

JOURNAL OF THE SPEECH AND THEATRE ASSOCIATION OF MISSOURI

Volume 43

Fall 2013

Scholarly Articles

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Journal of the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri

Volume XLIII, Fall 2013

Published by the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri – ISSN 1073-8460

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**Journal of the Speech and Theatre
Association of Missouri**
Volume 43, Fall 2013

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Journal of the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri
Fall 2014 – Volume 44

The editor of the 2014 Journal of the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri is presently accepting manuscripts. Scholarly articles, book and resource reviews, and teaching resources are all encouraged. Scholarship from a diversity of areas from the discipline encompassing communication, speech, and theatre will be considered. These areas include, but are not limited to: Speech, Debate, Theatre Instruction and Performance, Communication Theory, Interpersonal Communication, Intercultural Communication, Health Communication, Rhetoric, Persuasion, Organizational Communication, Political Communication, Family Communications, Listening, Communication Ethics, Mediation, Public Relations, Film, Mass Media Theory, Mediated Communication, and New Communication Technologies.

All submissions should be in Microsoft Word, and emailed to the editor. References should follow the latest edition of the American Psychological Association style manual. A separate page with abstract, author affiliation and bio(s) should be included. All submissions should be received by February 17, 2014, to ensure full consideration for publication.

Updated submission information for volume 44 will be available in October of 2013 at the website for the Speech and Theatre Association of Missouri – **www.speechandtheatre.org**

Submissions can be sent to:

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**Communication Internships:
The Good, the Bad, and the Not So Pretty**

Randy K. Dillon

Abstract

This study asks interns about their internship experiences. Interns reported on successes, frustrations, as well as what surprised them in internships. Utilizing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning this study emphasizes what can be done to help students transform internships into more positive experiences? These suggestions include more time spent on internship objectives, different approaches to planning and implementing different assignments, and considerations about intervention. Highlighting students' voices about their internships can help inform the scholarship of teaching and learning that carries impact for future internships?

Experience is the child of Thought, and Thought is the child of Action.
-Benjamin Disraeli

I. Introduction

When it comes to higher education students, faculty, administrators, and the public disagree on several things. One thing many do agree on is the need for practical experience. Internships are one way to gain such practical experience. College students are encouraged, and in some cases required, to complete internships as part of their undergraduate education. Internships carry positive connotations and are believed to be one of the best ways to gain entry into a career.

This paper emphasizes the student voice in internships. In particular, what are the reasons for an internship to be successful while another is not? What areas of concern do students have with their internships? What can be learned and done differently to help these students transform internships into more positive experiences? Furthermore, what can be discovered with these internships that can help inform the scholarship of teaching and learning that can impact future internships?

II. Review of Literature

A. *Why Internships?*

Taylor (1988) defines internships as “structured and career relevant work experiences obtained by students prior to graduation from an academic program” (p. 393). A diversity of disciplines in the arts and the sciences, in law as well as medicine offer internship prospects. According to Popik (2009) “the basic premise of an internship is to take the organization or field of work for a test drive” (p. 24). Likewise, “the organization can also test drive the person for compatibility as a future employee” (p. 24). The structure and the requirements for an internship vary widely but do share a common purpose of providing learning opportunities in an organized setting (Rothman, 2007, p. 40). For the purposes of the current study, an internship is defined as a structured and career relevant work experience that students obtain academic credit for prior to graduation. An “intern” is described as an advanced student gaining practical experience usually in a professional field. Specifically, the study reported in this paper focuses on internships done by students who major or minor in Communication.

Internships provide students with both immediate and long-term benefits. Knouse, Tanner and Harris (1999) state, “Internships can help them [interns] develop immediate skills that can improve course performance, such as better time management, better communication skills, better self-discipline, heightened initiative, and an overall better self-concept” (p. 35). Internships reflexively bridge theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom with experiential practice gained in the workplace. Students are attracted to internships because they are considered to be a reliable way to learn about the work environment (Knouse, Tanner, & Harris, 1999). An internship is a way to test one’s personal commitment to a career as well as appreciate the need for ongoing professional development (Capasso & Daresh, 2001). Furthermore, internships are seen as way to gain a competitive edge. As Cannon and Arnold (1998) note, “Students have increasingly relied on internships to differentiate themselves from their non-participating counterparts” (p. 202).

B. Internships as Experiential and Transformational Learning

“Experiential learning is making meaning from direct experiences” (Benander, 2009, p. 36). For interns experiential learning can consist of engaging in teamwork, being sensitive to and balancing a variety of needs, and encountering complex problems where judgment and organizational ability are essential. Communication skills both oral and written, are exhibited, developed, and often tested with an internship. The internship experience is a direct way for one to come face to face with one’s own strengths and weaknesses and then examining why this is so. Experiential learning requires reflection on what has been done and application to future situations (Benander, 2009).

Adult students in internships must go beyond learning gained from direct experience. Learning should be transformational (Baumgartner, 2001; Mezirow, 1994; Mezirow, 1997). An essential part of this transformational learning requires critical reflection that encourages the learner to evaluate their worldview and frames of reference with the new experiences (Cranton, 2002; Curran & Murray, 2008). Although the teacher can assist students in the process of transformational learning, Mezirow (1997) suggests that students must be independent, to be socially responsible, and to think on one’s own. Students must also grapple with the difficult questions. “In an effective internship, there are always more opportunities for questions; answers come slowly. That is the same as it is in the real world of administrative practice” (Capasso & Daresh, 2001, p. 160). For interns, these questions are likely to be: *What is the purpose of this internship? Was this internship effective? What are the key ingredients of a successful internship experience? What are my non-negotiable values for this internship? Did the internship meet all of the goals and objectives as stated in the project proposal? (Capasso & Daresh, 2001).* In addition, *Where did the internship fail, and why? What lessons can be learned from this failure and how can these lessons be applied to future experiences?* Such questions should also matter to those teachers and supervisors who regularly work with student interns.

C. Evaluating the Internship Experience: The Good, The Bad, and the Not so Pretty

This paper derives from the author's role as a director for a departmental internship program. The author hoped that community intern sites supervisors would recognize that student interns were competent, enthusiastic, and ready to work. The author also aspired to do a better job as a director with students having a successful internship. A challenge soon presented itself. Why do students have completely different internship experiences? What is it about what makes an internship a good one or turn out to be a bad one? Inspired by the title of the Clint Eastwood starred spaghetti western movie, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, the author's attention turned to those areas about internships that are not necessarily "good" or "bad". Because of the potential to be a positive or a negative experience these internship situations that proved most intriguing. Ugly was thought to be too strong of a word so the author chose to label these as "not so pretty" internship experiences.

Distinguishing internships into neat categories of good, bad, and not so pretty is tricky because interns can experience all three in one internship, or for that matter in one week at an internship. Nevertheless, there are specific characteristics for each. "Good internships result in students putting theoretical knowledge to practice and create a mind-set of continuous learning" (Capasso & Daresh, 2001, p. 160). Thiel and Hartley (1997) specifically state that "The student gained professional experience, and credit in his major, the [company] gained an excellent intern, and the college received tuition money and favorable image enhancement by the quality of the work of the intern" (p. 19). The author's own experience with "good" internships include: All the student's objectives are met; student earns a strong letter of reference from their intern site supervisor; and student has networked future contacts. In addition, the student expands on what they have learned in class with an experience at the internship; the student gets their work done on time, is responsible, and communicates well with their site supervisor and course teacher.

A bad internship is more than just less than satisfying results. In the case of a bad internship experience a low grade is assigned or a student is asked to drop the internship and withdraw from the course that goes with it. For example, an intern is reprimanded for not showing up

for work on time or is found sleeping at the desk. Such things can happen, but if this continues to be a problem and lessons are not learned, a bad internship results. Academic and work dishonesty including faking hours worked, lying about what was accomplished at the internship, plagiarizing others' work, and even forging signatures are considered by this author as bad internship experiences. Bad internships can also involve a contract abuse or legal and academic problems that once reported often goes beyond the teacher, student, and work site jurisdiction. Other examples include students getting hurt on the job, alcohol, substance and physical abuse, or sexual harassment.

Bad internships can stem from structural circumstances beyond the control of the intern. Yagoda (2008) warns about a possible internship reality that reinforces the divide between the haves and the have not students. Since most internships are unpaid, richer students are in a better financial position to acquire the opportunities and the prospects that come with these internships. According to Yagoda, unpaid internships despite the types of experiences, the networking, and the good recommendation from the supervisor are not economically feasible for the less well-off students. Faced with rising tuition, bills, and other financial demands these students cannot afford to work for nothing. Thus, poorer students can wind up doing menial work and gain less experience to put on resumes.

Unlike bad internship experiences the not so pretty internship experiences have the potential to turn out to be positive satisfactory learning opportunities. Some of the not so pretty experiences in internships are likely results of students' misunderstood expectations. Internships are often the first time that students may hold a job within their professional field. The realities and the challenges that come with a job may be energizing or dispiriting. New interns may be upset that their knowledge is not being used, that they are not learning anything new, or what they do accomplish does not seem essential or make a difference. They may be over-whelmed by the pace or under-whelmed by the mundane. Interns, especially those that set out ambitious goals, may be discouraged that objectives are not being met or that networking is hindered or nonexistent. Many interns are taken aback that others at the intern site are not considerate of their circumstances, are not welcoming, are suspicious, or in some cases hostile to their very presence. Bosses and supervisors may not be clear about their roles as supervisors for interns and with other added demands they may not take the time to

appropriately and effectively mentor interns. Those interns who are used to the constant attention, feedback, and reinforcement that is given to them in their classes and campus activities may have an especially difficult time adjusting to the realities of an internship. It is for such reasons that these “not so pretty” situations in internships are of interest in this paper.

The approach this paper takes is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is the scholarly inquiry into student learning which advances the practice of teaching by sharing this research publicly. Bok (2006) urges teachers to better understand how students learn and to evaluate one’s own methods of going about teaching. Bok further advocates that in order to do this systematically one should start with one’s own classes. This is the intention of the study reported in this paper. The author asks interns to talk about what they are learning in their internships. This includes the good, the bad, and especially those situations that are “not so pretty” with the internship. The lessons learned resonate with what is currently going on, and may change the way that internships are arranged, conducted, and reported.

III. Method

A. Context of the Study

Participants in this study consisted of 43 student interns in an undergraduate communication internship course from the Spring, Summer and Fall 2010 semesters. Participants were majors and minors in Communication with over 60 hours of college credit. A majority of the participants majored in Public Relations. In terms of gender, 77% were female (n = 33), and 23% were male (n = 10). Students interned at both non-profit and for profit organizations. One academic hour of credit equaled approximately 48 work hours completed at the internship site. Since internships were on-site work experiences students did not meet in a regular classroom. Most internships took place in the same city where the university is located. Other internships were in different areas of the state. Three internships were located in other parts of the United States. The teacher/researcher kept in touch with individual students using face-to-face, phone, and email correspondence. Periodically throughout the semester each student would turn in journals noting what their

experiences were at the intern site. Students were asked to collect materials for a final internship portfolio showcasing examples of work completed during the internship. The Communication interns produced press releases, detailed planning for events, photos, and offered explanations of internship work to give a sense of what had been accomplished. Signed time sheets with schedules verified from the on-site internship supervisor as well as a final letter of evaluation for work completed were included in the portfolio. In addition each intern wrote a six to eight page double-spaced paper that focused on connecting what had been learned in one's coursework with what the intern carried out at the internship site.

Due to the dispersed intern sites required class meetings between the internship teacher and students did not take place. However, if an intern needed to speak with the instructor he or she was encouraged to do so. In the week immediately leading up to the mid-point of the semester students were required to get in touch with the course teacher through a "conference" whereupon students were asked to answer questions and have their own questions answered.

B. Procedures

As part of the internship course conference the teacher contacted each student through email with a list of open-ended questions. Spring and Fall semester interns were contacted and asked to respond within the seventh and eighth week time period of the 16 week semester. Summer interns were contacted and asked to respond within the fourth and fifth week time period of the eight-week long semester. Among the questions interns were asked to comment was how internship was going, what specifically was being learned at the internship including how the experience was helping them to be a better communicator, and if any surprises were encountered as well as words of advice for those in future internships. Other questions focused on how the department and the university had prepared them for the internship as well as what more needed to be done. Interns were also asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being not good at all, and 10 being excellent, how he or she would rate the internship so far. Interns were asked to explain their ratings, and if needed, offer specific suggestions for improvement.

Each intern was required to answer conference questions as part of the internship class. In a separate set of instructions interns were

asked permission for their responses to be used for a study on internship experiences. Before proceeding with the questions for the study the author sought and got permission from the University's Institutional Review Committee. Interns were assured that their identity would be kept confidential, and whether or not the individual intern agreed to participate in the study it would not impact their grade or performance in the communication internship course. Any student expressing concerns about a conflict between grades and participation was provided contact information for the Department Head. Interns who chose to participate in the study were asked to sign an informed consent. Participants were told that contact through follow up emails and or a follow up face-to-face interview could occur for additional interviewing.

Participant answers to the email conference questionnaires were collected and filed in a Word file on the researcher's office computer. Each response was then printed out. In the case of follow-up interviews (email or in person) the researcher wrote down the individual participant response and attached this to the individual interview questionnaire. Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method was used for themes and categories derived from the interns' responses on the email questionnaires and any follow-up interview responses.

IV. Results

The semester mid-point "conference" and follow-up interviews with interns was a way to check in on how interns scattered among different work sites were doing. The conference was also a way for some to voluntarily report for the purposes of this study on how things were going. More specifically, questions provide information on what's good, what's bad, and what's not so pretty about internships. Because participants were drawn from a pool of communication interns the results underscore communication interactions found in internships.

One question asked interns to determine on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being not good at all, and 10 being excellent, how the internship rated so far? Interns were then asked to explain the rating. Of the 43 respondents 8 rated the internship as a 10; seven rated the internship as 9; 14 respondents rated the internship as an 8, 11 respondents gave a 7, two respondents reported the internship as a 5, and one intern rated the internship a 4. No respondent ranked an internship with below 4.

Interns reporting upper range ratings of 9 and 10 were in agreement that the internship was going well. One intern summarized, “I feel like I’ve learned much more than through a class.” Others who rated the internship highly remarked on how they felt that they were made to feel welcome and a part of the team. The excitement and professional aura of the job served as highlights. “I’m in a “big girl” job now,” stated one intern.

Highly rated internships often had “excellent” supervisor mentorship. One intern explained, “My boss has let me sit in on phone conferences with other employees all over the Midwest, coordinate and escort media crews...contact doctors/nurses, patients, and people when needing further information or expertise for a news release, attend meetings, and many more.” Support extended beyond the supervisor to include strong working relationships and communication with other intern site personnel. Responses from interns included, “people are nice and friendly,” “I am part of the team,” and “they really worked with me.”

Interns in highly ranked internships saw the value in their experience. One way that value was defined was through the variety of tasks assigned. One intern pointed out, “I am not only doing significant work for the company, but my ideas, thoughts are valued as well.” The interns who were satisfied with their internships also reported value extending past the current internship to include opportunities for networking and making future contacts.

Three participants assigned the internship with the lower ratings of 4 and 5. They reflected the opposite from the interns who reported favorably on their internships. No to little supervisor mentoring and support was a factor. One intern divulged there was “no executive director for a big part of my internship.” Another intern said, “The changes were unsettling with a new transition, new VP,” which resulted in “poor communication” and “little direction.” The intern further explained, “I feel like they were still trying to find out who they are as an organization and because of that, they did not have the defined roles that I expected.” One intern declared, “I’m not learning new things.” Negative assessments influenced how interns saw the value of their internship as in the case, “[It’s] not worth the amount I paid per credit hour. I’m just disappointed in my experience.”

Interns who gave their internships a rating of 7 or 8 often reported a combination of hopefulness and remorse. For these interns the internship was not as good as they would have liked, but things were not

bad either. Using the vocabulary set forth in this paper it is these experiences that often fall into the “not so pretty” category. These interns reported things like “I’m doing plenty of stuff, but could do more.” There was also a concern about the lack of time in meeting internship objectives. As one intern commented, “I have only 3 months for this summer internship.” Supervisor mentorship was listed as a concern for these interns. One intern admitted, “She (supervisor) did not have the time to adequately address my questions.” Another intern referred to “not enough guidance” and the “difficulty in getting in touch with the boss.”

Interns who marked their internships as a 7 or 8 talked about the need to improve communication or about the communication difficulties of the job. For example, one intern reported, “Communication with the guests are going well, but with some of the other employees not so well, because of in-fighting.” Another expressed frustration with working with those outside the organization specifically the coordination of volunteers and the “volunteers not following through.” Another intern desired more time for interactions. “If I was able to have more one on one connection with the patients I would be totally satisfied with my internship.”

Like their course colleagues value was a concern for interns assigning internships with a 7 or 8 rating. Primarily, value was expressed in thoughts of being needed. “There is not enough for me to do,” reported one intern. Another intern explained the course of their internship as, “Work, work, but then there is down time.” Other respondents in this category also talked about the busy periods followed by a slowdown causing one intern to say, “I don’t feel as needed.” To make up for any slow periods, one intern responded that she was “given odd things to do other than PR.” Another intern reasoned, “I remain hopeful. “I’m hoping this will change if Mr. H---- agrees to implement my marketing suggestions.”

Interns were asked about the biggest surprise with the internship? Time and managing time was the biggest surprise for interns no matter how high or low the internship was ranked. Closely related with time is the discipline or responsibility required for the job. One intern said, “I’ve never worked outside a coffee shop, so it was strange to sit at a desk all day.” Because many interns worked in public relations time and schedules demanded fluidity where “work goes beyond the 9 to 5.” An intern in the thick of a midterm political campaign noted,

“Seventy hours a week is a lot more than what it seems like on paper.” Surprises about time for these interns included the time it takes to prepare to do a job well. One intern said, “I couldn’t get over the amount of detail that was required for this event to run so smoothly. I have really learned a hard lesson in how much time goes into planning even the smallest event.” The balance needed to stay on schedule or competing projects requiring attention was another element about time that surprised interns. One intern remarked, “the biggest surprise that I have found would be the amount of projects that are going on at one time, and you have to give each project the appropriate amount of time.”

