

Teaching Supplement #12

CLAUDE GRATTON, EDITOR

Classroom use of Teaching Supplement material

Teachers may photocopy or otherwise reproduce or make copies of the material in this Teaching Supplement for classroom use. The rights to all the articles belong to their authors, and the use of any of this material for any other purpose without its author's written permission is strictly prohibited.

Call for Material

Please send material for the Teaching Supplement (electronically and hard copy) to, or contact:

Dr. Claude Gratton
Antelope Valley College
3041 West Avenue, K
Lancaster, CA 93536-5426
cgratton@avc.edu
T: 661.722.6488 F: 661.722.6483

What Does Arguing Look Like?

JEAN GOODWIN

Department of English
223 Ross Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011-1201
U.S.A.

goodwin@iastate.edu

Even on our best days, we teachers of argumentation sometimes suspect that our students are thinking bad things about us: that they don't *like* our subject! In this essay, I will give an account of a classroom exercise I call "What Does Arguing Look Like?" aimed to elicit and confront this suspected negative view of arguing. I'll start by pointing out why we need to know what our students are thinking. I'll then describe the exercise as I used it in one class, and analyze in detail the results it produced. And I'll close with some speculations about what we can learn from these results.

1. Why do we need to think about what students think?

Our students' negative view of arguing are a subject of troubles talk whenever teachers of argumentation gather. Like the teachers interviewed by the *New York Times*, we grumble about our "students' growing reluctance to debate," and how "students today tend to be more respectful of authority—parental and professorial—than they used to be, and more reticent about public disputation" (Kakutani, 2002). Gerald Graff echoes some of our themes:

For many students, the very word "argument". . . conjures up an image not of spirited conversational give and take, but of acrimonious warfare in which competitors revile each other and make enemies yet rarely change each other's minds. Disputes end up producing winners and losers or a stalemate that frustrates all parties; either way they are useless except for stirring up bad blood. (2003, 56)

Such gossip among teachers surely helps social bonding and lends emotional support. But there are at least some signs that our complaints are well founded. A strong negative streak turned up in the early studies of ordinary attitudes toward argument (Benoit, 1983; Scheerhorn, 1987; Trapp, 1986; Walker, 1991; but see Legge, 1991). Others have pointed out that a tie between arguing and warfare is built into the English language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and U.S. culture (Tannen, 1998). Still, we'd be guilty of hasty generalization if we assumed that in our classes we always faced students with allegedly ordinary views. If we want to know what *this* group of students is thinking, we should ask them.

But *why* would we want to know about this, or any of the other innumerable faulty views students start our classes with?—since, after all, the whole point of teaching is for them to end up somewhere better than where they began. Let me suggest three reasons.

The first and most obvious is to motivate students. A negative attitude towards argument can undermine students' willingness to actively engage course material. No one would want to hone a skill that will only "help" them anger their friends, pick nits, and make the weaker argument appear the stronger. (No one except a few tyrants-in-training, that is.) But if the students are unmotivated, even the best presentation of argument diagramming or debate case structure is going to go unheard. So the argumentation teacher needs first to find out what students think about the usefulness of the subject, and then may need further to persuade them of views that will better motivate them to learn.

Recent learning theory suggests moreover that a negative view of argumentation will affect students' very ability to learn the course material. This theory goes under names like "constructivism," among others (e.g., Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000); it can be briefly summarized as follows. Students do not come to class with empty heads. They bring their own conceptions of the phenomena being studied with them, conceptions that have proven adequate to their needs. Any material the teacher presents will be fit into the pre-existing views, even if doing so requires it to be twisted out of recognition. For example, in an argumentation class students may hear all mentions of words related to "critical"—as in "critical thinking, critical questions, argument critique"—to mean "harsh and derogatory" as opposed to

“careful and judicious,” despite repeated warnings not to. A teacher’s first duty, therefore, is to find out what students’ pre-existing conceptions are. Further, once discovered, it will not help just to preach against these conceptions. Instead, the initial teaching strategy must be to challenge students with a situation in which their views are conspicuously unsatisfactory. Such experiences, the teacher hopes, will give the students incentive to examine and revise their conceptions *themselves*.

