

The Taken-for-Granted Labor of Communication: Seeing Beyond Words

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ABSTRACT

This article is the first to discuss how the complementary and practical natures of emotional labor (EL) (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2006), and communication accommodation theory (CAT) (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Giles, et al., 2005) can help shape the field of public and nonprofit administration by translating communication breakdowns into opportunities. This is achieved by presenting these concepts and processes through the *Seeing Beyond Words* exercise that links EL with CAT. The exercise proposes that, if individuals acquire the necessary communication skills to determine how (a) to express or suppress emotions in career roles, and (b) to counteract these dilemmas, then they will more often attain organizational goals (Kimoto, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008; Kimoto, Frasco, Mulder, & Juta, 2009).

On my drive into work, I wonder how the meeting with my boss later in the week will go. Will [s/he] throw out the typical zinger which is supposed to catch me off-guard? I try to keep my focus during the day following-up on a presentation I gave at the County Democratic meeting. I E-mailed the Chair, thanking [him/her], and asking if there might be future opportunities to connect with county or city officials. Second, I contacted the Chairperson of the Community College, and left a message (I also met this person at the Democratic event). Third, I e-mailed two event volunteers for the Coalition and asked if they would like to participate in the planning of the 2010 March chili cook-off. Fourth, I sent out membership forms to one organization and thanked another for participation at the Bridging the Gap Event (Homeless Outreach.) All day I kept on thinking about

my boss. Sometimes it is very stressful to have this person breathing down my neck, and honestly, I never know what will set [him/her] off. I VERY rarely receive any praise for my efforts, even when others see them as successful. I wonder if I will hear from the other jobs I applied for, because I don't like working in an environment where I feel I'm going to be fired. I have made some minor missteps, but they really don't outweigh the good I have done: bringing in a \$713,000 HUD grant, a homeless outreach event, an increase of four member organizations (and more on the way), and the list goes on and on (all in six months). My boss and I seem to communicate on different planets. [S/he] on one and me on mine; never shall the two meet.

—Anonymous (personal communication, October 26, 2009)

It is not uncommon for public and nonprofit administrators to find themselves in a similar situation to that described in the epigraph to this paper — facing potential burnout due to the physical and emotional pressure related to positions of authority and leadership. What distinguishes this field from other professions is that “the management of emotion as a job requirement is a fundamentally communicative accomplishment. It is in and through interaction that we express, repress, or manufacture emotion, in our workplaces and elsewhere” (Shuler & Sypher, 2000, p. 51). Therefore, raising the consciousness of public servants about the power of communication to navigate the challenges of administration is of paramount importance.

This article is the first to discuss how the complementary and practical natures of the models of emotional labor (EL) (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2006) and communication accommodation theory (CAT) (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) can help impact the field of public and nonprofit administration by translating communication breakdowns into opportunities. The pairing of these two models recognizes that public service managers may be ill-prepared and unrewarded for the emotional constraints of administrative careers. It proposes that, if individuals can acquire the necessary communication skills to express or suppress emotions appropriately in career roles, without loss of identity or fatigue, they will more often attain organizational goals (Kimoto, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2008; Kimoto, Frasco, Mulder, & Juta, 2009).

The purpose of the article is to provide a roadmap that operationalizes the literatures on EL and CAT— which mostly focuses on the stresses of direct public contact personnel (e.g., help line operators, 911 call receptionists, and police officers) — for higher-level officials in the public and nonprofit sectors. This is achieved by presenting concepts and processes through the *Seeing Beyond Words* exercise that links EL with CAT. This article seeks to educate individuals about potential barriers to administrative professionalism

and how to counteract these dilemmas by using a continual development of communication skills.

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The section begins with the literature on emotional labor that details the way public servants “determine whether, when, and how to act” when confronted with personal and job-related affect (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2006, p. 7). It then introduces CAT as “the different ways in which people [adjust] their communication, their motivations for doing so, and their consequences” by defining accommodation as a matter of choice (Giles, Forman, Dailey, Barker, Hajek, Anderson, & Rule, 2005, p. 11.). The section concludes by imparting the rationale for the pairing of EL and CAT and the benefits this union brings to the fields of public and nonprofit administration.