Other surprises interns did not expect include the need to plan in detail every function of the event, meeting responsibilities and challenges that are not “necessarily glamorous” such as cold calling, making sure to follow up with clients, and “doing things that you don’t get credit for.” Blame is easily assigned whereas credit can be overlooked as was pointed out by one intern. “My supervisor disclosed that she feels that the rest of the ____ Development office does not entirely back up her fundraising efforts....She said she gets little recognition when she does something good, but everyone is eager to give feedback when something goes wrong.”

One intern was surprised by the versatility of knowledge required for a job as a lobbyist. “My co-workers are not only experts in politics, but also in many other areas like messaging, public relations, economics, product placement, and client relations.” Another intern became aware of the need to be resourceful. “I was surprised how creative you have to be sometimes when working for a nonprofit, because our budget was very small.” A majority of the participants were public relations interns where writing is required. Still, many reported they were surprised by the amount of writing required for the job along with the “tight deadlines” and the “need to be disciplined and correct” with writing. One intern summarized, “I REALLY need to work on using precise words and making every word count.” Interns who struggled the most with their internships had the most difficulties with how communication impacted the infrastructure and interactions at the internship site. In these cases, the surprise was the “poor communication especially from those who are in charge” or the ‘lack of structure including what tasks need to be done, and when.’”

Surprises with the internship can lead to unexpected results or a discovery of something positive and new. Such surprises include intern reports on how much was being learned on the job, the opportunities to work with professionals and to network, or how the internship turns out to consist of “fun satisfying work.” Surprises led to learning something new about one’s self. For example, an intern who had worked in the health care field and who had originally wanted to work in pediatrics admitted, “My biggest surprise has been that I really enjoy working around older people. This may change my career direction.” Another concluded, “I thought I was more interested in the print side of journalism. After my internship I’m now considering if I would like to be in front of the camera some day for the news.”

Interns were asked to respond to the question, “What is one thing that you have learned in your internship that has helped you to be a better communicator?” Many interns noted that in order to be a better communicator one must be organized and clear. As one intern said, “I learned that you should always know everything you can about the organization you are working for, so that you are always prepared to answer any questions about it and will sound more professional when answering.” One intern who worked in promotions for a sports team explained, “I have learned to be concise and precise when interacting with fans, especially when supervising the children’s play area and when explaining how our promotions work. My message has to be clear or a fan could be harmed by miscommunication.” These lessons about clarity extend to social media and email. One intern said, “Now I know how to phrase social media updates so that they are attention-getting. I also communicate via email a lot so I have to make my emails more direct and clear.

Adaptability is another internship requirement according to interns in this study. The challenge of contacting people “playing phone-tag, getting quotes, waiting on responses” has been an eye-opener for some interns.” This is epitomized by one intern “Learning that my agenda is not the most important.” One intern remarked, “I have been very observant on how my bosses communicate with their co-workers, clients, and government officials. Their suaveness with word choice and tone is what makes them such successful professionals.” Another intern said, “When on the phone or face-to-face with [managers of different companies] I cannot sound like I am a 21 year old college student. Therefore, I have adapted a more professional communication

technique.” Becoming a better communicator extends beyond being organized, clear, or being adaptable to an audience, sensitivity is also important. As one intern reported when working with persons experiencing cancer, “I had to be very careful about the words I used.”

In several cases the intern supervisor and co-workers served as role models for learning about communication. One intern praised his supervisor, “She handled complications and problems with people with ease and although she should have just ripped people apart she kept her cool and managed the problems affectively.” In the case where communication did not go well at the internship site, an intern said, “After seeing this all firsthand, it has taught me to be a better communicator s I now understand how necessary it is for me to not only communicate with peers, but listen to their responses and when there isn’t a response, I need to take the initiative to get one myself.” Another intern reported, “I have troubles not thinking ahead and completely tuning in to the person I am speaking to. Because the workers here spend a lot of their time listening to stakeholders, I’ve understood the importance of sitting back and just listening.”

Internships consist of a culmination experience for students’ education where they draw upon lessons learned in their academic coursework. Thus, one question in this study asked respondents to talk about how the department, major, and or specific classes helped prepare them for the internship. Predictably, respondents cited courses that had a direct and recent impact on internships such as public relations writing, cases, and event planning. Interns identified other courses such as public speaking and interpersonal communication, and courses with service learning components that influenced their performance at internships.

When it comes to particular skills interns note how relationships are influential. In this area interns commended their major/minor department. One intern summed it up, “It is all about relationships, relationships, relationships.” Writing a good press release does not mean much unless you have “coordinated with local media,” or “nailed your demographic when planning an event.” According to these interns good speaking goes beyond articulation and knowing how to organize a speech. The most successful speaking outcomes are intertwined with “knowing how to ask questions as well as how to have a conversation with the person so that they feel comfortable” when presenting a case for asking for donations. Being clear also means being diplomatic as in the case with one intern who had been asked his opinion, said “What I have

learned has also helped me know to respectfully tell my superiors what can be improved so I can do my job better and tell them in a way that is beneficial to everyone involved.” Regarding relationships in the case of one student who did not have a particularly successful internship the intern did see where the department had helped her “make sense” and learn from the experience. “I also feel like I was more prepared to deal with the organization’s lack of structure because in class we had talked about how a lack of strong communication can affect an organization, and I know [I] have been able to see that first hand.”

V. Discussion

Boyer (1990) urged that scholars “should be asked to think about the usefulness of knowledge, to reflect on the social consequences of their work, and in doing so, gain understanding of how their own study relates to the world beyond” (p. 69). The focus of this study asked students to report on their internship experiences. What these students say about their internships provide lessons insuring the good, decreasing the bad, and tackling the “not so pretty” episodes that occur when interns enter the workplace. Intern feedback such as found in this study has led to a “rethinking” about internships for this scholar/teacher.

Spend More Time Early on Internship Objectives

In the excitement of setting up an internship it is easy to get caught up in the immediate needs of the internship while sacrificing attention to more long-term projects. It is useful to set up social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for the company, but then what? Monitoring these sites may lead to the development of other work skills. Also, interns will likely get bored. Planning and implementing a fundraiser may take up the first weeks of the semester, but what will the intern do in those remaining weeks once the event wraps up? If nothing takes the place for that void then what was once a motivating internship experience soon becomes loathed by the intern. Before the internship begins strategizing should include looking at tasks that will take the student throughout the entire semester. Prepare students to be more self-disciplined and specific about what objectives can or cannot be accomplished at the internship site. Ask interns to rank the importance

of objectives he or she wants to achieve by the conclusion of the internship. Talk about what is one objective that could be dropped for the internship to be considered a success? Encourage the intern to communicate with the intern site supervisor to formulate mutual objectives for the internship as well as working on a schedule for meeting goals. Also, share the course syllabus and assignments with supervisors. Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen, and Chou (2009) emphasize that site supervisors should be educated and comprised of internship expectations, “Articulating the responsibilities of internship supervisors prior to their participation in the internship is a key element of a successful internship” (p. 1432). Based on what interns in this current study say about good, bad, and especially not so pretty internship experiences spend more time with those students who will be working with a new company, or an organization new to internships. Finally, internships are a window into the real world of work. At times the atmosphere is face-paced and exciting; other times are slow and not as thrilling. Students must learn that the mundane can occur in any job. Speak with prospective interns about taking advantage of the mundane times that occur in the internship. Becoming self-reliant and using this time to work on more long-term projects is a lesson that all interns will find beneficial. Thus, what could be a not so pretty or bad internship experience has the potential to become one of the best parts of the internship.

Evaluate and Readjust Internship Assignments

Kahl (2010) believes that “for students to use communication to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others, they must be engaged in communication scholarship beyond the classroom”(p. 299). For intern participants in this study the workplace serves as the place beyond the classroom. Interns should have work opportunities that connect to and build upon what they have learned in their academic courses. Offering new and readjusting assignments so that students can link classroom content with intern work experience should be emphasized. Adding brief readings on workplace communication is one option. Requiring interns to conduct a personal interview with supplied questions to ask the interviewee is another assignment. Whatever the assignment or the requirements interns should keep in mind that portfolios should be organized, clear, and professional looking with an

audience that goes beyond the teacher grading it. Internship directors may consider using a team of volunteer professionals to review portfolios and provide brief but essential feedback on what interns are accomplishing. Often student interns are asked to summarize work experiences in a journal. Instead of being open-ended more structured questions could help students use their experiences to engage in more active and deeper learning (Caine and Caine, 1994). “In effect, the learner asks in as many ways as possible “What did I do?”, “Why did I do it?”, and “What did I learn?” (pp. 156-157). Journals should pose these specific questions but should also include other questions such as “How did I spend my time?” “How could I have spent my time better?” “How am I meeting immediate work demands?” and “How am I doing with more long-term projects?” Ask the intern to comment on how he or she communicates with supervisors, other co-workers, and clients. More specifically what lessons are learned concerning communication with others? In the cases of “not so pretty” episodes, interns should be encouraged to directly confront these if possible in their journals. Afterwards, the instructor can work with the intern on if and how to turn around any not so pretty episodes.

Know When to and When Not to Intervene

Anyone who has coordinated internships for very long soon asks when it is best or not to intervene in internships. Teachers and internship directors need to be available to interns, while at the same time not come across as Velcro ready to pounce and address every concern real or imagined. Bad internship situations such as a safety, physical, sexual harassment or other legal type issues should be addressed and referred to the proper authorities. The “not so pretty” experiences for interns are not so clear-cut. Internships are the training wheels in introducing students to the demands of the workplace. “High levels of reality shock occur when individuals find that many of the work standards and procedures learned in school directly conflict with those required on the job” (Taylor, 1998, p. 393). With the ease of electronic communication, the teacher needs to determine whether an intern is finding it hard with a temporary situation, having a bad day, or if the incident is something more long-term and acute. Student should be allowed to experience, work through, and learn from those “not so pretty” elements that can

come with internships. Internship directors can follow up throughout the semester to see how things are going and intervene if need be. The mid-point semester conference that information for this study was gathered should not be the only opportunity for students and faculty to talk about internships. Even if things are going well early on new “not so pretty” situations may crop up well after the semester is underway. One possible situation that an intern nearing the end of the internship can experience is when to extract from the organization. Many interns voluntarily continue working for organizations long after the internship period is completed. Students may want to see a project to completion or feel a responsibility to helping an organization that provided the internship opportunity. In some cases interns may feel guilty for leaving the organization and are not able to move on despite other responsibilities such as a new academic semester or a different job. Thus, an end of the semester formal conference asking for similar feedback to questions asked in the first conference could be implemented to address any “not so pretty” episodes that can come about in the final weeks of the internship.

Encourage Doing a Second Internship

Finally, the feedback from interns in this study points to the benefits of doing more than one internship. Interns should be encouraged to consider gaining experience through internships that provide them with different types of experiences whether it is for academic credit or not. If building relationship skills are vital as interns in this study indicate than opportunities to work at different sites (large and small organizations, profit and not for profit groups) and engaging with a diversity of people should be a motivation for doing multiple internships. For those interns who liked what was learned from the first internship then a second internship could offer additional opportunities for learning but with a different perspective. Certainly, if things did not go so well in the first internship, then interns working closely with the teacher/director should revisit why this was so. Adjustments could be made and hopefully the second internship will be a more gratifying work and learning experience.

Concluding Observations

One of the strengths of this study is that interns were given time to reflect on their experiences. It is interesting that no student reported less than a 4 when ranking his or her current internship. Avoidance of lower number rankings may partially center on the inherent nature and reputation of internships. Students can reason that whether or not an internship experience is good, bad, or not so pretty, that the internship can be listed on the resume. Internship reporting was right before or at the semester mid-point so interns may be still hopeful for any improvements. Interns were aware that their responses were going to be assessed by the internship director who in turn served as the professor and final grader. Interns may have been less than forthcoming with lower rankings so as not to give the impressions of negativity and complaining. Interns less than satisfied with their current internship may reason that this is just a part of working in the “real world” where one must learn from the experience and then move on.

The gender disparity of participants in this study where females outnumbered males could be seen as a limitation. One explanation is that there are more females in the department in which participants were drawn from. The gender ratio in this study of 77% female and 23% male is more equal compared with the gender ratio of students completing internships in the three years leading up and involving this study (83% female and 17% male). Males may not be as attracted to internships as a result of societal expectations for males to be earners and breadwinners. Thus, a male student could believe that he should take a paid job over an unpaid internship even if the paid position has little to nothing to do with his career path. Males may be more likely to avoid or not be in a financial position to complete unpaid internships echoing what Yagoda (2008) warns is the divide between have and have not students.

For the interns in this study completing an internship satisfied an elective choice in their degree programs, but an internship was not a mandatory requirement. Would intern perceptions be different if the internship **was** a requirement for completing a degree? If a student has no choice in academic electives, has to pay for an intern work experience that is often unpaid itself then a consumer mentality may take over. This could result in demands for more available internships, placement help and for specific locales (e.g. “Get me an internship in Daytona Beach for the summer!), and the expectation that success should be guaranteed or

“I want my money back!” Thus, leading to new not so pretty episodes found with internships. Likewise, intern sites may look toward internship programs as a ready supply of potential workers much like temp agencies already serve. Such heightened expectations are not likely to be met considering the limited time, support and resources that most academic internship directors currently have.

This study focused on the voices of student interns and their experiences. However, other perspectives would add to the richness of understanding what is good, bad, and not so pretty about internships. For example, what does the intern supervisor have to say in response to what their interns are reporting? Certainly, the author in the role of an internship director could offer up other “not so pretty” episodes that student participants did not mention, such as not following through on appointments, not following up or responding to email in a timely manner, or at all. Future research on internships should include internship directors/advisors as well as on-site work supervisors.

For many students internships are transformational experiences that add value both professionally and personally to their resumes. An internship impact can last a long time and can change one’s direction in life. Good internship experiences are hoped for. Bad experiences can happen, but hopefully are avoided. The intern experiences that occur in the in between –the not so pretty-have the potential to become transformed into ones with tremendous learning value. Disraeli said that “experience is the child of thought, and thought is the child of action.” The project outlined in this study has made the author reflect on the experiences working with interns and has led to the implementation of changes in course of action so that interns are more likely to succeed. “Teaching, at its best, means not only transmitting knowledge, but *transforming* and *extending* it as well” (Boyer, 1990, p. 24). Through the approach of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning the research in this study primarily benefits current and future intern students. It also has implications for better working relationship with intern site supervisors. Furthermore, it is a step in assisting the author in becoming a better communication teacher and scholar.

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**Harry S. Truman Selects Boyhood Friend
Charlie Ross to be Press Secretary**

Adam Horn

Abstract

The current idea for the role of a presidential press secretary was first conceived during the Herbert Hoover Administration and labeled Secretary to the President. Franklin D. Roosevelt is generally known as the President to first fully understand how effective the media could be in informing the public, and to realize its powerful influence on opinion and behavior. It is pretty clear that the presidential press secretary position has had a central role in each President's ability to work with the media. This historical paper adds depth to what we know about Truman's longest serving press secretary – Charlie Ross, how he operated as a press secretary, and how his personal relationship with Truman allowed him to perform his role unlike other press secretaries who preceded him. More specifically this paper details Ross' early career prior to becoming press secretary, his selection as Truman's press secretary, how he handled press operations, how he handled Truman's "shoot from the hip speaking style," how and why he helped move Truman's press conferences from the oval office to the Old State Building, Ross' role as Truman's speech editor, his role in daily meetings with Truman, his role as a policy and personnel advisor to Truman, and his experiences during his travels with Truman. Arguably, the most important contribution this paper offers is a rich description of Ross' close personal relationship with his boyhood friend and boss—Truman. In an effort to bring the lived experiences to light, the rich oral histories of individuals who worked in the Truman Administration and of the newspapermen who covered the Truman White House are heavily referenced.

The role of a presidential press secretary was first conceived during the Herbert Hoover Administration. The position was labeled Secretary to the President. It is widely accepted that Franklin D. Roosevelt understood how effective the media could be in informing the public and he realized its powerful influence on opinion and behavior. It is pretty clear that the presidential press secretary position has had a

central role in each President's ability to work with the media. When Harry S. Truman inherited the presidency following FDR's death, he too understood the importance of having an effective press secretary to handle press relations.

The Secretary to the President role has undergone a variety of changes since its inception, an obvious one being its name change to press secretary. In the early years, the duties of the press secretary included any number of traditional public relations roles such as writing and disseminating news releases and presidential statements, answering daily media queries, writing and editing speeches, answering correspondence, holding daily press briefings, preparing the President for his press conferences and attending them, and traveling with the President. Those press secretaries who enjoyed a unique relationship with the President may have had the opportunity to perform non-traditional public relations duties as well. Some of these duties included acting as a policy adviser, helping make important personnel decisions, speaking to the President in a manner (direct and frank) others could not, being a voice of reason in times of crisis, and as unique as it sounds—being a friend.

The role of the press secretary depends greatly on how the President wants to utilize him or her. Many times that decision depends on the relationship that exists between the two. An examination of the press secretary role during Harry S. Truman's time in office (April 12, 1945 – January 20, 1953) is of historical significance in exploring this dynamic, a dynamic made all that more unique by the fact that Truman had seven individuals who acted as press secretary, including his boyhood friend.

Jonathan Daniels was Truman's first press secretary. He was a holdover from the Roosevelt Administration. J. Leonard Reinsch followed Daniels. Reinsch's tenure technically lasted only three days, but he actually left the office nearly a month after his successor, Charles G. Ross, was announced. Ross was Truman's press secretary for more than five years before he died of a heart attack following a press conference. Stephen T. Early was brought in to help until a successor could be named. Thirteen days later, Joseph H. Short was named press secretary. Short was press secretary for more than a year and a half before he died at home of a heart attack. Following Short's death, both of his assistants, Roger Tubby and Irving Perlmeter, were named co-press secretary. They held their titles until Tubby was given the job after Perlmeter, too,

suffered a heart attack. Tubby was Truman's press secretary for the final month and two days of his presidency.