The constructivist line of reasoning flows into a third reason for wanting to know what our students are thinking, one more specific to our subject. As put forward by a cluster of scholars in the Communication field, argumentation is a *practical art* (e.g., Craig, 1996; Goodwin, 2002; see also Craig & Tracy, 1995 and Philipson, 1992 with reference to communication generally). It is not a body of knowledge that can be grasped apart from the ability to use it in practice, nor a set of skills that can be applied mechanically, without thought. Rather argumentation as a practical art requires the practitioner engage in an activity directed by and realizing an understanding of that activity. For example, arguers quite ordinarily proceed by criticizing others’ argumentative conduct, or defending their own, on the basis of norms they put forward as governing their transaction—that is, on the basis of an understanding of argument. Within the practical art of argument, one goal of theory must be to articulate or “speak out” the implicit conceptions of skilled arguers more precisely and accurately perhaps than they could (thus also Benoit, 1991; Trapp, 1986; Trapp & Benoit, 1987). Within the art, again, one goal of pedagogy must be to engage students in their own theorizing, helping them deepen their understanding as they extend their skills. This conception of argumentation thus encourages teachers to accept their students as already quite skillful and knowledgeable communicators and reasoners. The problem, if there is a problem, may be that the competencies and understandings enabling students to be good at some activities (e.g., conversing as a friend) may disable them when they engage in others (e.g., arguing as a citizen). Again, this view suggests a pedagogical strategy not of preaching but of challenging students to adopt more considered views and to broaden their abilities to communicate differently in different contexts.

Whether to motivate students, to help them construct a more correct view of the subject, or to advance them in the practical art of argumentation, the teacher of argumentation thus may need to do two things:

She needs to elicit students’ initial, pre-reflective views of arguing, so that she, and perhaps the students as well, can examine them.

If those initial views appear faulty or limited, she needs to present students with challenges to them, inviting students to reflect more deeply.

The exercise “What Does Arguing Look Like?” aims to achieve both these purposes.

2. The exercise

I will report on the exercise as I used it first, in a sophomore/junior level introduction to rhetorical theory. This was not an argumentation class strictly speaking, although it did have a significant focus on political persuasion (“deliberative rhetoric”) and

the place of argument (“logos”) within it; it further asked students to participate in weekly debates and argumentative papers. Seventy people were enrolled that Fall term; like the majority of students in this private, Midwestern university, they were “traditional” college age.

The exercise was used the fourth week of the quarter, during a unit devoted to the topic of the relationship of persuasion to force and violence. Sixty-two students were present in class. The reading for the day was Brockriede’s classic essay on arguers as rapists, seducers and lovers (1972); the students had been assigned selections from Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) treatment of “argument as war” and from Foss and Griffin’s identification of persuasion and violence (1995) on previous days. The 50 minute session opened with the regular ten minute quiz on the readings for that week.

The exercise itself took 30-35 minutes, and proceeded in three steps: Drawing; Images; Theorizing. The first step of the exercise (Drawing; ten minutes) asked students to articulate, visually and discursively, their initial conceptions of arguing. I began by writing the topic for the day on the board: What does arguing look like? (a question suggested by Meyers & Siebold, 1990). I invited students to take out a sheet of paper, to think of a typical or recent example in their experience of people arguing, and then to draw it. In focusing on the visual representation of arguing in this and the following step of the exercise I was attempting to appeal to students’ pre-reflective, non-verbalized understandings. I encouraged them not to worry about artistic talent, drawing a stick figure on the board as a demonstration of acceptable incompetence.

After a few minutes of sketching, I asked the students to exchange drawings with another student. Each partner was to examine the drawing, and then interview the other, asking three questions and recording the answers on the drawing: (1) Who is arguing with whom? (2) What are they arguing about? (3) What two or three words best describe how they are arguing?

The second step of the exercise (Images; ten to fifteen minutes) exposed students to some alternative views of arguing, again both visually and discursively. As the partner interviews were winding down, I turned off the lights and invited the students to consider some images of what arguing looks like. (Information on the sources and development of the images can be found in the Appendix.)

Hicks’ (1991) intensive interviews showed his subjects most focused on arguments in relationships—husband/wife, daughter/mother, brother/brother (see also Benoit & Benoit, 1987). I therefore opened the presentation with two images of couples arguing bitterly and pointlessly, which I guessed students would see as typical.

