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"Back-stage" dissent: student Twitter use addressing instructor ideology

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ABSTRACT

In this content analysis, we explored how students address instructor ideology in the university classroom through the social media platform Twitter. We employed Boolean search operators through Salesforce Marketing Cloud Radian6 software to gather tweets and identified English language tweets by how students referenced their instructor's ideology. Tweets originated in the United States (U.S.), the United Kingdom (U.K.), and Australia. Using qualitative coding procedures, we identified seven themes in the data that described how students wrote about instructor ideology on Twitter: *venting regarding instructor's ideology, sharing classroom anecdote, affirming instructor's beliefs/actions, expressing grade concern, articulating an opposing view, reporting conflict,* and *indicating confusion.* Across categories, Twitter was employed primarily as a back-stage means to communicate expressive dissent regarding instructor ideology and also to demonstrate students' identity. We identified differences between categories based on the perceived ideology of the students' instructors as well as differences in the number of tweets per capita originating in each country.

Introduction

Many see college campuses as a battleground in an ongoing culture war. A 2017 study by the Pew Research Center found a majority of self-identified Republican or right-leaning respondents in the U.S. felt higher education has a negative impact on the country. Nearly three quarters of self-identified Democrats and left-leaning respondents, on the other hand, felt that higher education's impact was positive. It has been suggested that this disparity exists because of mistrust cultivated by a growing public perception that colleges and universities have a liberal bias (Turnage, 2017).

Perceived liberal orthodoxy in higher education has come under increasing criticism across the globe. Australian commentator Henderson (2017) has suggested the social sciences are "conservative-free zones where academics tend to agree with one another in a leftist kind of way" (p. 22). British politician Gove (2017) argued liberal monoculture has made a sustained attack on the academy's "ability to subvert, dissent and challenge"

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Humor in the classroom: the effects of integrated humor on student learning

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the impact of integrated humor on direct measures of students' ability to retain and transfer information from educational lessons. In two experiments, participants were randomly exposed to either a lesson with humorous examples or standard examples and were subsequently asked to take tests on the material. Data were analyzed to examine differences in students' test scores while controlling for the impact of perceived concreteness, interestingness, cognitive overload, and coherence within each lesson. In Study 1, results revealed that, compared with students exposed to standard examples, students exposed to lessons with humorous examples performed worse on a multiple-choice test of the material. Study 2 replicated these findings with a new manipulation and also included an open-ended question test; results revealed that students exposed to the humorous condition again performed worse on their tests compared with students exposed to the standard examples. Findings are discussed as they relate to the potential distracting consequences of humor in the classroom.

Researchers from various disciplines have devoted considerable energy toward developing an understanding of what teacher behaviors influence student learning. Though variables such as instructor clarity (e.g., Bolkan, Goodboy, & Myers, 2017; Titsworth, Mazer, Goodboy, Bolkan, & Myers, 2015) and the promotion of autonomous motivation (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; Guay, Ratelle, & Chanal, 2008; Reeve, 2002) seem to have robust and consistent positive effects on student success, other teaching behaviors have yet to demonstrate dependable results. Instructor humor is one such behavior. Considering the corpus of literature, results linking instructional humor and student learning have been mixed. And, as Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez, and Liu (2011) note, to date there are still no clear conclusions regarding how humor works in the classroom.

Despite the lack of clear conclusions, communication scholars have learned some things about the impact of humor in the classroom. For example, researchers have found that the presence of humor is associated with a host of instructional benefits including students' motivation (Gorham & Christophel, 1992), their positive attitudes toward instructors (Gorham &

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RESEARCH ARTICLES

Spewing nonsense [or not]: communication competence and socialization in optics and photonics workplaces

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how managers, entry-level employees, and hiring professionals in the optics and photonics industry socialize each other to enact the communication norms and expectations in their workplaces. A qualitative analysis of transcripts from interviews conducted with 33 employees at 15 companies produced five prevalent themes related to what optics and photonics employees consider competent communication (proactive questioning, efficient decision-making, familial-like humor, tactful translation, and fluent modality switching) and three socialization processes (presumed competence, informal mentoring, and structured training). These competencies and processes necessitate what we term cross-occupational communication: an interactive, iterative process involving communicative needs assessment, information exchange, and rhetorical/situational flexibility with groups distinct in background, training, and occupational role. It is difficult to create workplace-like experiences that truly capture the field-specific communication practices involved in organizational socialization within traditional classrooms; therefore, we argue for systematic and intentional communication in the disciplines instruction that considers cross-occupational communication needs in the workforce.

So a lot of the times I end up talking with sales people, but then other times I'm just talking to the customer directly. Sometimes customers or sales associates are technical people and understand the nitty gritty, but sometimes they're more like systems level people, and so they understand enough to pick out the projector and the screen, but they don't necessarily know how to do lens design. There's a lot of different levels of technical understanding. It's about trying to figure out how to communicate with people, and not dumb it down so much that it doesn't mean anything, but also not overwhelm them by spewing nonsense at them. —entry-level employee

Students don't go to conferences, and I take those very seriously. So when you [new employees] do a presentation at a conference, I'm not going to let them just throw it together and go to the conference. That's a multiweek effort, first, they give me their junk and then we're