Iowa Journal of Communication

Volume 53 **Number 1** **Fall 2021**

Iowa Journal of Communication

Volume 53 Number 1

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Iowa Communication Association

Officers and Leadership

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Changes in cervical cancer screening guidelines and persistent disparities indicate a need to identify communication preferences for receiving a positive HPV test result to ensure appropriate follow-up care. We conducted a directed content analysis guided by the tenets of self-determination theory of 575 written responses derived from a national sample of women $\geq$ 18 in the United States. Biologically female women responded to a prompt about communication preferences for a positive HPV test result. Pearson chi-square analyses were conducted to discover differences in communication preferences. Individuals with health insurance ($p = 0.044$), those with >$29,999 in annual household income ($p = 0.040$), and White participants ($p = 0.026$), more frequently indicated preference for communication related to autonomy compared to other groups. Hispanic/Latino participants more frequently indicated preference for relatedness in communication ($p = 0.003$). Implications include that communication should (a) focus on the meaning of results and HPV's relationship to cancer (i.e., competence) and what a woman can specifically do to follow up (i.e., autonomy); (b) incorporate elements that build autonomy to encourage clinical follow-up in populations that less frequently mention autonomy-based communication; and (c) build culturally competent communication by embodying the concept of "personalismo," or friendliness, for Hispanic/Latino patients.

This work seeks to explore the importance of mentorship, even if its guidance and direction are characterized by flaws. By looking at entertainment media and the way in which mentors are sought for the purpose of passing the torch to a new generation of characters with new storylines, the work will explain how realistic portrayals of those within leadership positions are important. Specifically, the work will draw from plot points of mentors and mentees looking for something in their own lives. The mentors are able to give useful guidance, ultimately working in the mentees' best interests; the goal is to allow mentees to work toward a more independent and thoughtful approach

Welcome from the Editor

Kristen L. Majocha

Welcome to the 53rd regular edition of the Iowa Journal of Communication. We are an award-winning state journal that publishes the highest quality peer-reviewed scholarship on a variety of communication topics. Our journal is a product of the Iowa Communication Association, a professional organization whose purpose is to unite those persons with either an academic or professional interest in all disciplines of Communication and the Performing Arts.

The issue begins with a manuscript that engages self-determination theory in connection to gender and communication: "Communicating Positive HPV Test Results: A Directed Content Analysis of Women's Preferences Using Self-Determination Theory" by Susanna Foxworthy Scott, Katharine J. Head, Nicole L. Johnson, Kaitlyn Kruer, and Gregory D. Zimet. Next, Paul Lucas and Abby McCann explore the importance of mentorship in "Torch Rhetoric: Characterizations of Flawed Mentorship". Pedagogical issues are fleshed out in "Curriculum Planning: A Snapshot of Iowa, Undergraduate Communication Studies Curriculum in 4-year Colleges and Universities" by Audrey L. Deterding and James L. Kauffman. The impact of digital communication on interpersonal relationships is uncovered in "Just Txt Me: How Digital Platforms Shape the Close Relationships of Generation Z" by Kurt Sernett, Abigail Reinhardt, Lillian Smithson, and Mitchell Hollingshead. Finally, Maryl McGinley reviews *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue & Difference* by Ronald Arnett, Janie Harden Fritz, ad Leeane Bell (Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2018). I invite you to cite these articles in your research.

Manuscripts are now being sought for Volume 54. Submissions may focus on any type of communication. Approaches may be either philosophical, theoretical, critical, applied, pedagogical, or empirical in nature. Submissions from all geographic areas are encouraged, and one need not be a member of the Iowa Communication Association to submit. We are particularly interested in unique, non-standard approaches and voices. The deadline is April 30th, 2022. Email majocha@calu.edu for more information.

Kristen L. Majocha, PhD
Editor

Communicating Positive HPV Test Results: A Directed Content Analysis of Women's Preferences Using Self-Determination Theory

Susanna Foxworthy Scott, Nicole L. Johnson, Kaitlyn Kruer, Gregory D. Zimet, and Katharine J. Head

Changes in cervical cancer screening guidelines and persistent disparities indicate a need to identify communication preferences for receiving a positive HPV test result to ensure appropriate follow-up care. We conducted a directed content analysis guided by the tenets of self-determination theory of 575 written responses derived from a national sample of women ≥ 18 in the United States. Biologically female women responded to a prompt about communication preferences for a positive HPV test result. Pearson chi-square analyses were conducted to discover differences in communication preferences. Individuals with health insurance (p = 0.044), those with >$29,999 in annual household income (p = 0.040), and White participants (p = 0.026), more frequently indicated a preference for communication related to autonomy compared to other groups. Hispanic/Latino participants more frequently indicated a preference for relatedness in communication (p = 0.003). Implications include that communication should (a) focus on the meaning of results and HPV's relationship to cancer (i.e., competence) and what a woman can specifically do to follow up (i.e., autonomy); (b) incorporate elements that build autonomy to encourage clinical follow-up in populations that less frequently mention autonomy-based communication; and (c) build culturally competent communication by embodying the concept of "personalismo," or friendliness, for Hispanic/Latino patients.

Introduction

Cervical cancer screening remains one of the most effective public health interventions, but disparities continue to exist in cervical cancer incidence and mortality (Safaeian et al., 2007). The disease can be largely prevented with early detection of abnormal cell growth and/or a high-risk human papilloma virus (HPV) type (Ronco et al., 2014). Yet, cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cause of cancer-related death in women worldwide, claiming 311,400 lives in 2018 (American Cancer Society, 2018). In the United States, it was estimated 14,480 new cases would be diagnosed and 4,290 women would die in 2021 (American Cancer Society, 2021). Many of these diagnoses and deaths could have been prevented with early detection and treatment.

In the United States, racial and socioeconomic disparities exist in cervical cancer incidence and mortality. Hispanic women

have a higher incidence rate, and Black women have higher mortality rates than other racial groups (National Cancer Institute, 2020). Recent findings show White women are 2.5 times more likely to have received a recent Pap test than Black women (Johnson et al., 2020). Also concerning, women with lower socioeconomic status have significantly higher rates of cervical cancer diagnosis in late stages and lower rates of survival (Singh et al., 2004). These same groups of women also report lower screening rates. Women who are Hispanic, Asian, age 51-64, and uninsured or publicly insured are less likely to report having had a recent Pap test (Sabatino et al., 2015). Only 62% of women without insurance report having a recent Pap test (Sabatino et al., 2015). There is also decreased access to critical preventive services in these populations due to a number of social determinants, including poverty, structural barriers, and personal beliefs (Scarinci et al., 2010); thus, the most vulnerable cohorts of women in the United States experience disproportionately higher rates of cervical cancer diagnosis and mortality, and these women report lower rates of screening, even though the disease is highly preventable.

Research on communication of the results of cervical cancer screenings is critical because of persistent disparities worldwide. The most recent U.S. guidelines for cervical cancer screening, issued in 2018, provide options for patients: for women ages 21-65, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends co-testing every 5 years, cervical cytology (Pap test) alone every 3 years, or high-risk HPV testing alone every 5 years (Smith et al., 2013; USPSTF, 2018a, 2018b). HPV causes over 90% of all cervical cancers, and testing provides an effective tool to detect oncogenic (cancer-causing) subtypes of the virus (Goodman, 2015). Furthermore, many countries have moved to HPV as the primary screening test, including the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands (Rebolj et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2015). Given the evolving landscape of preventive healthcare services catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that self-swabbing, which allows for more rapid screening, will increasingly be implemented, meaning women will conduct HPV tests in the privacy of their own residences (Bedell et al., 2019). This shift in screening practices further underscores the value in understanding communication needs around testing, including how to communicate the results of different cervical cancer screening modalities (e.g., Pap test vs. HPV testing), and in some cases, how to do so in a completely asynchronous setting.

Impact of Communication in Cervical Cancer Prevention

It is foreseeable the United States eventually will move to the HPV primary testing model through which women will learn from a cervical swab whether or not they test positive for an oncogenic strain of HPV and that eventually this may be done

through self-swabs. These guidelines represent a paradigm shift from women learning they have normal or abnormal cells through a yearly Pap test to a situation where women learn they may or may not have a high-risk strain of a common viral sexually transmitted infection (STI) for which there is a vaccine. It is critical, therefore, to understand women's preferences, particularly women from populations vulnerable to poor cervical cancer outcomes, for communication of positive HPV test results to help ensure patient understanding and adequate follow-up.

Research has shown women are rapidly adopting a preference for longer screening intervals but have low knowledge of guidelines and how these two tests work together (Cohen et al., 2016; Cooper & Saraiya, 2018; Head et al., 2017). With the added HPV test and expanded screening intervals, the relay of screening results becomes a more complicated task. We previously reported that clinics practice a variety of communication strategies for delivering Pap and HPV test results, with variations in timing, content, and delivery of results (Head et al., 2019). We have also found healthcare providers may have mixed attitudes and beliefs about these expanded screening intervals and how to communicate results to women, especially in the context of shifting away from long-standing annual Pap test recommendations (Tatar et al., 2020).

Because of disparities that exist around cervical cancer and screening, coupled with the changed guidelines, which create a more complex task for communicating results and ensuring follow-up, there is a need to focus on identifying effective strategies for discussing screening results with women. In fact, communication has been reported as one of the most significant factors that determine follow-up on abnormal test results (McKee et al., 1999). Lack of effective communication has resulted in low rates of return for colposcopy (McKee et al., 1999). In addition, women have reported low levels of knowledge about the meaning of a Pap test, and it has been recommended physicians more effectively educate their patients about HPV and its relationship to cervical cancer (Blake et al., 2015; Cermak et al., 2010). Although physicians have described explaining HPV test results to their patients and the cause for infection, women have indicated not feeling educated about risk factors and preventive measures for the virus (Cermak et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2015). Many women have recalled their physicians did not discuss HPV or cervical cancer-related topics in any capacity during their annual screening (Cermak et al., 2010). It has also been suggested conveying a positive HPV test result may require more sensitive communication involving a longer counseling session (Massad, 2018). This may be a result of the increase in anxiety and distress documented in women after learning they have tested positive for HPV (McBride et al., 2019).

Communication interventions have shown efficacy in increasing follow-up to abnormal results after a Pap test, but little research has been conducted on the means to effectively communicate HPV test results (Engelstad et al., 2005). Importantly, patients' interpersonal communication with physicians and uncertainty about test results may negatively affect cancer screening and follow-up behavior (Cohen et al., 2016). In general, effective communication by physicians has been shown to significantly increase patient adherence to cervical cancer screening recommendations (e.g., receiving a colposcopy; Zolnierek & Dimatteo, 2009). In sum, there is a gap in the research on women's needs and preferences for communication about HPV test results, particularly if that result is positive and requires follow-up care.

Theoretical Foundation – Self Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) provides an appropriate framework for explaining the motivational dynamics related to the regulation of positive health behaviors, such as following up with appropriate care after a positive HPV test result (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, the theory postulates humans have three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that, if satisfied, will result in participants acting in self-beneficial ways (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the clinical setting, these three needs can be understood as the patient feeling competent in understanding what is going on with their health, autonomous in their ability to participate in their care and take appropriate actions, and relatedness in terms of receiving relational and emotional support from their healthcare provider or clinic. Patients' ability and motivation "to assume responsibility for their health and behavior depends on the satisfaction of these needs" (Sheldon, 2008, p. 75).

Previous work in health communication has used SDT in a number of ways to better understand patient-provider communication. For example, patient-centered communication and the use of electronic health records have activated women to better adhere to cancer screening recommendations (Totzkay et al., 2017). Other research has been conducted using SDT to better understand motivators for patients' health information-seeking behaviors prior to a clinic visit (Lee & Lin, 2016). At the other end of the process, HPV test result communication focuses on downstream communication with a provider after a clinic visit. SDT provides a useful lens for understanding women's preferences for how HPV test results are communicated so they feel competent, autonomous, supported, and ultimately motivated to act in accordance with appropriate follow-up care for positive HPV test results.

Research Questions

Given recent changes in cervical cancer screening guidelines and persistent disparities in cervical cancer screening

rates, incidence, and mortality, we sought to identify women's communication preferences for receiving a positive HPV test result utilizing SDT as a framework. We are also particularly interested in communication preferences of women from at-risk cervical cancer groups (i.e., racial minorities, low socioeconomic status). Our research questions are:

RQ1: Informed by the tenets of SDT, what are women's preferences for how positive HPV test results are communicated?

RQ2: Do women's preferences significantly differ based on sociodemographic factors associated with higher rates of cervical cancer incidence and mortality, including race, ethnicity, health insurance status, and annual household income?

Methods

Recruitment and Procedure

Participants were recruited to this IRB-approved study through an online survey facilitated by Survey Sampling International (SSI), which provides support for academics in yielding national and representative samples. This company oversees a national panel of adults in 37 countries, with 4 million participants eligible for participation in the United States. Participants received e-mail invitations to participate in the survey, and compensation was provided through SSI, which offered a small incentive. The survey was administered online through Qualtrics, with both a mobile and web-based format. The link was distributed through e-mail, and data collection continued until sampling targets were met.

Participants

Inclusion criteria comprised being a woman, being 18 years old or over, and having the ability to read and respond to an online survey in English. Women who were Hispanic/Latino, African American, and who reported less than $30,000 annual household income were oversampled to reflect the higher disease burden in these populations. As this study was part of a larger project examining cervical cancer screening communication, only participants who had previously had a Pap test were included in the analyses for this paper. We received a total of 737 responses; of these, 60 participants opted out, 14 did not complete more than one-third of the survey, 32 never had a Pap test, and 631 women who had received a Pap test completed the survey. Of the 631 respondents, 575 women provided responses for the research questions of interest.

Measures

The survey was designed to elicit women's preferences for communication of both Pap and HPV test results. Clinical experts consulted to ensure face validity and pretested the instrument. In this

directed content analysis, we examined participant responses to the following open-ended question: "Imagine you recently had an HPV test and your clinic contacts you to let you know you tested positive for HPV. What information should be included in the communication from the clinic when they tell you about the positive HPV test result?"

For statistical comparisons of communication preferences, groups were identified based on ethnicity (i.e., 1 = Hispanic/Latino and 0 = non-Hispanic/Latino). Self-reported race was recategorized into a binary variable to accommodate a low frequency of American Indian or Alaska native (n = 3), Asian (n = 3), and "other races" (n = 19) and to maximize participant inclusion (i.e., 1 = White and 0 = Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or "other race"). We also compared responses by dichotomizing the income variable (i.e., 1 = less than $10,000 to $29,999 and 0 = $30,000 to $149,000). Recategorization was guided by Medicaid eligibility income of $33,948 at the time of data collection, which is 138% of the poverty line for a family of 4 (U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, 2019; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Finally, two groups were compared based on insurance status (i.e., 1 = yes and 0 = no or I don't know).

