

## Communication Rules in *Donahue* Discourse

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In the past several years, analysts of communication have been using and developing a rules approach (e.g. Hymes, 1962, 1972; Cushman and Whiting, 1972; Sanders and Martin, 1975; Cushman and Pearce, 1977; Shimanoff, 1980; Sigman, 1980; Cronen, Pearce, and Harris, 1982; Cushman, Valentinsen, and Dietrich, 1982). And several research programs have emerged from this perspective (e.g. Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Philipsen, 1975, 1976; Pearce and Conklin, 1979; Cronen, Pearce and Snavely, 1979; Katriel and Philipsen, 1981; Enninger, 1984; Nofsinger, 1976; Hawes, 1976). At the same time, however, critics of the rules perspective have labeled the approach as "broad, grossly diffuse, and imprecisely articulated" (Delia, 1977, p. 54), as "devoid of specific theoretical substance" (Delia, 1977, p. 54) and as in dire need of "descriptive and interpretive work" (Hawes, 1977, p. 66). One way of responding to these charges is through empirical work that is theory driven. In what follows, I will present an ethnographic report of communication in a prominent American scene as a way of developing communication theory from a rules perspective.

I begin by introducing two modes of analysis used herein as a way of contextualizing the inquiry. These perspectival "moves" suggest a way to unravel some of the general functions of communication through the use of distinctive theoretical models. The two general types of models can be called source models and analytical models (Harré, Clarke, and De Carlo, 1985). The inquiry that follows de-

rives primarily from a *source model*, a way of viewing communication that uses a game metaphor, and searches the common conventions that are creatively played or employed (Harré, et al., 1985; Whitgenstein, 1958; Cushman, 1982; Stewart, 1983). As such, the focal concerns are the generative *agreements* that guide coordinated communication conduct. Such inquiry is well-adapted for questions of meanings and motives, e.g. what is the common meaning of this activity? and, why do persons communicate in this fashion? The general goal served in using the source model is the explanation of human conduct through a formulation of communication rules (cf Hymes, 1962).

The use of source models is distinct from, and complementary to the use of *analytical* models (Harré, Clark, and De Carlo, 1985). The latter treats communication as drama, as a flow of event and episodes that has identifiable shapes and functions (Burke, 1965, 1968; Hymes, 1972). As such, the focal concern is the flow of communication processes, of proper enactments that mold social action around common goals. This type of inquiry addresses questions of the sort: in what fashion do persons communicate? how are communicative acts performed? what gets accomplished socially when people speak? The general goal is the discovery, description, and interpretation of identifiable shapes and functions of communication conduct. Where analytical models highlight the appropriate forms and functions of speaking, source models highlight its generative meanings and motives.

Throughout the following, I am primarily abstracting communication rules that generate social conduct. It is a source model of rules that informs the primary analysis. Yet, I will also detail the flow of communication events that provides evidence for, and derives from, these rules. As such, the analytical model guides the description of social events negotiated through the rules. As discussed in the concluding section, I am investigating both constitutive motives for, and normative enactments of, communication.

The discussion proceeds as follows. After some very brief com-

ments on methods and the *Donahue* scene, I will demonstrate four communication rules in *Donahue* discourse. I will then explore the functioning of the rules by examining some of their broader conversational and cultural features. In the final section, I will explicate more abstractly the two types of rules abstractions that inform the report. Through this type of analysis, I hope to increase theoretical precision through the workings of empirical study. The three major purposes that motivate the inquiry are: to demonstrate how a rules approach can point to common generative agreements among participants in communication scenes; second, to demonstrate some of the conversational and cultural functions of communication rules in public discourse; and finally, to develop communication theory by discussing the nature, function, and use of two types of rules.

## Method

The following analyses are based on a three year viewing of over one hundred hours of the popular American "talk show" *Donahue*. The inquiry proceeded in three general phases. The first phase consisted of a general exploration of American communication rules that were relevant to the discourses used on *Donahue*. Data for this phase included the viewing of sixty hours of *Donahue* shows, textual analysis of transcripts from twenty-eight shows, several unstructured interviews with persons who watched, and appeared on, *Donahue*, field observations of persons watching and talking about *Donahue*, and a reading of several commentaries on American speech and life (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, 1985; Davis, 1982; Sennett, 1978; Varenne, 1977; Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka, 1981; Yandelovich, 1981; Robertson, 1980; Heath, 1983; Tocqueville, 1835/1945), and Phil Donahue's best-selling autobiography (Donahue & Co., 1981).

The second phase of analysis focused on those communication rules that are central to this report, that is, those that occurred prominently on *Donahue*. Throughout this phase of analysis, a set of rules was evaluated for its explanatory adequacy. In the final form, all of

the rules met the following criteria: 1) they were *reportable* by participants of *Donahue*, that is, participants invoked some facsimile of the communication rules as a matter of routine communication conduct; 2) they were *repeatable*, recurrent, patterns in the "talk" of *Donahue* participants; 3) they were widely *intelligible* to participants as sensible guides for spoken action, i.e. no one questioned the meaning of the rules nor their appropriateness in this context; and 4) they were invoked as *repair mechanisms* in response to problematic actions. Thus, each of the following communication rules was reported, repeated and intelligible to participants, as well as used in response to various untoward actions (cf. Hymes, 1981: 75-135; Stokes and Hewitt, 1976; Philipsen, 1975).<sup>2</sup>

Finally, after carefully refining the rules, I collected additional broadcasts of *Donahue* to test my formulations against new data. This procedure was followed until the rules exhibited a high degree of validity. Thus, the analytical procedure amounted to a form of hypothesis generation and testing that triangulated among the data and transcripts, field notes, and subsequent broadcasts of *Donahue*.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, not everyone on *Donahue* speaks in accordance with the following rules, nor does everyone testify to their value and use. Nonetheless, the following system of rules does summarize a set of agreements that has a powerful practical force in *Donahue* discourse, and it guides prominently the conversations that occur there.

