A: You're right ma, how dare I? I couldn't possible know how it feels to take somebody's things, put them in plastic bags and watch garbage men take them away. Or how it feels when you forget and set him his place at the table. How about the food that rots in the refrigerator because you forgot how to shop for one. How dare I, right Ma? How dare I.

62 A: Believe me Ma, you had it easy, you had thirty-five years

63 M:
(Scene Seven: Back at Arnold's Apartment.)

A: Mama, you can come out now. We've got the whole joint to fight in.

M: Enjoy yourself. I'm going to bed.

A: Ma I'm sorry I lost my temper.

M: I'm glad your sorry.

A: Come on Ma, we got to talk this.

M: You don't want to talk, you want to fight. I don't fight with my children. In your life, did you ever here your father and me fight? No. You want to know why? Because all my childhood I listened to fights. My father fought with my mother. My mother fought with my brother. My brother fought with me. When I married your father, I said, Jack, I will talk but I won't fight. Did you ever hear us fight.

A: hhh

M: No. Now you know why.

A: hhh

M: ( ) Don't holler. People say things they don't mean when they holler. And you've said quite enough.

A: I won't holler. You just hit a raw nerve before. We won't discuss Alan, or Daddy, only David.

M: Arnold, darling, what do you know from raising a child?

A: What's to know? Whenever there's a problem, I simply imagine how you would solve it, and I do the opposite.

M: That's what you invited me here for, to insult me and spit on your father's grave.
81 A: Aw Ma (Gah).

82 M: Arnold, you live your life the way you want, I put my fist in my mouth, I don't say a word. But think about the boy. When he's sees you living like this, don't you think it's bound to affect him?

83 A: Ma, David is gay.

84 M: He's been here less than a year.

85 A: He came that way.

86 M: Nobody comes that way.

87 A: What an opening.

88 M: Everything for you is a joke. The whole world has gone completely insane and I'm heading south for the summer.

89 A: You know you make it very difficult to have an intelligent conversation.

90 M: You want an intelligent conversation, do what I do. Talk to yourself, it's the only way.

91 A: Don't you understand, the whole reason David was placed here was so that he could grow up with a positive attitude about his homosexuality.

92 M: Arnold, ( ) I don't care anymore. You're not going to put me in my grave like you did your father.

93 A: Oh, now I killed my father.

94 M: No, of course not, he was thrilled to have a fairy for a son. What do you think, you think you walk into a room and say, hi Dad I'm queer, and that's that. You think that's what we brought you to the world for. Believe me, if I had known, I wouldn't have bothered.

((Arnold leaves the room. Very long pause))

95 M: God should tear out my tongue I should talk to my child like that. Oh Arnold, you're a good person, a sensitive person with a heart kind of like your father. I try to love you like that, and forget about this, but you won't let me. You haven't spoken one sentence since I got here without the word gay in it.

96 A: Because that's what I am.

97 M: Well if that was all, you could leave it in there were it belongs. But no, you're obsessed with it. You're not happy unless everybody's talking about it.
A: Try and imagine the world the other way around. Imagine that every book, every magazine, every newspaper, every TV show, and every movie was telling you you should be homosexual. You know you're not. You know to you this is right.

M: Stop already, you're talking crazy.

A: You want to know what's crazy? After all these years I'm still sitting here trying to justify my life. This is crazy.

M: Call this a life. This is a sickness. But, it's what you've chosen for yourself.

A: Ma look. I'm gay. I don't know why. I don't think anyone does. That's what I am. For as far back as I could remember, back before I knew it was different or even wrong, I have

M: You have not heard one word I've said.

A: I know you would rather I was straight, I'm not. Would you also rather I'd lied to you? My friend Ed would never dream of telling his parents. Instead he cut his parents out of his life. And his parents wonder why, why is my child so distant. Is that what you'd rather?

M: No, but it doesn't have to be our every conversation either.

A: You want to be a part of my life, I'm not editing out the things you don't like.

M: Can we end this conversation?

A: No.

M: Arnold

A: There's one more thing you better understand. I have taught myself to sow, cook, fix plumbing, build furniture, I can even pat myself on the back when necessary. All so I don't have to ask anyone for anything. There's nothing I need from anyone except for love and respect. And anyone who can't give me those two things has no place in my life. (Pause) You're my mother, I love you. I do. But if you can't respect me, you got no business being here.

M: You're throwing me out.

A: Ma, I'm trying to explain

M: throwing me out. Isn't that nice. Listen mister, you get one mother in this world. Only one. Wait, just wait.
((Scene Eight: Arnold's apartment the morning after the big argument.))

114 M: I'll be leaving myself now.

115 A: Ma you don't have to go. You can stay.

116 M: What, and stay with your brother. It's better he doesn't know. I'll call him from Miami and tell him I couldn't make it.

117 A: I'll call him Ma. I'm going to tell him what happened.

118 M: You want to turn him against me too? What else do you want me to do? You want me to fight, I'm leaving. You want me to change, I'm too old. I can't. You do what you have to do. And I'll do what I have to do. And I hope you're satisfied.

119 A: Oh Ga---

120 M: If I had ever opened my mouth to my mother the way you did to me, you be talking to a woman with a size six wedgie sticking out of her forehead. I didn't raise my two like that. I wanted my children to respect me because they wanted to not because I beat it into them. No no.

121 A: Let's not start this all over again. Now.

122 M: Yes, because it's not fair to put all the blame on me. You think I didn't know about you Arnold. Believe me I knew, I knew, but I said no. I hoped. What's the difference. I knew and I turned my back. I wasn't the only one. You turned your back on me too. You opened your mouth to me about your friend Alan. How was I supposed know?

123 A: All of a sudden you would have understood?

124 M: Maybe if you would have told me. You never trusted me enough to tell me. You never said a word.

125 A: So you could have said what? Ah, he's better off dead. Right?

126 M: Maybe I could have comforted you. Maybe I could have told you what to expect. You cheated me out of your life, and then blame me for not being there. (Pause). About this Ed, do you love him?

127 A: I don't know. (Pause) Yeah, I think so.

128 M: Like you loved Alan?

129 A: No, they're very different. Anyway it's easier to love someone who's dead. They make so few mistakes.

130 M: You got an unusual way of looking at things.
A: I think it runs in the family. (Pause) Ma, I miss him. (Pause).

M: Give yourself time Arnold. It gets better. Arnold, it never goes away. You can work longer hours, adopt a son, fight with me, whatever. It's still there. But that's all right. It becomes a part of you, like learning to wear a ring or eyeglasses. You get used to it. It's good. It's good because it makes sure you don't forget. You don't want to forget him, do you?

A: No.

M: So, it's good.

((Telephone rings. It's a call from David.))
Conflicts occur for a variety of reasons and in many different contexts. For example, two children on a playground may argue over who’s turn it is at play, marital partners may argue over finances, or two nations may argue over property, security, or ideology. Conflict may be an inevitable part of human existence. This inevitability occurs due to the nature of knowing and understanding. Each individual has an experience of life uniquely her or his own. Although we have the ability to communicate which each other, which necessitates a theory of mutual understanding at some level, there are many instances of disagreement. Disagreement occurs due to differing perspectives, which are a function of our unique life experiences. Thus conflict is inevitable.

This paper will argue for a theory of conflict. This theory of conflict is not intended to be inclusive of all conflict, but rather attempts to explain conflicts which arise out of disagreements which occur following a misalignment of frames of reference. To accomplish this goal, the paper will be divided into several sections. The first section will describe the nature of the problem: (a) the nature of conflict, (b) a definition of frames, and (c) a discussion of rules. The second section will provide two examples of conflicts which occurred due to a misalignment of frames. The first example is anecdotal from personal experience. This example is the conflict which enkindled the idea to search for a new theory of conflict. The second example is from a transcribed public confrontation which demonstrates the principles of a misalignment of frames. The last section will offer some hope for resolving conflicts of this nature.

The Nature of the Problem

The nature of conflict.

According to Hocker and Wilmot (1991), conflict occurs when at least two individuals perceive incompatible goals. This perception escalates into a conflict when the parties express struggle in trying to achieve their goals. They may perceive the other party as attempting to subvert any attempts at reaching their goals, therefore the struggle ensues in order to overcome obstacles to achieving those goals.

The expressed struggle is performed through communicative interaction. Because conflict is inherently communicative, it occurs as a function of perceptions and the meaning attached to those perceptions. That is, an individual has perceptions about his or her needs, the appropriate means for meeting those needs and expectations regarding the others role in meeting those needs. The perceptions and expectations regarding the other’s role and the perceptions regarding the other’s desires contribute to the perception of conflict.

An individual in a relationship may have expectations regarding the other’s behaviors toward the self in the relationship. These expectations may result from earlier experiences in the relationship or other relationships. The perception that the
other has not met those expectations can lead to conflict because the goal of having the other meet one's needs are based on those expectations.

Not all conflicts result from a dependence on the other to meet certain needs. However, conflict implies at least interdependence upon the other. In that sense, conflict occurs in relationships between people. Conflict requires the other's cooperation to engage, and cooperation implies some agreement about the content, rules or relationship. Yet conflict occurs when there is a disagreement on any one or two of these three components.

Frames and frame misalignment.
Conflict may occur when there is a disagreement about the rules of the relationship or relational interaction. As discussed above, individuals inherently have differences in their perceptions and therefore meanings of the world around them as a function of their unique experiences. The way an individual interprets any given event is dependent upon his or her frame of reference.

Persons in relationship with each other do relationship through many different types of communicative acts. Relationships are defined interactionally through conflict, self disclosure, and play. As an example of the different types of frames that effect the interaction between two individuals, play is a useful example because it simulates combat. Conflict is often combative. According to Bateson (1972), play involves the sending of metacommunicative messages which signal a play frame. Play takes the form of interaction that is serious but contains codes which signal that the interaction is not serious. "... Play is a phenomena in which the actions of 'play' are related to, or denote, other actions of 'not play'" (p. 181). The "play" actions are related to the "not play" actions by content. The playful statement takes the same content form as a serious statement but does not contain the paralinguistic or nonverbal codes which serve the function of specifying metacommunicatively that the statement is not serious. These codes help the interactants interpret the actions of the other, and thus signal the frame. The frame is maintained by the interaction between the playing individuals.

Bateson (1972) further argues that play contains two peculiarities which distinguish it from not play. First, during play, the messages exchanged are not meant to be taken seriously. This first peculiarity creates an interesting paradox, and the paradox denotes play. The paradox of play involves the notion that any statements made within a play frame are excluded from being interpreted outside the frame, that is they are not serious. Yet, within the play frame, statements are made to maintain the frame. Such statements are a serious matter to those who wish to maintain the frame.

The second peculiarity of play is that the idea or thing which is denoted by the play message is nonexistent. For example, within a play frame, a statement is allowed which is untrue when interpreted from a serious frame. Yet that statement may actually perpetuate the play frame and is thus "true" to the play frame.

All actions including play can be framed and thus interpreted by those who observe the actions. A frame is a construct which determines the rules for interpretation of these actions. A frame is a perspective upon which an object or activity is viewed; the frame is bounded by the assumptions or premises which
define it. According to Goffman (1986), the codes which signal a frame are known as keys. A key is "... a set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (p. 43). Thus, in play, a transformation occurs. This transformation is a systematic alteration of an act from one form (seriousness) to another (play).

