Interpersonal Rhetoric: An Approach to Bettering Oneself and Others

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Abstract

Although interpersonal interaction is predominantly studied through the lens of communication studies, the field was originally studied primarily by scholars of rhetoric. Though this paradigm was instrumental in the founding of interpersonal communication, interpersonal rhetoric has largely been ignored by the discipline. However, throughout the last few decades, a few scholars have attempted to reinvigorate the study of interpersonal communication through the lens of rhetoric. This paper explores the several key concepts and perspectives within the history of the rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication, i.e., interpersonal rhetoric.

Key Words: Conversation, Rhetoric, Interpersonal Rhetoric, Interpersonal Communication, Intrapersonal Communication, Rhetorical Situation, Identity, Identification, Self, Satisfying Others, Personal Responsibility, and Persuasion

Introduction

The formal study of interpersonal communication is a relatively young academic pursuit. In spite of its youth, sundry perspectives concerning interpersonal communication exist. Interpersonal communication has been studied through the lenses of positivistic social science, symbolic interaction, dialogic philosophy, and theories of dialectics. However, interpersonal communication is rarely studied from a rhetorical perspective. This situation is interesting given that interpersonal communication was primarily studied in its foundations by rhetoricians (Ayres, 1984, p. 418). Eventually, the rhetorical approach to interpersonal communication began to be neglected by scholars, and interpersonal interaction would be studied using the methods of positivistic social science. Eventually, it redeveloped as an alternative to approaches grounded upon behaviorism and humanistic psychology, though interpersonal interaction has yet to truly become a viable paradigm of the study of interpersonal communication. This is regrettable since the approach provides valuable insight into interpersonal communication and relationships. Harden Fritz (2005) summarized interpersonal rhetoric as being "orderly, goal-directed, strategic, reciprocal, responsive, situationally-sensitive, identity-implicative communicative exchange" (p. 38). In other words, the approach is concerned with advocating personal responsibility for the bettering of oneself and society

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through intentionally influencing others rhetorically. In order to understand this approach to interpersonal interaction, the reasons for its lack of use are explored, and then different perspectives of interpersonal rhetoric are examined.

Unneeded Division

The primary reason rhetoric has not been utilized for studying interpersonal interaction is because of the methodological disputes within our field of study (Ayres, 1984). One of the results of the disciplinary disputes between rhetoricians and communication scholars was that "'communication' scholars staked a claim on the interpersonal area and rhetoricians turned to other pursuits" (Ayres, 1984, p. 420). One of the most recent articles to be written on interpersonal rhetoric, written by Harden Fritz (2005), specifically explores reasons why rhetoric was largely ignored in interpersonal communication. In her article, "Contributions of Gerald M. Phillips to Interpersonal Communication," Harden Fritz (2005) offered similar reasons why interpersonal rhetoric has not prospered in the field. The first reason was that other approaches were moving the discipline in different directions: "the rhetorical approach eclipsed by alignment of the three coordinates of philosophical, quantitative, and social approaches" (Harden Fritz, 2005, p. 38). Second, at the time the approach was developing, much of the discipline was preoccupied with a debate over methodology (Harden Fritz, 2005, p. 40).

However, the methodological dispute between scholars of rhetoric and communication was founded upon a false dichotomy. Arnold (1972), in his article, "Rhetorical and Communication Studies: Two Worlds or One," called for an end to the dispute between rhetoricians and social scientists. Arnold (1972) argued that the dispute was "illogical and [led] to parochialism in thinking about our research" (p. 77). The deliberate focus of attention upon method, instead of theoretical commonality, had begun to undermine actual scholarship because the focus upon methodology [distracted] scholars from focusing on "what *needs* discovery and from *where* one must go to find out" (Arnold, 1972, p. 77). Rhetorical and communication studies should not only be able to co-exist, but in some ways they can assist one another since their object of study is relatively the same. Along these lines, Ayers (1984) anticipated the rhetorical approach would develop "a more prominent research profile" as scholars in the approach "establish their credentials" (p. 422). Contrary to Ayres's intuition about interpersonal rhetoric's increased development, it experienced relatively little growth within the discipline.

