

Paper - On The Edge

By ~~Neil Fisher & Alexandra Belling~~

CI

✓ More dramatic hook needed

✓ Avoiding conflict by student needs to be more thoroughly discussed in CI

Suggestion - Personality Styles (Myers-Briggs)

- Promote or talk up the project - the difficulty of the project & impact of project on future

→ Suggestion - Explain project in more detail

✓ Unclear that the 1st advisor (pg 1, 3rd paragraph) is not Dr. Littlewood - clarify

Teaching Notes

✓ Shorten overview

→ Was the coding a minor or major problem?

✓ Is negotiation strategies necessary?

✓ Consider emotional side in more detail.

✓ Reword objectives as they too closely match questions

✓ Question 3 (part B) is problematic. Student may not know answer. May want to reword it to student's perception.

✓ Some questions are redundant.

Ex Q 5 is similar to Q 1

✓ Change questions from yes/no questions (ex. does, can) to what, how, when etc.

Ex Q.3 - Ask students to describe sources of power

Ex. If keep yes/no style, add that the student should substantiate their response.

✓ Make sure you answer questions. Question 1 a is not answered in TN

Date: April 22, 2014
To: Timothy Brotherton, Editor of the Journal of Critical Incidents
From: CI Authors – On the Edge
Subject: Response to reviewer comments received at the 2014 SCR conference

Please find below a listing of the comments for the “On the Edge” Critical Incident from the SCR conference session and an explanation of how each comment was addressed.

Critical Incident comments

Comment 1: More dramatic hook needed

Author’s Response: We have added a paragraph to the beginning of the incident to describe the sense of dread that the main character, Lisa, was experiencing as she climbed the stairs to meet with her adviser. For your convenience, that paragraph is pasted below:

2009
I had climbed these stairs countless times during my four years of graduate school, usually two at a time with little effort. But this time the journey up the stairs seemed to take forever. My heart was beating out of my chest, I was short of breath, and I knew that it had nothing to do with physical exertion. It had everything to do with an ominous message from my adviser and a looming sense of dread.

Comment 2: Avoiding conflict by student needs to be more thoroughly discussed in CI. Meeting attendees suggest that Personality Styles (Myers-Briggs) of both the professor and the student be discussed.

OK
Author’s Response: We have added a paragraph describing the main character’s personality (i.e., high Agreeableness on the Big 5 and preference for Feeling over Thinking on the MBTI) and how the conflict affected her in other ways (e.g., difficulty with sleep and concentration). The main character was uncertain of the personality traits of her professor and did not feel comfortable speculating about how he would score on the MBTI, for example.

Comment 3: Promote or talk up the project – the difficulty of the project and the impact of the project on future. Meeting attendees suggest explaining the project in more detail.

OK
Author’s Response: We have added additional details to emphasize the importance of the research project and the gravity of the stakes for both Lisa and Dr. Littlewood. Lisa needed the paper to get published so that she could be competitive on the academic job market, whereas Dr. Littlewood was spending most of his research budget on Lisa’s salary to complete the work, which represented a huge commitment of resources over nearly a year to collect and code all of the data. Due to confidentiality concerns, however, we are not able to provide any more specific details of the content of the project.

Comment 4: Unclear that the 1st advisor (page 1, 3rd paragraph) is not Dr. Littlewood – clarify

OK **Author's Response:** We have added several sentences to clarify that Dr. Littlewood is different from the advisor at the first institution and that the main character specifically sought to work with Dr. Littlewood when she transferred to the new school because Dr. Littlewood was perceived to be more friendly and cooperative than her previous advisor.

Teaching Note Comments

Comment 5: Shorten overview

OK **Author's Response:** The overview has been shortened to briefly describe the nature of the incident and to specify the concepts the incident illustrates and the courses in which its use would be most appropriate.

Comment 6: Was the coding a minor or major problem?

Should this be addressed in the teaching note? **Author's Response:** The accuracy of the coding was a major problem. To clarify that point, which contextualizes the gravity of the stakes in the conflict, we have added additional detail to the response to Question #5 under Learning Objective 4 in the teaching note. For your convenience, that information is pasted below:

Because Lisa was in such a low-power situation, she needed to be diplomatic in her response while still in Dr. Littlewood's office. The primary issue of the dispute was the accuracy of the coding, which was important because inaccurate coding could have threatened to undermine the validity of the research results. Granted, if the coding was, in fact, inaccurate, Dr. Littlewood could have accepted some of the blame by admitting that the coding rubric was too ambiguous to interpret or that he had not spent enough time training Lisa. To place the blame on Lisa, Dr. Littlewood had to conclude (and perhaps convince himself) that the problems with the coding were the result of her lack of effort.

Thus, Lisa's goal should be to defuse the volatility of the situation without conceding a lack of effort on her part. She should point out that she did work hard coding that data and emphasize that she will do everything in her power to go back and fix any mistakes which were made in the process. One example of something that she could say is, "Dr. Littlewood, I am deeply sorry if there are mistakes in the data I coded. As you know, there were ____ number of participants and coding it took me six weeks. That said, I pride myself on doing quality work and if you will kindly let me know what the problems are, I will fix them immediately. Again, I am sorry for any coding problems."

Comment 7: Are the negotiation strategies necessary?

