

COMM 510
Seminar in Personal Relationships:
The “Dark Side” of Communication
Spring, 2008

Thursday, 6-9pm, LA 303
CRN # 32975

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10-11 and Thursday 1-2 + by appointment

Course Overview

Although our personal relationships are certainly the source of vast degrees of comfort, support, joy, passion, love, and general “brightness” and “lightness,” not everything is as it seems. As Milan Kundera (1984) famously suggested, the lightness of our life experiences (especially those related to our relationships) can have dual meanings. Whereas lightness can imply contentment, relaxation, weightlessness, or illumination, it can also mean that life experiences are fleeting and often absent of meaning. The “Lightness of being,” wrote Kundera, is thus unbearable. Our relationships are full of such tricky and complicated experiences, and this seminar is designed to help us explore them.

The seminar revolves around the general “Dark Side” metaphor of relating, which refers to the paradox that our closest, most valued relationships are simultaneously the source of the most negative, insulting, nasty, hurtful, dangerous, purposely vague, and generally mean behavior people that people are capable of enacting. On the other hand, sometimes those behaviors that we would place in “the dark side” of relating can sometimes serve useful, beneficial, and objectively (or at least subjectively) positive outcomes. Furthermore, what we would often think are positive behaviors can have some very negative impacts on our selves, relationships, and relational partners. Of course, the dark side can also refer to what we don’t actually know about communication in personal relationships. As Donald Rumsfeld once said at a Defense Department news briefing on February 12 in 2002, *“As we know, there are known knowns, there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know.”*

Thus, among the topics discussed in this seminar, we’ll be attempting to illuminate the dark “known unknowns” and “unknown unknowns” in your MA program, and perhaps darken the “known knowns” a bit – our metaphor suggests that they are not as we think they are. Less abstractly, the seminar is oriented toward assisting your progress toward the M.A. degree. I mean that you will have the opportunity to: Learn about a sizeable group of researchers in the communication discipline, engage in scholarly discussions about theory and research; develop new ideas and engage in the process of research; enhance your ability to critically analyze theory and research; and learn how to overcome challenges of the research process. Specifically, this seminar will provide you with an overview of the major topics and issues surrounding the dark side of interpersonal/relational communication, assist you in developing questions about the dark side of relational communication, and help you construct a research project that you could eventually present at a professional conference.

Required Course Readings

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (Eds.). (1998). *The dark side of close relationships*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (Eds.). (2007). *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (2nd Ed). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Other readings available on CD.

Assignments

Some scholars argue that relationships are built and maintained most effectively through everyday conversation and participation in routine activities. My philosophy on education is that individuals learn more efficiently, effectively, and permanently when they remain active in their relationship with their course content. Thus, your coursework will involve a combination of several regularly submitted assignments.

Participation and Discussion 100 points

Graduate seminars are typically organized and conducted differently from undergraduate courses. Specifically, graduate students spend little time listening to lectures and much more time reading and analyzing course materials, participating in thoughtful and focused discussion about the material, and synthesizing old and new ideas. In hopes of fulfilling these goals, your ***weekly*** responsibility is to bring to class ***a one-two page reflection paper*** on the readings. Your reflection paper can deal with any number of issues that may include (but should not be limited to): Discussion about questions and/or issues that the article raises; a critique about the method and/or theoretical assumptions in the piece; an application of the ideas and/or research results to “real-life” relationship issues; or factual questions you may have about the work. You’ll be expected to discuss issues related to each others’ reflection papers in class. This part of your grade will be based upon the quality and quantity of your participation, as evidenced by the thoughtfulness of your reflection papers and active discussion during the seminar meetings.

Discussion facilitation 100 points

Each student will facilitate the discussion for the assigned readings for one or two days during the semester. The specific dates will be chosen during the first class. As a discussion leader, your responsibility is to provide a typed outline of the main points of the readings, and then present and integrate the main ideas in a way that promotes active discussion among the class. Three ways that you can promote discussion include (but are not limited to): assigning a few different readings for the class; developing an inter-active activity related to the material; and/or preparing 3-5 discussion questions for your colleagues to consider and discuss. The latter is very similar to what a round-table facilitator would do at a professional conference. This part of your grade will be determined by the thoroughness of the summary outline, the energy with which the discussion was facilitated, and your command of the topic.

Research Proposal Total point value: 150 points

I would like you to leave this class with more than an esoteric collection of thoughts and beliefs about personal relationships, so this assignment is designed to promote your entrance into the communication discipline. The paper will take place in four parts: the significance statement, the review of literature, the method proposal, and the final submission.