The next three images were meant to remind students that arguing occurs more widely; they portrayed adults arguing, vigorously yet with apparent enjoyment, during meals. These were followed up by a set of pictures meant to provide a more dramatic challenge to student views: pairs of maroon-robed Tibetan Buddhist monks engaged in vigorous, formalized debate in a monastic courtyard (see Dreyfus, 2003).

The next series of images portrayed arguing in a variety of more or less familiar contexts: in Christianity (following up on the “religion” theme); in baseball; in politics, center, right and left; and in history.

I closed by presenting two images in which people were *not* arguing, by way of contrast: Rodin’s “Thinker” and a video clip of a brawl in the Taiwanese parliament.

As the images were displayed, I explained them where necessary, and asked the students to make connections or contrasts between them. For example, after the first few images, I asked the class what bodily motion(s) appeared to be associated with arguing. Several students immediately noted the obvious: all the images contained a pointed finger (or sometimes, open hand) directed by the arguer to the interlocutor, sometimes with a raised hand blocking the motion in reply. We went back over the images to confirm this generalization, which would also be substantiated in many of the remaining images as well. Similarly, a bit later in the presentation a woman student raised the question of the relationship of arguing to gender. Most of the slides, she pointed out, showed men arguing; and we briefly discussed whether men and women argue differently, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

As the third and final step in the exercise (Theorizing; ten minutes), I invited students to form their own view of arguing. I began with a brief talk integrating the images with the readings for the week, suggesting three possible conceptions of the activity we had just visually examined. Drawing a spectrum on the board, I proposed to the class that at one end there are those who consider arguing to be a fundamentally *cooperative* activity, like a dance. People who take this view consider arguing to be a joint act directed to a common goal, often the resolution of a difference of opinion in a rational fashion—Brockriede’s “arguers as lovers.” At other end, there are those who consider arguing to be a fundamentally *competitive* activity, like a fight. People who take this view think that in arguing, each side is out for personal advantage; each side wants to win, to dominate their opponent—Brockriede’s “arguers as rapists,” or the metaphorical association of argument and war. In between these two extremes, there are those who consider arguing to be neither cooperative nor competitive, but rather coordinated. People who take this view think that arguers are pursuing their own goals, but are doing so in a way that shows respect for others.

After the lecturette, I gave students the opportunity to state their (tentatively) final conception of arguing. I asked that they take a drawing, turn it over, and write a paragraph or informal “essay” articulating their current views of what arguing looks like. Does it look more like love, or more like war? In particular, what does the basic argumentative gesture—the arm extended, the finger pointing—mean? Clearly, it is addressed to another. Is it a violent invasion of that other’s space? One step in a cooperative dance? Or an offer to coordinate their actions?

3. Students’ pre-reflective views of arguing

So: what *did* these students think? During the initial, Drawing phase of the exercise I had attempted to elicit students’ initial characterization of arguing by asking them “what 1-3 words best describe” the activity in the picture they had drawn. Students

<i>Theme: Arguing is...</i>	<i>Descriptive terms</i>	<i>Stereotypical drawing</i>	<i>What is being said</i>	<i>Number of drawings</i>
<i>Angry</i>	"anger/angry, mad, yelling, mean, insult, heated, complaining, jealous, war, explosive, deadly"	waving , arms steaming head, cloud overhead, physical violence	profanity, accusations	37 (60%)
<i>Emphatic</i>	"loud, animated"	wide open mouth, rays out of mouth, or head	"!, !!, !!!"	28 (45%)
<i>Futile</i>	"futile, petty, pointless, frustrating, stupid, not understand, don't help each other's views, closed minded, stubborn, opinionated"	a wall between two people	"blah, blah, blah"and variants, "Argument Clinic"-type remarks	21 (34%)
<i>Hurtful</i>	"unhappy, bad"	sad face	—	12 (19%)
<i>Enjoyable/ Productive</i>	"somewhat friendly, dance, exchange ideas, communicating"	happy face	—	9 (14%)

Table 1. Students' Initial Characterizations of Arguing

found this question confusing, however; less than half answered in any form, the rest either ignored it or recorded the words that the arguers were themselves using. But by supplementing the existing responses with close attention to the content of the drawings, the general themes summarized in Table 1 (see p. T6) emerged: arguing can be Angry, Emphatic, Futile, Hurtful, or Enjoyable/Productive. (Note that a drawing could contain more than one theme, or none.)