Although play is "not serious" in one sense, it does serve several functions for the interactants, and therefore is "serious." According to Glenn and Knapp (1987), play serves the function of building cohesion in relationships, play is done for pleasure, play maintains psychological and physical equilibrium, and play allows people to solve problems. These functions serve to maintain relationships in various ways. Play also defines boundaries for relationships. Rules for relationships are learned through play. And, when a "play" rule is violated, the violation can have serious implications for the relationship, or it can help the relational partners determine what is appropriate and important for the relationship.

Glenn and Knapp (1987) posited that: (a) participants construct the play frame, that play frames are created through the transformation of ordinary functions; (b) codes signaling the play frame may not be overtly available but rather assumed according to the behavior of the other or prior knowledge about the other; (c) laughter or other devices may be used to maintain the play frame; and (d) resumption of the primary frame activity, that preceded the play frame, through the introduction of a new topic or other devices, can end the play frame.

In serious conversation, the rules that apply to the play frame are not utilized in the same way. Although serious conversation defines relationship in much the same way as play, it may not and often does not contain the same elements as the play frame. For example, laughter may not be used as a device to maintain the serious frame. Yet, other devices, behaviors, or codes may be utilized to perpetuate the serious frame.

Sometimes the codes may overlap or be similar in structure in such a way as to make the distinction between play and not play or serious and not serious difficult to determine. In Bateson's (1972) example of the dog bite, a bite not as hard as a serious bite may denote a play frame. Yet, making the distinction between what is a hard bite and not a hard bite can sometimes be problematic. The keys for the frame may, at times, be quite ambiguous. Within any given frame, however, rules for interpreting moves, and even the keys to the frame itself, are a function of the frame of reference.

Rules of engagement.

Grice (1975) suggested that interaction can occur only when certain rules of engagement are followed. He provided a list of conversational maxims which describe limitations on conversation. First, in order for meaning to be conveyed between interactants, a certain degree of cooperation must occur. This cooperation may take the form of a common purpose for the interaction. In the case of conflict, both individuals have the purpose of getting her or his needs met which require the cooperation of the other. But, at a communicative level, in order for the interacts to
get their needs met, there must be some base level of understanding. In this sense, the interactants must cooperate in coherence.

In order to achieve coherence, Grice (1975) proposed that the principles of quantity, quality, relation and manner be upheld. In the case of these principles, information exchanged must suit the purpose of the interaction. For example, the relationship of the information to the purpose must be clear, in other words, it must be relevant. Yet, relevance of a given statement is determined by the purpose for the interaction. If the interaction is framed as play, statements serve a different purpose than if the interaction is framed as serious. This relevance maxim implies that misalignment of frames can contribute to disagreements, and also conflict.

Examples of Conflict due to Misalignment

Example one.
The first example of conflict arising out of a misalignment of frames occurred between myself and two other graduate students. The context of the talk began as a discussion regarding a particular performance in the Kleinau Theatre. The performance which was produced and staged in the Fall of 1993 contained mature themes regarding the stories of abuse survivors. The stories were of a graphic nature and included frank narratives of incest, and sexual, physical, and emotional forms of abuse.

One graduate student asked if a disclaimer was offered regarding the admittance of children into the performance. It was the concern of this graduate student that the performance itself might be inappropriate, if not harmful, for younger audiences. This question initiated a discussion about whether it was appropriate for children to be admitted into such performances.

One possible outcome of admittance of younger audiences was that the discussion of abuse might traumatize the children. Another possible negative outcome might be to affect the ability of children viewers to develop trust in adults now that their "innocence" regarding knowledge of such occurrences has been "violated." This perspective on the possible outcomes of viewing the performance has as a main goal the protection of the welfare of the children.

On the other hand, viewing such a representation of narrative regarding abuse might have positive outcomes as well. For example, for children to be aware that such tragic circumstances do occur might enable them to deal with such occurrences in their own lives, and might empower them to tell trustworthy adults when such occurrences happen as well. This perspective on the possible outcomes of viewing the performance has as a main goal the development of the child. This perspective has obvious pedagogical advantages over the previous perspective.

The discussion between myself and the other graduate student was joined by a third graduate student, and continued along the topic path of possible outcomes for younger viewers. At some point, the discussion took a tangential course regarding children's abilities to emotionally handle narratives of trauma, and whether or not we can really know what emotions a child is experiencing thus making our assessment regarding children's abilities to handle trauma potentially problematic. It was the instigation of this second argument that moved the discussion from one that was primarily between myself and the first graduate...
student to one that was primarily between myself and the second graduate student. It was this argument which resulted in the conflict that arose.

In this argument (in the sense of debate), I sensed myself becoming more frustrated with the moves of my opponent. From my perspective, the lines of argument I was laying down were constantly being thwarted by the moves of my opponent. However, I believed that the moves of my opponent did not follow the rules of logic which were appropriate to the argument, as I perceived it.

At some point, I moved to the metacommunicative level and made the claim that my opponent was not following the rules of logic. To this point my opponent claimed that Aristotelian logic does not apply to the realm of children's emotions. My response was to offer as counterpoint that Aristotelian logic does apply to the rules of argument (regardless of topic), and that my opponent was arguing from within an Aristotelian system, and therefore has to follow the rules of logic.

About this time, my opponent stated that she was only playing (devil's advocate). I believe she sensed my frustration and possibly became aware, before I did, that we were operating from two different frames. She stated that she was only playing several times before I let go of my frame. I believe this had to occur, because from within my frame the statement "I was only playing," did not follow the rules.

I moved the discussion to the metalevel. This relieved the tension for myself because it allowed me to explore the reasons for my frustration. Also, this freed my co-conversant from the role of opponent. We explored the idea that I may have gotten frustrated because she was not following the rules that I believed we had agreed upon. This belief stemmed from the perception on my part that the original question asked by the other graduate student was a serious one. She may have become aware of my frustration nonverbally and also by my disallowing her the ability to follow the rules she believed were relevant to the argument. In a sense, from my perspective she was violating the relevance maxim by making statements that were outside the rule structure of my frame of reference.

My frustration may also have stemmed from the belief that I was being vulnerable by expressing true feelings or beliefs about the issue at hand, where she was not. By being in the serious frame, my goal was to arrive at some answer to the question posed which began the conversation. My perception of the goal of her play frame was simply to have a lively, pleasurable debate about the issue. She was not invested in the issue to the same degree that I was, and her statements about the issue may not have been true representations of her beliefs. Thus she was more protected from issues of self-concept than I. Conflict occurred because our goals were incongruent.

Example two.

In a televised interview on CBS news, Dan Rather and George Bush became embroiled in a conflict. George Bush was presently Vice-president of the United States and also a candidate for election to the office of President. CBS was involved in the campaign by interviewing the candidates for a national audience. What transpired in the interview was a conflict which resulted from a misalignment of frames.
Although the frames in question where not play versus serious, as both participants were quite serious, the rules for engagement in the discussion were quite different. From Dan Rather's perspective, the interaction was an interview. An interview for Dan Rather implied that any topic relevant to George Bush's record was appropriate for exploration through questioning. Rather's goal was to uncover "truth" regarding a particular event during the Vice-presidency of Bush. Rather implicated through his questioning of this topic that Bush's actions and knowledge of this event are relevant to his candidacy for President.

From George Bush's perspective, the interaction was supposed to be a political profile. He believed that Rather was subverting the purpose by interrogating him about a topic he believed to be irrelevant to the goals at hand. Bush's goal during the campaign was to present positive face, and he believed that goal could be gained by having a political profile presented through the network news. In the following excerpt from the transcript of the interview George Bush made explicit his belief that the purpose of the program was for political profile.

(1)
35 GB ...so I find this t'
36 be a rehash .hh and a little bit (. ) if you'll excuse
37 me a misrepresentation on the part of
38 CBS who said you're doin' political profiles .hh
39 on all the candidates, .h and then you- (0.2) come
40 up with something that has been exhaustively looked
41 into.
42 (0.3)
43 DR Mister Vice President what (. ) we agreed to or
44 didn't agree to I think- you will- agree fer
45 the moment, .hh can be dealt with »in another way,«
46 Let's talk about the record. You say that
47 we've misrepresented your record
48 GB [Let's talk about the full record.
49 (.)
50 DR Let's talk about the record. If [we've] misrepresented
51 GB [Yeah ]
52 DR =your record in any way. « (. ) here's a chance t' set
Bush's statement that the "rehash" was a misrepresentation of the agreement on the part of the network to do political profiles was a metacommunicative comment about the rules for engagement. In this sense, the implication of the metacommunicative comment was that the questioning regarding Iran-Contra events was inappropriate and therefore irrelevant. However, Rather's next move beginning on line 43 was to question Bush's move to the metacommunicative level. Rather implied that the move to the metacommunicative level was inappropriate and therefore irrelevant to the rules of interviewing.

This conversational adjacency pair (assertion-denial), defines the interaction as, at minimum, a disagreement. However, the disagreement occurred not at the content level, but at the relational level. The disagreement resulted from a misalignment of frames. The misalignment of frames becomes more obvious in the lines following (46 through 54). Bush and Rather were using the same term, the record, although the meaning of that term was quite different for the two conversants.

The misalignment of frames is obvious in the following excerpt which occurred later in the interaction.

(2)

246 GB  h and I don't think it's fair t' judge a WHO:LE=
247 DR  [And Mister Vice President these questions ( )]
248 GB  =caree:r, h it's not fair to judge my whole career by
249 a rehash on Iran. hhh How would you like it.« ( ) if
250 I judged your career by those seven minutes when you
251 walked off the set in New York.
252 (1.2)
253 DR  Well Mist-
254 GB  l( ) Would you like that?
255 (0.2)
256 DR  Uh [Mister Vice President]

In this sequence, Bush violates the relevancy maxim which is inherent in Rather's interviewing frame. According to the rules of engagement for interviewing, the interviewee is not suppose to ask questions of the interviewer. Also, the content of the question was irrelevant to Rather because it had nothing to do with Bush's record. Later in the interaction, beginning on line 256, Rather moved to the
metacommunicative level to dispute Bush's implication that the statement regarding Rather's career was relevant to the conversation.

On Bush's part, the statement regarding Rather's career was as fair as Rather's line of questioning regarding his career. This move was a tactic to question the rules. However, Bush's question about the fairness was an attempt to show that Rather was not following the appropriate rules by taking on the role of the interviewer. Bush attempted to co-opt the interviewing frame by demonstrating its inappropriateness. This move took Rather by surprise as is evidence by the pause following a turn-relevance place on line 252. (The selection of Rather for the next turn at talk was made relevant here by the first pair-part of the adjacency pair uttered by Bush).

Both of these examples have common elements. Although the misalignment of frames for example one entailed a serious frame versus play frame misalignment, example two demonstrated a political profile frame versus interview frame misalignment. In both situations, the misalignment of frames entailed a disagreement regarding the rules of engagement in the interaction. From each persons' perspective, the other violated relevancy norms. And, this disagreement resulted in a thwarting of goals for the interactants. These qualities of the two examples qualify them as conflictual.