## The Scene

The *Donahue* scene is orchestrated by the very popular host of the show, Phil Donahue.<sup>4</sup> The high profile of Phil Donahue was evident throughout the term of this research as he helped moderate a presidential campaign debate, was featured in the popular American television newsmagazine *60 Minutes*, and captured the attention of national newspapers especially in the movement of his nationally syndicated television show from Chicago to New York.

The *Donahue* television show is named of course after its host. Natives label the show a "talk show," a place where "talk" is shown and heard by about seven to eight million persons daily (Donahue staff, 1983; Robinson, 1982). The show recurs every weekday as the audience witnesses, what is advertised to be, "perhaps the most important television program of your day."<sup>5</sup>

*Donahue* occurs in a studio setting with guests seated on a slightly elevated stage. During the show, Donahue, microphone in hand, paces up and down the aisles giving audience members the opportunity to speak. In fact, it would be hard to dispute Donahue's claim that his show involves the audience more than any other on the air (Donahue & Co., 1981, p. 236). Further, the setting is designed for maximum audience contact. However, the participating audience is not limited to those in the studio. It also includes the caller, or those who call the show by telephone from the privacy of their home. Thus, the following rules display their practical force in discussions among Donahue, his guests, and callers, and other audience members regarding important, and often controversial issues of the day, e.g. nuclear armament, educational institutions, helping professions, atheism, parenting for peace, freeform marriage (among two men and one woman), underwater births, abortion, birth control, male go-go dancers, the coming matriarchy, dropping sperm count in men, etc.

#### Four communication rules

**Rule # 1:** In the conversations of *Donahue*, a) the presentation of "self" is the preferred communication activity, and b) statements of personal opinions count as proper "self" presentations.

The general question raised here is this: what prominent quality or qualities of persons are marked for display in public conversation? What are persons expected to display when they speak? In the *Donahue* scene, interlocutors are evaluated positively when they speak from their own personal experiences, and do so in a way that asserts their "self." The proper and preferred act for the person is "standing

up and speaking your mind." Consider the following utterances made, at a rapid pace, by a young co-ed audience member during a heated discussion about fraternities:

Co-ed: I've been speaking to some people who are in fraternities and they told me that the values they learned from fraternities are violence, vandalism, racism, homophobia, and sexism. And I was told, this was from an ex-fraternity member, that it's not "boys will be boys" and "sowing wild oats," but that it's a training ground and this behavior goes on for the rest of their lives. There are often incidents of alumni coming back chasing women into dorm rooms and standing outside doors waiting for them to come out. And I have an interesting comment...

Donahue: (interrupting) Uh, now, wait a minute. Ah, I'm impressed with your... You seem to be ready for us. (audience delighted laughter) You are who from where, may I ask?

Co-ed: My name is Sharon Markeson and I'm from Brown University and I wanna talk about good works from fraternities. There was an interesting incident during spring week-end last year at Brown. A fraternity held a marathon, a foos ball-a-thon to benefit Sojourner House, a shelter for battered women. Now, in the course of this (sarcastically) "good work," they were rating women who walked by with a score card, from their foos ball-a-thon. y'know, one to ten: in the midst of raising money for a women's shelter! And I think this totally sums up the attitude. Good works are cosmetic. They're to justify their existence to the university administration, but they're totally superficial.

(one second pause)

Donahue: Well... (hearty applause as camera scans audience members' and Donahue's delighted smiles)

What has happened here? And why has it received a positive public evaluation, i.e. applause and smiles? In this scene, a young

woman has spoken out; she has said what she wanted to say; and said it in a way that asserted her opinion. The form of this opinion is technically an argument with data, including an interview with fraternity alumni and observations of fraternity events, linked through a common vision of fraternities as animalistic, e.g. as portrayed in the *Animal House* movie, to the claim that their "good deeds" are "totally superficial." But not all opinions stated are in the form of an argument. Nor would it be proper, from the natives' view, to label such statements as "arguments." To these speakers, they are not engaged prominently in "argument," but in "communication," "being honest" and "sharing" (Katriel and Philipsen, 1981; Carbaugh, 1984, pp. 261-363). "Communication" like this from the co-ed, displays the proper enactment for "self" as a holder of opinions. Statements as these are evaluated positively for they strike a familiar chord with interlocutors who value such verbal presentations, as this one of "self"

In the context of *Donahue* conversation, "self" is a powerful symbol that signifies an independent center, somewhat bounded, that only individual acts can access, and make available to others (Carbaugh, forthcoming). The assumption that persons have a "self" pervades American discourse (Varenne, 1977; Yankelovich, 1981; Lasch, 1979), and is assumed to inhere within persons as part of the discursive consensus. So conceived, the having of "self" is a taken-for-granted (Varenne, 1977; Hopper, 1981), and forms the common *social* center from which opinions are generated, and through which statements are publicly evaluated.

As a communicative construction, however, "self" is contained less in the dermatological membranes of human organisms, and more in the spoken symbols through which persons display and evaluate their living acts. As one comes to this scene, one can witness mass communication like that of this young co-ed, where presentations of "self" are something more than individual acts; they are also social enactments that are learned and played in social scenes, and subject to the public's appraisal — be it applause or boos, and both are used. Thus, as this co-ed's speaking demonstrates, there is a social-

ly valued and applaudable form of public presentation. In this scene, it is the verbal presentation of "self"

Since "self" presentation is an assumed and valuable feature in this social conversation, the interlocutor who wants to participate verbally is faced with the task of making "self" available to other. In the *Donahue* situation, this is done prominently and preferably through statements that display uniqueness. Having experiences that are unique to "self," is part of the unspoken consensus, is a taken-for-granted, and is assumed to be an intrinsic part of the person (cf Varenne 1977). It is the public affirmation of this value that leads to the presentation of "self," sometimes in extreme forms such as gay atheists, absentee mothers (mothers who abandon their families), freeform marriages, male erotic dancers, punk rockers, etc.; i.e. persons with a unique "self" to display. Such display affirms publicly the importance of "being your own person," of expressing who "you are," and emphasizes the wide range of persons it is possible to be. So, to speak in the *Donahue* scene involves and invokes "self" as a unique speaker of opinions and experiences.

