

# re-act

SPEAK...

VERBAL NEGOTIATION



POST-CONVERSATION  
TRANSCRIPT

**COMMUNITY**  
**CONVERSATIONS**

AN OMA/CPGC COLLABORATION

# Verbal Negotiation

*[re]ACT: Community Conversation Series*

*Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and Center for Peace and Global Citizenship (CPGC)*

**Friday, February 12, 2016**

**Multicultural Center, Stokes 106**

## **SESSION OVERVIEW**

Prompted by Ron Shapiro's negotiation workshop and talk, *Perfecting Your Pitch*, this discussion explores the oft-overlooked dynamics of power and privilege in verbal negotiation. We also unpack the ways "speaking instruction" typically seeks to normalize one's identity for a majority audience, addressing the ways that this impacts the speaker.

## **[re]CC COMMITTEE**

- Stephanie Zukerman, *CPGC Program Coordinator*
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## **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS**

- Cecily van Buren-Freedman '16, *Writing Center Tutor* **FACILITATOR**
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## SESSION NOTES

- The goal for discussion is to brainstorm a more nuanced perspective on oral communication.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How do we navigate the dynamics of having an audience react to our embodied identities along with the content of our communication?
2. How do we put pressure on the normative expectations informing and judging our verbal communication?

## ABOUT RON SHAPIRO: INSTITUTE FOR EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATION

- He used “boiling it down” approach in his presentation- very simple but not taking into account certain nuances.
  - Ignoring certain problems: our background/context is sometimes out of our control during a presentation.

## ACTIVITY #1: Public Speaking Experiences

- We independently wrote down an experience we had public speaking, then came back to the circle and made a group list of factors that make identity play into public speaking:
  - Culture
  - Power
  - Physical space you are in
  - Being invited to speak v. Asserting voice through interjection
    - Is the audience ready for your presentation [of self]?
  - Personal perspective on issue
  - How you see yourself in relation to audience
  - Introduction/Framing /Information presented beforehand
  - Language
  - The amount of space you take up

## ACTIVITY #2: Silent Wall Discussion

- Using post-it notes, we wrote down thoughts on the following statements, taking time to read other responses as well:

### I AM MOST/LEAST CONSCIOUS OF MY IDENTITY WHILE SPEAKING WHEN...

- More aware when I am the “only one” of a certain identity in the room
- Less conscious when I’m around people I know
- Average all the time; almost never because I don’t focus on that; I focus on the presentation itself or project at hand
- As a woman of color I always feel conscious of my identity speaking or not. There is a level of code switching that takes place no matter if I’m in a room full of people who are similar to me or a diverse, anonymous crowd.
- I feel less conscious of my identity when I’m speaking with my family
- When I’m in a crowd of professional, I watch my every word. When I’m leading a discussion, I feel more free.
- When I am the only one (Negatively)
- I feel more conscious of my identity in places where I feel like I have power and am trying not to take up space.
- I’m more conscious when I feel less prepared or like I don’t know what I’m talking about
- If I feel like I know what I’m talking about, I don’t care who I’m talking to
- Positive when I know people are listening non-judgmentally (safe space like WOC)
- I feel more conscious of my identity when speaking in small groups or in more diverse groups. I feel less conscious in academia + large presentations
- Less aware when I am speaking around peers
- I feel most conscious of my identity when I am in white/male spaces. This is especially the case when I am for some reason called to speak about “experiences of my people.”
- I am sorry that you feel the pressure of having to be an “ambassador” of your identity. People should look to you as an individual, not a representative of a collective body.

## I FEEL MOST/LEAST EMPOWERED TO SPEAK WHEN...

- I like having a table or podium and being in the front of the room. I need to be able to have everyone in front of me so I can account for them.
- With other women of color-- particularly w/ people who understand my experiences and accept my identities.
- I make more statements than ask questions, so having someone whose strong suit is questions to partner with is awesome.
- Level physical design
- I need people to be showing their attention is on me when I'm speaking- leaning forward, nodding, making eye contact. Otherwise I feel disregarded.
- Smiling while I speak or nodding to make it clear they're following.
- Obvious "speaker" space      Lengthy amount of time to speak
- More communal, i.e. group in a circle as opposed to standing in front of a room.
- I feel empowered to speak in more intimate settings. I feel more empowered when I don't feel judged about my identity. When topics of privilege come up I feel less empowered (maybe a good thing since I'm male/cis/white?)
- I hate having to stand up in front of a room as opposed to sitting in a circle because it makes me overly-conscious about my voice, posture, attire, height, etc
- I feel more comfortable when I am at a podium or table so that I do not have to be aware of my body/physical stance.
- People knowing me makes me feel empowered

## MY BODY IMPACTS ME AS A SPEAKER WHEN...

- This has changed with time. Now as a senior, I feel more confident because people recognize me. So I'm able to pull respect from a successful speaking track record, but this would be different if I was trying to separate myself from my speaking part.
- As a woman of color, I feel like there are times when people disregard my words or try to talk over me- in those instances I try to respond with my facial expressions or my tone when I reply to them.

- As a chatty person who also has a very privileged identity, I try to sit back and be quiet more.
- As a senior I now prefer to let others speak (later I share my thoughts/questions privately)
- There are a lot of people who don't look like me
- I sometimes do posture and breathing exercises before a big speech to gain confidence thru my control of my physical being.
- I feel a lot of pressure to say "smart" things
- I feel like people are judging more than just my words or intellect
- At HC I feel intimidated to speak sometimes because of my identity (worried people will think I'm the bad guy.)
- I try not to hold my body in stand-offish poses

#### **DISCUSSION CONCLUSION(S):**

1. People feel expected to say smart/philosophical things- always feeling like one has to prove their right to be here...
2. At Haverford, we take ourselves and our thoughts very [too] seriously. It makes it difficult for people to relax and just have regular conversations with each.
3. Moving forward, it would be great to generate a list of strategies for creating empowered spaces.