The significance statement 25 points

The purpose of this paper is convince your readers that your topic is important and worthy of research. While it might be tempting to say that some issue is important to investigate and discuss because nobody has done so before, few scholars will find that argument convincing. Instead, you should try to frame the importance of knowledge on a particular issue in terms of: (a) its potential to help people, (b) its ability to fill “gaps” in current knowledge about the issue, (c) its contribution to the field overall, or (d) its ability to advance related theoretical work.

Begin your paper with a strong opening statement (about one paragraph) that indicates what it is that you are interested in examining, and specifies your position on the topic. Once you’ve made your points, provide a single clear statement indicating the intent of your study. Underline or italicize your purpose statement (e.g., “*The purpose of this project is to...*”). Once you’ve clarified your position and purpose, go on to convince your readers that the topic is important to investigate and discuss.

The Review of Literature 50 points

The purpose of the literature review is to discuss previous research on your topic in such a way that your readers: (a) understand the history of research on this topic, (b) are familiar with the major issues surrounding research on the topic, and (c) are convinced that new research should be conducted. You can include in your review actual research reports, theoretical proposals or critiques, and/or other literature reviews (Communication Yearbook is dedicated to publishing reviews of research and is thus a good source to consult for ideas and examples of excellent literature reviews). The essence of the literature review is synthesis and integration of ideas. That is, the literature should be reviewed in such a way that the connections between the articles and ideas are obvious to the reader. Some organizing patterns used in literature reviews include: chronological order (good to use when tracing the development of research on the topic), general to specific order (good to use when using theory to drive specific predictions about a specific issue), comparison/contrast (good to use when illustrating divergent perspectives on a topic), methodological focus (good to use if you will use a novel method to investigate your topic), and topical order (most common organization pattern – good to use when building up to a specific prediction or research question). See me for more information on any of these organization patterns or for further questions about writing a literature review. I also have a couple of chapters on reading/writing quantitative and qualitative research reports. See me if you would like to copy them.

Regardless of the organization pattern you choose, your review should logically lead up to a specific question (i.e., a research question) and/or prediction (i.e., a hypothesis) that could be examined using a specific research method. Hence, the third paper is a proposal of a study that you might conduct in the near future.

Method proposal 50 points

Although the predominance of research on personal relationships is conducted using quantitative methods, qualitative research is becoming increasingly common. You are free to propose using any type of research method you want, provided that you have good reason to support your choice. My philosophy is that your choice should be based on how you will best be able to fulfill your purpose stated in your significance statement and on which method will best help you answer your question – not on subjective thoughts and evaluations such as “I hate statistics,” or “I am a quantitative/qualitative researcher.”

That being said, your method section should have roughly four sub-sections: (a) an introduction describing the general methodological approach and why that approach was selected, (b) who will participate in the study and how those participants will be collected (Labeled “*Participants*”), (c) the instruments that will be used (labeled “*Instruments*”), where you describe the questionnaires or interview schedule that you will use if you are using them (Note: If you are proposing a qualitative study, this is the section in which you would describe your “*position*” and role that you propose taking in the field [i.e., what relationships will you share with the cultural members? Will you be a complete observer, complete participant, or participant-observer?]), and finally, (d) a description of the procedures (labeled “*Procedures*”) that you will use to answer your research question, test your hypothesis, and ultimately accomplish your stated goal(s). End your method section with a summary of how your proposed method will help you accomplish your stated purpose.

While this is only a *proposal* (you won’t actually be conducting the study), my hope is that you will be able to turn this in to a study within the next year (perhaps in an independent study with me, Alan, or Christina, or for use as your thesis). Doing so would allow you to present your paper at a professional conference, which looks good on your resume if you are interested in a professional position (it shows your ability to organize, manage, and present major projects), and absolutely necessary if you are interested in applying to Ph.D. programs and teaching.

Final Submission 25 points

Revise your previous submissions and combine them into one paper. Bring them to class and present your proposal to the class.

A note about submitting papers

All aspects of the paper must be written in APA style. This includes proper margin measures, a cover page, and proper font style (12-point Times New Roman), in addition to proper in-text and bibliographic citation style.

An extension to the course assignment

Some of you may be interested in going further with your studies, and may have an interest in not just proposing a study, but actually collecting data on it. If this is the case, you might wish to pair up with another person and conduct a full research project in lieu of doing the project above by yourself. I will help you with the IRB proposal and data analysis, of course, and you should contact me so that we can modify your submission time-line.

Course Calendar and Readings

PDF = Reading available as a PDF file given to you on the course CD

‡ = Reading available as a photocopy in the main office

All others are in your required texts.