**Conflict Resolution: Reframing**

The interactants in the above examples exemplified the principle that interaction is a system process (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). Although the interactants were coming from different frames of reference, they were cooperating with each other at the relational level. In the first example, the conflict was created by a misalignment of frames, and the resolution to the conflict did not occur until a move was made to step out of the system. The move to the metacommunicative level brought about a reframing of the conflict itself as a misalignment. The interactants were operating at cross-purposes, although at the beginning of the interaction they may have both believed that they were both operating out of the same frame.

The interaction in the second example was not resolved. Although the interactants moved to a metacommunicative level, the move did not accompany a step out of the system. Both interactants insisted on maintaining the frame they had chosen for the interaction. Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974) suggest that reframing may help to resolve conflicts because the viewpoint regarding the interaction may be what is contributing to the conflict. When stepping out of the conflictual system to understand why the system was conflictual, I could see that the frames, and thus the rule endorsements, were incongruent or misaligned.

**References**


Assessment of a Reperformance of Naturally-occurring Talk

Our project of reperforming naturally-occurring talk was both frustrating and thought-provoking. Jim Prohs approached me with a bit of talk he collected between two eighteen-year-old dormmates. He had already transcribed the bit of talk with the help of the participants. This particular aspect of participant-assisted transcription was relevant to several issues that arose in the interpretation of the transcript.

The first aspect of our method was for each of us to listen individually to the tape. Next, Jim asked me to make the decision regarding whom I would like to reperform. I decided to reperform Tom's part. I chose Tom because Bill seemed to be much more directive in his talk, and I believed that Jim's presence on stage as Bill would be more believable even though both Bill and Tom are same age peers. I did not tell Jim my reasoning for the decision.

Jim and I read along individually with the transcript in order to get a sense of the general meaning and purpose of the segment, and to become more familiar with our character's attitude and demeanor. Then Jim and I, together, read through the transcript out loud.

We attempted to read along with the tape on several occasions. This proved to be very difficult for a couple of reasons. First, the voices on the tapes were very fast. Compared to my regular rate of talk, the two speakers on the tape, and in particular the speech of the person I had chosen to perform was much faster. Tom's line 18 through 22 were particularly fast. Bill's line 20, which is supposed to function as a next turn at talk, seemed, from my perspective, hard to time because of Tom's rate of speech. The pause time between the end of line 19 and the beginning of line 21 was extremely short. Also, because of Tom's normal rate of speech, increasing the rate of speech on lines 29, 41, 60, 115, and 122 was particularly difficult.

Jim and I used the class period time for blocking choices. We went to the Kleinau to determine how we wanted the stage to be arranged. Jim had a sense from the participants of the taped conversation as to how the room was actually set up. We, for example, knew where furniture was situated in reference to the hallway, door, and connecting bathroom. We then made choices regarding general movement for the reperformance. For example, the 5.6 second pause on line 51 needed to have some activity. So, we decided that Jim would walk across the room to pick up some papers.

After we had done the blocking, I had a better sense of what was going on in the segment. We spent most of our rehearsal time, following the blocking, going over lines. Our final rehearsal, we made last minute decisions about what props were needed and who would be responsible for the props.

Although we had made most of our decisions prior to the performance, there were a few movements that I made during the performance that were somewhat spontaneous. For example, I was standing during the lines 51 through 59. Although I had not planned the movement, on stage I was through with putting clothes in the laundry bag. I got up to fiddle with the tape boxes so that I would look busy.
There were other problems that we encountered along the way. Jim and I had difficulty deciding what to do about the snapping noises on the tape. According to the two participants, the snapping noises were snapping of towels. Jim did not specify to me whether the snapping was due to folding, such as snapping a sheet to fold it, or snapping as in a game of tag. It seemed to me also that the snapping sound in some cases could have been due to dropping tape or CD cases. At any rate, the snapping seemed unimportant on the tape because there was no talk accompanying the action in such a way as to make sense of it. If the snapping was a game of tag, then it seems like there would have been some talk about the snapping. Jim and I decided to ignore the snapping in the reperformance.

Line 2, °Bing(.)Bang(.)Bing°, also seemed unmotivated. Jim did not have an explanation for this particular line, so we treated it as a tease. The tease, of course, was responded to with a "po-face." Another seemingly unmotivated line included the -huh huh on line 50. I was unsure from the transcript and the tape why Tom laughed there. On stage, I treated it as a laugh aimed at Bill's immediately prior utterances, as if it was a commentary on Bill's disgust at Tom's insult on line 45.

The sequence of talk starting on line 64 and ending on line 75 was very intriguing to me. Line 64 is a request for information but is delivered paralinguistically as an insult, as if to say "Bill, you are stupid for having so many towels." There is a pause, followed by a response by Bill that can serve several functions. First, line 67 is an account. It offers a reasonable explanation for having the towels. Second, it serves as a brag. Bill brags about his personal hygiene. This particular interpretation is relevant considering the activity and topic of the current segment, that is the dormmates are cleaning the room. Third, it serves as a retort to the insult. Fourth, it serves as play. This line is delivered in a fast, whimsical way.

Line 67 is responded to by Tom as if line 67 served all of the functions outlined above. Tom's playful retort on line 68 disputes both the account and the brag. Bill's line 67 is a set-up for a tease to follow. If line 64-65 serves as an insult, line 68 adds to the insult. Bill takes part in the play when he delivers line 67. Tom knows that he has teased and insulted Bill, which motivates the laugh. Bill responds in lines 70 and 72 in a way that is cooperative in the play. There are laugh particles in Bill's utterance on line 72. However, although the utterance is cooperative in the play, it can be interpreted more than one way. Bill's utterance may be an acknowledgment that he has been had by Tom, thus continuing the play frame, or the utterance can be a serious statement of offense suggesting a desire to end the play frame. Tom's treatment of Bill's utterance is problematic.

There is a considerable pause following Bill's utterance, in which Tom radically changes the tone of voice in the deliverance of line 74. Tom's voice is very serious. Jim indicated that the participants reported that Tom's desire not to go home is indeed serious. Apparently, Tom viewed Bill's utterance as an opportunity to communicate, once again (given the participants' report), his disdain regarding his home. There is a pause following Tom's utterance, and then turn selection by Bill on a different topic. The topic shift disallowed discussion regarding Tom's feelings about home. The topic shift however may have been unexpected as Tom's line 78 suggests.
However, line 74 is also problematic in that it abruptly ends the play frame that Tom himself instigated. What is interesting about this sequence is that Tom finishes his laughter before Bill finishes delivering his line 72. It is as if either Tom saw the result of his insult, and decided to end the play frame before an argument ensued, or Tom saw an opportunity to make a statement regarding his disdain for home. If it is not the case that Tom strategized a response to Bill, then why would he have stopped the laughter so prematurely?

At any rate, performing that particular sequence was very intriguing to me because it did not seem to fit in with the playful nature of the rest of the segment. I wonder what the rest of the conversational episode was about. The laughter of the audience following the delivery of line 74 was very intriguing to me. However, they may have not had the knowledge of its implications that Jim received from the participants, although the audience may have interpreted the utterance as serious.

Reperforming the segment was intriguing to me for other reasons as well. Overall, the segment was a very funny one. However, many of the audience members indicated that it seemed very realistic, as if they know people like that. The use of the clothes during the performance was very helpful for me as well.

Appendix

Laundry
T: Tom, B: Bill

* The ‘((snap))’ referred to in the transcript is the snapping of a towel. There are the sounds of a train and music in the background throughout this dialogue.

001 T:  ((snap)) How goes the laundry? ((snap))=
002 B:  °Bing(.)Bang(.)Bing°
003     (0.3)
004 T:  In the laundry bag? (.)
005 B:  Yeah
006     (0.6)
007 T:  This full (0.4) not much
008     (1.0)
009 B:  Were gonna do laundry tonite afte[r they leave ]
010 T:  [Not even half]
011     (0.6) Ya wannew?
We have to get

=WE JUST DID LAUNDRY BEFORE THE AH GOONS came.

They mess everything up.

Look at all this laundry I gohhh(h)t.

Are we gonna do our laundry separate? Because I know the pants that I pulled out of the drawer?

=(This got.)

the ones I am wearing now are like still wet

because we got so much laundry

There's a thing called separating laundry (.). You can't shove four loads of laundry in one washer.

°It's cheaper°

You're an idiot (.). Now you have wet pants for a week.

But they're clean wet pants,

and it didn't cost a lot

Ok hh when it rains you can wear your wet pants

Otherwise quit bitchin (.). When you separate whites and blacks and colors. Not just colors and non-colors.

Whites and ↑not white (.). why not
039 (1.5)
040 B: be↑cause
041 T: >why don't we just do em all together<
042 (.)
043 B: Re:ds can stain on yellows.
044 (.)
045 T: °Reds can stain on yellows° ya sound like my ↓mother
046 (1.2)
047 B: fuck
048 (0.5)
049 B: fuck=
050 T: =huh huh
051 (5.6)
052 B: oh shit
053 (1.8)
054 T: (problems?)
055 (0.5)
056 B: we got jason's um
057 (0.3)
058 B: >whatdascalit< (. ) ticket?
059 (.)
060 T: >We'll give it back to him tonight<
061 (2.0)
062 B: °Donnersgrove (police department)°
063 (.)
064 T: What are ya doin with the towels here
065 How come you have so many towels.
066 (1.8)
B: »I'm a cleansie kinda guy«
T: Eh (0.3) You never use 'em hhh Hah U Ah=
T: =Hah Hah [Hah Hah Hah hih hih hhh hhh hhh]
B: [What is th(h)at supposed to mean]
(1.6)
B: 'hhhh (. ) Go ta hell.
(2.5)
T: I ain't going back home.
(1.6)
B: Jss fold em.
(0.5)
T: huh?
B: just fold em.
(1.0)
T: Fold yer t[ow= Now (. ) whoz: lucky ass gets to clean the
bathroom.
(1.1)
T: Clean the bathroom.
(1.8)
B: Dude (. ) sme:ll it.
(2.2)
T: I ain't stickin
(0.6)
B: He smel(h)ls
(2.3)
T: So ge(h)t ou(h)r suitemate to
(0.5)
T: We cleaned our room ([snap]) he'll clean the bathroom

B: [That's why it hah hah]

T: That guys a slo: b.

B: Theres cigarette shit

B: theres cigarette shit all over the floor.

B: "fuck"

T: Tell him to at least put an ashtray in there.

B: Think I'll build one for him.

T: what the hell we gonna clean it with

B: the ash tray?

T: N(h):o the bathroom ((drawer closing))

B: I'm not doing it now.

T: >I aint doing it< (0.8) Should we vacuum this carpet

B: "Go pay someone"

T: actually this carpet don't look too bad

B: I ah just vacuumed it a day ago

T: >You gotta vacuum yesterday?<

(0.7)
B: Naw yesterday the day before that.

T: When they were here?

B: No (.) No I am sorry Friday (.) I lost track

T: Oh you did that's right

B: I came here and cleaned like the good man I was.

