

Faculty Information Literacy Stipend Final Report

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Course: CCPA 2327: Communication Theory

Semester: Fall 2022

Introduction

CCPA 2327 is a prerequisite for CCPA 2375 Communication Research and Data Analytics, both of which are required before students can declare CCPA as a major. As an introductory course, students often begin CCPA 2327 with insufficient training about how to search for information specifically about communication studies, differentiate various types of sources, read peer-reviewed articles, and follow the citation style commonly used in the communication field (American Psychological Association Style: APA). Importantly, beginning students find it challenging to connect communication theory to everyday lives, not to mention how communication theory plays out in business and sociopolitical events. These pieces of knowledge and skills are fundamental and necessary for the students' success in their advanced courses across the different tracks/ concentrations within the CCPA Division.

Therefore, this information literacy project aimed to equip students with knowledge and skills necessary for basic **researching, reading, and writing** within the communication field. The emphasis was on enhancing students' ability to analyze theoretical concepts, develop critical thinking skills, and ultimately write a well-crafted, correctly formatted paper that shows how a theory can be used to form a basis of a future communication study. Students were encouraged to build on this paper and develop an empirical research project based on it when they are enrolled in CCPA 2375 in a future semester. Hence, this project served as a scaffolding process for students to transition to CCPA 2375 more smoothly, prepared students for their advanced courses in the CCPA Division, and supported the following Learning Objectives of CCPA 2327:

- Research, analyze, and explain a specific communication theory of interest.
- Analyze issues within culture, business, and politics, as well as individual experience, through the lens of communication theory.
- Select an appropriate communication theory for developing a new empirical study.

Through this project and with strong support from Ms Naomi Schemm, Social Sciences Librarian, CCPA 2327 students learned how to use library resources as well as specific search techniques for communication research, how to cite sources correctly in APA, how to read empirical research articles, and how to write a well-argued, theoretically driven mini-research proposal.

Description of the Information Literacy Assignment or Activities

Students completed the following Learning Activities:

- 1. Searching for Information Online Canvas Module [Library Support]:** Students learned basic concepts and terms related to online information search; identified how search works on the open internet and in library databases; and identified effective search strategies. This activity

helped the students find empirical research articles to support their application logs (see #4) and final paper (see #6).

- 2. Interactive Presentation on How to Research and Read Peer-Reviewed Communication Articles [Library Support].** In a class session, students gained hands on experience using specific library databases for this communication theory course. Also, students learned different components of a research article as well as tips and techniques for making sense of a peer-reviewed research article. These skills helped students in finding empirical research articles to support their application logs (see #4) and final paper (see #6).
- 3. APA Citation [Library Support]**
 - 3.1. Canvas Module:** Students first completed the APA Citation Module on Canvas where they learned how to cite sources correctly, both in-text and in the References Section, per APA, 7th Edition.
 - 3.2. Interactive Presentation:** Students then attended an interactive session that gave them a hands-on experience citing different types of sources. They were shown how to find citations from computerized citation generators, proofread, and correct the citations.
- 4. Application Logs [Instructor].** At the end of each learning unit, students wrote an application log in which they explained the central idea of theories covered in that unit, provided personal examples of how the theories applied in real life, and summarized empirical research articles using those theories as a framework. This assignment gave students an opportunity to sharpen their research and APA formatting skills as well as critical thinking and writing skills. The students wrote a total of five application logs which were a scaffolding for their final paper.
- 5. Final Paper Workshop [Instructor].** In a class session, I briefed the students on the goals and requirements of their final paper and walked them through the steps of writing the paper from selecting a topic and relevant theory, explaining the research problem, posing a research question or hypothesis, selecting an appropriate method, and explaining the study implications.
- 6. Mini-Research Proposal [Instructor].** Students individually developed a 6-8-page paper that proposed a new theory-based communication study. The paper included an introduction, a mini-literature review leading up to a hypothesis or research question, a proposed method, and a brief description of the study's theoretical and practical implications. Students were encouraged to select a specific communication topic intriguing to them, choose an appropriate communication theory as a framework, find relevant and credible sources to form an argument for their proposed study, and format the paper as well as cite sources correctly in APA. This is the final product of this information literacy project and this course.

