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THE GREY CLIFFS CONFLICT

Situating the Issues

David Edwards, a resource manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, had a problem. One of the county sheriffs in the district where he worked in the Southeast had given him 90 pages of documented crimes and disruptions that had taken place at a recreational lake area, Grey Cliffs, over the past 2 years. (All participant and location names within this study are pseudonyms.) Edwards immediately expressed concern because Grey Cliffs fell under his management responsibility. These nefarious activities included theft, drug use, kidnapping, attempted murder, assault, rape, and others. As Edwards monitored social media use about Grey Cliffs, he found warnings to people visiting the area, such as admonitions not to leave valuables in cars because thieves would break into vehicles and steal personal belongings. Upon visiting Grey Cliffs, Edwards found used needles, trash, and beer bottles littering the landscape surrounding the lake, which he attempted to clean up himself. In addition, he noticed evidence of all-terrain vehicle use that had decimated this once-beautiful area. Resulting erosion contributed to mudslides, and camping outside designated areas caused fires to burn dangerously close to trees and other vegetation. Trees riddled with bullets from target practice testified to continued unauthorized use of this land, as sportsmen prepared for upcoming hunting seasons. Grey Cliffs, one of 41 access points on this lake that the Corps managed, quickly had degenerated to become the very worst example of land management experienced in this area. Implications for this continuing environmental abuse and criminal activity were sobering; this area, ideally intended for public use, may need to be closed to prevent additional damage.

The Grey Cliffs community also had a problem. Recently, community members had heard rumors that the Corps might close Grey Cliffs, a beautiful area and beloved space that had served as the site for family swimming lessons, family reunions, fishing trips, picnics, cookouts, camping, hiking, baptisms, blackberry picking, Fourth-of-July celebrations, and, yes, all-terrain vehicle use. Families from this community had

visited Grey Cliffs for generations and shared stories fondly of family time spent in this area, which was just down the street from where many lived. Considering this area their own, these stories contrasted sharply with others this community told about Corps land takeovers in the 1930s and 1940s, when the Corps created the lake to control flooding and generate hydroelectric power; many families had lost their farms that had been passed down from generation to generation during that time. To these community members, Grey Cliffs seemed almost like a consolation prize, an accessible area where they could be assured of convenient recreation opportunities. The community members weren't the only ones who valued Grey Cliffs. Kayakers, canoeing enthusiasts, and influencers praised the area on social media as a site for sporting activity and beautiful surroundings. Campers admired the lake view and rising grey cliffs that jutted upward from the lake, topped with lush trees and rock outcroppings. The area provided a sense of isolation so that, not too far from more populated areas, families could gather, recreate, and "get away from it all." Fishermen spent many hours on the lake catching catfish, walleye, black crappie, trout, and bass, journeying for miles if they wished or anchoring near the lake-access point in solitary coves too numerous to count. Because of community members' genuine, longtime love of this area, rumors of potential closure struck a strident, unharmonious chord with this community; they were angry even at the idea that the Corps would consider such action, and they weren't about to stand silently by and watch it happen.

Although not able to communicate with a human voice, Grey Cliffs as a physical location also revealed that it had a problem. While visited often by caring community members who did clean up the area after use, this area had also become known as a place where others could go to "get out of the eyes of the law." To everyone's best knowledge, no one monitored the area, and the area was so remote that even attempted surveillance seemed difficult, if not impossible. No one could even access cell service in the area. In addition, the muddy landscape visitors encountered simply could not continue as before, and the camping continued spreading far into the woods—far beyond what the Corps had intended. This site also became one that provided access to other people's properties that connected to the Corps land, providing opportunities for all-terrain vehicle users to trespass on others' properties. Grey Cliffs had witnessed much crime and environmental damage, and its future seemed sad and bleak. The activity of the area, some of it connected to family time and traditions and some of it crime related, all could very well result in restrictions that would prohibit anyone from

accessing the area. These restrictions would certainly allow the area to rejuvenate in the quickest and most cost-efficient manner.

These various views and perspectives surrounding Grey Cliffs produced a kairos moment, a time when "the ability to select the right time and measure of language . . . a valuable rhetorical skill" (Salvo, 2006, p. 230) would impact this community and beloved, geographic space, perhaps forever. Edwards needed to take some action; the sheriff's reports were just one indication that activities at Grey Cliffs had gotten out of control. This community found itself in crisis and at a very difficult crossroads. Someone had to make some very difficult decisions, and no one was sure who would be making them. The community felt helpless as rumors spread, and the situation's urgency grew every day. Emotions escalated, anger spread, and conversations on front porches, back yards, and street corners grew more pointed within the community. No one wanted to see this area closed, especially with its close community connections. Motivation for action was quickly generating strength among community members as these conversations continued, but where would this building energy lead? Many of these community members harbored suspicions about anyone connected to the Corps and any community members who might be Corps sympathizers, who might be willing to restrict Grey Cliffs' access in support of the Corps.