T: °what a good boy°

B: °yah°
Teasing That Works: Sharing the Play Frame

Play occurs in many different contexts, however it occurs interactionally. According to Bateson (1972), play involves the sending of metacommunicative messages which signal a play frame. Play takes the form of interaction that is serious but contains codes which signal that the interaction is not serious. “... Play is a phenomena in which the actions of ‘play’ are related to, or denote, other actions of ‘not play’” (p. 181). The "play" actions are related to the "not play" actions by content, that is the statement, such as a tease, takes the same content form as a "not tease" but does not contain the paralinguistic or nonverbal codes which serve the function of specifying metacommunicatively that the statement is not serious. These codes help the interactants interpret the actions of the other, and thus signal the frame. The frame is maintained by the interaction between the playing individuals.

Bateson (1972) further argues that play contains two peculiarities which distinguish it from not play. First, during play, the messages exchanged are not meant to be taken seriously. This first peculiarity creates an interesting paradox, and the paradox denotes play. The paradox of play involves the notion that any statements made within a play frame are excluded from being interpreted outside the frame, that is they are not serious. Yet, within the play frame, statements are made to maintain the frame. Such statements are a serious matter to those who wish to maintain the frame.

The second peculiarity of play is that the idea or thing which is denoted by the play message is nonexistent. For example, within a play frame, a statement is allowed which is untrue when interpreted from a serious frame. Yet that statement may actually perpetuate the play frame and is thus "true" to the play frame.

All actions including play can be framed and thus interpreted by those who observe the actions. A frame is a construct which determines the rules for interpretation of these actions. A frame is a perspective upon which an object or activity is viewed; the frame is bounded by the assumptions or premises which define it. According to Goffman (1986), the codes which signal a frame are known as keys. A key is "... a set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (p. 43). Thus, in play, a transformation occurs. This transformation is a systematic alteration of an act from one form (seriousness) to another (play).

Although play is "not serious" in one sense, it does serve several functions for the interactants, and therefore is "serious." According to Glenn and Knapp (1987), play serves the function of building cohesion in relationships, play is done for pleasure, play maintains psychological and physical equilibrium, and play allows people to solve problems. These functions serve to maintain relationships in various ways. Play also defines boundaries for relationships. Rules for relationships are learned through play. And, when a "play" rule is violated, the violation can have
serious implications for the relationship, or it can help the relational partners determine what is appropriate and important for the relationship.

Glenn and Knapp (1987) posited that: (a) participants construct the play frame, that play frames are created through the transformation of ordinary functions; (b) codes signaling the play frame may not be overtly available but rather assumed according to the behavior of the other or prior knowledge about the other; (c) laughter or other devices may be used to maintain the play frame; and (d) resumption of the primary frame activity, that preceded the play frame, through the introduction of a new topic or other devices, can end the play frame.

According to Armstrong (1992), teasing is a significant form of play between individuals. Teasing is play in that the content of teasing is "serious but not serious." Indeed, the content of a teasing message may include some truth. However, the metacommunicative aspect of the message often communicates the non-seriousness of the moment, context, or purpose.

Teasing may be intended by the message sender. But intention does not dictate impact. A teasing message is determined by the treatment it is given by the recipient of the tease. Drew (1987) argues that recipients most often respond seriously to the teasing message, even though there is often paralinguistic or nonverbal evidence that the tease was received humorously. Drew (1987) beliefs that playing along with the tease occurs infrequently. The purpose of this paper is to look at interactive teasing, that is teasing where the play frame is shared by both the teaser and the teased, and the teased plays along with the tease.

According to Drew (1987), teases occur interactionally, and the teaser usually offers a mild or indirect reproof for an overbuilt statement in the other's prior turn at talk. Armstrong (1993) disputes that claim by categorizing teases as resulting from overbuilt statements, as well as errors and sequences "... which do not seem problematic in any way" (p. 2). Armstrong offers three main categories of teasables: (a) overdone statements, including overbuilding, stating the obvious, and transgressing; (b) blunders; and (c) opportunistic teases, including spur of the moment teases, and teases from the past. In the last category, a common phrase which may be heard following an opportunistic tease is, "You set yourself up for that one!"

In the following excerpts, teases are performed interactively. These examples qualify as teases because they follow the above guidelines specified by Bateson, Goffman, Glenn and Knapp. These examples can also be described according to the schema specified by Drew and Armstrong. This interactive nature can be shown primarily by sharing of the play frame through laughter, repetition (see Hopper & Glenn, 1993), and cooperation in the teasing sequence by the initially teased individual.

**Opportunistic, Interactive Teases**

In the first example, Jay is requesting that he and Ana talk about bad people. Ana takes advantage of Jay in line 27 by offering an insult that she treats as a tease ($T_1$) by laughing. Ana's treatment of the "spur of the moment" statement as laughable demonstrates her interpretation of the utterance as playful.
Jay's treatment of the statement in line 27 is initially "po-faced." The rebuff in lines 31 and 34 are performed in a serious manner as if line 27 (T₁) was an error or otherwise reproachable transgression. However, Jay comes to appreciate the tease and interacts with Ana's playfulness as evidenced in line 36 (T₂). In this sense, both parties to the interaction share the play frame.

In the second example, Tom takes advantage of a statement (T₁) made by Bill. Bill's statement may have been viewed as a brag, that is it was overbuilt. Yet, Tom seems to be looking for an opportunity to set Bill up by offering an insult in the form of a request for information in the immediately prior utterance. If Tom's prior utterance is a set up, than line 68 acts as a spur of the moment, opportunistic tease.
In an earlier paper, LeBlanc (1993) argued that line 68 serves to add to the insult of lines 64 through 65. Tom is thus perpetuating, at this point, a one-sided play frame. Bill's line 67 was performed in a playful manner, however Bill's playful utterance (T₁) was responded to in an aggressive manner through an insult. Bill responds to Tom's insult in a reciprocal, aggressive manner. In this sense, the reciprocity of aggression is cooperative, thus maintaining and perhaps perpetuating the play frame. Although Tom's lines 68 through 69 contain laughter, Bill's lines 70 and 72 do not. Bill's response here was "po-faced."

The play frame is not ended by Bill's "po-faced" response. LeBlanc (1993) suggested that the delivery of the retort (line 72) may have been serious and thus demonstrated a desire by Bill to end the play frame. However, the play frame is ended most abruptly by Tom's line 74. In this utterance, Tom tangentializes the topic of discussion and makes a serious statement, performed with a serious tone of voice, about his desire not to go home. It was reported that this line was indeed serious, and that both participants to the interaction were aware of the serious nature of the utterance (LeBlanc, 1993).

**Teases to Overdone Statements**

In the next example, Joy is flirting with Skeet who does not seem to be interested in a romantic relationship with Joy. (In the full transcript, Joy gives Skeet several opportunities to meet or go somewhere with her, all of which he turns down in one way or another.) Joy offers Skeet an opportunity to take her and friends to see a movie and suggests that Skeet bring lots of money to pay for it (T₁). Skeet responds in line 116 (T₂) to the overdone statement (T₁) by denying the suggestion.
Yet, in this segment of talk, Joy repeats the request for lots of money in line 121, and Skeet repeats the reproof in line 122. Although the content of the lines change and are thus not verbatim repeats of the previous utterances, the overbuilding and reproof functions are repeated. Indeed, the overbuilding increases until it reaches an absurd level in line 123. Hopper and Glenn (1993) argued that repetition was an indication that the sequence of utterances were being framed as play by the participants. In this segment, both members of the interaction were involved in the play. The play was, therefore, interactively framed.

References to the Past as Material for Teases

In the next two examples, the teaser makes a reference to either an utterance or an event in the past which the recipient of the tease made or was party to. In the first of these two examples, the teaser makes a reference to a statement made earlier in the conversation. The earlier statement is not problematic, in the sense of in error, but it becomes relevant again in the immediate situation. The relevance of the earlier statement is taken advantage of by the teaser, and as such is an opportunistic tease.
In this segment of talk, the daughter is reporting to her parents about a friend who she believes needs counseling. Previously the daughter stated that she was "so screwed up." This phrase, "so screwed up," serves as the focal point for the tease which occurs approximately 30 seconds later in the conversation.

(4)

077 D: =but I don't know \text{[if she's going}
078 M: \quad \text{[all you have to do}
079 \quad \text{[is start a conversation]} \quad \text{[by saying (.). um=
080 F: \quad \text{[well but that's more than] (.). [yeah]
081 F: =let \text{[me straighten you out}
082 M: \quad \text{[I was just wondering [heh heh}
083 D: \quad \text{[heh heh heh}
084 \quad \text{[heh heh}
085 M: \quad \text{[I was (hh)st wo(hh)nd(hh)ring heh heh}
086 T,F: \quad \text{let me straighten you out (.). you screw up}
087 M: \quad \text{heh heh}
088 T,D: \quad \text{you're still screwed up.}
089 M: \quad \text{Do you mind still sitting there}
090 \quad \text{or do you want me tuh:(. switch}

In line 81, the father (F) makes a reference to the earlier sequence in the conversation which talked about the friend of the daughter needing counseling. This statement serves as the beginning of the play frame. It occurs within the larger primary frame which is serious and concerns the daughter’s frustration in her relationship with the friend. The play initiation is taken up by both of the other participants in the interaction by laughter evidenced in lines 82 through 85. The talk in the conversation preceding this occurrence is of a very serious nature, and very little laughter occurs prior to line 81.

In line 86 (T$_1$), the father repeats the line that started the play frame, thus maintaining and perpetuating the play frame. The daughter then repeats (T$_2$) the father’s laughable tease, serving to interact in the construction of the tease as well as perpetuate the play frame. The play initiator serves as a tease in that it projects what the daughter should say to the friend. However, the projection is overdone. It
would be inappropriate for the daughter to make that kind of statement to the friend. The conversational interactants knew that the father’s statement was overdone and reacted accordingly. The mother ends the play frame by shifting the topic to comfortable seating arrangements in line 89.

In the final example, Paul (P) begins retelling a story that illustrates a funny incident that was created by the mother (A). The mother is the butt of the funny story. The mother takes over the telling of the story in line 4 after Paul mistells the story. At this point, the mother’s take over of the storytelling seems to serve the function of saving face. In this sense, line 4 serves as a "po-faced" response to the tease inherent in the telling of the story.

(5)

001 P: It went off the time you (.) burned

002 \[the:: (.) beans on the stove.\]

003 A: \[(burned?)\] I didn't burn

004 beans (Paul) I left the chicken boiling.=

005 P: \[(chicken)\]

006 B: ch \cdot hhu he h\cdot h You remember that chicken? (.h)

007 ha::: (.hhh)

008 A: Dad came home, [I never even thought about]

009 B: Uhh:::::::::: ha ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho,

010 A: Dad came home, the dog

011 A: was barking, the cat was yowling=

012 B: (-hhh) huh ho:, ho:, ho:, \]

013 A: an the house was full of smoke?

014 B: ha ha:::

015 P: And the fire alarm (going) ba::mp, ba::m,

016 P: ba::m\cdot ma::m\]

017 B: and it wasn't

018 A: ((laughs)))
In line 7, Bill (B) the father begins inserting laugh particles into his utterances. Bill maintains the tease nature of the son's (Paul) initial choice to tell the story. The mother does not respond to the play frame being constructed by the father and the son until line 19. The son who begins the story in line 1, and offers a laugh particle as an indicator of the initiation of a play frame, does not laugh again until line 27. At this point in the story, the point of the joke is laid out. Throughout the telling, the father laughs. In the telling of the story, a tease directed toward the mother is implied, and the play frame is maintained by all three interactants.