Throughout the semester, students received feedback from me via email, in class, and in-person meetings about how to strengthen their APA citation and writing quality. Several students also met with Naomi for a bonus workshop on using library databases and finding relevant sources for their application logs. The students expressed the learning activities and additional support from Naomi were helpful for their completion of the application logs and final papers.

Method of Assessment

- **Learning Activities #1 and #3.1** were assessed through quizzes at the end of each Module.
- **Learning Activities #2, #3.2, and #5** were informally assessed through in-class discussion and activities.

- **Learning Activity #4** was graded based on the accuracy of the theory and article summary, strength of examples, writing quality, and correct APA formatting.
- **Learning Activity #6** was graded using the rubric provided in the Appendix.

Results and Impact on Student Learning

The students' ability to find relevant articles, APA citation skills, and writing quality improved over the course of the semester. The information literacy knowledge and skills the students obtained through this project were evident in two assignments for this course: application logs and final paper.

In their first application log, students made multiple APA mistakes both in terms of formatting and citation. A lot of students also were unable to differentiate types of sources or find empirical research articles to support their paper. I required empirical research articles for this assignment so that the students could see research examples and design their own study for their final paper. However, some students selected a conceptual/ theoretical article, a teaching activity article, or other types of sources. Another issue was many students were unable to summarize the theories or research articles in their own words and simply copied/ pasted key sentences from the textbook or their chosen articles. These issues appeared less over time and in the fifth and last application log, the quality of the paper improved significantly. By then, most students were able to write in their own words, find relevant articles, and provide strong personal examples to demonstrate their understanding of and ability to apply each theory. Across the five application logs, 13% of the students got an A, 53% got a B, and 13% got a C+.

The actual product for the course was their final paper, a mini-research proposal as explained above. It was clear that students put a lot of thought and effort into their papers and the different learning activities as well as the application logs were a good bridge to this final assignment. The students covered a wide range of topics from friend zones and romantic relationships to mother-daughter dialectical tensions, from teacher-student privacy management to campus security alert messages, from fake news and influencers' narratives to political participation, all the way to racial identity, activism, gender equality, and international affairs. The students also used a wide variety of communication theories that we covered in class to form a basis of their proposed studies. Importantly, I was pleased to see many students have found their scholarly voice. They moved beyond repeating statements from other sources to paraphrasing and integrating sources to form a persuasive argument in their paper.

However, students do have room for improvement. Some need to continue working on their APA format and citation. Most can improve on synthesizing (not just summarizing) sources for their mini-literature review portion of the paper. Also, most students can further strengthen their ability to develop rationale and logically connect theoretical concepts with their research questions or hypotheses. These are more advanced concepts the students will learn in-depth in CCPA 2375. For their final paper grade distribution, 47% of the students got an A, 18% A-, 15% B or B+, and the rest 18% B- or below.

In sum, students demonstrated the ability to find credible and relevant sources using the library databases and open internet. Also, they demonstrated an increased ability to analyze theoretical concepts and develop critical thinking skills. They presented fresh and interesting research ideas grounded in an appropriate communication theory. They also showed improvement in formatting a

paper and citing sources in the APA style. Importantly, the students found this information literacy project to be helpful for their future courses and careers.

Summary and Next Steps:

I'm satisfied with this information literacy project and believe the different learning activities did help us meet the project's purpose of equipping students with knowledge and skills necessary for basic **researching, reading, and writing** within the communication field. The application logs showed the students' ability to connect the theories to their own lives. The final papers were rich in content and a pleasure to read. Many of the proposals were strong and could be further developed into an empirical research project in CCPA 2375 or the students' other courses which was an intention for the assignment.

I believe this sequence of instruction and assignments was successful and I intend to continue implementing these learning activities in this course. Additionally, I have made or plan to make the following adjustments to enhance the students' performance when I teach this course in the future.