The research team used directed content analysis, which involved a systematic analysis of text guided by SDT (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2013). Each response counted as one unit. There were a total of 575 units of analysis. The total number of applied codes (n = 822) exceeded the total number of units of analysis because each unit could have more than one code. The three pillars of motivation (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) as identified by SDT were used to inform the initial read-through of the data and to create initial codes. We analyzed the first 30 units (5%) and defined subcodes to further clarify the three primary codes. We then returned to the data and applied the coding scheme to an additional 30 units (5%) to further clarify each category. This ensured the conceptual categories were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. We met one more time to finalize the coding scheme and to reach consensus on using the coding scheme to ensure consistency. The first and fourth authors took this final coding scheme and independently coded 10% of the data (Krippendorff, 2013). This resulted in acceptable inter-coder reliability with a Cohen's K range of 0.64 – 0.89 and an average of 0.75. Average percentage agreement was 94.7%. The first and fourth authors then split the remaining data equally and coded the data (Krippendorff, 2013). Table 1 presents the coding scheme including exemplars from the data for each subcode.

Table 1

Codebook for Directed Content Analysis

1. Competence – *Information about HPV test results*	**A. What results mean** –*Ultimate ramifications of HPV (i.e., cancer development) and what to expect in the future from having HPV* *Example: "Explain the symptoms and what type of disease or problems they indicate."* **B. Information source** –*Preferences for mode of message delivery including a phone call, brochure, information on a website or more than one.* *Example: "A website that explains HPV, how it is contracted, how it is prevented, how it is cured. Enclose a brochure about HPV."*
2. Autonomy – *Next steps to take related to HPV test results*	**A. Setting up an appointment** – *Timing of appointment, referral, or general request for appointment* *Example: "Another appointment should be set up immediately."* **B. What to do next** – *Next steps more general than or not specifically mentioning an appointment* *Example: "All the positive steps to move forward with the diagnosis."* **C. Informing sexual partners** – *How, when and if to inform a sexual partner* *Example: "Do I need to contact sexual partners?"*
3. Relatedness – *Emotional aspects of delivering HPV test results*	**A. Providing assurance** – *Assurance that condition is not dangerous, that it is normal, that it is common, that it isn't scary* *Example: "A lot of people have it. Most common STD…make the person feel at ease over this bad news."* **B. Nonverbal signaling from healthcare team** –*Presentation of the information, urgency (i.e. as soon as possible) and intimacy (e.g. come see her in person) of delivery* *Example: "Be honest and open with the information"*

Statistical Analysis

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Version 25 (IBM Corp, Armonk, NY). Pearson chi-square analyses were conducted on the data to determine tests for independence of coding results and demographic factors including race, ethnicity, income, and insurance status. A p value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

Demographics

Of the 575 respondents who answered the open-ended question on HPV test result communication, 64% (n = 361) reported $29,999 or less in annual household income. Our survey population consisted of the following racial and ethnic breakdown: 19% was Hispanic (n = 107), 75% was White (n = 428), 20% identified as Black (n = 108), and less than 5% reported identifying as a race other than White or Black (n = 25). In addition, 59% (n = 333) had not completed college or a 2-year degree. A total of 86% (n = 487)

reported they had health insurance, and 14% (n = 81) did not have health insurance or did not know. Demographic statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Frequency	%
Education		
Less Than High School	19	3.3
High School Graduate	163	28.7
Some College	151	26.6
2-Year Degree	106	18.7
4-Year Degree	98	17.3
Professional or Master's Degree	30	5.3
Doctorate	1	0.1
Annual Household Income		
Less than $10,000	71	12.5
$10,000-$19,999	141	24.9
$20,000-$29,999	149	26.3
$30,000-$39,999	161	28.4
$40,000-$49,999	31	5.5
$50,000-$59,999	6	1.1
$60,000-$69,999	2	0.4
$70,000-$79,999	4	0.7
$90,000-$99,999	1	0.2
$100,000-$149,999	1	0.2
Marital Status		
Married	198	34.9
Widowed	43	7.6
Divorced	127	22.4
Separated	23	4.0
Never Married	177	31.2
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish		
Yes	107	18.9
No	459	81.0
Race		
White	428	75.4
Black or African American	115	20.2
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.5
Asian	3	0.5
Other Race	19	3.3
Health Insurance Status		
Yes	487	85.7
No	80	14.1
I don't know	1	0.2

Note. N = 575.

Research Question 1

Our first research question sought to understand women's preferences for how positive HPV test results were communicated. Based on our directed content analysis, the most important elements of communicating HPV test results are what to do next (64%) and what results mean (48%), representing competence and autonomy, respectively, as we have conceptualized using SDT. Table 3 details the number of times each code appeared in the data, wherein multiple elements may have appeared in a single response given that rich and detailed answers were provided by participants who expressed preferences to gain competence, establish autonomy, and seek relatedness.

Table 3

Preferred Self-Determinants for HPV Test Communication

Code	Frequency	%
Competence		
What Results Mean	278	48
Information Source	34	6
Autonomy		
What to Do Next	365	64
Setting up an Appointment	102	18
Informing Sexual Partners	16	3
Relatedness		
Nonverbal Signaling From Healthcare Team	10	2
Providing Assurance	17	3

Note. $N = 575$.

Competence

Responses related to competence focused on what results mean and information source, or mode of message delivery. One participant said they wanted to know:

> What it means to be positive with HPV and what type you have. The type does make a difference because I know that a few are more dangerous when it comes to cervical cancer. But also explain that it can go away. I had it, and within a few years it was gone.

Other women elaborated on their preferences for specific information that would build competence, including "the percentage of results that come back abnormal, factors that could cause these results, and next steps toward a follow-up and discussion of treatments."

A participant who noted she lost health insurance a few years ago provided an illustrative example of the need for communication that builds competence:

> When I was originally diagnosed, I was called on the phone. I was so sure I was going to die of cancer. The word cancer was used and that's all I heard. I didn't go back for 8 years.

> When I did go in for a pap [sic], I went to a different clinic in another city. Hoping it would all go away. This time I was called in for a follow-up, then it was explained, and I was shown a video . . . I had lost my insurance a few years ago, so I haven't been able to have any follow-ups.

Interestingly, note the number of communication touchpoints this woman experienced, highlighting cervical cancer screening as more than a one-time event, an ongoing series of appointments and behaviors.

When specifying preferred information sources, women offered suggestions for a variety of channels, ranging from letters to brochures to in-person appointments with a doctor. One participant detailed her preferences for information sources:

> Call as soon as possible to schedule an appointment. Phone number of appointment line. Call the doctor's nurse if you have questions. Phone number of nurse. A website that explains HPV, how it is contracted, how it is prevented, how it is cured. Enclose a brochure about HPV.

Multiple participants expressed a preference for synchronous communication, with information delivered directly by a physician or nurse. One woman said, "I would need to visit my healthcare provider so they could explain things more clearly to me in person." Another shared, "I would prefer they ask me to come into the office." Finally, a participant expressed, "They should schedule you to come in immediately so that everything can be discussed in person, but the patient should have the right to request a phone appointment."

Autonomy

Responses were coded for autonomy if a participant indicated they wanted to set up an appointment, know about informing sexual partners, or, more generally, learn what to do next. These responses were often directly connected to their competence about HPV. One participant replied, "When and what clinic to return to as soon as possible." Another said, "Appointment return date, and what to do and what not to do in the meantime."

Some participants indicated interest in guidance on how to inform sexual partners. One woman said, "All results and negative effects. What it could [sic] and if it could affect a sexual partner. If it can be cured and what can I expect to get treatment." Another asked, "Does HPV mean cancer? Do all my family member/sexual partners need to be tested?" In these responses, it is interesting to note the connection between autonomy and competence, including if it can be cured and concern over whether having HPV means you have cancer.

Women also responded they more generally wanted to know what to do next. Indicating doubt in the validity of results, one woman said, "If it's possible that the test is wrong. What follow-up needs to be done." This was repeated in multiple responses, with

women indicating a desire for a retest as a next step, "Please come in to retest to see if it comes up abnormal again," and "Please contact your doctor immediately so that testing can be redone and to discuss certain information that the doctor would like to talk to you about," are two examples of responses echoing this. Some women expressed interest in receiving treatment as a next step. In a notable response indicating the tie between competence and autonomy around HPV, one woman said, "What my options are am I going to die." Another indicated they wanted to know, "What needs to be done next. How soon can it be done? Where do I go 4 [sic] treatment if I have no insurance?"

Relatedness

Relatedness was far less commonly noted by participants, but, when it was, it included a desire for nonverbal signaling from the healthcare team and provision of assurance. The most common form of nonverbal signaling was that the healthcare provider show a sense of urgency in their response, indicating the importance of the result to the patient. One response that illustrated this was, "I think it should be treated with a sense of urgency, and that the patient should be made [aware] of what the results mean, and the next course of action that should be taken." Another expressed a desire for qualities of the doctor in the communication: "Be honest and open with the person."

To provide assurance, one participant recommended a healthcare provider share this with a patient: "A lot of people have it. Most common STD. Make the person feel at ease over this bad news and schedule another appt [sic]."

Another shared, "People get scared when things aren't normal, so I think communicating another way will help with understanding." One woman indicated she wanted to know "how to stay positive," and a participant wrote she would like to have a referral to a specialist and support groups along with medication options. Finally, a respondent said, "They would be gentle and tell [me when] the next appointment will be for show[ing] me my result[s] and talk[ing] with the doctor."

Combined Responses of Competence and Autonomy

Women most commonly indicated a preference for communication that builds competence and autonomy, and these were often combined or seen together in their open-ended answers, as noted previously. For example, one participant indicated:

> Information on how that can affect my body is important. What are the chances of it turning into cancer? Is it something I will have forever? Will I pass it on to others? I think too many women don't know the answers to those questions. Men too for that matter. I think an appointment with the doctor to discuss the results and what needs to be done should be strongly encouraged.

In this response, we see the woman's preference for first building a deeper understanding of HPV (competence) and then moving to what can be done about it (autonomy). Another woman echoed the same preferred pattern of communication:

> They should explain what a positive result means and where you are currently on the spectrum. They should explain that it could clear up on its own, but every case is different. What steps will be taken now should also be addressed.

A final example of this included a response from a woman in the second-lowest income bracket ($10,000-$19,999) and in self-reported poor health: "Information and where I can learn more. What I can do to help myself. Assurance that my condition is not life-threatening. Spell out specifically—what I can and/or should not do."

Research Question 2

Our second research question sought to determine if expressed communication preferences significantly differed based on sociodemographic factors associated with higher rates of cervical cancer incidence and mortality, including race, ethnicity, health insurance status, and annual household income.

Race and Ethnicity

White participants (67%) more frequently indicated interest in autonomy-related communication, specifically what to do next, than all other races and ethnicities (56%, $p = 0.026$). Regarding communication preferences coded as relatedness, Hispanic/Latino participants (10%) more frequently indicated interest in relatedness in communication than non-Hispanic/Latino participants (4%, $p = 0.003$).

Income

Those reporting more than $29,999 in annual household income more frequently indicated an interest in autonomy-based communication (82%) than those with less income (75%, $p = 0.040$).

Health Insurance Status

Participants with health insurance (66%) more frequently indicated an interest in autonomy, specifically what to do next, than those without insurance (54%, $p = 0.044$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess women's preferences for HPV test result communication and to examine whether certain sociodemographic factors relevant to cervical cancer disparities highlight a difference in those preferences. We used the core components of motivation (e.g., competence, autonomy, and relatedness) described by SDT to guide our analysis of women's open-ended responses explaining their preferences for how a clinic communicates a positive HPV test result. While we found participants in this study most often answered in a way associated with information related to building competence and autonomy, there

were significant differences across sociodemographic factors. White participants, participants with insurance, and participants with income above the poverty threshold more frequently indicated a preference for autonomy-based communication. This included setting up an appointment, informing sexual partners, and, more generally, what to do next. Finally, Hispanic/Latino participants more frequently mentioned communication that involves relatedness. This encompassed nonverbal signaling from the healthcare team that demonstrated care and provided assurance. We believe these findings have important implications for guiding clinicians to engage in targeted and culturally sensitive patient-centered communication with their patients about these test results. Next, we highlight three areas where these findings may impact clinical communication.

Focus on Competence and Autonomy

Results from this study suggest women want to know what positive HPV test results mean exactly and what to do next (i.e., competence and autonomy). Communication related to HPV test results can and should integrate both of these elements, aligning with SDT, which posits that individuals must meet basic psychological needs to be motivated to act in self-beneficial ways. At its core, SDT operates from the assumption that people have an intrinsic desire to grow and learn. It is clear from our findings that women demonstrated interest in understanding HPV. Our findings also demonstrate that participants had a low understanding of HPV and HPV testing in general, so participants might have difficulty understanding what a positive test means for their health and its relationship to increased risk for developing cervical cancer. It could be useful for health care providers to supplement their interpersonal communication with written educational materials focused on these topics, which have been shown to be effective at increasing the initial uptake of cervical cancer screening (Everett et al., 2011). This approach could be a beneficial communication strategy for building competence for patients, specifically in relation to HPV test results and the implications of a positive test result.

Concerning what to do after HPV diagnosis, the clinical guidelines recommend multiple management solutions, but there is currently no treatment. For example, if a woman is positive for HPV but has a normal Pap test, the recommendation would be to repeat a co-test in 1 year or to conduct an HPV DNA typing to check for a high-risk infection (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Another possibility is if a woman has an abnormal Pap and a positive HPV test, she undergo a colposcopy and receives a referral to a gynecologist (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Given these multiple management solutions, and that women may need to feel like they can or should "do something now" about HPV, it makes sense women would need information that may allow them

to feel a sense of autonomy and to acknowledge women's preferences and willingness to do something. For example, provider communication could emphasize the importance of more frequent follow-up testing and cessation or reduction of tobacco smoking, which is an additional risk factor for cervical cancer (Slattery et al., 1989). If the patient has disclosed they have a child, it might be a time to open up a discussion about HPV vaccination. Overall, this finding demonstrates an opportunity to encourage autonomy through health behaviors that, in general, lower the risk of developing cervical cancer, in spite of the fact there is no current treatment for the virus.

Future areas of study should include testing messages that integrate each of these areas of SDT into HPV test result communication to not only see if they can affect women's sense of autonomy and competence but also to see if follow-up rates are improved. Formative work could involve focus groups or one-on-one interviews to test message design. Intervention studies could test these materials in a random selection of federally qualified health centers that often serve populations most vulnerable for developing cervical cancer.

Populations That Face Disparity Need Autonomy-Enhancing Communication

The second primary finding from this study is participants who are in poverty, are a member of an ethnic or racial minority, or do not have health insurance less frequently mentioned a preference for autonomy-based communication. Broadly, socioeconomic status and cancer screening behaviors have been found to be negatively correlated, and this relationship was explained in terms of lacking a sense of personal control – autonomy – to plan their care (Good et al., 2011). Literature also shows socioeconomic status is negatively correlated to self-efficacy, a theoretical concept with many parallels to autonomy as posited in SDT (Boardman & Robert, 2000). One study on colorectal cancer screening behaviors found Black participants were more likely to have fatalistic beliefs about cancer than non-Hispanic Whites, and Hispanics had lower reported self-efficacy than non-Hispanics (Lumpkins et al., 2013). Based on the findings in this study, and in line with the literature cited here, it is possible those who are uninsured or in poverty may feel they have fewer options to move forward even if they do test positive for HPV and therefore that may be why they did not bring up autonomy-based communication as frequently. Although communication can effectively address many health challenges, it is critical to consider these social determinants of health that play a role in access to care.