Not a lot is known about the lives of most early presidential press secretaries, the roles they played with the Presidents they served, or the relationships they had with those Presidents. Truman's press secretaries are no exception. The best two sources to date for information about press secretaries are W. Dale Nelson's (1998) book *Who Speaks for the President* and John Maltese's (1992) book *Spin Control*. Nelson's book offers a chapter devoted to Charlie Ross. The chapter includes biographical information, while detailing Ross' role as Truman's press secretary.

This historical paper begins by first briefly explaining the term press secretary because it is a contemporary title. It is a title that did not officially exist under the Truman administration. Those who performed what we know today as a press secretary did not have that title. Further, this paper adds more depth to what we know about Truman's longest serving press secretary—Ross, how he operated as a press secretary, and how his personal relationship with Truman allowed him to perform his role unlike other press secretaries who preceded him. More specifically this paper details Ross' early career prior to becoming press secretary, his selection as Truman's press secretary, how he handled press operations, how he handled Truman's "shoot from the hip speaking style," how and why he helped move Truman's press conferences from the oval office to the Old State Building, Ross' role as Truman's speech editor, his role in daily meetings with Truman, his role as a policy and personnel advisor to Truman, and his experiences during his travels with Truman. Arguably, the most important contribution this paper offers is a rich description of Ross' close personal relationship with his boyhood friend and boss—Truman. In an effort to bring the lived experiences to light, the rich oral histories of individuals who worked in the Truman Administration and of the newspapermen who covered the Truman White House are heavily referenced.

The Term Press Secretary

The press secretary title did not officially exist while Truman was President. Secretary to the President was used instead. "There wasn't, as long as I was in the White House, officially, any such position as press secretary or assistant press secretary," said Eben A. Ayers

(1967a), assistant press secretary under Truman. He continued with, “I was called assistant press secretary. Actually, I was never on the payroll under that title. I was an information specialist or something of that sort, which was, I suppose, a civil service designation or something of the kind.” According to Ayers, none of the secretarial positions had any designation other than secretary. “I don’t think the commissions ever said ‘Press Secretary’ or ‘Appointments Secretary’ or anything, it was ‘Secretary to the President.’”

The first White House aide to handle press relations as his primary responsibility predated the Truman Administration and was George Akerson. Although Akerson did not hold the title Press Secretary to the President, he served President Herbert Hoover in that capacity from 1929-1931. Following this point in history, the individual responsible for handling press relations held the title Secretary to the President.

James Hagerty, who served right after the Truman Administration, handled press relations for President Dwight D. Eisenhower and was the last individual to hold the title Secretary to the President. The title was dropped by legislation passed in 1956 (Levy & Fisher, 1993). As a result, Hagerty was the first individual to hold the title of press secretary. Though the press secretary title did not officially exist during Truman’s Administration, the individuals who handled press relations are referred to in this historical article as such because the term resonates with contemporary language.

Charlie Ross’ road to the White House

Ross was born November 9, 1885 in Independence, Missouri. He was six years old when he entered the third grade in 1892. He was almost two full years younger than his classmates. One of the first boys Ross got to know was a boy named Harry S. Truman. Ross and Truman had a lot in common including their mutual disinterest in sports and they both loved to read.

Ross and Truman began their interests in politics while they were still in secondary school. The town of Independence needed a new high school. But, to get the new facility, a \$30,000 bond issue needed to be passed. Then schoolmaster W.L.C. Palmer knew that teachers and students, such as Ross and Truman, could be organized to help get the bonds passed. “They went out, although they weren’t old enough to vote,

they went out and worked on behalf of the bond issue. They were mighty pleased that the bonds passed,” said Sue Gentry (1971). Gentry was a long-time friend of the Harry S. Truman family, and a reporter, editor and columnist for the *Independence Examiner*.

Ross was excellent student. In fact, he was the valedictorian of his 1901 graduating class, a class that also included Truman and Bess Wallace (future Truman). In September 1901, he enrolled in the University of Missouri where, as a freshman, he began a friendship with Walter Williams, editor of the *Columbia Herald*. Williams offered Ross a job as a campus correspondent for the *Herald*, a job that he had throughout college. He graduated from the University of Missouri in 1905 and stayed at the *Herald* as a full-time reporter.

Early in 1906, Ross went to work at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* only to fall victim a few days later to a mild recession sweeping the country; he lost his job. The *Post-Dispatch* promised to rehire him once there was a vacancy. Only hours after his dismissal from the *Post-Dispatch*, and in need of money, he boarded a train headed for the Rocky Mountains to join his father in Victor, Colorado. There, he was a reporter for the *Daily Record*. But, Ross did not stay long in Colorado. Prior to his move, Ross had bought a round-trip train ticket and it was only good for three months. He soon headed back to St. Louis.

The *Post-Dispatch* re-hired Ross as a reporter. He worked for city editor Oliver Kirby Bovard. As a young reporter, Bovard taught Ross a valuable lesson about providing thorough details in a story. Bovard had sent Ross to cover a story about a painter who had fallen from a smokestack. The accident occurred well beyond the outermost point of the streetcar line. So, Ross had to walk the rest of the way. Once at the scene, he gathered all the information about the accident, and headed back to the office to write his story. Bovard looked over Ross’ account of the accident and asked, as recorded in Farrar (1969), “How tall was the smokestack?” (p. 34). Ross did not know specifically how tall the smokestack was. He only replied “quite tall” (p. 34). Bovard said tall was a relative term and sent Ross back to get the exact height. Ross returned to the factory and got the exact height of the smokestack in feet and inches.

Ross accepted copyreader job at the *St. Louis Republic* in 1907 because it offered an opportunity for quicker advancement. However, he was not at the *Republic* long. In the spring of 1908, Walter Williams got the approval from the University of Missouri’s Board of Curators to

establish what would be the world's first formal school of journalism. Williams called Ross to offer him a teaching job. Ross accepted and became the school's first journalism instructor. He published his first book *The Writing of News* in 1910 and his second book *The News in the County Paper* in 1913.

Ross also made time for a social life and he married Florence Griffin on August 20, 1913. The couple gave birth to their first child John Bruce Ross on August 7, 1914 and on December 29, 1915 they had a second son Walter Williams Ross.

Ross spent 10 years teaching at the University of Missouri. By this time, he was a full professor who had grown tired of teaching. Many of his friends were enjoying successful careers and Ross was anxious to do something else. One day, while giving a lecture in the summer of 1918, Ross looked up from his lecture notes to find one of his brightest students, Pauline Pfeiffer, staring out the window eating some candy. The Pfeiffer incident was the last straw for Ross. After he finished the lecture, he walked down to the Western Union office and sent a telegram to Bovard at the *Post-Dispatch*. The telegram read, "If you want me, I am now available" (Farrar, 1969, pp. 69-70). Ross never returned to academe.

Incidentally, Pfeiffer graduated from the university's School of Journalism and became an internationally known fashion reporter. According to Farrar (1969), Pfeiffer met and married Ernest Hemingway while on a fashion-writing trip to Paris.

In August 1918, Ross returned to St. Louis to begin discussions with Bovard about starting a Washington Bureau of the *Post-Dispatch*. Soon after, he became the *Post-Dispatch*'s Washington correspondent. The Washington Bureau had achieved such success that the *Post-Dispatch* eventually made Ross the bureau chief and added additional reporters to his staff.

On November 29, 1931 the *Post-Dispatch* published Ross' article "The Country's Plight – What Can Be Done about It?" It had a far-reaching effect. In fact, requests for copies came in so rapidly that the *Post-Dispatch* re-issued the article in pamphlet form and mailed out thousands of them (Farrar, 1969, p. 97; Markham, 1954, p. 166). Ross eventually won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Country's Plight* in the area of distinguished reporting.

The Pulitzer Prize was just one of many honors that Ross received. Walter Williams presented Ross with the University Of

Missouri School Of Journalism's gold medal for distinguished service. Additionally, he was elected president of the Gridiron Club. The Club consisted of a select inner group of Washington writers and bureau chiefs. Farrar (1969) argued that Ross' selection by his colleagues for the club presidency meant more to him than any other professional honor he ever received (p. 101). He was also awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree from George Washington University for distinguished contributions in journalism.

In 1934, Ross headed back to St. Louis to be the editor of the *Post-Dispatch's* editorial page. Ross was not too excited about taking over the post, but did so after Joseph Pulitzer persuaded him to. At this time, his old schoolmate Harry Truman was running for the U.S. Senate.

According to Farrar (1969), Ross' positive political relationship with Truman almost ended before it even really started. Ross became terribly upset at the political posturing in Missouri and wanted to take an old friend to task - Truman.

Less than a month after Ross returned to St. Louis he became incensed at a political situation in which he was sure that one of the candidates for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate was nothing but a tool of the Pendergast political machine in Kansas City. The candidate was an old schoolmate from Independence, Harry S. Truman. (p. 116)

Ross wanted to write an editorial attacking Truman and his campaign for the U.S. Senate. Ross felt his boyhood friend was a puppet of the Pendergast political machine and that Truman was not qualified for the seat. However, before writing the editorial Ross asked Pulitzer for his advice. Pulitzer and the editorial executives persuaded Ross to wait until after the primary to write the editorial. Farrar (1969) suggested that, "One can only wonder how the lives of Harry Truman and Charles Ross might have been changed if Ross had gone ahead, as he originally intended, with a blistering attack on Truman *before* the primary election" (p. 121).

After the primary, the attacks did come. The *Post-Dispatch* printed several editorials charging that Truman was little known outside of Jackson County (Missouri), that he had been put in a senate-seeking position thanks to machine politics, and that Truman was the Democratic Party's Senatorial nominee because Tom Pendergast willed it so. Truman still won the 1934 senatorial election.

In 1935, shortly after Williams died, the University of Missouri approached Ross about taking over its presidency. He declined. Later, he was offered the deanship of the School of Journalism, a position he also declined. Instead, he returned to the *Post-Dispatch*'s Washington bureau in 1939 as a contributing editor (not bureau chief, the position he held prior to leaving Washington) free to write interpretive pieces and not responsible for administrative duties. Ross was free to write what was important to him without being edited. Also, during this time, Ross and Truman began to renew their friendship. In fact, this rekindled relationship would soon go beyond just friends.

Roosevelt's 1944 bid for an unprecedented fourth term as President was supported by the *Post-Dispatch*, despite the fact that Truman was on the ticket as his vice-presidential candidate. Roosevelt won re-election and Truman became vice-president. Much to everyone's surprise, including Truman's, Roosevelt died five months into his term. Ross wasted no time in writing an editorial detailing his personal impression of what type of President the nation was getting in Truman as Roosevelt's successor. Ross' editorial tone was sharply different from the tone he used when Truman was a senatorial candidate. Ross thought Truman would make a good president. "It was the most authoritative (article) written at the time about the new President, (it) was widely reprinted and quoted from around the country" (Farrar, 1969, p. 154).

Truman, now president, inherited Jonathan Daniels as his press secretary. Daniels served the FDR administration in this capacity prior to his death. However, Daniels time as press secretary was short-lived under Truman. Truman had a press conference on April 17, 1945. During that press conference, Truman announced that "[J. Leonard] Reinsch is going to help me with press...affairs. He has been a radio executive for Governor [James] Cox... [and] was connected with the National Committee during the last campaign as [its] radio expert...And he is efficient, I will tell you that" (Public Papers of Harry S. Truman, 1945a). Three hundred and forty people attended the press conference, making it the largest press conference a president had ever held while in office. At the press conference, Truman did not directly name Reinsch as his new press secretary to succeed Daniels.

Truman's announcement created some confusion among Truman's staff and the newspapermen covering the press conference, but it also appeared that Reinsch was also confused about his new title. Both Reinsch and the press believed he was to be the new press secretary. In

fact, later that morning Reinsch had a press conference in the press secretary's office where he was asked, "What title should be used in referring to him (you), and he replied, 'Secretary to the President.'" (Ayers, 1967a). Newspapermen also asked Daniels if Reinsch would be the new press secretary. According to Eben Ayers (1967a), who was also present at the conference, Daniels replied that, "he wasn't making the President's appointments for him, but he presumed Reinsch would act as if he was the President's secretary."

According to George Elsey (1969), Assistant to the Special Counsel of the President, "there was some confusion in the minds of a great many people as to whether Jonathan Daniels was going to continue to function in the early Truman period as press secretary or whether Reinsch was to be the press secretary."

Not only did the announcement create some confusion, the news angered the press corps that consisted mostly of newspapermen. The newspapermen did not want a radioman as the President's press secretary. Nash (1966) recalled,

This (Truman's announcement) led to an explosion in the press corps. The old established members of the White House press were newsmen, particularly the wire service men. They were then following the growth of radio news, and the soon-to-come growth of television news, with sensations of rivalry and all the jealousy and envy that goes with this traditionally proud craft. Consequently, it was unacceptable to the elite of the White House press corps, who ran that group with an iron hand, that a non-print new media man should be their contact man in day-to-day affairs with the President.

Later when talking about the controversy surrounding what many believed was his appointment as press secretary Reinsch (1967), himself, said,

The fact that I was handling the new conferences at the time created a furor in the press area, because I was a radioman and they forgot that I also grew up in the newspaper field. I was a radioman as far as the press was concerned, and that job belonged to someone in the press area. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I was in no man's land under quite a crossfire between all the press people; later some of my most bitter

critics became my best friends. I really was doing whatever was necessary; all of us were pitching in to help.

Truman had not announced Reinsch as press secretary. He had stated that Reinsch was going to help him with radio and press affairs. In that same press conference, the only person Truman said would be a secretary was Matthew Connelly. In Truman's own words he stated, "I have asked Mr. Early and Mr. Hassett, Mr. Daniels and Judge Rosenman, and they have offered to stay and help me...my staff will stand the training with those gentlemen. I have asked Mr. Connelly to be my Confidential Secretary" (Public Papers of Harry S. Truman, 1945a). According to Ayers (1967a), it was Reinsch who had confused himself and those around him. He remembered that, "Mr. Reinsch never was press secretary at any time. Mr. Reinsch thought he was going to be press secretary."

Pressure to do something about Reinsch continued to mount from the press corps. The President needed to gracefully relieve Reinsch of his self-perceived duties as press secretary. Connelly (1967) claimed that, "I suggested to the President that the gracious way to do it was to call James Cox...and have Cox tell Leonard that he, Cox, could not afford to let him go, that he was too vital to his organization." Truman listened to Connelly's advice as a means to relieving Reinsch of his duties, real or not. On April 20, 1945, Truman held his second press conference where he read a letter from Cox asking that Reinsch be allowed to return to the Cox radio chain.

Truman followed up the letter by saying that he would comply with Cox's request. Unfortunately, some newsmen believed the letter was contrived to allow both Reinsch and Truman to put a positive spin on what appeared to be a bad decision by the President.

Truman was so conscious of trying not to make a mistake, that in order not to acknowledge that this was an error of the tongue at his (first) press conference, he let Leonard remain in the press office for a few weeks [of course, with Jonathan Daniels' careful backing] until Charlie Ross came in and took over. (Nixon, 1970a)

Reinsch was disappointed that he was not going to be press secretary but graciously returned to his position with Cox. With Daniels and Reinsch both out, Truman had to find a new press secretary. According to Connelly (1967), it was a pretty contested decision.

That (the press secretary position) was very widely discussed between the President and myself, and I made a suggestion to the President that I go to Steve Early who was still at the White House and ask Steve to make a poll of the press people at the White House (with White House correspondents) and to have them recommend who should be press secretary. I wanted somebody who would be respected by the press, and who could be accepted by the President. So Steve Early took that poll. He came to me with two recommendations and he told me that he didn't think the President would go for either one of them. I asked, "Why?" He said, "They both are with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*," which had been very violently opposed to Senator Truman when he was Senator. I said, "Well, those are the recommendations let's give them to the President. Let him make up his mind." So Steve Early said, "Mr. President, these are the two top boys on the list. One is Charlie Ross, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and the other is Pete Brandt, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*." The President grinned and said, "You know, I was thinking about Charlie Ross myself. Did you know he was a classmate of Mrs. Truman and myself in the Independence High School?" which neither Steve Early or I knew. Steve said, "Well, I'll get in touch with him."

Truman met Ross at Blair House and asked him to become his press secretary, but Ross rejected the offer for at least three reasons. First, Ross liked what he was doing at the *Post-Dispatch* as contributing editor. He also knew how demanding the press secretary's job was and was not too interested in beginning a new career. Finally, was the financial consideration. Both Farrar (1969) and McCullough (1992) documented the pay cut Ross faced from the \$35,000 a year the *Post-Dispatch* was paying him, to the \$10,000 salary the press secretary's job paid. It was not the most inviting option.

Truman held his ground in light of Ross's arguments and told Ross, "But Charlie, you aren't the kind of man who can say 'no' to the

President of the United States” (Farrar, 1969, p. 156; McCullough, 1992, p. 363). It took two evenings of persuasion, but Ross ultimately accepted the position. Mitchell (1998) claimed that Ross’ sense of duty and a strong belief in his own capabilities, as well as his faith in Truman, compelled him to join the Truman Administration.

It did not take long for the uniqueness of their relationship stemming from boyhood to appear. After working out a few of the details, Ross and Truman began to reminisce about the night of their high school graduation when their teacher, Miss Matilda (Tillie) Brown, kissed Ross on the cheek. Truman suggested that they call Miss Tillie in Independence to tell her the news that the two were back together again, this time in the White House. They placed the call and Miss Tillie asked Truman if he remembered their graduation night when she threw her arms around Charlie and kissed him. “Yes [Truman said], and the rest of us boys asked why you didn’t pass that around” (Farrar, 1969, p. 157). Miss Tillie replied, “Then you ought to remember that I told you when the rest of you did something worthwhile, you’d get your reward too” (p. 157). Miss Tillie acknowledged before the call ended that Truman had done that and promised him a kiss on his next visit.

In the April 20, 1945 press conference, where Truman read the letter from Cox asking for Reinsch’s return, Truman cleared up the press secretary situation when he announced that Ross would join his staff as the press secretary. Truman also cleared up what Daniels’ immediate future held. “Jonathan (Daniels) has agreed to stay with me. He is going to stay with me until Charlie comes” (Public Papers of Harry S. Truman, 1945b). In that press conference, Truman also told the newsmen what he and Ross did after Ross accepted the post.