Conclusion

The tease is determined by the interaction between the teaser and the teased. The teaser may choose the act of teasing for a variety of reasons: for pleasure, for equilibrium, for relational maintenance, or to resolve problems such as speech errors. The teased may choose to respond to the tease in a variety of ways provided he or she is aware of the tease: through "po-faced" responses, an aggressive act denoting displeasure, or by interactively framing the tease within play by going along with it. This interactive framing can be accomplished through several devices including, but not limited to, repetition and laughter. This sharing of the play frame allows teases to work, and ultimately can have positive affects on the individuals involved.

References


A Family Genogram and History

When examining structural characteristics of my family several interesting patterns emerge (see Appendix). First, among my great-grandparents and grandparents, large families are the norm. Among my great-grandparents’ families, the average number of children is eleven. Among my grandparents’ families, the average number of children when including step children of Leslie Clyde Lovett is nine. In my parents’ generation, counting known first cousins, the average number of children for ten families (numbers 8 (& 9), 10, 12 - 17, 20 - 21) is five with a range in size from seven children (three families with seven children) to two children. Overall, not counting in-laws, the ratio of female to male children is sixty-six females to sixty-six males. The total number of people represented on the genogram is two-hundred and nine.

Second, in my father’s family of origin there are no divorces among his siblings or with his parents. My father’s family was raised strict Roman Catholic, which may have contributed to a feeling of strong social restrictions on divorce among his siblings. In my mother’s family of origin, among her two closest sibling’s there are no divorces. My mother’s family history is more fragmented. Leslie Clyde Lovett is Seventh-Day Adventist. My mother, her sister Lois and brother Rodley were brought up and attended Seventh-Day Adventist schools periodically during their childhood. However, all three children, Lois, Rodley, and Loretta, moved away from Leslie Clyde Lovett by their mid-teens. Lois moved to Baton Rouge and lived with her Aunt Midget (Mildred Bernard). Rodley moved around considerably, living with his Uncle Henry Clay Lovett, in Boy’s Town Nebraska, and eventually moved to Baton Rouge. Rodley also spent some years in the United States Navy. Loretta, my mother, moved to Baton Rouge to live with her Aunt Lillian (Bernard) Boudreaux at the age of 14. That fall she first met my father H. Paul LeBlanc Jr., and she also began training to convert to Roman Catholicism. She converted to Roman Catholicism. By that time, my mother and father were dating. They dated continuously until they married in 1958.

When comparing my father’s family to my mother’s family, my father’s family was perhaps very enmeshed. H. Paul LeBlanc Sr. was a controlling, authoritarian parent. A specific example of this is my father’s occupation. My grandfather was a dentist. My father, being the first born son, was expected to follow in his father’s footsteps. My father did not really know what he wanted to do with his life when he began college, but his future was decided for him by his father. It is when my father was in college that he started to drink. He noticed his father drinking at this time as well.

As a side story, I took my dad to see the movie "Dead Poets' Society" when I began teaching as a master’s student. In our conversation after the movie, my dad asked me if I associated with the teacher’s character to which I agreed. When I asked him which character he associated with, his response was the student who committed suicide. That student committed suicide partly because he wanted to be
an artist or actor, but the student's father was controlling and dictated a future as a medical doctor for the student.

My mother's family on the other hand was separate or disengaged. My mother has described her father, Leslie Clyde Lovett, as a strict disciplinary, but not very close to his children. This characteristic perhaps contributed to the departure of the remaining children early in their lives. The story of the relationship between Leslie Clyde Lovett and Sadie Agnes Bernard is fairly tragic. My maternal grandmother, whom we called Grandma Lovett, lived in a nursing home for as long as I could remember. My family and I would go visit her two or three times a year because she lived several hours away. I thought we only went to visit her a few times a year because she lived so far away. Now I do not know why Grandma lived so far away because she did not have any relatives who lived nearby. The trip to see Grandma was also treated by the family as if it was understood that we had to go see her. My older siblings must have gone to visit before I was born, so my recollection was that visiting Grandma was something that we always did.

The only knowledge I had regarding Grandma Lovett's condition was that she had Diabetes, and she had some type of breakdown before I was born which required that she move to a nursing home. The circumstances surrounding my maternal grandmother's life, and consequently that of my mother, was not known to me, nor was it ever mentioned. It was as if it was an unspoken and unwritten rule not to talk about the subject.

It was not until the death of Grandma Lovett that I became aware of the story behind my Grandma's life. After the funeral and the burial, my family went to the house of my mother's sister. There, around the kitchen table, the story of my mother's life unfolded. It seems that my mother had two other siblings of whom I was never aware. She had a sister who was about five years younger and a younger brother who died in infancy. It was the death of the infant which precipitated Grandma Lovett's breakdown. Grandma was suffering from a severe case of postpartum depression immediately following the birth of her fourth child, Arthur. As a result, Grandma Lovett's sister came to take care of the children. The infant was ill, so the sister fixed some baking soda for the baby. The infant died. Following the death of the infant, Grandma Lovett had a nervous breakdown which resulted in her being institutionalized. Although she had another child, Sadie Madeline, afterward, Grandma Lovett was not the same.

My mom was about eight or nine years old when this event occurred. Her younger sister was given up for adoption, and then she, her father, and older brother and sister moved out west. My mom has not seen or heard from the younger sister since.

My mom's life with her father was harsh. However, it was revealed at the gathering after the funeral that Grandpa Lovett was in love with Grandma Lovett but had a difficult time dealing with the new responsibility of raising a family alone.

At the gathering, I learned a great deal about my mom. I do not know if she knew all of the details which were described by her older siblings, but I sensed that the occurrence of the storytelling allowed my mother to understand and let go of the
hurt and resentment which followed her throughout life. It was as if Grandpa was not to blame anymore. It was an unfortunate occurrence which no one could foresee.

However, for twenty-five years of my own life I did not know the circumstances of my mom's childhood. I did not understand the reasons why Grandma was in the nursing home. It became clear to me why it was difficult for my mom to talk about her childhood. Even though I do not blame my mom for not telling me about her childhood, I could not help but feel as though my relationship with her and with my grandmother and with my family and relatives would have been much different and perhaps better if I had known.

Leslie Clyde Lovett divorced Sadie Agnes Bernard in 1948. He married Edith Colburn who had two daughters from a previous marriage. My mother did not know her stepsisters very well, and I was not aware that my mom had stepsisters until Monday 9/27/1993. Leslie Clyde Lovett divorced Edith Colburn and married Thelma Simmons who also had two daughters from a previous marriage. My mother also did not know these step-sisters very well, and I became aware of them only recently as well. My mother told me that Mary Ella (Ducky) Simmons was murdered at the age of nineteen. My mother also has a half-sister, Susie Oden. I became aware of Susie when I was about seventeen. My mother and Susie have since developed a close relationship. Susie and Robin Oden and their three children live in Midland, Texas close to Leslie Clyde and Thelma Lovett. We visit the Odens regularly, and have become quite close to their family. (Susie and Robin recently passed through Illinois and stayed at my house in Murphysboro for two days.)

My mom has remained in touch with her brother Rodley and his family, but has not been able to keep a relationship with Lois. As children, my siblings and I grew up with my first cousins on the maternal side. We visited and played together fairly often. Rodley and Janet now live in Keene, Texas where there is a large Seventh-day Adventist community. Interestingly, the Adventists school in Keene is one of the schools that Lois and Loretta attended as children. Shortly after attending that school is when Lois left for Baton Rouge. My mother moved back to Midland for a couple of years before eventually moving to Baton Rouge.

At some point, in 1988, Lois moved Grandma Lovett from the nursing home at which she was residing in and moved her to Baton Rouge. This move was made without consulting with my mom or Uncle Rodley. This move did not become known until one day: I went to visit Grandma Lovett on my own only to be told at the nurses station that she had been moved. When I told my mom what had happened, she was very upset. I am unsure if this occurrence irreparably damaged my mom's relationship with her sister Lois, or if the relationship was deteriorating before, but it did not seem to be the same after the event.

I have only met Grandpa Lovett (Leslie Clyde) once, although I do not remember the occasion. My mom says he came to Baton Rouge once when I was about thirteen or fourteen. I believe my mom began talking to him again in the past five years as a result of her relationship with Susie and the information which came out at the funeral of Grandma Lovett.

Other patterns which occur at my generation level include the high number of divorces which have occurred between my siblings and first cousins who are old
enough to be married. With the exception of myself, my brother Jean-Claude, Jeff and Karen Carlino, Nicole and Michelle LeBlanc, Jimi LeBlanc, Clark and Rodney Vega, and Danny Lovett, all of my cousins who are at least 20 years old are either married or have been married.

In my own family, all four of my sisters were married by the age of twenty. Dianne is the only sister who has been married only once. I believe, to some extent, the occurrences of first marriages among three of my sisters were attempts to escape, either from the family of origin, or from troubles altogether. My father was an alcoholic up until about 1979, when he stopped drinking.

Among the daughters of Carol Ann and Charles Sibley, all but one has been married more than once. That family had a similar pattern. Charles was an alcoholic. He stopped drinking around 1981, and he sort of followed in my father's footsteps. I believe the early marriages in that family may have occurred for the same reasons. Charles Jr. did not marry for the first time until he was about twenty-five. (My cousin Troy also married at about that age. Charlie, Troy, and I were like the three musketeers when we were growing up.)

It is possible that the occurrence of these patterns in my generation were a function of the level of alcoholism which occurred among siblings in my father's generation. Of my father's brothers, all but Gerard, to my recollection, have had difficulty with alcoholism. Ben Vega, and Charles Sibley also have had problems with alcoholism. In some cases, instances of sexual abuse have occurred. Several of my siblings, including one brother, have been sexually abused by either of two paternal uncles.

However, all in all, my family of origin is fairly close. All of my siblings and my parents get together on holidays. My sisters' current husbands seem to be less abusive and do not drink. I believe the pattern may have been broken in light of the current situation. I attribute this to my father's discontinuance of the drinking behavior. It took my family several years to overcome the problems which have occurred as a result, and we are still discovering new issues. Neither of my parents were authoritarian; for myself, they may have erred on the side of permissiveness. I do not know my mother as well as I would like. But overall we seem to be functioning fairly healthy.
Appendix

Numerical Index: This is a list of names of people who’s symbol appears on the Family Genogram. Numbering is specified for the extended family of the index individual, the siblings and spouses of siblings of the parent of the index individual, the grandparents of the index individual, and the great grandparent families (with Roman numerals).