Most significantly, SDT is rooted in the idea that people have a desire to grow and master challenges and that this motivation is fostered through support. Autonomy in SDT can be understood as

the willingness to perform a behavior that is accompanied by choice and freedom from outside pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of HPV test results, this concept of autonomy presented as women expressing a preference to follow-up, go to another appointment, and learn how to address the test results. Because populations with the highest incidence of cervical cancer mentioned this autonomy-based communication less frequently, it is especially important to engage in communication that builds a sense of autonomy during communication about HPV test results to encourage follow-up and behaviors that reduce risk for developing cancer. Poor communication may diminish motivation to follow-up because the opportunity to foster a sense of control over the situation is lost. Practical ways to integrate autonomy-based communication may include providing information about free or reduced-priced health centers (federally qualified health centers) and other programs that may be able to help women navigate follow-up care.

Hispanic Women and Emotional Support

The third primary theme is that Hispanic participants mentioned relatedness, the third pillar of SDT, more frequently than participants from other racial/ethnic groups. For women in this population, who also have higher rates of cervical cancer, it may be important to consider the concept of *personalismo*, which has been identified as particularly important in patient-provider communication with participants who are Hispanic (Juckett, 2013). *Personalismo*, translated as friendliness, can be conveyed through a myriad of communication techniques and has been found to be effectively emulated by developing a personal connection and asking about the patient and their family (Juckett, 2013). Relatedness may also manifest as physical contact, such as handshakes or hugging (Caballero, 2011). Without engaging in these types of communication, there is a risk for patient dissatisfaction and lower follow-up (Flores, 2000).

Because HPV is classified as an STI and its diagnosis may carry a stigma, it could be especially important for a provider to convey assurance and normalize the experience during HPV test result communication with Hispanic women. One study showed women generally do feel stigmatized and concerned about sexual relationships after learning they are positive for HPV (McCaffery et al., 2006); however, if they know how prevalent HPV infections are, that sense of shame and stigma may be lowered (Waller et al., 2007), possibly further enhancing their self-efficacy for follow-up both clinically and personally. Women often learn of their cervical cancer screening results outside of the clinic setting (through a phone call or letter), so integrating relatedness communication into these other forms of communication may require additional research. A future path of study could involve exploring more culturally centered

communication around HPV-test results to Hispanic participants which privileges relatedness.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to query women about their communication and information preferences when receiving a positive HPV test and opens up a rich area of inquiry as to how SDT can be used to guide and inform clinical communication practices. Although we had a robust sample size, one key limitation of this study is that while the *p* value is compelling in regard to Hispanic participants and relatedness, the frequency, in general, was low across this code ($n = 27$). Preferences for communication about HPV test results among Hispanic women, particularly on the topic of relatedness, should be further explored and validated in a larger sample of women. Another limitation is how race and ethnicity were represented for purposes of statistical analysis. Several racial groups were combined to maximize participant inclusion, resulting in less meaningful sociodemographic data for comparisons on preference. Rates of response for American Indians or Alaska Natives, Asians, and other races were negligible. In addition, when we attempted comparisons by White non-Hispanic, White Hispanic, Black Hispanic, and Black non-Hispanic, the small number of responses from Black Hispanic participants prevented meaningful analysis. Although we did oversample for important demographics and determined some frequency differences related to race and ethnicity that indicate significance, we acknowledge these limitations in the statistical analysis. Given this limitation, it is critical in future studies to recruit more robust samples from these populations. It will also be important to expand research on the relationship revealed between poverty, being uninsured, and expressing a preference for autonomy-based communication at lower frequencies.

Overall, this study highlighted women's preferences for HPV test result communication through an open-ended question response. It is clear women have strong preferences for this type of communication that align with SDT. In particular, building competence and autonomy are of primary importance. Women should have a clear understanding of the purpose of the test and its relationship to cervical cancer development. They should also feel confident and have a sense of autonomy they can perform behaviors to reduce risk of cancer development and follow-up on screening recommendations. Developing a sense of autonomy in HPV test result communication might play a robust role in improving outcomes for women who test positive for the virus. Because populations that are still affected by cervical cancer also face structural barriers, such as poverty and lack of health insurance, communication should include more than purely clinical information.

Informing women about time and financial burdens related to follow-up may be significant in building autonomy for their next steps. Finally, this study points to the importance of culturally informed communication, taking into account the unique needs of minoritized patients in how positive test results are communicated.

Acknowledgments: This project was supported by a Translational Development Team within the ICTSI NIH/NCRR Grant Number UL1TR001108. Findings and conclusions in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the CDC.

Disclosure Statement: One of the authors has received fees from Merck for consultation related to HPV vaccination.

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Torch Rhetoric: Characterizations of Flawed Mentorship

Paul Lucas and Abbey McCann

This work seeks to explore the importance of mentorship, even if its guidance and direction are characterized by flaws. By looking at entertainment media and the way in which mentors are sought for the purpose of passing the torch to a new generation of characters with new storylines, the work will explain how realistic portrayals of those within leadership positions are important. Specifically, the work will draw from plot points of mentors and mentees looking for something in their own lives. The mentors are able to give useful guidance, ultimately working in the mentees' best interests; the goal is to allow mentees to work toward a more independent and thoughtful approach for themselves. The work will ultimately depict a mirroring of reality, showing how flawed leadership can operate in ways that are better than no leadership at all.

Introduction

There is certainly no question that people seek direction, leadership, and guidance in their lives. Even though guidance is desired, and even though leaders are sought, quality leadership is both complicated and in short supply. Leaders, specifically those in mentorship capacities, are not without their flaws, and they can only really make decisions based on what they see as best at the time.

Though we may like to see leaders portrayed as infallible, they, like everyone else, are far from it. Flawed leadership can prove to be better than having no leadership at all. The connection of the mentor to the mentee exemplifies this standard. This work is a starting point to a conversation about entertainment media specifically, since entertainment media showcases characters who have interpersonal connections while also relying on a link with the audience through character familiarity. The work will not, therefore, branch into news or social media, though the hope is to establish starting stages of a framework that could look at how we, as a culture, are beginning to understand that leaders are not without fault. Even with fault, the leaders are not necessarily negated as positive, even ideal, representations.

In recent history, entertainment media have given portrayals of the flaws that leaders/mentors have—through the sheer amounts and purposes of reboots and remakes. As media properties look to move plots and characters toward revived storylines for new generations, they inadvertently demonstrate an ambiguous world wrought with imperfect leadership. Snyder (2014) identified a phenomenon called "'passing of the torch' rhetoric," which was

meant to depict an "obligation to stay connected to a family history" (p. 83) by imparting knowledge and wisdom through generations. While this work will explore connections and family as part of the conversation, it will also look at the bonds that mentors have with mentees in general, with the important characteristic of mentors being unable to replicate their own, previous, solid mentorship.

Accordingly, use of the concept 'passing of the torch' in this work will represent an intention by the mentor of allowing the mentee to eventually go on fully without mentor guidance. The idea of 'Torch Rhetoric' will be introduced to describe passing the torch to a new generation while recognizing the dilemmas of leadership and mentorship—focusing on the importance of those dilemmas as they exist in media portrayals. To make use of the metaphor, the torch (noun) is passed to the next generation, but doubles as torch (verb), suggesting a burning down of/failure to replicate a previous and inflexible mentorship.

The Torch

There have been many attempts in media to reinvigorate origin points of stories. While there are likely a number of motives for these efforts, Bohnenkamp, Knapp, Hennig-Thurau, and Schauerte (2015) discussed the idea of "sensations-familiarity" (p. 16) to try and help determine why remakes can be successful. The entertainment media discussed in this work are not remakes in the strictest sense, but they are continuations of film brands and characters that work with existing themes already established within their franchises. There is the potential to capitalize on both the viewers' "connection to a pre-existing brand" and the "potential to offer novel sensations" (Bohnenkamp, Knapp, Hennig-Thurau, & Schauerte, 2015, p. 18).

Prior characters and plotlines are utilized, but new characters and plots appear. As stated by Robertson (2016), "Franchises seek to leverage environments, worlds and universes, rather than narratives…the latter will inevitably end, whereas the former ideally always exists as the context for further narration" (p. 484). Doing both is a unique and enticing strategy to draw out fans, bring in new ones, and keep franchises fresh and relevant.

Mentor/Mentee

The mentor/mentee relationship dynamic hinges on two primary characteristics: 1) the mentor and mentee are both looking for something in their lives; essentially, there is an active seeking of mentorship due to a strained or lacking connection with family; 2) the mentors, under a presupposition that they are working in the mentee's best interests, try to provide useful guidance, yet they themselves are flawed, and perhaps unprepared, in taking on concrete mentorship roles that they themselves once had. The first characteristic is an important plot device meant to show how mentors

are sought out, while the second characteristic demonstrates benefit to leadership and guidance from individuals who are far from perfect. The result is an appreciated and realistic look at mentors as simply human; people dealing with their own demons and challenges.

In addition to attempting to reinvigorate the franchises, there are also reasons why mentor/mentee dichotomies can be so appealing to audiences. When looking for leaders, people might like to envision someone who can swoop in and make things right, even in times of uncertainty and confusion. Since stories exist in competition with one another (Fisher, 1989), which is why the best-received stories are often those that provide lessons to audiences. Working the premise that "the world is a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation" (Fisher, 1989, p. 8), it is important to identify and isolate important stories that carry meaning; in this case, the ones that show how uncertainty in life can, hopefully, be mitigated.

Taylor (2007) described the world context as one where "fractured cultures find their own way" (p. 299), suggesting people are continually searching for ways to understand who they are and how they fit within larger contexts. Put simply, as fractured cultures seek repair, individuals want to understand themselves through provided meanings. Those meanings might be produced through entertainment media and give us guidelines applicable to life.

According to Kahn (2013), "Philosophy…won't tell us what to do, but it can illuminate how our practices are situated in a complex world of norms, values, and meanings in which we find our own way" (p. 3). Key to the argument is that "we see our way forward when we have been persuaded" (Kahn, 2013, p. 3). The influential nature of mass media and entertainment can provide individuals with a philosophical blueprint of sorts. Audiences have the potential to see themselves as needing guidance, or they may in fact see themselves as able to provide guidance; there is influence to be had for both mentors and mentees. Looking at older, more familiar characters who are thought to have the wisdom to pass to a new generation allows older audiences the chance to be able to share in the older storylines with children, young adults, etc., as newer storylines are purposefully reforged for younger audience appeal.

The Fictions

In order to explore these arguments, and to show that the characteristics are not isolated, four successful recent franchise efforts will be discussed; *Cobra Kai, Creed, Star Wars,* and *Tron.* In *Cobra Kai,* picking up years after the events of *The Karate Kid* movies, Miguel seeks out mentorship from Johnny, and Robby seeks out mentorship from Daniel; in *Creed,* picking up years after the events of the *Rocky* movies, Adonis seeks out mentorship from Rocky; in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Star Wars: The Last*

Jedi, continuing as part of the sequel trilogy in the *Star Wars* universe, Rey seeks mentorship from both Luke and Han; and, in *Tron: Legacy*, picking up years after the events of the original *Tron* film, Sam reunites with his father, Kevin, which causes him to realize how much he desired his father's influence in his life.

Within each fiction, audiences see the first previously mentioned characteristic, which is a mentee looking for mentorship and guidance, stemming largely from a lack of familial connection, or at least a familial connection that is strained. This particular plot point is deliberate. It sets up a situation where the audience is meant to see that there is no clear mentor present in the mentee's life from the start. It is that fractured, cultural element (Taylor, 2007) which necessitates a seeking out of the mentor; a seeking of guidance and information.

For example, in *Cobra Kai,* we know very little about Miguel's family, though we do know he struggles against bullies and is in need of someone who can provide him with strength and discipline. Johnny fulfills the role and, in addition to offering karate lessons, gives Miguel advice that one may typically expect from a father—such as how to deal with bullies and how to get a girlfriend. Importantly, Robby, who is Johnny's actual son, has extreme resentment for his father because of the lack of involvement in his life growing up. As a result, and as a kind of revenge, Robby looks to Daniel, Johnny's longtime rival, for karate training and life lessons, while Daniel's daughter, Samantha, feels somewhat neglected. All of the mentor/mentee relationships in the series have their obstacles.

In *Creed,* Adonis's disconnection from his family is central to all aspects of the plot. Adonis's biological mother passed away when he was young, and, early on in the movie, it is established that Apollo was Adonis's father. Due to the events of *Rocky IV,* audiences familiar with the *Rocky* franchise know that Apollo was killed in a boxing match that Rocky—theoretically—could have stopped. Adonis has aspirations of following in his father's footsteps and becoming a successful boxer himself, so he goes looking for Rocky. Adonis believes Rocky owes him training.

In *Star Wars: The Force Awakens,* Rey's parents are presented as virtual unknown, having seemingly abandoned her when she was young. Key events early in the film lead to her involvement with the Resistance and her struggle against the First Order. She eventually crosses paths with Han Solo, whom she connects within a father-daughter kind of way. Though Han is killed by the end of *The Force Awakens*, he does manage to play a role in directing Rey toward Luke.

Luke, after all, is the one who would be capable of training Rey and helping her to understand and make use of her Force powers. By the time of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi,* Rey begins Jedi

training alongside Luke, who has been living in secret. Audiences know that Rey has little to no sense of family, so both Han and Luke seem like natural fits for providing her the guidance she desperately needs.

Tron: Legacy, on the other hand, handles family elements a bit differently. At the beginning of the movie, the audience learns that Sam's father, Kevin, the main character from the first *Tron* film, is missing. Sam subsequently appears defiant of any kind of mentoring whatsoever when his father's friend, Alan, tries to fulfill a mentorship role for him. Sam's negative attitude toward leadership continues for a portion of *Tron: Legacy*, but, once Sam again encounters his father, he becomes open to the idea of having someone in his life who can be a parent for him. More to the point, Sam defies his father openly at one point later in the film; however, once he is willing to recognize that his father has valuable knowledge, he becomes receptive to his advice.

Family Strain the Mentorship Search

Due to a strained or lacking familial connection, finding a mentor is a task; Miguel randomly discovers Johnny's karate skills when he helps him fend off bullies, at which point he must convince Johnny to train him; Adonis has to fly to Philadelphia in an attempt to persuade Rocky that he is owed training, though Rocky wants no part of the boxing world anymore; Rey has to locate a map to even find Luke, who is very unenthusiastic about the prospect of training her; Sam accidentally accesses the game world, only to find his father who has been taking an extremely inactive approach to problems taking place within the game world. Lakey and Canary (2002) described the ways in which "people want to engage in communication interaction that results in positive and satisfying feelings. They seek exchanges with others who make them feel included, loved, rewarded, and satisfied" (p. 231). If a family member was visible and otherwise available to the mentee, there would be no challenge for these characters in discovering who to seek rewarding guidance from; no concrete progression toward a mentor in which the audience can relate.

The audience should then grasp that it is important to be conscious of who is looked to for wisdom. Though there are many audience members who would be able to make use of family for mentorship, discovering who else in life they may identify as a mentor is a process. For the characters, the path toward a mentor is meant to exaggerate plot points that move the attention of the franchise to a new generation.