It is interesting to note that Hicks (1991) also found the first four of these themes in his intensive interviews with students. “Anger/angry” was by far the most common descriptive term, with eight instances. What I call “Argument Clinic-type Remarks” typical of the Futile theme are symmetrical denials or accusations, such as “You suck!/You suck!” and “No I didn’t!/Yes you did!” Among drawings with the Enjoyable/Productive theme, three represented a “happy face” only on the apparent winner of the argument.

Overall, including the Angry, Futile and Hurtful themes as “negative,” 45 of the 62 drawings (73%) displayed negative attitudes towards arguing. Since Emphatic shades into Angry—it is hard to tell whether stick figures are just “loud” or actually “yelling”—including Emphatic as well means that 48 drawings (77%) displayed negative attitudes.

When selecting the photos presented in the second, Images, step of the exercise, I had guessed that students would imagine arguing among intimates as the paradigmatic case. This guess turned out to be correct. Table 2 summarizes what the student drawings portrayed as the typical context in which arguing occurs: Interpersonally, in Public, with Violence, and Abstract/Indeterminate settings.

<i>Paradigmatic case</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
<i>Interpersonal Arguing</i>	30	48%
<i>boyfriend/girlfriend</i>	(16)	(26%)
<i>peer/peer</i>	(14)	(23%)
<i>Public Arguing</i>	11	18%
<i>Violence</i>	9	15%
<i>Abstract Conceptions</i>	8	13%
<i>Indeterminate</i>	4	6%
<i>Total</i>	62	100%

Table 2. Students’ Initial Paradigmatic Situations for Arguing

Nearly half the students’ sketches placed arguments in Interpersonal settings. Many of these pictures were identified or identifiable as “girlfriend/boyfriend,” “boyfriend/boyfriend,” “guy/girl” or “couple” arguments. In addition to this largest group of drawings, a related set represented peer/peer interactions, identified as “friends,” “roommates,” “self/sister,” “football players” and “students.”

Another even more negative context was expressed in a group of drawings that directly linked arguing to physical violence. The Violence category included six drawings related to the events of September 11, 2001 (five weeks prior to the exercise), picturing conflict between President Bush or an “American” generally and Osama bin Ladin, or an “Afghan” generally. Other pictures represented armies fighting in the U.S. civil war, two men fighting over a “girl,” and cats fighting.

Some students did imagine other contexts for arguing, however. Nearly a fifth of the class drew pictures of what I call Public Arguing. Representations of non-intimates arguing included pictures of debates in politics (3), courtrooms (2), athletics (2); after car accidents, by email, between dorm residents and the dorm manager, and in a grade complaint dialogue (1 each). There is some obvious overlap here with the sort of situations I suspect many teachers of argumentation take as their paradigmatic cases—arguing in the standard rhetorical genres of deliberative (political) and forensic (courtroom) persuasion. This suggests that the teachers' view should be recognizable to at least *some* students.

A final group drew Abstract pictures, in which a drawing with no apparent relevance to argument (e.g., "Pac-Men") was supplemented by an extended explanation; my guess is that some of these students preferred a verbal to a visual means of expression.

If arguing between intimates is the first image that comes to their minds, then students' negative views of the activity make sense. In intimate relationships where concord is prized, the overt disagreement that is arguing's most salient feature (e.g., Trapp, 1986; Jacobs & Jackson, 1981; Meyers & Brashers, 1998) can be experienced as at least futile, if not decidedly harmful. It's worth noting by contrast that of the few drawings with no negative themes, seven (50%) were either Abstract Conceptions or Public Arguing—i.e., not Interpersonal.

In sum: the "What Does Arguing Look Like?" exercise revealed that a clear majority of this group of students initially viewed argument as angry, useless or even harmful, perhaps because they imagined it occurring in conflict-ridden disagreements among intimates and associated with other forms of fighting.