Week 1: Overview of the Dark Side

- Duck, S. (1994). Stratagems, spoils, and a serpent's tooth: On the delights and dilemmas of personal relationships. In W. R. Cupach and B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 3-24). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. ‡
- Spitzberg, B.H., & Cupach, W.R. (1998). Dusk, detritus, and delusion: A prolegomenon to the dark side of close relationships. In B.H. Spitzberg & W.R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. xi-xxii). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (2007). Disentangling the dark side of interpersonal communication. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (2nd ed., pp. 3-28). Mahwah, NJ: LEA
- Kowalski, R. M. (2001). Aversive interpersonal behaviors: On being annoying, thoughtless, and mean. In R. M. Kowalski (Ed.), *Behaving badly: Aversive behaviors in interpersonal relationships* (pp. 3-25). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. PDF

Week 2: On the Paradoxes of Personal Relationships

Facilitated by _____

- Rook, K. S., & Pietromonaco, P. (1987). Close relationships: Ties that heal or ties that bind? In W.H. Jones & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Advances in personal relationships* (pp. 1-35). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press. PDF
- Felmlee, D. (1998). Fatal attractions. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 3-32). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Le Poire, B. A., Hallet, J. S., & Giles, H. (1998). Codependence: The paradoxical nature of the functional-afflicted relationship. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 153-176). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Wegner, D. M., Lane, J. D., & Dimitri, S. (1994). The allure of secret relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 287-300. PDF

Week 3: Deception

Facilitated by _____

- LaFollette, H., & Graham, G. (1986). Honesty and intimacy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 3(1), 3-18. PDF
- Knapp, M. L. (2006). Lying and deception in close relationships. In A. L. Vangelisti, and D. Perlman (Eds.). *The cambridge handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 517-532). New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press. ‡
- Cole, R. (2001). Lying to the one you love: The use of deception in romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 18, 107-129. PDF
- Zhou, L., Burgoon, J. K., Zhang, D., & Nunamaker, J. F. (2004). Language dominance in interpersonal deception in computer-mediated communication. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 20, 381-402. PDF

Week 4: Relational Transgressions

Facilitated by _____

This week: Discuss your research proposal idea

Metts, S. (1994). *Relational transgressions*. Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. ‡

Kowalski, R. M., Walker, S., Wilkinson, R., Queen, A., & Sharpe, B. (2003). Lying, cheating, complaining, and other aversive interpersonal behaviors: A narrative examination of the darker side of relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 20(4), 471-490. **PDF**

Levitt, M. J., Silver, M. E., & Franco, N. (1996). Troublesome relationships: A part of human experience. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 13(4), 523-536. **PDF**

Jones, W. H., Moore, D. S., Schratte, A., & Negel, L. A. (2001). Interpersonal transgressions and betrayals. In R. M. Kowalski (Ed.), *Behaving badly: Aversive behaviors in interpersonal relationships* (pp. 233-256). Washington, DC: APA. **PDF**

Week 5: Responding to Transgressions: Revenge and Forgiveness

Facilitated by: _____

Due: Significance Statement

Yoshimura, S. M. (2007). The communication of revenge: On the virtues, viciousness, and vitality of vengeful behavior in interpersonal relationships. In B. H. Spitzberg and W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (2nd ed.) (pp. 277-296). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Yoshimura, S. (2007). Goals and emotional outcomes of revenge activities in interpersonal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 24(1), 87-98. **PDF**

Kelly, D. (1998). The communication of forgiveness. *Communication Studies*, 49(3), 255-271. ‡

Kelley, D. L., & Waldron, V. R. (2006). Forgiveness: Communicative implications for social relationships. In C. S. Beck (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 30* (pp. 303-341). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers. ‡

Week 6: Jealousy and Envy

Facilitated by: _____

Guerrero, L. K., & Andersen, P. A. (1998). The dark side of jealousy and envy: Desire, delusion, desperation, and destructive communication. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 33-70). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Guerrero, L. K., Spitzberg, B. H., & Yoshimura, S. M. (2004). Sexual and emotional jealousy. In J. Harvey, A. Wenzel, & S. Sprecher (Eds.), *Handbook of sexuality in close relationships* (pp. 311-345). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. ‡

Fleischmann, A. A., Spitzberg, B. H., Andersen, P. A., & Roesch, S. C. (2005). Tickling the monster: Jealousy induction in relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(1), 49-73. **PDF**

White, J. B., Langer, E. J., Yariv, L., & Welch, J. C., IV. (2006). Frequent social comparisons and destructive emotions and behaviors: The dark side of social comparisons. *Journal of Adult Development*, 13(1), 36-44. **PDF**

Week 7: Unrequited Love, Lust, and Pursuit

Facilitated by _____

Bratslavsky, E., Baumeister, R. F., & Sommer, K. L. (1998). To love or be loved in vain: The trials and tribulations of unrequited love. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 307-326). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Cupach, W. R., & Spitzberg, B. H. (2004). Unrequited lust. In J. Harvey, A. Wenzel, & S. Sprecher (Eds.), *Handbook of sexuality in close relationships* (pp. 259-286). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. ‡