Emotional Labor

Emotional Labor (EL) is defined as “work that is relational and involves the manipulation and expression of emotions — [it] is labor intensive and is required of many public service workers if they are to perform their jobs well” (Mastracci, Newman, & Guy, 2006, p. 123). It invokes a sense of civic trust in public and nonprofit bureaucrats by those they serve because it “involves managing one’s own affect as well as that of the other person in the exchange” and “sensing of the other’s emotional state and crafting of one’s own affective expressions so as to elicit the desired response on the part of the other” (Newman, Guy, & Mastracci, 2009, p. 14). Essentially, four components are involved (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2006):

1. Sensing — identifying the emotional state of others to discern and develop potential behavioral options.
2. Analyzing — distinguishing one’s own situational emotions from those belonging to others.
3. Judging — determining what is the most appropriate emotional response between self and others.
4. Behaving — expressing or suppressing personal emotions towards the attainment of constructive results.

Returning to the opening scenario, this executive is in a constant state of flux as s/he attempts to fulfill each of the steps discussed above, often within a split-second, while juxtaposing personal emotions against the numerous roles that s/he is asked to fulfill. At what point can the public servant no longer take the burden of considering someone else, wondering if s/he can ever do enough to secure praise from superiors? When does s/he begin to utilize a rote pattern of behavior just to keep her/his job? These are just some of the questions that the scholars of

EL have addressed (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2006; Mastracci, Newman, & Guy, 2006; Newman, Guy, & Mastracci, 2009).

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is “a wide-ranging framework aimed at predicting and explaining ... the different ways in which people accommodate their communication, their motivations for doing so, and their consequences” (Giles, et al., 2005, p. 10). Through the personal changing of one’s communications, CAT focuses upon the selection of verbal (i.e., word choice) and nonverbal aspects of behavior — e.g., linguistic (speech rate), paralinguistic (hesitancies), time (chronemics), distance (social), indirect expression (symbols), etc.— to advance change. CAT rests upon the elements of the following (Giles, Courtland, & Courtland, 1991; Giles, et al., 2005):

1. Socio-historical context — invoking an understanding that individuals enter communications with preconceived notions about the behaviors and actions of others.
2. Accommodative orientation — heightening the consideration of interactants’ affective states (e.g., intrapersonal, intergroup, and initial) when making communication changes.
3. Immediate situation — regarding communicative actions as goal-driven.
4. Evaluation and future intentions — employing present outcomes as a determinant when planning whether future action should occur and, if so, when, how, where, and what type.

Just as EL focuses on how individuals suppress or express emotion to perform administrative roles, CAT similarly addresses how individuals shift speech styles to either draw similarities (i.e., convergence) or amplify differences (i.e., divergence) with others, in order to gain desired outcomes.

Why Emotional Labor and Communication Accommodation?

Underlying the models of EL (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2006) and CAT (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) is a mutual recognition that when “the central aspect of a job is to manage one’s own emotions for the good of the organization,” change must occur (Shuler & Sypher, 2000, p. 55). The literature on EL focuses on the fact that “the emotions of employees are seen as commodities that are controlled by organizations” (Shuler & Sypher, 2000, p. 52). CAT complements the tenets of EL by recommending that individuals use communication as “a barometer” to maintain a level of social distance between themselves and work (Giles, et al., 2005, p. 12). What enhances the pairing of these frameworks for the creation of the *Seeing Beyond Words* exercise is how they jointly acknowledge and advance “the important role that is played by the

emotional laborers themselves in ... finding ways to cope with, or even to resist, the co-optation of their emotions” (Shuler & Sypher, 2000, p. 52). Together, the concepts of EL and CAT will help transform the comprehension of public and nonprofit leadership as a communicative event.

On a practical level, EL is employed as the foundation for creating a management strategy to regulate affect, where CAT governs the way that the resultant strategy is translated into communication. For example, when developing an affective management strategy for administrative service, individuals must first turn on an “emotive radar” to discern the wide range of feelings that are being transmitted by their target audiences. The conversion of strategy into action moves along a continuum where the expression of emotion moves from standardized acts of communication, or no accommodation (i.e., police respond to domestic abuse encounters with a predetermined list of questions and procedures), to more adaptive styles of interaction, or high accommodation (i.e., a nonprofit executive approaches each potential donor with a tailored, yet flexible, tactic for securing funds). The ease with which an individual moves along this continuum results in a reduction of EL, the avoidance of communication breakdowns, and the maximization of organizational effectiveness.