One additional reason why interpersonal rhetoric may not have flourished can be found in the interpersonal rhetoric literature itself. Several interpersonal rhetoric scholars were defensive about the use of rhetoric and the persuasion of other persons. Hart and Burks (1972) questioned prevalent assumptions by asking:

> Is it so shameful in an ordinary human encounter to attempt *effortfully* to make the interaction 'come off,' to achieve practical gain, or to strengthen an interpersonal bond? Is it inappropriate to choose carefully among alternative strategies so that my words will have the greatest social impact possible? (p. 90)

Along these lines, Phillips (1976) had to argue against the assumptions of humanistic psychology. He stated that, "whatever happens in the humanistics' utopia, it is immoral if it happens as a result of any human trying to make it happen" (p. 13). Concerning goal

centeredness, Phillips and Metzger (1976) stated that, "Many people would prefer to believe that we really do not have any [goals in intimate communication]" (p. 14). Ambrester and Strause (1984) also defended the word "rhetoric," against a clear, negative bias in public perception. They argued that, "rhetoric is not a process of deception as it has been labeled by the press in the United States. . . . The implications of these statements [made by the press] are that rhetoric is the art/science of deception" (p. 26). Clearly, as witnessed by scholars' initial defensiveness in developing their perspectives, interpersonal rhetoric may have not prospered because of prevailing attitudes against rhetoric and persuasion. In summary, if scholars and practitioners of interpersonal interaction are able to move past methodological differences and not be leery of influencing or persuading others, then interpersonal rhetoric can be an effective approach to understanding interpersonal interactions. With this in mind, the following sections present several approaches to interpersonal rhetoric.

Conversational Etiquette as Interpersonal Rhetoric

In one of the first formal examinations of interpersonal interaction within the field of communication, Ewbank (1964) studied the use of rhetorical principles as a basis for bettering one's skills in the art of social conversation within etiquette manuals of the early nineteenth century. Instead of using rhetoric to argue with or persuade others, rhetoric was a means to advance in "society" by pleasing "the Other" (Ewbank, 1964, p. 8). Ewbank (1964) quoted one etiquette manual from 1839, *Advice to a Young Gentleman on Entering Society*, as saying:

> The ordinary conversation of society . . . should have for its object, in the mind of every intelligent and well-bred man, mainly, the giving of pleasure to the individual conversed with, and the imparting of a high notion and esteem of the party speaking . . . . It becomes, therefore, the principle study of the man of the world to give pleasure,—in the largest and most comprehensive sense of the word,—by his conversation to those with whom he mingles. (p. 7)

Clearly, the author of this manual is concerned with conversationalists being skilled in the creation of enjoyable interpersonal interaction through conversation that is pleasing to others.

More specifically, Ewbank (1964) showed that the etiquette manuals utilized the five classical canons of rhetoric (invention, disposition, style, delivery, and memory) as the means to producing enjoyable conversation. Of the five canons, invention, or the canon of discovering arguments and speech material, was focused upon the most (Ewbank, 1964, p. 7). Invention had two sources for topics of conversation: reading books and listening to others. First, the etiquette manuals advised the young to read books for sources of conversation because books "would provide an eminently desirable alternative to gossip about friends and everyday living which could hardly escape from 'violating the laws of charity or of truth'" (Ewbank, 1964, p. 7). Additionally, conversation about books was advised because it was an alternative to talking about oneself, which inevitably makes a person less credible in the eyes of others (Ewbank, 1964, p.9). The second source of invention was listening to superior conversationalists so as to learn topics of conversation. Young readers were advised about the "need to listen

in order to accumulate new information rather than spending lavishly from one's own meager resources" (Ewbank, 1964, p. 8). Listening was also considered to be a prophylactic of disputes that may arise in conversation because "more effort expended in comprehension and less in advancing one's own arguments would tend to avoid unwanted disputes" (Ewbank, 1964, p. 9). In effect, disputes were considered disruptive of the social process and the instigators and participants of disputes were not enjoyable conversationalists. Consequently, sources of dispute were frowned upon because they hampered a young person's ability to advance socially.

