

Insider into the Leaders of Boys State on a Plate: One Trait Can Affect that Debate

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COMM 102-PC Interpersonal Communication

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June 16, 2010

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Colorado Boys State is a program founded by the American Legion that educates young men about the functions of government. Boys State is held every year at CSU Pueblo. This year, it was held from June 6, 2010, to June 12, 2010. The process includes a chance for every boy to be involved in his own local, county, and state government. In essence, Boys State creates the fifty-first state with all new laws, municipalities, and structure. The main purpose is to expose young men to the roles, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of citizens. While at Boys State, young men develop the leadership roles and the democratic responsibilities needed for the future. Shelley D. Lane's (2010) interpersonal communication concepts are seen clearly at Boys State in the following three ways: (1) slow-track circuit (p.98) was shown in decision making, (2) self-concept (p.64) was shown through everyone there, and (3) symbolic interactionism (p.64) was used by the people electing the officials running.

Shelley D. Lane's (2010) concept of slow-track circuit (p.98) was shown at Boys State through decision making processes. In other words, when it came to making decisions at Boys State, everyone had to use the slow-track circuit concept of communication. Slow-track circuit is when the "thinking brain rationally analyzes a situation and then communicates with the emotional brain" (Shelley Lane, 2010, p.98). For example, when people had to give a speech, such as candidates for governor, they had to think before they let their nerves get to them. They needed to think before they act, and control their nerves. Another example was when people were campaigning for the different offices, and had to put themselves out there for people to see.

The candidates had to talk about certain things that occurred in their lives, so they had to think before they allowed their emotions to kick in. Especially, when they were asked questions about certain topics. The third example of Shelly's (2010) concept of slow-track circuit (p.98) at Boy's State came when the people who were going to elect the candidates and select which one they wanted. The people had to make impressions off of the candidates while thinking carefully before their decision was made. Thus, They had to avoid the anticipation of the situation before they thought about it first. As one can see, while at Boys State, slow-track circuit (p.98) communication has to be used to effectively perform the duties of a candidate, voter, or elected official.

Shelley D. Lane's (2010) self-concept (p.64) was shown through the leaders who were running for office. In other words, the leaders used their self-concept to describe to everyone why they were fit for the job. The self-concept "refers to how we perceive ourselves" (Shelley Lane, 2010, p.64). For example, there was one individual who was running for U.S. Senator who over exaggerated his quality a bit too much. He continuously used the word "lead" over and over. Most of the people, including myself, at Boys State absolutely hated it. In one minute's time, he had used the word "lead" twenty-five times, not including "leading," "leader," and "leadership." He was not voted in because of his annoying self-concept (p.64) towards leadership. Another example of self-concept (p.64) was when another student was running for U.S. Senator and made a speech about the Colorado River. He had said, "My leadership flows as thick as the Colorado River." He thinks he has a lot of leadership, and this is his perception of himself. There was a large group of students who knew him, and supported him the whole way to the U.S. Senator seat. Next, there was a person running for governor who, when asked, loved to

talk about himself. He would go on and on about everything he has done and how caring he was, etc. He bragged about how qualified he was for the job compared to the other candidates. Some people thought of him as too egocentric, and he didn't make it to the governor position. Although these are just a few of the many examples of Self-concept (p.64) at Boys State, the reader can see how we all perceive ourselves in different ways. These leaders saw themselves their way, and we saw them our way.

George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism (p.64) was shown at Boys State through all the people electing the officials. In other words, the people who were electing the officials used symbolic interactionism (p.64) during the process. Symbolic interactionism "posits that our view of self is shaped by those whom we communicate" (Shelly Lane, 2010, p. 64). For example, when meeting the new people at Boys State, some people adapted to others views and beliefs. Due to the extended debates both in the hot seat, and out of the hot seat, people would adapt their beliefs and opinions with others. In this case, the symbolic interactionism comes in social comparison (p.65) when the students compared their beliefs with others. Next, the candidates, for whatever position they were moving towards, had to adapt to the beliefs of the constituents they were going to represent. The candidates present their own beliefs, but they also had adapted to the questions that were asked. Finally, I, myself, adapted to the experience because of the speeches that were given, and the communication I had. There were a few people who said, "Ya know," and "um" a lot, so now I watch for those when I am talking. It has really helped me improve my speech. Everyone is influenced by the people they are around, however you must adapt yourself to it. In these instances, the leaders of Boys State have been influenced by their peers, and view themselves a bit differently because of that.

In all these examples from Boys State, interpersonal communication was necessary. All the young men associated with one another one way or the other. They all had their voice heard, and used the many different concepts of communication. It was noticed that if you used proper communication skills correctly, and to your advantage, you can really persuade an audience. The people and the objects around us effect how we communicate. One big thing that was noticed was that lack of sleep has an affect on conversation. One is less likely to communicate when they are tired or just plain bored. “Just as communication affects our self-concept, our self-concept affects how we communicate” (Shelly Lane, 2010, p.66). The way the leaders perceived themselves affected the campaign they were running. In the case of the Lead, Lead, Lead guy, as everyone called him, he used unhealthy self-concept which “can result in exaggerated and unrealistic perceptions of our strengths” (Shelly Lane, 2010, p.66). This proves that theory right there. He was a primary example. As leaders, we had to put our brains first and our b*****s second. As one can see, these perceptions are different for everyone, but primarily at Boys State, it was all fun either way.

While at Boys State, I enhanced my speaking and leadership skills. It was fun to run our own government, and to form our own government. I felt many senses of emotion while at Boys State from disgust to surprise. My development of these skills and ideas will follow me to the future. My slow-track circuit (p.98) allows me to think before I let my emotions get the best of me. Watching the speakers present and answer question gave me the power to control my nerves too. This is when I use my symbolic interactionism (p.64) to adjust my speaking skills to some of the ones I heard, and observed. While talking to people, some of my political views changed which also proves this idea even further. The whole time there I searched more, and more, into

my self-concept (p.64) to see what my own principles and believes were. I even did this to see if I could compare myself to others, which is called social comparison (p.65).It was a great educational opportunity which allowed me to express myself and meet new people. It was the ultimate interpersonal communication experience because it “involved *at least* two people who establish a communicative relationship” (Shelly Lane, 2010, p.4) during the entire week. There really wasn’t a time when someone didn’t communicate. The phrase “we entered as boys, and left as men” can easily be concluded from the wonderful experience the American Legion gave us.

References

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