Returning to the dilemma faced by the official in the case study at the beginning of the article, s/he must decide between taking one of two strategies. Does s/he attempt to create and implement a strategy to alter the supervisor’s communication, which ultimately will require expending a great deal of time and energy? Or, does s/he simply modify her/his personal communication strategy? Before deciding which option to utilize, certain facts must be considered about communication in this scenario. First, the supervisor is executing a distorted version of communication with no accommodation, as reflected by the statements about “typical zingers,” and an underlying motive “to emphasize distinctiveness” and dominance over the official (Giles, et al., 2005, p. 11). Second, the supervisor exhibits another “phenomenon similar to divergence” known as “maintenance,” a term describing a communication style “whereby a person persists in his or her original style, regardless of the communicative behavior of the interlocutor” (i.e., other communicator) (Giles et al., 2005, p. 13). Third, the official’s tendency to adopt an empathetic and accommodating communication style in this environment, as opposed to an authoritative or assertive style, seems arduous, because it leads to exhaustion, the loss of individuality, and doubt of one’s professional abilities. Therefore, the key in reducing EL rests upon recognizing and maintaining a similar social distance between communicators, but not in the same manner as the supervisor. Instead of being ruthless and unprincipled during interpersonal interactions, the official should maintain social distance and employ the rules of professional decorum, such as described in the American Society for Public Administration’s Code of

Ethics (American Society for Public Administration, 2006). In this manner, the official further diminishes interpersonal anxiety and uncertainty.

EMOTIONAL LABOR AND THE ACCOMMODATION CONTINUUM

The *Seeing Beyond Words* exercise was created as a means of assisting students and professionals in becoming familiar with how to transform communication breakdowns into communication opportunities. Through the employment of particular styles of accommodation, which cut across various public and nonprofit administrative situations (e.g., criminal justice, healthcare, public management, and nonprofit), individuals may acquire the skills to move past the process of using words to define other words. Since its inception, the exercise has been modified through student and public feedback to facilitate individuals' willingness to think "outside of the box" when dealing with the emotive aspects of administrative communication. The appendix materials easily can be posted on a blackboard or sent via E-mail. The interactive portion of the unit is best conducted face-to-face. This section (a) walks the instructor through a detailed explanation of the communication assessment in Appendix A, (b) elucidates the pairing of EL and CAT elements from the communication assessment, and (c) concludes with illustrations of the accommodation continuum.

Before students submit responses to the communication assessment, it is imperative to remind them that there are no wrong or right answers. In order to grasp the initial impressions of participants, no specific term definitions are presented. Instead, the assessment is based upon how individuals judge their own communication skills, talents, and challenges. The objective is to utilize these opening probes as a means of fostering camaraderie and demonstrating the usefulness of the communication continuum in everyday interactions.

My Communication Assessment

Before the exercise begins, all participants are asked to complete an assessment of individual communication strengths and difficulties, and to post responses online for sharing with others (See Appendix A). This activity is utilized as one means of fostering camaraderie and discerning the commonalities and differences found in administrative communication. It further signals the complex nature of communication and its vitality to occupational effectiveness (e.g., areas of improvement and self-reported goals).

The eight, open-ended questions in Appendix A initially were culled from the communication concerns expressed by public and nonprofit students in prior classes. As the number of questions became cumbersome over time, I pondered whether a shorter list of questions — presented in an innocuous manner, and capable of completion in 5-10 minutes — could still generate enthusiasm for learning about administrative communication. Keeping these considerations in mind, the resulting assessment reflected four of the major concerns expressed

by students: (a) The realization that individuals communicate with others based on expectations, (b) the importance of self- and other-orientations in building successful interpersonal interactions, (c) the necessity of verbal and nonverbal elements in communicating likes and a positive evaluation of others, and (d) requisite communication strategies that are essential to fulfilling goals.

As literature advanced on the realities of unrewarded expenditures of time, energy, and their link to potential burnout for public servants, so did the notion of developing EL and CAT into competency skills. Using the communication assessment as a springboard for the union of these two models, the subsequent pairing of the eight questions, as discussed below, initiates the transformation of management strategy (i.e., EL) into action (i.e., CAT).