As "self" is successfully enacted, as by the co-ed above, a contribution is made not only to the topic at hand, in this case about fraternity life, but also to the proper form of public enactment, i.e. "self" presentation.<sup>6</sup> The creation and positive appraisal of such conversational accomplishments place unspoken burdens on the event as interlocutors search for something distinctive to say, attempt to then say it properly, and finally applaud the fact that such sayings have occurred and are indeed valuable. The first rule, then, when followed, 1) creates a communication scene in which persons should express "self," 2) through expressions of unique personal experiences and opinions.<sup>7</sup>

That such a communication pattern is distinctive to American society is evident from a brief look to the ethnographic literature. Other peoples, through their routine communicative enactments, construct a sense of the person less as a speaker of opinion, and more as silent thinker (Gardner, 1966; Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1985), as



a player of public roles in which individuality and uniqueness is foreign (Geertz, 1976), as a purveyor of harmonious relations in which "self" is downplayed or, if spoken, depreciated (Johnson & Johnson, 1975; Scollon & Scollon, 1981), and as a holder of social rank of which only one, or a very few, may speak publicly (Weider & Pratt, 1985). That public expression, and thus models for speakers, are so variously conceived is a testament to human diversity, and help highlight the sayings on *Donahue* as relatively individualistic, self-relexive, and loquacious (Carbaugh, forthcoming; cf. Reisman, 1974).

**Rule # 2:** Interlocutors must grant speakers the moral "right" to present "self" through opinions.

Where the first rule highlights the importance of speaking as "self" from a personal point-of-view, the second rule assures that such speakings may occur as a guaranteed "right" and privilege to those who participate in this social scene. Such a rule is no mere extension of the first, but rather marks a transition from the communicative act deemed proper individually — one thread in the conversational fabric — to a common moral premise that enables these acts and others to indeed occur — an identifiable pattern in the cloth. Consider one problematic guest on *Donahue* who repeatedly interrupted others, accused *Donahue* of asking "all of the wrong questions," associated his fellow guests, policy chiefs and officers, with "the KGB... in Russia," and criticized a woman audience member saying, "that's for a different reason lady!" As the show went on, tensions among interlocutors mounted, and a woman told the man (and he happened to be a Black man) that he was "more prejudiced than anyone else in the room," to which the audience cheered and applauded cathartically. The guest replied: "You're right!" *Donahue* asked the audience: "Do you feel better!?" And they replied in unison: "Yes!!" *Donahue* turned to his guest: "I don't think that you should be surprised that someone would call to your attention your rather negative personality. Which is still okay. This is America and you are allowed to have one." In so many words, the substance of the male guest's ribald opinions was deemed improper, but his "right" to speak them was ren-

dered proper. As Donahue said, this is "America," where persons have the "right" to so speak, even if disagreeably.

Such a rule guarantees both the moral capacity of "Self" to speak, and the availability of a public forum for being heard. It enables the person to speak indeed on any topic, no matter what the opinion might be, and no matter how disagreeable the person might be in presenting it. Such a rule was invoked tellingly during one show when Donahue interviewed an unrepentant murderer of a college professor. Donahue was asked by an audience member how he felt about the murderer appearing on his show, and he responded that he "was not happy" about the act of murder, but felt the public has a right to be informed about it. The further reasoning is that, if the public is to be informed, there is no person better able to inform than the murderer (then released from prison), who has the renewed "right" to so speak.

Rule # 3: The presentation of "self" through opinions should be "respected," that is, tolerated as a rightful expression.

While rule # 2 prescribes an obligatory moral capacity for interlocutors, enabling their voice to be stated and heard publicly, what is suggested here is the preferred tone to be maintained during the conversation. The tone could be called one of *righteous tolerance*, creating a scene where it is right and proper to tolerate a variety of viewpoints. Consider the unpopular comment made by a male: "A woman's role is a woman's and a man's is a man's!" Upon hearing this, the audience reacted with a loud "Oooohhhh!" Donahue then stated the norm, using the educational metaphor: "Class, we will show respect to all of the members." Similarly, on another occasion an audience member accused a freeform triad, a female and two male guests who were "married" to each other, of "an immoral act," to which one of the guests immediately retorted: "There may be some differences in our views of morality. I respect your views of morality and I would expect you to respect mine." In each of these cases, and others, interlocutors are co-orienting to a cultural code of

"respect," a code that suggests the proper tone for conversing with unique others.<sup>8</sup>

To enrich our understanding of the "respect" code as it is practiced here, it is necessary to examine several related discursive premises. First, "respecting" does not imply "accepting." Interlocutors can "respect" the person's "right" to speak without necessarily accepting who that person is, or the opinion he/she has just stated. Two examples of this common premise occur immediately above.

Second, speaking "respectfully" often involves an explicit lack of evaluation. Consider the mother, a guest on a show about sex and senior citizens, who said:

In our family, we don't give advice. I don't try to run my kids' lives and they don't try to run mine. They want me to be happy. And if I'm happy having an affair, they're all for it.

An audience member added: "I think that's great and, after all, who are we to condemn you people (the guests)?" And another guest added: "Right?" To which the audience member responded: "We're not God." A male guest agreed: "That's correct." And the audience applauded. In this example, a mother has stated an opinion, presented her "self," which her children and present others do not judge, just as she does not "give advice" to them. Each has the "right" to his/her own personal opinions which are *explicitly not judged*. By speaking in this non-judgmental way, a proper "respect" is shown to others; a respect that preserves the "rights" of individuals to display any opinion or experience, while protecting "self" from judgment by this-world others.