The other four canons were important during this time, but they were not emphasized as much as invention. Disposition, or the arrangement of ideas, "took the form of suggestions that one's conversation should be adapted to the company and the occasion" (Ewbank, 1964, p. 8). In a sense, disposition in this form is akin to attentiveness to the rhetorical situation, i.e., recognizing that certain situations call forth different discourses. Style was "one of the surest signs of good breeding," and on account of this, the youth were cautioned against the use of exaggeration and slang (Ewbank, 1964, p. 9). As for delivery, "a pleasant, sincere delivery was encouraged, necessitating cultivation of the voice, diction, and control over bodily movement" (Ewbank, 1964, p. 9). Finally, "memorization of poems, extracts from speeches, etc., was commended because it would not only exercise the memory but improve use of language" (Ewbank, 1964, p. 9). In effect, the canons of rhetoric were used as a means to allow a person to advance in society by making oneself an enjoyable interpersonal communicator.

The use of rhetoric concerning conversation was interpersonal communication even though it was not formally called such. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, rhetoricians continued to study interpersonal communication under the guise of conversation. Scholars at this time focused on formalizing the study of conversation. E.S. Oliver (1958), in "The Art of Conversation," wrote about "stumbling blocks" in conversation. He likened the life of conversation to the fragility of plant life and noted that, "In any human situation centering on conversation some one person may so interfere as to seriously handicap or entirely stifle the normal flow of ideas and the bringing of men's wit and comprehension to bear upon them" (1958, p. 3). Likewise, R.T. Oliver (1961b) developed several rules that a good conversationalist should follow in order to promote good conversations. However, he argued that these rules are not to be strictly followed and that the conversationalist must be cognizant of *situations* in which the rules ought to be broken. Though neither of the two Olivers used the classical, rhetorical language that Ewbank had focused upon, there remains an emphasized concern with *invention*, or topic choice, within their analyses of good conversation. More importantly, they were concerned with understanding how a person could intentionally control a conversation for the sake of personal betterment. Effectively, interpersonal communication, under the guise of "conversation," was being studied in rhetorical terms even though the emphasis was not on persuasion.

In addition to understanding how conversation can be used to advance socially, conversation was studied for its formative effects upon personality. In his article entitled, "Conversation and Personality," R.T. Oliver (1960) posited that conversation shapes who a person is. He argued that, "Conversation is less a technique than *a way of life*. As you talk, so you are. . . . *Your conversation is you*" [emphasis added] (pp. 1-2). Oliver's approach to conversation was, interestingly, focused upon an attention to the rhetorical

situation and the Other. He noted that, "*to converse* basically means 'to turn toward.' Conversation is a process of turning, of adaptation, of fitting in. It requires a flexible character and a plastic mind" (Oliver, 1960, p. 2). Additionally, in his article entitled, "Conversation as a Key to Understanding of Human Nature," Oliver (1961a) referenced Mead's *Mind, Self and Society* as a basis for arguing that the person does not develop in a vacuum, but rather through conversation with others (p. 25). He ended the article arguing that, "*To describe talk safely as a process of seeking to be understood is to miss many of its influential characteristics*" (p. 28). Both of these articles helped to develop the study of interpersonal rhetoric by moving past concerns of rhetorically influencing others to showing how the self could be understood rhetorically, or as a product of conversation.

Rhetorical Sensitivity

Similar to the scholars of conversational etiquette, interpersonal rhetoric scholars focused their attention upon intentional concerns for the Other, adapting one's speech to specific situations, and the rhetorical construction of identity. Along these lines, Hart and Burks (1972) developed a comprehensive argument for the need to be sensitive to rhetorical situations in their article entitled, "Rhetorical Sensitivity and Social Interaction." They argued that it is "rhetorical sensitivity" that "makes effective social interaction manifestly possible" (p. 75). Their most significant contribution to interpersonal rhetoric was their formulation of the "rhetorically sensitive person." The characteristics of such a person are:

> (1) tries to accept role-taking as part of the human condition, (2) attempts to avoid stylized verbal behavior, (3) is characteristically willing to undergo the strain of adaption, (4) seeks to distinguish between all information and information acceptable for communication, and (5) tries to understand that an idea can be rendered in multi-form ways. (Hart and Burks, 1972, p.76)

Essentially, the "rhetorically sensitive person," like a chameleon, is able to blend into their rhetorical surroundings. The notion of rhetorical sensitivity, in fact, was influential enough that Hart, Carlson, and Eadie (1980) offered an operationalization of the concept from a social scientific perspective.