- Socio-historical context and sensing. Questions “c” and “d” reflect the socio-historical context of communication accommodation and the sensing aspect of emotional labor. An interesting facet of these elements is that everyone enters any interaction with some notion, perception, or stereotype. During this aspect of communication, “stereotype” is defined as a “knowledge structure that influences meaning” by helping “to predict behaviors of a person or object we have classified within a particular group” and is not regarded as prejudice (Wood, 1995, p. 54). The development of awareness at this level, called self-reflexivity, is predicated upon a willingness to see oneself as viewed by others as a part of and apart from the environment. The self-reflexive aspect of communication often remains invisible to individuals until they are willing to become sensitive to what exists around them.

As administrative supervisors begin to sharpen their skills in noticing others, they turn to past actions and contacts to facilitate and manage comprehension of surrounding facts. In doing so, they advance supervisory skills by grasping the magnitude of communication. For example, it is quite typical for neighboring communities to have different strategic plans based upon differences in constituents, tax bases, and estimated student enrollment. Being aware of this fundamental information allows officials to stave off potential conflicts and/or to seek premeditated alliances.

- Accommodative orientation and analyzing. An emphasis on affective states offers consistency across questions “a” and “g.” Having predicated that the selection and combination of words, symbols, and nonverbal elements are a reflection of one’s emotional connection during any communicative act, it follows that knowing one’s greatest communication strength is tantamount to identifying the predominant emotive thread that infuses these interactions. The purpose of the listening abilities question is to ascertain the degree to which a person

can turn this communication “radar” outward, by taking the time to quell an inner voice and listen to the internal expression of others. The latter question makes the distinction that listening is attentive, and hearing is reactive.

No two people have precisely the same experiences; therefore, no two people attach precisely the same meaning to any situation. Through the advancement of initiatives, public and nonprofit directors engage in what is called perception checking. Here, they make sure that perceptions of own and others’ thoughts and feelings are accurate. Instead of using rigid categorizations to group people or events on the basis of common characteristics, they take the time to pay attention to the aspects they do not have in common — the singular aspects of identity.

- Immediate situation and judging. Questions “e” and “f” attempt to discern how people freely use words, symbols, and nonverbal elements when framing the most appropriate style of communication for target audiences. Typically, those who can accommodate across mediums without hesitation or the appearance of falsehood are the most effective in attaining goals. These communicators (a) acknowledge that people cannot communicate with those who they do not know without using stereotypes, (b) accept that some form of individualization is critical in avoiding misunderstanding and prejudice, and (c) realize that communication takes practice and patience.

Administrators may utilize communication to either converge with (i.e., show similarity) or diverge from (i.e., emphasize differences) other groups, in order to maximize outcomes. Based on the concept of bounded rationality (Simon, 1997), individuals make the best possible decisions given present constraints. Similarly, administrators contemplate how to fulfill responsibilities toward their larger communities by either suppressing or expressing the choice of emotionally charged words, symbols, or actions.

- Evaluation/future intentions and behaving. The adage that “actions speak louder than words” sets the tone for this final aspect of communication accommodation and emotional labor, because what happens today towards convergence or divergence affects tomorrow’s actions. Rather than resting on the laurels of success or being blocked by the limitations of defeat, the need for continual improvement and growth is reinforced by evaluation and behavior. What signifies the importance of questions “b” and “h” is the necessity to attain a desired future response towards action. The meanings that individuals acquire during this process affect the manner in which symbols are used to reflect experiences.

Positively rated conversations typically lead to further interactions

between members of respective groups. Nonetheless, this does not mean that administrators have not experienced some form of EL. While it is true that shifts in speech could lead to favorable appraisals, people may have over- or under-accommodated their communications in order to gain compliance from listeners (e.g., personal adjustments and temporary modification of messages). The real determinant of leadership requires the ability to reflect upon the validity of accommodative choices in reference to future actions.

THE ACCOMMODATION CONTINUUM

Combining emotional labor and communication accommodation firmly places the burden of change on the public and nonprofit professional, who must recognize that what is spoken will forever stamp an impression upon present and future interactions. The following materials recommend that those seeking this career path learn how to expand the scope of accommodation to reduce communication breakdowns (i.e., no, low, moderate, and high accommodation) by using nonverbal elements and symbols to replace words. While four cases are outlined to give the reader a frame of reference on how communication may be considered along the continuum of emotional labor and accommodation, they do not represent rigid compartmentalizations of real life — because communication is a fluid extension of oneself.