Third, as diverse opinions are presented, interlocutors are asked to "tolerate" a range of views. This is often accomplished with prefatory comments like: "I'm not going to argue with anyone's morals, but..."; "If that's what you believe fine, but..."; "You're entitled to your opinion... (and here's mine)"; "You have a right to your feeling..."; and "You have no obligation to conform..." Through this

manner of speaking, interlocutors explicitly tolerate a range of stated opinions on the current topic, many of which run counter to traditional codes of conduct, thus enacting a proper "respect" for fellow speakers.

In sum, "respect" can be heard as a communal code guiding the tone of conversation that dissociates it from agreement or acceptance, while associating it with non-judgment and tolerance. So enacted, conversants display "respect" through a tone of righteous tolerance, where it is right, and obligatory, to tolerate others' unique presentations.

Rule # 4: Asserting standards that are explicitly trans-individual, or societal, is dispreferred since such assertions are heard a) to unduly constrain the preferred presentations of "self," b) to infringe upon the "rights" of others, and c) to violate the code of proper "respect."

In a sense, this final rule adds a qualification to rule # 2. Specifically, while an interlocutor has the "right" to state any opinion, s/he should not state opinions that extend beyond "self" and potentially "impose" upon others. The rule is a practical realization of "negative face wants" in Brown and Levinson's scheme (1978): i.e. when setting an opinion, one should speak only for one's "self" and not "impose" one's opinion on others.<sup>9</sup>

This rule operates at times subtly, at others blatantly, as I hope the following examples demonstrate. During one show, a mother of five birth and five adoptive children spoke against "open adoption" (a type of adoption where "open lines of communication" are maintained between adoptive parents, biological parents, and children). She repeatedly stated her disagreement: "Open adoptions sound so good, but it's very confusing for kids..." She was saying, in effect, "open adoption" should not be an option for *anyone* in our society because it "confuses kinds" and "children should be the top priority." Donahue replied to her: "Noone is going to deny you your position, but the question is why do you impose it on others?" Donahue

began with the prefatory comment: "No one is going to deny you your position....," which functioned, in part, to affirm the woman's "right" to her *personal* opinion. But notice that her opinion was heard to be an imposition of sorts upon others. She was not saying, as Donahue, and some others would have liked for her to say: "Open adoption is not an option for me." She was saying: it should not be an "option" for anyone. Donahue reacted, therefore, by labeling her opinion as an imposition. Thus, the woman was being called to account by Donahue for "impos[ing]...on others." As such, his question evaluated negatively her more general, and non-personally stated, opinion. Through his prefatory comment and question, he granted the woman her "right" to speak, but evaluated her speaking negatively. To paraphrase Donahue: "Yes, you can say that, but it is wrong." Thus, Donahue affirmed her "right" to speak personal opinions, but denied her opinion legitimacy — as originally stated — on the more social level, despite his prefatory remark.

This framing of communicative acts through "non-impositional" or "negative face" rules is invoked on almost any topic. For example, several guests and audience members were discussing President Reagan's televised endorsement of National Bible Week. An audience member said: "I challenge everybody to name a philosophy that isn't dangerous when it is held by a majority .. I don't care what it is, as soon as the majority has the power, it is dangerous." Donahue added: "But it's not about the philosophy; it's about the possibility that the majority will assume the absolute righteousness of that philosophy [and] presume to impose it on other people..." And a gay atheist guest exclaimed: "The president has no right to endorse this [the Bible] as a moral code of the country because other people are being discriminated against because of it!" The only "majority" opinion acceptable to speak, therefore, is that which, in a polity or on a "talk show," enables all individuals to state their own opinions. What is highlighted then in speaking is the individual voice; what is hidden is the collective sayings. So conceived, proper communication enables everyone to speak individually, while disallowing one person's, or "the majority's," opinion to dominate others.

Interlocutors enforce this rule of non-imposition by co-orienting to its violation, often by framing the violation as a "self-righteous" act. This pejorative native frame is invoked to identify and broadcast an improper kind of speaking that "imposes" on other people and, therefore, does not enable them to fully exercise their "rights." Consider the woman audience member who condemned sex outside of marriage, a practice of some guests, by quoting passages from the Bible. Donahue responded to her: "The Bible says it's wrong and you cannot tell that woman [a widowed guest] she's wrong." Another audience member supported Donahue: "There's been other living patterns in the history of the world and what's right for some is not right for others. Maybe it's wrong for her [the audience member], okay, but maybe it's right for other people and we don't have a right to judge others." Donahue responded: "You have a right to your feeling about the Bible but it's wrong for you to use this book and impose your interpretation of its principles on other people. ... While you're entitled to your beliefs, it may not be right for you to impose them on others." Another audience member summed it up: "We don't have a right to be self-righteous. I think that's the worst thing we do to each other." Donahue and the other interlocutors corrected the woman's "self-righteous" speaking by using what they considered to be a superior source of data for their claim, a present widowed guest who had "intimate relations." Their redressive acts condemn the audience member's statement of absolute moral "principles," while praising the importance of personal opinions, thus guaranteeing for each person the "right" to act and speak freely and individually.

This brief "drama of living" demonstrates several of the above rules. First, interlocutors gather in this scene and engage in the preferred activity of "self" presentation, mostly through the giving of personal opinions. Second, all interlocutors co-orient to the "right" to state any and all opinions, regardless of their public evaluation. Third, the conversation displays a general dispreference for statements of absolute judgments, and a preference for statements of personal opinions. This is in part accomplished through the above statement, "Maybe it's wrong for her, okay. But maybe it's right for other people." Conversational reframing such as this functions to iden-

tify some statements as impositions, and illustrates how such statements and broad societal and public standards, e.g. "Sex outside of marriage is wrong," are dispreferred, and to become preferred, must be stated in more personal terms, e.g. "extramarital sex is not for me." Finally, the above demonstrates the negative sanctioning of impositional discourse through the native term, "selfrighteous."