The environmental degradation and criminal activity, though, were clearly unacceptable, according to the Corps. Grey Cliffs had obviously become unmanageable; of all of the lake-access points, Grey Cliffs was by far the most notorious and crime ridden. Not only had the area sustained environmental damage, but human safety continued to be a growing concern. Even some of the local people voiced concern about visiting the area alone or at night. Something had to be done to remedy these actions, and the Corps seemed to be the entity to step up and take control; after all, it did own the land and was in charge of maintaining it. Rumors continued circulating about the Corps closing the area. In order to begin a conversation about these issues, Edwards began talking with some local community members, who suggested a public meeting, one of several, to discuss the implications of closure. One of these community members was Norma; she lived near Grey Cliffs and was motivated to organize the first town hall meeting. She had experience with grassroots organizing and wanted to volunteer that experience to help the community.

At the first town hall meeting, Edwards and the community presented polarized narratives and views on Grey Cliffs' future status that ultimately reflected differing values. Edwards based his values upon the

Corps mission and vision, as he stressed the crime and environmental problems that no longer coincided with Corps goals. The community drew its values from Grey Cliffs' experiences as well as other values rooted in community traditions. The resulting narratives these opposing parties promoted were decidedly different as well; Edwards's narrative contained statistics from the sheriff's reports he received as well as his own experience with the area. The community's narrative contained testimonies about their use of the area, as well as clear resistance to closure. The community's narrative also focused on the benefits of the area and the inconvenience of closing it: no other lake-access points existed for miles. Based on the first meeting, Edwards and the community could not have been more polarized in their communication about Grey Cliffs. Nothing substantial could be accomplished without some type of value alignment and negotiation among these polarized communicators' narratives; something had to be changed to aid in resolving this crisis situation. How could change be accomplished, though? It is at this point that this observational case study begins.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This book presents an ethnographic, observational case study, including interviews that I conducted on communication and the events surrounding the Grey Cliffs lake-access conflict negotiation process. This study applies the theoretical lens of rhetoric (specifically the co-construction of ethos) to explore and articulate the relationship between ethos building and narratives, values, and texts, particularly when resolving conflicts. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

- How do key participants' narratives reveal negotiated ethos, values, and action during the Grey Cliffs events?
- How do different participant values motivate attempts to negotiate action during this process, especially surrounding sustainability?
- How is ethos co-constructed among participants and articulated through texts?
- What persuasive strategies during this conflict appear to be failures and why?

Focusing on these research questions profiles the co-construction of ethos, values, and negotiation efforts illustrated in this case study, and the findings reveal ways narratives, conveyed through various texts, enable and/or constrain agency and ethos negotiation. This negotiation is essential for effective relationship building.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My purpose in writing this book is to explore the research questions in light of the overarching concept that organizations and communities cannot negotiate meaningful action and relationships until there is a shared narrative that reflects aligned values. Constructing that shared narrative is the complicated part, and no one process is the same or works for all parties involved. As Faber (2002) writes when discussing a conflict he observed,

> Here, change was all about stories, but because the stories were so diver-gent, so opposite to each other, there was no possibility that either side was about to change. Instead, those in each group simply reinforced the other group's stories and perceptions held of their opponents. No one had created or presented a larger story to pull these people together; there was no common narrative they could both embrace. As a consequence, without a unifying story, one that spoke to both groups, neither side was about to change. (p. 8)

The Grey Cliffs conflict was similar to the one Faber discussed because both parties, the Corps and the community, promoted divergent stories and narratives; the Corps represented narratives of authority, poorly kept regulations, and crime, and the community communicated narratives of family gatherings, camping, and recreation. These types of conflict are common among organizations, businesses, and communities, and more research is needed to develop ways to create unifying stories and narra-tives among diverse groups. As Smith et al. (2020) propose,

> Future research should look at how organizational discourses around orga-nizational innovation and failure may shape over time and the role commu-nication plays in altering associated frames. Furthermore, it would be useful to understand the ongoing consequence of communication for shaping the understandings of what innovation work actually entails. (p. 20)

Far from being an idealized account of compromise for needed, inno-vative changes to Grey Cliffs' activities, however, this book presents an analysis of this particular organizational and community conflict and ways common narratives began to develop organically and realistically, based on these communicators' unique characteristics, motivations, and values. These common, negotiated narratives and values are just the be-ginning of conflict resolution and most likely will change over time, but studying the beginnings of this conflict resolution, as I do here, suggests tangible examples, attitudes, strategies, and frameworks for conflict ne-gotiation that readers could apply in a variety of situations, whether as organizational members, community members, or participants function-ing to various degrees within these realms. "Engaged in a shared activity"

(Smith et al., 2020, p. 2), these community workers demonstrate how "innovation is constituted through everyday talk and interaction" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 2). As such, this research helps answer the call for more inclusive research, particularly in the field of technical and professional communication, that has often suffered from a "hyperpragmatist" view (Scott et al., 2006, pp. 7–17) in the past. Instead, this more inclusive view "intentionally seeks marginalized perspectives, privileges these perspectives, and promotes them through action" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 214). Another important goal of this work is illustrating ways everyday practices, surrounding the shared activity of preserving access to Grey Cliffs, transpired through addressing the conflict. Eventually framing this event not just as a conflict but as opportunities for possible future action allowed Edwards, the Corps, and the community to work together on co-constructing solutions to these social and environmental problems.