- **Provide paper templates and writing guides:** After the first application log, I provided an APA paper template for the students specifically for this assignment which helped the students improve on APA citation. After the second application log, I provided an additional guide with tips on how to write and format the paper effectively. I also provided a tailor-made template for their final paper. Students commented these resources allowed them to focus on the content of their paper with less worries about how to properly format the paper.
- **Adjust APA citation activities:** The drawback of online learning modules is that students are likely to skip the readings and simply take quizzes without really engaging in or learning the new material. In a future semester, I plan to set aside time in class to go over APA Do's and Don'ts with some interactive games. This is so students are aware of key concepts and common mistakes and know to review appropriate portions of the Canvas Module before submitting their paper.
- **Add an activity on different types of sources:** In a future semester, I plan to add a learning activity that helps students understand different types of sources, their purposes, and credibility. Also, I plan to help students differentiate between a conceptual paper and an empirical paper.

In conclusion, I am grateful for strong support from Naomi and the library team and am motivated to continue developing the students' information literacy through this course as well as my other courses. I believe this project benefited students beyond this communication theory course and fostered skills the students could transfer to other courses or graduate school in the future.

Appendix

- Final Paper Assignment Instructions
- Final Paper Assignment Rubric
- Examples of Student Work

Final Paper

✓ Published

 Edit



OVERVIEW:

You will develop a **6-double-spaced-page paper** (8 including the title page and references) that explains how a theory can be used to form a basis of a new communication study. First, select a specific communication topic, situation, or phenomenon that is intriguing to you. Then, choose a communication theory relevant to that problem. In the paper, you will briefly explain the research problem, describe the theory, and argue how the theory can provide a strong framework for examining that issue. Drawing from that theory, you will pose a research question or a hypothesis you can later set out to ask or test. Lastly, you will briefly explain the potential benefits of this theory-based study.

In a future semester, you can take this paper forward to your CCPA 2375 Communication Research and Data Analytics Course and develop an empirical research project based on it!

This feature supports Course Objectives #3 to #5.

PAPER TEMPLATE

[Please download and USE THIS TEMPLATE for your paper](https://smu.instructure.com/courses/101384/files/7117159?wrap=1)

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COMPONENTS

Your final paper must consist of the following components. **Please see more information and writing tips about each section in the [template paper](#)**

[\(https://smu.instructure.com/courses/101384/files/7117159?wrap=1\)](https://smu.instructure.com/courses/101384/files/7117159?wrap=1) . ↓

[\(https://smu.instructure.com/courses/101384/files/7117159/download?download_frd=1\)](https://smu.instructure.com/courses/101384/files/7117159/download?download_frd=1) .

1. **Title page:** Include the paper title, your name, CCPA and SMU (fully spelled out), CCPA 2327: Communication Theory, instructor name, and assignment due date.
2. **Introduction:** In 2-3 paragraphs (about one double-spaced page), introduce the topic to the reader, provide rationale for the study, and state the research purpose. Clearly discuss your research problem and the significance of your topic.
3. **Mini-Literature Review:** In 3-4 double-spaced pages, describe the theory and existing research that form the basis of your study. Weave your sources together and organize this section by

themes not by articles. End this section with **at least ONE hypothesis (for a quantitative study) OR ONE research question (for a qualitative study) that flows from your mini-literature review.**

4. **Method:** In 1-2 paragraphs, succinctly describe how you plan to conduct your study. This section should include two subsections: **Participants** and **Procedures**. See more details in the template paper.
5. **Conclusion:** In 1-2 paragraphs, restate your research purpose and how your chosen theory will be useful for you in conducting that research. End with how you think this research will help support or extend the theory as well as how the results will provide practical implications for your target population.
6. **References:** The paper **must include a minimum of 6 sources (four of which must be peer-reviewed journal articles)**. Be sure every source used in the paper is listed in References. No source should be listed in References if it was not used in the paper.