4. Students' reflective conceptions of arguing

Did these views change upon reflection? Analysis of the paragraphs students wrote during the final, Theorizing, step of the exercise suggests "yes." These paragraphs revealed a significantly broader range of views at the end of the exercise in comparison with the beginning. The main themes in the responses are summarized in Table 3, clustering student views as Positive, Negative and Mixed (to be explained b

Those adopting a final Negative view, although still a sizeable minority, nevertheless totaled only about a third of those expressing negative views at the beginning of the exercise—a substantial decrease. Common terms expressing the Negative theme included "competition, competitive, aggressive, one-upmanship" and "confrontational." For example: "Argument is competitive, aggressive. It's like trying to beat your opponent into submission—get him to give up their ideas in favor of yours. It's a beating." Arguers in this view were out to "win" or "defeat" each other, and argumentative moves and the bodily gestures were described as "offensive"/"attack" and "defensive"/"defense."

Even among these Negative responses, however, it was only asserted that argument was "like" or "sort of like war"—i.e., not war itself; two went on to explicitly contrast arguing with fighting, one explaining that "arguing is civilized,

<i>Reflective view</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage of responses</i>
<i>Negative</i>	17	27%
<i>Positive</i>	5	8%
<i>Mixed</i>	36	58%
<i>In the Middle</i>	(22)	(35%)
<i>Situational</i>	(14)	(23%)
<i>Other/no answer</i>	4	6%
<i>Total</i>	62	100%

Table 3. Students' Reflective Views of Arguing

but fighting is barbaric.” Several expressed a sense of resigned realism; arguing “should be closer to love but unfortunately it isn’t.” This was often ascribed to the fact that the arguers themselves were flawed. “People,” as one student observed, “debate because they feel people must hear their view, not because they care or are open to the other person’s view.”

Only a small minority of students was willing to commit itself fully to an optimistic, positive view of arguing. Students articulating this theme emphasized the reciprocity inherent in the argumentative relationship:

Arguing is like teaching except there are no teachers just students. Students want to gain knowledge but do not want to receive it from one another. So the students clash because the only other person contending their argument is another student.

I think that the basic argument gesture is one that opens up a person and allows for a response. There are obviously various emotions behind this gesture ranging from anger to compromise, but the action itself is about opening a discussion.

Other responses similarly stressed the importance of finding “common ground” or allowing one’s own beliefs to be “shaped” by the other.

The majority of students expressed conceptions of arguing that retained some of their initial negativity, but in a moderated form or as part of a larger conception—what I will call the Mixed view. Two subcategories emerged here. First was the theme of In the Middle, articulated by students who mentioned both competitive and cooperative aspects of arguing or placed themselves expressly in the middle of the competitive/cooperative spectrum. For example:

I think arguments are neither totally aggressive nor totally cooperative. Instead, during an argument at times there is cooperation and at times aggression. Because the arguers are both there it is somewhat cooperative. But since they both have their own positions it is somewhat aggressive. The arguers must try to coordinate in order to come to any conclusion. Therefore an argument can encompass aggression, cooperation & coordination all at once.

Argumentation is coordination. The basic gesture of arguing (pointing) suggests not only a physical affront because it is aggressive and accusatory, but it also suggests a contribution, meaning that arguments entail cooperation.

Features that were deemed to make arguing more cooperation-like included the goal of resolving disagreement, agreements between the arguers about turn-taking, equal contributions or responsiveness to each other and attitudes of mutual respect. Features that were deemed to make arguing more competition-like again included most prominently the personal characteristics of the arguers as being people motivated by “selfishness,” out to “win,” having “a vested interest” in their own positions. Several students noted that while arguing was In the Middle, it did often tend more towards the Negative end of the spectrum; for example: “in general (theory) arguing can look like a coordinated discussion However, in practice, argumentation frequently looks like a state of war.” Other students, by contrast, viewed competition as not entirely Negative, for without it, “neither side would really invest themselves into the debate, and it wouldn’t be good.”

The second Mixed view was expressed using a Situational theme. These students either expressly stated that arguing took different “forms” or had different “levels” in different “situations,” or at least suggested several different ways arguing “can” or “could” be. For example:

I believe argument looks different in different situations and amongst different people. As individuals, we do things differently than the next person. Also, we play multiple roles in our varied social context, allowing argument to take different forms within an individual.

The meaning of the basic argument gesture lays in question, because it could have a few, but the gesture itself is both sly and sincere at the same time. It could either be a welcome, friendly invitation to debate or a friendly invitation to an unwelcome ambush. It presents the invited with a cause for caution, but at the same time for openness.