Author's Response: We believe that discussing a negotiation strategy is relevant because Lisa appears to be at risk of being kicked out of the program and she needs to consider what options she has. Assuming that a follow-up meeting will eventually take place, Lisa needs to prepare for that meeting. Even if Lisa apologizes and provides concrete suggestions to reassure Dr. Littlewood that something similar will not happen in the future, Dr. Littlewood may still not be completely satisfied and may want to press Lisa or even suggest that they not work together anymore. At this point, Lisa would want to at least identify a good alternative (i.e., "best alternative to negotiated agreement" or BATNA), such as switching advisers, in case she and her adviser cannot reach a common understanding and repair their relationship. Identifying and signaling her BATNA to Dr. Littlewood without coming across as threatening will require tact and preparation consistent with the development of a negotiation strategy.

Comment 8: Consider emotional side in more detail.

Author's Response: We have added discussion in the answer to Question #8 that explores the emotional side of this conflict – and the underlying issues that fuel those emotions – in greater detail. For your convenience, that discussion is pasted below:

One competency that would serve Lisa well in this situation is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a person's ability to recognize and manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Salovey & Grewal, 2005). In such a heated situation, Lisa would do well to recognize that both she and her advisor are very upset and probably not in a good position to talk. Research suggests that individuals' self-awareness of their emotional state is critical to their effectiveness in organizations, because they will be able to self-edit before they cross the line and say something that they would later regret (Geddes & Callister, 2007).

It may be valuable for instructors to discuss the emotional side of this conflict in more detail. In particular, students should understand that the intensity and immediacy of the anger felt by both Lisa and Dr. Littlewood reflected underlying issues far beyond a dispute over the accuracy of coding. For Lisa, who had already committed four years to working with Dr. Littlewood as a graduate student and who had poured her time and energy into collecting and coding the data for this project, Dr. Littlewood's accusations may have been interpreted as an attack on her identity as a scholar and integrity as a worker. Dr. Littlewood, in turn, may have attributed Lisa's coding to a lack of effort and disrespect of him as her supervisor. Thus, much like a doctor tries to diagnose the underlying, sometimes distal root causes of a patient's pain, instructors should help students to analyze the underlying issues that fuel the emotions in a dispute.

Comment 9: Reword objectives as they too closely match questions.

Author's Response: This has been done by rewording several objectives and questions. For your convenience, we have pasted the new learning objectives and questions below.

Learning Objective #1: Students will analyze and critique supportive methods of communication which could be used by Lisa to resolve the incident.

1. What style of communication can Lisa use to increase her chances of resolving the dispute with Dr. Littlewood?

Learning Objective #2: Students will identify and contrast conflict resolution strategies which could be used by Lisa to attempt to resolve the situation.

2. How might Lisa go about attempting to resolve the conflict between herself and Dr. Littlewood?

Learning Objective #3: Students will analyze how power effects the situation described within the incident.

3. What are Dr. Littlewood's sources of power in this situation?

4. What, if any, sources of power does Lisa have?

Learning Objective #4: Students will analyze and evaluate strategies which individuals in a low power situation can use to deal with entities that possess high levels of power.

5. What is the proper response option for Lisa while still sitting in Professor Littlewood's office? Do her response options change a bit once she has left the office and both she and Dr. Littlewood have had time to calm down and process the situation further?

6. What strategies can Lisa use to negotiate with Dr. Littlewood to try to repair their working relationship?

7. How should Lisa go about setting up the follow-up meeting with Dr. Littlewood? What should she say during the meeting?

Learning Objective #5: Students will identify and apply emotional competencies that can facilitate effective management of difficult situations such as the one presented in the incident.

8. How can Lisa manage both her emotions and the emotions of Dr. Littlewood over the next few days to increase her chances to resolve the situation?
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Comment 10: Question 3 (part B) is problematic. Student may not know answer. May want to reword it to the student's perception.

Author's Response: Per the suggestion, we have reworded Question 3 to focus on Dr. Littlewood's sources of power. The question now reads "What are Dr. Littlewood's sources of power in this situation?"

Comment 11: Some questions are redundant. For example, Q5 is similar to Q1.

Author's Response: Question 1 now reads "What style of communication can Lisa use to increase her chances of resolving the dispute with Dr. Littlewood?" Conversely, Question 5 reads "What is the proper response option for Lisa while still sitting in Professor Littlewood's office? Do her response options change a bit once she has left the office and both she and Dr. Littlewood have had time to calm down and process the situation further?"

This wording change reflects the distinction between the two questions. Question 1 now addresses style of communication (i.e. supportive versus combative), whereas Question 5 seeks to focus students' attention on the exact responses that Lisa might consider. While they are related, we believe that the two questions get at different issues.

Comment 12: Change questions from yes/no questions (ex. Does, can) to what, how, when, etc.

Ex. Q3 – Ask students to describe sources of power

Ex. If keep yes/no style, add that students need to substantiate their response

Author's Response: Question 1 has been reworded so it is no longer repetitive with Question 5. Question 3 has been reworded to address sources of power. And Question 8 has been modified to ask how Lisa can best manage her emotions to increase her chances of resolving the dispute. Based on our review, these were the only questions in the teaching note for which students may have previously been able to provide a "yes/no" answer.

Comment 13: Make sure you answer questions. Question 1a is not answered in Teaching Notes.

Author's Response: Question 1 has been rewritten to read "What style of communication can Lisa use to increase her chances of resolving the dispute with Dr. Littlewood?" We have also updated our response accordingly.