There is an implicit paradox here between rule #2 and rule #4, between the "right" to speak opinions freely and the proper stating of them in a non-impositional way. In a sense the paradox involves an interaction of legal and cultural codes: the legal code giving American citizens a relatively unconstrained "right" to free expression; and the cultural code offering moral guidance for expressions deemed most proper within American social life. In the *Donahue* scene, the cultural code constrains the practice of its legal counterpart through the rules of "respect" and non-imposition.

### Conversational and Cultural Functions of the Rules

Given the above rules as generative motives in *Donahue* discourse, I now turn to a discussion of some of their functions. My purposes here are to explicate some of the conversational functions that co-occur with the social use of the rules, and to frame these within their more cultural motives and meanings.

The conversational use of these rules results in three notable accomplishments: 1) the public enactment of free expression; 2) the perpetuation of topical dissensus; and 3) the disinclination for explicitly stating public standards for (non-communication) conduct.

The combination of values in "selfpresentation," opinion-giving, "rights" for and "respect" of speaking, combine to make *Donahue* an event supporting free expression. It is here that all individuals may speak, from unrepentant murderers and gay atheists, to absentee mothers (mothers who have abandoned their families), nurses who abuse drugs, children who abuse their parents, etc. *Donahue* offers

a soap-box from which virtually any such "self" may address America. And as their voices echo across the land, free expression is witnessed.

However, as noted above, the free expressions occur in a preferred way, i.e. "self" presentation that is properly non-impositional. Thus, each participant tends to speak for his or her "self," and in so doing, conforms to the social rule for doing so. In sum, free expression and "right" to speech are experienced by these interlocutors as "freedom," but they do not entail, in this scene, freedom from all constraints. Rather, they entail freedom to speak for one's "self," as an individual, through a form that preserves for others the similar "right" (cf. Bellah, et al., 1985, pp. 27-51).

A necessary conversational outcome of the social rules is a degree of dissensus on the topics of discussion. The folk logic could be recast as follows: participants are expected to present opinions as constituents of "self"; "self" presentations are expected to reveal unique and distinctive qualities of participants; unique opinions taken severally on any topic, result necessarily in a degree of topical dissensus. No matter what the issue, from herpes to gifted children, as unique participants state their rightful opinions, and those various opinions are "respected," dissensus results. Take for example the discussion about religion and the USA when participants stated: the USA is a religious nation; the USA is not a religious nation; George Washington dealt with Moslems; President Reagan has a right to his religious beliefs as an individual; President Reagan oppresses those who believe differently from him; President Reagan is supporting discrimination by endorsing the Bible; etc. No matter what the topic of discussion, there is always room for varied opinions, and such varied statements are necessary if participants are to feel the requisite latitude for various self-expressions. What results? Dissensus. Topical dissensus.

Yet, while a dissensus on the current topic is created, there is often overlooked the consensual rules that enable the performance. It is through communicative rules such as the ones described above that participants' efforts may be coordinated meaningfully. Thus, while



participants tend to display dissensus on the content of concern. *they display consensus for a way of speaking it.* While they have not agreed generally what to say, they have agreed how they should say it.

A third consequence of these rules is a disinclination for stating public standards of (non-communication) conduct. While standards for communication conduct are indeed spoken, generally agreed upon, and used as bases for evaluation, other standards for belief, feeling, and acting are much less intelligible. What people should believe, how they ought to feel, and what is proper for them to do, are all said to be matters of *personal*, as opposed to social, judgment. As a result, given any problem for public address, various opinions are offered as responsive, with the individual person being the crucial variable in the selection of the one deemed most appropriate. Thus, any topic of social concern, from open adoption to sexually permissive senior citizens, is met with a barrage of reactions, with some perhaps more applaudable than others, but each packaged within a rhetoric of "individual choice" and personal judgment that tends to silence *shared* standards for belief, feeling, and action. As a result, participants seem to share a disinclination for the explicit speaking of common standards. What is marked for speech then is individuality more than commonality, diversity more than unity, personal more than social rules. Thus, when communication conduct is the topic of concern, consensus may be realized, but as other concerns arise, dissensus results. These preferences of personal rules for non-communication conduct, and social rules for communication conduct, are both, of course, social constructions that are constituted as interlocutors use common communication rules.

The three conversational phenomena sketched here, free expression, topical dissensus, and personal standards, all suggest cultural features in this communication. By looking at conversations as cultural performances, we may highlight their widely accessible and commonly intelligible features (Scruton 1979; Schneider 1976). I will now show how an analysis of certain cultural features mentioned above helps organize an understanding of communication rules and their conversational consequences.

A long-standing feature in cultural studies of human action is the native conception of personhood (De Laguna, 1954; Gardner, 1966; Geertz, 1976; Kirkpatrick, 1983; Harrison, 1985; Marsella, Devos, and Hsu 1985; Westen, in press). The above rules suggest the question: what, and how, are models of the person conceived and evaluated communicatively? Through the American discourse described above, a model of, and for, the person is constructed through the cultural term, "self." It is as "self" that persons are heard to speak, attempt to speak, and have a "right" to speak. As a "self," persons are asked to become aware of who they are, of the distinctive qualities that make of them a unique individual with important opinions. In the process, persons are treated as individual beings, as separate and separable entities. The "self," at least as these natives speak it, is a rather uniquely bounded thing, conceived through a container metaphor as something that may become "lost" or "found," "scattered" or "together." In short, these conversational enactments create a common sense of the person who is conceived and evaluated through native dimensions of communicativeness, awareness, and independence, respectively (Carbaugh, 1984, pp. 174-225). Such a symbolic "web" motivates persons to speak their own "minds," consciously, without "imposing" on others. Thus, one cultural feature in these conversations is the construction of a model person, in this case the "self," who is compelled to communicate, to be aware of its internal qualities, and to think and act independently.