Additionally, Hart and Burks (1972) based rhetorical sensitivity on an idea of self not all that different from G.H. Mead's social self. Specifically, they understood the identity of the person as being grounded in rhetoric. They argued that the identity of a person is not singular, but rather "composed of a set of interconnected selves which acquire their *rhetorical* definitions in interaction with another" (p. 77). The authors went so far as to argue that if a person "continually opts for the same role without regard to situation or context and does not deal with social interaction on an *ad hoc* basis, he will be rhetorically unproductive and interpersonally naive" (p. 79).

Interestingly, Hart and Burks (1972) argued that *not* being rhetorically sensitive to the situation could be unethical because not doing so fails to regard each person's individuality. They stated that, "the point to be made here is that unless both speaker and respondent are adapters, a kind of 'mechanical communication' results, which entails an almost total disregard for the existence and complexity of each other" (p. 83). So to not engage the Other *rhetorically* is to deny the uniqueness of the Other's own self, i.e., the

uniqueness of the Other's own personhood. With such an important reason to be rhetorically sensitive, Hart and Burks (1972) ended their article with hope in the interpersonal rhetoric research yet to be done:

> Our objective has been to recast traditional rhetorically assumptions into a more contemporary theoretical framework, for we feel that by continually attempting to redefine this adaptive animal, this rhetorically sensitive person, scholars may have an ever-refreshed set of tools with which to probe interpersonal events. (p. 91)

Gerald M. Phillip's Interpersonal Rhetoric

Four years after Hart and Burks postulated the need for rhetorical sensitivity, Phillips (1976) argued that interpersonal rhetoric could serve as an alternative to common approaches to interpersonal interaction based upon behaviorism and humanistic psychology. He argued that the "rhetorical posture to interpersonal communication allows for greater effectiveness in analysis than the two major alternatives, that is, the behaviorist position and the perspective of the humanistic psychologist" (p. 11). He differentiated the rhetorical perspective from the behavioristic approach by arguing against its determinism and making will "central to the rhetorical position" (p. 14). On the other hand, he argued against humanistic psychology on account of its grounding in "egocentric gratification" (p. 17). Essentially, behaviorism negates self, and humanistic psychology is too centered upon self.

Additionally, Phillips (1976) argued that the behavioristic approach and humanistic psychology reduce to "utopianism and moralism" (pp. 13-18). The rhetorical approach is an alternative to these because it is grounded on utilitarianism. The utilitarian view differs from these two approaches because it regards people "as corruptible and corrupted but capable of making decisions about his own behavior for which society held him responsible, though he did not have the right to blame society for what he was" (p. 18). Within this statement, we see the centrality of the person's ability to choose how to act for good or bad. Along these lines, Phillips was able to claim, in concurrence with Hart and Burks, that interpersonal communication is primarily concerned with "self-building" (p. 11). Also similar to Hart and Burks, Phillips understood interpersonal relationships, and therefore the formation of the self, as being embedded in rhetoric (Phillips, 1976, p. 21). On account of rhetoric's centrality in interpersonal communication, Phillips was able to argue that interpersonal rhetoric "promises to be productive in both teaching and counseling, as well as the future garnering of information about relationships" (p. 23).

In the same year, Phillips and Metzger (1976) developed a comprehensive theory of intimate communication based on rhetoric in their book, *Intimate Communication*. As in Phillip's article discussed above, they offered the rhetorical perspective as an alternative to the behaviorism and humanistic psychology present during their time. Specifically, they did not wish to negate either view, but rather to "point out that the rhetorical mode appears to lie halfway between the formality and rigor of operant conditioning and the casualness of humanistic psychology and encounter grouping" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 5).

