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COMM 2100
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Ideas for Oral Presentation

Introduction:

You stand, elevated 50 feet above civilization. You peer over a vast checkerboard of streets, houses, and fields of a small and peaceful community. The breeze blows through your hair as you soak up all your surroundings, breathing in the peace and stillness that fills you to the very core. The smell of tulip bulbs and pine fill the air. Below you, a quaint city and above you, a majestic structure towering 179 feet overhead. Welcome to Temple Hill, located in Manti, Utah.

With over 200,000 visitors a year, this temple and its grounds require constant care in order to look great. We were privileged to be able to help maintain the flower beds which directly surround the temple. From this spot, we were able to observe many communication principles which we have discussed in this class. We are credible because we have lived in Manti our whole lives and have seen how great an impact this temple has on bringing people into this part of the state. You are students in a community that is directly affected by the temple. Chances are that either you or somebody that you know has been to the temple and enjoyed the beauty and tranquility that it provides. Today we will be talking about using alternatives to self-disclosure and the affects of physical setting and gender roles on communication.

Body:

Point One: There are four alternatives to self-disclosure:

1. The first alternative to self disclosure is silence. Silence takes place when you withhold your thoughts, feelings, and opinions from others, even when you are asked to disclose certain information. It can be in the best interest of both parties when silence is chosen as an alternative because complete candor may hurt the other person; whereas silence can leave the interpretation to the other person. Silence can also serve as a way to save face for both parties. One great example that we had was on the first day that we started service.

Story:

We piled into a truck and headed towards our working site. On the way, we passed many trees, and we noticed on the ground that there were pinecones which had fallen from the trees. Ken, the groundskeeper and expert on plants, turned to us and explained that we were to clean

the pinecones from the flowerbeds. A shrewd smile crossed his face as he turned to us and some of the first words we heard from him were, “So I knew a man one time, who came up here, and he saw all of these cones on the ground and asked me where all the pinecones came from. I smiled at him and told him that these were spruce trees. I laughed out loud and explained to him that these weren’t pinecones at all, but that they were spruce cones. I couldn’t believe that he couldn’t tell the difference!” He burst into laughter, while we sat there, in stunned silence, feeling sheepish that we didn’t know the difference, either. For all that we knew, they *were* pinecones. Trying to hide our embarrassment, we just sat in silence and laughed with Ken, trying to hide our insecurity about the subject. Rather than self disclose, we both decided that silence was the better option.

2. The next alternative is lying. Lies more often than not, are benevolent, and are often used to not only “protect” the one who is questioned, but also the one who asks the questions. Also, lying is often used to avoid conflict. Many people consider that it is worth telling a benevolent lie rather than being completely blunt. Guiding social interaction is another reason that people lie. A fourth reason that people lie is to expand or reduce relationships. Finally, the fifth reason that people lie is to gain or maintain power. Deborah Kotz (2008), a writer for U.S. News & World Report reports, “Researchers from the University of Massachusetts several years ago found that 60 percent of people lie at least once during a 10-minute conversation . . . women are more likely to lie to make a person feel better. Men, on the other hand, tend to lie to make themselves look better” (para. 3).
3. The third alternative to self disclosure is equivocating. Many prefer equivocating over lying or complete candor. Equivocation is ambiguous language that is used to avoid telling the outright truth or telling a lie. It is very much like “sugar-coating” your opinion.

Clip of Pinocchio: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9wR-tXavTo>

4. The fourth alternative to self-disclosing is hinting. Hinting is used when you want to get a certain response from another person. It is not as clear as a direct statement, but it is much clearer than equivocating.

Point Two: Physical Setting

Next, we found that communication is not only affected by internal thoughts, but also the surrounding physical environment. According to Adler and Proctor (2008), “An environment can shape the kind of interaction that takes place in it” (p. 228). The physical setting of the temple on the hill was an interesting place to observe how people communicated both verbally and nonverbally. Many of those who live in this area esteem the temple to be a very reverent place, and we noticed that because of this belief that conversations that were held there were generally very quiet and respectful. We noticed that even our conversations were greatly affected by our surroundings. The closer that we came to the temple, the quieter the conversations became.

While we were working, we saw several wedding groups that were gathered together. Most of the conversations took place at personal distance (18 inches to 4 feet). Our conversations between ourselves and others also were generally at about four feet. Any further away and it felt awkward and out of place because of the presiding quietness of the environment we were in. We found that physical setting affects the distance that conversations generally take place at, and how loud the conversations were.

We found that not only were conversations affected by the setting, but also the way people acted around us. We noticed that people were very kind up there. Almost everybody who passed us, old or young, waved at us and thanked us for the work that we were doing. We had lots of compliments given to us from many different people, even people from different cities and states.

Point Three: Gender Roles

Lastly, we discovered that outside effects from our environment are powerful, but so are behavioral expectations from other people. Gender roles are ways that society and people in general perceive that a person of a given sex should behave and act. Men and women have traditionally had very separate and distinct gender roles, but as time has progressed, the boundaries separating these roles have slowly dissipated. It was very interesting to work in a pair as brother and sister. One observation we made was that when people approached us while we were working, they would first approach Bryce, despite the fact that I (Stephanie) was closer than he was. The people seemed to feel more comfortable talking to Bryce rather than me. This may have been because he appeared to be the one in charge. Generally, when it comes to physical or outdoor labor, men are expected to perform that type of work. We assume that because of gender roles, people thought for some reason that Bryce was in charge.

Story:

While we were working on the flowerbeds, I (Stephanie) was raking right next to the curb, while Bryce stood further away from the sidewalk, working in the trees picking up spruce cones. Ken drove up in his white van, looking around for somebody to pass information to. He looked like he had something to tell us. While I stood in plain sight, he drove right past me, and went out of his way to get Bryce's attention. It was a hassle for both of them. All that he needed to say was, "you can quit whenever you want, because I'll be leaving soon. Just put the tools in the shed". He could have easily passed that information to me, but for some reason, he went through the hassle of driving past me and trying to get Bryce's attention. I didn't think much of it, until several similar situations happened to me the next day with other people. It happened with a security guard, who wanted to find out what our service entailed. I was much closer to the guard than Bryce, but he even walked uphill towards my brother in order to ask a couple of questions concerning our service project. A third incident raised my suspicions that there was a pattern here. Just like the other times, I was clearly visible, capable, and closer than Bryce was.

That didn't matter. A man with a camera walked past me, went downhill out of his way to ask a simple favor of Bryce. He asked if he could take a picture of the man with his family. Bryce deferred the opportunity to his "more capable" sister.

Even though the traditional view of gender roles is slowly disappearing, we found that it hasn't been completely eliminated. One study mentioned in USA Today reports that, "traditional gender roles have lost favor for both sexes. About 60% of men and women say they don't agree that men should earn the money and women should take care of the children" (Jayson 2009). While we were being given the tools we needed for work, Ken, the groundskeeper, issued us two plastic rakes, two steel rakes, two landscaping rakes, and two shovels. Of these, he offered Stephanie the two plastic rakes, while leaving to me the other six instruments. We presume this was because of the unwritten gender roles stating that women shouldn't have to carry as much or do as much physical labor as men.

Conclusion:

In closing, we can see from our experience how people (ourselves included) use alternatives to self-disclosure, how the physical setting greatly affects communication; and how gender roles affect others' perceptions and treatment of each other. It was a great opportunity to serve there on the Manti Temple grounds. As Albert Einstein once said, "Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile."

References

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