1. H. Paul LeBlanc III
2. Stephanie Louise LeBlanc Gesell
   a. Bob Menezes {divorced 1988}
   b. miscarriage
   c. Rick Gesell {married 1/2/1993}
3. Leslie Yvette LeBlanc Picou
   x. unknown father of 3a.
      a. Kevin Daniel King 12/5/1977 (adopted by Ronnie King)
      b. Al Sheldon {married 1978, divorced 1979}
      c. Rachel Amanda Sheldon 8/31/1979
      d. Ronnie King {married 1981, divorced 1984}
      e. Matthew Joseph King 2/24/1984
      f. Perry Michael Picou {married 9/15/1988}
      g. Michael Patrick Picou 10/10/92
4. Dianne Marie LeBlanc Hanley
   a. John Hanley {married 8/22/1981}
   b. Alicia Marie Hanley 2/26/1987
5. Cecilia Renee Stone
   a. Craig Bennett {divorced 11/1/1984}
   b. Angie Lynn Bennett 8/24/1982
   d. Nicole Marie Stone 1/30/1987
6. Jean-Claude LeBlanc
7. Jacques Yves LeBlanc
   a. Anh {married 2/1993}
   b. Genevieve Kieu LeBlanc 7/16/1993
8. Hanson Paul LeBlanc Jr.
9. Loretta Ann Lovett LeBlanc {married (8) 8/2/1958}
10. Carol Ann LeBlanc Sibley
    a. Charles Wayne Sibley
       i. Theresa
          - DeBusk (Theresa’s first husband: Theresa is DeBusk’s second wife)
          - Stacy Rhyna DeBusk (daughter of Theresa and DeBusk)
          - Shanni Rah DeBusk Reeves (daughter of DeBusk and first wife)
- Jeff Reeves (Shanni Rah DeBusk's first husband)
- Floyd Manning (Theresa’s second husband, divorced)

ii. Charlene
- Trim (first husband)
- Brian Andrew (son of Charlene and Trim)
- Mark DWayne (son of Charlene and Trim)
- Sabrina Kay (daughter of Charlene and Trim)
- Fugler (second husband; Charlene is Fugler's second wife)
- Joshua Colter Fugler (son of Fugler and Fugler's first wife)

iii. Kathleen
- Teryl Strother (first husband)
- Carolyn Yvonne (daughter of Kathleen and Teryl Strother)
- Barbara Ann (daughter of Kathleen and Teryl Strother)
- James Tardie (second husband)
- Jean Reneé Lodis Tardie (son of Kathleen and James Tardie)

iv. Cindy
- Craig Gerald Kimball (husband)
- Craig Gerald Kimball Jr. (husband of Cindy and Craig Gerald Kimball)

v. Charles Wayne Jr. (10/1964)
- (wife, name unknown, divorced)
- Thomas Jordan (son of Charles Wayne Jr. and first wife)

vi. Christopher
- Darla Marie Ligon (wife)
- Kyle Christopher (son of Christopher and Darla Marie Ligon)

vii. Christine
- Seymour (first husband)
- Ryan Anthony (son of Christine and Seymour)
- Travis Michael (son of Christine and Seymour, died as infant)
- William Claude Foster Jr. (second husband)
- Crystal Ann (daughter of Christine and William Foster Jr.)
- William Claude III (son of Christine and William Foster Jr.)

11. Hazel Agnes LeBlanc II (never married)
12. Elmire Marie LeBlanc Vega
   a. Ben Vega
      i. Clark
      ii. Rodney
      iii. Maria

13. Armand LeBlanc
   a. Lillian Blanchard LeBlanc
      i. Troy Michael 5/16/1964
- Angela Brown (wife)
  - Melanie Marie (daughter of Troy and Angela Brown)
    ii. Nicole Monique
    iii. Michelle

14. Richard LeBlanc
   a. Sharon
      i. Tracy
         - Steve (husband)
      ii. Jimi

15. Gerard LeBlanc
   a. Kay Dispenza
      i. Jay
      ii. Joel
      iii. Jeffrey
      iv. John Michael

16. David Henry LeBlanc
   a. Jean Porche
      i. Bridgette
      ii. David Henry Jr.
      iii. Bonnie Jean
      iv. Carrie

17. Raymond LeBlanc
   a. Vicki Mansur
      i. Danielle
      ii. Matthew
      iii. Amy

18. Hanson Paul LeBlanc Sr.
19. Hazel Agnes Ramirez LeBlanc
20. Lois Alicia Lovett Carlino
   a. Leo Carlino
      i. Tony
         - (wife, name unknown)
         - (daughter)
         - (son)
      ii. Randy
         - (first wife, name unknown)
         - (daughter of Randy and first wife, name unknown)
         - (second wife, name unknown, divorced)
      iii. Jeff
      iv. Karen
   v. Chris
      - (husband, name unknown, divorced)
      - (daughter of Chris and husband, name unknown)

21. Rodley Clyde Lovett
   a. Janet
i. Mike
   - Caroline (wife)
   - (son of Mike and Caroline, name unknown)
   - (daughter of Mike and Caroline, name unknown)

ii. Kathy
   - (husband, name unknown)
   - (daughter of Kathy and husband, name unknown)
   - (son of Kathy and husband, name unknown)

iii. Danny

iv. Keith (currently engaged to be married)

v. Jason (currently engaged to be married)

vi. Amie (currently engaged to be married)

vii. Alicia

22. Arthur King Lovett (died as infant)

23. Sadie Madeline Lovett (given up for adoption in 1946)

24. Leslie Clyde Lovett


26. Edith (Colburn) Lovett (second wife of Leslie Clyde Lovett)
   a. (Ray) Colburn (first husband of Edith, died)
   b. Nelene Colburn (Loretta Ann Lovett's first step-sister)
   c. Dorthea Colburn (Loretta Ann Lovett's second step-sister)

27. Thelma (Simmons) Lovett (third wife of Leslie Clyde Lovett)
   a. Roscoe Simmons (Thelma's first husband, divorced)
   b. Mary Ella (Ducky) Simmons (Loretta Ann Lovett's third stepsister)
   c. Burma Joe Simmons (Loretta Ann Lovett's fourth stepsister)
      - (first husband, name unknown)
      - (second husband, name unknown)
      - (third husband, name unknown)
      - (fourth husband, name unknown)

28. Susie Lovett Oden
   a. (first husband, name unknown)
      - Becky (daughter of Susie and first husband)
   b. Robin Oden (second husband)
      - Niki (daughter of Susie and Robin)
      - Patrick (son of Susie and Robin)

I. Family of Michael Paul LeBlanc 2/14/1983, and Elmire Marie Dugas 11/13/1878

II. Family of Jean Wilford Ramirez 9/16/1889, and Mary Lillian LeBlanc 1/23/1892

III. Family of Rufus King Lovett 1/1851, and Rebecca Marseline Reid 1/26/1870

IV. Family of Arthur Frank Bernard 1/25/1876, and Maude Cecilia Babin 1884
Ideology and Marriage and Family Research

Research is based on epistemological and ontological assumptions. These assumptions form the paradigm out of which explanations of phenomena including human behavior and interaction can be made. For much of the research in the Social Sciences, a logical positivist paradigm is in place. This particular paradigm for research carries with it strong resources such as a logic for determining validity of claims. Logical positivism also carries with it some weaknesses, such as the assumption that causal reasoning can explain and predict human behavior devoid of context.

In the text Marriage and Family in a Changing Society, edited by James M. Henslin, the various articles take different approaches to prove assertions. While some articles use a hypothetico-deductive model with a quantitative methodology, and others use a grounded model with a qualitative/interview, many articles specify theoretical positions with anecdotal evidence or make claims based on the authority of the authors. This third tendency can be particularly problematic for determining the accuracy of the descriptions of phenomena for which the articles are intended.

As evidence, many articles offer definitions of terms to limit the domain of the argument. For example, the definition of family may be offered, and the article makes claims about the family, such as what is healthy or unhealthy for family based on the definition. The intention of this essay is to point out some definitions given in six articles, some definitional inconsistencies between articles, and some of the ideological assumptions which underlie these articles and lead to the definitional choices. Ultimately, these ideological assumptions bias the conclusions made about family. As researchers and scholars, it is our responsibility to be critical about all claims germane to the subject matter of our inquiry.

To frame the discussion, some assumptions about the subject of family must be offered. First, research must take into consideration that meaning is intersubjectively determined. What this assertion entails, is the claim that meaning does not exist outside of context and that meaning is held by individuals and does not exist outside of individuals. The implication of this assumption for family studies is that the definition of family offered by members of the family or families studied must be taken into consideration. A third-party observer, such as the research or community of scholars, cannot assume the role of imposing a definition of family upon the practitioners of family. The meaning of family from members' perspectives, therefore, must be taken into account.

Second, given an operationalizable definition of family, determination regarding what is functional and what is dysfunctional has to be made. Prior research has determined that family dysfunction is a tendency which occurs when interactional patterns subvert the family's ability to meet its member's needs. Inherent in this finding is that interaction determines the health of a system. Healthy systems meet the needs of its members. Needs, such as the need for intimacy, are shared and met through interaction between relational partners. Therefore, by
examining the interactional patterns of families, the health of the system can be observed.

With these parameters in mind, an analysis of several articles can demonstrate ideological biases in marriage and family research. It is hopes by pointing out such biases, a critical eye can be poised on the more important and demanding issues in family research.

Article One:
In the article, "What Is a Family Anyway," William Sayres argues that "the forms of the family are so varied that the term defies definition" (Sayres, p. 23). He then goes on to describe different types of families such as the extended family, nuclear families, and single-parent families, and variants such as stepfamilies, foster families, adoptive families, communes, and group families. In each of the descriptions, the author posits advantages and disadvantages of each form.

The predominant form of family in Western society, according to the author, is the nuclear family. Sayres argues this family type is the most advantageous, given our social needs for mobility and autonomy. He goes on to argue that the nuclear families disadvantages may include the decrease of intimacy afforded spouses at the arrival of children. This argument assumes that intimacy is a limited resource, and can only be fully realized through the institution of marriage which sanctions conjugal affairs.

Single-parent families, on the other hand, do not have the presence of a spouse, for the intimacy needs of the parent, nor the presence of a second parent to fulfill the needs of children that role provides. Sayres argues, without sufficient evidence offered, that single-parent families "suffer socially, economically, and psychologically" (Sayres, p. 27).

Sayres then goes on to describe other variant family forms. Although he does not argue for the impossibility of meeting needs in these variant family forms, he argues that building trust, acceptance, and affection are particularly problematic. Differences in relational issues, such as these, attributed solely to the form of the family seems to assume that trust is more or less automatic in nuclear families. However, children growing up in dysfunctional nuclear families may have more difficulties interacting with parents and each other than children who live in functional stepfamilies. Sayres article may fall into the trap of imposing a value regarding the form of family based on assertions regarding "most" families which can be categorized the same way. This type of imposition assumes that function or dysfunction is directly, and possibly highly, correlated to family type.