In *Star Wars*, The Force is thought to determine "a sense of universal order and balance" (Peters, 2012, p. 126), which is directly linked to Rey's motivation in using The Force for good against those who would otherwise use it for evil. The sentiment can be linked to

all narrative structures in each of these mentorship fictions, however, as there is a kind of order and balance to the plot formula. Each mentee needs to now take center stage while sticking true to plot elements that made the franchises popular from the start; Miguel in the first season trains toward a karate tournament, as Johnny did; Adonis must rise through the ranks to take on a top boxer, as Rocky did; Rey must challenge the dark side of The Force to usher in an era of peace in the galaxy, as Luke did; and Sam must leave his mark on the game world, and, accordingly, the real world, as is expected of him based on Kevin's accomplishments.

The plot points repeat to introduce the anticipated "novel sensation" from the "pre-existing" (Bohnenkamp, Knapp, Hennig-Thurau, & Schauerte, 2015, p. 18), but the "order and balance" (Peters, 2012, p. 126), so to speak, can only happen because new characters are theoretically selecting correct mentors—the ones who have already had comparable experiences to what mentees now face. For older audiences who find nostalgia in the franchises, the mentor-seeking is equally important. The older characters who are passing the torch endured similar struggles of their own, so audiences should, at least initially, view mentors as capable of serving in mentorship roles now.

It is also important to understand why the older characters are no longer positioned to carry their franchises. The original *Rocky* film embodied "the iconic rise of the underdog" (Motley, 2005, p. 60), which is part of why Rocky's rise to success was something that Adonis envisioned for himself. Though Adonis's father was Apollo, a famous and successful boxer during his lifetime, Adonis himself is very much portrayed as an underdog in *Creed.* He does not yet possess the skill sets to obtain the level of success in the boxing world that he requires. This characteristic is true of the other franchises, as well; Miguel is training with *Karate Kid's* tournament loser, Johnny, and Miguel himself is often picked on at school; Rey is a complete unknown who is struggling to find out who she is and where she belongs in the greater scheme of the universe, all the while defending it from evil; and Sam is new to being immersed in the game world, though he has the very serious responsibilities of attempting to save his father and preventing the game world from spilling out into the real one.

The fact is, the mentors can no longer be the underdogs, or, at the very least, audiences would have a difficult time accepting them as underdogs anymore. We have seen the struggles of these characters already, and, in all cases, the results of their efforts. Johnny lost to Daniel but was able to see Daniel as a worthy opponent; Rocky was able to defeat Apollo; Luke played a role in influencing Darth Vader to see good in the world again; and Kevin built the game world and essentially ruled it for a period of time. To

perpetuate the underdog element to the stories, we need new characters who have new goals, if for no other reason than to reintroduce mentees as individuals in vulnerable states needing to rely on others for guidance—which is the necessary and relatable way to allow the fictions to work. Audience members looking for mentors need to be able to see themselves reflected in the characters, while audience members seeing themselves as mentors already grasp the struggles they once had and are now ready to impart their knowledge and experience on others.

Flaws in the System

The real transition in fictions, versus the old storylines within the franchises, though, is in the second characteristic: the mentors attempt to work in the best interest of the mentees, but the mentors themselves are flawed and largely unprepared to take on mentorship roles. This characteristic works in direct contrast to previous mentors within the franchises, which is important; it shows audiences that mentors are not infallible, which both mentees and mentors in real life would do well to remember. Importantly, this is a more realistic portrayal than what the franchises attempted in the past and should appeal to younger audiences and their comprehension of those who serve in leadership positions. The current mentors themselves tend to hesitate, which is likely because they see the possibility of the mentees following in their same flawed footsteps—the flawed footsteps that we saw these characters take when they were young, and the franchises were newer. Hesitation felt by these characters now can also be attributed to the dogmatic mentoring they themselves once received.

We know, for example, that Johnny's mentor/sensei in *The Karate Kid* was John Kreese. John Kreese adopted a violent, no mercy approach to opponents in karate matches. The approach led to Johnny becoming distraught over his karate tournament loss to Daniel, ultimately derailing his entire life. *Cobra Kai* consistently shows Johnny trying to deal with his inner demons, which appear to stem primarily from Daniel and the loss. While John Kreese was a regimented, no-nonsense leader, and still is once he reappears in the series, Johnny himself is incapable of taking on such a role, as evidenced by his constant second guessing of the no mercy approach to opponents and life in general. As a result, we see Johnny as someone in disarray, which confuses those around him and causes Miguel to question Johnny's directions at times. As noted previously, Johnny's failure to properly be part of his son's, Robby's, life, is also indicative of his problems in serving a mentorship capacity.

Even if audiences assess Johnny as better—perhaps less evil is the way to phrase it—than John Kreese because of his traits, they will likely not feel the same way about Daniel. In what serves as a kind of role reversal from *Karate Kid,* Daniel makes all kinds of bad

decisions in his family life and how he deals with/confronts Johnny. Mr. Miyagi, once Daniel's mentor, always seemed to have the right answer and always seemed to embrace peace. Daniel is in no way an embodiment of the teachings of Mr. Miyagi, which affects his treatment of both his daughter, Samantha, and his mentee, Robby. Even if audiences interpret Johnny as less evil than John Kreese, they will likely see Daniel as less good than Mr. Miyagi. Regardless, without the steadfast personalities that Johnny and Daniel experienced with their mentors, they appear ill-prepared in serving as mentors themselves.

In both *Creed* and *Creed II,* Rocky owns a restaurant and has apparently moved on from boxing, even to the point of being unwilling to train anyone—Adonis included. Rocky fails Adonis in ways that demonstrate he is not quite as competent a mentor compared with Mick. There is an underlying assumption that Rocky may not want to encourage anyone into a boxing as a career; during the franchise, Rocky is shown to have physical repercussions as a result of years of boxing, which audiences can speculate is also a motivator for his reluctance to train Adonis. Beyond that point, though, Rocky does not appear particularly adept at mentoring when he does take on the role.

In the first three *Rocky* films, Mick trained Rocky to become a great fighter. Mick knew how to encourage Rocky at the right times and also when to tell Rocky to back down, such as he did when Rocky was poised to go against Klubber Lang in *Rocky III.* Rocky is depicted as unable to make these kinds of accurate judgment calls, failing to encourage and mentor Adonis when Adonis initially seeks him out; also stepping away from Adonis when Adonis needed him to train against Viktor Drogo in *Creed II*—an action seemingly motivated by Rocky's guilt over Apollo being killed in his *Rocky IV* match against Ivan Drogo. Rocky's stepping away was an attempt to spare himself the guilt of the same thing potentially happening to Adonis. It should be noted that, while Rocky takes steps to make amends with his own son, Robert, at the end of *Creed II,* Rocky and his son have had a falling out due to Robert always feeling as though he is in Rocky's shadow. His failings with his own son further reinforce the idea that Rocky may not be fully ready to be a mentor.

In *Star Wars: The Force Awakens,* Han has gone back to a smuggler's lifestyle. The transient lifestyle he embraces, coupled with losing his son, Ben/Kylo Ren to the dark side, are absolute indicators that he would struggle in his role as a mentor to Rey. These flawed characteristics could be part of why the series focused on Luke as Rey's mentor instead of Han.

To be fair, Luke's role as a mentor for Rey is wrought with all kinds of problems, too. In *Star Wars: The Last Jedi,* Luke's motives are not entirely clear. What the audience does know is that

he has begun looking at Jedi training as a problematic and cyclical process, having the end result of someone turning evil, turning to the dark side. Because of Luke's failure in training Kylo, who is Luke's nephew, he sees Jedi practices as fundamentally flawed, bringing death and tragedy to the world. Unfortunately for Rey, Luke's stance is extremely pessimistic. He has already sought a reclusive lifestyle and a kind of avoidant behavior when Rey finds him. He has no will left to train her. While Luke does grudgingly train Rey, it is clear he envisions a difficult, and perhaps corrupting, path for her that will lead to an inevitably tragic end.

Given the extremely questionable things Luke did to Kylo Ren that caused Kylo to turn on him, together with Luke's extremely derogatory view of Rey, he is in a very poor position to serve as a strong mentor. Luke simply cannot be to Rey what Obi-Wan, and Yoda, for that matter, were as mentors to him. Obi-Wan and Yoda were disciplined; calm and collected Jedi who strongly bought into the fundamentals of the Jedi Order. Luke, on the other hand, questions Jedi teachings to the point that he would rather not even train Rey at all.

Interestingly, if we go back to the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy, Qui-Gon, who was Obi-Wan's mentor, was flawed in his approaches and questioned Jedi teachings, too, while Obi-Wan's stricter approach was apparently the wrong one—though Qui-Gon really should be blamed—for Anakin, who ultimately became Darth Vader in his fall to the dark side. *Star Wars*, as a series, could be trying to show problematic cycles to mentorship. If nothing else, *Star Wars* wants to show that there is unpredictability in how Jedi will wind up, while also demonstrating that good and evil both consistently find a way to emerge—again, as indicative of the balance mentioned earlier.

Tron: Legacy's mentorship is directly that of father and son. Kevin and Sam, in a way, both have the same mentor in Alan. Alan is a voice of reason and morality in both the original *Tron* film and *Tron: Legacy*. Alan is a friend to Kevin and then a father figure to Sam. When Sam eventually finds Kevin in *Tron: Legacy*, we see his significant flaws and how he cannot really be the stable and grounded presence that Alan is. Kevin, unlike Johnny, Rocky, or Luke, is not what would be traditionally thought of as a warrior or fighter—though he does possess a degree of superpower-type abilities within the game world he has created. Instead, Kevin is more of an intellectual, praised for his creativity and genius. Still, he displays extreme reluctance to mentor Sam.

When Kevin reunites with Sam, it is in a situation of duress. Kevin has been trapped in the game world, with little hope of ever getting out. He actually dissuades Sam from taking any course of action that might possibly help lead to escape for them both, as he

knows that Clu (standing for Codified Likeness Utility), a Kevin-created digitized version of himself and the antagonist in the film, stands a chance of escaping the game world if they try. In fact, Kevin had previously tried to escape, but ultimately came to view escape efforts as futile.

Where we see Kevin's most serious fault, however, is in the fact that he programmed Clu to help him make the "perfect system," a decision that causes Clu to destroy anything he views as imperfect—and therefore destroying much of the game world and the beings within it. Near the end of the film, Kevin admits that he failed in making Clu, for the simple reason that, when he made him, he did not realize that perfection was "unknowable." As stated by Burke (1966), humanity is "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy…and rotten with perfection" (p. 16). The 'rotten' connotation fits; Kevin saw an opportunity to take the game world in the direction he wanted, an act that led to Kevin's downfall.

Unfortunately, it was that exact drive toward perfection, that relentless pursuit, which served as the collapse of the game world, as well as Kevin spending so much time within it and away from Sam, even before becoming trapped. Had Kevin not sought out perfection in such a way, he may have had a better and more present relationship with Sam. While Kevin was eventually more rational about his views on perfection, and therefore more likely to be a positive role model and father, it was too late given that Kevin had to sacrifice himself to allow Sam to escape the game world. That flaw prevented Kevin from being what he might otherwise have been; importantly, the eventual recognition of this flaw, though too late, now does allow Sam to continue Kevin's legacy with an understanding of why perfection should not be chased. Sam is able to develop as a person and character by understanding a flaw Kevin has, meaning that being imperfect, as a mentor and in accepting imperfection, can be valuable.

What Those Flaws Really Mean

The flaws and lack of preparedness the mentors have are fundamental in audience perception of how mentors should actually be, seeing as how their mentorship is still important to mentee development. Leaders are not infallible, as the previous generation of these fictions might have suggested, but they can be effective just the same. An assessment of a leader's "care" from "the point of view of the follower" is "about the goal itself" (Clutterbuck & Hirst, 2002, p. 353). It would be mistaken to say that flawed mentorship, even with its missteps, cannot be beneficial and without achieved goals. As individuals look to leaders in real life, this is a lesson that is extremely important to consider.

Each of the central mentors has complications in his own family life; Johnny with his son, Robby; Rocky with his son, Robert;

Luke with his nephew, Ben/Kylo; and Kevin with his son, Sam. The family problems experienced by the mentors are presented as indications the mentors can fail in providing leadership and guidance. Yet within each fiction, the mentors are granted a second chance of sorts, in which they can learn from their mistakes; Johnny with Miguel; Rocky with Adonis; Luke with Rey; and Kevin with his opportunity to meet Sam as an adult. A mentor cannot shield a mentee from the world forever, and it is better the mentee gain guidance from the mentor as a move toward independence. Choosing from the strong, influential stories (Fisher, 1989) allows the mentees to value and appreciate guidance from those who have the experience; those who have already taken a path. That path, that experience, is already known by the audience. In the mentor relationships largely focused on in the fictions, it is clear the mentees are able to progress forward better on their own as a result of the mentoring, and the audience sees this passing of the torch to the new generation in the new storyline. Accordingly, it is difficult to argue that the mentors do not have at least a degree of success in their leadership roles.

For example, both Johnny and Rocky can be seen as "male stars who are not only out of place, but conspicuously out of time" (Evans, 2015, p. 25), as evidenced by the fact that Johnny, in *Cobra Kai,* is dealing with alcoholism and a lack of steady employment. Rocky in *Creed,* owns a restaurant and has apparently moved on from having anything to do with boxing. They are both displaced characters, having moved on from the passions they had in their younger years. As such, they are both reluctant in their mentoring and perhaps therefore not fully suited to mentorship roles. Importantly, however, their mentees pull them back into their passions, of which they can finally take on leadership roles as trainers, now with different life experiences that have shaped their perspectives.

At first, Johnny sees Miguel as weak and pathetic and does not want to be bothered teaching him karate. At Miguel's persistence, and Johnny's realization that opening a dojo can help him earn money as a sensei, Johnny decides that Miguel has potential and would benefit from karate instruction. Johnny has grown as a person in his time away from karate, even demonstrating a mutual respect with Daniel at, albeit fleeting, moments in the series.

By the time of the first season's karate tournament, Johnny is second guessing Cobra Kai's violent, offensive strategy that he has been teaching Miguel. Miguel, however, wants to viciously attack Robby in the last match, even at Johnny's hesitation. Despite Johnny's concern, though, he does allow Miguel to use the no mercy approach against Robby, which results in Miguel winning the tournament. Though Johnny struggles with Miguel's choice, and

even reflects on it with skepticism later, there is no question that Johnny saw fit to let Miguel make decisions for himself, placing a degree of confidence in his mentee. In the second season, Miguel's eventual adoption of Johnny's more merciful approach has significant impact on Miguel and the plot as a whole.

Adonis is representative of a reintroduction to Rocky's old boxing life, which was not one that Rocky was ready to embrace. A major plot point in *Creed* is that Rocky is diagnosed with cancer. Since part of the lasting popularity of the *Rocky* franchise is that Rocky is "a powerful icon" (Elmwood, 2005, p. 49), seeing Rocky get cancer and go through treatment is difficult, especially given that audiences are so accustomed to seeing him as an almost invulnerable figure. As Rocky fights cancer, he relies on Adonis for support and help. Adonis is even the one who convinces Rocky to get treatment for the cancer in the first place. Adonis tells Rocky how much he cares for him when Rocky initially says he does not want to undergo chemotherapy—because chemotherapy did not save the life of Adrian, Rocky's wife. It is really only due to Adonis that Rocky attempts chemotherapy at all.