- No accommodation: Communication as information. Communication begins as a sender transmits a message to a receiver. A message is considered received upon transmission, because it is assumed that a receiver is passive and that language transfers thought. This approach, much like the old “telephone game” children played with two cans and a piece of string, sanctions the sender to dominate the flow of information — hence communication. It does not consider that distortion can occur anywhere along the line of transmission, and it emphasizes how historically divergent roles lead toward the attainment of projected outcomes (i.e., socio-historical context-sensing).

For example, criminal justice supervisors are often called upon to relieve stressful and hazardous circumstances. While they may be connected to the parties involved, or familiar with the circumstances surrounding the event, their position necessitates that they expand divergence from clients, as in the case of calming down a 911 caller or responding to a domestic-abuse claim. If these higher-level managers project fear or horror at what they are encountering, a smooth resolution becomes impossible.

- Low accommodation: Communication as relational. Here, the goal of communication is twofold: (a) develop an interpersonal relationship,

and (b) promote a mutual discernment of messages and information. Fulfillment of these goals requires that individuals move beyond initial stereotypes and highlight the affective nature of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group conduct. It promotes an underlying foundation that everything surrounding an individual communicates a message, whether or not it is intentional. Because the analysis of these multiple factors happens within a split second, accommodation does not always result in the desired goal of shared meanings, unless one takes the time to practice this skill (i.e., accommodative orientation-analyzing).

For example, healthcare professionals are tied to a prescriptive format by the legal priorities set by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regarding regulations that work to combat waste, fraud, and abuse in health care delivery and health insurance and to protect individually identifiable health information. By developing a more personalized comprehension of the scope of healthcare problems through talking with patients, reading evidence-based studies, and working on community initiatives, the primary concern of these professionals rests upon creating mutual insights on healthcare policies.

- Moderate accommodation: Communication as power. Communication occurs through the coordination of diverse interpretations. The audiences to whom an individual speaks are quite varied in background, personality, and need. The sole commonality underlying these groups is that communicators are goal-driven and employ strategic communication choices to gain power and control over the environment and the relationships in which they interact. It is the process of choice that enables people to change activities while appearing consistent in their actions. Managing the interpretative aspect that can be given to any message serves as the basis or ethic of administrative power (i.e., immediate situation-judging).

The 2008 election of President Obama signaled a resurgence of interest in civic engagement. One of the tools that Obama employed in gaining momentum for his campaign was the ability to present a single message that resonated with diverse audiences (e.g., men, women, first-time voters, people of color, and baby boomers). Eisenberg (1984) coined this talent as “strategic ambiguity,” because it defines an individual’s skill to generate multiple impressions with a consistent voice. It was through this created sense of immediacy that Obama garnered power and control.

- High accommodation: Communication as balance. To maintain order and promote change, people must rely upon creativity and ingenuity to generate the resources needed to sustain the activities of public and nonprofit service. Serving to link evaluation with behavior,

communication becomes one medium for stimulating a newfound curiosity to ask questions that converge boundaries, while also advancing decision-making and problem-solving. When this happens, accommodation becomes an opportunity for the administrator who knows what to communicate, how to do it, to whom, and when, while also resolving to advance consistency (i.e., evaluation/future intentions-behaving).

For example, stimulus dollars available to new programs and prospective changes are exciting nonprofit executive directors all across the country because of the potential benefits that can infuse life into communities plagued by high unemployment, low graduation rates, and home losses. Providing longevity to these efforts is contingent on generating solvency. Creative collaborations that combine private, nonprofit, and public administrative forces will continue as long as they generate evaluative outcomes (i.e., measurable changes) versus outputs (i.e., yield).

At this point, members are asked to reflect upon the requirements of public and nonprofit service and the employment of accommodation to gain compliance, suppress or express emotions, and avoid communication breakdowns. These intrapersonal deliberations serve as a framework for (a) helping people step outside familiar comfort zones when trying to replace words with symbols and nonverbal elements, and (b) developing usage of the accommodative continuum in the upcoming exercise.

SEEING BEYOND WORDS

In this section, the reader is given greater detail on how to teach the *Seeing Beyond Words* exercise. A companion outline in Appendix B, to be used when implementing the exercise and shared with students, (a) discusses the fundamental importance of the communication assessment, (b) offers illustrations of accommodation, (c) clarifies the pairing of theoretical tenets guiding the exercise (e.g., EL and CAT), and (d) concludes with points of reflection that attest to the importance of such an exercise for public service providers. The outline also assists in answering the queries that typically arise during this process.