FORMAT

Follow the template posted above and keep in mind the following. Use the APA style for your paper. Make sure to **cite correctly both in text and in the References Section**. Use 12-point Times New Roman with 1-inch margins. Double-space the entire document. Include a running head (flush left) and the page number (flush right) in the header of every page. Adhere to the [APA heading levels](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/headings) [↗](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/headings) when formatting your headings and subheadings. Consult the [APA Citation Training Module](https://smu.instructure.com/courses/101384/modules/216007) [↗](https://smu.instructure.com/courses/101384/modules/216007) or this website for [APA guidelines](https://guides.smu.edu/citations/APA) [↗](https://guides.smu.edu/citations/APA). **Do not trust APA reference "generators." They are often highly unreliable. Check every reference detail yourself, and preserve your points!**

Points	150
Submitting	a file upload
File Types	doc, docx, and pdf

Due	For	Available from	Until
Dec 9	4 students	-	Dec 10 at 5pm
Dec 9	Everyone else	-	Dec 9 at 11:59pm

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
<p>Introduction/ Problem Statement</p> <p>Opening statements grabs reader's attention. Topic is clearly defined. Importance of research established. Contents of paper clearly previewed.</p>	<p>20 to >15 pts Excellent</p>	<p>15 to >10 pts Good</p>	<p>10 to >5 pts Fair</p>	<p>5 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>20 pts</p>
<p>Content</p> <p>Context of research clearly provided. Theoretical framework appropriate for the proposed research and clearly explained. Variables (for quantitative research) are clearly identified and explained. Content reflects depth and breadth of research.</p>	<p>20 to >15 pts Excellent</p>	<p>15 to >10 pts Good</p>	<p>10 to >5 pts Fair</p>	<p>5 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>20 pts</p>
<p>Synthesis and Argument</p> <p>All sources are synthesized (not only summarized) and logically organized into a coherent argument. Overall, the mini literature review effectively sets up and justifies research questions and/ or hypotheses.</p>	<p>20 to >15 pts Excellent</p>	<p>15 to >10 pts Good</p>	<p>10 to >5 pts Fair</p>	<p>5 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>20 pts</p>
<p>Method</p> <p>Participants: Clear and complete description of the target population including the number and demographics of participants. Recruitment channels clearly listed.</p> <p>Procedures: Research methods and procedures are clearly described and appropriate for the study's purposes.</p>	<p>20 to >15 pts Excellent</p>	<p>15 to >10 pts Good</p>	<p>10 to >5 pts Fair</p>	<p>5 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>20 pts</p>
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Succinct summary of research goals. Potential theoretical contributions and practical implications are logically and persuasively presented. Paper concludes memorably!</p>	<p>20 to >15 pts Excellent</p>	<p>15 to >10 pts Good</p>	<p>10 to >5 pts Fair</p>	<p>5 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>20 pts</p>

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
<p>Quality of Writing</p> <p>Writing is clear, concise, and well-organized. Uses correct spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and word choices. Sections well transitioned.</p>	<p>20 to >15 pts Excellent</p>	<p>15 to >10 pts Good</p>	<p>10 to >5 pts Fair</p>	<p>5 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>20 pts</p>
<p>APA Format and Citation</p> <p>Correct use of APA throughout paper. In-text citations and reference list citations complete and properly formatted in APA style.</p>	<p>15 to >11 pts Excellent</p>	<p>11 to >7 pts Good</p>	<p>7 to >3 pts Fair</p>	<p>3 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>15 pts</p>
<p>References</p> <p>Sources are credible and relevant to the topic. At least six sources are used, four of which are peer-reviewed journal articles.</p>	<p>15 to >11 pts Excellent</p>	<p>11 to >7 pts Good</p>	<p>7 to >3 pts Fair</p>	<p>3 to >0 pts Poor</p>	<p>15 pts</p>
<p>Total Points: 150</p>					

**Foreign Affairs and Media Framing: Agenda Setting Effect During the Trump
Administration**

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CCPA 2327: Communication Theory

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9 December 2022

Foreign Affairs and Media Framing: Agenda Setting Effect During the Trump Administration

In February of 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and citizens around the world were disquieted as rumors of World War III ran rampant. In August of 2021, the United States formally withdrew from Afghanistan, ending a decades long war that impacted the lives of every citizen. In January of 2020, the World Health Organization announced the start of what would be a two-year global pandemic caused by the Coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China. Over the last decade, life-altering international events have become a more frequent occurrence as globalization grows and countries become increasingly intertwined (Stokes, 2018). With an influx of both foreign and domestic headlines, keeping up with international affairs can be an incredible feat. Regardless of the difficulty, consistently following international news should now be an integral aspect for Americans whose lives are undoubtedly impacted by the catastrophic world events that have occurred over the last few years.