While undergoing treatment, Rocky is still able to serve as a mentor and trainer for Adonis, but the mentee role is altered since Adonis gives Rocky help and advice, too. In addition, in *Creed*, during Adonis's final match against Conlin, a top boxer, Rocky at one point expresses to Adonis that he wants to end the fight, something he failed to do for Apollo. Rocky only lets Adonis continue when Adonis confidently expresses his objection to stopping the match. Adonis did eventually lose to Conlin, but he holds his own and likely would have won if given more time. The loss was a personal victory for Adonis, only attainable because Rocky had to take a step back and put faith, trust, and confidence in his mentee in order to allow him to continue. There is no question that, by this point near the end of the film, Rocky believes in Adonis's judgment and abilities.

Both Luke and Kevin can be viewed as "outsider heroes" (Tasker, 1993, p. 7), in the sense that by the end of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* and *Tron: Legacy* respectively, they have managed to remove themselves from the people they save. They see sacrificing themselves as serving a better end than what additional training and wisdom could have brought. In other words, after imparting knowledge and wisdom on their mentees, they see the next step in their mentorship roles as recognizing the mentees' abilities to move forward without them.

Luke probably does the least for Rey as compared with mentors in the other franchises, as he only gives her rudimentary training—after treating her with negativity and pessimism to begin with—though he has a clear comprehension of when Rey is ready to

move on without him. Rey's training from Luke is obviously incomplete, even at the point of his death at the end of *The Last Jedi.* What is important to remember, however, is that Luke sacrifices himself so that members of the Resistance can flee, which includes keeping Rey alive. When Luke directly professes himself to Kylo as not being the last Jedi, audiences can easily interpret it to mean that he is putting faith in Rey taking on the mantle of Jedi herself. Luke's decision holds true in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*, as Rey receives little additional direction from Luke as a Force ghost, yet she is able to hold her own against the threats of both Kylo and The Emperor, even with The Emperor ultimately shown to be pulling the strings in the sequel trilogy.

As mentioned previously, in *Tron: Legacy*, Kevin sees any attempt at stopping Clu's rule of the game world as futile, with any possible course of action capable of making things worse. As a result, Kevin's only advice to Sam is to do nothing, which Sam adamantly refuses. It is not until later in the film when Kevin starts to become a bit more accepting of Sam's eager ideas and approaches to the situation that he offers guidance to Sam that can potentially benefit them both. Kevin communicates in the film that he will not lose Sam again, and he comes to Sam's rescue on a few occasions, so his preoccupation with Sam getting hurt or dying is apparent. In this case, then, Kevin does not mentor Sam from the start because doing so will cause the same outcome along a path that Kevin has already taken, and he would not be able to accept Sam being lost or killed. Ultimately, however, Kevin sacrifices himself to save Sam from Clu. Kevin's sacrifice was meant to allow Sam to escape from the game world with Quorra, whom Kevin believes will be a miraculous contribution to the real world. If Kevin had any doubts of Sam's capabilities by the end of the film, he would not have allowed Sam that level of responsibility and obligation.

The Importance of Flaws

If we go back to the idea that the mentors are providing flawed, perhaps unprepared, guidance, while still believing they are working in the mentees' best interests, they may not be doing such a bad job, after all. Since the mentees are now the main characters in the fictions, they need to learn from their mentors with the goal of moving the plots forward, of one day moving on alone, even if the mentorship they receive is not perfect. At face value, this notion may seem harsh for the mentee; in reality, it is simply about a rites of passage progression, in which the mentees have now gained levels of knowledge and skill directly linked to their independence.

As a new generation is exposed to these sentimental franchises, it is important that they, in the long run, connect to the new characters, while also understanding the vital role a mentor can play. The mentors, after all, serve as a basis for the new characters to

lead the narratives. A passing of the torch is only able to take place when the mentee grows in this capacity, learning from leadership, adapting to it, understanding it, and, hopefully, being able to move forward in life without it. The original generation of characters serves a purpose in their positions within the storylines, but mainly so the new generation can take their places. In effect, you will have mentees taking pride in their independence, yet they are not able to completely obtain full independence until after the mentors intervene in their lives. There is certainly tension for the mentee in the initial reluctance of the mentors, but the mentor-to-mentee relationship sees the mentees having a much more established, grounded, and masterful independence than they would have had otherwise—given that the mentees do not have the convenience of easy mentor figures in their lives, such as with family, and despite the leadership from the mentors coming with hesitation and imperfection.

Conclusion

It would be an incorrect assertion to consider the new fictions as being about the mentors. These storylines are now about the mentees; their progressions, their paths, their challenges, and their struggles. The mentors provide guidance for the mentees to operate with a sought-after level of independence, but it is so that the torch can be passed and fully given up for the purpose of the new generation's story. Mentor guidance is designed for the mentee, and, in these cases, for the franchises continuing. In chaotic situations, the mentees simply cannot go it alone.

Though the franchises follow formulas that allow narrative consistency to story arcs, these narratives are now intended for Miguel, Adonis, Rey, and Sam. Audiences will see characters they have come to know and care for lead the way for a new generation. In the fractured world we live in, the fictions do some of the work for the moviegoers, mirroring the generations that could be in attendance of the cinematic releases. To some audiences, these fictions will show how we should understand leaders as people who are flawed and can make mistakes, and for others, they should be willing to perceive themselves as imperfect, with slip-ups being part of the leadership process.

Through familiar characters, now in key mentorship roles, audiences should understand the importance of experience and wisdom in imparting information. They will not, however, see these familiar characters as infallible—though they may have accomplished great feats in the franchise prior to current storylines, they are far from perfect. Importantly, they are still of value to their mentees, even with their flaws and flawed approaches. While mentors and leaders are certainly capable of complete failure, the narratives here set up realistic expectations for audiences, in that leaders can make mistakes and yet still be largely successful in

giving important lessons to mentees and followers. The mentees are eventually able to continue on their own more effectively and independently and navigate uncharted territory.

To reiterate, for the message to work, the narratives rely on: 1) the mentor and mentee both looking for something in their lives; essentially, there is an active seeking of mentorship due to a strained or lacking connection with family; 2) the mentors, under a presupposition that they are working in the mentee's best interests, try to provide useful guidance, yet they themselves are flawed, and perhaps unprepared, in taking on the concrete mentorship roles that they themselves once had. The mentors are getting second chances to right some of their past mistakes, while the mentees are able to get fulfilling experiences in the absence of set family structures. It is meant to show audiences a process of seeking mentorship. The torch is passed, and the previously inflexible and idealized mentorship is burned down, not replicated. The mentors do accomplish goals of having confidence in their mentees with their new knowledge and skill sets, which is apparent in each of the four franchise examples.

The portrayals are absolutely realistic of mentors and leaders who can only really act according to an assessment of what appears best at the time. By passing the torch to the next generation of characters, they are allowing the characters to take center stage in their own journeys. Though the franchises rely on formulas to their plots, there is a 'torching' of prior methods of mentorship, as the fictions have all included very stoic and dogmatic mentors at one point in time; those previous mentors were more steadfast, but such unbending and seemingly infallible individuals do not mesh well with cultures now looking to reclaim a sense of who they are by choosing amongst all the different possible messages and narratives that exist in the world.

Although this work focuses on popular entertainment media and the actions of fictional characters, there is significant application to everyday life. Today, we see younger people trying to forge paths into new futures, looking to leaders and mentors for help in doing so. As new generations emerge with a desire for change and success within themselves, they look to those with applicable knowledge and experience as examples and as resources in order to help give guidance and direction on their own journeys.

Leadership can be flawed and therefore is not unachievable; having flaws in a mentorship capacity can be okay, a prompt established for the audience through a revisiting of narratives in which the audience has prior knowledge of flawed mentees. The next step in the conversation would be to assess the ways that leadership and mentorship roles might be understood in lived experience, including with news and social media, with valid criticisms of leaders being acknowledged while also allowing leaders to maintain the

integrity of their positions. Of course, there would also need to be an analysis of fairly objective cultural standards that could rightfully tarnish leaders or be enough to remove them from authority. Still, in both real life and in entertainment media, it is revealed time and time again why it is important to have leaders willing to mentor those actively working to make real change within themselves and their circumstances.

Flawed mentorship, or even the passing on of those flaws, is not a diminishing process, but it is a change. Mentors can both acknowledge and admit their flaws, and mentees are able to look at mentors as flawed human beings; this is in contrast to what amounts to an expectation of unconditional acceptance by prior mentors such as Mr. Miyagi, Mick, Obi-Wan, and Yoda. Flaws play an important part in being a whole, genuine person—trying to do what is right as opposed to always acting in assumption that all actions and decisions made are the correct ones, often times without question.

On one hand, the admission of flaws is characteristic of a more realistic portrayal, fueled by the notion that flaws can be worked with instead of marking the possibility of undoing as with prior mentors. On the other, the admission of flaws serves as a key plot dynamic for previously established characters because audiences once knew the current mentors as flawed mentees. Their flawed mentorship in teaching and training others is an extension of the struggles that were apparent when they were the ones being mentored. The end result is vital in comprehending why the process is a change and not a diminishment. Mentees can grasp that they themselves do not need to be perfect, either, which was a theme largely absent earlier in the fictions. By passing the torch to the mentees—who will one day be the new generation of leaders, too—mentors are passing hope and possibility into the future, even if the mentorship is flawed.

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Curriculum Planning: A Snapshot of Iowa, Undergraduate Communication Studies Curriculum in 4-year Colleges and Universities

Audrey L. Deterding and James L. Kauffman

Curriculum planning is an ongoing process that requires an exploration of current offerings to determine if programs meet the needs of stakeholders and remain current with the discipline. The last national study to examine communication studies curriculum was more than a decade ago. This study provides a current snapshot of course offerings at all 4-year colleges and universities in Iowa that offer majors in communication studies. It compares and contrasts the Iowa curriculum to earlier national curricular studies in communication. Results suggest that while Iowa schools generally align with national studies, public and private schools differ in their offerings and may reflect a broadening definition of the field.

Introduction

Communication studies scholars have devoted a great deal of time and energy to identifying the curriculum in the discipline. In 2002, *Communication Education* devoted a special issue to examining communication curriculum. Backlund (2002) summarized the challenge of such an enterprise: "To some extent, the field of communication defines itself by what it teaches, and yet, agreement about the best content for our basic course or the most important topics for ideal curriculum remains elusive" (p. 1). One might reasonably expect that communication scholars would have reached a consensus about a core curriculum while acknowledging that the core may evolve over time. Smith and Turner (1993) call curricular review and change "common activities in all colleges and universities" (p. 34).

Communication programs often look to state associations, national associations, and/or surveys of students, employers, and other communication programs in adjusting their curriculum. Undoubtedly, communication programs want to ensure that they offer a curriculum that remains current and meets the needs of their various stakeholders. Iowa has fourteen, four-year colleges and universities that offer a communication studies major[1]. To ensure its curriculum remains current and meets the needs of its stakeholders, communication programs in Iowa will find it helpful to know at least two things: 1). how communication studies programs at Iowa's public and private colleges and universities define themselves by what they teach; and 2). how their curriculum compares to programs nationally. This study offers a snapshot of the undergraduate, communication

studies programs of Iowa's four-year, public and private colleges and universities to assist programs in the curriculum planning process.

Review of Literature

Two studies have attempted to identify the curriculum in the discipline by cataloging the courses offered by communication studies programs through a national survey. Wardrope (1999) "surveyed communication department chairpersons to ascertain the frequency of courses offered, expected to be offered or desired in communication curricula (p. 264). Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) replicated and updated Wardrope's study, surveying 148 National Communication Association's colleges and universities to identify the frequency of courses that appeared on the surveyed programs' web sites or program catalogs. Both studies provide an invaluable service in identifying the breadth of the field and the curricular changes taking place nationally. The national study surveyed members of the National Communication Association, which is overrepresented by public and research universities. The results may not be representative, especially for small, private schools.

One study conducted a curricular comparison between the findings of the two, national studies and the Kentucky colleges and universities that offer communication studies majors (Deterding & Kauffman, 2011). The results showed that the curricula of the Kentucky schools closely aligned with the national studies' top 11 courses (pp. 2-3). It also discovered that the Kentucky schools had a higher percentage of performance-based courses than the national study. Finally, the Kentucky study grouped together the 11 private and 8 public schools. Consequently, one cannot determine if the public and private schools differed in their offerings (p. 3).

Iowa offers a unique opportunity to compare the findings of the national findings to a state's curriculum. No studies have attempted to identify the communication studies curriculum of Iowa's colleges and universities. Iowa has a high ratio of private versus public universities that offer communication studies majors: 11 private schools and 3 public. However, Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) included only two Iowa universities in their survey, both public: Iowa State University and the University of Iowa. Second, Iowa has a declining college population. However, "Iowa's college-going rates do not follow the national trend," (Conditions of higher education, p. 22), falling faster than the national percentages. Third, all parts of Iowa are becoming diversified, and "population growth among children of color and/or of Hispanic descent is the sole driver of population growth in that age group in Iowa" (Statewide population trends, p. 8). Iowa colleges and universities must offer relevant, attractive majors that appeal to residents and non-residents, particularly students of color. The schools must keep abreast of trends in employment and student interest and adjust their curricula

to meet the demands of employers and a changing student body who have numerous in-person and online options. The current study will offer a current, comprehensive snapshot of Iowa's communication studies curriculum. To that end, we forward the following questions to guide this study:

RQ1: How does the curriculum of Iowa schools compare to the nation?

RQ2: Is there consensus in the courses offered in the fourteen programs?

RQ3: What differences in curricula exist between the public and private colleges/universities?

Method

The study examines all 4-year public and private colleges and universities in Iowa that offer a communication studies major. In so doing, it examines each institution using the same coding scheme employed by Wardrope (1999) and subsequently Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) in characterizing the courses to report the top 30 courses that they discovered in their review and the percentage of schools surveyed that offered the courses (see Table 1). The websites from the fourteen schools in this study were examined to find and to record course offerings. Most course offerings were easily found on department websites, and course catalogs were also utilized to determine the content of classes if class titles did not specifically coincide with Wardrope's typology (1999). Frequency counts were calculated for the 30-course list to identify course offerings from each institution. However, ten additional courses were added to the typology if at least 1/3 (33.3%) of institutions offered the course.

Results

The frequency and percent of current course offerings are presented in Table 1 below and are shown holistically for Iowa as well as divided by public and private institutions and compared against Bertelsen and Goodboy's (2009) rank and percentages.