BENEFITS AND UNIQUENESS OF WORK

This research extends work in the fields of ethos development, sustainability, values alignment, and narrative as it

- addresses the different sensemaking frames between a government organization and a rural community—the Corps needed to bring the community back into alignment with sustainability values, and the community needed to co-construct and revise its ethos with the Corps in order to negotiate access to Grey Cliffs;
- emphasizes co-constructed framing processes as a way to align values and actions discursively through all participants' narratives;
- connects organizational, environmental, and rhetorical communication theory and practice with cultural narratives, an application that potentially addresses other types of unique, organizational conflicts;
- highlights the relationships among ethos, value alignment, and shared identity development through co-constructed framing and rhetorical strategies, meeting a growing cultural need for additional research into accomplishing social action among participants with polarized views;
- illustrates how values and rhetoric can be adapted to the needs of a local culture with the aim of accomplishing common social action, extending the research on "our responsibilities to the cultures and communities within which, to whom, and about whom we communicate" (Haas & Eble, 2018, p. 12);
- provides data that support an increased understanding of why and how audiences change their actions based on persuasive discourse and socially mediated action regarding environmental and safety issues, based on negotiated ethos development;

- demonstrates the *dialogic* (Bakhtin, 1983; Meisenbach & Feldner, 2011, p. 567; Olman & DeVasto, 2020, p. 17) and *poly-vocal* (Boje, 2008; Jones et al., 2016, p. 212) work of organizational and community rhetors who, through rhetorical persuasion as well as agency and identity negotiation, work together to accomplish Corps environmental sustainability goals;
- promotes inclusivity by "working in communities and the public sphere" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 217) to learn more strategies for engaging with dominant narratives, such as organizational ones; and
- presents analysis of a generous range of texts used to accomplish and mediate communication goals through the qualitative, ethnographic, observational case study approach.

Many studies in organizational communication have focused on errant companies that damage the environment for capitalistic purposes or function shortsightedly, with seeming disregard for the concerns of impacted communities (Boyd & Waymer, 2011; Henderson et al., 2015; Jaworska, 2018; Lehtimäki et al., 2011; Shim & Kim, 2021; Verboven, 2011; Waller & Conaway, 2011). Many of these businesses address global markets and also serve a wide customer/company base. But this study is different in that this time the "big business"—the government—is the one prompted to step up to address a damaging environmental situation, and the community is the one to resist. Because of different cultural "sensemaking" (Weick, 1995) frames—including new materialist, embodied ways a person experiences physical and cultural events (Frost, 2018, p. 25; Herndl et al., 2018, p. 87; Senda-Cook et al., 2018, p. 102)—the Corps and the community approached this communication process differently. The cultural-historical context provides a unique setting through which to view the social negotiation of action between the community and the government: in the 1930s and 1940s, the Corps had bought much land surrounding a local river, including many farms, to create the lake to manage flooding and generate hydroelectric power. While this management undoubtedly had its benefits, many landowners at the time believed they had not been given a fair price for their land, they were not given a choice in whether to sell, and their generations-owned properties were lost. As a result, many landowners and farmers left the area to start over elsewhere (Williams et al., 2016). This cultural history led to a long and unpleasant narrative between this local community and the Corps, a narrative that had little if no positive history to balance it out. Community narratives had framed this history as an "us versus them" standoff that predisposed many community members to distrust government representatives in general and Corps representatives, such as Edwards as a resource manager, specifically. To add to this

difficulty, there was no personal, embodied "face" to the Corps. Instead, it was an anonymous, unidentifiable entity that had suddenly reemerged to once again take control of this physical place the community felt it had regained some ownership of through memories and longtime, embodied recreational use. This scenario, then, is a very unique, local context through which to view the concepts of narratives, ethos, and values, all in need of some type of alignment in order for positive, social action and relationships to take place.

Organizational leaders in particular often use rhetoric to influence their audiences (Cheng, 2012; Heracleous & Klaering, 2014; Higgins & Walker, 2012; McCormack, 2014), and scholars have indicated the need to focus specifically on "ethos as an aspect of context that can shape rhetorical strategies" (Heracleous & Klaering, 2014, p. 133). The concept of ethos is a complicated one, including aspects of character development as well as expertise and authority (Aristotle, ca. 367–347, 335–323 B.C.E./2019). Only through ethos development can organizational leaders, for example, begin to negotiate action with the public, such as community members and stakeholders, who need to develop confidence and trust in the leader. In addition, community members need to develop their own ethos that complements the leader's ethos; only through this co-constructed ethos process can significant social action take place to resolve a conflict such as this one, which involves diverse members of the public.