There are important links here between the model speaker as "self" and the conversational accomplishments of free expression, dissensus, and individuality. In short, this model person is realized through free expression, is responsible for and tolerant of a degree of dissensus, and speaks the virtues of individual "choice" over majority standards. In such communication, a model for the person is displayed. As such, the accepted model for the person is intimately linked to a free, dissensual, and individual mode of public discourse. It is in this sense that conversational functions of discourse, such as free expression, dissensus, and individuality, are intimately linked to models of persons, such as "self." Considered in the abstract, ways

of speaking a language are linked intimately to ways of conceived personhood (cf. Rosaldo 1982).

Such a link can be explored further through the cultural symbols of "rights" and "respect." One's "rights," in this scene, highlight certain moral capacities of *each* participant to be uniquely "who one is," to speak one's own opinions, to separate one's acts from any and all others, and to be unimpeded by others. The exercise of these common premises is most visible in moments of free expression, as when an "absentee mother" who had left her family described her "life-long process in search of [her] self" (cf. Yankelovich, 1981). Through these shared moral premises, participants enact a sense of being a person. Such a person is suggested upon hearing the imperatives to be who one is (as opposed to being what someone else thinks you should be), to speak assertively, independently, and respectfully. To be a fully applaudable person in this scene, is to be more than a private "self," it is to be a public "self" capable of its proper and independent expression. Through the cultural symbols of "rights," and their "respect," a model for the speaker is displayed in a manner of speaking. It is partly through these co-orienting symbols of "self" and "rights" (and analogously through "individual" and "choice") that participants come to construct socially a model for the person that is accessible and acceptable to a vast audience. Such a performance shows participants a model for speaking, a model for rendering their world commonly intelligible. It is this molding and modeling of life in public communication that helps make of *Donahue* a successful cultural performance.

The cultural performance of "self," "rights," and "respect" can be summarized as a personal style of cultural communication (cf. Hymes 1972). That "self" should be displayed, that "rights" of free expression should prevail, that "respect" should be given, that one should not speak "self-righteously," are all prominent social rules constructing a way of speaking and living together. Taken severally, these rules create a personal style of communication that depends "upon the continuing response of individuals. The point of communication is to excite interest and bring together persons who will then

respond with emotion to whatever event has occurred" (Hymes 1972, pp. 47-48). Thus, this type of sociality, involving as it does conversations of free expression, dissensus, and personal standards, and cultural performances of "self," "rights," and "respect," creates, and is generated from, personal thoughts, feelings, and actions. Through such a cultural performance, interlocutors may at once display a way of speaking and being deemed favorable to them, while witnessing and applauding its collective personal force.

### Code and Normative Rules

So far, we have come to understand a way of speaking in a prominent American scene, i.e. the preference for "self" presentation, the obligatory "rights" of interlocutors, a preferred tone of "respect," and a rule of non-imposition, the breaking of which risks accusations of "self-righteousness." We have examined some of the conversational functions of the rules, and the cultural meanings and style that organize their use.

As I was formulating this report of communication rules, I soon realized that I was using two identifiable conceptualizations of communication rules, with each suggested by different communicative enactments, and each directed toward distinctive empirical claims. I will now turn to a discussion of the analytic procedures that lead to identifying two types of rules for communication inquiry.

The two general types of rules that run through the above will be called code rules and normative rules, following similar distinctions drawn by others, e.g. norms of interpretation/norms of interaction (Hymes 1972), alternation/co-occurrence rules (Ervin-Tripp, 1972), constitutive/regulative rules (Searle, 1969; Cronen et al., 1982; Sanders and Martin, 1975), and content/procedural rules (Cushman and Whiting, 1972).<sup>10</sup> It is my basic claim that a distinction in types of rules analyses is necessary for communication study, for each type raises distinctive questions, requires different abstractions, and yields complementary insights. Thus, the present discussion calls into ques-

tion Gumb's (1972) and Shimanoff's (1980) conflating of the two types.<sup>11</sup>

Both code and normative rules are alike in that they both refer to socially patterned communicative action, capture some consensual imperative for interlocutors, and have practical force in identifiable contexts. It is as such, that they both qualify as rules (cf. Shimanoff 1980; Cushman et al., 1982). Both are alike as well in that they require similar types of evidence for their construction. Specifically, at least one of the following is necessary for constructing a rule, e.g. an observed and recurrent pattern in communication, a native statement of a rule, and/or corrective actions that co-orient actors to a rule.

However, the two types of rules have distinctive qualities. Take for example code rules. It is the nature of code rules to specify patterns of meaning, or mutual intelligibility, spoken through native symbols and symbolic forms. Such rules attempt to capture a system of folk belief by interpreting the hierarchical relations between and among cultural terms and domains. This type of analysis probes the general questions: What does this native act, symbol, or symbolic form commonly mean? What does the unit of concern (act, symbol, or form) count as on another cultural level? For example, through the above rules, we came to understand how opinion-stating counts as a proper act of "self," that is, how a type of communicative act is associated with an accepted model of the person. Likewise, we came to understand how being "self-frighteous" is meaningful as an impositional and disrespectful type of speech, i.e. how a cultural symbol is linked to a way of speaking. Thus, it is through code rules that abstractions at one level, e.g. communicative acts and cultural symbols, are linked to abstractions at another, e.g. accepted models of the person and ways of speaking, respectively.