Despite its importance, many Americans do not actively follow international politics and lack a sufficient understanding of foreign affairs. It has been well confirmed that Americans possess gaps in their knowledge regarding international affairs (Silver, 2022). Though Americans may not be as informed about international affairs as they are regarding domestic issues, the American public acknowledges that international issues are incredibly important and relevant (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). My proposed research looks to bring better insights to the mass communications field as to why the American public places high importance on international affairs, despite their lack of understanding on the topic, through the lens of agenda setting theory. Using agenda setting theory, this research will examine the role that

traditional U.S. news media plays in influencing the salience – or importance – of foreign issues. Specifically, this research looks at the framing of international relations during the Trump administration and its association with the salience of foreign affairs. In this paper, I will first review agenda setting theory, leading to my hypothesis. Then, I will present the methodology of the study before explaining the potential benefits of this theory-based study to the mass media communication field.

Theoretical Framework

Formally founded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, agenda setting theory examines the idea that media influences the public's beliefs and priorities for important issues. This theory assumes that the media does not simply portray reality, but inadvertently sets an agenda that shapes and filters news for the public. This, in turn, influences the public policy of a society as media gatekeeping information pushes policymakers to focus on certain issues. It is important to note, however, that the public and policymakers can influence the media as well through ratings and likeability. This is explained as a three-part process within the theory where the media's prioritization of issues influences the public opinion which in turn influences policymakers' decisions. The media is not always successful at setting this agenda, however. Instead, individuals sometimes will reject the media's agenda based on the relevance – or salience – the news has in their life. The media can influence this salience through the framing of certain topics, the specifics of which will be discussed further in this paper.

Using a lens of agenda setting theory to conduct this research would provide a streamlined framework that has already established the link between media's actions and public perception in the mass communication field. Some research has been conducted to discuss the influence of framing within agenda setting theory on public opinions when it comes to specific

issue-focused media coverage in the United States. Li (2018) discussed the shift in public opinion on transgender issues after the news reporting of Caitlyn Jenner's interview on the Diane Sawyer show in 2015. Drawing all stories with relevant coverage from the five-month period before and after the interview, Li (2018) examined the gender discourse, depth of topic, and intersectionality of issues in the stories sampled. Through this research, Li (2018) determine that Jenner's interview possessed agenda setting theory effects by influencing the way that media and the public would discuss transgender issues when compared to the five-month period before the interview. Because this study focuses on pop culture and American specific coverage, further research needs to be conducted to see if the same agenda setting theory effects apply to international issues. However, despite the domestic or pop culture coverage, it is still indicated that agenda setting theory impacts public opinion, confirming that agenda setting theory is the proper lens for my proposed study.

The extent to which a policy issue has agenda setting effects is thought to be heavily influenced by the framing of an issue. The definition of framing, though a central idea of agenda setting theory, varies greatly amongst literature. Aday (2010) discusses several attributes of framing pertaining to the 2005 coverage of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars by NBC and Fox News Channel. These attributes include the topics and frequency of topics selected by editors, the aspects of a topic a source chooses to highlight, and the way those aspects are presented, such as the use of graphics and story placement. Aday (2010), using the concept of framing, concluded that both NBC and Fox News Channel underplayed the severity of the war. This study provides a reference for the research proposed in this paper as it highlights the use of framing by news sources as a means to conduct a cohesive message agenda. However, this study does not look for a correlation between the framing of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and the notable

public opinion shift surrounding these two topics, an issue which Aday (2010) recognizes and calls for further research on. Currently, there is minimal understanding regarding the extent that framing can influence the public's stance on international affairs specifically, a gap my proposed study aims to diminish.