Circumstances that were thought to make arguing vary included the relationship between the arguers (arguing “on political level when people who don’t know each other debate about issues that effect many people” versus arguing that is “intimate”); the number of people involved (“from a group of two to an entire world of people”); differences in “intensity” of disagreement; motivation for arguing (““mental stimulation”” versus coming to a “common understanding” or “middle ground”); personal characteristics (someone who “needs to prove him or herself to the other person” versus someone with “more passive tendencies”); and the “topic of the argument and its significance to the arguers.”

Overall, it appears that two aspects of the exercise were most successful in inducing students to reconsider their initial conceptions. First, the diversity of settings, purposes and roles for arguing displayed in the Images step (and possibly in discussion with their peers) seems to have challenged (or reminded) some students to recognize the Situational nature of arguing. From this broader perspective, although in some situations arguing may be angry, futile and so on, in others it may be a functional and enjoyable activity. Second, the lecturette presenting a spectrum of diverse conceptions of arguing seems to have challenged (or reminded) some

students to recognize the validity of views other than their own. This class was throughout the course very eager to find *all* conceptions of *anything* to be correct, at least in part. Making explicit a spectrum of views on arguing running from “War” to “Love” gave them the opportunity to locate themselves somewhere in the middle, and thereby to acknowledge at least some positive aspects of the activity.

5. Conclusions and speculation

Overall, the class seemed to enjoy the “What Does Arguing Look Like?” exercise. Like Alice before Wonderland, I and (I believe) the students found it pleasant to break up a normally prosy activity with some pictures.

As the results I’ve presented suggest, the exercise also seems to have achieved its purposes. The exercise confirmed that most students in this class did start by viewing arguing negatively, and filled in some details of how and why they did so. The exercise also revealed that students’ initial conceptions incorporated key areas of flexibility that could be exploited relatively easily to encourage them to take broader views.

I have used the exercise now a half a dozen times in various settings, including as a first-week activity in classes specifically focused on argumentation. Speaking impressionistically, the results appear the same. Now that I have more definite expectations of what they will draw, I replace the final “spectrum” lecturette by asking students to discuss the differences between their own sketches and the images. For example, I ask them why so many of them drew girlfriend/boyfriends, and so few, public meetings; or why the people in their drawings are mostly angry, while the people in the images mostly aren’t. This discussion appears to produce the same Situational and In the Middle essay themes as the more labored presentation.

Of course, no one-day exercise is sufficient to transform students’ attitudes. But if the themes that emerge when examining “What Does Arguing Look Like?” are re-iterated throughout the semester, teachers of argumentation can reasonably hope to change students’ negative views of arguing, thus influencing their motivation for learning and their conceptions of the subject.

Let me close with a final speculation. If, as above, we conceive argumentation as a practical art, then the exercise I have described has uses beyond the pedagogical. Argumentation theorists ought (among other things) to give voice to the practical understandings of ordinary practitioners. Students in our classes are ordinary practitioners. Therefore their views are something theorists ought to listen to (or look at). From this perspective, the “What Does Arguing Look Like?” exercise can be a small dialogue from which teachers, as well as students, learn something.

Consider this example. One set of drawings took me by surprise—they portrayed a context for arguing that I hadn’t thought much about before, although on reflection it isn’t unfamiliar. On one sketch of an athlete arguing with a referee, the student noted three descriptive terms: “human error, anger, questioning authority.” A similar theme appears in a drawing of a student (thinking “A”) arguing with a teacher (thinking “C”), and in another of residents arguing with a dorm manager. Thus at

least some of these students (in contrast to Hicks', 1991, interviewees and the Benoit's, 1987, respondents) thought that arguing was an appropriate way for subordinates to address, and indeed object to, those with power over them.

After examining the students' final essays closely, I began to notice resonances between these drawings and some conceptions articulated there. Several essays expressed a bond between arguing and self-assertion, and in particular asserting one's own worth in a world that tends to overlook it. For example:

Argument indicates the confidence & faith in one's own beliefs or viewpoints . . . You have to be sure what you are talking about to fully convey your thoughts.

To win, you need to stay true to yourself and persuade the other person.

