



COPPER MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

*the*  
*Copper*  
*Penny*

**The ¢opper Penny, Volume II**

**(A Scholarly On-Line Journal for Copper Mountain College)**

Throughout existence, objects often portray meaning. For example, the historical importance of copper is evident by its use in legends, art, medicine, trade, and technology. Its metallic brilliance is enshrined in the word "liberty" that beams forth from America's copper penny. Like the Statue of Liberty, plated with copper, its green coloring offering evidence of natural weathering, the copper penny endures. This journal is intended as a beacon of liberty, a celebration of expression, and the renewal of meaning.

---- Aimee` Percy (2010)

*The Copper Penny* is an electronic publication, sponsored by the Copper Mountain College Academic Senate's Academic Integrity committee. *The Copper Penny* is a forum for student scholarly work.

## *The Copper Penny* Submission Form

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### Submission Criteria/Standards

The work should be unpublished in any academic, trade, or peer reviewed professional publication, original work, academically based including the practical application of knowledge, no length requirement, and text based. All submissions with outside research should be properly cited and documented. Anonymous works are not accepted. Presentations and readings in video or audio format are acceptable with submission of the text. As *The Copper Penny* is an electronic publication, all materials must be submitted by the sponsoring faculty member in one of the following formats: electronic text file, or an email attachment sent to: [gbrown@cmccd.edu](mailto:gbrown@cmccd.edu), with the words, "The Copper Penny submission" in the subject line. Submissions should be in an enriched text file format. Submissions should be accompanied by a brief biographical statement, no more than 75 words.

### Editorial Policy

*The Copper Penny* is a product of Copper Mountain College and is intended to represent the quality of academic work produced by its students. The staff reserves the right to edit all pieces.

### Process

Student work must be submitted by a sponsoring faculty member, who agrees to be involved in the editing process for submitted work. The Academic Integrity Committee referees all submissions and determines if a submission is accepted, rejected, or referred for revision and resubmission. The Committee will identify an editor or editors, including student editors, to edit submissions. Submissions returned to the student for revision will be provided a deadline for resubmission.

*The Copper Penny* title was selected after a college-wide “Name-the-Journal” contest, won by CMC student Aimee Percy. The judges were Greg Gilbert, Cathy Itnyre, and Carolyn Hopkins. The CMC Foundation awarded a \$100 prize to Amy, who was honored at a college literary journal reading on May 7, 2010. An explanation of Aimee’s selection of a title is on the journal’s cover.

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Instructor's Prologue: Students enrolled in Introduction to Sociology were asked how a sociologist would define friendship. To earn full credit students were required to *connect* the sociological concepts they had learned in class to friendship. These two students offered excellent answers.

### **Friendship: A Sociological Definition**

A sociologist would define “friendship” as a relationship characterized by a strong tie. Strong-tie relationships are intense, time-intensive, and intimate. They tend to generate loyalty, obligation, and respect. Because strong ties (friends) are important in our lives, we tend to cooperate and coordinate with them to achieve common goals (positive-sum games). Given that two or more friends constitute a group, friends are able to pool their resources to create collective “club” goods such as time, trust, and security. Some friends will free ride on, or take advantage of, these group benefits. Furthermore, when we violate our friendship (group) rules, our friends are able to exert group pressure upon us to bring us back into line. Extremely close friends assist us with socializing our emotions and internalizing our values. Although friends are considered strong ties, they often serve as weak ties, providing us with access to other groups.

By Travis Burkes

A sociologist, who studies social order, would define “friendship” as a necessary contributor to social order. Individually, friendship could be a value; between two or more people, a strong tie. To be a value, friendship might be considered important to a person and carry with it other values, such as loyalty, trust, and honesty. It could be something they value for themselves, expect of other people, or both. As a strong tie, friendship creates a link between people, different from that of people who are merely acquaintances (weak ties). Values, if positive, can contribute to social order by encouraging enlightened self-interest among group members, the aggregate of which is social order. The reason for this is that enlightened self-interest involves considering costs and benefits to the individual and group and compromising if necessary to benefit the group. Strong ties contribute to social order by being a resource if a person needs something (such as to borrow money) because strong ties include a level of trust between people. Another factor of strong ties is that they involve individuals who will also provide time if a strong tie needs it (such as listening when a person has some form of social disorder present in their life – or a lack of cooperation/coordination) or by offering advice to a strong tie in need of it. In this case, advice may be more beneficial if an individual is a strong tie because the advice-giver has more knowledge about the situation.

By Melissa McPheeters

Faculty Sponsor: Mike Danza  
Sociology 1, Introduction to Sociology

Instructor's Prologue: Students enrolled in Sociological Analysis & Critical Thinking were asked to select a cultural object and offer a sociological analysis of the object. Ben Lester selected *Fight Club*; his final paper for the course was forty pages. Below you will find an excerpt from his paper which analyzes the creation of the object.

## He Wants You to Hit Him as Hard as You Can: The Sub-Cultural Creation of Fight Club

By Benjamin Lester

Faculty Sponsor: Mike Danza  
Sociology 4, Sociological Analysis & Critical Thinking

*Fight Club* was created by Chuck Palahniuk. I argue that Palahniuk was a member of social groups which shaped the creation of Fight Club. People, however individualistic, are products of the cultures in which they live. The idea behind this creator-subculture section is to identify the identities and groups that informed the creation of the object. Luckily for me (and you) Palahniuk is a person who lends himself extraordinarily well to sociological analysis.

[Editor's Note: The author wrote 3-4 paragraphs explaining identity, subculture, and meaning. These paragraphs were intentionally removed by the instructor of the course. ]

I claim that Palahniuk has five identities that dictated the creation of Fight Club. First, he was a member of the Cacophony Society. Second, he was a member of the homosexual community. Third, he came from a divorced family. Fourth, he is member of a community of writers who specialize in transgressive fiction. Lastly, he was an escort for terminally ill patients. Between these five identities, I assert that all of the necessary ingredients for Fight Club are present.

This is your life and it's ending one minute at a time.

One of the major themes in Fight Club is of social deviance. A group called Project Mayhem starts fights with strangers, blows up corporate and cultural objects and forges plane emergency instruction pamphlets just to name a few things. Palahniuk is an active member of the Cacophony Society.<sup>1</sup> The Cacophony Society is, "a randomly gathered network of individuals united in the pursuit of experiences beyond the pale of mainstream society through subversion, pranks, art, fringe explorations and meaningless madness."<sup>2</sup> On their website, they claim that you may already be a member and not even know it! They describe themselves as, "The heart murmur that's easy to dance to" and "the happy dog rolling on the carcass of preconception."<sup>3</sup> You get the idea. Being a member of such an organization implies a meaning system dictating members perception of normalcy. Namely, the status quo is an annoyance at best, and it is outright dangerous at worst. Members of this group are willing to risk arrest or worse for the sake of their ideals. This group shares a meaning of *acceptable behavior* that conflict with greater society. An important idea shared between members of the Cacophony Society is that the *taboo should not be avoided*; rather it should be *flaunted and celebrated*. I assert that the meaning systems shared by members of the Cacophony Society were the base of inspiration from which the author created the concept of project mayhem.

<sup>1</sup> Chuck Palahniuk. June 9, 2011. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_palahniuk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_palahniuk) (accessed June 21, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> The Cacophony Society. 2011. <http://www.cacophony.org/> (accessed June 22, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

I'm wondering if another woman is really what we need.