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (2007). The state of the art of stalking: Taking stock of the emerging literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior: A Review Journal*, 12, 64-86. PDF

Spitzberg, B. H. (2002). The tactical topography of stalking victimization and management. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 3, 261-288. PDF

Week 8: Insults and Teasing

Facilitated by _____

Due: Literature Review

Kowalski, R. M. (2007). Teasing and bullying. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (2nd ed., pp. 169-197). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Harris, M. B. (1993). How provoking!: What makes men and women angry? *Aggressive Behavior*, 19(3), 199-211. PDF

Preston, K., & Stanley, K. (1987). "What's the worst thing . . . ?" gender-directed insults. *Sex Roles*, 17(3-4), 209-219. ‡

Kowalski, R. M. (2000). "I was only kidding!": Victims' and perpetrators' perceptions of teasing. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(4), 231-241. PDF

Week 9: The Dark Side of Social Perceptions

Facilitated by: _____

Sillars, A. L. (1998). (Mis)Understanding. In B.H. Spitzberg & W.R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 73-102). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Knobloch, L. K. (2007). The dark side of relational uncertainty: Obstacle or opportunity? In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (2nd ed., pp. 31-59). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Murray, S. L., Bellavia, G. M., Rose, P., & Griffin, D. W. (2003). Once hurt, twice hurtful: How perceived regard regulates daily marital interactions. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 84(1), 126-147. PDF

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Griffin, D. W. (1996). The benefits of positive illusions: Idealization and the construction of satisfaction in close relationships. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 70(1), 79-98. PDF

Week 10: Spring Break: March 26th – March 30th

Week 11: The Dark Side of Organizations

Facilitated by: _____

Due: Method Proposal

Lutgen-Sandvik, P., Tracy, S. J., & Alberts, J. K. (2007). Burned by bullying in the american workplace: Prevalence, perception, degree and impact. *Journal of Management Studies*, 44(6), 837-862. **PDF**

Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-sandvik, P., & Alberts, J. K. (2006). Nightmares, demons, and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 20(2), 148-185. **PDF**

Corley, M. C., & Goren, S. (1998). The dark side of nursing: Impact of stigmatizing responses on patients. *Scholarly inquiry for nursing practice*, 12(2), 99-118. **PDF**

Bratton, V. K., & Kacmar, M. (2004). Extreme careerism: The dark side of impression management. In R. W. Griffin & A. M. O'Leary-Kelly (Eds.). *The dark side of organizational behavior* (pp. 291-308). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ‡

Week 12: The Dark Side of Families

Facilitated by: _____

Eckstein, N. (2007). Adolescent-to-parent abuse: Exploring the communicative patterns leading to verbal, physical, and emotional abuse. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (2nd ed., pp. 363-388). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Stafford, L., & Dainton, M. (1994). The dark side of "normal" family interaction. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 259-280). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA. ‡

Morr Serewicz, M. C. (2006). The difficulties of in-law relationships. In D. C. Kirkpatrick, S. Duck, & M. K. Foley (Eds.), *Relating difficulty: The processes of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 101-118). Mahwah, NJ: LEA. ‡

Tooley, G. A., Karakis, M., Stokes, M., & Ozanne-Smith, J. (2006). Generalising the cinderella effect to unintentional childhood fatalities. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 27(3), 224-230. **PDF**

Week 13: Secrets, Gossip, and Misinformation

Facilitated by: _____

Afifi, T, Caughlin, J., & Afifi, W. (2007). The dark side (and light side) of avoidance and secrets. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (2nd ed., pp. 61-92). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Foster, E. K., & Rosnow, R. L., (2006). Gossip and network relationships. In E. K. Foster, and R. L. Rosnow (Eds.). *Relating difficulty: The processes of constructing and managing difficult interaction* (pp. 161-180). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers. ‡

Caughlin, J. P., Afifi, W. A., Carpenter-Theune, K. E., & Miller, L. E. (2005). Reasons for, and consequences of, revealing personal secrets in close relationships: A longitudinal study. *Personal Relationships*, 12(1), 43-59. **PDF**

Chovil, N. (1994). Equivocation as an interactional event. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 104-123). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA. ‡

Week 14: Revisiting the Dark and Light Sides of Communication in Relationships

Facilitated by: _____

Due: Final submission

Rook, K. S. (1998). Investigating the positive and negative sides of personal relationships: Through a lens darkly? In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 369-394). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (1994). Dark side dénouement. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 315-320). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA. ‡

Week 15: Course project presentations