I called in Charlie Ross last night after this happened (receiving the letter from Cox), and Charlie agreed to come with me after this San Francisco Conference (this is where the United Nations was being organized), on May 15. Then Charlie and I got sentimental and called up our old schoolteacher in Independence last night. I am afraid there is a leak in Independence and Charlie also called up his son. I didn’t want you fellows to be scooped on it, so that’s why I am doing this. He and I called her together. She is the only schoolteacher that is living, and so we called her up. We used to go to school together. She taught Charlie and me English. (Public Papers of Harry S. Truman, 1945b)

Ross got an early jump on his more than five-year press secretary career by holding his own press conference nearly three hours before he was actually sworn in. He said,

I still feel like something of a “carpetbagger” here, inasmuch as I will not be sworn in until 12:45. I am going to keep on Eben Ayers as my assistant. He served very ably under Jonathan Daniels, and Steve Early; and he is going to stay with me, I am very happy to say. (Charlie Ross Press Conference, 1945)

Later in the same press conference he told the newspapermen, “I am very ‘green’ on this job. I have a great deal to learn. I hope you will bear with me for a few days.” He was officially sworn in by Associate Justice Wiley Rutledge of the Supreme Court May 15, 1945 using the same Bible used to swear in Truman. Ross exuded confidence shortly after taking on his new position, beginning with how he worked with his staff.

Press office operations

There was never any doubt as to who ran the press office while Ross was press secretary. “Charlie Ross ran his department. Nobody else in the White House interfered” (Connelly, 1967). As press secretary, Ross had many responsibilities. Among them were the day-to-day operations of the White House press office, which included interacting with the press and public, writing and disseminating news releases, responding to correspondence, accrediting visitors for press conferences, and processing newspapermen’s applications for White House accreditation, also known as a White House pass. “We had a rule. We wouldn’t consider any (newsman) unless they had already been admitted to the congressional press galleries and passed the committees there” (Ayers, 1967b).

Though in control and committed to his rules, Ross was quite accommodating when pressmen came to him requesting permission for their editor or visitor to attend the President’s press conference and be introduced to the President afterwards. Kent (1970) recalled that when Ross received one of these request he would respond, ““Well, of course, why don’t you introduce him yourself afterwards?” So you would line up with your VIP and the President always had some comforting...word...to indicate to this editor that you and he were indeed very close.”

Ross held daily press briefings. They included such things as a

rundown of the President's appointments for the day, an announcement of who the President's visitors were and why they were there (courtesy call or other business), the reading of any formal statements by the President, an announcement of any presidential appointments, discussions of relevant daily news, and answering any questions the newsmen had.

According to Ayers, the coordination of news among government agencies at that time was not as controlled as it is today. In fact, the press office then made little effort to control or coordinate news between any agencies. Ayers' (1967c) memories made it clear:

...as to anything that was done generally towards the coordination of news, I don't think we had much of a problem in that respect. It might be that some agency would come out with something sometimes, that we thought we should be informed about, but we didn't make an issue of the thing. It has been in some subsequent administrations when they've tried to control the news from all agencies. We made no such effort.

With regards to day-to-day news, many reporters would not leave the White House for the day until Ross put *the lid* on, as they referred to it. Former Washington correspondent Robert Nixon (1970c) explained:

That meant the business of the day was done. After the President had gone to his private quarters in the White House, and the events of the day ended, I could leave. Regardless of the hour of the evening, I never left the White House until I had assurance from Charlie Ross that it was safe to do so until the following morning. If anything untoward happened and there was any reason for my being there, I would be telephoned by the White House switchboard at my residence.

The press office also had rules regarding photographers and the opportunity to get exclusive photos of the President. "We had followed the rule that if there were to be any pictures to be taken or anything, everybody should have the same chance. That was the rule all the way through, that nobody should have an exclusive," Ayers (1967c) said referring to some of the rules that existed in the press office.

Ross was also responsible for preparing Truman for press conferences. Part of this preparation included holding briefing sessions a half hour prior to the press conference.

Charlie Ross or Joe Short, whoever happened to be Press Secretary at the time, would come in with a list of suggested questions that might be asked at the conference and then we would hash out what reply should be made to it. The President would make the final decision on what the answer to that particular question, if it came up, would be.
(Connelly, 1967)

Ross' unique relationship with Truman came into play here. Ross could prepare Truman for his press conferences in a way that none of Truman's other press secretaries would even try. Ross could say and do things to Truman that others could not. He made a habit of asking Truman questions in a blunt almost rude and unpleasant fashion. Elsey (1964) remembered, "The President would sometimes snap out a quick answer, not always in diplomatic terms, nor would it be very politically wise, at which point, Charlie would lean back and laugh." The relationship between the two was quite unique. Truman "would also grin, and realize that all Ross had been doing was simply putting him on the alert to...the kind of question he might get...from a reporter who was trying to get from him, precisely the reaction Ross had [gotten]" (Elsey, 1964).

Truman: "shooting from the hip."

Ross did not care for Truman's *shoot from the hip* style of answering newsmen's questions. The press found Truman's answers amusing at times, but it frustrated Ross and his staff. Depending on the severity of Truman's misspeak, Ross' office would later release a clarifying statement. According to Ayers (1967b), "it was [occasionally] necessary...to make a clarifying statement later, but most of the time those 'shooting from the hip' answers didn't do any harm...[but] I can remember Charlie Ross saying to me one time, 'I wish he wouldn't do that.'"

During a November, 30 1950 press conference, Truman nearly created an international incident when he cavalierly shot from the hip and made reference to the use of the atomic bomb by the military

commander in the field. Truman had been asked about what actions would be taken against Communist China by the United Nations. The record of that exchange is telling.

Q: In other words, if the United Nations resolution should authorize General MacArthur to go further than he has, he will...

President: We will take whatever steps are necessary to meet the military situation, just as we always have.

Q: Will that include the atomic bomb?

President: That includes every weapon that we have.

Q: Mr. President, you said "every weapon that we have." Does that mean that there is active consideration of the use of the atomic bomb?

President: There has always been active consideration of its use. I don't want to see it used. It is a terrible weapon, and it should not be used on innocent men, women, and children who have nothing whatever to do with this military aggression. That happens when it is used.

Q: Mr. President, you said this depends on United Nations action. Does that mean that we wouldn't use the atomic bomb except on United Nations authorization?

President: No, it doesn't mean that at all. That action against Communist China depends on the action of the United Nations. The military commander in the field will have charge of the use of the weapons, as he always has.
(Truman Press Conference, 1950)

This exchange between the press and the President led Ross' office to later issue a clarifying release. Atomic bomb use was nothing to trifle with and the statement reflected the seriousness of the issue:

The President wants to make it certain that there is no misinterpretation of his answers to the questions at his press conference today about the use of the atom bomb. Naturally, there has been consideration of this subject since the outbreak of the hostilities in Korea, just as there is consideration of the use of all military weapons whenever our forces are in combat. Consideration of the use of any weapon is always implicit in the very possession of that weapon. However, it should be emphasized, that, by law,

only the President can authorize the use of the atom bomb, and no such authorization has been given. If and when such authorization should be given, the military commander in the field would have charge of the tactical delivery of the weapon. In brief, the replies to the questions at today's press conference do not represent any change in this situation. (Truman Press Conference, 1950)

Another example of a Truman misspeak was when he announced that Gordon Clapp was to be appointed director of the Tennessee Valley Authority. In his news conference, Truman repeatedly referred to the TVA as the TWA. A reporter finally asked Truman if he meant TVA. The President continued to read and carefully enunciated the "V" in TVA. Ross had had the opportunity to correct his boss on several occasions before the reporter brought the misspeak to the President's attention. He did not correct Truman in this instance or in many others such as the atomic bomb one and, instead, made necessary corrections at later, more strategic times. The choice to allow Truman to save face likely came from Ross' sense of professionalism and friendship.

Some argued that one of Ross' shortcomings as a press secretary stemmed from his idolization of Truman that is what prevented him from correcting his boss in public. He was "too fond of Truman as a lifelong personal friend to be an imaginative and helpful assistant. In fact, 'fond' is not strong enough to describe his feeling. Ross idolizes Truman...He speaks of 'the President' in hushed tones of reverent awe" (Allen & Shannon, 1950, p. 55).

Press conference change of venue: Oval Room to Old State Building

During Truman's presidency the press corps assigned to him had grown so large that it made press conferences coverage difficult. In the beginning, Truman's press conferences were held in the Oval Room (now known as the Oval Office). Newsmen would cram into the room and stand elbow-to-elbow all the way to the front of Truman's desk. Truman would stand while giving his press conference and the room's acoustics were so bad that the newsmen in the middle of the room could barely hear him. Truman really needed a different venue.

The eventual decision to move was made and was due, in part, to the result of a mystery reporter who had asked a red herring question

(regarding the Whitaker Chambers-Hiss investigation) during one of Truman's press conferences. At the time, no one on Ross' staff knew who had asked the question because it had come from the back of the room. The person asking the question could not be seen. Ross asked Robert Nixon to help identify who had asked the question. His initial search for the mystery reporter came up empty. At this point, Ross and his staff suspected that the question may have been planted, but after further investigation the reporter's identity was discovered. According to Nixon (1970d), the question came from a *Columbus Dispatch* writer who had been on a "one-time visit to Washington and that this was his first and only presidential press conference. This question simply popped into his mind because the Whitaker Chambers-Hiss investigation was a fresh thing in his mind."

On April 27, 1950, as a result of the overcrowding, poor acoustics, and the inability to see the reporters asking questions, Truman decided to move his press conferences from the Oval Room (Office) to the Old State Department Building (Executive Office Building). Truman and his staff liked this move because it gave the President more room and better control over the press conference. In the new format a reporter had to quickly stand up, begin to ask his or her question and then be recognized by the President to finish.

While some reporters liked the venue change because it gave them room to move and comfortable seating, not everyone was happy. Some reporters raised objections; among them was Nixon (1970e).

While we raised mild objections to any change taking place at all, it wasn't that we objected to the Indian Treaty Room. Our objection was on the basis of there being any change, and why should there be a change. This again was based upon the feeling that it would get us away from the President. Intimate contact with a president normally improves your own situation for the gathering of news. For years we had been in rather intimate contact with the President at his press conferences in the Oval Office. When we were in the President's personal office, standing immediately in front of his desk, we could see every expression on his face, every movement of his hands. All of these things have meaning in conversation.

The venue change prevailed in spite of objections. All future press conferences were held in the Old State Department Building/Executive Office Building.

Not a speech writer

While some may equate the press secretary position with speech writing, Ross did not do it because of time constraints. Connelly (1967) remembered that, “He [Ross] never participated in writing speeches. But, he would be an editor of every one of them.” This, too, may have had a lot to do with his relationship with Truman.

Ross’ command of the English language was so good that Truman wanted him to edit the final draft of all of his speeches. “The President always wanted Charlie to take a look at the last draft or two of a speech” (Elsy, 1969). Truman practiced reading his speeches aloud just to get the sound of them and to clear up awkward phrases; he always had his boyhood friend with him when he did this. “Charlie Ross was always there and he would frequently be the one to strike out what he thought was clumsy language and suggest phrases that would be appropriate to a man from Missouri” (Elsy, 1969).

Ross’ contributions to Truman’s speeches were almost always more about specific language used than rhetorical approach. In fact, Ross had an interesting quirk about using the word *presently* to mean *now*. It was Ross’ contention that the word *presently* did not mean the word *now*, but rather the word *presently* meant *in the near future*. Truman honored Ross’ perspective, again being influenced by their relationship.

Morning meetings

Ross also attended Truman’s rather informal daily staff meetings. Truman would go around the room asking each staff member if he or she had anything to report, if he or she had anything that required discussion among the group or if there was an issue that required the President’s attention. “The President would always ask the press secretary if there was anything special, any particular problem that the press secretary saw coming up during the course of the day, or comment on anything that appeared in the morning papers that should attract presidential notice or comment,” (Elsy, 1964). Ross did not hesitate to speak when he had something on his mind.

Policy and personnel advisor

It was widely accepted by both staff and the press that Truman periodically consulted with Ross on policy issues and personnel matters, a complete departure from traditional understandings of a press secretary's role. Truman trusted his friend for wise counsel and was steadfast in his confidence in his friend. Their pre-presidential relationship impacted presidential decision making. "I think that relationship grew closer during Charlie's service as press secretary. I know that there were times when the President called him in on certain things that were policy matters" (Ayers, 1967c). Nixon (1970b) remembered the uniqueness as well.

I always had the feeling that when Ross gave Truman his opinion, he laid it on the table and let it lay. He did not press. He would tell the President what he believed, make his recommendation, and then let the President make up his own mind.

According to Murphy (1963b), Ross was the one responsible for Truman appointing Edwin Nourse to the Council of Economic Advisers. "Dr. Edwin Nourse...even then, a rather elderly gentleman and a very distinguished economist with a distinguished record...was appointed largely at the recommendation of Charlie Ross." Ross' relationship with Truman affected presidential appointments.

Travel with Truman

Ross was rarely far from Truman and traveled almost everywhere with the President as did many of the newspapermen who regularly covered the White House. Despite being on-the-road, Ross still conducted press briefings and made himself available for questions. Ross' extensive travel with Truman let him experience world changing history first-hand. For example, Ross made the trip to the Potsdam Conference for the summit of the big three, Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill and Truman. Ross was with Truman aboard the U.S.S. *Augusta*, returning from Potsdam, when Truman received a message that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima.

In 1948, Ross hit the campaign trail with Truman for nearly two months as Truman made 275 speeches on his *Whistle Stop* campaign. On

election night, Ross refused to tell the members of the press where Truman was staying. Nixon (1970e) described the experience, “This was one of those frustrations. We were supposed to be covering the President, but we couldn’t cover him. We were supposed to be able to say where he was and we couldn’t find out.” Truman had actually stayed at a hotel a few miles away from the newsmen in Excelsior Springs. Ross protected his friend’s need for privacy.

Ross also made trips to Key West with Truman; however, these were not always pleasurable. Nixon recalled a trip aboard the *Williamsburg* headed for Bermuda when the ship ran into stormy weather. The press had not heard from Ross in several days and wondered why.

One day when it was rather stormy, we got Charlie Ross on the ship-to-ship radio, and said something to the effect, “Charlie, we haven’t heard a word for a couple of days. What’s going on over there? Why haven’t you called us?” Charlie’s reply was, “Oh my God, please let me alone. Oranges and grapefruit are rolling around the room, I’m deathly seasick. The President is seasick. Everybody in the party is seasick.” (Nixon, 1970a)

Ross’ travels with Truman kept him up-to-date on world happenings and Truman’s experiences, making their relationship even more valuable.

Press associations perspective

Ross had difficulty understanding press association newspapermen and their insatiable desire to be the first to report the news. He had little patience and often became frustrated with the newsmen when they conveyed this sense of urgency to him. “He didn’t understand the press association operation. He couldn’t see the reason for one man wanting to be a minute ahead of another...He had slight patience with the newsmen in their concern over delays or anything” (Ayers, 1967a).

One reason Ross may have had difficulty with press association urgency was the fact that he spent most of his career as an editorial writer and not a daily news reporter. Another reason was he had never worked for a press association. Ayers (1967a) described the value press association newsmen held for being first to report the news. “The press association that got there first with an important bulletin...even only a

minute or so ahead, (that newspaper) was on the street ahead of the other one and that might make a great difference.”

Ross' lack of experience regarding press associations' competitive operations led to his lack of press patience. Interestingly enough, Nixon (1970a) felt it may have been this lack of experience that actually helped propel him into the press secretary position.

The reasons were obvious why the President wanted him to be Press Secretary. There was this lifetime friendship, and the association continued in Washington. The President felt he needed a competent newsman who was independent of any competitive connections, to be press secretary. When I say independent of competitive associations, I mean an independent newspaper like the *Post-Dispatch* was all right. In contrast it would have been very embarrassing to the President, and just about impossible for him to have chosen a reporter from one of the news services, no matter how high he went, because of the intense competition in the three services.

Ross may not have understood the urgency to be first to report the news, but he did understand the need for the Truman Administration to work competently with the press.

Ross' relationship with Truman

Ross' and Truman's friendship was deeply rooted in the past they shared as boys growing up in Independence, Missouri. Despite their political differences when Truman ran for the Senate, their friendship endured and even culminated when Truman asked Ross to be his press secretary thus becoming what author Scott Hart (1946) described as "America's No. 1 Team" (p. 6). The friendship was mature enough, though, to allow professional boundaries to guide them. Despite their 50-year-friendship, Ross showed respect for Truman's position when he quipped, "I call him Mr. President, and he calls me Charlie" (Hart, 1946, p. 9).

Ross summarized his relationship with Truman in the letter he wrote to him on Christmas Day 1947.

Dear Mr. President,

There is nothing in life, I think, more satisfying than friendship, and to have yours is a rare satisfaction indeed.

Two and a half years ago you “put my feet to the fire,” as you said. I am happy that you did. They have been the most rewarding years of my life. Your faith in me, the generous manifestations of your friendship, the association with the fine people around you—your good “team”—all these have been an inspiration.

But the greatest inspiration, Mr. President, has been the character of you—you as President, you as a human being. Perhaps I can say best what is in my heart by telling you that my admiration for you, and my deep affection, have grown steadily since the day you honored me with your trust.

May this Christmas, and all your Christmases, be bright!

Sincerely yours,
Charles G. Ross (1947)

The quality of the Ross and Truman relationship was obvious to many. “Charlie’s relationship with President Truman couldn’t have been better. I think he kept Charlie pretty well informed” (Ayers, 1967a). Additionally,

Charlie Ross, because he was so well-known to the President and Mrs. Truman, had the ability to speak frankly and candidly with the President in a way that really no one else around the White House did, especially in the early days. He had a great knack for bringing the President up short when he thought it was necessary. But his personality was so warm, and so kindly, that he could chide or even admonish the President in a way that certainly no one else could do. (Else, 1969)

Ross' death

Ross' lifetime friendship with Truman and his influence on the Presidency ended abruptly. He died of a heart attack following a late afternoon press conference December 5, 1950. He was preparing to make some on-camera remarks for the National Broadcasting Company news crew when he slumped over in his chair. Ross' secretary, Myrtle Bergheim, immediately called General Wallace Graham, Truman's physician. Graham ran upstairs from his office below, but it was too late, Ross was already dead. Truman was deeply affected and penned a poignant tribute to Ross.