Code rules as these function in conversation to frame actions, to define contexts, to construct a coherent sense. They define the practical nature of the spoken game as it is played by interlocutors, what the game in general is, what it means to play the game, what

moves are made within the game, the meanings of each particular move, and so on. The units of analysis in the abstraction of code rules may be any cultural act, symbol, or symbolic form, most generally native terms and tropes. The unit of observation is a system of symbols, a symbolic orientation, terministic screen (Burke, 1966), galaxy, or universe (Schneider, 1976; Berger and Luckman, 1966). By examining native terms, clusters of terms, and clusters of clusters, code rules may be discovered, and their semantic forces unveiled (e.g. Seitel, 1976; Kartiel and Philipsen, 1981; Carbaugh, ms).

There is also an interactive process in conversations that code rules help us understand. Consider the cathartic exchange discussed above between the woman audience member and the man who interrupted others, imposed his position upon them, spoke to them disrespectfully, and violated their "rights." Given that he broke these rules, his interlocutors were posed with the question: what common sense is to be made of this person? Given the continuous rule violations, in what cultural frame can he be put? Following his rather untoward acts, he was negatively sanctioned by others who referred to his "negative personality." So, a symbolic resource was used here to summarize a set of instances, to render the individual's specific behaviors widely intelligible. It is in this sense that code rules erupt conversationally as bottoms-up rules; they take several concrete instances of action and place them into broader symbolic frames, in this case by subsuming untoward acts within a "negative" agent, and in others by placing several previously unnamed acts into a frame of "self-righteousness" (cf. Harré, Clark, and De Carlo 1985, pp. 20-21). Through such uses of code rules, puzzling instances are instantly rendered into coherent frames of action. This is the conversational use of code rules.

In sum, then, code rules abstract patterns of common meaning, systems of folk belief, that function to create mutual intelligibility and shared coherence in communicative action: they can be stated in the form: in context C, the unit, X, counts as meaningful on another level as y, y', ..., and they often erupt conversationally as a bottoms-up type of sense-making.

Normative rules, on the other hand, are abstractions of patterns of acting (Schneider, 1976). Normative rules involve abstractions of conduct deemed proper in identifiable contexts. Formulating such rules brings into focus sequential organization in talk; it helps delineate what acts properly initiate events, and what acts should follow others (cf. Schegloff, 1972; Philipsen, 1975). Note that normative rules involve explicit standards of appropriateness, and of evaluation, which are central criteria in discovering and specifying such rules. It is what should be done, rather than what is, that sustains a normative analysis of communication rules. Abstracting communication rules this way raises the questions: what behavioral acts are appropriate in this context? what communicative conduct is deemed proper here? Consider two examples. One, as stated above, in the context of the *Donahue* "talk show," persons should state their opinions without imposing on others. Such acts are appropriate and proper in this speech situation. In another context, called Teamsterville, it is not only appropriate but highly preferable for "a man" to punish his child nonverbally (Philipsen, 1975). Failing to comply, brings the male's social status, as "a man," into question. Such normative rules abstract patterns deemed proper in identifiable contexts.

Normative rules function to guide actions in social contexts. They derive from pre-existing templates and provide standards for judging what to do, and for evaluating whether what has been done, has been done properly. The units of analysis in formulating normative rules are the regular sequences of communicative acts deemed proper, with special attention to instances of rule-violations. Note how the "negative personality" above helped demonstrate the normative rules of "rights," "respect," and non-imposition. The unit of observation is generally a speech community whose members interact frequently and share at least one standard for social communication (cf. Enninger, 1984; Ervin-Tripp, 1972). By discovering the communicative acts deemed proper, and the sequences in which they occur, one can specify native appraisals of appropriateness through normative rules.

Where code rules surface conversationally in a bottoms-up fashion, normative rules operate prominently from the top down. Con-

sider the conversation above in which an audience member stated the very unpopular opinion: "A woman's role is a woman's and a man's a man's," to which the audience responded, "Oooohhhh!" To this, Donahue replied, "Class, we will show respect to all of the members." In his act, Donahue is legislating the normative law. He is prescribing a kind of conduct deemed proper, that is in this case a tolerant "respect." His reply functions to instruct his interlocutors in appropriate conduct and to evaluate a particular act as improper. As such, it is prescriptive in force, providing a template for the doing of future acts if they are to be considered appropriate. Stating the normative rule this way provides a pattern for future communicative acts that functions to evaluate and instruct his interlocutors. It is this legislative, top-down use that helps distinguish normative rules from code rules.

In sum, normative rules abstract patterns for acting appropriately, templates for communication, that function to instruct and evaluate social conduct. Normative rules can be stated in the form: In context C, if X do Y; and are often used conversationally to guide future action from the top down.

The relationships between normative and code rules are summarized in Table 1.

I should stress that one cannot abstract normative rules, e.g. children should address elders with respect, without also abstracting codes, e.g. what counts as an elder? Normative rules always entail the use of some constitutive codes. Likewise, code rules, e.g. in *Donahue* discourse, opinion-giving counts as "self" presentation, can be erroneously construed into normative rules, e.g. if one wants to display "self," one should give opinions. But this construal wrongly translates a constitutive definition of logical relations into an appraisal of social conduct. The two are not the same abstractions, do not point to the same types of analysis, not to the same types of conversational enactments. If we are to unravel an understanding of communication from a rules perspective, such a distinction in types of rules is warranted.



**TABLE I**  
**Code and Normative Rules**

	<i>Code Rules</i>	<i>Normative Rules</i>
Focus:	system of meaning	pattern for action
Form:	X counts as Y.	If X, do Y.
Unit of Observation:	symbol system	speech community
Unit of Analysis:	acts, symbols, forms	act sequences
Criterion:	coherence	appropriateness
Functions:	unify actions define contexts	instruct actors evaluate actions
Prominent use:	bottom up	top down

## Conclusion

The above analysis has demonstrated how a rules perspective can contribute to our understanding of situated communication conduct. More specifically, it has unveiled four rules in the communication of a prominent American media event, examined some of the conversational and cultural functions of the rules, and based on the inquiry, proposed a distinction between two types of rules for communication inquiry.