One curious facet of *Fight Club* is the relative lack of women in the story. There are only two women named in the novel, and both are extremely vilified.<sup>4</sup> Another theme that is difficult to ignore in *Fight Club* is that of male physical contact. Also, a strong theme of *Fight Club* is that of people struggling to find their cultural identity. Finally, social secrecy is one of the most popular themes of *Fight Club*. I assert that these aspects of *Fight Club* were very likely influenced by Palahniuk's sexual identity. Though far from a rule, some members of the gay community seek exclusivity in the presence of gender.<sup>5</sup> This group shares a meaning of *safety* in that respect. Another common meaning within the homosexual male sub-culture is obviously the physical contact with other men. However the strongest cultural meaning, which I feel contributed heavily to *Fight Club*, is that of *social marginalization*. The homosexual community has faced persecution in America since it was first brought in to the open.<sup>6</sup> Socially marginalized cultures, under certain circumstances, might feel the pressure to fight for their respective identities. There is a duality here though; fight or flight. If a group doesn't fight for their identity then, barring assimilation, that means that they would end up taking on multiple identities which is yet another theme of *Fight Club*.<sup>7</sup> From the dichotomy of work and leisure, to the literal split in the protagonist's personality, *Fight Club* is full of references to having two lives. Finally there is the concept of secrecy.<sup>8</sup> "The first rule of *Fight Club* is: you don't talk about *Fight Club*."<sup>9</sup> This statement bares a strong resemblance to the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Palahniuk himself was reportedly "in the closet" at the time of writing *Fight Club*.<sup>10</sup> It seems plausible that this social group's long history of social secrecy could be a major inspiration for *Fight Club* and its secret society. With these things in mind, it seems likely that this social group's set of shared meanings were influential in Palahniuk's creation of *Fight Club*

I am Jack's broken home

Another identity that Palahniuk possesses is being a child from a divorced relationship. Children from divorced families have many shared meaning systems. Common shared meanings among children of divorced parents are *shame, guilt, anger, having to choose sides* and the list goes on. *Fight Club* can be interpreted as a challenge to the American dream. If the American dream is to have a house, a happy marriage, and two and a half kids... what then does that say about people from divorced homes? Chances are that people from broken homes are more likely to view the American dream as a fallacy.<sup>11</sup> These views seem to be likely to have influenced the creation of *Fight Club*. To name another important aspect of this subculture, children in divorced families can tend toward becoming distant from the father's side of the family when living with the mother.<sup>12</sup> This alienation from the father figure and the focusing of problems on the mother figure can become quite problematic for teenage boys.<sup>13</sup> The themes of frustration with the mother figure in *Fight Club* are almost certainly a manifestation of this meaning. Perhaps even the vilification of relationships and women in general could be attributed to these meanings. Another consequence of problematic paternal relationships is that men

<sup>4</sup> Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Lagan, Bernard. "The Bar Where Only Gay Men Are Allowed." *The Times Online*. March 29, 2007. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article1851889.ece> (accessed June 23, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> "Homosexuality." *Wikipedia*. 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality> (accessed June 23, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Danza.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Chuck Palahniuk. June 9, 2011. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_palahniuk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_palahniuk) (accessed June 21, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Danza.

<sup>12</sup> P. MacMurray, et al. "Parent-Daughter Transmission of the Androgen Receptor Gene as an Explanation of the Effect of Father Absence on Age of Menarche." *Child Development* 73, no. 4 (July 2002): 1046-1051. *Academic Search Elite*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 22, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> O'Neill. "Experiments in Living: The Fatherless Family." *Civitas*. September 2002. <http://www.civitas.org.uk/pubs/experiments.php> (accessed June 22, 2011).

might grow up not knowing how to bond and love other men appropriately.<sup>14</sup> Fight Club is rife with the desire for male bonding and an acceptable way for men to congregate. Again, this cultural identity can be seen as having contributed many of the themes of Fight Club.

This isn't a for real suicide...

Palahniuk is considered to be a writer of transgressive fiction.<sup>15</sup> Transgressive fiction is a, "genre of literature that focuses on characters who feel confined by the norms and expectations of society and who break free of those confines in unusual and/or illicit ways. Because they are rebelling against the basic norms of society, protagonists of transgressional fiction may seem mentally ill, anti-social, or nihilistic. The genre deals extensively with taboo subject matters such as drugs, sex, violence, incest, pedophilia, and crime."<sup>16</sup> Authors in this genre of writing share important characteristics, not the least of which is a *desire to play on the taboos of society*. Authors of this genre also wish to push readers to question their own norms and values. It is very easy to make the argument that Fight Club is a case of transgressive fiction. It contains six out of nine of the characteristics listed above, and some are present in multiple cases. I assert that the collection of meanings that belong to the writers of this genre inform the creation of Fight Club as a cultural object.

You have to know—not fear—know that someday you are going to die.

Palahniuk served as an escort for the terminally ill shuttling them to and from support group meetings.<sup>17</sup> Caregivers in this situation often serve as compassionate listeners, experiencing the patient's pain in a way that few others can understand.<sup>18</sup> Escorts for the terminally ill are exposed to many of the ups and downs of caring for and interacting with a terminally ill patient. One important meaning that caregivers in this setting tend to share is the increased awareness of the significance of communication. "When people think that you're going to die, they really listen instead of just waiting for their turn to speak."<sup>19</sup> Also, in caring for the terminally ill, caregivers will eventually adopt some form of acceptance of the death concept. While in general, people tend to have a strong taboo against talking about death, people in this subculture must learn to identify with it and soldier on. This subculture allowed for one of the main themes of Fight Club in which the protagonist attends support groups for terminally ill patients. The similarities are way too obvious here to overlook.

Did you know that if you mix gasoline and frozen orange juice concentrate, you got napalm?

So what we have here are a set of identities, subgroups and consequent meaning systems that are responsible for the creation of Fight Club. The combinations of the author's identities manifest themselves in the object and form a seemingly original work. After reading this section you should understand that the creator merely channeled his environment while creating Fight Club. Palahniuk was a Cacophony Society member, homosexual, child from a broken home, transgressive fictionist and caretaker for the terminally ill. The interaction of these identities and the subcultures to which they belonged were directly responsible for the creation of this story. These identities interact to produce a story centered around anarchy, cultural marginalization, family relationships, taboo and death. Sounds like a pretty good summary of Fight Club to me!

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<sup>14</sup> Danza.

<sup>15</sup> *Chuck Palahniuk*. June 9, 2011. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_palahniuk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_palahniuk) (accessed June 21, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> *Transgressive Fiction*. April 4, 2011. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgressional\\_fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgressional_fiction) (accessed 6 21, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> *Chuck Palahniuk*. June 9, 2011. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck\\_palahniuk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_palahniuk) (accessed June 21, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> "Terminal Illness." *Wikipedia*. June 10, 2011. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terminally\\_ill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terminally_ill) (accessed June 22, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.

## How normal am I? Are My Parents Normal?

By Tristan Foust

About five years ago, I made a decision to move away from my city of birth, Flint Michigan. I was among the 18% to leave the city since the last census that took place in 2000 (quickfacts.census.gov Flint). My father and mother also decided to get out of the city which was soon to be a ghost town if it continued to go the same direction because of deindustrialization. What once was a major producer of General Motors vehicles was now starting to become abandoned. My family was the minorities in Flint, making up part of the 37.4% white population in the city compared to the nation's 72.4% white population and I began to realize that we were the odd race in the city, which was comprised of 56.6% African Americans (quickfacts.census.gov USA). My father's seniority allowed for him to keep his job as a factory worker at the truck and bus plant. We were fortunate enough not to be part of the 36.6% of the city's population below the poverty level and with my father pulling overtime every day, we were well above the median income level of \$27,199. My father made quite a bit more than that because he worked hard to provide for his family (quickfacts.census.gov Flint).

The lack of jobs in Flint was my motive to get out. I joined the Marine Corps and became one of the 18% of the military to move out of the state to pursue a career in the military (Military Population P8). My parents, although they were not part of the 85% of civilians to not move what-so-ever, were smart enough to become part of the 3% to move to a different city inside the same county (Military Population P8).

My parents had a pretty good reason to stay within the area. They were married and had children in the area. They were both part of the 14.8% of the country's population to be on their second marriage for the age range 40-49. I was fortunate enough to be part of the 87.5 percent in my age range, 20-24, at the time to never have gotten married, but I realized that expectations have changed since my parent's marriage in the 1980's when there was only 59.2% of the population who never married (America's Youth P 35). I had nothing interfering with my decisions. Unfortunately they quickly became part of the 28.5% in their age range to divorce while I was enlisted (Marriages and Divorce PDF P.16).

While I was in the military, I realized I was part of a small percentage of enlisted personnel making up only .5% of the nation's population, and part of the small percentage of military veterans in the United States at only 7.2% active and retired (Military Population P8). I made my way up to a Corporal in less than 2 years, which was a pretty big accomplishment to me because only 20.2% of the Marine Corps is comprised of Corporals compared to the 44% that made up junior enlisted ranks before it (<http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/rg1112.pdf>). Now because of the military, I am able to afford college and I am part of the 57.3% of the nation's population with some kind of college education.