Arguing fulfills . . . the needs to voice your opinion and have others validate your feelings. Arguing gives you a feeling of self; you can help discover who you are.

Similarly, several students noted that people engage in argument in order to show *themselves*, not their opinions, to be right. And others explained that it is this close tie between the person and the argument that makes arguing so often angry. "One's position consumes the arguer," as one student put it, causing him to respond perhaps too aggressively to challenges. "When the convictions are deeply personal," another proposed, "conflict is almost inevitable."

Why was I surprised by this cluster of ideas? In part, it may be because I and my students live in somewhat different worlds: younger university students may have more experience with being pushed around and disrespected than older university professors do—perhaps. But it's also the case that very little in contemporary argumentation theory forces me to take seriously the relationship between the arguer and the position she is arguing. Most theorists, for example, use quite weak terms to designate this relationship, as Perelman did in speaking of "adherence" (Goodwin, 1995). The students' responses suggest that this vocabulary seriously underrates the bond. Repeatedly their essays are telling us that people only argue when they care, deeply; that in arguing, they are putting not only their opinions, but themselves and their deepest convictions at risk. This conception is not completely unknown to theory. It was once explored by Henry W. Johnstone (1959). Perhaps it's now due another look.

I began this project in the spirit of "classroom research," as a "systematic and careful study of learning as it takes place day by day" with the goal of "gaining insight and understanding into how to make [my] teaching more effective" (Cross and Steadman, 1996, 2). I close it with a call for further research into argumentation itself. Argumentation theory in North America has always developed in close connection with pedagogy (Johnson & Blair, 1994). This tradition may be fruitfully continued not only through classroom research into our pedagogy, but through research into the argumentation theories that get articulated, by students as well as teachers, within our classrooms.

Appendix: The Images

The images were collected from a variety of sources—family photographs, books, newspapers and the web. After consideration of the relevant circumstances, I judged that classroom presentation was fair use of the copyrighted material under U.S. law, since the use was nonprofit and educational and the images largely factual and published, representing only a small portion of the original content, and not for sale in any established market. The images not already in digital form were scanned, and a series of webpages designed to present them. These pages were then stored on a laptop and presented using a “portable” projector.

I plan to maintain a full set of the images on my website, currently at <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~goodwin/>, and I include source information below for those images still online as of May, 2005. Given the fleeting nature of web content, however, I encourage the interested reader to construct her own set of images of “What Arguing Looks Like” searching terms like “arguing, argument, debate” on an image search engine such as Google.

1. A young woman spurning her date’s proposition.
2. A cartoon about a husband/wife argument; <http://www.nevtron.si/borderline/argue.gif>.
3. Two photos of my mother arguing with a friend over the remains of a picnic.
4. Israelis arguing at a café; from Deborah Sontag, (2000, July 9), “Two Sides Share Subdued View of Mideast Summit Talks,” *The New York Times*, Section 1, p. 6.
5. Tibetan monastic debate; the cover picture from Guy Newland (1999), *Appearance and Reality: The Two Truths in Four Buddhist Systems*, Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Press.
6. Three more images of monastic debate; <http://fistick.com/india1a.html>.
7. Thomas Becket arguing with his king, a 14th century illumination; from John Butler (1995) *The Quest for Becket’s Bones*, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, p. 7.
8. A manager and an umpire arguing.
9. Bush v. Gore presidential debate.
10. Phyllis Schlafly orating; from Nancy F. Cottred (2000), *No Small Courage*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
11. Malcolm X orating; <http://www.ashland.edu/~mposner/Honors/0205.jpg>.
12. Patrick Henry orating; <http://www.history.org/images/debate.jpg>.
13. Cicero orating; <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/magazines/images/Jcicero2.jpg>.
14. Rodin’s Thinker.
15. A brawl in the Taiwanese parliament; <http://www-cgi.cnn.com/WORLD/Newsbriefs/9512/12-05/brawl.mov>.