They defined interpersonal rhetoric as the "conscious effort to achieve goals in intimate relationships" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 12). Like the interpersonal rhetoric scholars before them, Phillips and Metzger (1976) saw the development of society and the self through rhetoric as the heart of interpersonal communication (p. 12). They argued specifically for understanding the importance of goal seeking in intimate communication (p. 13). Their argument was based on the "premise that there *is purpose and order in what goes on between people, and the more management that is exerted, the more mutual the satisfaction with the relationship*" (p. 14). Essentially, in contrast to the behaviorism of their time, Phillips and Metzger were committed to the idea that people can choose. In contrast to the humanistic psychology of their time, they believed that the intentional influence of others was beneficial to society. In order to make these claims, the scholars made "will" and "reciprocity" essential elements of interpersonal rhetoric.

On account of the person's ability to choose, the concept of will was central to Phillips and Metzger's interpersonal rhetoric. They emphatically argued: "*To take a rhetorical position, WE MUST AFFIRM that, in spite of biology, environment, and unconscious mind, the individual has options in his interpersonal behavior, and that through appropriate analysis and selection of strategy he can maximize his success, whatever his problems may be*" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. vii). Will *must* be central if one comes from a paradigm of persuasion, i.e., a sane person would not try to persuade someone if the Other does not have the ability to choose. Additionally, because of Phillips and Metzger's focus on persuasion within intimate relationships, they also made the idea of reciprocity central to their approach. Reciprocity is the "give and take" of intimate relationships. The give and take happens because "both parties to the relationship attempt to manage the other in order to achieve personal goals" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 6).

Since Phillips and Metzger's (1976) approach was fairly novel, they grounded their interpersonal rhetoric in existing social theories. They used Murray Davis' "Sociology and Intimacy" as one of their theoretical foundations for interpersonal rhetoric. They adapted Davis' theory because reciprocity and symmetry existed within his "micropolitics" of interpersonal relationships (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 30). They summarized: "Thus, we find in Davis' theory a convergence of a sociological and psychiatric point of view which enables us to support our rhetorical view on sound theory, at least insofar as we allege that it is orderly and dependent on persuasive exchanges of communication" (p. 30). Essentially, relationships are purposive and orderly; they are not random behavioral occurrences or public venues of self-discovery. Likewise, the other theory Phillips and Metzger (1976) relied on allows for "an element of decision" and "an element of reciprocity" (p. 31). They adapted Georg Homans' "Social Exchange Theory," which essentially states that people enter into relationships for mutually beneficial reason and that relationships can be judge on a cost-benefit scale. They stated that, "Homans makes no apology for the admittedly behavioral cast of his theory, nor do we. We insert only that things do not 'just happen' to human beings" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 31).

In addition to aligning interpersonal rhetoric with these two theories, Phillips and Metzger (1976) derived a guiding metaphor of "exchange" from the theories (p. 40). Specifically, they believed that "transaction," not "interaction," is the core of intimate relationships because transaction "carries the connotation of carrying on business,

appears to be a more purposive term, more applicable to individual goal seeking. It would refer to private behavior or public behavior carried out under the norms enacted in private. Transaction carries a heavier connotation of exchange than interaction" (Phillips & Metzger, 1976, p. 42). This idea of transaction is wholly congruous with the interpersonal rhetoric laid out above because it is centered upon goal seeking, choice, and reciprocity. Essentially, Phillips and Metzger saw intimate communication as a rhetorical process in which persons enter into in order to accomplish goals with one another.

Phillips (1981) further developed interpersonal rhetoric in his next book, *Help For Shy People*. After developing a philosophic account of shyness, he offered the practice of rhetoric as a form of therapy for shyness. He stated that, "rhetoritherapy is a system of instruction designed to train people to improve their communication skills in particular situations they face in their lives" (Phillips, 1981, p. 43). He grounded this "rhetoritherapy" in five main ideas: (1) every act of speech should be goal-oriented, (2) the goal should be adaptable to others, (3) ideas should be clearly organized, (4) rhetoric sometimes fails, and (5) relationships can be improved through goals (p. 44). With these ideas in mind, Phillips developed many practical exercises for the shy person to become more effective in their relationships. In effect, Phillips utilized principles of rhetoric as a means for people to take personal responsibility for self-development and creating better interpersonal relationships.