The friend of my youth, who became a tower of strength when the responsibilities of high office so unexpectedly fell to me, is gone. To collect one's thoughts to pay tribute to Charles Ross in the face of this tragic dispensation is not easy. I knew him as boy and as man. In our high school years together he gave promise of these superb intellectual powers which he attained in after-life. Teachers and students alike acclaimed him as the best all-round scholar our school had produced.

His years of preparation were followed by an early maturity of usefulness. In the many roles of life he played his part with exalted honor and an honesty of purpose from which he never deviated. To him as a newspaperman truth was ever mighty as he pursued his work from Washington to the capitals of Europe and to far continents.

Here at the White House the scope of his influence extended far beyond his varied and complex and always exacting duties as Secretary to the President. He was in charge of press and radio, a field which has steadily broadened in recent years with continuous advance in the technique of communications. It was characteristic of Charlie Ross that he was holding a press conference when the sudden summons came. We all knew that he was working far beyond his strength. But he would have it so. He fell at his post, a casualty of his fidelity to duty and his determination that our people should know the truth, and all the truth, in these critical times.

His exacting duties did not end with his work as Press Secretary. More and more, all of us came to depend on the counsel on questions of high public policy which he could give out of the wealth of his learning, his wisdom, and his far-flung experience. Patriotism and integrity, honor and honesty, lofty ideals and nobility of intent were his guides and ordered his life from boyhood onward. He saw life steady and saw it whole.

We shall miss him as a public servant and mourn him as a friend. (Public Papers of Harry S. Truman, 1950).

Truman was so moved by what he wrote that he was unable to read his tribute to his friend. He had no shame letting the press conference attendees know that.

When Truman walked down the corridor to the press lounge where the reporters waited, he found he was unable to read what he had written. His voice broke on the first sentence. "Ah, hell," he said, "I can't read this thing. You fellows know how I feel anyway." He turned and with tears running down his face walked back to his office. (McCullough, 1992, p. 827)

Years later Truman wrote in his memoirs what the death of Ross meant to him. He penned, "We had been friends since high school days, and his loss grieved me very much. It struck me like a loss in my immediate family" (Truman, 1955).

White House staff members clearly knew what Ross meant to Truman. "The President relied on Charlie very much and it was a terrible personal tragedy to the President when Ross dropped dead of a heart attack in his White House office" (Else, 1969). Ayers (1967a), too, remembered the President's pain, "I think the President thought a great deal of Charlie. I know he felt bad when Charlie died and how much he regretted that he couldn't live to go on through (the remainder of Truman's presidency)." Ross' death took a significant toll on Truman.

Paul Hume letter

It seems that the emotional loss Truman felt at Ross' death contributed at least to one incidence of poor Presidential-decision-making. Some contended that without the loss, Truman would not have sent a scathing letter to music critic Paul Hume for writing a critical review of Margaret Truman's singing performance in Constitution Hall the night Ross died. "Charlie Ross would never have let the Paul Hume letter out. Charlie was... a calming fine influence on Truman, a tempering influence... much more than a press secretary" (McCullough, 1992, p. 828).

Nonetheless, Truman did take exception to Hume's criticism of his daughter's performance and wrote a letter threatening to punch Hume in the nose. "Not only had his only child been subjected to rather scathing criticism, but his, perhaps, oldest friend and his most favorite staff member in the White House, Press Secretary Charlie Ross, had died the previous evening," Nixon (1970f) said. He added that, "it's no wonder that with the combination of the two things, his boiling point rose to a fairly high level."

In fact, Truman had been so incensed by Hume's review that he wrote two drafts of a letter to Hume and mailed the second one. According to Connelly (1967), Truman called him into his office and said,

"I want you to read something." He had this longhand letter and I read it and I said, "You're not going to send this." He said, "I knew you'd say that. It's already been mailed. You don't like that?" "Hell, no." He said, "Wait a minute, I'll show you something else." He reached in his desk drawer again. He said, "Here's the first draft." So, I read that. I looked at it and I said, "All right, I'll settle for the one you mailed."

The combination of Ross' death the night of Margaret's performance and Hume's review appeared to have a powerful impact on the President's choice.

Complimentary perceptions from colleagues

Most colleagues thought Ross was successful in his role as press secretary. Connelly (1967) said it this way, "Charles Ross was a very

intelligent, quiet, but effective press secretary. (He) had the ability to exude confidence. And the press corps admired him tremendously...Charles Ross... became an excellent press secretary. ”

Elsey’s (1969) opinion was similar. He thought Ross was an ideal fit in the White House position.

Ross was an ideal choice for this job. First of all, he had known President Truman nearly all his life. They had been, as is well known, schoolboy acquaintances and then friends. Ross was a well-known newspaperman with many honors and awards to his credit. He was respected by the White House press corps as one of themselves, and as one of the better members of their craft or profession. So, he filled all that was needed, friendship and complete trust of the President and the respect of the press.

Murphy (1963a) too, praised Ross’ performance. “Ross was a wise and wonderful man...almost too good for the kind of job...but on the whole, I think, did an extremely effective job for the President. One reason this was possible...was because he was so universally admired and respected.” It appears clear that Ross’ reputation *before* he served the White House helped him greatly while he *did* serve the White House.

Conclusion

This paper started by contextualizing “press secretary” because the term did not exist during the Truman Administration. At that time, those who performed the duties of a press secretary did not have that title, but still performed many of the same duties under the Secretary to the President title. That said, this paper then focused on Charlie Ross and his duties as Truman’s longest serving press secretary. In addition to discussing the many roles Ross performed and detailing his lived experiences during his tenure serving the Commander in Chief, this paper focused on Ross and Truman’s close personal relationship—a dynamic that made both men’s time in the White House truly unique. This uniqueness stemmed from the fact that the two had been boyhood friends growing up in Independence, Missouri. One rose to the nation’s top office (Truman) and the other spoke on behalf of the President

(Ross). It was a truly unique relationship indeed. It is a rare instance when two boyhood friends find themselves tasked with decisions that affect the future of an entire nation and are able to make them with professional camaraderie.

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**I'm Not Lazy:
Interpersonal Effects of Living Fat in a World Full of Thin**
David A. Wendt

Abstract

With the obesity rate in America rapidly increasing, the awareness of weight discrimination is also increasing. The interpersonal effects of discrimination of overweight and obese individuals can be lifelong. The stereotypes of sizism have strong implications in the workplace, schools and the health care industry. How have these perceptions been formed and how can these perceptions be defeated?

“Dear Lord, if you can’t make me thin,
please make my friend’s fat”
-popular thought-

“I’d rather die than get fat!” is an all-to-familiar quote by many teens, predominantly adolescent girls as they discuss and visualize their individual body image. Surveys show that 80 percent of children who are ten years old are afraid of being fat. (Brown, 2011) This sentiment mirrors the feelings of a clear majority of citizens as “Weight discrimination is a very serious social problem that we need to pay attention to” (Puhl, 2009). The upbeat and fast paced metabolism of ideal weight persons burns the excess calories easily. This efficient metabolic process keeps the fat cells under control and therefore, helps the body maintain the ideal body weight. These ‘lucky’ persons view the state of being fat as never happening to them if they make the correct dietary choices combined with effective exercise practices. From that perspective, a majority of overweight Americans are increasingly making the wrong choices on a daily basis and a negative cycle of perception can begin.

Numerous studies report that currently the number of overweight Americans is hovering near the 66 percent mark or approximately 93 million people. Thirty two percent are considered obese and nearly five percent are morbidly obese. (Wang, 2008) Rates for obesity are

calculated by including the height of the person combined with the weight of the person computes the BMI (Body Mass Index). Persons below 18.5 BMI are considered underweight, 18.6-24.9 healthy, 25-29.9 overweight, 30-39.9 obese and higher numbers morbidly obese. A person is considered morbidly obese when they weigh more than one hundred pounds over their ideal body weight. Fat advocate Carol A. Johnson stated, "Weight discrimination can have an omnipresent and lasting impact on the life of an overweight person. It can be much more limiting on that person's life than the excess weight itself." Having the excess weight can force basic adjustments to daily living experiences, but the emotional impact of obesity comes in many significant forms. "Most common situations were those in which participants had family members make disparaging remarks toward them (98%), experienced physical barriers because of their weight (97%), received nasty comments from others (89%) or inappropriate remarks from doctors (89%) and believed that their loved ones were embarrassed by their size (86%). The stigmatizing experiences of receiving negative comments from children (77%), being the target of prejudice (76%) or stared at (57%), being avoided, excluded or ignored (56%)." (Friedman, 2005).

Veteran Saturday Night Live star Gilda Radner spoke openly about her struggle with her weight throughout her life. She was an obese child and utilized those coping skills in her memorable characters that lead her to stardom in the late 1970's and early 1980's. "I found that I could defuse whatever people might say about me being fat by joking first. That way they would have to deal with me as a person. If you can decide to be funny, I decided it then. I knew I wasn't going to make it on my looks." Another celebrity icon that openly discussed the intense inner-struggle with her weight was Kirstie Alley. "Being thin does make a difference, I told myself. In my head I got that role (Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan in 1982) because I was 114 pounds, not because I was a good actress..." (Semigran, 2010) Alley, the one-time sex symbol was condemned harshly by the media for her obesity. Alley replied that she hated being fat. "To be so divided against oneself is very stressful, and that stress leads to more stress eating, and more comfort eating. Kirstie Alley admitted to both." (Hartman, 2011). Radner summed up the frustration and the coping skills with "Funny is the thin side of being fat!"

The significant impact of media in our culture cannot be questioned. Icons, like Radner and Alley, provide role models and easily

identifiable characters to the viewing audience for the past several generations. “We are filled with media portrayals of the ‘perfect body’, which is normally 15 percent under normal body weight.” (Wilson, 2011) Therefore, media plays a powerful role in our perceptions of beauty and acceptance of differences. “In the media, people who are fat or short are often shown for comic relief and are rarely portrayed as emotionally competent and happy. As a result, we have negative images of the experiences of people who are fat and/or short. When discussing size, we most commonly gravitate towards issues of weight.” (Cullen, 2011) To further illustrate the stereotypes of weight issues, the average American woman is 5’ 4” and weighs 140 pounds where the average fashion model is 5’ 11” and weighs 117 pounds. Most fashion models are thinner than 98 percent of American women. (Brown, 2011)

“Most mainstream Americans consider the lean body enviable. Revering slimness to the point of obsession, we endow the slim with attributes of beauty, femininity or masculinity, sexuality, health, friendliness, skillfulness, employability, kindness, goodness, marriageability and wealth.” (NEA, 1994) This cultural obsession with thinness has alienated the majority of Americans who fight the daily battle with personal weight and those who have given up and succumbed to obesity. Many persons find many levels of frustration as they work endlessly to stay in shape and be considered ‘normal.’ “When asked to rank order various categories of people as potential marital partners, students report preferring to marry an embezzler, cocaine user, shoplifter and blind person before they would marry an obese person.” (Tiggemann, 1988) The human psychological need to ‘fit in’ continues from elementary school well into adulthood. “Obesity is one of the most enduring stigmas in American society. Stigma is defined as any personal attribute that is ‘deeply discrediting’ to its possessors, and may include ‘abominations of the body’ and ‘blemishes of individual character.’ Obese Americans arguably are stigmatized along the latter two dimensions. Research conducted over the past 40 years shows that obese persons are viewed as physically unattractive and undesirable and are viewed by others as responsible for their weight because of a character flaw such as laziness, gluttony or a lack of self-control.” (Carr, 2008)

Numerous physical and emotional contributors can be attributed to personal weight gain. Certain physical factors do not allow individuals to maintain ideal weight. Therefore, their personal discrimination occurs through no fault of their own. “Weight

discrimination begins with the assumption that fat and thin people are essentially the same; fat people are just thin people who make poor choices. In contrast, race discrimination begins with the assumption that being of a different race makes you inherently different.” (Wang, 2008) “In this sense, anti-fat prejudice is more like race than disability.” Our culture embraces the concept of racial diversity and tolerance. Racial profiling and prejudice would be considered totally unacceptable by a majority of Americans. Why is weight bigotry an accepted practice in schools, workplace and the health care industry?

School related issues

Since schools are a microcosm of our society, it is not surprising that an anti-fat philosophy begins early. For some students, this victimization may be their first encounter with bullying or name-calling. According to the National Education Association, “for fat students, the school experience is one of ongoing prejudice, unnoticed discrimination and almost constant harassment...from nursery school through college, fat students experience ostracism, discouragement and sometimes violence.” (NEA, 1994) Overweight youth are bullied far more readily than normal sized children. This bullying effect can lead to numerous emotional issues including lower self-esteem, depression and possibly suicidal thoughts. “Close to one in three overweight girls and one of four overweight boys report being teased by peers at school. Among the heaviest group of young people, that figure rises to three out of every five.” (Rudd, 2009)

The millennial age life style, filled with computer-aided games and technology, is far more sedentary than the previous generations. Children and teens of today find the instant gratification and mesmerizing graphics of computer games to be far more exciting than ‘old fashioned’ playing outside. These technological advancements have forced a sociological life style change that can be seen both in and out of the school. This ‘couch potato’ theory has led to the fact that it is estimated that over nine million adolescents are considered overweight. Of those nine million children, 70 percent will be more likely to become obese throughout their adult life. The lack of physical activity is definitely a deciding factor in this epidemic.

Schools have been restructuring long-standing policies to ‘help’ educate students on the harms of childhood obesity. The Healthy Child

Act of 2010 has changed the daily nutrition values in accredited K-12 buildings. Cafeteria personnel and supervisors endlessly research options to provide healthy choices that are appealing to all students. The elimination of fatty-based, high sugar content and highly salted foods has been replaced with researched based healthy selections. Teachers have been informed of these policy changes and have accepted the challenge to encourage healthy life style choices for all children. Classroom educators see the daily frustration of overweight children as they face harassment.

Normally, bullied students turn to their teacher as the beacon of hope for compassion. However, overweight students may not receive the same inspiration that other discriminated students normally receive. In a study, teachers say that overweight students are untidy, more emotional, less likely to succeed at work and more likely to have family problems. Teachers have lower expectations for overweight students when compared to thinner students across a range of ability areas. Forty-three percent of teachers agree that ‘most people feel uncomfortable when they associate with obese people.’ (Rudd, 2009) The emotional remnants of this daily barrage of comments and negative treatment can be lingering. For many overweight children, counseling may be a long-time companion as they navigate the personal feelings of low self-esteem and the search for acceptance.

Employment related issues

The most noticeable impact of anti-fat bias occurs within the workplace. The economic impact of this bigotry has been cited throughout numerous studies. The consistent facts include:

- Overweight and obese women make, on average, \$6,700 less per year.
- Over a 40-year career, an overweight person will likely earn \$100,000 less than an average weight co-worker.
- Overweight persons tend to have less education overall and have a ten percent greater chance of living in poverty.
- Overweight persons tend to be promoted less. Wage growth rates near six percent lower than thin co-workers.

- Overweight people are less likely to attend college even though they score high on standardized tests and are academically motivated.
- Overweight students tend to receive fewer letters of reference from faculty and employers.
- Overweight students tend to receive fewer scholarships and must pay their own way through college.
- Overweight people are not hired as often as their 'average weight' peers.

“Hiring prejudice against larger people has been demonstrated consistently in studies using written descriptions, photographs, videotape and actors. Large and smaller job applicants were matched for equal qualifications, equal references and similar personalities. Hiring staff usually chose the thinner applicants with equal qualifications and made unfounded assumptions about the larger applicants—such as that they were too aggressive, difficult to work with, lacking in self-discipline, less productive, or less determined—even if they had never met or spoken to the applicants. One study, using photographs, showed that prejudice against heavier applicants was found even when faces were obscured, ruling out the factor of facial attractiveness. (Council) Human Resource personnel have provided numerous and repeated instances of overt sizism in the hiring process. “In a poll by Business and Legal Reports (BLR) if someone’s weight had ever influenced a decision to hire him or her, 26 percent said yes and another 28 percent admitted that weight might have influenced their hiring decision unconsciously.” (Minnesota, 2010)

It is somewhat surprising that there is a difference between professional and non-professional overweight persons in the hiring process. One professional worker cited his personal philosophy on competing in the job market. ‘As an obese person, I know that I must be four times better to have an equal chance with an average weight finalist.’ ‘The frequency of perceived interpersonal mistreatment among extremely obese is significantly higher for professional persons than for persons with lower status jobs. Among both men and women, obese II (obese) and III (morbidly obese) professional workers, persons report significantly higher levels of mistreatment compared to their thinner peers and extremely obese nonprofessional workers.’ (Carr, 2008)

In a February 2007 study that replicated a 2005 study done with 2,603 Human Resources personnel, “over 93 percent said they would hire a ‘normal weight’ applicant as opposed to an obese one-if they were otherwise identically qualified.” (Cockcroft, 2007) This weight bias appears to be perpetuated at all levels of the workplace and continues to be plague the work environment. “Size discrimination is widespread in the workplace. Highly productive and qualified individuals are regularly, underpaid, limited in career advancement, denied benefits and terminated due to their size.” (NAAFA)

Some companies are beginning to discuss the implications of overweight workers in a positive manner. “It’s a matter of good practice: how to motivate your workplace, and providing an environment that doesn’t encourage prejudice, states Louise Diss. This means encouraging reasonable breaks, discounts to a gym or water aerobics. It’s about thinking outside the box: if you want a productive workforce, treat them well.” (Cockcroft, 2007) This significant shift in attitude must begin with all levels of management into the ranks of the working class. “Obese people are often thought of as lazy or incapable of working to the same level, whereas in reality, weight frequently has nothing to do with performance, “ states Elspeth Watt, Director of Training and Development for Calibre HR and Training. “This will become an increasingly key issue for employers. Equally, I hope, attitudes will start to change.” (Cockcroft, 2007)

Health related issues

“The social repulsion associated with overweight has been used as a stimulus for children, teenagers, adults and the elderly to engage in healthier habits.” (Filho, 2010) Genetics, behavior and environment are pivotal when determining body types, particularly morbid obesity. Unfortunately, this negative stereotype has been used to promote a positive health choice. The National Association for Advancement of Fat Awareness encourages a program, “Health At Every Size” (HAES) where nutrition and exercise are encouraged for all body types to be in the best health possible for the individual. Unfortunately, the medical field upholds several beliefs of the worst stereotypes associated with obesity. “In a study of over 400 doctors, 33 percent respond negatively to obesity only behind drug addiction, alcoholism and mental illness. They associated obesity with noncompliance, hostility, dishonesty and

poor hygiene. They view these patients as lazy, lacking in self-control, unintelligent and weak-willed” (Rudd, 2009)

The Obesity Action Coalition offers several staggering statistics that need to be considered when discussing the health care needs of the overweight and obese population.