Now that I live in California, I am among a slightly higher Veteran population than that of the nation's at 9% and live in a city with more white people than what I was used to in Flint at 83.5% for the city of Yucca Valley and 57.6% for the state of California overall (Yucca Valley Quick Facts).

After taking a look at some of the data, I can easily see that at one point me and my parents were not normal compared to the demographics in our hometown. We were not black and my father made too much money, therefore we did not fit in. After deciding to get out of Flint, I took a not-so-normal approach by leaving my state to enlist in the military to become one of the less than 1%, in order to live the almost normal life I am living today. Now I am not a minority in a town filled with mostly white people and I am doing what the majority of people do when they get out of high school; college. I remain unmarried and at least for a few more years until I am in my thirties, that remains the normal thing to do.

Faculty Sponsor: Mike Danza  
Sociology 3, Fundamentals of Statistics

## Am I Normal? Are My Parents Normal?

By Ariel Sands

I was born in North Carolina but I was raised in Twenty-nine Palms. The population of Twenty-nine Palms is 25,048 and the population of California is 37,253,456 according to the census from 2010 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>). I am also African American and 8.2% of the people in Twenty-nine Palms are also African American and the total percent of African Americans in California is 6.2% and the total percent in the United States is 12.6% according to the 2010 census (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html> and <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/0680994.html>). Also, I am a female and the percent of females in Twenty-nine Palms is 43.7% and the total in California is 50.3% (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>).

Both of my parents have a Bachelor's degree, my mother went to college for her Bachelor's degree in Psychology right after high school, but my dad waited a few years before he decided to pursue his Bachelor's degree. The total number of women with a Bachelor's degree or more is 102,502,211 in the United States out of 197,892,369, which are 26.7 % (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation). The total number of men with a Bachelor's degree or more is 95,390,158 out of 197,892,369, which is 28.2 % (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation). My parents are both African American and the total number of African Americans with a Bachelor's degree or more is 22,171,628 out of 197,892,369, which is 17.3 % (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation). All of these numbers are according to the 2007 Census Bureau.

My parents have been married for 22 years and they are both in their mid forties now. The number of married people in the United States is 221,148,671. The total number of married men 35-44 is 22,797,615 which is 63.3 % (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation). The total number of married women is 23,107,856, which is 65.1%. The number of African American men married is 11,691,001, which is 34.2% and the total number of African American women married is 13,626,532, which is 27.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation). All of this information is according to the 2000 census bureau.

My dad has been in the military for over 20 years and he is currently a sergeant major and he is stationed in Camp Pendleton. He is married to a civilian wife and he has two children, my younger brother that is 18 years old and me and I am 19 years old. 53% of African American men with children in the military have a similar family situation according to the 2002 census (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007). 41% of African American men are married to a civilian wife (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007). 20% of enlisted men in the military are African American (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007). All of this information is according to statistics from 2002.

Doing this experiment taught me that there are a lot of people that have similar backgrounds and situations and some statistics surprised me. One statistic that surprised me was more women than men have a Bachelor's degree. 102,502,211 women had a Bachelor's degree or more and 95,390,158 men had a bachelor's degree or more. Another statistic that surprised me was only 20% of enlisted men are African American in the military; I thought that number would be higher. One last thing that surprised me was the population of Twenty-nine Palms. According to a 2010 census there are 25,048 people in Twenty-nine Palms and I have always thought that number was way lower.

Faculty Sponsor: Mike Danza  
Sociology 3, Fundamentals of Statistics

Olivia Smith

Faculty Sponsor: Greg Gilbert

English 003A

December 6, 2011

### **Military Privatization**

The military is changing dramatically from what it once was. Private companies and civilians are being hired by the government to go over to hot war zones to work in jobs that had previously almost exclusively been performed by soldiers, like work in the fields of drivers and security. The civilian death rate in the past year has actually been higher than soldier deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan according to Christian Miller, partly because these civilians have no training unless they are retired military, and the company's management just wants the job done as fast and cheap as it can be. There has always been contracted civilians working for the military, and it may be appropriate in some instances for some jobs to be done by civilians, but there should not be more contracted civilians than there are soldiers in such war zones as Iraq and Afghanistan. The risks of having contracted civilian employed by the government outweighs the good, so only trained soldiers should be overseeing security and fighting hostiles in the wars that America fights.

Contracted civilians were allowed to control security in Iraq. There have been more contracted civilians performing security operations than there were soldiers in Iraq, and these operators placed our soldiers in harm's way in the manner that they completed missions. "As of summer 2007, there were more 'private contractors' deployed on the U.S. government payroll on Iraq (180,000) than there were actual soldiers (160,000)" (Scahill 48). And none of these civilians have been prosecuted for such violent crimes as murder and torture, like soldiers have been; they have no rules enforcing their behavior. "Civilian contractors enjoy protection from local criminal prosecution, even for such crimes as murder, torture, and rape" (Mariner 1). This makes them dangerous to our soldiers and causing more harm than good. They have next to no rules, so they may lack military discipline and legal accountability, thus resulting in reckless and indefensible acts of seemingly random violence. "They were taught by American guards to shoot randomly at people while going through town to keep everyone back for the convoys and it was all right to hot civilian with gunfire" (Rasor 121). American guards, referring to the contracted security guards sent over to Afghanistan and Iraq, are telling the Kurds' boys that are helping with security to shoot at will into crowds to keep them at bay, and if anyone gets too close to the vehicles, shoot even if they do not look like a threat and have no weapon. We have young men and women fighting for their lives, being held to a certain standard, prosecuted if they are in the wrong, and they know this and it keeps them in line. According to Daniel Bates and Mark Duell, there were army soldiers that were performing horrible acts against citizens and mutilating the dead, like taking their fingers or parts of their skulls as a trophy of their kill. One soldier was sentenced to jail for 24 years, and the others are being court marshaled. Contractors should not have different standards or no standards at all with how they operate.

Most of the truck drivers that are transporting supplies between camps for the soldiers are contracted truck drivers from the states. These truck drivers are going to war zones to make extra money for their family, but is the money worth it to them and their families when weighed against the risks of working in a hot war zone? The average pay of a truck driver in Illinois is about \$45,000 a year versus that they can start out at \$100,000, making an extra \$55,000 a year by going to Iraq as a truck driver (PayScale.com). If that person dies in the combat zone or even gets injured, it is really not worth it to the family for an extra \$50,000 for that one-year. Whereas if they had 30 more years at \$45,000 and died or were injured, they would have earned \$1,350,000 over their lifetime, money that they could have made for their family as opposed the extra \$50,000 while working in the war zone. Sometimes the truck drivers only get a flak jacket and occasionally they don't even receive one of these, which is basically an armored vest that can carry bullet proof SAPI plates in the front, back, and sides for protection. A flak jacket can save a life when one is under fire or during explosions caused

by IED's, but these do not even always protect you. They have little or no armor, so they are pretty much sitting ducks while going through towns and hostile areas.

The companies hiring truck drivers do not even check to see if the drivers know how to operate a semi-truck most of the time. This places all of the ones that do know how to drive a semi-truck in danger. "Warren met a man who had been hired as a truck driver although he had never driven a truck" (Rasor 61). If one person stalled or swerved and caused an accident it would be a major pile up collision considering some of the convoys can be 30 trucks long sometimes, and even longer. "Some were all right but others were weaving, a clear indication that they were not familiar with big trucks" (Rasor 61). And most all the trucks are not armored and are easily destroyed when hit with an IED. They are easily attacked and looted for the supplies that they are hauling. Occasionally there are maybe one or two military vehicles to protect them if attacked. Some of the time though they didn't even have any military protection when delivering the supplies from camp to camp. Also, they are usually not even moving the supplies in closed containers, most the time the supplies are not even covered up, so people come up to the trucks when going through towns and loot the supplies. Rocks and other things are thrown at the drivers, and most of the truck windows become broken by civilians. It is assumed that probably ten percent of each truck is looted by towns people when driving through the towns, so the soldiers are not getting all the supplies and the government is paying as if they delivered all of the supplies because there is not usually an official record of what is being delivered (Rasor 63).