Burkean Interpersonal Rhetoric

In addition to the more classical approach to rhetoric of Phillips, a Burkean perspective of rhetoric was developed for understanding interpersonal interactions. In their book, *A Rhetoric of Interpersonal Communication*, Ambrester and Strause (1984) created a theory of the self that was grounded in the rhetoric of interpersonal communication and relationships. The authors claimed that their approach to interpersonal communication was rooted in reality, whereas other approaches were based on ideality (Ambrester & Strause, 1984, p. 20). Additionally, they broadened the typical definition of "interpersonal communication" from dyadic situations to a spectrum between intrapersonal communication and communication within small groups (pp. 20-22). They justified studying interpersonal communication rhetorically by extending Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson's (1967) dictum, "You cannot not communicate" to "You cannot not persuade" (p. 37). Therefore, interpersonal interaction becomes the proper study of the rhetorician because "the rhetorician is one who examines the various techniques of persuasion and attempts to explain those techniques" (Ambrester & Strause, 1984, p. 26).

Rhetoric was able to be applied so broadly by these authors because they rooted their understanding of rhetoric in identification (Ambrester & Strause, 1984. p. 31). Identification was defined by the authors as the "process of symbolically joining with other human beings at the level of social rules, roles and strategies" (p. 30). The authors summarized the difference between their Burkean rhetoric and classical rhetoric by using the following quotation from Burke:

> If I had to sum up in one word the difference between the 'old' rhetoric and the 'new' (a rhetoric reinvigorated by fresh insights which the 'new Sciences' contributed on the subject), I would reduce it to this: The key

> term for 'old' rhetoric was 'persuasion' and its stress was upon
> deliberative design. The key term for the 'new' rhetoric would be
> identification which can include a partially 'unconscious' factor in appeal
> (1951, p. 203). (p. 29)

The key here for the authors is that rhetoric is about identification and can take place unconsciously. Additionally, identification takes place on three levels: the intrapersonal, the interpersonal, and the societal (Ambrester & Strause, 1984, pp. 30-31). Thus, rhetoric permeates almost all of human life.

In the book, Ambrester and Strause (1984) discussed existential concerns of interpersonal rhetoric. The existential concerns are grounded in the ideas of identity preservation and responsibility. The authors argued for the need to preserve one's identity or to not lose one's self in society (pp. 42-43). Ambrester and Strause (1984) stated that, "We must rediscover those factors which are genuine concerns for us" (p. 43). Society can be lethal to the self if the person is not true to his or her self, yet one should not alienate oneself by seeking shallow pleasures for the self (Ambrester and Strause, 1984, pp. 41-43). Essentially, they argued for a balanced approach between concerns for oneself and society.

The dialectic between self and society is existential in nature for Ambrester and Strause because they believed, like Phillips, in the human ability to act: "A second major premise in the existential perspective holds that we are all responsible for our own decisions" (Ambrester & Strause, 1984, p. 44). Therefore, these authors argued for the need to define ourselves through action:

> We are born to die. Yet, how we conduct ourselves in the face of that
> inevitable judgment characterizes humankind at its highest and lowest
> points. . . . The courage of the struggle against insurmountable odds is the
> quality that existentialists point to in discussing the human spirit. We can
> choose our way of life in the face of death. (p. 44)

In addition to the authors' call to define ourselves existentially through action, they advocated that the person must not confuse his or her essence with the demands of society. Ambrester and Strause (1984) argued:

> We are constantly called upon to act in ways that society sanctions and in
> doing so we begin to believe that we are not responsible for our actions,
> we are simply chattels of the society in which we live. It is only through
> the search for one's essence outside of social trappings that gives a true
> sense of personal responsibility. (p. 46)