References

- Benoit, P.J. (1983). Characteristics of Arguing from a Social Actor's Perspective. In D. Zarefsky, M.O. Sillars and J. Rhodes (Eds.), *Argument in Transition: Proceedings of the Third Summer Conference on Argumentation*, pp. 544-59. Annandale VA: SCA.
- Benoit, P.J. (1991). A Defense of Argument as Disagreement. *Argumentation and Advocacy* 28: 35-40.
- Benoit, W.J. and P.J. Benoit. (1987). Everyday Argument Practices of Naive Social Actors. In J.W. Wenzel (Ed.), *Argument and Critical Practices: Proceedings of the Fifth SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*, pp. 465-73. Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Bransford J.D., A.L. Brown and R.C. Cocking. (Eds.). (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School, Expanded Edition*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Brockriede, W. (1972). Arguers as Lovers. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 5: 1-11.
- Cross, K.P. and M.H. Steadman. (1996). *Classroom Research: Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Craig, R.T. (1996). Practical-theoretical Argumentation. *Argumentation*, 10: 461-474.
- Craig, R.T. and K. Tracy. (1995). Grounded Practical Theory: The Case of Intellectual Discussion. *Communication Theory*, 5: 248-272.
- Dreyfus, G.B.J. (2003). *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Foss, S.K. and C.L. Griffin. (1995). Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric. *Communication Monographs*, 62: 2-18.
- Goodwin, J. (1995). Perelman, Adhering and Convictions. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 28: 215-233.
- Goodwin, J. (2002). One Question, Two Answers. In H.V. Hansen, *et al.* (Eds.), *Argument and Its Applications* [CD-ROM]. Windsor, ON: Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation.
- Graff, G. (2003). *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hicks, D. (1991). A Descriptive Account of Interpersonal Argument. In D.W. Parson (Ed.), *Argument in Controversy: Proceedings of the Seventh SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*, pp. 167-174. Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Jacobs, S. and S. Jackson. (1981). Argument as a Natural Category: The Routine Grounds of Arguing in Conversation. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 45: 118-132.
- Johnson, R.A. and J.A. Blair. (1994). Informal Logic: Past and Present. In R.H. Johnson and J.A. Blair (Eds.), *New Essays in Informal Logic*, pp. 1-19. Windsor, ON: Informal Logic.
- Johnstone, Jr., H.W. (1959). *Philosophy and Argument*. State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kakutani, M. (2002, March 23). Debate? Dissent? Discussion? Oh, Don't Go There! *The New York Times*, p. B7.

- Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Legge, N.J. (1991). Framing a Dispute: The Role of Context in Interpersonal Argument. In D.W. Parson (Ed.), *Argument in Controversy: Proceedings of the Seventh SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*, pp. 217-223. Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Meyers, R.A. and D.E. Brashers. (1998). Argument in Group Decision Making: Explicating a Process Model and Investigating the Argument-Outcome Link. *Communication Monographs*, 65: 261-281.
- Meyers, R.A. and D.R. Seibold. (1990). Perspectives on Group Argument: A Critical Review of Persuasive Arguments Theory and an Alternative Structural View. In J.A. Anderson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 13*, pp. 268-302. Newbury Park, PA: Sage.
- Philipsen, G. (1992). *Speaking Culturally: Explorations in Social Communication*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Scheerhorn, D.R. (1987). Perceived Causes of Argument Avoidance in Group Decision-making. In J.W. Wenzel (Ed.), *Argument and Critical Practices: Proceedings of the Fifth SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*, pp. 419-22. Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Tannen, D. (1998). *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Trapp, R. (1986). The Role of Disagreement in Interactive Argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 23: 23-41.
- Trapp, R. and P.J. Benoit. (1987). An Interpretive Perspective on Argumentation: A Research Editorial. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 51: 417-430.
- Walker, G.B. (1991). Argument and Conflict: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives. In D.W. Parson (Ed.), *Argument in Controversy: Proceedings of the Seventh SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*, pp. 182-87. Annandale, VA: SCA.

Call for Material for the Teaching Supplement

We solicit material from teachers for the Teaching Supplement. We will publish examples of assignments, tests and exams; examples used in the classroom that work well for some particular purpose (with or without your analysis of them); discussions of textbooks that you have used and your views about how best to use them; teaching tips for particular topics, teaching challenges or problems/issues (with or without your solution to them). We also welcome notices of upcoming conferences, workshops, other journals you have found useful and ideas about how to train faculty or coach peers. Send such material to Claude Gratton, Teaching Supplement Editor, or contact him (see page 65 for his contact information).