- Almost 112,000 annual deaths are attributable to obesity.
- Being overweight, obese or morbidly obese significantly increases the risk of: diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, osteoarthritis, and many more.
- Socioeconomic status plays a significant role in obesity. Low-income minority populations tend to experience obesity at higher rates.
- African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians have been experiencing the highest rates of childhood obesity.
- The cost of obesity in the United States in 2000 was more than \$117 billion.
- In 2002, medical costs attributed to overweight and obesity reached an incredible \$92.6 billion.

Numerous studies cite repeated instances of the barriers of obese persons in the health care industry.

- Overweight persons are reluctant to seek medical care.
- Overweight persons put off preventive healthcare services.
- Overweight patients receive less time with the doctor.
- Overweight patients tend to receive fewer pelvic exams, cancer screenings and mammograms.
- Overweight persons need to remember that generally diets do not work. A large majority of patients re-gain their ‘lost’ weight.

In one study of nurses, 31 percent said they would prefer not to care for obese patients, 24 percent agreed that obese patients repulse them and 12 percent prefer not to touch obese patients. (Rudd, 2009) Unfortunately, health issues are problematic for a majority of overweight Americans and dependency upon the health care system is crucial for healing and re-entry into the work world. If personal bias exists in the health care industry for a specific

group of persons, then how can we be assured the at the best care is being giving to all patients?

Legal issues

Current federal laws do not include weight discrimination in any policy. The ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) does not specify obesity unless proven as a specific disability. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 does not include weight as a category in employment discrimination cases. However, “45 percent of women said they had experienced discrimination because of their weight, as compared to 28 percent of obese men. If overweight men are tolerated but comparably overweight women are not, a claim of gender discrimination could be made under the Minnesota Human Rights Act or Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” (Minnesota, 2010)

“Employers are free to be unfair,’ says Bill O’Brien, a Minnesota-based employment lawyer. “Other than some protected classes, there isn’t a great deal employees can do about it.” (Armour, 2005) Some employers, such as the Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa in Atlantic City say it’s not discriminatory to require that employees conform to appearance standards. Borgata, in a case that received widespread attention, bans bartenders and cocktail waitresses from gaining more than seven percent of their body weight from the time that they begin weigh-ins. Those who gain more receive a 90-day unpaid suspension, and after that, may be fired. Employees have claimed the policy amounts to discrimination based on sex and disability. (Armour, 2005)

“Some employers also agree that looks matter. Intranet software firm Mindbridge Software in Norristown, PA, requires formal business attire on the job. Men must wear ties, can’t have beards and can’t wear their hair past shoulder length. Also, employees can’t have visible body piercings or tattoos. ‘Clients like to see a workforce that looks real conservative,’ says Scott Testa, chief operating officer.” (Armour, 2005) So how does weight bigotry fit into the picture, when the world is fixated on a perceived visual image of thinness and a picture perfect body? Are there true possibilities of weight acceptance or legal implications?

Several cities in the United States have included weight discrimination in city ordinances concerning discrimination. In 1992, Santa Cruz, California passed an all-encompassing anti-discrimination

ordinance including height, weight or physical characteristics. Washington D.C. passed a human rights law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of ‘personal appearance’ in 2001. Four other cities have incorporated city ordinances that include weight as a protected class of persons: Binghamton, NY, Urbana, IL, Madison, WI and San Francisco, CA. Michigan enacted the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and currently is the only state that protects overweight persons from discrimination on employment issues.

Conclusion

“Obesity carries with it one of the last forms of socially acceptable discrimination. We, as a society, need to eradicate it from our culture. One important step would be by enacting meaningful public policy to protect those who have been subject to weight discrimination.” (Rudd, 2009) states President and CEO of the Obesity Action Coalition Joseph Nadglowski, Jr.

Our visually based society places a high level of value on thinness. Daily media blasts ‘normal weight and overweight persons’ as they stress the importance of thinness. The slogan of ‘Thin is In!’ sums up the everyday advertisements of most clothing companies. The simple fact that large size clothing and products are significantly more expensive, reinforces the negative view of these media saturated Americans. Overweight and obese individuals are vilified in a biased context.

The answer seems simple: Hire the best person for the job! However, there are some strategies to help aid the fight for acceptance.

- Teach tolerance and acceptance for all people.
- Be an ‘average sized’ advocate for the overweight community!
- Challenge fat jokes! Help change attitudes concerning weight.
- Inform and question accessibility issues in public places. Help remove all possible barriers!
- Question companies and businesses that discriminate based on weight.
- Help others to not judge based on size.

- Help parents to accept their children for who they are as people.
- Help support the slogan of the NAAFA “We Come In All Sizes!”

“If weight discrimination against obese individuals continues without sanction, thousands of people will suffer the emotional, social and physical health consequences. Legislation to protect overweight and obese individuals from unfair treatment is badly needed.” (Puhl, 2009)

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**Teaching Through Politics:
The Applicability of Political Discourse to the
Communication Classroom**

Scott Jensen

Abstract

The 2012 campaign season provided more than its share of illustrations for a variety of communication courses. Whether teaching about language, relational dynamics, or image management, politics brings with it a variety of examples that can become vivid illustrations of concepts in the classroom. This program combines research and a rationale for including political illustrations in the communication classroom. Additionally, selected activities are shared that have applicability for all levels of teaching, and the broadest range of communication lessons and courses. Courses and lessons for which this program has immediate applicability include, but are not limited to: public speaking, argumentation, persuasion, rhetorical strategy, image management through both public relations and advertising, nonverbal, mass communication, ethics.

One of the unique aspects of the communication discipline is its interdisciplinary nature. It is at the same time a humanity and a social science. It is a process (we *communicate*) and a product (we have *good communication*). The communication classroom teaches invaluable skills and provocative, relevant theory. The flexibility of communication makes it a perfect discipline for both integrative and interdisciplinary teaching. Perhaps most importantly, communication is the perfect discipline for teaching what is current and immediate to its students. Relational communication courses help students understand their lives and communicate more competently with friends and family. Ours is a discipline strongly recommended by employers, sought after by students, and dynamic so as to make it always a central part of any college or university culture.

Few areas taught within the communication discipline are more contentious or broadly applied than politics. While politics is a relevant subject area for a variety of disciplines, it has broad applicability within

our field of study. Arguably, few areas are riper for teaching than politics. Some students are politically engaged and aware; they are motivated and challenged by the critique and discussion of political processes and dynamics. Other students are politically unaware or even ambivalent; these students, as the next generation of American adults, benefit from critical exposure to the process by which decisions are made. This paper and program provides a rationale for incorporating the world of politics into communication classrooms. It also includes a number of activities that are useful for illustrating a variety of communication concepts. The integration of political discourse and process into the communication classroom is a pedagogical choice that offers significant benefits for students and the communication discipline.

Politics and Communication—Why Together?

Much of our discipline is grounded in history and traditions of public address, as originally posited by Greek and Roman theorists. We continue to understand principles of effective speaking, sound argument, and artistic oratory through these early instructions. It is this early framework that gave us appeals of ethos, logos and pathos. We categorize essential propositions through terms like *forensic*, *deliberative*, and *epideictic*. This focus on argument and persuasion provides the best rationale for integrating politics into the communication classroom. Political contexts provide us rich examples of public speaking, and sometimes even oratory in the tradition of eloquence and sound logic, as well as argumentation, image management, and even relational dynamics. While politics can be fabulous for illustrating communication concepts in general, and principles or theories of debate, speaking and public address in particular, one caution is paramount. This paper and program does not advocate the communication classroom as a bully pulpit for promoting instructor beliefs or endorsements of any single candidate or issue. While a discussion and comparison of issues and candidates may certainly be relevant to any integration of politics and communication, such advocacy should be within a broader discussion or analysis in which no reasonable political choice is discounted or promoted in isolation. Every effort should be made to promote balanced, open, rational discussion of any dimension of politics that finds its way into the communication classroom.

The best rationale for integrating politics and communication is the importance of political discourse in our society. Freeley and Steinberg (2009) speak to the many benefits of debate, many of which center on preparing students for responsible citizenship. Such responsibility necessitates such things as being an informed voter, thinking critically about messages and issues, and respecting the value of debating ideas openly and respectfully. It is important to remember “negative” examples are as instructional as “positive” illustrations. In this period of growing incivility, propaganda, and proliferation of exposure and information, any campaign season brings with it volumes of discourse. Our classrooms can—and arguably *must*—illustrate concepts with political examples. Students’ focus on political messages for analysis and application helps them to gain valuable insights into contemporary political issues and dynamics, allowing them the opportunity to be more critically informed when voting or discussing issues that are central to determining directions for our country.

Scholarship to Shape Integrations of Politics and Communication

As has already been discussed, political communication is a literal and important dimension of our discipline. As such, the scholarship in this area is an important starting point for integrating politics and communication pedagogy. It is vital that both instructors and students understand the nature of political discourse through the available research in our field. Research informs our teaching by providing understanding and illustration of past and present political discourse and events. Sharing this research with students and understanding its applicability to classroom lessons profoundly strengthens classroom instruction. Candidate debates, for example, provide countless examples from over 50 years of debates for lessons in argument, presentational effectiveness, media communication and literacy, and image management. However, familiarizing oneself with existing research about these debates helps frame a context in which these examples can be more accurately discussed. Benoit provides us with a number of pieces of scholarship that provide important explanation for many facets of these debates. He offers a widely accepted classification of arguments advanced in debates as acclaims, defenses, and attacks. Through understanding these arguments, students can dissect

debates with an eye for these arguments, conduct their own analyses of argument content, and even draw conclusions about candidates based on their argument strategy. These critical applications of debate content would not be possible without a familiarity with Benoit's research (Benoit & Airne, 2005; Benoit & Currie, 2001; Benoit & Harthcock, 1999; Benoit, Hensen, Sudbrock, 2012).

Another excellent resource for acquiring a basic understanding of presidential debates is a 2012 issue of *Spectra*, a publication of the National Communication Association. This issue provides insights into the history of presidential debates (McKinney, 2012), a reflection of the first televised debates in 1960 (Drury, 2012), reflections from a person who coached candidates in presidential debates (O'Donnell, 2012), and questions of civility in primary debates (Hinck, Hinck, and Daily, 2012). These articles are brief enough to share with students, and informative enough to contribute important insights to lectures and lesson plans.

A plethora of sources now exist for examples of political discourse. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and virtually any other social media are havens for countless examples of political speeches, rallies, advertisements, and narratives. Beyond these public outlets, the communication discipline is home to collections of speeches and discourse that can be readily integrated into communication lesson plans and course content. Campbell and Jamieson (2008) provide a thorough and incredibly helpful review of various types of presidential rhetoric and communication. This resource helps instructors understand the many examples of presidential communication open for analysis, or applicable as classroom illustrations.

Benoit and his collaborators have provided us with insights into the types of arguments used in debates, and even the frequency and intensity with which these arguments are both made and reported by the media (Benoit and Currie, 2001). Other scholarship can help us better understand more general realities of political discourse and campaign strategy. Benoit and Hansen (2004), along with Benoit, Henson, and Sudbrock (2012) tell us what issues evolve as definitive of major political parties, as well as how those issues are introduced and defended in multi-party discourse, such as debates. This scholarship lends itself to discussions of politics and values hierarchies, and how those preferences shape party culture, candidate identity, and arguments themselves. Again, such discussions are not possible without insights into what scholars can tell us through their own analysis and empirical research.

One final piece of scholarship that can be broadly applied in discussions of political communication is what is referred to as the Rank Model (Rank, 1976). This model, developed out of a desire to understand how students arguments and make them more critical recipients of persuasive messages, is simple in content and paramount in framing candidate and campaign communication. It suggests that messages—and consequently people such as political candidates—intensity or downplay when they frame and present persuasive communication. These choices can be intensifying or downplaying one’s own or an “opponent’s” strong or weak points. The model is easily applied to examples of political discourse as a framework for critical review and discussion.

Unique Opportunities from 2012 Campaign

The 2012 campaign brought with it many unique opportunities to integrate our discipline with the political process. From apologia to argumentation and persuasion, and from basic critiques of speeches to culture, the campaign season was rich with stories and illustrations.

From my perspective, perhaps the most interesting area of application was the debates. This season highlighted the importance of these events in close elections. Despite having an economy with a number of problems and an unemployment rate hovering at eight percent, an incumbent won re-election. A number of political commentators point to the debates as central to the rise and fall of Mitt Romney in his effort to win the election over Barack Obama. An initial debate favored Romney and showed the importance of tenacity and assertiveness in both language and appearance/style. A final debate found Romney not able to establish a broad range of difference from Obama on foreign policy, thereby lessening his breadth of argument as to why there was a need to change course.

Perhaps credibility is the most interesting dimension of this campaign for integration into courses. At a party level, many lessons were provided for how we associate individuals with their political demography. As members of the Republican party made statements about rape and reproductive choice, it became hard for Romney and other candidates to separate themselves from a generalized identity. Similarly, comments made that need clarification highlighted the power of apologia to shape the impression management of individuals. Secretly video-taped speeches and comments by Romney became claims and

opinions he had to defend, despite not making these statements in what he thought to be public campaign settings. In the end, this campaign will be known for the apology that ultimately had tremendous impact on the outcome of the election.

A great deal of commentary was provided regarding the political conventions, ranging from wives' speeches on behalf of their husband candidates, to celebrities and the positive or negative impact of their contributions to the conventions. Notable examples here include Clint Eastwood and Gabby Giffords. The notions of values as underlying and important indicators of philosophy are also important. Many commented on how institutions and ideals like veterans, women, patriotic symbolism, and family were integrated into speeches and speakers. The conventions this year provided powerful examples of how cultures are shaped and communicated.

Course Illustrations

The appendix includes a number of classroom activities that can be integrated "as is" or with slight modifications. Many of these activities are applicable to a broad range of teaching experiences including middle school. While the appendix activities provide specific applications, more general integrations of political discourse are available to a variety of communication classrooms.

Any speech by any political candidate, or by any person for any political cause, is an opportunity for analysis. YouTube makes it possible to critique presentational aspects of speeches while students follow along with the manuscript that can be analyzed for content. Similarly, public debates offer the same opportunity for analysis, with added dimensions of impromptu defenses of policy and performance, some degree of clash with others' arguments, and varying contexts for presentation that range from town-hall to formal speaking situations.

Films provide rich opportunity for analysis of political concepts within narratives that are strategically framed to promote specific messages. Provided the narrative is relevant to concepts being taught, political films can be terrific ways to promote discussion and further understanding as metaphors for "real-world" politics. Films like *The American President*, and television series such as *The West Wing* provide meaningful portrayals of people whose lives reflect political and personal contexts. They will also provide focus on specific issues in a context of

relationships that influence rhetoric.

Published communication, both news and advertising, have virtually unlimited potential as classroom tools. Advertising on behalf of issues and candidates can be analyzed for intended audience, reasonability of presented or assumed arguments, and even layout and design. Newspapers and magazines can be compared and analyzed for issues that are covered or not covered, as well as for the manner in which issues are treated. Such comparative analysis affords valuable insights for lessons in media literacy, media communication, persuasion, writing, advertising and marketing, and even interpersonal communication as a discussion of values and culture as reflected in the framing and presentation of messages.

Summary

Our discipline is positioned as one that balances understanding of theory and skill development in its instruction. At the same time students are able to frame and present messages that reflect core critical skills such as effective speaking, proficient writing, and critical thinking. This unique quality of communication education lends itself to integrating political discourse and communication classroom instruction with outcomes of both heightened understanding of non-political concepts through political illustrations, as well as increased awareness and engagement with political messages and contexts. Our students are well positioned to be leaders in our world, based solely on the core of our teachings. Morreale and Pearson (2008) make a persuasive case for communication instruction being essential for today's college student. Part of their case is preparation the discipline provides for responsible participation in the world. Littlefield (2006), in a defense of forensic and debate education, defends forensics as epistemic. His arguments regarding the instruction and lessons provided through experiencing forensic communication is applicable to the discipline as a whole. The bottom line is politics, whether ethical or unethical, rationale or irrational, civil or uncivil, or even liked or disliked, are at the center of how our society functions. Understanding how critical issues are presented, who is vying for offices and what they stand for, and the strategy behind the communication of these messages is paramount to influencing a world shaped by people who understand the value of politics, and the importance of how they are communicated.

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Comparative Analysis: Framing of Candidates and Issues

Persuasion is a ubiquitous reality in our world. Some scholars argue all language and communication is persuasive. What is clear is we are unable to escape a day without being on either end of a persuasive message. Perhaps the most dynamic, contentious, and ideologically bent context for persuasion is political. This assignment asks students to explore any facet of political rhetoric they deem most interesting to them, in an effort to compare and critique persuasive strategies that are at odds with one another on a common issue or candidate. Requirements...

- Students should select a political issue, candidate, theme, etc. about which they can find at least two messages that clearly clash with one another in their intent.
- Students should critique each of the selected messages with a focus on (1) strength of argument, (2) tone, (3) ethics of the employed persuasive strategies, and (4) the medium (and context/background thereof) used to communicate the message. These critiques should include strengths and weaknesses, as well as any other important observations regarding the four areas of focus.
- After their critiques, students should offer conclusions that identify their comparative analysis of each message. While one message does not have to be identified as “better” than another, the comparisons should make clear their observations of differences and similarities.
- Students should conclude their papers with observations regarding their reflections on the assignment, including but not limited to any change that took place in their own worldview, and the potential for objective political messaging.
- Papers should include excerpts from the examined messages, and attachments of complete messages or electronic links if possible.