Soldiers do not make very much money, especially if they are enlisted at a lower rank. They leave their families and homeland for seven or more months to get blown up, shot at, attacked, and changed mentally from the things they witness. For this they get \$650 extra every two weeks. It is a nice amount of money and helps pay the bills, but it is not what they should be getting to do the kind of work that they do. In addition to the \$1,800 a month base salary, based on navycs.com, that is about \$3,100 a month, roughly about a \$100 a day working a twelve hour days or more, about \$8.50 an hour, barely minimum wage. Many wouldn't do that job for any amount of money. It is no wonder they have to pay these contracted civilians so much to go over there and risk their lives. According to Jeremy Schill, author of *Blackwater*, "once Blackwater started recruiting for its first big job, guarding Paul Bremer, an American diplomat serving as the U.S. Administrator to Iraq, the rate shot up to \$600 a day." According to Jon Ponder in 2007, the rate pay that Blackwater operators receive per day is up to \$1,222. That is at least six times as much as a soldier makes, sometimes more. Because my husband is deployed, I know the stress and danger they have to go through for very little money. My husband knows a man in Afghanistan who is an ATV mechanic, making \$150,000 during his nine-month contract. If my husband was there for nine months earning what he makes now over the nine-month period, he would make about \$28,000 as a Corpsman, equivalent to an LVN versus an ATV mechanic.

These companies that hire the civilians for security are also putting these civilians at risk by their poor management and work ethics. They do not provide them with proper armor, weapons, ammunition, or transportation most of the time (Rasor 108, 117). They instruct them to do things that the government does not approve of because of deadlines. Contracted civilian take routes that have not been cleared for insurgents or IEDs. The civilians are instructed to take those roads even after the military has told them to stay off and wait until they get a team to clear the route for them since it was covered with IED's that had not yet been found and taken out. According to Rasor (124 – 126) and interviews with Will Hough and two other contractors that served as private security guards with Hough, they are usually instructed to take the route anyways to make a deadline, and Hough had to pay for it with his health, going from the perfect "herculean abilities when he left for Iraq" (Rasor 126), to now where he cannot even ride a bike after returning home. Hough called on the radio telling them he had been hit with an IED, but they sped away because they thought he was dead. While trying to help one of the young Kurd boys that had been hit with shrapnel and was bleeding from the head, Hough and his men began being shot at by a group of insurgents. So much adrenaline was pumping through Hough that he managed to run at the building firing while running and stormed the building as a two-man team causing all of the insurgents to drop their weapons and surrender, doing so with very serious injuries. Hough had shrapnel in his leg and most of the tendons and ligaments in his arm were torn off the bone, and shrapnel in his skull caused one of his eyes to budge out of his head. After coming back from the hospital the army told him to rest for 48

hours, not nearly long enough for his injuries. The next day, though, a supervisor told Hough he had to go on another mission. After Hough refused, the supervisor grabbed his gun like he was going to shoot him so Hough put him in an arm lock, using his good arm, and the supervisor called the military police. Hough lost his youth and his ability to perform simple tasks for the rest of his life, all because the company pushed them to not listen to the military and to go for the money. Many people have lost their lives and become seriously injured because the companies really do not care about the people that work for them.

These private companies that the government has contracted out to, like Blackwater, Custer Battle, and KBR, would prefer to hire people with military experience. The contractors can approach and recruit military soldiers who are in uniform and talk to them about changing from military to working for them as a private contracted civilian. They can pay their people significantly more than the military pays any of their soldiers. These companies come to people in the military and offer them the deal to come work for them. They lure them in with generous six figure salaries, and who wouldn't take it after making less than \$40,000 or maybe a little more a year, that is if they are an officer, or a lower ranking enlisted making less than \$25,000 a year? Blackwater is a security operation and charges the government \$1,222 for each of their guard's per day, approximately \$445,000 a year according to Jon Ponder.

There was an incident where four Blackwater operators were sent into Fallujah to pick up kitchen equipment without a map, enough ammunition, support or weapons. This city is the biggest terrorist city in Iraq and there are insurgents by the thousands ready to kill. When the military has to go into the city they make sure it is a necessity, and if they can go around the city to get the job done they will. They never go in with less than three armored cars filled with troops whereas the Blackwater operators had two unarmored cars and two men in each car. They lost their way and went to the American Camp, Fallujah, where they stayed the night. The soldiers did not speak to them or offer the safer route that they could have taken to avoid the highly hostile area filled with insurgents. "The Marines allegedly shared no information with them about Fallujah or the route they could take to avoid it" (Rasor, 108). Soldiers do not particularly like contracted civilians, because they are getting paid thousands and thousands of dollars more to do the same job that they are doing, and that is enough to create resentment in anyone. The men left the next day to finish the mission and get to Camp Ridgeway for the equipment. While traveling through the city insurgents jumped out in the middle of the road and shot the two men in the second car to death, and when the first car turned to help them they shot the other two men to death. Then they proceeded to cover the cars in gasoline, and ignite them. One of the men's bodies, Scott Helvenston, was dragged behind a car through the streets and then taken to the bridge and strung up on metal frames (Rasor 109). While Blackwater was re-writing their contract, they took out the word "armored" in the section about the transportation vehicles, because if they wouldn't have to armor their vehicles it would save them 1.5 million dollars a car according to Rasor. These men may earn more than soldiers, but civilians are dying needlessly, because of the way companies want things to be done. The question is what do contracted civilians value most. They could make a couple extra hundred thousand, yes, but if it will cost them their lives because these companies do not want to follow the proper precautions, is it worth the sacrifice? Soldiers should be performing these high-risk jobs like they always have been in the past. I am a military wife, and I do not want any soldier to be lost, but soldiers are safer and have more precautions than these companies that are providing for the contracted civilians. The military is governed to certain standards and has precautions set up for very specific reasons. Contracted companies do not have to follow the precautions and rules the military has set in place, which results in many unnecessary deaths and injuries of civilians. The military makes sure that every soldier has body armor that will protect them, armored transportation, sufficient weapons, enough ammunition, and enough support. Even if nothing happens or it is an easy mission that is considered safe, the military sends enough support in case something did happen so they would be prepared. These precautions are to be safe and prepared, and the military is the best at getting the job done in the safest manner. Soldiers should be the ones fighting the wars.

Hiring out contracted civilians may be cheaper for the government in the long run because they do not have to pay for their equipment, training, or transport, but there are some serious risks when dealing with contracted civilians especially when the number of contracted civilians is now so high. Even if it is more cost

effective to hire contracted civilians, is it worth it to the country to do so? These companies are trying to get as much money as they possibly can for a substandard work that is not up to the standards that the troops need them to be in order to do their jobs.

The cost of troop support would be \$78.4 billion for the 20-year period. LOGCAP support is calculated to cost \$41.4 billion for this period. Based upon the CBO calculations, the cost difference over a 20-year period would be \$37 billion dollars, in 2005 dollars. The study found that organic support costs approximately 90 percent more than using contractors. (Smith, Charles 3)

Some of the risks are added work for soldiers having to protect these civilians. Most of them do not carry weapons because they are maintenance, truck drivers, cleaners, jobs that do not require them to carry a weapon. So the soldiers have the added responsibility of protecting all of the civilians because they are defenseless in the case of an attack on a truck convoy or just going outside the wire. Another problem with hiring civilians is that the government and contractors have different values and ideas. The military wants the job done right and fast so they can get their work done, whereas contractors are worried about making a profit and getting as much as they can from the government and making sure there are no loses to their bank accounts. Problems come up when these companies can't or won't do what the military wants them to do. There is also the risk of fraud because the military cannot watch these contractors all the time to ascertain that they are fulfilling their obligations. Contractors try to get as much money as they can from the government in many different ways. One method is by claiming their employees are working 12 plus hours a day even, 108 hours a week, when they are really not working the hours being recorded. Employees are being told to take longer to get things done so they can charge more for the time spent on completing a project. They even take bribes to accept SUV's that are in when they are barley running and unfit to bring the military the supplies they need and make sure no one tells the military so they won't have to fix them (Bauman 16). These hired contractors are trying to make the most money for the least amount of work, and they are doing this by cutting corners, endangering civilian lives, lying to the military they are supposed to be supporting, and putting our soldiers at risk because of the job being done so poorly. The soldiers depend on the contracted civilians to provide them with supplies, maintenance, and technical support, and if they aren't doing their jobs right and in the most efficient way it's slowing down the troops and making it so they cannot get their jobs done.