In addition, this study contributes to the growing research focusing on environmental sustainability and organizational communication, including specific focuses on values and rhetoric adapted to the needs of a local culture with the aim of accomplishing common social action. It addresses needs of individual, rural, community stakeholders who are incredibly valuable to and legitimate in negotiating social action with an organization such as the Corps, although these community members might appear to be less significant and powerful at first, when compared to organizational communicators who have more ready access to dominant discourses of power. Edwards's ethos appeals, particularly those highlighting his credibility and character, reveal ways ethos can diplomatically frame an organizationally strategic message. Today, we are experiencing more and more tension between government organizations and the public. Analyzing the ethos creation of a government representative in a crisis, as well as this community's negotiated response to it, yields data and observations that scholars and communicators can use in thoughtfully and intentionally negotiating social action within different sociocultural contexts, including communities and governments,

both influenced by discourses of organizational power (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990; Foucault, 1980, 1983, 1995). In addition to recognizing powerful organizational structures, this study also emphasizes the potential for community empowerment through "activism, social action, and the demarginalization of nondominant groups" (Walton et al., 2019, p. 109).

Recent work suggests that individual and community voices can indeed be heard and need to play a more meaningful part in corporate social responsibility, strategic communication, and organizational issues management (Carlson & Caretta, 2021; Henderson et al., 2015; Shim & Kim, 2021) as well as environmental communication and public policy formation (Carlson & Caretta, 2021; George & Manzo, 2022; Herndl et al., 2018; Le Rouge, 2022; Martinez, 2022). My work adds to this conversation by extending and further emphasizing the dialogic (Bakhtin, 1983; Meisenbach & Feldner, 2011, p. 567) work of organizational and community rhetors who, through rhetorical persuasion, attempt to work together to accomplish Corps environmental sustainability goals. This work also exemplifies an "ideal/real tension" (Meisenbach & Feldner, 2011, p. 566) that highlights potential strategies for negotiating communicative agency between organizations and individual stakeholders. The "ideal" Corps' regulation of the area differed significantly from the real lived experiences of the community members. The qualitative analysis of community participant interviews provides insight into the deconstruction of this dichotomy through the agency and identity negotiation process among the community, the Corps representative, and ultimately the Corps itself. Highlighting these community voices demonstrates a commitment to democratic communication about the environment; as Killingsworth and Palmer (2012, p. 265) discussed in their research, organizations must "recogniz[e] the need of all levels of people to have access to reliable information designed to be useful for their particular social goals" despite those goals being as seemingly insignificant as primitive camping and blackberry picking. Such attention supports "valu[ing] knowledge as experiential and lived" (Walton et al., 2019, p. 107), an important part of valuing the participation of marginalized communities as well.

Furthermore, Edwards's reflective observations on his own communicative processes contribute insights into these complex communication choices often not available from organization representatives in retrospect; this rhetor reveals that the identification process is nonlinear and recursive (Pickering, 2018) and is "key to how we perceive the world, looking through the lens of **historicity**" that occurs within a context (Jones & Walton, 2018, p. 242, bold emphasis in original), in this case, the context of the Grey Cliffs conflict, including its local community and

narratives. When discussing social and environmental concerns, Higgins and Walker (2012) stress that discourse analysis alone can sometimes overlook "how other social actors think, feel and act" (p. 196) when discussing "social and environmental reporting" (Higgins & Walker, 2012, pp. 195–196). Discourse analysis alone therefore leaves a huge gap of missing information that analysis of reflective self-narratives can fill regarding social actors' "think[ing], feel[ing] and act[ing]" (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 196). My work provides data that contribute to an increased understanding of specifically why and how audiences, such as the Grey Cliffs community, change their actions based on persuasive ethos development initiated by an organizational communicator, "includ[ing] discussions of the practical implications of technical information, consistent efforts to make information accessible to the public, and a forthright representation of scientific uncertainties associated with complex technical information" (Tillery, 2006, p. 325).

The conflict analyzed here illustrates this local, cultural context as well as ways these participants used various rhetorical resources to negotiate agency and act. The community—those with less power in this story—did not have automatic and totalizing power bestowed on them similar to that seemingly possessed by Edwards as a Corps resource manager, a government representative. As a Corps representative, Edwards was charged with enforcing the Corps' identity as an organization. "An organization's identity or image is the result of an effort to create hegemony—the appearance of uniformity and consensus" (Graham & Lindeman, 2005, p. 423). Yet, once the community learned of the Corps' intentions to close the area, it began subverting and destabilizing those power structures and sense of order through the use of *polyphony* (Bakhtin, 1984), *heteroglossic* narratives (Bakhtin, 1983), *counterstory* (Martinez, 2020), and *antenarrative* (Boje, 2015); Edwards, in response, sympathized with the community's needs and negotiated with the community, in part to help neutralize anti-government sentiment that had been generated between the community and the Corps, originating from the earlier Corps land buyouts. This process, then, reflected a negotiation among all parties; they learned the structures of the others' modus operandi and then acted with rhetorical awareness to subvert those structures and accomplish social action and agency within them (Giddens, 1984).