Table 1
Curricular Comparison of National and Iowa Communication Course Offerings

Top 30 offered classes	Waldrop e 1999	B & G 2009	Iowa (all)	Iowa (public)	Iowa (private)
Interpersonal Communication	71.60%	96.60%	92.80%	100%	90.91%
Group communication	68.20%	93.20%	71.40%	100%	63.63%
Organizational Communication	66.20%	92.60%	71.40%	100%	63.63%
Persuasion	64.10%	91.20%	57.10%	66.7%	54.55%
Public Speaking	64.10%	87.20%	50.00%	66.7%	45.45%
Intercultural Communication	54.70%	84.50%	92.80%	100%	90.91%
Communication Research Methods	50.00%	83.80%	64.30%	100%	54.55%
Communication Theory	66.20%	81.80%	57.10%	100%	45.45%
Argumentation and Debate	60.80%	80.40%	28.50%	33.3%	27.27%
Gender Communication	40.50%	65.50%	42.80%	100%	27.27%
Introduction to Communication	42.50%	58.80%	64.30%	33.3%	72.72%
Nonverbal Communication	n/a	58.10%	21.40%	100%	0%
Conflict Communication	n/a	51.40%	35.70%	100%	18.18%
Political Communication	39.80%	47.30%	21.40%	67%	0.90%
Business and Professional Speaking	45.90%	44.60%	50.00%	100%	36.36%
Rhetorical Criticism	47.90%	43.90%	14.20%	33.3%	0.90%
Interviewing	30.40%	39.90%	0.07%	0%	0.90%
Health Communication	13.50%	37.20%	28.50%	33.3%	27.27%
Advanced Public Speaking	45.20%	31.80%	21.40%	33.3%	18.18%
Language and Communication	25.60%	29.10%	14.20%	33.3%	0.90%
Family Communication	18.20%	27.70%	28.50%	67%	18.18%
Oral Interpretation	39.80%	20.30%	21.40%	33.3%	18.18%
Communication and Society	26.30%	16.90%	0.70%	33.3%	0%
Voice and Diction	30.40%	16.20%	0.00%	0%	0%
Speechwriting	7.40%	14.90%	0.00%	0%	0%
Teaching Methods for Speech	22.90%	14.20%	0.70%	33.3%	0%
Public Address History	25.00%	14.20%	14.20%	0%	18.18%
Listening	20.20%	12.80%	14.20%	33.3%	0.90%
Instructional Communication	17.50%	8.10%	0.00%	0%	0%
Coaching Forensics	20.20%	6.80%	0.00%	0%	0%

Table 2 presents information about additional courses offered, which were not included in the national study. This data was used to answer the research questions and is detailed below.

Table 2
Additional Course Offerings in Iowa Schools

Additional Classes	Public- 3	Private-11	Cumulative (14)
Digital Communication	3	8	78.60%
Leadership	3	8	78.60%
Senior Seminar/Capstone	3	7	71.40%
Media Studies/Criticism	1	8	64.30%
Rhetoric (not criticism)	2	6	57.10%
Strategic Communication	1	7	57.10%
Journalism		7	50%
Writing		7	50%
Ethics	1	5	42.80%
Mass Communication		5	35.70%

Like the national studies, many of the top ten courses identified by Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) were top offered courses by Iowa schools. In fact, Interpersonal Communication was the most offered course in both their study and the current study. The top 8 courses identified by Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) were also offered by at least 50% of Iowa schools, although not in the same ranked order. The top course identified in the national study, Interpersonal Communication, tied with Intercultural Communication (ranked 6th nationally) as the top course offered in Iowa.

The Iowa schools show a lack of performance courses as compared to the national average. For example, 87.2% of national schools required Public Speaking but only 50% of Iowa schools did. Similarly, elocution courses such as Oral Interpretation or Voice and Diction courses which showed a marked decline between the two national studies were also rarely offered in Iowa schools with only 3 of the 11 schools offering an Oral Interpretation course and none of them offering Voice and Diction. Although there was a lack of performance courses offered, Public Speaking tied with Business and Professional Communication as the 9th most offered course in Iowa.

RQ2: Is there consensus in the courses offered in the fourteen programs?

Ten courses were offered by 50% or more of Iowa schools: Intercultural Communication (92.8%), Interpersonal Communication (92.8%), Group Communication (71.4%), Organizational Communication (71.4%), Communication Research Methods (64.3%), Gender Communication (64.3%), Introduction to Communication (64.3%), Communication Theory (57.1%), Persuasion (57.1%), and Business and Professional Speaking (50.0%). Eight of these courses were the top eight offered nationwide (Bertelsen & Goodboy, 2009) with the exceptions being Introduction to Communication (ranked 11) and Business and Professional Communication (ranked 15).

When the comparison goes beyond the course list identified in the national study, there is still consistency between Iowa public and private schools (see Table 2) with course offerings. A large majority of schools in Iowa offer a course in Leadership (78.6%), and a Senior Seminar/Capstone course (71.4%). These course titles and descriptions were consistent across institutions. However, while the majority of Iowa institutions also offer a digital communication course (78.6%), media studies (64.3%), strategic communication (57.1%), and rhetoric (57.1%), indicating a recognized need for students to have knowledge in these areas, the specific type of digital communication, media studies, strategic communication, or rhetoric course varied by institution. It is important to note that these rhetoric courses are distinct from rhetorical criticism courses, which is its own specific course as identified in the national studies.

The small number of public schools (3) means that each university accounted for 33% of the offerings while each private school only garnered 1/11 (9.1%) which could skew overall results if looking for a simple majority, so to answer this question, our focus was when the public schools were in full consensus with offerings. There were 10 courses that all three public institutions offered while there were no classes that all private schools offered. Additionally, out of those 10, five were offered by fewer than 50% of the private schools: Business and Professional Communication (36.36%), Communication Theory (45.45%), Conflict Communication (18.18%), Gender Communication (27.27%), and Nonverbal Communication (0%). Breaking down the data even further shows that not a single private school provided Nonverbal Communication, only 2 private intuitions offered Conflict Communication, and only 3 offered Gender Communication.

While there were no classes that all private schools offered, Table 2 shows that many of the small schools are offering courses that are not included in the previous national studies' lists. Media Studies was indicated in RQ2 as a course that shows consensus in the programs as a whole, yet a further breakdown shows that only one public institution offers a form of this class while 8 of the 11 private schools (72.7%) do. None of the public universities offer a journalism or writing course yet more than half of the private schools do (n= 7, 63.6%) while almost half of them also offer a course in mass communication (n= 5, 45.5%).

Discussion

Analyzing the information in Table 1 shows important information about the curriculum in Iowa schools compared with the national studies. The findings highlight how Iowa compares to the national data from a decade ago and provide a glimpse of how the discipline may be evolving, as suggested by Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009). Iowa schools may find the list useful to identify trends in the state and to aid in curricular planning.

General Trends in Iowa Course Offerings

One finds a decided lack of performance and elocution classes offered by Iowa schools, which corresponds to the national trend (Bertelsen & Goodboy, 2009). Additionally, one can see a continuation of the move away from the "individual's relations to society to individual's relations with other people" (Morreale & Backlund, 2002, p. 5) and a decline in elocution skills courses, such as Advanced Public Speaking. Moreover, one finds a reduction in even the basic skills courses such as Public Speaking, Business & Professional Speaking, and Voice & Diction. Only half of Iowa schools offer Public Speaking or Business & Professional Speaking, with none offering Voice & Diction. It may be that Iowa is shifting from conventional public speaking to a more business presentation

style although one cannot determine if the current national trend would align with Iowa, the national studies suggest a continued downward trajectory in line with Iowa's limited offering of these types of courses. Historically, as the speech discipline evolved to become the communication discipline and areas that had once been the domain of other disciplines became part of the communication discipline, this precipitated a "decline of prominence and depth in our oral/aural emphasis on speech communication" (Feezel, 2018, p. 5). It seems this decline continues to be the current trajectory of the field.

In addition to specific basic skills courses, many courses offered by a small percentage of schools in the earlier national studies (see Bertelsen & Goodboy, 2009; Waldrope, 1999) were not offered by Iowa programs, such as Speechwriting and Instructional Communication, or offered by only one school, such as Interviewing and Communication and Society. The small number mirrors national studies and also indicates that perhaps these courses should not be included in a top 30 communication courses as national trends evolve and courses that were once top offered across the country no longer make the cut, and new national studies should not work from a predetermined list from over 20 years ago.

Additional courses offered by Iowa schools reflect the broadening of the field from speech to communication studies to include journalism, mass communication, and mediated communication: Digital Communication, Media Studies/Criticism, Journalism, writing, Ethics, and Mass Communication. One also finds an emphasis on professional communication, with new courses in Leadership and Strategic Communication. Further, most of the Iowa public and private schools offered a senior seminar or capstone course.

As performance course offerings wain, there seems to be a marked increase in courses focused on the workplace, such as Group Communication, Intercultural Communication, Leadership, Strategic Communication, and Digital Communication. From 1999 to 2009, Group Communication and Intercultural Communication courses had a 25% and 29.8% increase (see Waldrope, 1999; Bertelsen & Goodboy, 2009). The current data show that 71% of Iowa schools offer Group Communication and 92.8% offer Intercultural Communication. With an increase in global connectedness, there has been an increase of courses that promote cross-cultural sensitivity.

Interestingly, this study found a large majority of schools offered leadership classes. Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) specifically noted that the "discipline should make a concerted effort to include more courses such as *Leadership* " (p. 271). The data from Iowa would suggest that colleges and universities have taken note, as over three quarters (78.6%) offer a class in leadership. Further,

classes in Strategic Communication and Digital Communication, courses not included in the previous national studies, also have a robust presence in Iowa curricula, with a majority of schools offering courses in these areas.

Public vs Private

The Iowa snapshot shows many similarities but decided differences between public and private schools. The Iowa public universities largely continue to mirror the Bertelsen and Goodboy (2009) findings and the previous trend away from elocutionary courses and toward classes that focus on the individual's relations with other people. However, relying on a study over a decade old may not reflect the changing and expanding communication field. Possibly, the larger state schools may have more constraints, such as graduate programs and a larger number of faculty, which would hinder significant change. The smaller, private schools may be able to adapt their programs more quickly. In some instances, the curriculum changes may partly reflect the expertise and interest of a changing faculty, especially as faculty retire. Further, the offerings might reflect the broadening definition of the field.

One finding outside the scope of this article's focus, yet still important, is the number of courses offered by different institutions. Not surprisingly, the large state schools are able to offer more courses. For example, the most recent degree worksheet from the University of Iowa (Degree Worksheet, 2018) lists a possibility of 77 courses for a student to take while a small private school such as Graceland University offers 18 (Communication Major, 2021). While students earn a degree in the same major, their course work may have little overlap and graduates enter the workplace with vastly different experiences and coursework.

The findings of the Iowa private schools reflect a shift from elocutionary courses, while also demonstrating a wider variety of courses offered than the public institutions. This may reflect the limited course offerings of the programs due to their smaller size and a broader definition of the field to include courses in journalism, mass media, and mediated communication. The more inclusive definition of the field would explain courses in media studies, journalism, ethics, strategic communication, and mass communication. Finally, in accord with the national trend, the Iowa private schools reflect the move away from skills classes, like Advanced Public Speaking and Listening and other courses associated with the elocutionary movement. In general, while there are differences between public and private, it appears that Iowa higher education institutions as a whole are receptive to changes in the field and adjust their curriculum to meet current demands.

Future Directions

This snapshot of Iowa provides an important step in identifying the trends of course offerings in Iowa. It offers a starting point to identify how Iowa schools modify their curriculum. When programs work on curricular mapping and updating their course lists, it is important that programs stay familiar with trends in the field as they modify or defend the selection of courses offered. Ideally, scholars will take another snapshot in ten years to identify any changes Iowa programs make to their curriculum, how those changes reflect national trends, and how well those changes meet the needs of an everchanging workplace and society.

In addition to looking specifically at Iowa, scholars should take snapshots of additional states to determine how they align with national standards. The United States is a large country with regions that do not and cannot necessarily reflect other regions. Change may be occurring at a state level which may not yet be reflected nationally. Further, individual states may have idiosyncratic needs in their curriculum.

Finally, this study suggests that public and private schools may differ in their curriculum. The differences may reflect differing stakeholders, which may influence the types of courses offered. While Iowa mostly conforms to a large, public versus smaller, private school, grouping, this is not the case in all states. Studying states with large private schools may help to determine if public or private designations play a role in curriculum. In addition to institution size, private schools may have a religious affiliation, which could play a role in course offerings. Future research should include such variables to better understand curriculum offerings.

Notes

[1] Public: Northern Iowa University, Iowa State University, University of Iowa; Private: Buena Vista University, Central College, Clarke University, Coe College, Dordt University, Graceland University, Luther College, Mount Mercy University, University of Dubuque, Upper Iowa University, Wartburg College

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Just Txt Me: How Digital Platforms Shape the Close Relationships of Generation Z

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The rise of texting and social media usage, primarily among Millennials and Generation Z, has led to the emergence of new communication behaviors in the last decade. While many studies have focused solely on the behaviors of Millennials in the digital age, we examine the behaviors of Generation Z and how the usage of digital communication shapes the close relationships of America's college-aged youth population. After identifying the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face communication and digital communication, we argue that today's youth seek a healthy balance between in-person and online communication to cultivate fulfilling interpersonal relationships with their friends and family. This balance is personally negotiated and depends on several factors, including the communication context, the perceived closeness of the relationship, and the personality (i.e., introvert or extrovert) of the communicator.

Introduction

Texting and social media have taken their place as hallmarks of the technological revolution. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat offer near-instantaneous communication via direct messaging or interacting online with photos, videos, and other posts. At the same time, Apple's iMessage service offers a popular alternative to standard texting, taking advantage of features like 'gifs' or personalized digital touch messages. Texting and social media platforms have become ubiquitous mediums of communication, especially among young people (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Schneiderman (2013) noted that while many Millennials make use of technology, Generation Z was born into the world of technology: "As texting becomes second nature to a generation reared on iPhones, it's worth noting that human beings were designed to connect with each other on many different levels" (para. 2). For Generation Z, the inherent meaning of interpersonal communication has changed dramatically as a result of digital communication (Selwyn, 2009). Therefore, it is imperative to study the influence of digital communication on Generation Z to discover how their communication patterns have evolved alongside technology. Our research sought to address the following question: *How does communication via texting and social media platforms impact and further shape the interpersonal relationships of Generation Z?* In the following case study, we closely examined past literature, singling out three important aspects of digital

communication: the role of youth in the technological movement, motivations for using digital platforms, and the psychological well-being of today's youth as a result of texting. Then, through one-on-one interviews, we collected data from college-aged youth about the role digital communication plays in their lives. Finally, we discuss the findings from our thematic analysis of interview responses, highlighting the major themes and discussing implications for future research on the communication habits of Generation Z.

Literature Review

The Role of the Digital Native

*Defining the digital native***.** The term "digital native" refers to the younger generation of the population, for whom access to technology is crucial to their overall well-being; they possess a special confidence regarding the ability to use and figure out new technologies (Selwyn, 2009). Their access to and usage of technology is similarly unparalleled when compared to previous generations (Conti-Ramsden, Durkin, & Simkin, 2010; Selwyn, 2009). In 2016, for example, 98% of young people in the United States owned a cell phone, and 81% of those cell phone users sent or received text messages while they used the phone; these numbers have continued to climb over the past decade (McEwan & Horn, 2016; Conti-Ramsden et al., 2010). Smartphones are the most recent evolution of the cell phone, and most young people have one (McEwan & Horn, 2016). These devices have become common in our digital native-centric society, representing "as much a part of our lives as the cars we drive and the books we read" (Rew & Hosterman, 2018, p. 1).