Papers should be typed, double-spaced, and no less than 2 pages in length. The papers are worth 50 points and are due *September 12th*.

Comparative Analysis – *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Fahrenhype 9/11*

Persuasive messages take on a number of forms. Whatever the message or form, what is inherent in persuasion is that it is an effort of advocacy. People who persuade are attempting to convince us to do, think, or feel something – often something different than what we might otherwise do, think, or feel. What is not inherent in persuasion is the rejoinder, or the response, to the attempted advocacy. Arguments are always more exciting, and often made better, as a result of clash between competing perspectives. When perspective messages can be processed in terms of the argument, then the response to the argument, layers of persuasion are then available for analysis.

This assignment gives students the opportunity to analyze a documentary film that clearly advocates a particular position, and another film that is intended as a response to the first film. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is a documentary that is critical of America's response to terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. *Fahrenhype 9/11* is a response to the claims made in the first film.

Students should view both films. It is **strongly** suggested that students first watch *Fahrenheit 9/11*, given that it is the impetus for *Fahrenhype 9/11*. After watching each film, students should write a typed, double-spaced paper that is no less than three pages in length. The paper should analyze the persuasive strategies and argumentation strategies within the films. While students should make any observations they deem to be appropriate, their analysis should address, at minimum, the following questions:

- What are the most effective persuasive messages found in **each** film? What makes these effective?
- What are the least effective persuasive messages found in **each** film? What makes these ineffective?
- What are examples of strong and weak arguments found in each film? What makes these strong and weak?
- How would you assess the ethical dimensions of the persuasion in each film?
- General observations?

This paper is worth 50 points and is due November 11th

Propaganda Project

(NOTE: This project can be easily tailored to focus on a political candidate or campaign for a specific political issue.)

Propaganda, while defined in several ways by several different theorists, is generally thought of as mass media messages that attempt to persuade in subtle, indirect ways. We are constantly bombarded with propaganda by politicians, advertised products and services, and other sources of persuasive messages.

The class will be divided into groups. Each group will carry out the following tasks as part of this project:

1. Locate and identify examples of seven forms of propaganda discussed in class. Provide examples of each of these seven forms, along with a brief explanation of how these examples represent the forms. This is due ***September 5th***.
2. Create a product or service and design a campaign to sell it. The campaign should include, at minimum:
 - a. rationale for the product/service
 - b. an identification of how at least two of the seven forms of propaganda are integrated
 - c. 60 seconds worth of commercials that are videotaped and explanation,
 - d. a print advertisement and explanation,
 - e. an explanation of how this product/service is meant to adapt to this particular audience, based on the demographics we know to be true,
 - f. a discussion, led by the group members, of what forms of propaganda are found in the commercial and how it could be more or less persuasive, given other strategies suggested by the audience, and
 - g. an explanation of how this propaganda compares with similar messages in today's media.
3. Grades will be as follows:

a. Forms of propaganda	25 points
b. Commercial and advertisement	50 points
c. Presentation/discussion	50 points
d. Peer Evaluations	25 points
4. Commercials, advertisements, and presentations/discussions will be presented on ***October 10th***. Sometime will be allocated from class sessions for group work; much of the group work, however, will need to be out of class.

Rhetorical Criticism #1—The Speech

(NOTE—this assignment is easily transferable to any focus on any type of political discourse.)

Students should select any speech for criticism. Ideally, students should be able to find both an audio/audio-visual version of the speech, as well as the manuscript. At minimum, however, students should have the manuscript to analyze. The speech can be historical or contemporary, political or otherwise...the only requirement is that the artifact being analyzed be a speech.

This criticism requires the following:

- Students should write a criticism that is no less than four pages in length. Pages should be typed and double-spaced, in a font no larger than 12 and margins no broader than one inch all around the page.
- The criticism should include a works cited page that includes any research conducted for the paper; there should be some research such as background on the speech, reviews of the speech, socio-political-economic context of the speech, etc.
- The criticism should follow the framework discussed in Foss' *Rhetorical Criticism* text.
- The model for this analysis can be any unit of analysis/method applicable to speeches. The model may, but does not have to be, one discussed in class or in class readings.
- Suggestion: Students should carefully explain their claims and observations, including illustrations from their artifact. The paper should reflect careful thought and analysis on the part of the student critic.
- Students should include a paper copy of the artifact being analyzed with their paper. Should audio or audio-visual copies be made available, these do not need to be included with the paper.

These papers are due week of February 13th.

The paper is worth 100 points.

SPCM 1040 – Public Speaking Critical Speech Review

One of the best ways to understand what distinguishes between a “speech” and a “great” speech is to examine speeches scholars and society have declared to be great. This assignment asks students to select and analyze a speech of their choice. The analysis will include exploring both the delivery and content of the speech in an effort to identify what makes it uniquely effective.

Students should select a speech for which they can analyze both the manuscript and video delivery. The speech should be one that is referenced in literature/scholarship outside the student’s own life experience. The standard for an exceptional speech under this assignment is subjective, but in general should meet the expectations of *oratory* as opposed to *public speaking* (as each was discussed in class). Speeches should be approved by the instructor. ***Speeches should be approved by Monday, September 10th.***

Critical reviews should meet the following requirements:

- Students should discuss the context in which the speech was delivered. This should include addressing, at minimum, when it was presented, the purpose for the speech, where it was presented, and who, in a general sense, comprised the audience. Anything unique about the context should be highlighted.
- Students should discuss language strategies/choices employed by the speaker that were particularly effective. This discussion should include examples and reasons for labeling them effective.
- Students should discuss the delivery of the speech, including aspects of delivery that stand out as exceptional.
- Students should include in their reviews research in which the speech, its purpose, and/or its impact are referenced. This research should include at least one print source and at least two sources total. Again, these are minimums.
- Students should provide their own review of the overall impact of the speech, including conclusions as to its overall effectiveness, its potential/proven ability to be a model for future speeches of similar purpose, and how the speech can contribute to our understanding of oratory as art.

Papers should be a minimum of three pages, typed and double-spaced, in length. Additionally, students should provide a bibliography of works consulted/cited. Additionally, students should provide a copy of the manuscript of the speech and, if available, a link to a video of the speech.

The paper is due Monday, October 8th. It is worth 50 points.

Social Protest Song Presentation

One important form of persuasion is music. The power of music is that it engages its listeners, often to the point that they sing the song repeatedly. Songs, as forms of verse, incorporate vibrant imagery that brings thoughts to life. One context in which songs are often seen as persuasion is social protest. There are a number of ways in which a song can communicate a cause. That being said, Borchers (2002), in his persuasion text, cites Charles Stewart's 1991 look at the ego function of protest songs when he describes the functions of protest music.

Based on Borchers' discussion of social protest music, prepare a presentation of protest music. Presentations should follow these guidelines:

1. Select a song of your choice. Have the actual song included in your presentation, and lyrics available to the class.
2. Provide an analysis of your song, addressing these elements...
 - a. In what ways does your song reflect the elements of protest songs that are discussed on page 330 of Borchers' text (meant to be remembered, discontent, simplistic vision, and ego-related need(s)?
 - b. In general, how do you evaluate the effectiveness of your song in communicating the cause it is intended to communicate?
3. Present this analysis and song in an oral presentation. While there is no minimum, the maximum time limit for each presentation is 10 minutes.
4. Presentations are worth 50 points.

Toulmin Model of Argument Analysis

Arguments can be made in support of nearly any position or claim. The challenge with advocacy is to understand that accepting an argument as valid or sound does not mean one agrees with that same argument. Claims, supported by credible data and reasonable warrants become arguments that are worthy of consideration and response. In a society that celebrates free speech, arguments are advanced in a variety of areas and take several positions. It is commonplace for individuals to have to contemplate arguments with which they disagree.

This assignment challenges students to look at arguments made by advocates who take what many in society would deem to be extreme positions on controversial issues. In looking at these arguments by these groups students should consider valid and sound arguments made in support of and against these groups and their ideologies.

Students may use as the organization for this assignment *either* the Westboro Baptist Church or the Ku Klux Klan.

Specifically...

- Students should select one of the two above organizations and visit that group's website. (Addresses can be found by googling either group by name.)
- Students should provide a paragraph indicating strengths and weaknesses of the advocacy found on the website.
- Students should find one argument in support of and one argument against this group and/or one of the primary tenets of the group's ideology. These arguments can be found on the group's website, or in other sources.
- The two arguments presented should have the following elements of the Toulmin model labeled:
 - Claim
 - Data (Grounds)
 - Warrant
 - Backing
 - Qualifiers *or* Rebuttals
- The assignments is worth 50 points and is due Friday June 20th by 11:59 pm

Special notes...

1. Students should be aware of knee-jerk rhetoric that supports or challenges these groups and their claims. These messages are often persuasive, but are not necessarily valid or sound arguments.
2. Visiting these sites and reporting arguments for or against these groups **does not** equate support or even disagreement. As suggested earlier, the purpose of this assignment is to highlight that strong advocacy is reasoned argument, and that effective debate implies making arguments and not loaded statements that lack support.

Evidence and Credibility Assessment Assignment

(NOTE: This assignment can be made to focus on specific issues in order to further more direct discussion of political issues or candidates.)

One of the joys of living in a pluralistic society is the myriad sources of information available to individuals. While this is clearly a strength of our society, it is not without its drawbacks as well. A single story, issue, or event can be reported in profoundly different ways as a result of the perspective taken by the source of the information. The *Washington Post* may take a critical and questioning perspective on an action taken by Congress, while the *Washington Times* may praise the same action. At times the perspectives reported have clear biases, while at other times such bias may be disguised in subtle word choices or the inclusion/exclusion of information.

This assignment asks students to select a relevant news story and examine how it is reported by three different news agencies/sources.

Specifically...

1. Students should select a current news story. While selecting a controversial story will make the assignment more exciting, this is not a requirement.
2. Students should find three news sources reporting on this issue. For each source the student should write a paragraph that explains how the story is reported.
3. Students should provide a link/address *or* the actual article used from each of the three sources.
4. Students should write an analysis that includes...
 - a ranking and rationale for ranking of each of the three sources from most to least credible
 - a statement of what kind of grounds/data is used by each sources to justify its claims
 - a sense of what insights this assignment provides to the student as a consumer of argument
5. This assignment is worth 50 points and is due _____.

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**Writers Never Die:
Connecting Hip-Hop Music to Creative
Language Use in the Classroom**

Justin Atwell

Abstract

This article recounts the experiences of a graduate student at Iowa State University while teaching the use of creative language or “stylistic devices” to students in a university-level basic public speaking course. Though many students may fail to see creative language in use outside of the confines of the public speaking classroom, introducing them to its use within the genre of hip-hop music can help reinforce that the use of creative language is more than a mere course requirement and, in fact, is present in almost all aspects of American culture. This article offers an activity using hip-hop music and videos that is visually and aurally stimulating for students, offers an opportunity for friendly competition among students, and helps foster thorough student analysis of multimedia texts’ use of creative language. If executed properly, this activity can be engaging for both high school and university students in a range of settings and will undoubtedly be enlightening for instructors as well.

In the Fall semester of 2010, I entered a master of literature program at Iowa State University and, unlike most of my peers who taught first-year composition courses, was afforded the unique opportunity to serve as a graduate instructor in the basic public speaking course. Given my usually talkative nature and my comfort in front of a crowd, the public speaking classroom seemed a perfect fit for me. My first semester went incredibly well (I felt). Sure, I endured the steep learning curve that every new graduate student experiences when trying to balance their dual role as student and instructor, but I had a great deal of support from my department, my students seemed fairly non-confrontational, and the semester progressed fairly smoothly. That is, until my students encountered their last assignment of the semester—a special occasion speech—and my first semester of teaching began to fall apart.

In Speech Communication 212, the basic public speaking course at Iowa State University, students are expected to incorporate specific types of creative language or “stylistic devices” into their special occasion speeches. Following the guidelines of our course text, Stephen Lucas’ *The Art of Public Speaking*, students are tasked with creating five stylistic devices from the ones the instructors introduce in the classroom (simile, metaphor, personification, parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and antithesis) and incorporate them in a speech that either commemorates or entertains. As a graduate student in English, such a task seemed relatively easy to me. I had learned about simile, metaphor, and alliteration in elementary school and filled in the others some time shortly after. I naively assumed that my students had this same knowledge base and would easily be able to complete the task with minimal effort. I was sorely mistaken. In class, I was met with great resistance when asking students to identify stylistic devices in examples I provided in class and flat-out indignation when I asked them to use them in their own work. *Nobody actually talks like this*, they claimed. *When will we ever use this again?* I knew the material was worth their while, and I could see stylistic devices in use all around me, but my students refused to see eye to eye with me on the subject of creative language. Given my lack of experience, I was stumped as to how to justify the use of stylistic devices to my students, and once the special occasion unit and the semester were over, I’m sure many of them left just as skeptical about the importance of using creative language in public speaking as when they entered my class.

After my first semester’s lackluster attempt at teaching students how to use creative language in their speeches, it seemed to me that students’ main complaint about the special occasion speech was that they didn’t see the practicality of stylistic devices. With this in mind, I set out to devise a plan for helping my students see that stylistic devices did exist outside of the public speaking classroom and weren’t just another hoop for them to jump through in order to pass the course. I knew many great speeches throughout history had drawn the same stylistic devices we teach in the classroom—Kennedy’s “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country,” Martin Luther King’s repetition of “I have a dream,” etc. I also knew, however, that by the time the special occasion speech rolled around in the last few weeks of the semester, many students were often already burned out on the many examples of famous speeches I provided them with throughout the

semester. In addition, some were difficult to engage simply because of their busy schedules, the nearing of summer vacation, and even pending graduation for those who had put off the class as long as they possibly could. As such, I needed something a bit more unorthodox to engage my students. This is when I stumbled upon the idea of using hip-hop to teach stylistic devices.

I've always had a passion for independent hip-hop music that borders on the obsessive, and one of my professors from my undergraduate institution had often suggested that exploring my interest in hip-hop might make for an interesting topic for my master's thesis. Though I ignored my professor's advice at first, by the end of my first semester, I was convinced that my professor was on to something, and began writing a thesis exploring that very topic. Simultaneously, I saw my colleagues who were teaching composition courses bringing their thesis and dissertation work into their own classrooms. Since I had hip-hop on the mind anyway, and my students at least feigned interest in my thesis topic during our pre-class banter, I thought *why not?* After several variations, I landed on an activity that I thought would work well and when the end of the semester rolled around and it came time to introduce students to stylistic devices, I decided to try it. The first day of stylistic devices was largely lecture-based and elicited the same responses from students I encountered the previous semester—*Why are we learning this? Nobody talks like this.* The second day, however, I introduced my students to stylistic devices in hip-hop music.

Why Hip-Hop?

Before explaining the activity I used, it is perhaps important to provide some justification for why I chose to use hip-hop to teach stylistic devices in a university-level public speaking classroom. There are many practical reasons why using hip-hop is perfect for the public speaking classroom. Firstly, hip-hop music is incredibly popular among college-age students, so it has the potential to engage them in analyzing a discourse with which they're already familiar. Granted, not every student has a strong predilection for hip-hop, but most, if not all, college students have at least a passing familiarity with the genre. Though some may dislike the music, it's important to recognize that, as an instructor as well as in life, you can't please all of the people all of the time. Secondly, hip-hop is a genre that I'm fairly familiar with. Though this may seem like a

selfish reason to use the subject in the classroom, it makes sense to teach what you know, and I know hip-hop. Many young scholars in Language Arts fields have a similar interest in and knowledge of the genre. As such, an activity using hip-hop may be fitting for these scholars as it helps to bridge the narrow, but still present gap between graduate instructors and their undergraduate students. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, hip-hop music is rife with creative language use and is a rich area for examination because it is a genre that foregrounds artists' lyrics. This is important not only because it means that hip-hop songs traditionally have more lyrics in any given song than songs in other genres, but also because the art form privileges creative language as a means of demonstrating skill. Vonna Powell notes that, "social creativity" and "inventiveness" are "the genesis of the hip-hop genre/ethos and the most frequently enacted self-enhancement strategy by its referents" (Powell, 2011). This creativity comes in countless forms, but often roots itself in language concepts particularly relevant to Speech Communication students (simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration, etc.). Creativity has always been and will probably always be a mainstay of hip-hop music and culture.

Many other scholars have explored the benefits of using hip-hop in the classroom. A cursory search through pedagogical journals reveals articles espousing its use in teaching composition, literary giants such as Chaucer (Forni, 2013) and Shakespeare (Paul, 2000), and even math and science (Edmin & Lee, 2012). As Ayanna Brown notes, using hip-hop in schools "inserts youthful culture into the classroom in magnificent ways. Students who may have been otherwise unreachable might become engaged in talking about their own thoughts and ideas that sometimes seem mysteriously hidden" (2008). Campbell and Low demonstrate the role of hip-hop and other forms of popular culture as tools for investigating the outside world: "Within a constructivist model, where teaching and learning is a dynamic interchange between all classroom participants, students and teachers can become co-investigators of culture" (Callahan & Low, 2004). Campbell explores other important uses for hip-hop in the classroom: "[S]tudents (of all racial and social backgrounds) also need to recognize the power of language, of rhetoric through the manipulation of linguistic codes, conventions and styles" and hip-hop can be more effective than the "sanitized approach to language in conventional pedagogical models" (Campbell, 2007, 333). Campbell not only shows the potential for hip-hop to appeal to a diverse body of

students in our classrooms, but also demonstrates hip-hop's capacity to reveal the power of language both in and, more importantly, outside of the classroom. This makes hip-hop a perfect tool for showing students the importance of creativity in public speaking.