Existing studies on international news framing have looked at the extent to which the framing of coverage on foreign policy influences the public's perception of an issue. Besova and Cooley (2009) analyzed the New York Times' coverage of nine foreign countries and the public's positive or negative feelings toward the highlighted country. One interesting finding presented in their study is that media coverage on international news has been decreasing over the last few decades, calling for research into the notion that the public perceived importance of foreign issues may have shifted in recent years. Though Besova and Cooley (2009) did not investigate the impact of this decrease of coverage on public opinion, their study did examine the foreign policy issues most frequently highlighted by the New York Times and found that the framing of foreign policy issues did correlate strongly with public opinion. For example, countries that were covered most positively by the New York Times were also regarded warmly by the public. Of note, this study defines public opinion narrowly as the public's positive or negative perception of a country or policy issue. Broadening the scope of public opinion to include perceived importance and relevancy of an issue would allow for a more complete understand of the influence of framing, which is the broad framework intended for use in my proposed study. While Besova and Colley (2009) studied a similar phenomenon as the one I proposed using agenda setting theory, a more recent analysis should be completed as the international relations landscape has changes drastically over the last decade, particularly as

trends indicate that coverage is declining, and with an increase in globalization, hence I propose a study examining framing's role during the Trump administration.

Agenda setting theory has been used in mass communication research to understand the role that framing has in influencing public opinion on issue-specific coverage. Most studies have studied this phenomenon within United States specific coverage (Li, 2018). Other research has looked at the use of framing in international issues, but not its correlation to public opinion (Aday, 2010). Those that have researched the framing of international affairs in correlation with public opinion provide great insights, but have not been tested in this new era of globalization (Besova & Cooley, 2009). Furthermore, framing research on international issues could benefit from a more expansive definition of what public opinion means, including the relevance or importance of foreign affairs for the American public. Taking into consideration this literature review, this study proposes the follow hypothesis:

H: The relevance of foreign affairs for the American public is associated with the framing of international issues as reported by U.S. news sources during the Trump administration.

Method

To test the proposed hypothesis, this study utilizes content analysis data from articles produced by the top 10 U.S. newspapers covering international affairs during the Trump administration and opinion survey data.

Participants

To assess the relevance of foreign affairs for the American public, the opinion of adult news consumers in the United States will be surveyed. A random sample of 1,000 adults will be drawn across demographics. The survey will ask news consuming adults about their news

consumption during the Trump administration, such as the frequency of news consumed, the sources from which news was most often consumed, and what issues they remember reading the most about. The survey will also ask participants about their feelings toward relevant foreign issues during the specified time frame. Recruitment for the survey will be done via social media to reach the targeted population.

Procedures

In this quantitative study, data will be collected from the public opinion surveys from the above population and compared to data collected from content analysis. I will draw all stories run by the top 10 U.S. newspapers on foreign topics during the first and last year of the Trump administration, which include The New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, LA Times, New York Daily News, New York Post, Boston Globe, San Francisco Chronicle, and The Chicago Tribune (Olmstead, 2011). Hypothetically, an analysis of coverage from the first and last year of the Trump administration should highlight any change and contrast in coverage framing. To measure the framing enacted, an analysis will be conducted to look for the frequency of issues reported, the tone used, the type of event reported, and story positioning. A comparison between any positive/negative framing attempts and public opinion will then be conducted to assess the hypothesis.

Conclusion

Agenda setting theory in the mass communication field has provided invaluable insights into the way that the media can influence public opinion and actions through framing. However, previous research tends to emphasize media coverage for American-specific issues or was conducted during a time not reflective of current foreign relations and globalization trends. Thus, my proposed research would offer insights into if agenda setting theory effects hold true in the

current, fast-paced international affairs media coverage. The understanding of foreign affairs is imperative, and data indicates that Americans understand this importance (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). Despite this, Americans still lack sufficient knowledge of international affairs (Silver, 2022). Understanding the media's influence through framing is integral to understanding how international media literacy can be changed in the future.

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Co-Cultures' Communication Orientations in Response To the BLM Movement

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CCPA 2327: Communication Theory

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December 9, 2022

Co-Cultures' Communication Orientations in Response To the BLM Movement

“I can't breathe” are the famous words that George Floyd struggled to vocalize in the last few moments of his life. George Floyd was a 46-year-old Black male living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was arrested on suspicion of using a counterfeit 20-dollar bill. Officers J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane, Tou Thao, and Derek Chauvin all played a significant role in the murder of George Floyd (Kaur & Chavez, 2022). This hate crime sparked one of the United States' biggest movements to date, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. With “more than 11,000 demonstrations associated with the BLM movement that have been reported in nearly 3,000 distinct locations all around the country” (Kishi et al., 2021, p.4), it is clear that George Floyd's death inspired change, but who was a part of this change?