Two groups stand out that best represent the aura of the digital native. Skierkowski and Wood (2012) discussed the existence of the first group, those born in the 80s and 90s, who had the opportunity to "grow alongside technology" during their adolescent years. Today, this group is comprised of adults between the ages of 25 and 40—Millennials. Meanwhile, the second cohort represents today's college-aged youth, who benefit from the newly-widespread availability and the exploding popularity of communication via cell phones and Internet-based social media applications—Generation Z (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2010). This group, between the ages of 18 and 25 and born at the turn of the century, has not merely grown up alongside technology; rather, they have grown up with technology woven into their daily lives. Both generations have experienced profound changes in their communication behaviors due to technology, and digital media has influenced the meaning of interpersonal communication for these groups (Skierkowski & Wood, 2012; Selwyn, 2009). However, Selwyn (2009) was skeptical of technology's role in broadening the minds of young people as far as communication is concerned. Instead, he argued that the digital

native's actual usage of technology is limited to more passive, simple actions, such as consuming video content or searching on Google. With this idea in mind, the digital native label is actually quite complex and difficult to generalize, since being tech savvy and benefiting from the affordances of digital media are not universal qualities of today's college-aged youth.

*Youth communication patterns and texting***.** The act of texting itself has been ingrained in the daily lives of young people (Rew & Hosterman, 2018; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012; Conti-Ramsden et al., 2010). This "proclivity for texting," as Jin (2013) observed, can have a significant effect on the types of communication today's youth are willing to undertake via text. This internalized preference for texting exists on a situational basis, meaning that the context of digital conversations indeed matters. Still, it is widely accepted that in regard to young people, "frequent contact with others over text messages promoted feelings of being loved, valued, and of being popular among (their) peer networks" (Skierkowski & Wood, 2012, p. 746). This preference is noticeable across friendships and romantic relationships alike.

There are unspoken "rules of the game" in terms of texting, just as there are norms and boundaries during cases of face-to-face communication (Rew & Hosterman, 2018; Novak, Sandberg, Jeffrey, & Young-Davis, 2016). For example, should difficult topics be discussed via texting? Is it healthy to text a lot in a romantic relationship? How long should one wait to respond to a text message? Unsurprisingly, the answer to all these questions lies embedded in context. As Rew and Hosterman (2018) identified, "Texting response time varies depending on how long the participants have known each other, the context of the situation, and the meaning of the message itself" (p. 10). In other words, young people today use a variety of factors to determine their interpersonal communication behaviors via texting. Likewise, some behaviors are more problematic than others when expressed via text, such as criticism and conflict (Novak et al., 2016). Still, the nature of these digital communication behaviors can change depending on context.

*Youth maintenance of relationships via texting***.** The usage of cellular devices and Internet-based services to communicate represents a means of building and maintaining strong social ties for digital natives, and this practice has become integrated and further normalized into their daily lives (Skierkowski & Wood, 2012; Rew & Hosterman, 2018; Cahir & Lloyd, 2015). However, similar to traditional face-to-face interactions, relationship maintenance via texting is not always rosy either (Jin, 2013). In fact, there are plenty of cases in which hurtful or conflict-inducing text messages are sent to friends or romantic partners, and it is the level of closeness in the relationship that determines how these messages will affect the

relationship over time (Jin, 2013; Novak et al., 2016). Texting is deeply ingrained in friendships and romantic partnerships, which is clear not only by its prevalence but also by the fact that texting—a relatively mundane activity on the surface—can cause significant strain within a relationship due to potential hazards of miscommunication in just a split second of time (Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018; Jin, 2013).

Regarding romantic relationships specifically, there are advantages and disadvantages of texting. Partners have the opportunity to feel a greater presence in each other's daily routines (McEwan & Horn, 2016), and their ability to be readily available to each other enhances some instances of romantic relationships (Novak et al., 2016). The depth of the relationship, the clarity of the message, and the context of the communication determines which messages are appropriate to send via text (Novak et al., 2016; Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018; Rew & Hosterman, 2018; McEwan & Horn, 2016). Several samples of college students indicated that their increased usage of digital media with romantic partners was found to be correlated with positive relationship qualities, such as level of commitment, closeness, connectedness, love, open communication, and trust (Jin & Peña, 2010; McGee, 2014; McEwan & Dakota, 2017). However, according to McGee (2014), several study participants admitted that they experienced feelings of jealousy after seeing pictures of their significant other with previous romantic partners on social media. Likewise, the discovery that some partners had exchanged private messages on social media with members of the opposite sex proved to be problematic; some partners also stated that increased usage of social media inspired feelings of resentment and loneliness, since they were spending too much time on their phones, which took time away from being together in the moment with their partners (Luo, 2014; McGee, 2014).

Perceived advantages of texting among youth. There are many advantages of texting and social media usage for Generation Z, but several affordances in particular stand out in the literature. These affordances include "convenience, affordability, control over the context of communication, speed of relating information, and autonomy from parental supervision" (Skierkowski & Wood, 2012, p. 745). Conti-Ramsden et al. (2010) added that adolescents are motivated to use their cell phones less as a technological tool and more as a social tool. For its part, texting has been an integral part of this transformation. Now, young people make use of various social tools while texting, which are meant to personalize their digital communication experience in close relationships. These features include read receipts, emojis, and voice recordings in lieu of typical text messages.

Motivations for Use

*Defining motivations for use***.** The phrase *motivations for use* refers to the reasons why different people choose to communicate through texting or social media platforms in certain situations. Several themes explain the choice to use digital media to communicate. These themes include motivations to maintain and grow relationships, to meet new people, and to practice social etiquette.

*To maintain relationships***.** Feelings of inclusion or affection can act as the main driving force behind the usage of texting in a relationship (Jin & Park, 2010). Texting communicates affection outwardly to others very quickly and efficiently, whereas previously, staying in contact with others would have been costly and more time consuming, especially when individuals were physically separated by distance (Jin & Park, 2010; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012). After initial meetings, cell phones are oftentimes used to build and maintain relationships (Sprecher & Hampton, 2017). The desire to build and maintain relationships is one of the reasons for increased cell phone usage today, which is due to the constant contact with friends and loved ones that digital platforms provide (Jin & Park, 2010; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012).

To meet new people. Additionally, past research has investigated how digital media has affected the process of meeting new people or even dating, through dating websites, apps, or texting (Sprecher & Hampton, 2017). Current research signifies that if the relationship stemmed from digital communication and continues to exist solely on digital platforms, there may be a less positive impression and outcome in the end; however, if the same relationship is able to move toward face-to-face communication (and away from the digital platform itself), this effect could be lessened and typical positive impressions would appear (Sprecher & Hampton, 2017).

To practice social etiquette. Social and texting etiquette refers to the "acceptable" communication practices on digital platforms (Rew & Hosterman, 2018; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012). Response timing is an important facet of texting etiquette. Research has shown that response timing largely depends on the context of the situation, as well as the nature of the perceived relationship to the sender. Thus, individuals in close friendships or romantic relationships appear to be more accepting of responses that are not instantaneous (Rew & Hosterman, 2018). In fact, some individuals find the expectation of constant availability to be very intrusive and frustrating, and they actually perceive a lack of social boundaries in others (Cahir & Lloyd, 2015). Additionally, these same individuals feel that the constant expectation of contact disturbs the stability of their other relationships, interactions, and environments (Cahir & Lloyd, 2015).

Psychological Effects of Digital Communication

Addiction and emotional stunting. Addiction to texting and social media is a real problem (Lister-Landman, 2017). Digital platforms have become so prevalent that they are now impacting all facets of life (Lister-Landman, 2017). This behavior—technological engagement as an addiction—harms emotional growth because people do not pursue the physical, concrete aspects of human socialization; rather, they stay absorbed in their technology for long, uninterrupted periods of time (Lister-Landman, 2017). Studies on texting and social media have shown that the more an individual becomes involved with texting, the more likely he or she will be to develop psychopathology (Pea et al., 2012), which refers to disorders such as depression or anxiety. Compulsive texting can alter social skills and emotional capacity (Harari et al., 2019).

Self-esteem issues. Over-involvement in technology—such as compulsive texting—can be detrimental to self-esteem, particularly for children and young adults (Twenge, Martin, & Campbell, 2018). Conversely, face-to-face conversations tend to result in higher self-esteem for youth. Regarding personality type, those who consider themselves to be extroverts are not only more involved in face-to-face interactions, but they are also more involved in the act of texting when compared with introverts of the same age group (Twenge et al., 2018; Harari et al., 2019). Thus, although extroverts enjoy face-to-face communication more than introverts, they are also more likely than introverts to use digital platforms to communicate as well. No matter the personality type, the more screen time someone has, the less happy they will be in general—especially if they are young.

More stress. Texting has been shown to add significant stress to individuals' daily lives (Murdock, 2013). Cognitive development is shifting as a direct result of the increased usage of digital platforms (Pea et al., 2012). If students are stressed, they have the opportunity to turn to their phone as a source of entertainment, and this fallback enhances burnout and procrastination. When students use texting and social media as a distraction, it harms their studying habits and overall intellectual functioning (Murdock, 2013; Lister-Landman, 2017). Students who are frequently on their phones also did not get proper amounts of sleep. Young people and adults often spend hours scrolling through social media before bed, which is not a healthy routine. In this manner, the combination of technology-induced procrastination and lack of sleep only adds to daily measures of stress among young adults (Murdock, 2013).

Critique

Several limitations of previous research came to our attention. Most studies on digital communication in close relationships were based entirely on self-reported results, which

called into question their accuracy and findings (Jin & Park, 2010; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012; Sprecher & Hampton, 2017; McGee 2014; Luo, 2014). Additionally, studies tended to have similar sample groups, since most focused on college-aged individuals of the same gender or those who were exclusively involved in romantic relationships (Luo, 2014; Miller-Ott, Kelly, & Duran, 2012). There was little research into Generation Z (children born in the late 1990s and early 2000s), who have had digital tools at their fingertips since childhood. Rew and Hosterman (2018) also noted that the oldest members of Generation Z have received little attention by researchers in studies regarding digital communication trends and behaviors.

This study addressed the gap in research on the face-to-face and digital communication behaviors and preferences of Generation Z. In an attempt to better understand how digital communication has altered the ways in which today's college-aged youth communicate in close relationships, we posed the following research question for our study:

RQ: How does texting and social media usage shape the relationships of Generation Z?

Methodology

Sampling

We chose to interview 42 college students from Central College, opting for a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Our participants were not chosen randomly. We asked friends and acquaintances at Central College if they would participate and some of these participants also invited their friends and so forth. We determined this sampling method would be best for our research, since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdowns in the United States hampered our ability to collect interview data. Additionally, all of our participants were college students who were born after 1995 and represented members of Generation Z. The majority of our participants were female, but males also had significant representation—approximately 60% of interviewees were female, while 40% of interviewees were male. Nearly all 42 participants were white, middle-class college students. One student was of Hispanic descent and identified with the middle class.

Procedure

We asked participants a series of six questions during their interviews to understand their perceptions of face-to-face and digital communication, respectively. The questions inquired about participants' usage of texting and social media in close relationships, their usage of face-to-face communication in close relationships, and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each communication

style. All interviews were conducted electronically via video chat on various digital platforms, such as FaceTime, Zoom, or Snapchat. These interviews lasted no longer than 15 minutes. After conducting the interviews, we replaced participant names with pseudonyms to protect the privacy and anonymity of all interviewees, and these pseudonyms were also utilized in analyzing and preparing the data for our final report. We used a thematic analysis to best analyze and categorize the data from our interviews—sorting out responses, understanding their meaning, and piecing together the big picture of our findings. Through this analysis, several important themes emerged: the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face and digital communication and the role of both mediums in close relationships as perceived by Generation Z.

Discussion

Face-to-Face Communication

*Advantages***.** Most participants believed that with face-to-face communication, there is more than enough context to determine the meaning of messages. In being physically together with individuals, seeing their body language, hearing their vocal tone, and observing emotions and facial expressions/reactions, communicators can prevent their messages from being misconstrued and misinterpreted. It is much easier to decipher meaning in person (Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018). As Sheila explained,

> It's human, it's normal, it's genuine. I enjoy [conversations] a lot; I feel like you get to
>
> > know people better through face-to-face conversation. I think that it's just the real, person-to-person, physical, visual, verbal…that stuff creates a typical face-to-face conversation.

Conversations or discussions that occur in-person can prevent context collapse, which refers to the misunderstandings that arise in a conversation due to lack of context. This phenomenon is a very common result of texting due to communicators' unique grammatical, textual, and expressive styles (Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018). The absence of body language, gestures, and non-verbal cues while texting makes messages much harder to decipher, since their context is more ambiguous. These findings are consistent with previous literature in asserting that meaning can be lost or misconstrued by recipients of text messages, while face-to-face communication is lauded for its all-encompassing communication style, involving more than mere words to be deciphered (Sprecher & Hampton, 2017; Skierkowski & Wood, 2012).

Overwhelmingly, our participants believed that face-to-face communication was imperative to having successful close relationships. This preference for using face-to-face communication to build and strengthen relationships supports previous research

conducted by Sprecher & Hampton (2017), who found that building intimacy was best accomplished in person. Bonnie echoed this sentiment:

> It's important to have that one-on-one contact and to be able to read each other's body language and facial expressions…physical touch is important as well, especially with romantic relationships…without that I don't think you could have a very valid relationship.

This finding also represented a large motivation for using face-to-face communication: most participants stated that face-to-face communication was meant for deepening relationships with close friends, family, or romantic partners. Catherine, Bonnie, Michaela, and Rebecca stated that face-to-face communication offered a sense of trust, respect, and understanding. Likewise, nearly all participants agreed that when having face-to-face conversations, the conversations themselves felt more genuine, expressed deeper meaning, and felt more real than most conversations online. Eve said, "You can't just rely only on texting and stuff… it's definitely important to have those face-to-face contacts and human interaction." All participants felt that the way to achieve the most genuine, human connection was through face-to-face communication.

Disadvantages. Although most participants did not directly acknowledge any major disadvantages of face-to-face communication, their discussions suggested several disadvantages. Additionally, there were a few participants who directly discussed their own qualms with face-to-face communication. First, it is much more difficult to conceal emotions and intentions through face-to-face communication than it is through texting and social media. Several participants said that they regularly "put up a front" or curate a different image of themselves on social media than they portray in real life. For instance, Catherine stated, "I think with texting and social media, it's easy to put up a front so you're not one hundred percent honest, like you can avoid questions or you can change the subject." Similarly, Annalise said, "If you know me, you can read my face like a book, and that's gotten me in trouble before." This finding is in contrast with previous literature, which has focused on the ability to skew meaning, assume a different personality, and misconstrue emotions as negative qualities of texting (Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018; Jin, 2013; Novak et al., 2016). In several cases in our study, participants actually viewed these characteristics as positive traits of texting and disadvantages of face-to-face communication, in which they could not hide their emotions, and they could not avoid talking about certain topics they preferred to ignore.

Similarly, face-to-face communication can be uncomfortable, emotionally painful, or emotionally difficult and stressful for

communicators. In particular, introverts expressed discomfort with face-to-face confrontation and the discussion of difficult or polarizing subjects. Across the board, introverted participants were most likely to equate face-to-face conversations with conflict. Taylor, an introvert, repeatedly stated that she assumed that many instances of face-to-face communication in her life would be confrontational and would likely get blown out of proportion – even before they began. She asserted,

> I guess the downside is that people's reactions can escalate quickly, so it can get blown out of hand, blown out of proportion quicker…I feel like I am willing to do face-to-face, but it also worries me in some situations, you know, like whenever my roommate says 'Hey, can we talk?' I think uhhhhh what did I do now?