It is within this call to take responsibility for one's identity that the authors develop existential communication as an aspect of interpersonal rhetoric. Existential communication, according to Ambrester and Strause (1984), is differentiated from rhetorical communication not by kind but by degree (p. 46). The two modes of communication differ in motive. They differentiated the two by stating: "In rhetorical communication we engage in consciously and unconsciously discovering all the means of persuasion. In existential communication one attempts to communicate his/her essence to another receptive human being who is attempting to do the same" (1984, p. 46). Interestingly, it is at this point in which the rhetorical perspective approaches a degree of similarity to a dialogic approach to interpersonal communication: "In existential communication, we attempt to reveal ourselves to another as completely as possible. We

attempt to engage in what Karl Jaspers called an 'I-Thou' relationship. This form of interaction refers to a communion in which we meet at the level of humanity with another mutually caring person" (1984, p. 46).

       Relating to their existentialism, Ambrester and Strause (1984) formulated a concept of the self that is thoroughly rhetorical. They were able to make this move by using Burke's concept of identification as the basis for modern rhetoric. The scholars stated:

> From a rhetorical perspective, we would allege that our earliest associations with parents are rooted in the identification process. . . . Identification takes place as the infant begins a lifelong process of determining what the demands of the external 'audience' (the parents) are and begins seeking to meet those demands as a means of acceptance and avoidance of rejection. (1984, pp. 79-80)

       Continuing with the Burkean idea of identification, Ambrester and Strause (1984) argued that the process of identity formation happens on three levels: identification within, identification and interpersonal relationships, and identification and culture. Concerning identification within, they stated that, "we persuade ourselves in much the same way an orator persuades an audience. We find the means of identification, speak to ourselves, and render judgment" (1984, p. 85). In this manner, they were able to make intrapersonal communication a part of interpersonal rhetoric. Rhetoric also takes place in interpersonal relationships when persons seek to identify with other persons (Ambrester and Strause, 1984, p. 86). Additionally, the self is formed through the symbols of the culture that the person identifies with and is assimilated into (Ambrester and Strause, 1984, pp. 86-87). Ultimately, they built their theory of interpersonal rhetoric upon this tripartite process of identification.

       Ambrester and Strause (1984) devoted two chapters of their book to self-persuasion and intrapersonal communication, which they called the "internal rhetorical wrangle." Specifically, they used a model of intrapersonal communication that they developed in 1980, called "The Ambrester/Strause Rhetorical Model of Intrapersonal Communication." In this model, three different concepts of the self-persuade oneself how to act. The model is best summarized by the authors themselves:

1. Socialized self discovers and employs all the necessary means to persuade the person to act in socially acceptable manners and "repent" for social "failures":
2. Primitive self discovers and employs all the necessary means to persuade the person to act in any manner required to meet his/her most basic needs and deny the responsibility for such action:
3. Conceptualizing self discovers and employs all the necessary means to persuade the person to act in ethically valid manners (congruent with the value system) and project an "ideal self" consistent with his/her self-concept (allowing for consciously purposeful manipulative roles). (Ambrester and Strause, 1984, pp. 120-121)

At the heart of this Burkean interpersonal rhetoric is this process of self-persuasion by the socialized self, primitive self, and conceptualizing self. Indeed, the authors themselves justified their concept of the persuasive "internal wrangle" by likening it to Mead's "I addressing its me" (Ambrester & Strause, 1984, p. 21). In a sense, this interpersonal

rhetoric is grounded in both Mead and Burke. Even with its strong foundation in Mead and Burke, Ambrester and Strause's rhetorical perspective to interpersonal communication has by and large yet to be espoused by the discipline.

Eventually, Ambrester, Buttram, Strause, and Ambrester III (1997) simplified and extended Ambrester and Strauses' interpersonal rhetoric within *A Rhetoric of Interpersonal Communication and Relationships*. In the book, they briefly developed the concept of self, the "internal wrangle," and the "existential concerns" that were in the previous book. Upon this conception of the "self" the authors developed "a rhetoric of personality types and relationships" and a rhetorical "existential perspective on intimate relationships."