MY ROLE

My interest in this topic is personal as well as professional. I moved to a small farm that is part of this community about 15 years ago. Not being

from the area, I have considered myself an "outsider" among people who have grown up in this rural community, where generations have raised their families. At the same time, I quickly realized I was also an insider since our farm is one of two that possesses direct access via rough, unpaved roads to the Corps land that borders the Grey Cliffs lake-access. In fact, to access a part of our farm, we must cross a small segment of Corps land. Via this rough road, "trespassers" from the Grey Cliffs lake-access area often ride all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) through the Corps land up to our house, which is at the top of the road leading down to the Corps property. I put "trespassers" in quotation marks because we have not treated them as such; they are not bad people or criminals but simply those looking for adventure who have wandered a bit too far. Nevertheless, they should not even ride ATVs on Corps property to begin with, which they would have to do before arriving at the bottom of the road that leads to our home. The presence/appearance of these people at our back door, despite "no trespassing" signs on our part of the road, emphasized this problem of unauthorized use of Corps land to us in a very personal way.

While we were uncomfortable with strangers appearing feet from our door at any time of day or night, we were not automatically in favor of closing the Grey Cliffs area to limit people from accessing it. One reason why was that we also used the area to take our children swimming and launch a small boat to fish and explore. We enjoyed using the area for what the Corps had intended; we also empathized with this community and wanted to support it in every way we could. We had heard of the community's devotion to the area and the history with the Corps, since we lived so close to the lake; we had met and gotten to know some neighbors, and our children went to school with others who were descendants of the original landowners in the area. As a result, we found ourselves occupying an in-between space in this conflict; we wanted to secure our own land (through closure), but we also wanted to preserve the use of the area for ourselves and the community. In this way, I realized my own unique positionality in relation to this growing conflict; my roles as community observer and participant were somewhat powerful as a landowner yet also weak since, ultimately, our family might not have any say in the Corps' decision about whether to close the area. Within this context, I realized the many selves that not only I but others participating in this conflict were constantly navigating and negotiating, through "differing ways of talking and being that stand as '[we]' for different audiences" (Gergen, 2007, p. 120). As Bourdieu (2007) emphasizes, "Because any

language that can command attention is an 'authorized language', invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated" (p. 170). As I observed this conflict, I saw how two different sides—the Corps and the community—were focused on legitimizing their own "authorized language" made up of scientific, governmental language on one side and affective, valued experiences on the other, and these dynamics created a rhetorical situation that everyone could learn from, including myself as a researcher.

When this situation unfolded in our backyard, I realized from an academic/professional perspective that this was a stunning example of various forms of communication: personal narratives, values, government/organization communication, business communication, environmental sustainability, other forms of rhetoric, and uses of various forms of texts. Given that these have been my scholarly focuses during my life in academia, I decided to become involved in this situation as a participant/observer, more an observer than a participant, since I still considered myself an outsider and was somewhat neutral about whether the area should be closed or not. In this vein, I began an ethnographic, observational case study involving various texts, including interviews, field notes, documents, and community stories that emerged from the interviews. With these data and observations, I hoped to explore the research questions through the context of co-constructing ethos, values, narrative, and texts, which I have found very useful in illuminating communication nuances involving conflict within these different cultural contexts. In doing so, I acknowledge that "the research process is itself a storytelling process in which the researcher's voice is always present" (Jørgensen, 2015, p. 285) throughout the presentation of others' voices, the theories I apply, and the data I've chosen to include. This information is crucial for learning more about conflict communication and ethos negotiation during crisis situations, especially involving sensitive cultural contexts, diverse populations, and the narratives they produce. As other scholars have demonstrated (Higgins & Walker, 2012; Mackiewicz, 2010; Walton, 2013), this type of specific analysis of rhetorical strategies provides an in-depth perspective on statements rhetors use when attempting to negotiate a credible ethos with audiences. Because I addressed the process of negotiating a shared identity with the audience using values as well, a grounded theory and interpretive approach allowed me to discover that Edwards's and the community's specific uses of language, in various forms, were part of the process of negotiating ethos among all participants.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Methodology

My research is based in qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), ethnographic research techniques (Dunn, 2019; MacNealy, 1999; Strauss, 1987), including fieldwork practices, which highlight "identifying and assigning meaning by identifying partici-pating actors, enabling attention to the mundane, and interpreting relevance with regard to rhetorical purposes and outcomes" (Grabill et al., 2018, p. 195). Grasping these community members' and resource manager's stories and "lived experiences" (Boussebaa & Brown, 2017, p. 14; Moore et al., 2021) was of the utmost importance in studying these communicators' rhetorical purposes. As Gephart (2007) asserts,

> Narratives and stories form the substance of much regulated communica-tion; hence, narrative/rhetorical analysis addresses the *substantive* dimen-sion of regulated communication and the form it takes. Rhetorical analysis complements narrative analysis by showing how selective construction of storytelling influences or regulates understanding and meaning. (p. 240)