In an effort to obtain the contractor's view on these issues, I attempted to contact eight different agencies, and only one responded to the email that I sent. After our initial exchange, I went into greater detail about what I would like to do a short interview on, and I did not get another message back from that agency. This is part of the message that I sent out to the one that did respond:

I thought it would give me the most information and insight to my paper to talk to an agency that hires these civilians to work in these dangerous war zones. How these people get the job, where they go to do it, the benefits, what benefits they don't receive and how much they make that lures them to these danger zones, and any other factors that are contributing to so many civilians wanting to go over to Afghanistan or Iraq.

It is curious that only one responded to my first email, and that after I explained why I was emailing, Silver Ray Ltd, I did not receive any more emails. Though this is only an isolated example, it is safe to assume that private contractors do not want to answer any questions. Not only am I being denied access to any information that they could give me, but the truth is not being told to contracted civilians. They are promised five star hotels and at least two-week vacations when they arrive in order to get acclimated. They have been told they will have armored vehicles and body armor, and up to date, working guns. Razor states in many interviews and his writings that these promises are not kept, but, in fact, the opposite is what happens.

The military has changed and the contracted side of the military has even more people contracted than actual soldiers enlisted in the military. Contracted civilians may under some conditions be necessary so that soldiers can concentrate on more pressing and important jobs, like security and protection, but things like laundry, food, maintenance, and truck driving are good things to be contracted out so soldiers are not wasting their skills on jobs that need no real talents or skills. Security should not be contracted out to people who might not be properly trained for the job, thus putting the soldiers in danger by their actions and the unrealistic orders of the companies. And the risks of having so many contracted civilians, especially performing security, outweigh the good that they bring. The military should try and revert to the way they once were when soldiers did almost all of the jobs and there with more soldiers by far than contractors working in war zones. If soldiers were carrying out these jobs they would be safer and have fewer casualties because they are properly trained and take the necessary precautions, unlike companies taking shortcuts. The military would benefit in being like it once was by reducing costs, needless deaths, and the amount of fraud going on in the military.

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Instructor's Prologue: The creation of social problems involves claims-making. Students enrolled in Social Problems learned how to analyze the claims made by organizations and the ways organizations frame social problems. As part of a final project in this course students were required to become a claims-maker for a social problem. This project offered by Andrea Morales indicates that she learned a great deal about effective claims-making and framing of social problems in compelling ways.

### **Unions: A Problem for Education**

By Andrea Morales

Faculty Sponsor: Mike Danza  
Sociology 2, Social Problems



Click this link to launch this youtube video: <http://youtu.be/MZpVOFpCWR4>

**There goes the Neighborhood!**

**A Counter-Argument by the Cosby Show: The Reframing of Black America for a White American Audience**

By Shannon Bryce Rumsey

Faculty Sponsor: Mike Danza  
Sociology 14, Minorities in America



Click this link to launch this youtube video: <http://youtu.be/ILsRp16E1bk>

**Blade Runner: A Sociological Analysis of Race and Class**  
by Brandon Bear

Faculty Sponsor: Mike Danza  
Sociology 14, Minorities in America



Click this link to launch this youtube video: <http://youtu.be/hxd24TdBmDg>

Communication Theory and Practice Applied to an Accident Scenario

(A Collaborative Paper by SP00102F11, Interpersonal Communications)

Shelby Blair	Daniel Maldonado	Xavier Siddall
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With special thanks to Pamela C. Gibson, Stephanie Allen, and Stephen Marshall



Instructor's Prologue: This collaborative paper, based on the following accident scenario, involved three teams of writers. The writers applied communication terms (*italicized throughout the essay*), interviewed fire and medical personnel, and successfully utilized a range of communication practices in order to complete this assignment (Professor Greg Gilbert).

### The Accident

An elderly gentleman is driving his 1987 Suburban east on 29Palms highway. He is going home from his day at the farmers' market in Joshua Tree where he works part-time selling fresh vegetables grown in his home garden in 29Palms. His little Pekinese sits by him.

As he passes the Colonel Sanders in 29Palms, the dog has a seizure, and the man swerves into a 1996 Honda Civic sedan, shoving it into the curb, where it rolls over and slides to a stop on its roof. The Honda contains a Hispanic family, and only the children are moderately proficient in English. The father is pinned behind the steering wheel of the overturned car, his wife, who had removed her seatbelt to turn and talk to her children, has hit the windshield and sustained a serious head injury. The children, an 8 year old boy and a 12 year old girl are not seriously injured, but are terrified. They have just moved to the US from Mexico, so everything is new and strange to them.

The Suburban has swerved and spun out into the middle of the road facing the wrong direction. The driver is elderly, badly shaken up, and does not know where his dog is. As he stumbles out of his car to find his dog, he begins to experience chest pains. In pain and greatly concerned about the whereabouts of his little dog and the condition of the people in the other car, he begins to cry for help and collapses.

The first car to stop and assist contains three middle-aged African American women on their way to lunch in Palm Desert.

Also, a young cell phone brandishing woman comes out of Colonel Sanders proclaiming that she knows first aid.

Group One (Epic 5)  
Professor Gilbert  
Interpersonal Communication  
December 1, 2011

### The Importance of Communication (Chapter One)

Taking a look into a disastrous scene, such as a horrific car accident, the question arises of how excellent care of victims is executed. With challenges such as a non-English speaking family, a lost dog, and an older gentleman experiencing chest pains we are allowed to view the types of communication theories and principles that are applied in subsequent events. With the application of sound communication principles, it is possible to reduce a chaotic scene into a well managed scenario.

Communication is an important factor in accidents such as this. Communication theory has been outlined into the *Transactional Communication Model*. In Adler and Proctor's book, *Looking Out Looking In*, the transactional model captures communication as a uniquely human process. *The Transactional Communication Model* is defined as a characterization of communication as the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages in an ongoing, irreversible process. Two major causes of misinterpretation between parties are *environment* and *noise*.

The *environment* is the field of experiences that leads a person to make sense of another's behavior. *Environments* consist of physical characteristics; personal experiences, relational history, and cultural background (p. 445). Culture, race, gender, and age are all forms of environmental factors.

*Noise* is external, physiological, and psychological distractions that interfere with the accurate transmission and reception of a message (p. 446). *External noises* are the sounds being heard or sound that block communication (p. 12). *Physiological noise* would be someone with biological factors that interfere with accurate reception, for example, an illness, fatigue, and hearing loss (p. 12). *Psychological noises* are forces

within that interfere with one's ability to understand a message accurately (p. 12); a communicator's state of mind if you will. For example, defensiveness is the most common form of psychological noise.

In the scene you will find the transactional model being used in many places, such as between the three black females and Mexican family, with the KFC lady and the elder suburban driver, and in the 911 phone calls.

The Honda finally stopped sliding on its roof, leaving a 50 foot red stripe on the pavement, an eerie resemblance to a blood smear. The silence was deafening after hearing the metal scrape for so long, a sound that will be remembered forever. Glass scattered over what seems like miles of road; the Honda has no windows left intact. The silence was quickly swept away by the screams of frightened children.

The older suburban has now stopped spinning and is now facing oncoming traffic; at least its right side up, unlike the Honda. By the looks of the area the owner of the suburban is going to be out a lot of produce; as there are vegetables spread all over the road. The back doors to the suburban must not have been shut properly and were flung open during its one-hundred-eighty degree turn across the four lanes of traffic. There goes a watermelon rolling under that passing car. Was that a tomato that just landed on that windshield?

The few cars on the road are getting an eye full while learning a valuable lesson. The by standers on the sidewalks are lucky they are not in the wrong place at the wrong time. Witnessing a scary scene like this can change a person's for life forever.

### Life or Death

"Mama! Mama! Wake up!" said the 12 year old girl from the back seat of the smashed Honda. The screams and cries of the 8 year old child brings the father around to consciousness, probably something he would rather not have happen; since he is pinned between the steering wheel, caved in roof and smashed doors. As the father struggles to get a grip on reality he starts to communicate with his children. He turns is body as much as he can, fighting back the unbearable pain, just to see his wife, who is bloody and unresponsive to his words. So much blood leaking down her face, her head must have hit the windshield; if she had only left her seat belt on.