The use of hip-hop in the classroom, as any activity, is not without its potential for drawbacks. Callahan and Low caution that any time an instructor teaches topics related to pop culture that instructor runs the risk of students not taking such activities seriously or perhaps even feeling that they, as students, have more expertise than the instructor (2004). Similarly, while she recognizes hip-hop's great potential in the classroom, Brown (2008) provides a particularly imperative caution against exploiting an important African American cultural contribution such as hip-hop:

Making connections with students' lives, listening to our students, challenging them to apply their own creative ideas to more complicated concepts make learning a life changing experience, for all students... As such, we can find ways to use culture (hip-hop and others) in ways to transform learning. However, we must collaborate and consider why and how we use these cultures, specifically if we don't find value in them beyond our own professional objectives. (So Now What? section)

I would take Brown's warning a step further and assert that if one finds no cultural value in hip-hop as an art form that it shouldn't be used in the classroom at all, even if the instructor recognizes students' attraction to the genre. If this is the case, one could probably find other, more effective means of instruction that both engage students and find favor with the instructor. If, however, one is interested in teaching creative language in the public speaking classroom through using hip hop, I put forth the following activity.

The Activity

In order to prepare for the activity, the instructor should choose 3 songs with accompanying videos (I use YouTube) that exemplify strong use of creative language. My personal favorites that seem to stimulate interesting discussion include P.O.S's "Optimist," Dessa's "Dixon's Girl," and Shad's "I Don't Like To"—all of which can easily be found by typing the titles and artist names in the search bar of YouTube. I

choose these songs in particular because the songs and videos are appropriate for students in a university or even high school setting. Additionally, given the fact that these artists lie outside the confines of mainstream hip-hop, many students are unfamiliar with their work and discover something fresh and new. That said, almost any hip-hop song could be used for the activity; it all just depends on the instructor's comfort level.

After choosing the songs, the instructor will want to review them several times and note any examples of various stylistic devices and their perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness. I choose to take notes on all of the devices I notice in order to foster discussion of any examples students may miss. In the class period prior to the activity and via e-mail, the instructor should request that those students who have laptops bring them for the day's activity. In a smaller, 20-23 person public speaking classroom, six laptops should be sufficient. Many university students have access to a personal laptop, but if for any reason not enough students have laptops, students can use smartphones or additional laptops may often be checked out from other sources on campus. Before entering the classroom, the instructor should print several copies of the lyrics to each of the songs for the students to read during the activity. This will ensure that students can not only hear the stylistic devices, but also see them in written form. Lastly, immediately before entering the classroom, the instructor should e-mail students links to YouTube clips of the songs and their accompanying videos.

What to Do During Class

The activity traditionally takes approximately 40-50 minutes to complete. A brief (five minute) review of stylistic devices discussed in previous class periods may be necessary to jog students' memories of concepts they'll be working with. Students should be broken into six groups of no more than four students with one laptop per group. Each group should be assigned a song to listen to, read, and analyze. For each song, there should be two groups analyzing said song. These groups will go "head-to-head" later in the class period in their analyses. Once students are broken into groups, each group should be given printed copies of the lyrics to their assigned songs. Explain that students will be competing to see which group can uncover what they believe to be the five most creative, effective, and unique stylistic devices in their

assigned songs.

Students should be given approximately 10 minutes to analyze songs and pinpoint various stylistic devices in each. They should write down any stylistic devices they notice as well as the type of stylistic device (simile, metaphor, etc.). At the end of 10 minutes, groups will be called to the front of the room by assigned song. First, the song should be played for the class to hear. This not only gives all the students an opportunity to hear the stylistic devices, which is particularly important with rhythmic devices such as parallelism, but also provides a nice opportunity to keep students engaged with the visual rhetoric of the videos. After showing the video, the two groups assigned to the song should reveal any stylistic devices they noted. Given the competitive nature of the activity, stylistic devices are assigned differing point values based on the difficulty of locating them. I use the following scale, but you may wish to develop your own:

- Simile or metaphor- one point
- Repetition or parallelism- one point
- Alliteration- two points
- Personification- three points
- Antithesis- five points

As noted previously, students are searching for unique stylistic devices. This way, the activity doesn't merely focus on finding stylistic devices, but is also an exercise in close reading and analysis. Similar to the board game, Scattergories, when both teams note the same stylistic device, no points are awarded, but for unique discoveries, teams are awarded points based on the type of stylistic devices.

After each group reveals their findings, a quick discussion of any prominent stylistic devices that groups may have missed can be helpful in reinforcing students' ability to identify and understand various types of stylistic devices. At the end of the exercise, the team with the most points "wins." Although I've found that competition is often an effective enough means of fostering student engagement during this activity, bonus points, candy, or other forms of positive reinforcement may be offered to the "winning team" to ensure participation. After the activity, a brief discussion of particularly strong or weak stylistic devices seen throughout the activity can help students further process what makes certain instances of creative language effective or memorable. Discussing particularly clichéd stylistic devices and contrasting them

with especially unique, effective examples can also help students understand the importance of originality when developing their speeches.

Parting Thoughts

After my botched first semester of teaching public speaking, I used this activity for the remaining three semesters of instruction in Speech Communication 212. Though I can't speak for all of my students, I do know that the activity was certainly beneficial for some. Each semester, at least one individual (often three or more) e-mailed me, unsolicited, to express his or her engagement with the day's activities. In one of the most bizarre, backhanded compliments I've ever received, one student, an individual particularly averse to in-class participation, informed me via e-mail that, though they had been largely unimpressed by the course as a whole, "Hip-Hop Day" was particularly interesting, engaging, and beneficial in helping this individual recognize the presence of stylistic devices. The activity also received sparse, but positive mention in my end of the semester evaluations. While "Hip-Hop Day" certainly isn't for everyone, those with an interest in hip-hop music looking to show students the presence and importance of creative language use outside of the public speaking classroom may find this activity an appropriate means of doing so. As Callahan & Low and Brown all acknowledge, it is important to proceed with caution when approaching such an activity; however, if one respects the cultural importance of hip-hop and its potential for bridging gaps in the classroom, I believe this activity can prove to be an enriching experience for both students and instructors.

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**The Laugh Factor:
Emulating Sketch Comedy in the Public Speaking Class**
Kylie M. Jacobsen

Abstract

The public speaking classroom can be a dread course, but it can also serve as an influential component for effective public speaking in the professional workplace setting. Using improvisation, the quintessence of sketch comedy, public speaking educators can inspire students to collaborate in the classroom and apply the same communication skills in the professional workplace. Through analogical reasoning between improvisation in marketing and business classes and improvisation in the public speaking classroom, this paper demonstrates that improv speaking contributes to collaboration and communication in the professional setting. To support this claim, evidence can be gleaned from a few case studies by marketing and business professionals, but application in other academic areas is lacking. This article aims to provide discourse for improvisation in the public speaking course that reduces student apprehension and bridges speech theory and real- world application.

Keywords: improvisation, sketch comedy, public speaking, basic course, collaboration

Each semester in the public speaking class I instruct, I am challenged with a speech topic during the persuasive unit that attempts to convince me public speaking courses are irrelevant to collegiate study, if not just plain cruel. Understandably a dreaded course among students, public speaking can be made more welcoming through improvisation (improv) techniques because of the emphasis on collaboration over competition. Additionally, I argue that research of improv in business course case studies and in-service training can give insight to curricula that prepare students for a variety of workplace situations by emulating some of the principles of sketch comedy such as the “yes, and” guideline.

Improvisation as a Methodology

Improv, the quintessence of sketch comedy, is associated with comedic acts because the scenes are predominantly unprepared and focus heavily on extemporaneous speaking, which can result in humorous mishaps and witty banter. Improv is ideal as a tool in the classroom, however, because it is easily accessible and relatively familiar to everyone, regardless of anyone's theatrical background (Sheldon Huffaker et al. 2005). In general, there are no rules for improv, but there are some basic guidelines that need to be adopted before a scene can be successful for its comedic effect, or in this case, its collaborative effect. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the reasons educators should implement improv in the classroom, discuss the benefits of improv in the workplace, and address two major components of improv that educators can apply in the classroom.

Many students in the foundational public speaking course confront a high degree of anxiety. Most Americans fear primitive threats, or threats that play on humans' survival instincts, and *people* are the number one primitive threat (Smoller 2012). *People* intimidate public speakers because the speaker feels singled out by the audience, or *people*, like prey among predators. Primitive threat has carried over into the modern day and developed into social phobias. Smoller states, "More than 12% of the Americans meet criteria for full-blown social phobia, a condition in which social and performance fears cause significant suffering and impairment" (2012). Smoller charges that public speaking and other social situations are significant phobias among people because often the speaker is stared at, which is indicative of primal threat (2012). Consequently, students who feel forced to take a public speaking course by their degree advisor can initially feel threatened in what can be perceived as a "dread course." Kher et al. defines a "dread course" as "one that students sometimes avoid due to a lack of self-confidence, perceived difficulty of the material, or a previous negative experience ..." (Kher et al. 1999). If students associate public speaking courses with innate fear and threat, they may suffer through the course. The popular improv technique "Yes, and" uniquely combats major contributions of social phobias, especially between classmates, because it explicitly establishes rules that prevent judgment of an individual. Through improvisation, the collaborative communication skills fostered in the public speaking classroom can further be developed for collaborative

workplace communication.

Research in the past decade has analyzed the successful use of improv in business and management classes as well as in employee training. The resulting conclusions suggest the success of improv in business classrooms is indicative of its value in professional workplace settings. Aylesworth charges that adapting the *mindset* of improv into case study practice in the business classroom will lead to the “ultimate goal: discovery and internalization of the managerial techniques and knowledge represented in the case” (Aylesworth 2008). Sheldon Huffaker and West explored the learning possibilities using improv in the business classroom and based on empirical data concluded that improv, among other techniques, greatly enhanced the classroom experience and promoted “an open, risk-tolerant, creative, participative, and energized atmosphere” (2005). Additionally, they cited many companies, such as Nike and FedEx, that have benefited from the improv consultant group On Your Feet: Improv for Business. Companies cite improved team building, collaboration, communication, and brand and character development (Sheldon Huffaker et al. 2005). Berk and Trieber experimented with four improv exercises to promote deep learning in business classrooms that aimed to bridge the dissonance of Net Generation learners (2009). Despite these successes, improv has not travelled well across the curriculum. Berk et al. point out that, “Despite the documented effectiveness of the techniques in this domain, their potential for application to virtually all other disciplines has not been realized” (2009).

This paper aims to take the practice of improv into the realm of public speaking, with two objectives in mind: collaborative communication and innovation. The proposed approach eliminates what Rockley terms as “The Content Silo Trap” that results from individuals working in isolation (2003). Co-workers do not always communicate with others in different departments, and consequently, updates and changes are not expressed to all the necessary people (2003). Often people are pressed for deadlines and do not work collaboratively. Instead, each department creates documents for their own areas and often re-create documents that already exist. This inefficient use of communication takes twice as long and costs twice as much (2003). Consequently, people work in a linear fashion that does not consider innovative ideas of others, as if they were working inside a silo. This non-recursive act is what Rockley et al. describe as the “not invented

here syndrome” (2003). I will argue that two major components of improv in the classroom provide the mindset for approaching these situations in the workplace.

Improvisation in Practice

Improv does well in the classroom because it distinctly sets up each participant for success through the “yes, and” technique. Arguably the paramount characteristic of improv, the “yes, and” technique requires that each participant “must accept what other players say, and then build on it” (Aylesworth 2008). “Yes, and” emphasizes collaboration over competition in three main ways. First, improv bolsters confidence and trust in oneself and in one’s teammates because all ideas are considered valid contributions. “Yes, and” does not allow judgment between participants and does not attribute success or failure of a project to a single person. The freedom to contribute freely reduces the anxiety many students feel in the dread course of public speaking.

Secondly, improv promotes creativity. Without the fear of judgment, students take more risks in critical thinking and develop innovative ideas. “Yes, and” encourages each participant to approach every idea with an open mind. Similar to the previous point regarding attributing success or failure of a project to one person, creative contributions encourage everyone to participate because a single idea is not allowed to monopolize the direction of a conversation. Aylesworth considers creativity an ideal outcome of improv because it eliminates the “yes, but ...” response that immediately suppresses a participant’s contribution, at which point no further communication can advance the solution or the scene (2008). Aylesworth summarizes the “yes, and” technique to mean, “be confident in what you are doing, and help each other out” (2008).

Finally, “yes, and” promotes active listening between participants. The kairotic moment for a participant to enter the conversation or scene depends on his or her listening skills. Before a student can successfully enter a conversation, he or she must be informed of the discussion at hand. This concept mirrors what Burke describes in his parlor analogy. In this analogy, Burke sets a scene for the rhetorical reader. He describes a parlor in which people are participating in a discussion. As a late arrival enters the parlor, he or she must acclimatize to the current discussion if he or she wishes to add valuable comments

into the “unending conversation” (Burke 1973). The conversation, Burke claims, was occurring long before the person entered the parlor and will be ongoing after the arrival leaves (1973). An important lesson from the parlor analogy with regards to improv in the public speaking classroom is the ability to adapt to the scene or conversation. Only when a participant is aware of all the components in the scene can he or she participate in the conversation.

While no formal rules govern improv, the “yes, and” technique can only work if the participants agree to follow the guidelines established by the mnemonic acronym *DORQ* (deny, order, refuse, and question) (Aylesworth 2008). *DORQ* represents the four main things *not* to do while participating in improv. In short, *DORQ* inverts “yes, and.” Aylesworth addresses the concerns *DORQ* raises by applying it to case studies in a business class. Following is a brief description Aylesworth offers and my translation of how to apply *DORQ* in the public speaking classroom.

- *Denying* a participant’s contribution means to reject the reality he or she suggests. In this instance, no further communication can occur between participants because the trust between them is destroyed.
- *Order* represents commanding what others do during the sketch, which reduces creativity and innovation. Once the scene is monopolized or given a direction, nothing new can emerge from the discourse.
- *Repeating* is copying what another person has said but does not add anything new to the discussion, which means the “and” part of “yes, and” is not followed. In this instance, not only is innovation inhibited, but also communication.
- *Questions* that define the situation instead of prod the situation thrust the responsibility of creativity onto one participant and do not promote a supportive atmosphere or collaboration between both participants. For example, questions like “what should I do with this prop?” do not add to the conversation.

Application

An activity I have found useful and successful in the public speaking classroom is a hybrid adaptation of Berk's "Speech Tag" and a lesson plan from my graduate teaching handbook. I call this activity the "improv-mercial" because it parallels an infomercial using improv.

The "improv-mercial"

Beforehand, collect 10 random or interesting objects and conceal them in a brown paper bag.

1. Begin with a lecture on Aristotle's Artistic Appeals and the essentials of a policy-based persuasive speech.
2. Divide the students into groups of 3-4.
3. Allow each group to blindly select a random item from the bag.
4. Have each group create a different purpose for the object they selected.
5. Give each group at least one minute in front of the class to demonstrate a persuasive and improvised infomercial for the new product
6. "Speech Tag" occurs when one student volunteers to begin the infomercial. As the infomercial progresses, other group members tap the shoulder of the current speaker to contribute to the infomercial in place of the preceding speaker.
7. The group may be seated after the infomercial incorporates ethos, pathos, logos and establishes a problem and a practical plan/solution.

Implications

The "improv-mercial" emphasizes active listening because a logical contribution cannot be conceived without listening to the contributions made before each student. Additionally, this activity emphasizes collaboration because everyone is working together to create a convincing infomercial. But without turning the classroom into a *Whose Line Is It, Anyway* scene, the "improv-mercial" exposes students to situations where they have to adapt and practice forming logical

responses to a myriad of situations. Not every student will initially feel comfortable contributing to the “improv-mercial”, but if the “yes, and” technique is strongly established at the beginning of class, each student should feel encouraged that his or her contributions are valued, big or small, comedic or practical.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this paper addressed the theatrical concept of improvisation in the classroom to promote better workplace speaking practices. Improv encourages innovative communication as a result of collaboration in the workplace. Using activities such as the “improv-mercial” in lessons for the public speaking course can allow students to start emulating sketch comedy in the classroom, and apply the lessons in the workplace setting. As studies have shown, improv in the classroom has proven to be successful in business settings. I suggest that specifically in the public speaking course, “yes, and” improvisation can encourage an atmosphere of trust and support in an otherwise anxiety-induced setting. Students who practice these activities will gain a skillset that employers favor and that reduces The Content Silo Trap. In short, improvisation harnesses effective collaborative communication and innovation.

Title of Class Session: The Improv-mercial

Purpose The Improv-mercial introduces students in the basic public speaking course to improvisation to create a persuasive infomercial.

Learning outcome(s) By the end of the lesson, students should be able to correctly identify and apply the artistic appeals, patterns of reasoning, and identify the problem, plan, and practicality (3 Ps) of persuasion. The theory used in this course is provided by material from Stephan Lucas. Also, students will practice the “Yes, and” improvisation technique to create the infomercial with just a few preparation minutes. Emphasize innovation, collaboration, and communication.

Attention Getter Often I show a variety of YouTube clips of infomercials. Infomercials that sell household appliances work well because of the heavy use of logos and analogical reasoning.

Connecting This activity connects the theory of persuasion techniques to the practical application of improvisation. Improv benefits students in dread courses like public speaking, but also encourages collaboration and communication in the work place. These two traits are highly desired by employers.

Main Idea Students will separate into groups of approximately 3-4. Each group will be given a mystery item from a paper bag and is charged with inventing a new purpose for the item. For approximately 5 minutes allow the groups to discuss a new purpose and outline a persuasive argument that would sell the “new” product to the class. Use “speech tag” to direct the improv-mercial once the group is in front of the class. A group may be finished with the performance once they have incorporated the aspects of persuasion per lecture material.

Guided practice I encourage the most random and impractical objects that you can find around your house so that students don’t get hung up on what the item is intentionally used for. In the past I’ve used:

- Ceramic statues
- Cymbal pads
- Silica gel stress balls/toys
- Plastic decorative fruit
- Bobble heads
- Novelty nut crackers
- Pieces of computer hardware

Check for understanding Have a follow-up discussion after each “improv-mercial” to see if the audience can correctly identify the parts of persuasion.

Closure Recap key concepts and discuss other ways improv can prepare students for future classwork and job preparation. Consider interviews, business proposals, and casual conversations with the boss.

Reflection Sometimes students are shy about “performing” this activity. “Yes, and” needs to be clearly emphasized and encouraged before this activity can be successful. Also, points should not be awarded for “best” improv-mercial because this lesson specifically encourages collaboration over competition.

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