The Exercise

Participants for the *Seeing Beyond Words* exercise are divided into groups of 4-6 members and encouraged to share impressions of what they have learned about the role that EL plays in the future of public and nonprofit executives, and how application of CAT might further productivity by reducing communication breakdowns and increasing affective strategies of management. Before going

further, it is imperative for the facilitator or teacher to reinforce that there is no right or wrong answer during the exercise. Rather, the purpose of the exercise is to stimulate participants' creativity and freedom to explore communicative options that further the optimization of administrative goals.

Each group is given 20-30 minutes to develop a written composite of how the members have experienced communication accommodation across the fields of public and nonprofit administration. While the composition of each group is not pre-determined, it should be recognized that groups composed of similar professionals (i.e., criminal justice) will result in different synthesizations of perspectives when compared to those consisting of a cross-section of public servants (e.g., healthcare, criminal justice, management, and nonprofit specialists). Through active listening, question-asking, and having fun in thinking imaginatively, the members translate verbal text into a nonverbal format by using crayons, colored paper, scissors, tape/glue, and lunch bags to depict their subsequent impressions. After each group has completed the assignment, members explain the group illustration.

Why a Visual Format?

One of the first questions that arises in the minds of students and practitioners after hearing these instructions is: Why a visual format? The answer is quite simple: Communication is more than just words. Too often, public and nonprofit executives rely on words as their premier mode of interaction. The purpose of the exercise is to heighten participants' awareness of how they might converge with constituencies and stakeholders who place less reliance on words and more on the role of symbolic and nonverbal relationships. It puts the role of communication accommodation in the forefront by relying upon interpretations that students/practitioners bring to the table. Rather than using words to bring people together, images, colors, size, and the juxtaposition of symbols become the tools for convergence. In order to enlighten the reader about the merits of such an activity, three examples are illustrated, which hopefully entice and promote the adventurous nature of those who seek to help and benefit communities through such accommodation.

Illustrations of Accommodation

Probably the easiest method of using symbols to accommodate the needs of others deals with the enlargement of icons. Public and nonprofit providers have long known about the effect of marketing to the baby boomer generation. The simple enlargement of printed text (i.e., font) — a form of accommodation — attends to the fact that many of our retired seniors are visually challenged.

An interesting point from the class was the way that students amplified symbols. For example, one group used question marks and exaggerated symbols of home (e.g., drawing a big house with windows and an enlarged front door for a handicapped entrance), travel (e.g., a car with an extended panel for a

wheelchair), and food (e.g., hot spices, such as red pepper and garlic, represented by vibrant colors to symbolize the connection to family recipes) as a means of expressing how community service aids the senior population.

Another group placed an emphasis on color. International students from Zimbabwe, the Sudan, and Ghana used green, gold, and red hues to reflect the solidarity of an African heritage. On the surface, the meaning of such colors would hold very little bearing to someone from West Michigan, for example. It was through the engagement of this exercise that participants learned and appreciated the meaning behind the choice of these colors as a symbol of independence for those who could attend college in the United States before returning to translate the lessons learned here into a reality for their native homes.

The most interesting aspect of accommodation relates to the element of layered communication. During one representation of accommodation, a group used a lunch bag to hide its contents. As the group presented impressions of communication across the fields of public and nonprofit administration, members suddenly sprang hidden items from the bag (e.g., colored pieces of paper shaped into the images of people in shades of black, brown, yellow, and red) in order to represent the parts of themselves that could only be engaged during face-to-face encounters. By encouraging class members to value self-reflection, imagination, and foresight, the creativity and meaning given to these colored paper images advanced participants' abilities to think beyond words and embrace real change.

Upon presentation of each group's depiction of communication accommodation, the points of convergence and divergence were addressed, in order to demonstrate how a communication breakdown was avoided. In the first circumstance, the enlargement of symbols enhanced the difference between those who were visually challenged and those who were not. Divergence was used to demonstrate respect and consideration for those who were advanced in age, and to show how this type of accommodative change led to a positive result. The second example was a blend of both convergence and divergence. Associating an indigenous African identity with color is not something that most individuals would normally recognize or even consider (i.e., divergence). However, through a heartfelt explanation, the significance of color became tangible, and what might have been considered as divergence became convergence. The final illustration, that dealt with the layering of communication, reinforced the solemnity of living in the presence of others. It reminded people that even in a technological world of cell phones, computers, and instant messages, touching the flesh of those who are pivotal in their lives can be the sincerest form of convergence, and the sincerest form of communication.