As a victim who has never experienced a tragedy of this magnitude, he is still capable of calm, level headed communication. One way this can be attained is by attending to one's behavior and using these observations to shape the way one behaves and communicates. This process of *self-monitoring* allows for smooth communication amongst individuals. The father has to make sure to pay attention to his behavior because the children need him to communicate clearly and calmly, for they are scared and have no idea what is next. In a terrible scene such as this, it is hard for those involved to control their feelings and emotions. It is vital to maintain a high level of *emotional labor* or manage and suppress emotions when doing so is appropriate and or necessary (p. 444). This ability is especially useful when establishing sound communication channels with others; and in a crisis those channels are extremely important, as other's lives many depend on them.

### The Best Friend

The elderly gentlemen driving the suburban slams his vehicle into park and stumbles out the driver's side door nearly falling onto the pavement facing oncoming traffic.

"Chuck, Chuck where are you?" the driver yells, trying to locate his only remaining "family member," his Pekinese lap dog.

It had been another long hot day in Joshua Tree, California, where he had to sit outside selling what little produce he was able to grow in the dry desert; making a few extra bucks with the hopes of covering his minor medical expenses. Now all of his means for any extra income lay spread across four lanes of traffic. Having no idea that the Honda had flipped over, the man continues to search for his dog by walking around to the back of the Suburban where he sees for the first time the disastrous results of his actions. He stands there in utter shock, unable to move, help, or even talk.

"Oh Dear God, did I cause this?" the man whispers to himself as he drops to his knees and grabs his chest, for the horrific pain shooting through his arm and chest becomes unbearable. Thank goodness a lady

from the local KFC has made her way to him. Knowing first aid she could tell the man was in serious trouble and in need of medical attention.

“Sir, Sir, can you hear me? Where are you hurt? Ok Sir, lie down. It’s going to be ok,” the KFC lady said while laboring her emotions.

“I didn’t mean to; I really didn’t mean to hurt anyone. It’s.... It’s just something was wrong with Chuck.” *Debilitative emotions* block the elderly gentlemen from functioning effectively.

The woman from KFC maintains her reserve by calmly speaking to the elderly gentleman. Subsequently, she avoids a negative *Emotional Contagion*, which is the process by which emotions are transferred from one person to another (p. 444). This term is quite important to understand when dealing with crisis situations. The last thing an emergency responder or helping bystander wants to do is add more stress to an already chaotic scene.

“It’s ok, calm down. It’s all ok, who’s Chuck?” the KFC lady asks.

“He’s my best friend since my wife died two years ago, I can’t lose him too... I just can’t” the elderly gentlemen says as tears fill his eyes and roll down his cheeks.

“I really didn’t mean to hurt anyone,” the man says as the simultaneous cries of the children rise and his battle with consciousness is lost.

The woman from KFC does an amazing job at approaching the scene and handling the elderly gentleman with enough ease and care while maintaining control of her emotional output. The questions asked are direct and her tone is a calming force.

### Live and Learn

Due to today’s multicultural society we live with people from different backgrounds and communication styles; for example age, occupation, physical disabilities, religion, activities, race and ethnicity. It is important to be able to communicate competently with other *co-cultures* (p. 443).

Splat, there is a tomato on the windshield! Slamming on the brakes as the tomato slides down, the black female driver sees an upside down Honda and a Suburban in the wrong lane of traffic.

“Find your cell phone, hurry now! Call someone, Oh MY GOD, look at how bad that car is,” the driver says to the other black women in the car.

“This is 9-1-1 dispatch, what is your emergency?”

“Um, yeah, so there’s like a car accident, some white guy drove some poor Mexican family off the road.”

“Where is the accident Ma’am?”

“Um yeah, like in 29 Palms.”

“Where in 29 Palms, Ma’am?” Accurate and clear communication is needed to speed up dispatch time, rescue, and effectiveness. The longer it takes to get the basic information, the longer those victims lives are at stake. Communication is not only chatting with others; communication can be very important when passing vital messages to one another.

The other two women run to the Honda and find the worst scene of their lives. Overcoming their fear, one of the women quickly turns to the children and tries to calm them by reassuring them that everything would be okay. The women have to think fast and make the best informed decisions they are capable of. Therefore, they struggle to communicate to the children that it is best that they stay in the car and try not to move until emergency personal get there, all while using *emotional contagion*, passing along a calm and, “It will all be okay” attitude.

“Mi mama does no wake up, help, help her... por favor wake her up” the 8 year old screams in fear to the lady in broken English, clearly showing that the children are not fluent in the English language.

“Honey it is ok, she’ll be ok, the ambulance is on the way. Do either of your parents speak English?” the lady calmly asks the child.

“No, we jus’ move from Mexico, por favor...mi papa he stuck.” Fear crackling the 12 years old voice, breaking the women’s heart at the same time.

*Listening* is a concept in which most think does not need an explanation, but in reality many do not understand the true meaning of listening and how important it can be in a crisis. Listening is process of making sense of out other’s spoken messages (p. 237). Many can hear the message, which is the process in which sound waves strike the eardrum and cause vibrations that are transmitted to the brain; listening actually makes sense of that sound. In a critical situation such as this, listening is vital not only for emergency personal but for the bystanders and the victims. High impact situations are not the time for automatic, routine, mindless listening. It is time for *mindful listening*, which is giving careful and thoughtful attention, and responding to the messages being received (p. 446).

When the three black women stop to assist the accident victims they should naturally kick into *mindful listening* mode and make the most out what the victims try to convey to them. Where life and death consequences are involved, one cannot listen carefully enough. These women act out the process of *active listening: hearing, attending, understanding, responding and remembering* (p. 446).

The crying children in the back seat and the traffic flying by the accident scene make it hard for the women to hear the victim’s message clearly. Attending to the victims require that the women filter out some of the messages and focus on others. Assessing the situation the women have to filter out what they cannot help or change, and focus on what they can do; like talk to the children and calm them down versus getting the father unpinned from the car.

*Misunderstanding* messages happen often, but in a lifesaving crisis understanding can prove fatal. These women use high *listening fidelity* in order to understand completely and relay the message to others. Such as the adults do not speak English and the children speak in broken English, so the degree of which the listener understands the message being communicated takes a lot of effort on the women’s part.

*Responding* in this situation has to be carefully handled by the women, giving only positive observable feedback to the children in order to calm them. Positive response in this kind of situation is the best course of action; the women would not want to convey their own personal doubts or observations of the situation to the children; which would be counterproductive. Relaying back to the children what is being communicated gives the children a sense of reassurance that they are being understood and things are going to be ok. When these women are responding they are keeping eye contact and appropriate facial expressions which is particularly important when dealing with children (p. 240).

*Remembering* is also vital of the women, they have to be able to convey the messages clearly and accurately to the emergence personal first on the scene. Most people only remember about 50 % of what they hear immediately after hearing it (p. 241); therefore these women have to truly put a lot of effort into what is taking place verbally and nonverbally between them and the victims. Names, address and prior health conditions are just a few important details the women might hear and need to relay to others, so remembering is needed.

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December 1, 2011

### In the Midst of Disarray (Chapter Two)

*Communication competence* will be our overall focus in this portion of the scenario. In simple terms, *communication competence* is interpreted as achieving one's goals in a manner that, in most cases, maintains or enhances the relationship in which it occurs (Adler and Proctor, 2011, p. 25). With such a broad term it's simple to tie in more distinct terms such as *mindful listening* and *mediated communication*. These terms, when used together correctly, construct a very structured and organized response to an emergency situation.

*Mindful listening* plays a role unlike any other in this incident. By giving careful and thoughtful attention and responses to the messages we receive, it allows emergency response personnel the ability to stay focused and make the right choices when they count most (p. 238). In order to maintain this type of communication, many different types of technological channels are needed to be utilized.

Many different technological channels such as email, chat rooms, texting, and instant messaging all form a unified category of communication by the name of *mediated communication* (p. 18). This type of communication allows the responders to transfer information in the blink of an eye without having to be directly next to the receiver to do so. In an instance such as this, time is of the essence so the phrase "every second counts" can't be more stressed.