I grew up in a predominantly White town. Only a year before Floyd's death, on May 14, 2019, my high school experienced a racist prom proposal. As I drove to school on May 15th, I was ashamed to be associated with the school. On May 16th, at seven o'clock in the morning, news stations crowded our school and by eleven o'clock we were on lockdown from a school shooter threat. As I crouched under my desk, receiving texts stating “Don't be a hero” and “I love you”, I heard a 15-year-old White classmate of mine say “I bet the shooter is Black.” At that moment, I realized that not everyone has compassion. My city held multiple peaceful protests for both the racist promposal in 2019 and the BLM movement in 2020. I could no longer look at the world with rose-colored glasses, as the majority of the people at these protests were people of color. Reminder, this is a predominantly White town.

George Floyd was a Non-Dominant Group Member (NDGM) in the United States. Derek Chauvin, the officer who pressed his knee into George Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes and ultimately killed Floyd, is a Dominant Group Member (DGM). I would like to use the concepts

presented in the co-cultural theory to better understand how people from different NDGMs and DGMs responded to the BLM movement. Discovering who protested and were activists, and who did not, should show communication orientations within the different groups. In order to fix a problem, racism, we have to understand and identify the problem.

Theoretical Framework

The co-cultural theory is a part of intercultural communication theories. Intercultural communication is essentially communication between two or more people from different cultures. In the co-cultural theory, researchers study how NDGMs decide to communicate with DGMs. This theory suggests the feeling of togetherness that many NDGMs feel within their culture. Even though not all the NDGMs have encountered exactly the same things, most of them have faced similar experiences. The term co-cultures means people with shared identities (NDGMs or DGMs) who are part of a larger culture. This can be, for example, college students, various races, sex, or religious beliefs. Though this theory is relatively new, “over the past two decades, scholars in- and outside of the field of communication have utilized the theory to increase their understanding of the relationship between culture, power, and communication in a variety of contexts.” (Razzantel & Orbe, 2018, p. 355)

Within this theory, there are nine different communication orientations. These are nine different ways that NDGMs typically communicate with DGMs. There are three preferred outcomes, whether it be assimilation, accommodation, or separation. In addition, there are three communication approaches which are nonassertive, assertive, or aggressive. The three communication orientations regarding assimilation are nonassertive assimilation, assertive assimilation, and aggressive assimilation. The next three communication orientations are based on accommodation and they are nonassertive accommodation, assertive accommodation, and

aggressive accommodation. Lastly, there are three orientations based on separation, nonassertive separation, assertive separation, and aggressive separation. These communication orientations stem from the understanding that NDGMs are commonly muted and ignored, just like Floyd. When NDGMS are subconsciously or consciously choosing which communication orientation to practice, they usually look at the perceived cost and reward. In the context of the BLM movement, to many, the perceived cost of being arrested, harmed, or even killed, was worth it, to finally be heard.

Derek Applewhite supported this sentiment when he wrote “George Floyd’s murder reminded me, and many of my Black colleagues, that our degrees can’t protect us, that our privileged middle-class upbringing (if we had one) was not a shield. Our lives were not worth more than a counterfeit 20-dollar bill.” (Applewhite, 2021, p. 1797) Applewhite is a gay, Black, science researcher who stressed the fact that we, as a society, have not improved as much as it may seem. Though the Affirmative Action legislation and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have given NDGMs more rights, they do not protect NDGMs from racism and hate (Zirulnik & Orbe, 2019). I believe that researching the different communication orientations that NDGMs and DGMS used in regard to the BLM movement, will expose how we, as a society, can begin to heal.