Article Two:
In the article, "Issues in Marriage," David R. Mace argues that the institution of marriage is inherent in our need for survival. He offers as evidence the assumption that "the most natural, nuclear grouping, in terms of mutual needs and mutual service, is a man, a woman, and their children" (Mace, p. 14). This assertion is not supported by evidence other than deductive reasoning. In this process of reasoning, the assumption offered above may be faulty or based upon wishful thinking. Therefore the conclusion that marriage has existed since the "dawn of humanity" is problematic. We may base these assumptions on religious or
ideological values. However, the careful scholar may notice that other forms of providing for the survival of the species, other than nuclear family forms, can and do exist. Obvious examples of non-nuclear family cultures include Bedouin tribes or other nomadic tribes not susceptible to the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

Mace then describes major changes which have occurred recently as a result of social mutations such as the agricultural and industrial revolutions. He first argues that the movement has created an emphasis in the need for companionship between marital partners, which is radically different from the economic purposes of marriages in the past. This radical shift brings about major changes in the way marriage or relationship is done. (What I mean by "done" is that relationships are defined by interaction. Rules and boundaries are determined interactively, which define the relationship. Therefore, relationship is done through interaction.)

Major changes, posited by Mace, include attitudes about sex in marriage, parenthood, and the resulting levels of stability. He argues that the changes which have occurred have increased levels of instability in family life. The responsibility of "workers and specialists in the field" (p. 21) is to understand fully the dynamics and resulting problems of modern marriages which did not bother traditional marriages of the past. He argues in the conclusion that people adapt to their environment, and therefore the changes that have come about are healthy ones.

Several problems are inherent in this particular article. Since the author assumes that the institution of marriage as a social convention is ultimately for the purpose to procreation and survival of the species, family can only be defined as including at minimum a man, a woman, and children. This definition invalidates and denies the experience of people who have developed and found intimacy in family systems which do not follow that model. Finally, as an aside, the statement that unhappy marriages must be tolerated is not an article of Catholic Dogma. First, it is neither Dogma nor Doctrine, but rather a teaching. Second, the Catholic church does allow for divorce through Annulment, following certain guidelines which can be interpreted on a case by case basis by a counseling priest and the local bishop. (I spent four years as a Catholic Seminarian.)

Article Three:

In the article, "Love-Centered Marriage," by Irving Sarnoff and Suzanne Sarnoff, the authors argue that intimacy and companionship should be the direction that marriages develop and grow. This is the conclusion that Mace reached in his article. Sarnoff and Sarnoff argue that the requirements of love-centered marriage contribute to barriers which hinder its development. They describe these requirements as dialectical stages including coupling versus concealing, reproducing versus retreating, nurturing versus negating, focusing versus fragmenting, renewing versus regressing, and deepening versus drifting. Each of these stages occur as a process of determining and negotiating the degree of interdependence each individual needs from the relationship.

The authors argue that individuals need to be independent as well as dependent on each other. This dichotomy induces the struggles which occur in love-centered relationships. It is important for phenomenological research to be conducted, in order to determine whether these themes can be explicated from the
experience of individuals in love-centered relationships. A phenomenological methodology would be particularly helpful with this type of research because the goal of the examination is to determine meaning held by relational partners. However, it would be interesting to test whether these themes emerge in non-sexual intimate relationships.

Article Four:

In the article, "Marriage and the Construction of Reality," by Peter L. Berger and Hansfried Kellner, a phenomenological methodology is employed for determining how meaning defines relationships. The authors argue that marriage serves the function of bringing about order in the lives of relational partners. This order occurs as the needs for "romantic love, sexual fulfillment, self-discovery and self-realization through love and sexuality" (p. 167) are met through the institution of marriage and nuclear family structure.

However, the institution of marriage may not be necessary to fulfill these needs. Conversely, marriage may not fulfill these needs for individuals. The authors provide a possible explanation for the endurance of marriage as an institution; however, other reasons may exist as well. These other reasons are offered by other authors cited in this essay. Yet, the important point made by the authors is that intimate relationships, such as intimate marriages, help individuals make order, or meaning, of their experience.

Article Five:

In the article, "Uncovering Secret Contracts," by Richard Stuart and Barbara Jacobson, the authors posit that individuals enter into marriage with expectations regarding their partner's performance of roles defined by the premarital interaction. As with other articles, particularly numbers three and four above, relational expectations, and therefore rules and boundaries, are defined interacionally.

The authors describe how expectations which relational partners have when entering into marriage can pose serious threats to relational satisfaction if the expectations are not met after the partners have entered marriage. The institution of marriage in our society may place barriers and sanctions to dissolving unsatisfactory marriages which occur as a result of these "secret contracts." These sanctions may not exist between non-married intimates. Therefore, the repercussions of relational dissolution may not be as high. Given this reasoning, if secret contracts are not met in non-married intimate relationships, then relational satisfaction, though possibly not occurring, is not as negatively valenced as it would be in marital relationships. This reasoning again privileges the marital relationship in terms of positive or negative effects of interactional patterns.

Article Six:

In the article, "Love and Property," by Randall Collins, the author offers an alternate explanation of the occurrence and purpose of marriage than offered by the other authors. Indeed, he argues that "... The family and sexual relations are not just natural but exist as part of a system of stratification" (p. 126). If it is the case that family systems are not natural but socially created, then the arguments offered by previous authors, such as Mace, become problematic.
The author argues that families were constructed for the purpose of managing property (or resources), including sex and economics. This description, if accurate, requires a different basis for defining family than has previously been offered. As the other articles have demonstrated, a more abstract and theoretically based definition of family must be utilized in the study of family.

Any useful definition of family therefore must be taken from the perspective of family members, and not from the perspective of the researcher or counselor. From the perspective of the child, an adequately abstract definition of family might be the developmental environment, with individuals who take on the role of primary socialization being defined as parents. This definition of family allows for variations of family type including one parent, foster parent(s), adoptive parent(s), two same-sex parents, communal parents, and agencies as well as traditional family types. From the child's perspective, any person(s) fulfilling the parenting role may constitute family. This type of definition is also more neutral, in that it does not necessarily imply a value system.

Definition of family from the perspective of family members also allows couples without children to define themselves as a family. Inherent in many definitions of family, as described above, is the stipulation that a recognition of social convention, i.e. the institution of marriage, must be realized before a relationship can be defined as family. This denies the experience of individuals involved in intimate relationships that serve the function of family, such as meeting the mutual needs of members.

Once the definition of family has been determined from the perspective of family members, the researcher can observe whether certain behaviors or interactions are healthy or unhealthy for the family system. In terms of dysfunction, certain interactional patterns can be determined as healthy or unhealthy based on the needs of the particular family and its individual members. Interactional patterns which allow families to meet needs of the system and its members can then be determined as healthy to the system.

With these parameters with which to study family, researchers can develop more useful models for exploring family issues. Counselors who take a more intersubjective approach to assessing meaning regarding the family, from the perspective of the family, will be better equipped to deal with the meanings of that family, and consequently, better equipped to help the family reach its goals and meet its needs.

Footnotes

1 For example, see "Strong Families", by Nicholas Stinnett, Chapter 49, pages 496-507.
For example, see "Hard Choices", by Kathleen Gerson, Chapter 29, pages 286-296. Even in this article, however, there is only one reference which may be of limited use because it is a book written in 1974. The rules and norms of society may have changed significantly such that the claims made in the reference are no longer valid.

See prior research on family characteristics such as Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell's (1979) Circumplex Model of Family Functioning which defines dysfunctional family systems as those which fall on an extreme end of cohesiveness and adaptability scales. According to Olson, et al. families which are either highly enmeshed or highly disengaged, or families which are very rigid or have no boundaries can be dysfunctional.


References


Parent-adolescent Interaction: 
Family Functioning During the Teenage Years

For many, the period of adolescence is troubling. From the parent's perspective, the adolescent is undergoing many changes and is attempting to become independent from the parents. From the adolescent's perspective, the desire to become independent is marred by resistance from the parents. The adolescent's ability to become independent from his or her parents requires the setting of new relational boundaries, and the setting of these new boundaries can contribute to stress in the family. Although not all families may undergo stress and conflict between parents and adolescent children, this particular period during the family life cycle may pose special challenges to interaction and family functioning.

The interaction between parents and their adolescent children shapes family members' perceptions of family functioning. For example, the degree of support and control messages, or the ratio of support to control messages, from the parents may have a significant affect on children's perceptions of the family (Amato, 1990). On the other hand, the perceptions of the family and family functioning may have an impact on the interaction between parents and their adolescent children (Johnson, Shulman, & Collins, 1991). This familial environment, or the perception of the familial environment, can influence the development of self-identity and therefore differentiation. This study proposes to show that the adolescent's perception of family functioning during this period, the period of the development of self-identity and autonomy, has an impact on that development. Specifically, this study attempts to discover how the adolescent's perceptions of the family in terms of cohesion and adaptability, parenting style, and support and control, are related to the degree of conflict and stress, and the interaction between the adolescent and parent(s) during the process of differentiation.

This study is based on several assumptions. First, the relationship of an adolescent with the assumed primary caregiver (for example, a parent) during this period of development and change is the most important component in the development (Martin & Anderson, 1993). Second, relationships with significant others may play a role in this development to a nearly identical degree. However, interaction with the assumed primary caregivers remains most important. Third, relationships with "lesser important" peers play a less significant role in this development, such that peer pressure does not affect the development of self-identity and autonomy to the same degree as the relationship with the primary caregivers, provided that: (a) the assumed primary caregivers' behaviors are not inconsistent with reasonable expectations learned during the child's cognitive development, and (b) the peer groups expectations are not more consistent than the parents. Gavazzi, Anderson, and Sabatelli (1993) found that psychosocial maturity is predicted by both family support and peer conformity pressure as well as by the interaction of parental support and peer support, but that problem behaviors are predicted by the interaction of high parental intrusiveness and low peer support.
A fourth assumption holds that the cognitive development of individuals from an epistemological standpoint, incorporates all perceived data. This implies that cognitive schema are developed about reality, and in particular relational expectations, from all data available. And finally, the effects of data extrinsic to the familial relationship take on a less significant role in cognitive development. This assumption implies that the meaning of mediated sources of relational expectations are compared against already existing cognitive schema about relationships derived from observations within the family.

The basic argument for a relationship between perceptions of the family and interaction between family members includes several points. First, any given able child has perceptions about his or her immediate surroundings, which in many cases includes the perceived family (developmental environment). Second, any given able child develops an understanding of family in general. This cognitive development occurs through the process of comparing the schema regarding the child's own family with that of other families (Bandura, 1977).

Third, the child's perception of family helps shape self-identity (Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989; Baron & MacGillivary, 1989). The perception of self within a system may help to define the self as separate but part of the system. This assumption is dependent upon the nature of a given system. For example, a particular family may have very diffuse boundaries. A lack of clear boundaries may adversely affect the adolescents ability to define self.

Fourth, inconsistencies between the perceptions of the actual family with the idealized or other family may affect the development of identity or other self issues, such as esteem, confidence, and autonomy (Buri, 1989). Fifth, the development of self-identity becomes a more important issue during the struggle for independence and/or autonomy during adolescence (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993). And finally, the effects of family interaction and environment may manifest themselves through adolescent behavior as a function of the adolescent’s drive to meet needs of differentiation (Barber, 1992). The behavioral manifestation may occur extrinsic to the family system in terms of delinquent behavior, or intrinsic to the system in terms of conflict or stress. It is not necessary, however, that the behavior of the adolescent in the struggle for autonomy be problematic. On the contrary, the adolescent may act in exemplary ways in contrast to a unhealthy family.