This study highlights stories told by community members; these sto-ries constitute reflective self-narratives about the conflict, its status, and the community's relationship to it. These narratives "can be a valuable method for sharing the individual and situated concerns of community members" (Stephens & Richards, 2020, p. 8), which may not be identi-fied otherwise. As a result of the crucial importance of reflective self-narratives to learning more about these dynamic communication pro-cesses and negotiated power/action within this conflict, I incorporated semistructured interviews (Kvale, 1996) and allowed the participants to guide the discussion although I did have questions planned, the same for all interviews, to begin the discussion. My presence at the town hall community meetings allowed me to be a participant by "being there" (Blair, 2001; Rai & Druschke, 2018, p. 4; Senda-Cook et al., 2018, p. 103) and gathering additional background information to contribute to my general sense of the cultural history surrounding these events and con-flict. At the same time, while being there, I understood that I can never fully and truly portray an authentic representation of participants' feel-ings, experiences, and motivations based on these observations because I did not live those same experiences. Likewise, this ethnographic portrait is a small snapshot of the events going on at the time (Heath, 1983); events and circumstances are constantly changing, just as the *sensemak-ing* (Grant, 2015, p. 113; Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2017; Henderson et al., 2015, p. 14; Weick, 1995) and embodied understanding (Frost, 2018, p. 25; Herndl et al., 2018, p. 87) of these events will not always remain

stabilized. New dynamics can cause different conflicts to erupt, and negotiation may need to reoccur and evolve. The relationship between the community and the Corps will continue to change.

When analyzing the interview transcriptions, I implemented a grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kwortnik & Ross, 2007) and interpretive approach (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001; Kuhn, 2006; Kvale, 1996) to identify themes significant to the theoretical lens of ethos building. As I read the interview transcripts several times, I made note of possibly significant recurring themes and then made connections among themes revealed by all of the interview participants. In the process, through open and in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016), I selected key words, phrases, and sentences that reflected the application of those key themes; some of those quotations are included at chapter beginnings and through headings, for example, to illustrate participant agency and identity. Therefore, I viewed participants' words and collected data as an opportunity to discover efforts to portray and negotiate identities, based on the rhetorical exigency of kairos moments these participants deemed significant as they participated as social actors through these narratives. The resulting study yields a rich account of the messy process of negotiating action and relationships based on two general groups—the Corps and the local community—both with important, yet different, investments in the Grey Cliffs area.

Data

This ethnographic, observational case study includes qualitative data such as field notes taken during town hall meetings, documents distributed at meetings, maps, and semistructured interviews with key participants involved in the discussion and resolution of the issue. As Table 1.1 indicates, some data necessarily duplicated themselves in the field notes as well as the transcribed interviews. For example, Edwards stated his position title as Corps resource manager as he began his presentation at the first town hall meeting, and he reiterated his position title during our interview. Similarly, he reflected on statements he made at the meeting during the interview. The rich data I gained from analyzing the self-narratives are especially helpful in revealing participants' reflections on the events I observed at the meetings as well as other conversations that occurred before and after the meetings. The transcribed interviews revealed perspectives, intentions, and contexts that simply were not available from my observations alone. I transcribed all interviews by hand with the help of Express Scribe to ensure the transcriptions were as accurate as possible.

Table 1.1. Annotated Research Timeline Totaling Approximately 18 Consecutive Months

Research phase	Event	Date of event	Types of data collected
Pre-research	Informal conversation occurred between Edwards and a few community members at Grey Cliffs about the problems occurring there. All parties decided a community meeting would allow opportunities for discussion about these problems.	September 2018	None—researcher learned about these conversations during later community meetings and interviews.
Data collection	First community town hall meeting	October 2, 2018	Field notes, meeting agenda, meeting notes supplied by meeting organizer, Convention of States Literature
Data collection	Second community town hall meeting	October 16, 2018	Field notes, meeting agenda, meeting notes supplied by meeting organizer
Data collection	Meeting during which community members signed up for various committees	October 27, 2018	Field notes, meeting agenda, committee lists
Data collection	Joint committee meeting to update the community about progress being made on committee efforts and future plans	November 5, 2018	Field notes, negotiated action plan containing Corps and community goals, list of what help the Corps was willing to provide, email documentation from Edwards about plan for rejuvenation
Data collection	Joint committee meeting to discuss continued progress with helping to clean up the area through cleanup days, barricade installation, concrete and rock application	November 27, 2018	Field notes, revised map developed by Edwards indicating plan of future action for restricting access to certain areas, list of supplies to be provided by the Corps
Data collection	Participant interviews with Edwards, Norma, and selected community members	January 2019–March 2019	Recording of interviews
Interview recording transcription	Transcription by hand with the help of Express Scribe	Summer 2019	Interview transcripts
Data analysis	Analysis of all data collected during meetings and participant interviews	Fall 2019–Spring 2020	All data collected

I initially recruited interview participants based on the prominence of their roles during the conflict. For example, because Edwards was the Corps resource manager in charge of informing the public about Grey

Cliffs' status and guiding future changes, I chose to interview him; he obviously knew a lot about this issue from his perspective and held an important role in addressing this conflict. I interviewed Norma because of her efforts to organize the community. Community participants also played strong roles, and I recruited some of them, such as Tom, who chose to lead some of the meetings and created a Facebook page for Grey Cliffs, and Paul, the owner of the general store where the town hall meetings occurred. A couple of participants, such as Denise and Felicia, serindipitously participated because they happened to be around when I was interviewing another participant and agreed to participate as well. All participants signed informed consent agreements for me to use their interview transcriptions in this research, and the overall research project was approved by the Institiutional Review Board at my university (Approval Number 2096). All identifying information has been removed from the data.