Following the BLM movement, there was a vast amount of backlash. Many people made blanket statements calling Black people “violent” just based on the protests. Except the problem with these statements is that they are incorrect. Nearly 95 percent of the protests were peaceful, with only five percent of them being “violent” (Kishi & Jones, 2020). That 95 percent were practicing assertive or aggressive accommodation, and a mere five percent were actually using aggressive separation. Nearly all of the accusations calling Black people “violent” were made by

White males, also known as DGMs. Resulting of the Black Lives Matter movement came campaigning for the Blue Lives Matter movement. Though in 2020 both of these movements gained recognition, they were created prior to Floyd's murder. The Black Lives Matter movement was created in 2013. The Blue Lives Matter movement was created a year later, in 2014. This is just another example of why the co-cultural theory is of great importance. The DGMs have power over and silence NDGMs. I believe it is important to recognize this censoring and give responsibility where it is due.

When exploring co-cultural theory in regard to the BLM movement, I was not able to find any information. However, I found similar research on how the theory applies to the Asian hate that intensified due to COVID-19. In 2020, Asians received appalling scrutiny and were being blamed for causing COVID-19. Jun et al. (2021) explored and researched the horrific consequences that the pandemic had on Asians. During interviews, they found that one-third of Asians reported having experienced racism during the pandemic. They also found that most Asians gave nonassertive responses such as walking away and ignoring people regarding COVID-19-related racism. Additionally, it was noted that sex was significantly correlated with the nonassertive responses. Women more often than not stayed quiet, while some men took the assertive and aggressive accommodation approaches. These findings are what inspired me to do similar research regarding the BLM movement. However, instead of just looking at the NDGMs within a specific culture, I would like to examine how all cultures reacted in regard to the BLM movement.

Evidently, the responses to the BLM movement affect primarily Black people. Though, the answers to be found from my proposed research, impact most, if not all, NDGMs. There are a few existing interpersonal and intercultural theories that offer general approaches to studying

cultures, however, “co-cultural theory is one of only a few that is grounded in the lived experiences of the persons it seeks to describe” (Orbe & Roberts, 2012, p. 294). By examining how the different groups responded to the BLM movement through the co-cultural theory, we will be able to see how the DGMs have power over and work overtly, or covertly, against NDGMs. By knowing that information, we, as a society, can shine a light on the people who have been silenced by DGMs, not only in regard to the BLM movement but in the future as a whole. Following the above rationale, I ask:

RQ: What communication orientations did different co-cultures use in response to the Black Lives Matter movement?

Method

Participants

My target population is college-age students. Ideally, there would be one to four people from different co-cultures within NDGMs and DGMs. If we were to research all co-cultures, there would be too many participants, so I propose we take one to four from each of the more prevalent co-cultures. This would be two LGBTQ+ members, Black members (two female and two male), White members (two female and two male), Hispanic members (two female and two male), Asian members (two female and two male), one Catholic or Christian, one Mormon, one Jew and one atheist. This comes to a total of 22 participants.

I believe a good way to reach these participants is through posters around college campuses or Instagram posts. The target participants are between the ages of 18 to around 23. This age range is on college campuses and use social media heavily.

Procedures

This is going to be a qualitative study, conducted through interviews. There are many reasons why I want to use in-depth personal interviews as a way to answer the research question. Mainly, I want to hear and listen to what people have to say. It is much more complicated than a simple survey question like “Did you participate in the BLM movement?” There are degrees to which people participated or did not participate. That is why I think it is imperative to hear what people have to say as well as ask follow-up questions to get the full story. This style of interviewing will also be helpful because the interviewer can ask the participant about how their family and friends reacted as well, thus gaining more in-depth information. With all of this information, we will know what communication orientation the participants used.

Conclusion

“I can’t breathe” are not only the famous words that George Floyd said in the last few moments of his life, but it articulates how the majority of NDGMs feel. Oftentimes NDGMs feel suffocated, muted, and looked over by DGMs. Answering the research question will extend the co-cultural theory even further. As stated earlier, there is no information on how the co-cultural theory applies to the BLM movement. With this movement being one of the biggest movements in United States history, it will provide additional information to an otherwise new theory. This information will be useful to anyone wanting to learn more about co-cultures, and more specifically, how they respond in a crisis. Researching how different co-cultures responded to the BLM movement and what communication orientations they used, will not only give minorities answers, it will also give them hope for change.

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