The Adolescent Stage

The needs of the individual change as the individual matures. The needs of the infant involve feeding, bathing, and clothing. Through learning and development, the child learns to feed, bathe and clothe him or herself. Social interaction skills are also learned in a similar fashion, primarily through observation of more skillful individuals.

By the time a child reaches adolescence, identity and autonomy needs become more pronounced. The results of these changes in the types of needs of adolescents, the relationship of adolescents with their parents also change (Richardson, Abramowitz, Asp, & Petersen, 1986). According to Sessa and Steinberg (1991), changes in the family structure at this time in the development of
the child can instigate the autonomy process. Presumably, structural changes reframe the context of parent-adolescent relationships.

However, the changing needs of the adolescent may also precipitate changes in family rules and boundaries. For example, when a teenager first learns how to drive, she or he may desire to take the car out. This desire, if met, requires the family to construct or change rules regarding time constraints and mobility that may not have been at issue before. Changing of rules may have an impact on the family interaction patterns. A lack of an ability by the family to change rules when necessary may also have an impact on family interaction patterns, such as an increase in familial conflict.

The ability of the family to change rules and be flexible may be a function of parenting style. Baumrind (1971) identified three types of parenting style: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Authoritarian parenting is typified by controlling attitudes and behavior. Authoritative parenting is typified by moderate control and high support. Permissive parenting is typified by low control and high support. The family dominated by controlling parents may be too rigid, whereas the family with permissive parents may be too flexible.

Familial Interaction and Adolescent Perceptions of Family Functioning

Familial interaction can be affected by parenting style. If adolescent children perceive their parents as inflexible, this perception may have an affect on familial interaction. Barnes and Farrell (1992) found that adolescent behaviors are highly related to the parenting style in terms of support and control. For example, in a later study, Baumrind (1991) found that authoritative parenting styles were remarkably successful in protecting adolescents from drug use.

Such behaviors may result from low self-esteem. Indeed, Baron & MacGillivary (1992) found that father's rejection and mother's psychological control were two very significant contributors to adolescents depressive symptoms. In another study, Cotterell (1992) found that the strength of attachments to parents and teachers was associated with adolescents positive feelings toward themselves. These characteristics of adolescent development, therefore, seem to be directly related to family interaction and relationships between parent(s) and the adolescent.

Research Questions

In order to examine the relationship between adolescent's perceptions of the family functioning in terms of support and control, parenting style, and cohesion and adaptability, and the effects of that perception on family interaction, the following research questions are relevant:

R1: Is there a relationship between perceptions of family functioning and particular interaction characteristics?

R2: How do adolescent perceptions of family functioning affect the adolescent's differentiation?

In order to answer these questions, a multi-method approach is suggested.
Methodology

A research protocol for interviewing family members about family communication was developed in a class on family communication. The particular questions were determined to be relevant by examining research and anecdotal accounts into the nature of family relationships. A subset of the list of questions developed in that class was selected for inclusion in the present study. Additionally, particular questions regarding the adolescents’ perception of parental support and control, types and topics of conflict, parenting style, and perceived levels of interdependence and boundary flexibility were included. This interview protocol will be employed in one on one interactions with adolescent children and their parents.

The ICPS - Family Functioning Scale will also be employed to measure degrees of family functioning. The questionnaire was developed by Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma, and Schweitzer (1992) to measure three factors: (a) level of intimacy, (b) parenting style, (c) and level of conflict. The researchers found that cohesion (Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979) was highly positively correlated to the intimacy factor, and highly negatively correlated to the conflict factor. Additionally, Noller, et al., (1992) found there were moderate positive correlations between cohesion and parenting style (democratic versus controlled), and adaptability and parenting style. The questionnaire was chosen for two reasons: (a) the factors of interest were relevant to the questions asked in the interview protocol and in the study, and (b) the results of data collection using this particular questionnaire are readily available from published sources.

Finally, the families chosen for the study will be videotaped during natural family interactions to determine if there is a basis for the perceptions reported by family members. Specifically, the analysis of natural family interaction will allow the researchers to determine the reliability of the self reports, the frequency of particular behaviors within a given time frame, and the verbal and nonverbal characteristics of the relational content of messages. Conversational and discourse analytic techniques will be employed to determine the impact of certain behaviors. For example, conversational analytic techniques approach natural utterances within the context of an interaction in terms of how they are treated and used by co-participants in the interaction. This particular approach allows the research to examine actual interaction strategies as they unfold prior to reframing by the participants after a period of self-reflection.

The data derived from these techniques will be compared to explicate patterns of interaction and the correlation of these patterns with the perceptions family members have about their families. LeBlanc (1993) found that a combination of techniques in this fashion, as well as the theoretical implications of such multi-method approaches, is very helpful in describing complex family phenomena.

Discussion

The study of parent-adolescent interactions and perceptions of family functioning could help increase our understanding of intergenerational transmission of patterns of behavior. If modeling, as proposed in Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), is done primarily through the interactions of the family and the observation of interactions in the family, then intervening in the development of
family models within a family system may be a helpful tool for counselors and therapists interested in inhibiting the likelihood of a transmission of relationally destructive behaviors. On the other hand, reframing family members' perceptions regarding family interaction may also help the family deal with conflict and stress. Such procedures may help build more healthy family systems.

References


Appendix A

Family Communication Questionnaire

Family Overview

1. Who does your family consist of?

2. How do you view the relationships of the family members with each other?

3. What do you have in common with your family members?

4. In what ways are you different from your family members?

Individual Relationships

1. What expectations or pressures does your family have for you?

2. What expectations do you have for your family?

3. In what ways are parents supportive of children?

4. Does your family allow you to change?
**Rules**

1. Does your family value individual privacy?
2. How is space managed for individual privacy versus group time?
3. Are your things/room off-limits to others?
4. What are your family rules about: dating/friends, visitors, conflict, silence?

**Decisions**

1. Who makes family decisions?
2. How are these decisions made?
3. Are parents usually in agreement or disagreement about decisions?
4. What kinds of decisions are most difficult for the family to make?

**Conflict**

1. What happens when a rule is broken?
2. What kinds of situations have caused disagreements lately?
3. Who resolves conflict in the family? Who is the peacemaker?
4. Who mediates communication between family members?

**Feelings**

1. How does your family express affection, fear, hurt, happiness, anger, trust, guilt and shame?
2. Are there rules regarding the place and time for expressing certain emotions?
3. With which family member do you feel most comfortable sharing feelings?
4. With which family member do you feel least comfortable sharing feelings?
Your Age: ______

1. Please identify yourself by circling the correct term:
   1 2 3 4
   - Mother
   - Father
   - Daughter
   - Son

2. If you are a son or daughter, please indicate the number of siblings in your family:
   ______

3. In what chronological order were you born: (circle one)
   - First (only) child
   - Second child
   - Third child
   - Fourth child
   - Other

Rate the extent to which each of the following statements is true of the family in which you are now living. Circle the appropriate number using 6 point scale provided.

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1. People in our family help and support each other.
2. Each member of our family has a say in important family decisions.
3. It is hard to get a rule changed in our family.
4. We are honest with each other.
5. We often misunderstand each other.
6. Parents usually agree on things involving the family.
7. We are flexible about who does what in our family.
8. Even though we mean well, we interfere too much in each other's lives.
9. There is a lot of anger between family members.
10. Family members feel very close to each other.
Children have a say in the rules.

We interrupt and talk over each other.

We show affection and tenderness to one another.

One parent sides with children against the other parent.

We work together to sort out problems.

Each person is encouraged to make up their own mind about things.

Once we have decided something, we have difficulty making changes.

Family members show their true feelings to each other.

Making decisions and plans is a problem for our family.

Each family member is accepted for what they are.

Children are consulted with and participate in decision making.

It is easier to talk about problems with people outside the family than with other family members.

We listen to and respect each other's point of view.

We try to change each other in big ways.

Members of our family are able to stand on their own feet.

We can usually sort out problems by talking about them.

Family members share interests and hobbies with each other.

Family members have a say in family matters.

Even when we disagree, we still show our love for each other.

Parents and children talk about things before decisions are made.

This scale is based on the ICPS Family Functioning Scale developed by Patricia Noller, Department of Psychology, University of Queensland Australia. Used with permission.
**Transcription and Description of a Telephone Opening in UTCLA20**

In this telephone conversation opening (see Appendix), Melanie and Alice (?) interact with each other in a way which varies slightly with Schegloff’s canonical opening. Line 1 represents the summons, as described by Schegloff, to which the answerer, Melanie, responds in line 2. However, in line 3 Alice recognizes Melanie’s voice. This recognition could be a function of Alice’s knowledge on the part of Melanie’s living arrangements, or Alice may have recognized Melanie’s voice by her response to the summons in line 2. Line 3, therefore, serves different purposes such as showing recognition of Melanie by Alice and offering a voice sample to Melanie and therefore identifying Alice to Melanie. However, Melanie demonstrates by the assertion “yes” on line 4 that she possibly did not recognize Alice’s voice. Line 4 is an assertion because it serves the function of responding to Alice’s assertion on line 3. Line three serves as a first pair-part of an assertion-assertion acknowledgment adjacency pair. The possibility that Alice believed that Melanie did not recognize her voice from line 3 is demonstrated in line 5 when Alice identifies herself. The first part of line 5 serves as a greeting, which is followed by the second attempt at identification. In this sequence, Melanie and Alice vary slightly in their interaction from Schegloff’s canonical opening.

Line 6 serves as the second pair-part of the greeting offered in line 5. However, line 6 also acknowledges Alice and therefore demonstrates recognition. Line 7 then begins the initial inquiry to which Melanie responds in line 8. The initial inquiry serves a function of checking on the well-being of the other. This tendency occurs in other contexts as well. For example, personal letters may be opened with, “Dear John, How are you?” This particular formula is interesting in that it makes an initial inquiry into the well being of the other, though in the context of a letter the inquiry cannot be responded to immediately. For this reason the initial inquiry may also serve a politeness function, or a function of demonstrating care. Line 7 also asks for information about the present activities of the other. Melanie responds in line eight with the statement “Nothing.” This statement is not exactly true, since Melanie is doing something, namely talking on the phone with Alice. This response suggests another purpose is served by the sequence. Melanie responds to the initial inquiry by asking the same question to Alice. Lines 7 and 8 probably serve some relational function of politeness or showing concern.
Appendix

UTCLA20, Paul LeBlanc, February 3, 1994

(Two Party, Phone)

01 (Ring)

02 M: Hello,

03 A: ↑Melanie

04 M: Yeah.

05 A: Hi this is Alice.

06 M: ↑Hi:::=

07 A: =↑Hey what's goin ↑on.=

08 M: =Nothin what are you doin.

09 (0.5)

10 A: =No:thin::? hh

11 M: ↑Woo↓::=

12 A: =Are you on the other line?

13 (0.2)

14 M: No.

15 A: No?

16 (0.2)

17 M: Nope hh.