Some of the research I discuss in this study refers specifically to organizational communication within workplaces. While Edwards is an organizational representative, the community members are not workplace communicators within an organization. This characteristic contributes to the uniqueness of this study: not all organizational communication takes place within formal workplaces, and community members' reciprocal communication with organizations also proves essential when organizational efforts intersect community cultures and activities. The research I cite in this study yields perspectives that apply to these external stakeholders, community members, and workplace communicators. While not organization members themselves, these community members were still influenced by organizational communication through the Corps and Edwards in potentially life-changing ways. They also participated in co-constructing this communication, therefore participating in the power dynamics discursively constructed through that communication.

CHAPTER PREVIEWS

Chapter 2, "Narratives, Stories, Ethos Building, and Environmental Justice," presents the theoretical framework guiding the case study, including a focus on narratives and stories, as well as ethos and environmental justice. Within the context of narratives and stories, I introduce the concepts of symbolic and social capital, as well as agency, which is negotiated through the narrative construction process to accomplish social action. Complementing the focus on narratives and stories is the

ethos building, partially evidenced through them. Within this overarching theory, I explore the concepts of credibility as well as character, especially as they relate to Edwards's ethos development, since he is the primary rhetor in this case study. I then situate a discussion of values, frames, and trust within the process of co-constructing ethos. The third major theoretical frame is environmental justice and its influence on narrative and ethos development, since all of the data gathered for this study revolve around one central question: what should be done to preserve Grey Cliffs so that everyone can continue using it? Exploring the answer to this question requires a developing rhetoric of relationship, a concept that permeates the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3, "Community Narratives and Ethos: Agency and Values," presents the need for some type of value alignment that needed to occur between the Corps and community before jointly accomplished social action could take place regarding the Grey Cliffs conflict. To demonstrate this need for alignment, I introduce values reflected in stories told by community members, such as values connected to religion, tradition, recreation, skepticism of government authority, and social unity. The value of social unity for this community also included the need for respect and the need for all voices to be heard. The stories these community members told strongly communicate the diverse voices involved and their potential to participate in resolving this conflict. Affective community values presented themselves in texts, such as narratives and stories, signs, fliers, newspaper ads, and social media communication, to begin to negotiate agency with the Corps to keep the area open.

Chapter 4, "Motivating the Compliant Individual: A Corps Resource Manager's Rhetoric of Regulation," focuses on David Edwards in his role as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers resource manager assigned to maintain and monitor the Grey Cliffs lake-access point. In this chapter that highlights Edwards's first attempt to persuade and engage with the community, I present Edwards as a regulator and motivator of action in this local community. Edwards saw the need for change to protect Grey Cliffs' sustainability; he also encouraged behavioral change in the community for the sake of public safety since crime had become so prominent in the area. But accomplishing social action was not easy for Edwards; while he attempted to create a persuasive persona, one that the community would accept, the community rejected him initially, based on his appeals to credibility alone. No meaningful relationship existed between Edwards and the Corps at this point. In the processes of communicating Corps values through various written, oral, and multimedia texts, Edwards presented values to the community to motivate

it to comply with Corps rules and regulations. But this first attempt at persuasion met with strong community resistance.

"Attempting to Persuade as a Community Organizer: Norma's Narrative of Logic Without Emotion," Chapter 5, analyzes the role of Norma, the community organizer who coordinated the first community town hall meetings and motivated the community to attend them and who led the meetings to generate solutions to the problem of closing Grey Cliffs. Chapter 5 establishes Norma as a leader with a strong logos, or sense of logic, as she possessed strong organizational skills as well as experience with nonprofit organizations and grant writing obtained through previous work experience and volunteering. However, from the beginning of her involvement, Norma struggled with rumors about her circulating throughout the community and a damaged reputation. These rumors and her reputation threatened Norma's ethos with the community to the point that she was not able to rally the community behind her efforts; she was not able to co-construct an ethos with the community. Despite her strong logistical qualifications, Norma faced rumors focusing on three themes of her character: that she was overly controlling of the information, had a lack of personal connection with the community, and was untrustworthy. Despite these rumors, Norma initially constructed a persona regulated and motivated by her own apparent values of face-to-face communication, focusing on facts, rejection of emotion, consistency of organizational structure, and the importance of grassroots involvement. She also distributed several different types of texts, such as Convention of States literature, fliers advertising meeting locations and times, agenda and meeting notes, and researched rules for beginning nonprofit organizations. The values reflected in these documents and the documents themselves were helpful to the community as it started on its journey of negotiating some type of action with the Corps, but ultimately, the community resisted this regulation by deconstructing Norma's ethos and logos; Norma herself acknowledges her displaced agency as her role in the conflict resolution process diminished. This chapter demonstrates the need for a fully developed rhetorical persona necessary to persuade others to act; leaders require attention to their own credibility and assessment of community need, including responding to local culture and its receptivity rather than focusing on logic alone. This chapter also highlights the potential for deconstructed agency that results when a leader lacks established relationships and co-constructed ethos as prerequisites for rallying community members to act.