Ambrester et al. (1997) based their existential perspective on the creation of self-developed in Ambrester and Strause's *A Rhetoric of Interpersonal Communication*, but they made one addition to the self in regards to intimate relationships. This addition is formulated by the Ambrester Model of Relationships. Interestingly, the authors argued that, "Sea cows are very large and if we could see the concepts and perceptions each of us carries into a relationship, we would all look like manatees to each other" (Ambrester et al., 1997, p. 6). They argued that, "At the core of any relationship lies each person's self-concept, which basically refers to ego strength. . . . By ego strength we basically mean the degree to which we like/love ourselves" (Ambrester et al., 1997, p. 6). From the self-concept extends the "concept of ideal relationships," and relating to this concept is the "concept of other" (Ambrester et al., 1997, p. 6). The authors stated: "When speaking of the beginning of intimate relationships, your concept of the other person often seems to match your own concept of an ideal relationship" (Ambrester et al., 1997, p. 7). Affecting in large ways how people act in intimate relationships is the "concept of the relationship" itself and the person's "experience of past relationships" (Ambrester et al., 1997, p. 8). At this point, "the manatee" shifts their focus of attention away from their immediate self to their "perception of Other's concept of you" (Ambrester et al., 1997, p. 9). Finally, the person has a "perception of Other's concept of the relationship" (Ambrester et al., 1997, p. 10). The person, as such, is a process that works holistically to shape how each person interacts within relationships, but their metaphor does not end here.

Ambrester et al. (1997) completed their analogy by having "the sea cow" swim in the sea of "our inner selves," "our interpersonal relationships," and "our social interaction." The authors explained:

> Your inner communication, which reflects your attitude system, is the most important key to understanding how well you like yourself, who you believe yourself to be, and your approach to relationships. . . . Being the rhetorical creatures that we are, we swim through various depths and currents in our relationships with others. . . . Continuing our metaphor, as humans, after we leave our mother's placenta, we are immediately engulfed in a sea of symbols which are so powerful that they affect our total existence. (pp. 17-18)

As in Ambrester and Strause's *A Rhetoric of Interpersonal Communication*, Ambrester et al. (1997) conceived human existence as being entirely rhetorical: "You cannot not persuade." It is within the context of this model that the authors argued that people can use this knowledge existentially to improve their relationships. In this spirit of praxis, or

theory-informed action, the authors developed procedures to function in intimate relationships in the last chapter.

Conclusion

In 1984, Ayres concluded that "the time seems particularly ripe for rhetoric to become a vital force in the area" (p. 420). Nearly 20 years after Ayers argued that the time was right for rhetorical scholarship of interpersonal communication, little had been done and Harden Fritz (2005) wrote about the potential for rhetoric to be utilized for studying interpersonal interaction in the 21st century. Harden Fritz (2005) ended her article by developing potential areas of research for interpersonal rhetoric. First, she stated that, "the concepts of agency and rhetoric, so prominent in this work through its focus on will and choice, can be engaged to move beyond the modernist assumption of lack of situatedness of an agent" (Harden Fritz, 2005, p. 43). In this manner, the rhetorical approach may be able to enter into dialogue with a dialogic approach to interpersonal communication. She also argued that the rhetorical approach could be extended into the philosophic approaches (2005, p. 43). Most interestingly, she posited that the rhetorical approach could be improved through the narrative perspective by "moving rhetorical action away from agency, while still holding to choice, situation, constraint, and will" (p. 44). As the situations stands today, much of this research is still in need of being performed.

This essay ends in the hope, like that of those before me, that the study of interpersonal rhetoric may experience a resurgence in the 21st century. The use of rhetoric in interpersonal communication dates back to at least the conversation sections of etiquette manuals from the early nineteenth century. After Mead posited the idea of a social self, rhetoricians would, for a short while, take on the idea and study the effects of conversation on personality. After a period of latency, interpersonal rhetoric was formulated in different ways by several scholars, including Hart and Burks, Phillips and Metzger, and Ambrester and Strause. Regretfully, little has been done following these scholars. Though interpersonal rhetoric has yet to fully come to fruition, Harden Fritz has pointed toward fertile grounds for the future development of interpersonal rhetoric.

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