This ethnographic approach to rules research suggests several avenues for future study. Perhaps most important is the need for theory-driven, empirical studies of situated communication conduct. Such a call was made long ago by Hymes (1962, 1972), and a considerable literature has developed (Philipsen and Carbaugh, in press). Yet, what seems lacking is theoretical sophistication in our research and parsimony in our theorizing (cf. Sherzer, 1977). Two complementary means to this goal are comparative study of communication patterns, and rigorous conceptual analysis based on previous case studies (cf. Keenan, 1976; Rosaldo, 1982; Scollon and Scollon, 1981; Brietborde, 1983). The present study suggests giving more systematic attention to the construction of model persons in communication (Carbaugh, forthcoming; Chick, 1985; Scollon and Scollon, 1981), and their relations to cultural and conversational features. The questions are raised: what model(s) for the person is spoken? what premises provide for this performance? what common meanings are socially constructed? through what communicative codes, forms, and styles? By addressing these questions, we may further be able to identify what, in particular communication systems, needs to be understood, and what, in general, this tells us about communication. I hope to have contributed not only to our understanding of "self" presentations, "rights" and "respect" in some American communication, but also to an understanding of communication theory *via* the conversational and cultural functions of code and normative rules.

## Notes

- 1 The following report, as an ethnographic study of communication, meets four defining criteria. 1) it is a descriptive study of communication patterns in the context of their use, 2) it is a cultural study that organizes communication patterns in native terms, or "in terms of its own patterns" (Hymes, 1962, p. 101), 3) it is a theoretical study that uses a specialized vocabulary (Hymes, 1972) to achieve the twin goals of local theories of communication, and a grand theory of human communication, and 4) it is a comparative study that draws from the ethnographic literature (Philipsen and Carbaugh, in press) for illumination of the particularities of a case, and the generalities across cases (Hymes, 1972). While the following report uses each in varying degrees,

it is this set of attributes in descriptive, cultural, theoretical, and comparative study, that motivates this report, and makes of it an ethnographic study of communication.

- 2 Of course not all communication rules of concern to analysts fulfil all of these criteria. But the following system of rules does.
- 3 The fundamental problem addressed here is the nature and function of the rules, rather than the frequency of their use, or their distribution. However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that such a system is widely used in the heart-land of America (Hawkins, Weisberg, and Ray, 1980), across the nation in several social institutions (Coles, 1980), and readily available as a discourse for the "expressive individual" (Bellali et al., 1985). And, if I might add, the following rules have been applied in several academic discussions to legitimate the saying of virtually any opinion, whether or not it was well-grounded. In communication accomplished this way, one can hear the powerful practical force of an "ideology of non-ideology" (Weiler, 1984).
- 4 In a recent Gallup Poll, Phil Donahue was ranked second only to Walter Cronkite as most recognized media figure (Craig, 1986).
- 5 All materials quoted below and not referenced to published sources are native sayings.
- 6 On the other hand, through mere re-statements of others' opinions, or agreeing with others, one lacks full cultural status as "self," for one has replicated the beings of others without displaying an uniqueness of one's own.
- 7 Donahue preaches as much in his pre-show "pep-rallies" when he tells the audience, "I'm nothing without you," and creates a tone of "dinner table conversation" where "self" revelations are expected and accepted (Donahue wows... 1982).
- 8 A similar cultural code of "respect" has been lamented by Erwin (1983).
- 9 The "positive face" operating in this scene is "self," as summarized with rule # 1 (see Brown and Levinson (1978), and Carbaugh (forthcoming)).
- 10 Note that the former rules suggest inquiry into the semantic codes of folk logics that are used in a way of speaking; for example, the interpretations of native beliefs as enacted in speaking (Hymes, 1972); the social meanings of selections from among linguistic alternatives, be they e.g. lexical choices or choices of pronunciation, with each emailing social messages interpretable through rules of alternation (what is meant by choosing this feature of that verbal repertoire) and ("vertical") co-occurrence (what social meaning is conveyed through e.g. this act in that tone) (Ervin-Tripp, 1972), the logical links between utterances, acts, episodes, social expectations, and cultural themes (Searle, 1969; Cronen et al., 1982), and the logical links between concepts, their attributes, and their social functions in communication (Cushman and Whiting, 1972). The latter rules suggest inquiry into the norms that govern standards of appropriateness in communication; for example, norms for interaction that regulate when one may or may not interrupt another (Hymes, 1972); rules of ("horizontal") co-occurrence that specify sequential relations among linguistic items in utterances, acts, and episodes (Ervin-Tripp, 1972); and other standards for social conduct that prescribe proper sequences for spoken actions (Searle, 1969; Cronen et al., 1982; Cushman and Whiting, 1972). By following the two paths of inquiry used in the above ethnography, sketched here, and detailed below, analysis of communication rules may understand both the common standards of coherence in and of spoken actions (an organization of mutual intelligibil-

ity through common codes), and the standards for speaking appropriately (an organization of appropriate actions through norms). Both paths may be pursued independently, as in a cultural or normative analysis of communication rules, or each may be considered in relation to the other, as in communication norms from the standpoint of cultural codes, or cultural codes from the standpoint of communication norms. (The distinction introduced here, and developed below, draws upon Schneider's (1976) important discussion of culture and norm, and is analogous to, but distinct from, the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes long used in sociolinguistics.)

- 11 The discussion compares rules as abstractions from behavior. Thus, code and normative rules result from two distinctive perspectives on communication, as illustrated in Rule # 1, with each complementing the other.

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