Self-Checks

The exercise is laced with points of reflection, or self-checks. During these

junctures, participants were asked to consider how public and nonprofit communications, such as the accommodation continuum, could be used to reduce the complexities of emotional labor. In an effort to formalize students' recognition of traversing the expanse from low to high accommodation, each was asked to delineate three goals for how s/he intended to incorporate symbols and nonverbal elements into daily interactions. At the end of the exercise, individuals shared insights and aspirations with each other. Two months later, participants were contacted and asked to report on the degree to which they had attained their accommodation goals. Preliminary results suggested that students were succeeding in adapting their communication behaviors towards others by (a) paying attention to how people were responding to their delivery and mannerisms and (b) understanding that individuals enter every communicative situation with preconceived notions.

As this exercise becomes more widely employed, the ability to collect inferential data expands. The optimal plan is to create an instrument that parallels the growth of communication accommodation and emotional labor, in order to avoid communication breakdowns and missed opportunities for change. The community servants who easily can move along a range of accommodation should (a) experience less emotional distress, (b) converge or share a resemblance with those whom they represent, and (c) maintain integrity. Using this article as a catalyst for further inquiry, the topics of communication accommodation and emotional labor become viable areas of research for those interested in the fields of public and nonprofit administration.

SUMMARY

The *Seeing Beyond Words* exercise asks students to delineate their understanding of the complexity of communication and to describe their feelings throughout the process. Accommodation is one element that can reduce communication breakdowns, because it advocates that people target messages to their audiences and take the time to think about the impressions associated with their words.

Returning to the communication assessment that participants had completed before the workshop, the reader now may recognize moments where the expression or suppression of emotion appeared critical towards the obtainment of a career objective. During these times, the way that leaders allow the emotional labor of their jobs to alter objectives and communicative behaviors becomes a matter of choice, for "no longer can communication remain an isolated aspect of behavior. It is a tangible object with concrete ramifications" (Kimoto, 2007, p. 39).

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APPENDIX A

Communication Assessment Instrument

My Communication Assessment

Name: _____

- a. My greatest communication strength is _____.
- b. My communication skills can best be improved by _____.
- c. My skills in accurately perceiving what is going on with others or in a situation or event are _____.
- d. My reliance upon using stereotypes when communicating is_____.
- e. To what degree do I use words and symbols to communicate with others?
- f. To what degree do I use gestures, distance/space, time, touch, and body language to communicate with others?
- g. My listening abilities can best be described as _____.
- h. What are 3 things about communication that I would like to get from this seminar?

APPENDIX B

The Taken-for-Granted Labor of Communication: Seeing Beyond Words

(The instructional materials related to the theoretical and conceptual background of this exercise are available from the author.)

I. “*SEEING BEYOND WORDS*” EXERCISE

A. SELF-CHECK: MY COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT

1. Explanation of the Assessment

- a. Heighten an awareness of how communication may be used as a medium for reducing emotional labor, avoiding communication breakdowns, and maximizing organizational effectiveness.
- b. Utilize self-report questions to initiate discussion about the communication strengths and challenges that individuals encounter in public and nonprofit administration.
- c. Explain how the pairing of specific questions on the assessment promotes an understanding of EL and CAT.
- d. Introduce the concept of the accommodation continuum as a means for expanding the scope of administrative skills to promote communication opportunities over communication breakdowns.
- e. Describe how particular styles of accommodation can be related to various public and nonprofit administrative situations (e.g., criminal justice, healthcare, public management, and nonprofit).