This finding is similar to previous research, which posits that one reason why some individuals may use texting or social media to handle difficult scenarios – like breaking up – is that they find it too uncomfortable to carry out in person (Harari et al., 2019; Pea et al., 2012).

Overall, according to the majority of our participants, the advantages of face-to-face communication are vast, while the downsides are few in comparison. In-person interactions facilitate the personal connection and trust in close relationships, while conveying messages with clear context and meaning. However, it is interesting to note that self-reported introverts and those who generally prefer to avoid confrontation took a less positive stance on the advantages of face-to-face communication, arguing that it can lead to stressful situations and conversations that are blown out of proportion due to heightened emotions. Still, every introverted participant agreed that some level of face-to-face communication was necessary for psychological well-being and sense of belonging. This finding is reminiscent of the need for relational bonding and the ability to confide in others in close relationships (Skierkowski & Wood, 2012). Similar to previous literature suggesting that face-to-face communication is important for human well-being, our study found that face-to-face communication was not only preferred but better suited for communicating meaning, building close relationships, and giving personal value and a sense of belonging to individuals.

Digital Communication

*Advantages***.** The vast majority of participants praised the ability to communicate with people who lived far away via text message or catch up with people they had not seen in a while via social media. One of the participants, Michaela, explained that she was adopted, and she was able to reconnect with her original birth family through social media. Michaela said, "There's a lot of relatives I don't talk to, but they have me on Facebook, so they keep

updates and stuff. I know my birth family has connected with me through social media, too." The ability to connect with others who are far away through digital platforms was also emphasized by the research of McEwan and Horn (2016), Rew and Hosterman (2018), and Skierkowski and Wood (2012). Similarly, Laurel stated that texting and social media are helpful:

> You don't have to be in the same place; if you're in a different time zone, it definitely helps then; [social media] lets you share things that you're doing with other people and not just your close friends; you can share it with your family, too, wherever they live in the world.

Just as McEwan and Horn (2016) found that many couples in committed relationships use texting to maintain a connection when they are apart, texting and social media are used in almost every type of relationship to stay connected over long distance or to simply stay in touch with old friends or relatives through the years. Furthermore, we found that the ability to share life moments on social media was very popular among interviewees, as they could easily stay in touch with and feel close to others despite the lack of physical proximity.

Texting and social media provide constant accessibility to friends, family, and acquaintances – no matter where they are in the world, no matter what they are doing. Participants liked being able to get in touch with friends whenever it was convenient to do so. Even if participants did not receive a quick response, they felt good knowing the message was sent and out of their hands. Marcus emphasized,

> A couple of my closest friends go to school like an hour or two away, so it's been really helpful…and now with corona[virus], my primary form of communication with the people I love is through text. So, I think it's really helpful when there's distance especially…you can always stay connected. I can send them a message any time and talk with them.

In other words, face-to-face communication can be aided by texting and social media usage in close relationships, because communicators almost always have immediate access to their close relationships via digital platforms anywhere in the world. Previous research on texting in close relationships expressed similar findings; chiefly, interpersonal relationships can become stronger as a result of high-frequency texting to maintain a constant connection throughout the day (McEwan & Horn, 2016; Novak et al., 2016; Jin & Peña, 2010; Luo, 2014).

Disadvantages. Instances of misinterpretation and conflict due to texting and social media usage were commonly cited across our interviews as disadvantages, and this finding is supported by previous literature (Jin, 2013; Novak et al., 2016; Rew & Hosterman,

2018). One participant, Wes, described a scenario in which texting would not suffice for good communication:

> So, if someone says for instance 'sure'—is it 'sure' like *okay* or 'sure' like *yeah…alright, fine I'll do it* kinda thing. There could be sarcasm involved with some expressions, and it could be really hard to convey over text because you can't express it very well.

Even though emoticons are embedded into most texting and social media platforms today, it is still difficult to decipher messages correctly without the presence of tone, body language, gestures, and facial expressions (McGee, 2014). In scenarios such as the one mentioned above, recipients can have a hard time detecting sarcasm or determining the real meaning of the message itself. Likewise, Emily emphasized, "Sometimes people can come off as rude when they're being sarcastic or something, like it's harder to read how people are going to react to stuff." These observations parallel the findings of Kelly and Miller-Ott (2018): the misinterpretation of tone and the subsequent unwillingness to seek clarification through texting were detrimental to the overall health of relationships. In other words, misunderstandings that could be easily circumvented through face-to-face communication can often quickly become worse without immediate clarification and explanation through text.

The other main disadvantage of texting and social media usage in close relationships was the lack of personal privacy and the expectation to constantly be available for conversation. Interestingly, digital platforms were described as a double-edged sword in this regard, as interviewees heralded the ability to stay constantly connected with others, yet they did not enjoy the pressure of being constantly connected themselves. Michaela said, "Once you start posting on social media, people just feel like they have the right to your life." Regarding texting, Rew and Hosterman (2018) also found that there is a societal pressure to stay connected and be available via digital communications platforms, concluding that individuals in close relationships will actually wait longer to respond to each other's texts as long as the situation is not urgent. Several of our participants also indicated that they would wait longer or not respond at all to close friends in non-urgent situations, simply due to the fact that they know them well and know they will not get upset. Annalise admitted,

> If I know the person super well, I'm gonna be more likely not to respond or be really flamboyant or really flippant about the conversation like 'Oh, it's [my best friend], she gets it; she knows I care; she knows I'm probably busy…and I'll just respond later.

In this manner, young people indeed view the constant access of texting and social media as a major downside even though they

simultaneously enjoy the ability to get in touch with others simply and effortlessly, all the time. In fact, a certain level of hypocrisy exists regarding the idea of constant access. Introverts and extroverts alike conveyed that texting and social media provide advantages to the sender that could become deleterious to the receiver.

Ultimately, most of our participants viewed digital communication as a complement to traditional face-to-face communication. Its advantages include facilitating long-distance communication and providing a constant line of access to friends, family members, and acquaintances. Meanwhile, disadvantages of digital communication include the potential for miscommunication and the expectation to "always be online," in the words of Michaela. In general, participants took a much more negative view of texting and social media usage, especially when discussing consequences of excessive usage of digital platforms. Participants voiced the idea that a complementary balance needs to be struck between face-to-face and digital communication to achieve maximum happiness and comfort within a relationship.

Complementary Face-to-Face & Digital Communication

After interviewing participants about the advantages and disadvantages of both face-to-face and digital communication, we turned our focus to the ways in which our participants used these mediums to communicate in close relationships in their everyday lives. Specifically, we examined the balancing act between face-to-face and digital communication, and we found that the equilibrium varies from person to person and is based on elements of context, the level of closeness in the relationship, and personality type—introvert or extrovert.

Context of the situation. Context is a vital factor in determining whether face-to-face or digital communication is used by Generation Z. While most participants agreed that face-to-face communication was best for serious and "deep" topics of conversation, others argued that face-to-face communication may need to be prefaced by digital communication to prevent conflict and escalation or simply to establish the need for an in-person conversation. Taylor, an introvert, believed that face-to-face communication was good for conveying emotion in a relationship, yet she also stated that at times, texting is useful in previewing a conversation that needs to happen in-person:

> When I'm face to face with people, I'll talk; I like to talk a lot like with people about what I'm feeling and everything…but if there's a topic that is going to be difficult to talk about or just challenging or they need time to process before they actually talk, you know, you can give them a heads up using the social media, being like 'Hey, are you

> free? Can we talk?' just kind of using social media that way, giving that [heads up] ahead of time.

Previous literature also suggests that the decision to use face-to-face communication or digital communication is largely situational (Rew & Hosterman, 2018; Conti-Ramsden et al., 2010; Selwyn, 2009; Sprecher & Hampton, 2016). Overall, some topics of conversation are best expressed via text message while others must be expressed via face-to-face communication in order to be conveyed best and clearly understood.

Closeness of the relationship. Most participants indicated that the closeness of the relationship also determines whether or not face-to-face communication or digital communication is used more frequently. Michaela stated that having frequent face-to-face communication with someone is almost a prerequisite to becoming close friends with them:

> If I'm not close with you, I'll leave you on read maybe for three days and then I'll get back to you if I can, but if I'm talking to you face to face it means I really wanna see you, and I really wanna be friends with you and hang out and stuff, so I don't know, I guess I just use it to differ on whether or not we're close.

Other participants made similar remarks, citing the importance of face-to-face communication as one of the dominant factors in assessing level of closeness in a relationship. Texting and social media usage also played a role, allowing participants to stay connected with their close friends if they were apart. Meanwhile, across the board, the act of texting by itself was a sign of "acquaintance-ships," as Michaela described. Similarly, Novak et al. (2016) found that among married couples and engaged couples, there was a higher likelihood of expressing emotion and broaching confrontational subjects in-person and over text, while dating couples (who have been together less time) chose not to talk about difficult topics over text, potentially out of fear of breaking up as a result. In this manner, the closeness of the relationship determines whether or not digital communication will be utilized in addition to face-to-face communication across various topics, and it also determines the balance necessary to nurture healthy communication in the relationship itself.

*Personality type***.** Participants who felt as if they were more outgoing were also more likely to reach out and talk, regardless of what communication medium was used. However, participants who felt as if they were less outgoing and more introverted only enjoyed face-to-face interactions under certain circumstances with close friends, and they used digital communication for most other conversations. For instance, Emily said,

> If you have social anxiety, I feel like people can use that as a crutch to not talk to people otherwise, and they don't really know how to actually socialize with people…I think I'm more of an introvert, so I'm more confident using texting to talk to people; I'll say more of what's on my mind than I would outwardly with face to face.

While this theme of extroverted versus introverted personality is not necessarily representative of all participants, it holds true across the vast majority of interviewees. Likewise, our findings lined up with those of past research, which allege that individuals approach social interactions with a set of social cues, rules, or expectations unique to their own communicative preferences and tendencies (Rew & Hosterman, 2018; Novak et al., 2016).

Communication During the Coronavirus Pandemic

We conducted this study in the midst of an international quarantine, in which people were instructed to stay home to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Nearly every participant cited the pandemic at least once during their interview, and most comments were made in reference to the positive aspects of digital platforms. As Bonnie highlighted, "Especially now, during this pandemic, you can't meet up with social distancing or quarantine so it's very nice to have social media and texting to be able to connect and communicate with friends and family." Additionally, several participants felt as though they took face-to-face communication for granted before the pandemic hit the United States, admitting that they missed being with their friends (Laurel) and having face-to-face conversations with their professors (Emily). In fact, this disruption of the natural communication balance in relationships also led to resistance effects, which several participants identified. As an extrovert, Annalise discussed how she pulled away from digital platforms during the pandemic:

> I feel like especially now with everything going on, I don't really care about talking to people; we all have our own lives; we all have our own individual problems going on, so I just really don't ever reach out to people when I know I should.

It is quite significant and astonishing that an extrovert would be pulling away from all communication due to everything moving online as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. This finding is in stark contrast with the research of Twenge et al. (2018), who found that extroverts were typically more involved with digital communication than introverts. Overall, it is quite apparent that the coronavirus pandemic uprooted the balance between face-to-face and digital communication in some instances of close relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

In completing our study, we identified four limitations. First, the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 most likely skewed public opinion in favor of digital platforms, as they became the only option for close, interpersonal contact between friends, family members, and co-workers. Second, although there was roughly an even split between male and female participants in this study, there are still several demographic disparities to consider. Nearly all of the study's participants were white, middle-class American college students; and therefore, our sample may not be representative of nor generalizable to the American collegiate population as a whole. Third, sampling limitations due to the coronavirus pandemic led to variations of convenience sampling and snowball sampling. In other words, interviewees were chosen based on their proximity to the researchers, and several participants also provided names for further participants to increase the sample size of the study. Fourth, our study does not differentiate between phone calls/video calls and texting/social media usage in regard to digital platforms. Future research should aim to separate the two categories to discern whether or not phone calls/video calls are likened to face-to-face or digital communication, respectively.

Additionally, we believe future directions for research should include studies on the potential differences between Millennials and Generation Z in forming friendships and romantic relationships online. These studies could discover ways in which technology has altered interpersonal communication behaviors. As more Generation Z members come of age, we expect to see new research focusing on the differences of digital etiquette and digital affordances between these two groups. Future research should also examine the social and communicative differences between young people who use technology to communicate frequently and those who do not. Today, there are a growing number of young people who limit their technology usage or refuse to accept the idea of upgrading technology to benefit their lives. New research could shine a light on how technology-resistant young people communicate in comparison with their technology-absorbed counterparts. These studies would be useful in undermining some of the generalizations about the digital native, which Selwyn (2009) questioned a decade ago.

Conclusion

Digital platforms, which facilitate texting and social media usage, are an integral part of communication in close relationships, especially for members of Generation Z. Young people in the United States strive to maintain a healthy balance between face-to-face and digital communication to maintain fruitful relationships with their friends, family members, and acquaintances. There are many advantages and disadvantages to both forms of communication, and it

is evident that today's college-aged youth are always evaluating their options before clicking send.

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Book Review: Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue & Difference (Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2018)

Maryl McGinley

In a historical moment marked by acrimonious discourse everywhere from social media to the news media, *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference* (2018) provides a framework of civility and reflection as an antidote to reactive and volatile communication. The book offers a well-timed dwelling place of welcome that explores a dialogic understanding of communication ethics while providing a solid foundational overview of communication ethics literature. Ronald Arnett, Janie M. Harden Fritz, and Leeanne M. Bell McManus establish a shared good of learning as a restorative dialogic communicative ethic from which to move meaningfully in public and private spheres. The book moves us through an understanding of difference not as something to pit us against each other, but as a starting place for dialogue. In expecting to encounter difference, we can expect to learn and grow. From a pedagogical perspective, this book is relevant and significant for use in the communication classroom.

The book offers an overview of communication ethics, with attention to why communication ethics is vital in this historical moment. The first section helps students develop the vocabulary to contemplate communication ethics, highlighting fundamentals like multiplicity of goods (Alasdair MacIntyre, 2016), the narrative paradigm (Walter Fisher, 1987), and the between (Martin Buber, 1958). And while communication scholars and professors are familiar with this framework, Arnett, Fritz and Bell present the material in a way that is accessible, foundational, and transformational for students and applicable to many public spheres. For example, the second section explores communication ethics in organizational communication, business and professional communication, integrated marketing communication, and health care communication. This section also situates communication ethics within interpersonal relationships, looking at how a dialogic ethic emerges in our responsibility to the Other in listening and attentiveness. The last section explores implications of communication ethics literacy reiterating the significance of dialogic learning in a moment marked by contending goods.

This book, situated within a communication classroom, asks students questions about how they meet difference and negotiate disagreements, how they make decisions, how they listen, and what it means to live a good life. It is an ideal entrance for college-aged students to contemplate protecting and promoting the good of human

flourishing (a phrase Fritz also uses in her text *Professional Civility*, 2013).*Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference* is a great addition to a communication classroom, with clear through lines to many spheres of the marketplace.

The text opens up conversation about mindfulness, difference, civility, and attentiveness to the Other. Anecdotally, I have had students tell me the text helped them navigate difficult conversations concerning pandemic mitigation measures with their parents or social justice movements with friends from home. The book helps students move the focus of encounters from who is "right" to what we can learn in the between.

Arnett, R. C., Harden, F. J. M., & Bell, L. M. (2018). *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue & Difference*. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.