Within this scenario there are a variety of examples in which these terms apply to the emergency at hand: communication between the fire captain, the EMTs, the flight medics, patients, and most importantly, the CommCenter, which *mediates* the entire situation. Within this scenario, *communication competence* and the terms provided play a central role in keeping the scene at hand under control.

As if from a scene from a dramatically overdone Hollywood cinema, the horror that has fallen upon the 29 Palms Highway on this sweat-bearing summer day is, nonetheless, reality. With tension, anxiousness, drama, fear, and adrenaline all at their peaks, the emergency responders know what must be done and how to properly execute a near impossible procedure to secure each and every one of the victim's lives. There are no meaningless outside distractions that could possibly afflict a single one of the rescue members' minds, for they know that if they are taken away from their duty for even a moment, someone's life could be a risk and possibly lost. Communication is key in ensuring all procedures are carried out effectively on time and in an orderly fashion. Without it, the once nearly flawless operation would turn into a chaotic nightmare with all responders unsure of what needs to be accomplished and how they should go about such ordeals. In theory, all forms of communication are essential in an emergency responders' arsenal to give them every advantage necessary against their foe, Death.

### A Fireman's Trials

Right when his boots hit the pavement after descending from his vehicle, the fire captain's heart begins to race as he makes haste to the scene, not knowing what is in store ahead. Upon coming to the first vehicle, which happens to be lying on its' own rooftop, he begins his initial observation of the victims.

"Hello in there, can anyone hear me?" the fire captain announces as he eagerly waits for a response.

"I can hear you..." the young girl says weakly.

"Good, good. Try to stay calm; we are here to help you. Do your best not to move and we will get you out of there in no time!" yells the fire captain, trying his best to keep the young children cool-headed.

Turning his attention to the parents, he notices that the mother has had severe trauma to the head with blood streaming down her unconscious face. The driver of the vehicle has also been substantially hurt from the steering wheel being jammed into his abdomen. Before he begins to extract the victims, one of his firemen informs him that the man from the second vehicle is in fact having a heart attack and is in need of immediate

assistance; with this in mind the fire captain must now inform the EMTs that are on scene about what needs to be done. As he makes his way to the medics (who happen to already be unloading their equipment and rushing to the patients), the fire captain recaps the abundance of information he must relay so as to give a correct analysis of the situation at hand. Creating a *dyad*, when two people interact with one another, the fire captain and medic exchange information and within seconds the medic is off to tend to the wounded (p. 17).

With the EMTs attending the wounded, the fire captain makes haste to his radio to inform the CommCenter of the dire need for an airship to be sent to his location for the trauma patient in the top-sided vehicle along with a backup ambulance for additional assistance with the wounded victims. Using this *mediated communication*, the fire captain is able to effectively establish controlled communication with the entire emergency response group, thus giving the biggest advantage in saving the victims' lives. Once CommCenter gives their confirmation for the airship and ambulance, the fire captain rushes back onto the scene to begin extracting the family from the capsized vehicle. Rather than immediately using heavy equipment to break open the vehicle, the fire captain first simply tries the door handles to see if they are unlocked and able to be opened (M. Helmkamp, personal communication, October 26, 2011). Thankfully, the passenger side door is unlocked, and the fire captain yells for one of his firemen to help with the extraction of the battered woman. As they follow procedure to safely remove the family, the fire captain feels his spine tingle immensely, causing him to shiver, due to *adaptors* taking effect. *Adaptors* are unconscious bodily movements in response to the environment (Adler, 2011, p.216). With no complications in the operation, the fire captain leaves the victims to the medics' care as he prepares for the airship's arrival by clearing space on the actual highway itself seeing as how there are no suitable landing spaces nearby.

### Grasping for Life

Feeling the anxiousness kicking in, the medics arrive on scene within minutes of departing from their station in 29 Palms. As they exit the ambulance, they see the firefighters already rushing to the scene, with hope in their eyes. Following closely at their heels, the medics rapidly receive information regarding the need for immediate attention to the front passengers of the overturned vehicle as well as the man lying on the ground adjacent to the suburban.

"The lady in the front passenger seat of the overturned vehicle has severe head trauma along with the driver sustaining what looks to be abdominal injuries inflicted by the steering wheel. Also, the man lying on the ground seems to be having a heart attack and will need immediate transportation to the nearest hospital," informs the fire captain as he makes his way to his radio. "I will also be calling in an airship for the trauma patient as well as an additional ambulance to assist with the multiple victims" (M. Helmkamp, personal communication, October 26, 2011).

After the information is given, the medic swiftly makes moves toward the trauma patient, as that is by far the most serious injury to be dealt with. While en route, the medic sends his assistant over to the man lying on the ground to prepare for his transportation to the nearest medical facility. Within seconds of arriving at the car, the fire captain is already back and has opened the passenger side door, allowing access to retrieve the injured there within. As the firemen carefully extract the bleeding woman, the medic stands close by awaiting his chance to sustain the woman until the airship arrives.

After a couple of extremely long minutes, the firemen are successful in getting the lady out of the car and immediately the medic begins doing everything in his power to keep the life held in his hands alive and breathing. Before the medic has a chance to determine whether the victim will be able to make it or not, the airship arrives. As soon as it has landed, the flight medics on-board calmly rush over to the patient and begin exchanging information with the medic on scene as well as keeping *communication competence* in the process. Shortly thereafter, they begin transporting her over to the helicopter as carefully as possible. Once they have taken off, the medic turns his attention to the driver of the vehicle who has also been extracted by the firemen.

By this time, the backup ambulance has arrived and has already begun transporting the elderly man on the ground into their vehicle to bring him to the hospital. With his assistant at his side, the medic braces the

driver of the vehicle as they move him over to their backboard and quickly walk him to their ambulance to rush him to the emergency room. Once the man is put inside, the medic glances over to the children who were in the same vehicle, still watching their dad as he is hauled off to be saved (M. Helmkamp, personal communication, October 26, 2011).

### In the Blink of an Eye

Overhearing the radio calling out for an airship to the 29 Palms vicinity, a flight medic, his assistant, and a pilot quickly pack up their gear and bolt to their helicopter, anticipation running high. As they depart from the helipad and make way toward the higher desert, they overhear CommCenter relaying that they are en route to a trauma patient with extensive bleeding to the head in an overturned vehicle. With this knowledge in mind, they prepare themselves for what lies ahead both mentally and physically. They catch each other breathing in deep and letting it out slowly, realizing the *nonverbal communication* indicating that they are attempting to calm themselves down before the event that lies ahead (Adler and Proctor, 2011, p. 200)..

*Nonverbal communication* is where messages are expressed with *nonlinguistic means* such as sighs of relief, laughter, and the volume of one's voice (p. 200). These are used in everyday life whether one likes it or not, and is quite advantageous for one to realize the meaning of each different expression.

As they reach their destination, the pilot begins circling the crash site for a suitable location to land the helicopter. With no open desert or large area for them to land, they recognize that the fire captain has already begun clearing space on the highway for them to land. With telephone poles, trees, and buildings nearby, it's extremely important for the pilot to be as cautious as possible while making his descent. The fire captain has chosen a perfect spot for the helicopter to land, so they are on the ground within a matter of minutes and rushing out towards the trauma patient. Once arriving at the vehicle, the medic on the scene informs them of her current state while the flight medics utilize the *mindful listening* technique to gather all of the information completely. After the information is transferred, the flight medic and his assistant carefully transport the injured lady over to the airship while maintaining medical procedures to keep her alive. As they board back onto the helicopter, they signal for the pilot to liftoff and in seconds they are heading back toward Loma Linda where the trauma surgeons are preparing for their arrival. While on the way, they inform CommCenter of the patient's status and how they are keeping her sustained for the duration of the flight. Once this *mediated communication* is complete, they focus all their attention to the patient for the remainder of the flight (M. Helmkamp, personal communication, October 26, 2011. D. Zacks, personal communication, October 26, 2011).

Arriving at the medical facility, they are greeted by the doctors who have been awaiting their arrival and within minutes the lady is taken from the airship and brought into the hospital for immediate treatment. All the while, the flight medics make sure that the doctors are up to speed on the current situation with the lady (D. Zacks, personal communication, October 26, 2011).