Chapter 6, "A Corps Resource Manager's Rhetoric of Relationship: Co-Constructing Ethos With a Community," analyzes ways that Edwards

pivoted to address more relational concerns with the community based on an ethos of sincerity and affinity. Upon meeting resistance at first (see Chapter 4), Edwards consciously adapted his persona to portray a revised ethos so that the community would accept him and his message. To emphasize this change from highlighting regulations to attempting to foster relationships to achieve compliance, I analyze Edwards's reflective self-narrative using a rhetorical framework of character appeals. Ultimately, this new persona resonated effectively enough with the community so that social change could begin to be realized. To even begin this process, though, Edwards had to demonstrate willingness to co-construct ethos, agency, and an eventual new narrative with the community. For Edwards, a revised map, including negotiated plans for rejuvenating the area and materials the Corps would provide, served as one tangible way of building that trust.

Chapter 7, "Narratives of Jointly Accomplished Social Action Through Aligned Values: The Negotiated Resolution," argues that developing a co-constructed, common narrative through a revised framing strategy increased value alignment between the Corps and community in such a way that the community changed its behavior to arrive at a solution to this conflict that works for now. Analyzing semistructured interviews, I present the changed narratives, stories, texts, and actions of the community to identify specific ways the community responded to the ethos appeals Edwards extended in his conversations with the community. Texts the community constructed, such as fliers advertising cleanup days and social media posts communicating Corps regulations, verified its role in reflecting Edwards's reconstructed ethos back to him and agreeing to help the Corps with its rejuvenation and decriminalization efforts.

Chapter 7, then, indicates the results of efforts by Edwards and the community as they strived to co-construct an ethos that in turn fostered a new narrative that framed this conflict in a different, more positive, and more inclusive way than the "us versus them" type of narrative that the community promoted before. Together the Corps and community constructed a new narrative that contained values the Corps and community could agree upon, and a new value developed during this process: framing a positive future for Grey Cliffs. This new narrative and aligned values became evident to all who visited Grey Cliffs based on the results of these collaborative efforts. While not all values between the Corps and community would perfectly align, the Corps and community members found enough in common among their values to negotiate a workable solution to keeping Grey Cliffs open. These co-constructed narratives and ethos are a tentative representation and evidence of this

jointly accomplished social action that could change at any time based on the changing, destabilizing activities surrounding Grey Cliffs.

Chapter 8, "The Continued Negotiation Process: Implications for the Future," contains my brief reflections on the current status of the negotiated resolution 3 years later. Keeping reflection at the forefront of this chapter, I discuss agency's cyclical nature and the ways Edwards and community members negotiated agency throughout this conflict as well as ways this co-constructed agency might continue to be renegotiated into the future based on changing values evidenced in narratives, ethos building, and social and environmental justice frames. This renegotiation process considers potential changes to interactions among Grey Cliffs, the Corps, and community as conditions change over time. I then present limitations of this work and suggest areas for future research. Toward the end of the chapter, I emphasize the need for continued reflection in conflict resolution contexts such as this one: rather than being a singular resolution event that participants negotiate once and for all, this conflict continues to be renegotiated over time, necessitating continued reflection about successes, potential improvements, and ways to incorporate additional participants who may become newly involved in the conflict resolution process. Finally, I present future implications suggested by the communication surrounding this conflict that include both global and local communication contexts.

My hope is that the case study in this book will prove useful to communicators from a variety of fields, as well as those influencing the creation of public policy, as they seek to learn more about how government representatives, for example, might connect with community members when trying to resolve sensitive issues. Organizational communicators, technical and professional communicators, and environmental science communicators will find these observations valuable when considering conflict resolution in general, especially conflicts involving diverse publics. In addition, scholars and students in these fields will find this work helpful; not only is this case study a model for ethnographic work others might want to replicate in the future, but the community-specific insights provide a window into the complex cultural, historical, and dynamic processes of engaging with community members. Through this work, readers learn more about ways rhetorical processes such as ethos negotiation provide avenues for increasing collaborative dialogue among diverse participants who bring their own cultural contexts to the negotiating table. Attempting to acknowledge voices and assign legitimation to all of these participants, this study should also encourage others to consider the broad communication dynamics that extend beyond

the apparent simplicity of polarizing views that stand out at the beginning of crisis situations. While these polarizing views certainly require our attention, they often obscure the possibilities for negotiating ethos, relationships, agency, and possibilities for sincere persuasion that this book argues are essential for continued conflict resolution.