NCA’s Monthly Teleconference Series
CARD Calls: Communicating About Research and Professional Development

Reasonable Hostility:
A Useful Norm of Conduct in Sites of Local Governance

Featured Speaker:
Karen Tracy
Professor, Department of Communication, University of Colorado, Boulder
& NCA Distinguished Scholar

Moderator:
Melissa Anderson, Coordinator for Research & Educational Initiatives
National Communication Association

Monday, September 13th, 2010
2:00pm Eastern time
Reasonable Hostility:  
A Useful Norm of Conduct in Sites of Local Governance

Karen Tracy 
University of Colorado at Boulder
1. The argument about *ordinary democracy* and reasonable *hostility*

2. Studying local governance — methodological ruminations

We need to be studying ordinary democratic practice

We answer the question, “What is democracy?” in practice; scrutinizing our practice might reveal to us that our implicit definition of democracy is not satisfying. — Nina Eliasoph

If we are concerned about the shape of our democracy, we would do well to start by exploring exactly those practices. By investigating the norms we already live by. — Gary Shiffman

Democracy’s heart does not beat in the halls of Congress or in the voting booth but in everyday enactments of citizenship. — Robert Asen

Without a more concrete picture of discourse, then, one that pertains meaningfully to our actual political practices. . . .it is unclear what Habermas’s theory can have for us. — Mark Kingwell
Ordinary Democracy
## BVSD Meeting Data Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hult Board (4-96 to 10-97)</th>
<th>Shoemaker Board (11-97 to 2-99)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Public Meetings</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave Meeting Length</td>
<td>5.0 hrs</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>1.33 hrs to 7.08 hrs</td>
<td>.5 hrs to 5.92 hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average # of Speakers at start</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Number of Speakers on Agenda Items</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range</td>
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<td>0 to 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Total Number of Citizen Speakers</td>
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<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>2 to 43</td>
<td>2 to 36</td>
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</table>
The Test Controversy

#1: Policy issues become character issues

#2: Local disputes tap national controversy
  – Role of citizens vs. education experts
  – Standardized testing
  – Tears in fabric of “American Dream”

#3: Newspapers and civic journalism
Communication a top priority

Task force offers ideas, recommendations
Negative Sentiment Strategies

C: .....Now you can debate whether this is good enough and have a very productive debate. But this focus on a single misleading percentage produces nothing useful, it's dangerous and it's childish. It's time for this board to act like adults. This isn't a game. now- ((bell rings)) I will say to the so-called "Gang of Five" that you may think you may get more[ DS: [I'm sorry we cannot i- uh- tolerate attacks on the board. Please stick to the issues and talk to the policy. Your time's up. Can you please come to closure please. . C: You may think you'll get more votes out of this in the next election but you don't. These are very real children you're putting at risk. And if you make a knee-jerk decision to revise the reading curriculum you will simply prove what many of us are beginning to suspect. That you care more about looking good than doing good.
The Triple Ideological Challenge of School Board Meetings

† A two-sided decision logic

† Contradictory views of democracy

† Achieving excellence and equity
Elected Officials’ Challenges

† Selecting meeting rules and deciding how to enforce them
† Balancing process needs with outcome concerns
† Navigating between rubber-stamping the superintendent’s efforts and micro-managing the district
† Recognizing the connectedness of words and people in policy discussions
Reigning Ideal

• Politeness/Civility
  – Theories = Goffman, Brown & Levinson
  – ordinary citizens, public intellectuals

• Limitations
  – OD is shaped by competing values so we need a two-sided ideal
  – Democracy should be “rowdy,” recognize legitimacy of anger & outrage
Reasonable Hostility

Df. = **face attack**, emotionally marked critical commentary about another’s actions, matched to the wrong perceived to have been done

= expression of anger most people would judge to be reasonable

Features

† A response to a perceived breach
† Includes talk tokens attentive to target’s face wants
† A judgment, similar to “reasonable person” standard
Methodological Ruminations

• **Grounded Practical Theory** (GPT) is a useful way to study communicative practices
  1. What are the problems/dilemmas of the practice?
  2. How are problems made visible discursively?
  3. What are participants’ situated ideals?

• Why?
  1. It’s empirical AND normative; it’s rhetorical AND social scientific
  2. It takes talk seriously
References


2010-2011 CARD Calls Registration Form for NCA Members

To register for one or more of the teleconferences, please fill out this form and return it to Melissa Anderson via email manderson@natcom.org or fax (202) 464-4600. Please note that the registration deadline for each teleconference is 72 hours prior to the start of the teleconference. However, there will be a registration limit of 100 phone lines (more than one person can be participating from a single phone line), so please register for the teleconferences that interest you as soon as possible to ensure that you get spots. You will receive a registration confirmation email within 48 hours of submitting this form. Slides for the presentation and dial-in information will be sent to all registered teleconference participants 48 hours before the teleconference.

Name:
Affiliation:
Email Address:
Phone Number:

Registration for: (please X all teleconferences for which you would like to be registered)

• Teaching the Basic Course in Communication
  Janis Andersen, Dean, School of Communication, Emerson College; Isa Engleberg, Professor, Department of Speech Communication, Prince George’s Community College; and Kevin Meyer, Vice Chair, Basic Course Division, NCA & Assistant Professor, School of Communication, Illinois State University
  Thursday, October 14, 2010—12:00pm Eastern

• Defining Marriage in California: An Analysis of Public & Technical Argument
  Edward Schiappa, Paul W. Frenzel Chair in Liberal Arts & Department Chair, Department of Communication Studies, University of Minnesota & NCA Distinguished Scholar
  Friday, November 5, 2010—12:00pm Eastern

• Communication Scholarship and the Public
  Kathleen Jamieson, Elizabeth Ware Packard Professor of Communication, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania; Joann Keyton, Professor, Department of Communication, North Carolina State University; and Katherine Rowan, Professor, Department of Communication, George Mason University
  Tuesday, January 18, 2011—1:00pm Eastern

• Research Presentation- Title TBD
  Joseph Turow, Professor, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania & NCA Distinguished Scholar
  Thursday, February 17, 2011—2:00pm Eastern

• Technology and the Discipline
  Christina Yoshimura, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies, University of Montana
  Friday, March 18, 2011—3:00pm Eastern

• Research Presentation- TBD
  John Daly, Professor, Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas, Austin & NCA Distinguished Scholar
  April—12:00pm Eastern

• The Post Ph.D. Job Search
  William Elwood, Scientific Review Officer, Community-Level Health Promotion Study Section, Center for Scientific Review, National Institutes of Health; Robert Leonard, Associate Professor, Department of Communication, Sinclair Community College; and Don Stacks, Professor, School of Communication, University of Miami
  Thursday, May 12, 2011—1:00pm Eastern

If you have any questions about the teleconference series, please contact Melissa Anderson at manderson@natcom.org or (202) 534-1111.
September 13, 2010 Conference Call: Dial-In Information

• Dial the Access Number: **1.800.920.7487**
• When prompted, enter the Participant Code followed by #
• Your Participant Code is **66623635#**

Participant Star Commands

• **4** - Volume: Pressing **4** will increase/decrease the volume

• **Q &A Session:** Participants press **1** to ask a question, and the moderator will take your questions in the order that they arrive

• For technical assistance during the teleconference, contact Customer Service at **1.800.989.9239**