In an emergency situation, where wasting time can be the deciding factor in life or death, communication is essential for ensuring the scenario is carried out quickly and effectively. Without it, the crash site would look like the phrase suggests, "a bunch of turkeys with their heads cut off." That being said, communication is our greatest tool as human beings for saving victims lives. *Communication competence*, *mediated communication*, *mindful listening*, and many, many more terms used for communication are all involved with not only emergency situations, but everyday life, and it is essential to realize it. Seeing how they can be applied during an emergency situation, it's time to move on to how they can be implemented at the hospital once all of the victims have been rescued.

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\* \* \*

Group Three (Determinators)  
Professor Gilbert  
Interpersonal Communication  
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### The Final Chapter (Chapter Three)

At the scene, the lead paramedic determines which hospital each patient should go to. Since the closest hospital in the area does not treat trauma patients, they will need to contact the area's base hospital to determine which hospital to bring the brain injury patient to. The base hospital (Eisenhower Medical Center) decides where the brain trauma patient will go, while the father, children, and the chest patient will be delivered by ambulance to the High Desert Medical Center. CommCenter dispatches each hospital informing them that an accident has occurred and the number of patients that will be arriving. Once the helicopter is in the air and on its way to Loma Linda Medical Center, the flight nurse and flight paramedic begin their assessment on the brain patient and perform any procedures necessary to keep the patient stable. At some point during their flight, the paramedic contacts the hospital to inform the emergency room about the patient's injuries, procedures that have been or will be performed and an estimated time of arrival. In this transmission, the patient's name and accident details are not shared (Zachs). From the scene to the hospital, the communication between the paramedics and the hospital staff is *mediated communication*. With the radios they are able to transmit their information about the patient to each other through technology.

Meanwhile, at the hospital, the emergency room is preparing for the arrival of the patient: gathering a team, reserving any machines and surgery rooms, and making sure the neurologist and cardiologist are available for the chest and brain patients. Upon arrival at the hospitals, there are ER nurses or doctors waiting outside with hospital gurneys. The paramedics help bring the patient to the resuscitation room and inform the team about the injuries of each patient, procedures performed on the patients, and even details about the accident. Once the paramedics give their report, they leave and there is no further communication with the hospital (Zachs, personal communication, October 26, 2011).

Through the hustle and bustle of the resuscitation room, it is important for people to *filter* out the many noises that may *distort* the messages being sent. Every five minutes a nurse calls out the vital signs, machines are beeping, people are rushing around the room, papers are shuffling, instruments are clinking against each other, and all these distractions can keep a message from being heard (Burley, 2011). Senior nurses were found to be interrupted at least 42 times an hour (Burley, 2011). This can result in *message overload*, when too many signals are being sent and the receiver is unable to distinguish what the important messages are. Message overload may hinder care professionals from doing their jobs. "In 52 percent of consultations, interruptions were disruptive enough to stop history taking entirely" (Burley, 2011).

In addition to *noise* there will be another communication problem that arises and that is the *language barrier* between non-Spanish speaking care staff and the Hispanic patient with head trauma. It is recorded that the most frequently encountered communication barrier in emergency rooms is difference in language (Burley, 2011). This is the case with 46% of patients. Strangely, the use of professional interpreters does not mitigate this problem. There is a fundamental problem between patient-practitioner confidences, which causes them to lose faith in translation.

On the other hand, sometimes there is not enough communication. After a patient has been stabilized, a doctor is required to consult with them. Only 16% of patients are given opportunities to ask questions during these sessions before the doctor rushes out to the next problem (Burley, 2011). Studies show that a consultation can last on an average of 7.5 minutes, with both a physical assessment and history taking occurring in the same sitting (Bickley and Szilagyi). This time is reduced for the elderly man with a heart condition. Studies show that practitioners attempt to accelerate consultations with those who have heart trouble sometimes even botching the history taking process due to haste (Burley, 2011). Patients complain doctors should establish greater *rappor*t with them in a time of trauma. Not showing patients that they have the time to thoroughly care

for them can lead to *disconfirming* messages.

In the resuscitation room the ER team may be able to determine what is injured by simply looking at the appearance of the body, taking vital signs, and putting in IV's. The appearance of the body can *nonverbally communicate* to the caring staff possible symptoms of a condition, disease, or determine a diagnosis of the patient. Because the chest patient is conscious, they are able to obtain history information to help complete their assessment. Along with the patient's history they need to perform a physical examination, give him oxygen, and put him on an IV and a cardiac monitor ("Chest Pains," 2011). After they have finished their own assessment on the patient, the team leader or resident shouts out any necessary procedures and/or dosages of medications needed and the nurses start performing the tasks (Carlson). Once the patient is stabilized, the chest patient will get an EKG or chest radiograph to determine what type of heart complication he has ("Chest Pains," 2011). These machines *encode* the scans into results to its operators and the doctors are able to interpret the results into a diagnosis. The EKG communicates through its images and results. Without these machines doctors would not be able to discover the cause of the patient's chest pain or if the brain patient needs to go into immediate surgery.

Finally, after all the major communication is over, the patients are attended to by their prospective specialists and all emergency personnel are gone or leaving the hospital, in walks Ms. Oprah, Shaniqua, and Destiny. Upon entering the double doors of the emergency entrance of the hospital, the ladies are a slightly loud, demanding to be attended to. The hospital security guard steps up to quiet the ladies and asks them what business they have entering through the entry marked as emergency personnel entrance only! Right away Destiny begins to get even louder, which Ms. Oprah knows would be interpreted as the beginning of an *Escalatory Conflict Spiral*, meaning that it could lead to a full-fledged battle. So, Ms. Oprah being well rounded in her abilities to *Communicate* takes over the *Content Dimensions* of the conversation with the security guard, thus turning it into a *Linear Communication model*; which means the conversation is now just between her and the guard exclusively. Once the *Listening Fidelity*, has reached a conclusion, the ladies are allowed to continue onward to find the head nurse or the attending physician of the patients.

Suddenly, while walking down the narrow hallway of the emergency room, Shaniqua, recognizes one of the paramedics that she assisted upon their initial arrival on the scene of the accident. "Gary," she calls out in a low and authorized voice, causing him to react with a *Confirming Communications* response. The ladies are relieved to find someone who recognizes their contributions and efforts in the most intensifying situation that they had ever been involved in. They are treated and greeted with sincere appreciation for their quick actions and utmost concern for their fellow human beings!

All of a sudden the ladies begin to weep because they see the *reflected appraisal* being conveyed in the responses of the EMT and an officer from the scene of the accident. Now filled with validation, they begin to ask questions about the injured parties, whom they cared for to the best of their individual abilities. All their concerns are met and their questions are answered. Now, all three of the ladies are able to carry out their plans for lunch and discuss the events of the day.

Feeling elated and exhausted, Ms. Oprah sees no reason to continue with the initial lunch conversation that she had started out to address. The ladies grow closer and all the little idiosyncrasies no longer matter, because in a pinch, she knows that she can count on her girls to come through in any situation. "Hell," she says to herself, "no one is perfect, not even me!"

Such scenarios occur on a daily basis somewhere in the country and even larger still, the world. Languages and procedures may change, but communication is always there. Most of us do not have to put much thought into the communications processes, as it comes naturally, and there are certain rules that are instilled into us from birth. For instance, we learn for the most part that it is important to follow directions from police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel in times of an emergency. This is why we pull to the right side of the road when we hear sirens and see the flashing lights. Imagine a world where we questioned their authority constantly, and didn't pull to the side, or maybe we just did it only when we felt like it. Fortunately, we do not live in such a world, and we know that sirens are a *symbol*, encoded with the message "there is an emergency, please pull to the side." Even for something as simple as sirens, the communication theory is at work.

This accident scenario shows that when communication principles are properly used, we can expect an outcome that satisfies what would be considered a well-managed situation. Granted, this was almost a "best case" scenario with not too many wrenches thrown into the gears. Any communication breakdown in a traffic accident like this could result in serious issues, even death, depending on the communicator's role. Regardless, we can see the importance of how these communication principles are applied and can make disasters seem more like well-oiled machines. Being aware of the communication processes and consciously understanding how they work will help us integrate enriching communication practices into our personal lives and thereby make an otherwise chaotic world a little easier to live in.

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