2. Four Illustrations Of Accommodation

- a. *Socio-historical context and sensing/No accommodation*: Questions “c” and “d” reflect participants’ reliance or expectation on how others will behave or communicate with them. In part, these queries are based on social norms and communication rules that ultimately influence one’s attitudes. They also reflect the fact that individuals cannot communicate with people they do not know without using stereotypes. As such, this communication style is associated with no accommodation. Ex: Criminal justice (See article).
- b. *Accommodative orientation and analyzing/Low accommodation*: Questions “a” and “g” are created with respect to low accommodation, as they express the importance of self- (i.e., my greatest communication strength is) and other- (i.e., my listening abilities can best be described as...) orientation in successful interpersonal interactions. Here, individuals begin the training in discerning the invisible aspects of interpersonal

communication, such as meaning, learning, and subjectivity, which requires more than a process of attending to, hearing, understanding, and remembering symbols. Ex: Healthcare-HIPAA (See article).

- c. *Immediate situation and judging/Moderate accommodation:*
In reference to moderate accommodation, questions “e” and “f” are posed to appraise the extent to which participants are confident in the employment of verbal and nonverbal elements of immediacy. Verbal immediacy refers to calling individuals by name, using humor, and encouraging input and discussion. Nonverbal immediacy describes nonverbal behaviors, such as smiling, touching someone in a non-threatening way, and speaking in an animated way that communicates liking, a positive evaluation of others, or a positive affect to others. Immediacy is important in creating perceptions of credibility (e.g., communicator competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness) and the promotion of convergence. Ex: President Obama (See article).
- d. *Evaluation/future intentions and behaving/High accommodation:*
The notion of high accommodation, which is associated with questions “b” and “h,” indicates a future orientation. These questions tap into an individual’s determination to create and implement communication strategies towards the fulfillment of goals. When these questions are presented to public and nonprofit managers, they indicate a determination to maximize management strategies toward the fulfillment of administrative goals that also reduce EL. Ex: Nonprofit executive (See article).

B. Divide the class into groups of 4-6 members. Take about 20-30 minutes to craft a group explanation of how the participants have experienced movement along the accommodation continuum in the field of public and nonprofit administration. Use crayons, colored paper, scissors, tape/glue, or lunch bags to depict the group’s final impression as long as there are NO words in this visual depiction. After each group has completed the assignment, they will explain the drawing to the class through a concrete example.

C. SUGGESTIONS:

1. Active Listening - Communication is a two-way street, so it is important that you listen carefully to your group members when they are speaking.
2. Ask Questions – If you hear something that confuses you, ask about

- it. Maybe you missed a detail or maybe you remembered something others forgot. In any case, it's important that everyone understand exactly what's going on.
3. Think Outside the Box- Consider all alternatives. Don't let your desire to reach consensus (i.e., groupthink) diminish your enthusiasm for creativity.
 4. Enjoy – Be open. Take some chances. Have fun.
- D. Why utilize a visual format?
1. Communication is more than just words.
 2. Discuss how converging with constituents and stakeholders who place less reliance upon words and more on the role of symbolic and nonverbal relationships may be obtained.
 3. Practice communicating without using words.
- E. Commonalities/Differences among visual definitions? Which visual depiction was most powerful to you and why? Some areas which are frequently addressed:
1. Differences:
 - a. Demographics (e.g., gender, age, culture, etc.), color (e.g., national heritage, life vs. death, emotion), size of objects (i.e., hierarchical vs. equality), and placement of objects (i.e., culture norms for proxemics).
 - b. Complex or layered depictions and/or taking a longer time for members to confer on the visual design— simultaneous use of multiple styles of accommodation within the group.
 - c. Simplicity in design and color and/or ease with which tasks are completed— predominance of one accommodation style in the group.
 2. Similarities:
 - a. Word conversion into symbols— money (e.g., \$), listening (e.g., the picture of an ear), people (e.g., stick figures), education (e.g., books), and global (e.g., the earth).
 - b. Temptation to still include written words in the visual depiction— overconfidence that only words can add depth and clarity.
 3. Most powerful: Typically the image that is considered most representational of the group's written illustration of communication accommodation is the one that employs the greatest amount of creativity to "think outside of the box." Reason— The freedom to explore that is afforded through the exercise, coupled with individuals' desires to reduce emotional labor and maximize the satisfaction of completed goals.

II. LESSONS LEARNED

- A. **SELF-CHECK:** What did you learn today? How will this influence your approach to public and nonprofit communication? Write three goals that you will set for yourself regarding public and nonprofit communication and role of emotional labor and accommodation in becoming an affective leader. In two months, the instructor conducts a follow-up about the participants' progress in developing personal communication skills and serves as an continuing resource.

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